UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Voice of Being, Voice of Perpetual Becoming: Embodied Rituals for Transformation

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

in

Contemporary Music Performance

by

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2017

The Dissertation of Alice Teyssier is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2017

DEDICATION

for Jon, who showed me the sky, and for Brad, who taught me how to fly

EPIGRAPHS

They both listened silently to the water, which to them was not just water, but the voice of life, the voice of Being, the voice of perpetual Becoming.

Hermann Hesse

One can know worlds one has not experienced, choose a response to life that has never been offered, create an inwardness utterly strong and fruitful.

Susan Sontag

Aesthetics means experiment, elaboration, not purification.

McKenzie Wark

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE

We find ourselves at an interesting time. Access to intellectual and critical thought has never been broader, yet the election of Donald Trump is the logical next step in advanced capitalism and neoliberalism; social media has enabled instantaneous reports of human rights violations and social injustices, and yet the media at large is increasingly hard to trust; tides of social progress around the world are experiencing waves of backlash… It is difficult not to ask oneself: what is my place in this world? How is my life, and my life's work, impactful, meaningful, and ultimately, truthful?

In June of 2013, I received a phone call from Claire Chase, founder and (then) Executive Director of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) in New York. She asked me if I would be willing to come to New York that August and play with the group at the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center; of course I agreed. Within a year, I had finished my qualification exams and prepared myself to move to Brooklyn to join the group.

Many things would change in my life that fall: I lost my university-sponsored health insurance and enrolled with New York State of Health; although my address was in Brooklyn, I spent about 40% of the first year there, due to touring; the ratio I had established between singing and playing was almost reversed; I was contracted for gigs rather than organizing them myself.

Since that first year, I have taken on an administrative role within ICE. I am co-Director of OpenICE, our engagement initiative, which offers artist-curated concerts, open rehearsals, workshops and discussions all free and open to the public. I also head up the EntICE commissioning program for youth orchestras to co-create and premiere new works by major composers alongside ICE musicians. The flute-singing balance has been restored to an

acceptable degree; I am currently involved in new opera projects (at various stages of completion) by Ashley Fure, Clara Latham, Lewis Nielson, and (posthumously) Pauline Oliveros. I have become involved with many ensembles of new and old music in New York, and am continuing to grow my presence.

I began this dissertation as I was first embarking on the transition between scholarly life and a professional life as a freelance musician. My initial questions were ones of agency, quality, sustainability. In the three years since, for a multitude of reasons, which I will touch on, I have found myself broadening my line of questioning, expanding from the production of self to the Becoming of Self, from "good" artistic work to active political work, from a set of values to an evolving philosophy of embodiment. It has been fascinating, illuminating and challenging to engage in the process of writing about Becoming while in the process of Becoming and growing.

Here are the results of my long-term musings on these topics as I've grown my footprint on the contemporary music stage in New York City and around the world. I hope some of the questions I address here will intrigue other performers and diversify the broader conversation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely grateful to the University of California-San Diego Department of Music, that offered me a place to be *both* a doer and a thinker, and challenged me in ways I could not have foreseen nor will I forget. It is difficult to imagine my current life without the inspirational presence of the faculty, staff, but particularly my fellow graduate students.

I would like to thank Susan Narucki for her flexible, adaptive and friendly support and guidance in my vocal development and growth as a confident, able artist; she has been an integral part in the development of my Self and the love I have for it. Amy Cimini, for opening my world to countless new intellectual encounters and challenges, and for being a meticulous and demanding advisor, particularly during the composition of my qualifying exam papers. Billy O'Brien, for contesting any kind of frivolous use of language, and for the constant reminder that this work is hard, contradictory, yet necessary and optimistic. Kim Rubinstein, for offering a parallel in her field that has served to motivate my own performative actions. And to Steve Schick, whose presence in my life has only deepened since my departure from UCSD, and to whom I am eternally grateful for continually demonstrating that an artist works inter-generationally, takes on a multiplicity of roles, and speaks eloquently and personally about things that matter.

The subject of this dissertation is the relational, community-oriented and generous production of labor in contemporary music, and I am eternally grateful that there is indeed a community of which to be a part. Many thanks to Claire Chase and Josh Rubin, who took a chance on me and have (literally) shown me the world; to Ross Karre, who believes in me almost unconditionally and is a strong advocate in the community; to Rebekah Heller and

Ryan Muncy, for becoming family; and to the rest of ICE for adopting a little sister and giving her some of the reins.

My gratitude to Michael Weyandt and Bradley Scott Rosen, with whom I have taken on a creative spirit I never trusted was there. Our circuitous conversations have played a large role in how I conceived of this topic and engage in the world. Many thanks also to Jon Hepfer, who has been able to be my friend—musically, personally and professionally—through the variegated topography of life and love.

Many thanks to Christian Teyssier, who sets before me an example of dedication to one's practice, the true importance of teaching, and the value of figuring out how our individual work makes its way to the world. I would be nowhere without Sophie Teyssier, who never takes anything for granted and has endured years of my working out my own vocabularies and true beliefs; I am grateful for her efforts in meeting me halfway. For his eternal patience with me, his belief in my personal *and* professional worth, and his imaginative spirit, this dissertation is dedicated to Brad.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Voice of Being, the Voice of Perpetual Becoming:
Embodied Rituals for Transformation

by

Alice Teyssier

Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance

University of California, San Diego, 2017

Professor Susan Narucki, Chair

This dissertation positions the professional performer of contemporary music in her contemporary socio-economic landscape, the intangible economy of immaterial production, in order to investigate the intellectual, social and conceptual responsibilities that come with her deep corporeal privilege. The production of affective labor is inextricably connected to the body; knowledge and skill is acquired through the body, assimilated inside the individual and shared between bodies. A brief history of the rise and pervasiveness of neoliberalism and its implicit ability to transform all human relations into capital allows for an outline of the forms of immaterial value that stem directly from the human—her physical capabilities, her knowledge, her morals and taste, her social being. Turning the discussion of value and quality into an ethical one, the second part of the dissertation revolves around the performer's experimental practice as a ritual of progressive self-transformation; analyses of deep corporeal

experiences through newness are first analyzed in terms of their impact on the performer's body, then on the subject's outlook on her social situation. A theory of value through the transformation of understood "private property" in contemporary music is proposed with two specific examples of open-source, community-based, collaborative projects. The discussions in this dissertation position the performance of contemporary music as the site of optimistic potential social, ecological and economical transformation, inciting performers to engage deeply, thoughtfully and ritualistically with their individual practice to discover new and innovative ideas for leveraging equality, justice and a positive outlook on the world.

INTRODUCTION

I am interested in the idiosyncratic and embodied behaviors at the site of advocacy and resistance in the contemporary musician. More than a reproduced labor, performance, particularly of experimental music, is a discovery, an encounter, in which the sensory experience generates thought and ideas. Since we are uniquely tasked with bringing new ideas into the world through our bodies, shouldn't we also have a privileged seat at the discussion table of what "better work" could look like? A "better" life? A "better" world? I believe that placing this responsibility on performers' shoulders can yield a more variegated, more intensely supported, and more deeply integrated field.

Contemporary music: the conceptualization, the creation and the performance of music in today's society. As a performer specializing in this music—as broadly defined as it is—I have professionalized my complicity in all of these elements. With colleagues, teachers, students, listeners, I engage in conversations about meanings, I devise solutions for realizing sonic or artistic concepts, I endeavor to embody a work, and I allow my experience to be shared publicly. I choose repertoires and alliances and discard others. In this, my body, my personality, my intellectual knowledge, and my political self are inextricable from my work.

In this dissertation, I confront the roles, responsibilities and challenges of the professional performer of contemporary music today. What is her role? Is she an entertainer? Is she an agent of provocation? Is she here to pacify an increasingly alienated, depressed population, to give hope? Or is she meant to arm them with tools for their own interpretation of proactivity and resistance? By virtue of the all-encompassing and self-defining nature of her work and the particular embodiment of her creative affective labor, the professional performer

of contemporary music has the unique privilege of working each day toward her own Becoming as an eternally developing, ethical and inherently creative human being, as well as the responsibility to become a force for progress, resistance and liberation in her community.

Becoming: a challenging, ever-evolving and slippery word. How does it manifest? What factors prompt and, conversely, prevent one's Becoming? I underline the importance of having and taking the time to develop one's self (and the differences between the marketed self and the true self) through the marriage of mind and body. In redefining a performer's 'economy,' I will study the kinds of investments made in "valuable work" to produce "valuable art" that leads to a "valuable life", manifested in building relationships and communities, destabilizing limiting norms and structures, and positioning oneself in the thick of our contemporary society's deepest challenges and questions.

While I won't make this a philosophical study of ethics, in many ways my stances involve a conversation around ethical experimentalism (or experimental ethics), in which the artist moves away from the prescribed affective, perceptual or moral clichés and universality. There is no right and wrong here, not even good and evil; rather, I inhabit a sliding scale of highly-personalized better and worse actions and stances. In the words of Joe Panzner, "morality demands fidelity, reproduction, and filial loyalty. Ethics demands experimentation, risk and ongoing practices of evaluation."[1] So while this dissertation will not prescribe actions or methodologies universally, it may describe certain actions that go against the grain, that take risks and challenge authority.

I will begin my investigation with a historical, economic framing of the conditions to which musicians must consent as they professionalize art. I will describe the effect of neoliberal policies on the global common sense, and their impact on new-music organizations, independent contractors in the field, and music itself. How does resistance manifest in a

[1] Panzner, *The Process that is the World*, 16.

precarious and scarce economy? How are interpersonal ties deepened, alliances formed, aesthetic challenges shared, standards raised when there is hardly enough money to go around (and when that money is consolidated at the site of corporate "altruism")? Is immaterial labor compensated equitably?

I continue by setting up a set of values unique to the performer. While the values listed and described here have been deeply considered from my personal experiences, it is my hope that this section will invite other performers to define their own. Through this practice, or ritual, the performer of contemporary music is armed with an affective view of her position as a citizen of the world, inviting a sense of deeply idiosyncratic, ethical responsibility and informed economic resistance.

Once we have set up our "economic" value system, I apply the sensual and embodied conditions for immaterial labor to a visceral philosophy of quality. Turning our often externally-biased conceptions of superiority and excellence inside out and reclaiming the self as the center of truth enables the performer to contribute more genuinely to a moral-ethical world through embodied experimental music rituals. Again, these philosophies are meant to be starting points, invitations for others to ask themselves these same questions and (hopefully, definitely, logically) come up with conflicting answers from mine.

In theorizing how the sensual impacts our memories and experiences, what we deem to be "good", and what defines our sets of aesthetic values and our choice of repertoire, I introduce the beautiful and highly-applicable dichotomy of corporeal logics and conceptual logics.[2] Investigating the mechanisms of this dualism is crucial to our understanding of ourselves as complex beings and decision-makers, and to our struggle to create a more ethical and dynamic future. I examine the positive effects the integration of somatic knowledge with

[2] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze,* 7.

intellectual and conceptual knowledge might have on a society that insists on valorizing one over the other.

In the end, these lines of inquiry serve as tools to deepen our personal engagement and question our motives, our lives and our place in society. Sustaining a vibrant and morally-ethically-invested culture relies on a multitude of different, conscious and sensitive personal approaches. Contemporary music allows the space for trends to be eschewed, u-/distopian futures to be imagined, "commonsense" discourse to be disrupted; in choosing this field, we must shoulder our political, even ecological, presence. In Chapters 5 and 6, I analyze my practical and real experiences and current work scenarios through the lens of the theories discussed throughout the dissertation, with special emphasis on personal truth and political public life through musical practice and community building.

I end this study with an invitation to other musicians who, like me, may be questioning the ethical sustainability and economic viability of their artistic endeavors. In stark contrast with contemporary "professional development" guides, I encourage a dismantling of imposed neoliberal attitudes, in favor of individual, visceral, empirical lines of flight and interfacing at the human level with others in the field. This practice is rife with contradictions, reconciliations and impasses. Yet at the root of my own personal commitment to experimentation is a deep curiosity about unknown future systems. Could it be that through her uniquely positioned corporeal engagement with the new and undetermined, the performer of contemporary music may well develop a proposal for a healthier, stronger, more just society?

* * *

PART ONE

THE IMPACT OF NEOLIBERALISM AND IMMATERIAL VALUES ON THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURE

CHAPTER 1

SOCIO-ECONOMIC HISTORY AND LANDSCAPE

"Neoliberalism has done much more than transform our economy;
it has profoundly reconfigured the social imagination […]"[3]
- Daniel Zamora

Neoliberal policies have set up moral and ethical values that favor hyper-individualism, self-responsibility and self-management, as well as the commodification of affects and relationships. Locating creative artistic endeavors (especially experimental ones) within this landscape can be challenging, contradictory, even incompatible. In an effort to identify the specific networks of power challenging the affective laborer today and reclaim some of the optimism necessary for this type of work—and, frankly, for life itself—I have assembled a rough sketch of the current economic structures. I have drawn from the powerful historical accounts and theories of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, Peter Drucker, David Harvey, and André Gorz, primarily. Their texts, sometimes at odds with each other, reflect the complexities and range of interpretations possible in this course of study and have enabled me to draft a personally relevant historical narrative of the shifting economic landscape, positioning the subject of my inquiry—the creative, curatorial and political individual—within the current capitalist context.

Artistic Movements Through the Rise of Neoliberalism

The passage of our communal common sense from elements of Fordism to those of neoliberalism[4] contextualizes what immaterial labor has come to mean in the knowledge

[3] Zamora, "Can We Criticize Foucault?", online.
[4] The question of whether we are currently experiencing a kind of post-neoliberal transition is worth more investigation, although for the purposes of this study the general capitalist structures seem unthreatened.

economy of the 21st century. Understanding the historical development of these socio-economic models and taking the time to interpret these terms in more vernacular language has helped me position myself and my work in the world as I see it, and I think it might be useful for others in similar positions. I open my historical account at the moment of resistance within the Fordist system, which signaled a first turn towards generalized deregulation.

The Fordist economic and social system, named for the Ford Motor Company's mid-century business model and tactics, was based on three principles: product standardization, mass production, and wage control. By capitalizing on new technologies and unskilled labor, cheaper goods could be mass-produced and more easily purchased by moderately-waged employees. Economic growth was closely linked with material goods, tangible objects that were produced and consumed. This structure had ripples that reached even the academy, where intangible products like music-making, were only sustainable if they served (more tangible) scientific or political purposes.[5]

In the 1950s and 60s, an anti-establishment counterculture gained traction in Europe and the United States. Mass disapproval for Jim Crow laws and the failure of the US' involvement in Vietnam caused increasingly serious and violent civil unrest. The organization Students for a Democratic Society espoused the values of the "New Left" and demanded scrutiny of political decisions on moral terms. Authorities started fearing for their safety, and for their power. In 1968, Charles De Gaulle fled the Élysée Palace in fear of his life, as extended strikes and protests against class discrimination and police states in France escalated. This popular resistance against forms of authority and structure at all levels of society would instigate a crucial shift in the political and economic landscape. It would also rewrite the rules of effective protest and resistance.

[5] The very formation and mission of UCSD's music department, based on the technological and scientific contributions possible there, is a good example of this outlook.

The dynamism and engagement of the 1960s resulted in "hippie" culture; a desire to experiment with expanding the mind-body relationship through psychedelic drugs and analogous creative endeavors, influencing movements and artists such as Fluxus, Happenings, the Situationist International, John Cage... It was a time of idealism and imagination, reflected in proposals and discussions on utopian futures, including a post-work society, in which free time would be used effectively to enhance quality of life. Imagination, however, does not equal reality: Herbert Marcuse, in his seminal *One-Dimensional Man*, lamented that "contemporary society seems to be capable of containing social change—qualitative change which would establish essentially different institutions, a new direction of the production process, new modes of human existence. This containment of social change is perhaps the most singular achievement of advanced industrial society." [6]

Still, strong anti-establishment movements and the demands of factory workers for more democratic divisions of labor caused a "crisis of governability" in the mid-1970s, which authorities attempted to address by turning to the enterprise as a source of structural inspiration. [7] In 1973, David Rockefeller founded the Trilateral Commission, an international coalition linking the business interests of the US, Europe and Japan;[8] the Commission would soon thereafter publish a report which identified an "excess of democracy"[9] in the West. For workers, the poor, and other marginal classes to be demanding political participation was a liability lawmakers had to address, and a remodeling of society itself in the image of a

[6] Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man*, xii.
[7] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 27.
[8] Because the state had become so responsible (intervention, regulation, arbitration) in every sector (welfare state) it had actually become vulnerable to society's changing needs and desires. The mechanism of control was too public, too visible, too identifiable. The Trilateral Commission was formed to create a similar mechanism that would operate as "natural" and "right", and only subliminally imposed.
[9] Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki, "The Crisis of Democracy", online.

business—wherein the state itself was "an enterprise in service of enterprises"[10]—offered a way to crush the public services that had become problematic.

These first signs of scarcity and precarity caused a shift in the social consciousness and in artistic communities as well. In his searing 1976 article "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening", Tom Wolfe described the change of outlook from the 1960s to the 1970s: "…the old alchemical dream was changing base metals into gold. The new alchemical dream is: changing one's personality—remaking, remodeling, elevating, and polishing one's very *self*... and observing, studying, and doting on it. (Me!)..." [11] This attitude, "pushing individualism at the cost of anything to the limit" [12], and in combination with a rush to the safety of the academy, dismantled the sense of community that had harbored experimental practices during the 1060s.

Further, Fordism, with its emphasis on connecting productivity with wages, had ushered in a mass consumerist mode, yet one that had built-in limitations. The deregulation of markets would not only privilege the private over the public but incentivize interests, risks, and freedoms; this played out well on the global scale, as well as with the citizen-turned-consumer. This was an attractive ideology for capitalist leaders and civilians alike to come to believe in, as they witnessed the previous system's demise. In conjunction with diluted vertical structures and increasingly obscured mechanisms, the neoliberal agenda—transcendent in ideology and global in application—allowed governments to unify, blur and strengthen their networks of control by imposing values and norms subliminally, as "right" and "natural".

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[10] Dardot and Laval, *The New Way of the World*, 384.
[11] Wolfe, "The 'Me Decade' and the Third Great Awakening", online.
[12] Landy, "Quantity and Quality (if we're lucky)", 65.

This behavior had immediate ramifications in the private sector, where companies mirrored the move to decentralize mechanisms of power; lateral networks replaced the Fordist industry's vertical hierarchies and far-too-identifiable operating structures. Deregulation, which was key to decentralizing power within large companies, "[liberated] the labor market from the elements which were 'distorting' it".[13] These "distortive" elements, of course, had protected the humans behind the industry, through trade unions and their negotiating powers, welfare rights and the capacity for industry-wide regulation.

If capital was to be freed from the limitations of the state, it needed to both feed and be buoyed by the contemporaneous technical and informational revolution. The computer age reduced unit labor costs, sped up productivity, and enabled global communications and business relations. Business operations were able to more easily move through and beyond state borders, where, replacing national policy, capital became the highest political and social arbiter. This trend away from economic nationalism was highlighted in the 1980s by the growth of "transnational" companies, which would become global corporations in the 1990s. As sovereignty was transferred to capital, international organizations and corporations (now able to choose to "locate" themselves anywhere—or nowhere) weaned themselves from dependency on state power: as Gorz suggests, this is the market we currently know, which has superseded States in its global power and influence.

All these machinations have managed to take the individual much further from that dream of the 1960s of a world without work. Indeed, even our free time, filled as it is with the digital sharing of personal data, has managed to be turned into a product large corporations can buy and sell, if they don't steal it, for the purposes of making us better—and ever-more addicted—consumers. For artists, the quantifiable product created in a composed piece of music has extremely low market value; in my experience with individual commissioners,

[13] Gorz, *The Immaterial*, 11.

demand for new works follows emotional and affective channels of capital through subjective involvement in the economic process, rather than in the product.[14]

Administrations from Reagan to Obama have worked steadily to quietly reconcile interests of the State with business interests. The election of Donald Trump does not come as a shock; indeed, for the first time in this nation's history, policy and international corporate interests have been publicly and unapologetically equated. Though civil movements for equality and peace remain, their modes of resistance stand no chance against a government whose mechanisms are opaque, complex and post-legal. Neoliberalism has changed the conditions of production from that of labor to that of truth, allowing individual self-interest to eclipse multi-faceted, popular, and tactical discourse. Most importantly for my study, this restructuring has engendered a swift and global philosophical shift, pervading the moral, ideological and aesthetic spheres. Margaret Thatcher helped us understand how bluntly this is meant: "Economics are the method, but the objective is to change the soul."[15] This dissolving of social solidarity in favor of the individual—his private property, her personal responsibility, their unique set of values—has ushered in a new outlook, and a new "common sense", on life, labor and human resources.

Today, basic tenets of the "'Me' Decade" continue to hold, with many people striving to achieve freedom, individualism and upward mobility at the expense of job security, even as they are aware that there is no guarantee that everyone will or can benefit fully from these principles. In truth, neoliberalism does not oppress universally; it allows for "winning." There is potential compensation to be had from its structures. As Rob Horning eloquently explains in his blog *Radical Subjectivity*, the word precarity belies its positive, generative potentials. "The

[14] For example, a piece might be commissioned as a birthday offering for a mother, or an oboe solo requested because it reminds the commissioner of their cousin who passed away. Only on very rare occasions is the quality of the work linked to the value of the product.
[15] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 23.

sense that it provides for the freedom of flexibility, rewards certain kinds of creativity and opportunism, promotes a kind of absolute individualism that can be taken for dignity, and accommodates or even requires a degree of social and geographic mobility — are part of what has allowed for neoliberalism's implementation."[16]

This virtuousness of inequality flips inequality on its head: you get what you deserve, in both negative and—if you're lucky—positive ways. This has been an efficient and pervasive mode of rationale that I believe attempts to reshape human life and shift the locus of power from the individual human to the corporation.[17] In creating quantifiable information and affect in the knowledge economy, we consent to transforming the labor process in parallel with the political and economic changes we've discussed in this chapter.

In some ways, this makes "contemporary music" practices (defined as one wishes as new classical music, experimental music, new genres…) simultaneously less marginalized than they perhaps were twenty or thirty years ago, and more liable to disrupt the labor process. In *The Immaterial*, André Gorz already identifies immaterial production as one tentacle of the crisis of capitalism.[18] The internet has made it possible for anyone to find a kindred spirit, a community, and individualism can operate on the level of the group and in collective and social ways. We will explore the "freedom value" and internal quality control inherent in collaborative production rituals in Chapter 6.

In this moment, how do we as artists reclaim our humanity and dynamically move to change the social order? In the words of Leigh Landy, "Isn't it about time that Marcuse's 'unfreedom' die a quiet death, where choice (i.e., quantity) and quality merge?"[19] Artists must detach quantity from commodity and financial value and redefine quantity as choice, or the

[16] He goes on: "Precarity is another way of describing why many Americans seem to instinctively reject the idea of labor unions even as the decline of unionism has given bosses more power."
[17] See Citizens United v. FEC for the most sweeping expansion of "corporate personhood" to date.
[18] Gorz, *The Immaterial*, 12.
[19] Landy, "Quality and Quantity (if we're lucky)", 69.

freedom to develop what it is that feels idiosyncratically right and good within their own communities.

I am inspired here by Brian Massumi's distinction between affect and emotion[20] to propose an affective approach to resistance, one that would mobilize the visceral and empirical knowledge of the self (as reflected and encouraged by collective work) to subjugate pervasive (yet at times emotionally tempting) social and economic norms as we consciously perceive them. By analyzing the knowledge economy within the context of the American capitalist economy, investigating its forms of immaterial and affective labor, and discovering the ethical and aesthetic questions and contradictions that arise in a professionalized application of affective work, freedom might still be achieved. And who better to launch into that investigation than the performer, the scholar, the artist that feels, thinks and imagines?

* * *

[20] Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect", online.

CHAPTER 2

AN ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY OF SUBJECTIVITY

An Investigation Into the Forms of Value Within Immaterial and Affective Production

"The value or worth of a man is, as in all other things, his price:
that is so much as would be given for the use of his power."[21]
- Thomas Hobbes

The capitalist ethos, as we've seen, pervades (or has the capacity to pervade) every mode of interaction, every action, every relationship, every product created. In this "new" reality, information is a commodity, affect is a mode of production, and creativity is labor. The development of information technology has only deepened this pervasiveness, challenging and re-defining what commodities in and of themselves can be, how "work" is assessed and, of course, how these factors influence wages, growth and precarity in the immaterial labor economy.

I begin here by asking very basic questions of immaterial production in general and the professional performance of (contemporary) music in particular:

- How is immaterial labor evaluated?
- How is the production of Self implicated in affective/immaterial labor?
- What comprises the commodity and how is it quantified?
- How is success or wealth assessed?

My starting point here is with the clear definition set out by Hardt and Negri, where immaterial labor produces a cultural idea rather than a tangible product: "Since the production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labor involved in this production as *immaterial labor*—that is, labor that produces an immaterial good, such as

[21] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, online.

a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication."[22] The labor inherent in producing the musical "commodity" (the performance, recording, workshop…) gains value when it is put up for exchange in some way in society.

Hardt and Negri's claim is that if in the modern Fordist economy, production meant industrialization, the postmodern economy is an informational one.[23] For them, "the novelty of the new information infrastructure is the fact that it is embedded within and completely immanent to the new production processes".[24] For Gorz, neoliberalism has privatized and commodified everything (intellectual property did not become a commonplace concept until the late 20th century, after all); his claim is that the immaterial nature of production will elude neoliberalism's ability to place monetary value on it, therefore causing a crisis of capitalism.[25] I believe that through deep engagement with our individual relationship to our immaterial and affective labor, this site of crisis can be exacerbated and revolutionized in the particular affective economy of abstract, experimental and imaginative contemporary music, helping us advance socially and ethically.

Hardt and Negri very helpfully outline three types of immaterial labor that drive production in this information economy:

> The first is involved in an industrial production that has been informationalized and has incorporated communication technologies in a way that transforms the production process itself. Manufacturing is regarded as a service, and the material labor of the production of durable goods mixes with and tends toward immaterial labor. Second is the immaterial labor of analytical and symbolic tasks, which itself breaks down into creative and intelligent manipulation on the one hand and routine symbolic tasks on the

[22] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 290.
[23] In what ways is this economy a Knowledge Economy? Is it responsible to claim that we live in a post-industrial economic landscape? In his pointed critique of *Empire*, *The Empire's New Clothes*, Timothy Brennan reminds us of the current "backdrop of a vast manual system of interlocking, armed work farms in the clothing industry, the prison-labor system, massive new infrastructural projects (in the laying of fiber optic cable, for example), and new arctic drilling ventures" that, to him, do not indicate that industrialism and colonialism are past.
[24] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 298.
[25] Gorz, *The Immaterial*, 14.

> other. Finally, a third type of immaterial labor involves the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labor in the bodily mode. These are three types of labor that drive the post-modernization of the global economy.[26]

I will be engaging with this third type of immaterial labor, the **production and manipulation of affect**, which involves corporeal labor and human contact. Favoring relationships and knowledge in the means of production is simultaneously a site of empowerment for the worker and, both interestingly and dangerously, one in which these inherently human and natural behaviors are commodified.

A neoliberal mindset designates the market as the ultimate guide on virtually all human endeavor; as this outlook begins to pervade society, it extends its reach beyond the economic realm, and into moral and aesthetic ones. Lauren Berlant writes and speaks eloquently on sensing bodies in the public sphere, where identities and relationships are built on affect and emotions, which both inform and are informed by our ways of thinking about and understanding the world. Layering affect onto a broadly Marxian production model, she notes that "our senses and intuitions are transformed in relation to property, to labor, to presumptions about being deserving, and to enjoying the world".[27] It holds, then, that how we perceive and position our Selves in the world - simply put, how we sense the world - would be intricately bound up in our relation to and position in the contemporary economic order.

As we unpack Hardt and Negri's concise definition of immaterial labor, we find that the immaterial laborer must engage in three different ways of producing the Self. She will actively work with her body (necessitating a production and maintenance of the localized or physical self), be interdependent with others and privilege human contact (producing a reflective social self), and she will produce a cultural good (requiring of her that she produce

[26] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 290. Emphasis mine.
[27] Berlant, "On her book *Cruel Optimism*", online.

her ideological self). I will engage more with these various kinds of self-production in the next section.

The artistic activity is a site of visceral and subjective structural social relations. As musicians, our occupation unites a variety of forces: our bodily capabilities, our social responsibility and economic position, our ideologies and the fantastical resolutions we make to be able to live within contradiction. I am interested in the musician's life at the crossroads of Self-production (often at its height in a university setting) and commodification, or the decision to turn this labor into wage labor through professionalization; in what ways does contemporary capitalist working life put pressure on the musician's aesthetic and moral values? In what ways does living in a neoliberal society affect how she senses the world and how she puts forward intangible artistic legacies and progressive/subversive ideas?

Interestingly, the neoliberal checkmate that we find ourselves in does not put the affective laborer in shackles; it may even be an opportunity to break away from what we expect from capitalist reproduction. Precarity is also contingency; in making herself essential, the worker retains the choice to leave an undesirable scenario in favor of something new, if she can think of it. In artistic, affective labor, the fine line then lies in the conception of that new thing. Musicians, who deal in an abstract form with new and unknown ideas and technologies, are a good example of the kind of affective laborer who may be able to propose alternative futures. "It is incorporating the old with the new, synthesis, that helps us to evolve in this ever-changing world. Ideas are necessary for synthesis."[28] It is my hope that with more performers—musicians who come face-to-face with the public at large—taking responsibility for advancing new models, the inertia of our collective imagination might be shaken.

In her book *Experiments in Visceral Philosophy*, Tamsin Lorraine identifies within contemporary gender relations a hierarchy that threatens a budding "alternative economy of

[28] Landy, "Quality and Quantity (if we're lucky)", 70.

subjectivity."[29] What can this mean? How can it be interpreted, nurtured and grown into a new, radical way of understanding working relations and the individual as sensing, affective agent for progress? I find these questions inspiring and energizing, since labor is only productive, at least in an economic sense, to the extent to which it is able to integrate and control desires (what we want, what feels good…) As affective laborers, it is up to us to reclaim or redefine those notions of value that have fallen victim to capitalist modes of production, organizing the production of value beyond the economically determinable: mental and affective values, capacities of the soul, and the affects at the root of our production of subjectivity (our online persona, our aesthetic affiliations…) In the end, and I alluded to this in the previous chapter, we must strive to reconstruct the concept of "free action" that has been "perverted and mysticized equally by both capitalism and the labor movement."[30]

By definition, the capitalist mode of production creates delineations between life and work: the factory is the workplace, the home the site of living; when defined work hours end, private life begins. Yet affective labor, and the immaterial mode of production, puts our perception and sensing of the world, as well as our unconscious behavioral patterns to work, thereby establishing a capacity for work and desire that can only be sustained by the highly privileged. Increasingly, the mechanisms for producing subjectivity are linked to those for producing wealth. In that case, where do our individual sensibilities stand? What is ideology in the mode of subjective production? Where does one end and the other begin?

In his fascinating critique of Michel Foucault's relationship to neoliberalism, Daniel Zamora makes several points that I find useful to flip on their sides.

> Foucault was highly attracted to economic liberalism: he saw in it the possibility of a form of governmentality that was much less normative and authoritarian than the socialist and communist left, which he saw as totally obsolete. He especially saw in neoliberalism a "much less bureaucratic" and

[29] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze*, 116.
[30] Lazzarato, "Economy and the Production of Subjectivity", online.

> "much less disciplinarian" form of politics than that offered by the postwar welfare state. He seemed to imagine a neoliberalism that wouldn't project its anthropological models on the individual, that would offer individuals greater autonomy vis-à-vis the state.[31]

Although we have seen the detrimental and seemingly irreversible impact of neoliberalism on the environment, globalization, political crises, I am tempted ask whether the affective laborer couldn't aspire to relate optimistically to the potential offered by her empowered place of subjective production. If indeed the state is to blame for the institution of a new global common sense, could the system itself be the opening for a reversal, or better yet, a transformation to some new favorable collective logic? If so, how does the artist take part in knowledge economy and its forms of immaterial and affective labor within the developing subjective capitalist economy in America, and use the moral and aesthetic questions and contradictions that arise in a professional (for-profit) application of affective labor to that end?

Contemporary Relations of Immaterial Production

The Sensing Body

A neoliberal mindset posits that the market is the ultimate guide on virtually all human endeavor; increasingly, as we've seen, its reach extends beyond the realm of trade, and into moral and affective life. Already a peripheral study of Marxist thought provides us with a powerful account of "how our senses and intuitions are transformed in relation to property, to labor, to presumptions about being deserving, and to enjoying the world."[32] It holds, then, that our relations to making art, making a living, and engaging our sensing bodies in the world would be intricately bound up in our contemporary relations to the economic state of affairs.

[31] Zamora, "Can We Criticize Foucault?", online.
[32] Ibid.

Since neoliberalism affects our way of sensing and understanding our world through our sensing bodies, any discussion on affective production should address how we sense.

Hardt and Negri underline the very important role cooperation plays in all forms of immaterial labor; the definition itself presupposes social interaction and interdependency. In this way, the social structures of "sub-industries" (or sub-cultures) are created independently and organically and create their own sets of rules, regulations and hierarchies that allow them to produce not only immaterial, affective products, but also cooperative, affective and supportive networks and relations. Within these relations, the production of a value system sets up an ideological basis of understanding what is "good", what is "worthy", and in what ways life becomes work.

Individuals learn to perceive themselves as subjects through these social relations and practices. Louis Althusser claims that social practice—how we learn to behave in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our schools, and further in institutions like professional fields and state functions (ie: the military)—heavily influences our definition and performance of "self". Althusser proposes the term Ideological State Apparatus to encompass those institutions and the ideas and ideologies that these institutions promote.[33] An individual takes on an ideology as soon as she becomes a subject; subjectivity itself is a type of ideology - according to Althusser, we are unable to identify as ourselves without ideology, and our actions reproduce our personal ideological structures, which are derived from our social relations.[34] In the words of Marx, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their *social being that determines their consciousness*."[35]

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[33] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", online.

[34] Drawing on Lacan's concept of the "mirror stage", Althusser gives the example of a person becoming a subject by being called to on the street. Upon hearing the call, the person responds by turning around – the person, in their awareness of the other person, is recognizes himself as a subject.

[35] Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 4.

Neoliberalism has transformed these Ideological State Apparatuses, which reproduce ideology, into fundamental "institutions", which reproduce the means and relationships of production. For example, the corporate media might contribute to a fundamental collective institution, turning core values (which have originated from shared beliefs, behaviors and habits) into mechanisms for the direct creation of economic wealth. We could call these the collective institutions of the information economy. As such, I want to consider the powerful institutional relations implicit in the American new music community.

I am interested here in the performing musician as agent of immaterial production. The subject I will refer to within this reflective discussion is a creative producer and curatorial artist, one who consciously views the production of her self and her immaterial/affective work as ideological. Though she exists within and relates to the current economic structures, her value system is heavily formed by her idiosyncratic set of institutions (perhaps her church, her collection of Facebook friends, her professional community…), and in constant flux as she encounters new relations within her immaterial means of production.

The affective laborer engages in a system of values that not only has monetary impacts on her life, but also generative values for her career, cultural and aesthetic value in her community and legacy, and moral values about what is important to create and share. Chapter Three will explore these kinds of values in greater detail.

The Working Body

The performing musician is acutely aware of her Self as producer and affective product. Her body, which is trained for a certain skill set and reliability of reproduction of those skills, is the site and instrument of production, which she then applies in her ideological ritual. Musical performance produces affects, ideas, experiences that are meant (in most cases)

to be shared with others. The musician must relate to her body as the site of cultural production continually (not just in performance), since the capacity of her body to produce these affects is the main condition of production. She is an Affective Laborer.

Karl Marx, in *Estranged Labor*, outlines two aspects of alienating practical production from the human. First, the relation between the worker and his product of labor is "an alien object exercising power over him".[36] The object here—the product—may or many not have much value to the affective laborer. Let's take the case of a wedding singer, hired for a particular set of capabilities that are being directed by an outside party (in and of itself a form of self-production). This affective laborer's product—the song she has been hired to sing—represents ideas, affects, references to history and tradition, and creates the affective glue that her employers find necessary for the occasion. These affects become normalized, alienated from the worker and belonging rather first to her employer and further to mass culture.

The second level of alienation occurs in "the relation of the worker to [her] own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him", wherein she begins to understand activity (Marx asks: "for what is life but activity?") not only as not belonging to her but also hostile to her.[37] This, in Marx's logic, leads to an estrangement from the self. The singer, finding financial success and stability doing wedding gigs, starts to lose touch with her sovereignty over her activity by equating her activity with someone else's value system. Reliant on this activity for economic survival, she becomes subservient to it and starts resenting it.

But, if we are engaging our minds as agents of choice, how can we possibly be estranged from ourselves? Here we must elaborate the concepts of the Knowledge Economy, Immaterial Labor, and Collective Institutions through actual, specific experiences within the affective laborer's life.

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[36] Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 74.
[37] Ibid, 75.

The Knowledge Economy, far from being the unique post-industrial system, is one form of social and economic relations that quantifies and qualifies affective, intellectual and creative production. While the means of production within these relations is immaterial, the value placed on that production and its currency remain firmly planted in the money form. We will put a pin in the practical realization of Gorz's revolutionary dream of a post-monetary society in which immaterial labor subjugates capital, since the types of immaterial capital I outline don't necessarily corroborate this outcome. Here, I am interested in the ways in which the immaterial laborer can negotiate her agency within the Knowledge Economy (which itself lies within a neoliberal capitalist economy).

The immaterial laborer positions herself in this economy as one kind of laborer, cognizant of and interdependent with other laborers. Accepting this, she must seek to understand in what ways she is being commodified, what other kinds of value-forms are at play within his relations and exchanges, and in what ways she claims or cede agency. There, the visceral and empirical sense of self helps ground her; we will delve deeply into this Knowing or Becoming of the Self in Part Two.

So, in what ways is our affective laborer commodified? As we've seen, before any work may be done, the self must be produced. An identity must be developed and marketed to the outside world in a certain way; I, for example, curate my own website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. These are all accessible to most on the Internet, so it is likely that someone who wishes to find out about "Alice Teyssier the Affective Laborer" can do so with a simple search. What I choose to share also reflects the qualities of others with whom I would like to work, or to engage; this is the creation of a community in reverse, so to speak, by outlining the characteristics of one's desired Collective Institution.

Self-production is crucial to the curation of an affective laborer's means of production. An individual that wishes to teach in a university will pursue a graduate degree, while one who wishes to have a home studio might put out newspaper advertisements, have a "Teaching" page on their website. How one self-produces strongly impacts how one is perceived in local and related networks.

Immaterial laborers, still deeply entrenched in the capitalist form, are compensated with money for certain parts of their production. Performances and lessons are often compensated with money. But we've seen that the immaterial laborer is constantly self-producing by practicing, keeping her body capable of production, thinking about the means of production, establishing and maintaining networks, looking for and organizing opportunities to produce. These elements are not necessarily compensated with money, although there is potential and indirect monetary value gained from these endeavors. In my breakdown of the value system in the Immaterial Economy, I will offer some suggestions as to how immaterial value can turn into monetary value.

Through the repertoire she performs, the performer has a unique opportunity to influence and curate the artistic landscape of the future. This means that a performer's legacy and personal aesthetic contributions are intertwined with her agency. Curatorial agency is rare and must be sought out; even when the laborer is capable of choosing repertoire and producing a concert, her choice of repertoire reflects her life experience, her relationships within the community and the expectations placed on her by that community (and, at times, the "wider public"). These expectations are also set out in the new music community's institutional beliefs.

What are the common systemic principles in this field? From where do they stem? An informal survey of my colleagues (performers of contemporary music) yielded several

collective institutional beliefs. First, musicians consider themselves "independent contractors". This is reinforced by our state taxation system, which classifies them as such (and even imposes a freelancer's tax). This is a reflection of the pervasive neoliberal mindset that every individual is self-producing and responsible for his own quantity and quality of employment. The question of choice and agency is an interesting one: what one "makes of oneself" is informed by many factors, both predetermined and developed: background and societal privilege, ability to operate within conform one's behavior to the community, combination of natural ability and acquired/practiced skill, chosen field or sub-field, and ambition (the standard of living and expectation of oneself).

Another common principle in performance circles is the examining of past generations' successes as a way of proposing avenues of development for oneself and for one's colleagues. In producing our own communities, we tend to reproduce past conditions of production: the "tried and true." This seems untenable in light of the evolution of the economic framework in the United States over the last 40 years; different generations of musicians will necessarily encounter different "workscapes". Searching for ways to identify and operate within the contemporary condition of production is at the heart of my question here.

Yet another commonly held institutional belief, possibly unique to contemporary music, is that musicians are lucky to be compensated at all. Resources are scarce, and any resemblance of financial success (survival) should be considered a great luxury. Those who do not align with this principle are often shamed, or made to feel like they are "in it for the wrong reasons", an accusation that would never be leveled in almost any other field. This sense that even though someone has chosen to professionalize their immaterial labor, they should have

no allusions to a degree of livable compensation is a good example of the contradictions embedded in immaterial labor relations.

I have also observed something interesting with respect to individuals' very different understandings of the boundaries of their community. For example, it is common for performers of improvised music to pit themselves against performers of notated music; similarly, performers of contemporary music separate themselves dramatically from orchestral musicians. These reactions from colleagues and friends have led me to believe that discrete communities exist perhaps only in our individual minds, where we organize our social connections in idiosyncratic and personally functional ways. Ideologies and institutional beliefs overlap in cloudy, blended combinations and amalgamations between close communities.

The Political Body

Since our actions on Earth outline the quality of our lives, and since the immaterial laborer's actions as a worker and as a private citizen are blurred, there is a political implication to all her actions. In contemporary music, the commodity is both the self that is produced and shared and the product (piece, concert) that is created, developed and shared; what is produced and shared—put into the world—affects and influences others. In this sense, each community's institutional beliefs are also highly political and have the capacity to evolve and change based on the action or inaction of its members.

I will spend more time in Chapter 5 outlining what I consider the political implications of the "emission" of new sounds as a sonic ecology. It is interesting to consider the political implications of communities and institutions existing in any firm state, since their fundamental beliefs have the power to assert themselves as norms. Concert experiences, for

example, are responsible for normalizing certain sound worlds: the symphony, Broadway, jazz, opera all have societally-accepted boundaries and frameworks. When a project is produced that does not fit easily into these compartments, its value is threatened. (I will give specific examples of this in Chapter 6.) Experimental contemporary music can serve as an outside force to challenge conventional methods of listening and compartmentalizing, if and when it resists atrophying into another compartment.

I am not attempting a universal manifesto here, nor even a personal economic mission statement. I think it is important that as affect-producing neoliberal subjects, we become responsible not only for our individual successes and failures, but for an understanding of the systems in which we operate and our position and role within them. Each human body will have a unique sensory and affective experience on Earth, shaped and modified by external conditions and relations. If we acknowledge these various forces and position our own limitations, values and acceptable forms of sacrifice, can we create our own personal set of values?

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CHAPTER 3

PERSONAL VALUES AND FORMS OF IMMATERIAL CAPITAL

According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, it is "impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory".[38] For him, economic theory defines immaterial types of capital (cultural or social capital) as *disinterested* (the inverse of self-interested, or maximizing monetary profit), proliferating the bourgeois ideology of the "pure, perfect universe of the artist and the intellectual and the gratuitous activities of art-for-art's sake."[39] My writing so far on the matter of immaterial production has shown the world of immaterial labor to be far from pure. Bourdieu advances the idea of a general economy of practices, wherein monetary exchange is only one example of exchange in all its forms.

I was inspired to take a practical look at these kinds of immaterial capital, or affective value, from the performer's perspective, illustrating my encounters with each kind with practical examples from my personal experiences. My initial analyses of a concert-giving experience yielded four kinds of value (or capital) being produced, exchanged and acquired: monetary value, aesthetic value (from which ethical value was then disconnected), labor value, and career value. It became clear that these forms of value essentially reflected Capital under various angles: economic capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital and social capital. I will argue that in the end, the measure of *quantity* as reflected off a labor of *quality* can and should only be measured in "freedom capital".

Monetary value for musicians, put simply, is the fee granted upon completion of the project, minus the money spent on travel, lodging, instrument rental, taxes (etc.). In

[38] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", 184.
[39] Ibid., 185.

the capitalist economy, this is the most objectively quantifiable of the values, into which most of the other values strive to convert. Monetary value operates in terms of **economic capital**, which is directly and immediately convertible into money and is exists in the world in terms of private property.

In my production work for ICE, I have been part of developing an internal operations website that allows us to keep track of budgetary allowances and expenditures as they pertain to concerts. A budget is established from a source of funding (presenter income, an institutional grant, an individual gift, ICE's general operations budget, or any combination thereof) and divided into types of expenditures:

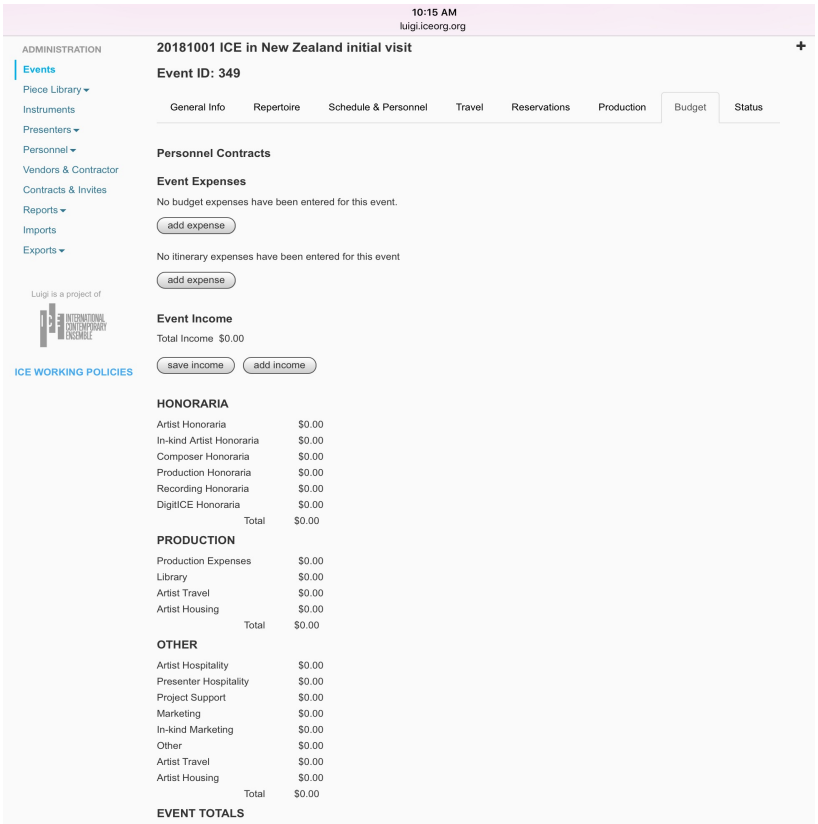

Figure 3.1: Screen shot of "Luigi", ICE's internal database for scheduling, budgeting and contracting events.

a) Performer Honoraria: in ICE, there has been a cultural agreement that all players are payed equally for a single concert, regardless of their specific involvement in

one or several pieces. This makes the slice of the budget allocated to performers' fees fairly simple to calculate; at the moment of this writing, "day rates" for ICE projects are generally calculated at $250/rehearsal day and $500/concert day. For example, three 3-hour rehearsals on Thursday and Friday, with a dress rehearsal and concert on Saturday would yield a budget of $1000 per player.

b) Production Expenses: these can relate to piano or percussion rentals, library expenditures, rehearsal space rental, and ground transportation for artists with large instruments (like harp and percussion cartage). This budget is usually over-estimated at the time the event is approved, in order to allow for surprise expenses over the course of the project.

c) Other Expenses: Travel, housing and per diem allowances for artists, event marketing and any miscellaneous expenses are budgeted separately, and similarly are buffered for safety.

With the budget in place, performers have the chance to review their participation. Invitations to confirm availability and accept the fee are sent in advance of contracting. Once contracted, players have the responsibility to attend the scheduled rehearsals, prepare their parts in advance (in the case that music is available), participate actively and cooperatively in the preparation and rehearsal process, and represent the group to external parties (the presenter organization, audience members, potential donors…) These responsibilities are implied in the cultural and career values outlined below.

Cultural capital, inherently linked to the body, is gained through the incorporation, assimilation and embodiment of an immaterial product (knowledge, *savoir-faire*…). For the musician, this ritual of continual self-improvement and -production (practice, research, corporeal and intellectual maintenance) comes at one's personal cost, or investment, of money, time and effort. The *labor value*, not only over one's career, but also for each specific project, generates one kind of embodied cultural capital.

Labor value in music reflects how much effort is put into a project, short- or long-term. Effort is measured in time needed practicing and preparing the music, the difficulty of the music, any new knowledge needed in order to complete the project, and the potential toll on the body (short- and long-term). The willingness of a musician to exert more of less effort for a given project is tied to *aesthetic value* and *career value* (and at times, too closely linked to monetary compensation), as capital is converted and institutionalized in various ways.

This partly explains the awe that tenacity, dedication and sacrifice inspires in non-immaterial producers. The birth of ICE, its growth over a decade and its ostensible success, especially in the last five or six years, are the result of the labor value (which is propelled by aesthetic value and produces career value) implicit in the immaterial production of performances of contemporary music. The group's assertion of itself in the world is parallel to any corporate success story, and has therefore received an institutional stamp of approval from granting organizations and investors. In this regard, ICE floats between the institutional ideologies of the artistic world and the corporate world, attempting at the same time to reconcile and exploit the contradictions therein.

What one gains from embodied cultural capital is a combination of the prestige of innate property (the musician's natural ability) with the merits of acquisition (how hard that musician worked, which is intangible, and what specifically she has accomplished, which is

quantifiable); this is regarded as **symbolic capital**, in that it is recognized as a competence rather than material capital. The synthesis of cultural and symbolic capital with economic capital in its institutionalized form is most clearly apparent in honorary cash awards (Claire Chase being awarded the Avery Fisher prize), but is really at the core of any freelance (precarious) artistic (affective) labor.

It is also reflected in the transformation of post-secondary degrees into academic positions:

> With the academic qualification, a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture, social alchemy produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital he effectively possesses at a given moment in time.[40]

The material and symbolic profits conferred by academic qualification depend on the scarcity of their availability; this means changes in the conversion rate between academic capital and economic capital are likely, and difficult to anticipate. As more musicians are awarded doctorates, for example, their investments in time and effort (and, for some, money) may turn out to be less profitable than foreseen when they were made. Ironically, the more economic capital is invested into cultural capital (through and for educational capital), the lower the economic value of the cultural capital of education. Interestingly, in my recent experience, academic qualifications are becoming increasingly facultative, especially for performers, who are selected on the basis of their tangible career value—yet another link to the neoliberal romance with entrepreneurship in the immaterial world.

Since these symbolic and immaterial economies are always in flux, artists put a lot of stock into their personal artistic taste. Aesthetic value is the personal value that prevents the worker from becoming alienated from her activity, and from the object of production. A

[40] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", 173.

concert's aesthetic value reflects how important completing the project is, its monetary, career or effort implications notwithstanding. The ethical value of one's work is also relevant, especially in immaterial production. A project may be worth doing for a variety of intellectual reasons: its social relevance, its historical or political impact, its avant-garde nature, etc.

These two types of value—aesthetic and ethical— link cultural capital to **social capital**, which is the value form of social connections, relationships and renown. Social capital is the aggregate of current and potential resources connected to networks of relationships. Not only does quantity matter here, but so does quality: the economic, cultural and symbolic capital of each individual connection and network of relationships reflects back onto the individual. Belonging, participating and supporting in solidarity make profits possible both for the individual and for the community, generating material (through the exchange of services) and symbolic (through trust and support) institutional bonds.

One's social capital is the product of various investment strategies, whether or not they are made consciously. The neoliberal attributes of immaterial and affective labor are definitely at play here: a socially-adept person, who plays by institutional "rules", stands to gain in social capital, which is endlessly re-produced in collective institutions through the consecration and acknowledgment of relationships and the reproduction of those relationships through exchange. As LinkedIn is to the corporate world, Facebook and Instagram have been enormous game changers for artistic communities, where relationships can be forged anywhere and with anyone; the investment of time and labor in not only producing oneself as a subject to be interacted with on these platforms but also as an active pursuer of potential artistic friends, collaborators and interlocutors cannot be underestimated here, and these relationships are real in many ways.

Career value rates the performer's reputation as an artist and her ability to open-handedly expand institutional circles, generating more aesthetic, ethical and economic opportunities for others in her (ever-expanding) community. The musician builds her career on her work and relationships being deemed successful and productive by a number of people—presenters (who may choose to hire her again), collaborators (who may choose to invite her to collaborate on future projects, at increasing levels of agency), professional and amateur critics (whose mention of her performance or career produces her identity by and for the wider public), funders and employers (who deem her future worth investing in and partnering with), and a growing and increasingly diverse group of audience members (who, in certain cases, may be donors or potential patrons, or even critics within their own social circles). This is measured in **symbolic capital**.

On the local level, the career value of a single concert is reflected through the notoriety of the venue, the nature of the engagement, the potential for future re-employment, the distinction, quality and suitability of the collaborators, the quantity and quality of audience members in attendance and the potential for a review/recording. The social capital of all of these things is currency in one specific group, in this case the contemporary music institution. Social capital is materialized in the form of a title of nobility, where "the noble is the group personified".[41] An individual musician's success in this community can be measured in symbolic cultural and social capital, where ultimate success is establishing a certain amount of power or influence in the aesthetic trajectory of the institution. This is what I have set out to investigate in this study.

Groups, like families, university departments, ensembles, and collectives, each define their own ideologies; within them, each member is a curator of the group's identity, but some members will hold more social capital than others. Measures of success are taken at different

[41] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", 246.

scales. At the scale of a self-run ensemble, the height of success is reached in the artistic director. At the institutional scale, the artist who takes on multiple advisory roles, holds social and cultural sway, retains her capacity for self-production while liberally presenting others and takes responsibility for expanding the community may define success.

Each musician producing immaterial and affective labor for-profit must navigate these various cultural and social landscapes in order to define their own activity and their own product. These values, framed simply as different angles on capital, circularly define the individual's position and are shaped by the individual's *choices* within a constant production and exchange of value. The more agency she has, the more quantifiable capital the artist has; this leads us to the ultimate form of immaterial capital, the **freedom capital**. Just like financial stability allows citizens more choice and freedoms and shields them from more types of oppression, so does the cycle of accumulation of immaterial value result in greater quantities of freedom, manifesting intellectually, artistically, and personally. Striving for a higher degree of freedom an capital opens up the subject to her ability to know herself, which I will explore in Part Two; if the goal is success, choice and influence, isn't there a responsibility to consider the ramifications of influence?

* * *

PART TWO

FROM THE INSIDE OUT:

A VISCERAL PHILOSOPHY OF MUSICAL QUALITY

INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

The aim of this section is to set the performer free from the shackles of economic and institutional ideologies of success and allow her to look inside to develop her own set of personal, affective and developing values through the processes of initiating, performing and sharing new works. I will investigate the creative integration of corporeal and conceptual systems that could generate new choices in authentic aesthetic living. My research has uncovered a number of authors that advocate for thinking, speaking and writing (*translated musically: creating, curating and advocating*) that involve a transformative practice, and don't content themselves on the simple transmission of information. As engaged citizens and laborers, we should be interested in a qualitative change in the lived experience of our audiences as well as in ourselves.

I have been inspired in my research by the strategies of more globally "nomadic" thinkers, who put forward analytical tools for modes of becoming (proposing) rather than being (identifying). Perhaps this is the sensibility of one who spends the majority of her time in spaces of the (relative) unknown. In re-conceptualizing the most basic human experiences and finding new philosophical personas through a truly curious treatment of immaterial work, I see potential for escaping those structural, discursive and aesthetic constructions that can be limiting and oppressive, and redefining those structures from within.

If the aim is more "authentic" being in the world, it is necessary to scrutinize the traditional systems of abstract conceptualization; I hypothesize here that in transgressing "common sense" mind-body dualisms, there lies a transformational potential for a new ecosystem of sensing, thinking, speaking and creating. These new ways of codifying

social structures and relations are a necessary step in establishing an alternative cultural symbolism (a new world order?), starting on the smallest community scale.

In our current understanding of success, power is achieved through choice and influence: once that influence has been granted, what are the basic tenets of one's proposals? Will the powerful know how better to lead the less-fortunate? I want to optimistically refer, thanks to Rosi Braidotti, to the body as an "enfleshed field of actualization of passions or forces"[42] and use it as a starting place for the ethical transformative process of connecting the cognitive to the emotional, the intellectual to the affective. In order to move beyond the pillars of identity (and their implicit boundaries) set up in a neoliberal structure, the subject of my study must engage in the process of developing herself, making non-sentimental, non-narcissistic progress in relation to herself, encountering and engaging multiple layers of subjectivity, and learning the capacity to affect and be affected.

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[42] Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming Imperceptible", 2.

CHAPTER 4

A VISCERAL PHILOSOPHY OF CREATIVE AFFECTIVE LABOR

"Life will go on, as zoe always does. So much so as to render obsolete the classical dilemma: 'choose life (bios), not death!' (thanatos) – and replace it with: give me life (zoe) and hence - give me death."[43]
Rosi Braidotti

Why should we confront our embodied experience? Why is that the moral-ethical way forward? In what ways can engaging in active music rituals (theorizing, performing, listening) challenge idle or static behaviors? Why does it matter that we support each other and share our individual experience? In developing vocabularies for a visceral philosophy for musicians, what is a starting point?

Becoming

What is the connection between the body and the mind? Is it interesting, useful even, to consider it a dualism? Or are the two so intricately linked as to represent something deeper, yet always evolving: one's *self,* one's *identity*? Tamsin Lorraine's *Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy* was a major inspiration and model for my study. In her introduction, she states that "human beings come to experience the world as conscious, sentient, embodied subjects through a process in which no clear distinctions can be made between mind and body, thought and matter, reason and emotion, interiority and exteriority, or self and other."[44]

What I find inspiring about this statement is not only the unanswered metaphysical question of the space we inhabit, but also Lorraine's description of this experience as a process. The individual, in coming to understand herself in the world, *becomes* a

[43] Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming Imperceptible", 29.
[44] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze*, 3.

complex amalgamation of her "conscious, sentient, embodied" experiences. It is uniquely her responsibility, then, to foster the "practices of perception"[45] in which she integrates body and mind.

For Lorraine, one reason to move away from the dualism lies in the historical privileging of mind at the expense of the body, an issue central to feminist thought.[46] She sees philosophizing as a physical ritual, one that may not deliver clear, specific answers, but rather engenders experimentation and a heightened "receptivity to the unknown"[47]. It is my theory that the practice of performing and creating new music helps in the localization of this physical ritual, inviting the mind to imagine new horizons, different solutions… And yet it is difficult to even propose a methodology for an integrated philosophical practice without first theorizing the inner workings of our (default) dualistic way of thinking.

Lorraine, attempting to interpret and disrupt gender subjugation, uses **corporeal** vs. **conceptual logics**[48] to reconnect our bodies and minds at levels both physical and discursive, integrating somatic and conceptual knowledge. For example, as I touched on in Chapters 2 and 3, social capital is a driving economic force for the musician; one could refer to the domain of encounters and relational "becomings" as one that suggests a domain of corporeal logic that is not completely without organization, but that often eludes our conscious awareness.[49] This makes it clear that we are not always aware of the realm from which our "conscious" experience emerges, because it may not conform to habitual modes of conception or perception. Lorraine argues—and I agree—that we can and should occupy this realm more deeply if we wish to lead ethical, vital lives.

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[45] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze*, 5.
[46] In the age of Google and Facebook, ubiquitous advertising and "treat yourself" mantras, is this really true? The comforts of the body inform the mind's idea of what is good and right.
[47] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze*, 6
[48] Ibid, 7.
[49] Ibid, 114.

The neoliberal environment of advanced capitalism, combined with an increasingly overwhelming stream of information, factual and not, has created the perfect environment for a comfortable alienation, not only from society, but from the Self. Musicians, who produce an embodied affective, social labor, have a heightened responsibility not only to live out our ethical positions through our daily practice, but also lead others in defining and embodying their own. The goal is a "transformation of consciousness at both the corporeal and conceptual levels."[50]

The "good work" of "good" contemporary art is uniquely positioned to implement dynamic conditions that generate the perception and thought of unfamiliar, unprecedented experiences, developing a sensibility that defies "common sense" perception and the traditional categories of representational thought. In allowing her labor as imaginative dreamer (and u/dis-topian futurist) to help shape her conception of her life and "career" as *beyond* current or conventional norms, the musician is better able to shed the cloak of principles draped over her by neoliberalism. Why is this ethically important? The diligent, curious practice of developing new forms of subjectivity—integrating conceptual existence into conscious awareness—opens the possibility of escape from the damaging collective need to "exploit specific others by displacing corporeal dissonance upon them."[51] Perhaps by transforming this into a ritual, the musician can authentically find herself—and invite others into—the transformative, dynamic process that is an engaged life.

Lorraine's practice harkens back to Heidegger's conception of *Dasein*, in which one's involvement and interest in one's immediate surroundings and world is continually reassessed in terms of the precarity of one's very existence, the relation between world and Self, and the natural evolution of Self. *Dasein*, being-in-the-world, in so many words, is the living out of

[50] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze*, 114.
[51] Ibid, 115.

one's authentic Self. This concept intrigues me when it comes to the affective labor of performing contemporary music, since it sets out an important limitation: it is impossible to see the whole of the world from a single perspective. Further, the traditional separation between subject and object moves into a dynamic relation between the two. These points emphasize the necessity of, and our reliance on, communities, dialogue, and deep (metaphysical?) modes of communication with our own selves and with others.

There is also moral-ethical responsibility implied in authentic, embodied being-in-the-world, threatened daily by increasingly seductive and normalized capitalist and neoliberal diversions. The potential for escapism and entertainment—and the 20th century conceit that music lives and stays in that category—seems in some ways logical and "natural," and leads to a quotidian, inauthentic *Dasein*, in which the subject practices and (possibly) even craves alienation. This is a safe, distant place, in which there is a lot to do. It is also a place with the most potential to reproduce socially, environmentally, and personally limiting, even detrimental, patterns.

In what moments do we find ourselves re-defining "worlding"? Living? Knowing? Feeling? Strangely, it is often in those moments when we intellectually understand the least that new knowledge appears to us. Again, Heidegger's terms make themselves useful here: in order for "things [to] show up in the light of our understanding of being,"[52] we must make space, a clearing, *Lichtung*. Similarly to the moving meditation of yoga or the semi-lucid dream-state, I believe performance can allow us to enter a new perceptual realm of consciousness, simultaneously fully engaged and fully open, "cleared."

[52] Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 163.

Process and Ritual

In the performative practice, using our experiences and history to map our biographical Self and consciously enable it to grow, to change and to progress revolves around aspects of learning, memory and language. An idea set out on the musical page affords us a task capable of being completed—after a certain amount of practicing, negotiating, accepting, re-defining, perhaps—and teaches us to trust our ability to learn. The sensations and communications we experience around learning and performing are mapped on our bodies and minds and create a bank of memories to which we respond favorably or not (this helps craft an aesthetic). All of these learned experiences become the common language in our communities; certain behaviors are understood, certain notational practices preferred, a general tone of discussion pervasive[53].

Over time, these learned and experienced memories inform our sense of belonging, of self and of confidence. They also inform our attitude towards the world: we manage to use them to make sense of the world around us, even turning them around as knowledge when we are given positions of privilege or pedagogy. This learning is productive and positive, but can also atrophy our ability to imagine other experiences (much like learning a word to represent an object or concept instantaneously draws boundaries around what that word IS and IS NOT.) In music, notation, performance practice and muscle memory (ticks) can have this effect.

The processes inherent in contemporary music performance lie in the active *creation* of, *advocacy* for, and *engagement* with new sonic material. Each part of the process has

[53] This struck me upon moving to New York City, where I was introduced to the musical community as a member of ICE. The ICE ethos is one of insistent, persistent and tenacious positivity (the words "amazing" and "superstar" are quotidian and applicable to almost everyone.) There are several reasons for this (not entirely deliberate) behavior: first, the continual confirmation of one's acceptance in the "family" helps solidify loyalties; second, there is a need to justify—to oneself, to the rest of the ensemble, to the audience, to the board, to the community—decisions made; third, it creates an atmosphere of hope and optimism in the community at large, where jobs are scarce and funds are low. Language matters.

elements of individual practice and relational elements that allow the subject to work both locally and in reflection with others. In her own immaterial labor of creating new sounds and organizing them into music, the performer must constantly engage her imagination and the multiplicities of her current self to recognize, challenge and perhaps even betray her prior conditioning. Through embodied practical ritual and the physical experience at the site of performance, she can, in Deleuzian terms, reflect and build on her biographical map, following lines of flight to dynamically become herself. That becoming is then reflected outward when she engages with composers, colleagues, students, etc., where new ideas, perspectives and feedback come dance with her knowledge of self. The process, meandering and discovering new corners, finally circles back around, in perpetuity.

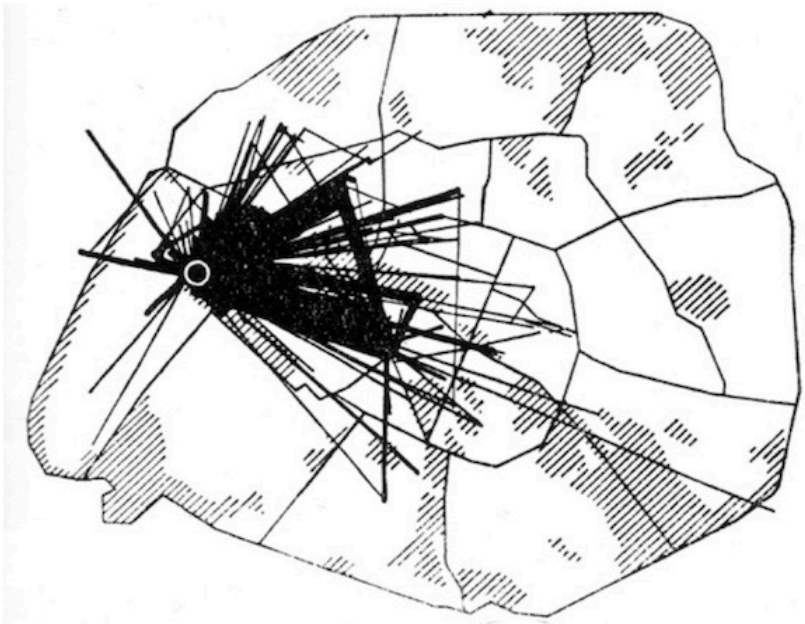

Figure 4.1: Paul-Henri Chombart de Lauwe, map of a young woman's movements in Paris, 1957[54]

Questioning her work's *value* (what is valuable about this work? Is a piece, concert, or collaborator "good"? Why? Do I have personal biases based on my pre-existing perceptions and alliances?), is a first step in external advocacy in the contemporary music institution.

[54] Wark and Byrne, “A Cavalier History of Situationism”, online.

These questions form the basis of how (or even whether) a new work is shared: the" right" kind of advocacy, by those who engage meaningfully and authentically with a certain kind of work (a piece, a genre, a project) affects how, where and for whom the work is curated and framed, and therefore how it is received.

This continual search for her own “brand” of quality—what is unique to her, both in physical capacity and aesthetic choice—allows the subject, using her internal biographical matrix, to engage in variegated lines of creative and experimental flight, generating so many different outcomes (built-in variations on the experiment) that the need develops to communicate and engage others.

Sharing involves the deep engagement of others as well as the performing self. Listening is a deep, complex practice; though I don't believe one needs particular training to engage aurally with music, one benefits from mental and spiritual openness and receptivity—in some ways, those capacities are more difficult to unlock in highly trained and educated musicians (much like the videographer has a difficult time enjoying the content of a film she deems shot with the wrong lens). The practice of aural engagement, free from associative senses, is one that contemporary life has alienated us from; this must be acknowledged when creating and sharing music, though a reliance on visual or didactic techniques to "sell" music should be questioned in the creative process.

Engaging also takes the form of translating the physical experience of performing or listening into another language, which may take the form of the words one uses in theorizing or teaching the work or a symbolic language of analysis. As I am confronting head-on with this piece of writing, this is a challenging step in the creative process, since we've seen that words tend to limit understanding, especially in such an abstract and non-representational form. Since words have significant power of influence, those chosen to partner with, represent

or "explain" affective work must be considered and chosen with the same care and reflection as the musical sounds themselves.

Roles

As is being evidenced by the changing of job descriptions in universities and organizations, we are entering a time in the contemporary music institution in which the definition of roles as we've known them are shifting and expanding. The legacy of George Lewis[55], the astonishingly polymathic performer-thinker-composer-educator, has inspired many in the younger generations to eschew traditional roles as violinist, jazz drummer, spectralist composer, ethnomusicologist. Rather, musicians are espousing several (if not many) different roles in the processes of creation, advocacy and engagement. Here again, neoliberal tendencies have played into this trend: polyvalence is value in the knowledge economy. When we consider the quantity of processes (as outlined above) that are shared between people in different roles, it becomes clear that an understanding not only between people, but inside a single artist with many experiences, deepens the quality of the process.

Language, Boundaries and Communication

Humans, socially, define their reality through language. It helps delineate, define, make reference and frame a mutually-acceptable understanding of the world. At the same time, humans are eminently curious: we continually prove that we crave practices that topple these notions of stability, explanation and knowledge. Life rocks back and forth between these polarities. Contemporary music practices follow a path of experimentation and the unknown. The professionalization of anything must have distinct, defined boundaries. So how do we, as

[55] The legacy of George Lewis is not limited to his incredible skills in so many different areas, but includes his longtime membership in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and deep impact on the curriculum and program at the University of California – San Diego.

professional generators of experimentalism, continue the search for quality in our experiments and avoid the normalization and calcification of ideologies and concepts that would prevent that search?

I have been inspired in my personal life and relationships by the thinking and writing of Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway and Tamsin Lorraine, all feminist thinkers and theorists who are living the transformation of language around critical theory. I quote them, surely haphazardly, in this writing, because their approaches have helped me understand, through their choice of language, my visceral, human(oid) experience in the contemporary world both with more complexity and more optimism.

In developing this writing, and finding concepts in language that help me understand my practice as a crucial component of a meaningful life, I have chosen to focus on the corporeal connection to the world. It is undeniable that our bodies—even those without the auditory sensory capacity—respond viscerally to the power of vibration; we are pulled again and again back into musical rituals of creating and listening that afford us new physical, at time psychedelic experiences. When we consider these in retrospect, we establish a conceptual connection to what we have just physically undergone. As creators, we are often in the reverse position as well: in searching for a vibrational, visceral approach to a concept that might not have words, what constitutes a worthy experiment?

One of Braidotti's subjects is the sustainable self, in which "the body as an enfleshed field of actualization of passions or forces […] transform[s] negative into positive passions."[56] I have found in my transition into professional life an increasing need to address deeply troubling issues in the exterior world with musical/institutional/relational responses. In responding to today's world, and in generating new sounds in that world, I believe musicians have a responsibility to be the voice of the voiceless, and to amplify what has become

[56] Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming Imperceptible", 2.

invisible or forgotten. This comes with a set of cultural complexities and sensitivities, but music—through collaboration and abstraction—can help us navigate those terrains sometimes more sympathetically than spoken dialogue.

Radical Alterity

Through experimental practices, we have the chance to continually confront the limits of conformist conceptions of life, while discovering new modes of Becoming through internal processes of addressing our desires and curiosities. Lorraine addresses this through Heidegger's *Being and Time*, in which he refers to the "ease with which a speaker of the language can take up perspectives with respect to what it is possible to say […] without seriously considering the choices involved in thus positioning onself."[57] This is particularly true in music, where stances can be quickly taken as to whether one "likes" this or that or imposes an interpretation based on their own (unexplained) desires. By no means am I arguing an intellectual motive for each and every interpretive or experimental decision (quite to the contrary!), but I do think this point is good: the reasons why we "like" something or are attracted to a sound or desire a certain experience have basis in our life experience and in our bodies. I believe interpreting those historical clues allows us to find our most compatible musical partners and develop the most authentic experiments in sound.

Unique, individualized sentient positions vis-à-vis the world can be radical with or without a relation to others. My claim is that the performer of contemporary music desires alterity; through her desire for the unknown, she is practicing independent thinking. Through her interest in the landscape of today, she is an engaged citizen. Through the choices of repertoires and communities she does not engage with, she is taking a stance in the social world. She is alive, receptive and conscious of her position in the cultural matrix. With that

[57] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze*, 9.

premise, I will now position her in the world, in the communities and institutions which affect her and which she and her actions impact, where she must situate herself in a way that combines the ideologies and discursive meanings of an entire cultural field with her corporeal experiences as an embodied subject.

Communities

Although this dissertation pertains mostly to the deep internal study of an individual, that individual—especially the affective laborer in music performance—relies intensely on relations with others in defining herself and continually becoming. Her labor is created with, for and by others throughout her process of becoming:

- Learning: the musician learns the craft of her instrument or voice through the transmission of knowledge and experience of others. Even a self-taught musician relies on performances, recordings, or videos of other people making music.

- Collaborating: many integral musical skills (timing, cueing, tuning, blend, etc…) are learned from social music-making.

- Interpreting: any performer who works to bring to life sounds imagined by another (from the composer-performer relation to the collective band) must interpret the vocabularies and language used by others. This might be notated, using a more-or-less familiar alphabet of symbols, or a set of terms agreed upon.

- Performing: the subject of this dissertation is the professional performer, who sublimates her labor through the public performance of her corporeal and conceptual activity. The process of performing accesses the interpersonal shared experiences at both the physiological (emission and reception of sound waves through the body) and the intellectual levels.

- Commissioning: the performer's choice of future collaborators and the potential for learning new languages or approaches relied on her evaluation of a composer/collaborator's social, cultural and symbolic capital.

- Distributing and Marketing: sharing her work beyond her own immediate circle, the performer also relies on the help of others to allow her access to their platforms (websites, listings, print journalism, labels…) and expand her potential reach.

- Teaching: the performer may choose to monetize her teaching, developing a secondary business in music, or simply remain an educational presence through her performance (*see* Learning) and through the engagement with the audience she may encounter.

"Language does not simply describe human reality but is an important constitutive factor in conscious experience."[58] We define our reality through our language; can music, the most abstract of languages, help expand the boundaries that language erects? Innovations in style and notation can be vital to introducing new ways of thinking and being that can transform our awareness; this is, indeed, a social-ethical responsibility. In the practices of developing new languages or new forms of awareness through musical play, the experiment yields something of genuine significance to the individual. I am interested in the moment at which individual authenticities merge, and what languages are used to recognize this moment and to share it. "Repeating what has already been said is not likely to instigate the kind of thinking that enlivens one's sense of meaningful connection to the world."[59] Effective communication, in any language form, intensifies one's somatic experience in the world; what windows into the unknown can we open when we communicate somatically around our somatic experience?

A performer who connects her corporeal experiences to her understanding of her Self, and vice-versa, is best positioned to communicate personally and genuinely, and be open to others doing the same. This deep grounding allows her to experiment dynamically with others whom she trusts, to share her experience and why it is she has it to her colleagues and to her audiences, and to foster and celebrate others' experiments in differentiations, while being careful not to dictate the forms the difference should take.

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[58] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze*, 13.
[59] Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

PERSONAL PRACTICE, PERSONAL GUIDELINES: ANALYZED EXPERIENCES

"Art belongs to the infrastructure of society, not to the super-structure. Art is a fundamental kind of social production. Marxism breaks with classical tradition by assigning priority to action rather than contemplation, but its error is to consider art only as a form of contemplation. Art is action."[60]
-McKenzie Wark

What grounds me as a musician, as an artist and as a human is what truly is defining how my career will look, and I owe much of its individuality to the accumulation of my experiences—as a multi-lingual dual national, as a dual instrumentalist, as an educator, as a student, etc… Over the transition away from graduate school and into the professional realm, several themes have emerged in my approach to creating and performing music: the search for personal truth and growth, which has bolstered my ability to "survive" in the New York ecosystem, spiritual bonding with music, the concept of musical process and transformation as political, and the search for community-building leadership, confronting social issues I see in my own world.

A few projects stand out as distinct examples of these developing themes, and I have devoted this chapter to analyzing those experiences through the lens of this writing, specifically inquiring into the sites of contradiction and learning implicit in each.

Personal Truth and Growth: Rolf Riehm's *Pasolini in Ostia*

In April 2013, I premiered Rolf Riehm's *Pasolini in Ostia*, a micro-oratorio for soprano voice, cello, piano and percussion at the Monday Evening Concerts in downtown Los Angeles. Having previously played piccolo on *Hawking*, Rolf Riehm's instrumental meditation on the limitations of the intellect, the body and the cosmos (provoked by the life

[60] Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street*, 50.

of Stephen Hawking) and worked on a translation for a short video interview my then-partner Jonathan Hepfer had done with Riehm, I had already learned a great amount about Riehm's music, ideas and background. Riehm's utterly idiosyncratic and mystical musical language and the incredibly positive public reaction to *Hawking* in Los Angeles precipitated a "commission" of sorts for a future Monday Evening Concert, on which Riehm's 2011 work *Lenz in Moskau* would also be programmed.

Upon Riehm's enthusiastic agreement to the proposed instrumentation, I became very much personally involved in the process. The piece is based on a police report of the death of Pier Paolo Pasolini, the great Italian filmmaker, poet, novelist and intellectual. Riehm had proposed a text (in German) that he wished for the "narrator" (singer) to use, but it was important to him that the piece - if performed in the United States - be (at least for the vast majority) in English. I am a trained translator and lived several years in Germany, so I made the translation into English. I sent him various recordings of my singing as well as a brief text about what kinds of things I enjoyed doing and felt most comfortable doing.

When I received the score, I set to work on a translation of the performance notes for the other musicians. Besides myself, the engaged musicians were Jonathan Hepfer (percussion, who knew Riehm personally and had also played *Hawking*), Rei Nakamura (piano, who knew Riehm personally from performances in Germany, where she lives), and Jay Campbell (cello, a young virtuoso based in New York City, whom the Monday Evening Concerts director thought would do particularly well with Riehm's music). Tutti rehearsals for the quartet could not begin until the week before the concert, and Riehm had requested (a discovery made in the performance notes) that the soprano perform from memory.

The piece is challenging for the singer—atonal, set in an extremely high tessitura for long periods, large leaps and long phrases—and very long (35 minutes practically

uninterrupted). Attempting to memorize the piece as I was learning it was extremely daunting, so I started as soon as I received the score. This meant six months of applied work (not exclusively, of course, as there were other projects and university course study mixed in), ushering in a degree of doubt in my abilities I had never quite confronted so intensely. Susan Narucki might remember me entering her studio for my lesson, in the weeks leading up to the concert, certain that my voice wouldn't work. I was in psychological distress, conceiving of every small challenge (spring allergies, a fatiguing vocal day teaching…) as a sign that I was incapable of the task that had been set before me, and therefore unworthy.

The learning process for *Pasolini* was so physically strenuous and psychologically stressful that it imprinted itself upon my body. If I am being generous (and a bit superstitious), I may even say that Rolf knew what he was doing to the singer who would undertake this challenge. The score, in tribute to the beautiful and memorable films of Pasolini, is peppered with vignettes for the soprano:

Figure 5.1: A scene from Pasolini's *Teorema*, in which a nun levitates. Riehm chose this image as one of the vignettes for *Pasolini in Ostia*.[61]

These gestures, as I was learning them, were signposts in the score, around which I could organize material to memorize. Only now (several years after performing the work for the first time) do I consider them also to be, partly, my physical salvation: by engaging the singer's body fully and in multiple ways (the singing voice, the speaking voice, gestures,

[61] *Teorema*, screenshot.

movement), Rolf allows for a total corporeal commitment—much like the inner ear protecting itself when the body activates its own loud sound[62]—that is required for a healthy and successful performance.

The orchestration also allows for full singing throughout, where the vulnerability of singing alone is presented in stark contrast with the intentional overpowering of the voice by the percussion at several distinct moments. This sets up the expectation for a lyrical, supported singing style that enables the solo moments to find intimacy and exposure without fragility; the moment the piano opens the piece, a threshold of perception and sonic power has filled the space, preparing not only the listeners but also the singer (who must then enter alone) to match this level of vigor:

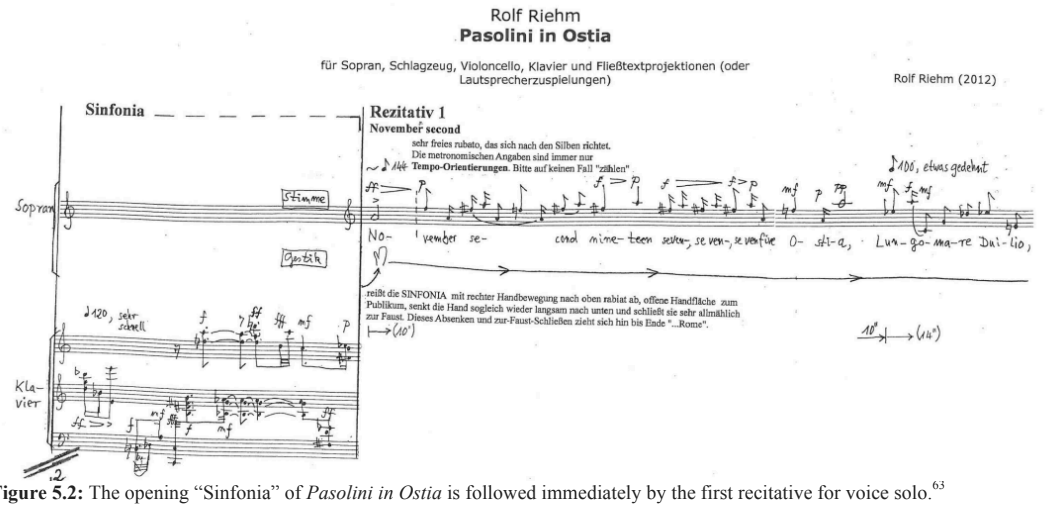

Figure 5.2: The opening "Sinfonia" of *Pasolini in Ostia* is followed immediately by the first recitative for voice solo.[63]

I credit these characteristics of the composition to my ability, in the end, to give a performance that transported me beyond my present self and into a space of openness, receptivity and strength. The process, culminating in those final moments on stage when I realized that yes, I *had* been able to accomplish this task and yes, I was worthy, stretched me

[62] The acoustic stapedius reflex (ASR), an involuntary muscular contraction that responds to high-intensity sound stimuli can be triggered by vocalization, decreasing the intensity of sound transmitted to the cochlea by approximately 20 decibels. (read more at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acoustic_reflex)
[63] Riehm, Pasolini in Ostia, 1.

and improved me as a singer, in ways no other single piece had ever done. I think it is fair to say that *Pasolini in Ostia* helped concretize my relationship with myself and my body as a singer: fear was overcome, trust was established and I am now able to intellectualize what my embodied capacities are and can become.

The Visceral and Spiritual: Gérard Grisey's *Quatre Chants pour franchir le seuil*

While a student in Strasbourg, France, home of the annual MUSICA Festival and cultural center, I happened upon two rare volumes in a downtown bookstore. The first was a collection of Giacinto Scelsi's poetry and a volume on his life and work.[64] The second was a beautifully bound volume of Gérard Grisey's writings, from ideas on teaching and composition to interviews to writings on his work. His voice, so poetic, profound, spoke clearly through the pages and through the years, and I was deeply moved to listen again to his music. Of course, the *Quatre Chants pour franchir le seuil "*Four Songs to Cross the Threshold" (hereafter *Quatre Chants*) pulled me in. The directness of the singing voice, the clarity of the texts, the unusual and prismatic instrumentation, and not least importantly the historical connection to Grisey's own death all contribute to my fascination with this work, and my dream to one day sing it.

Grisey began his work on the *Quatre Chants* in 1996 and completed the piece in 1998, and was his first foray back into vocal writin since 1967. It is a musical meditation on death, in four distinct parts: the death of the angel, the death of civilization, the death of the voice and the death of humanity. The texts Grisey chose for each movement come from four different civilizations and times, all evoking death in content, form and emotion. Though he would have turned just 70 last year, collaboration with Grisey on his music is, obviously,

[64] *L'homme du son*, poetry edited and with commentary by Luciano Martinis, with collaboration from Sharon Kanach. Actes Sud 2006, *Les anges sont ailleurs*, writings on Scelsi's life, music and art.

impossible now. Something about this work, however (and I have played other works of Grisey that did not quite elicit this) calls forth his presence and energy, almost metaphysically.[65]

I was given my first chance to sing *Quatre Chants* by Steve Schick, and flew out to the West Coast in October 2015 to prepare and perform with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, under his direction. I had been listening to recordings, practicing the part and had a good analytical understanding of the piece from my year spent studying it for my qualification exams, but I was not prepared for the physical and visceral sensations of singing with the instrumental group. The *Quatre Chants* are scored for soprano and fifteen musicians, forming four separate groups: one group made up of the singer and three instruments with similar tessitura (flute, trumpet, violin), and three groups each containing two medium- or low-pitched wind instruments, one (low) string instrument, and one percussionist (resonant instruments, bass drum, skins). In his writing about the piece, Grisey mentions that the instrumentation was chosen to counter the lightness of the soprano voice with a low and heavy yet colorful and sumptuous sound mass.

While the vocal line remains idiomatic (the *Quatre Chants* has been a work I can say with confidence particularly suits my voice), it is treated instrumentally, interacting playfully and in parallel and in counterpoint with the instrumental lines throughout:

[65] I am currently in the workshop and development process for a "new" posthumous opera by Pauline Oliveros, in which very similar transcendental and mystical working processes are taking place. In the case of *The Nubian Word for Flowers*, our work is being led by Oliveros' partner IONE, who is the librettist and also narrator in the piece; this allows us a level of access to the planning Oliveros had made before she passed. Still, her energy is present in our working process and decision-making process, and I recognize this sensation from my work on *Quatre Chants*, though in that case it was not evident to me until I performed it.

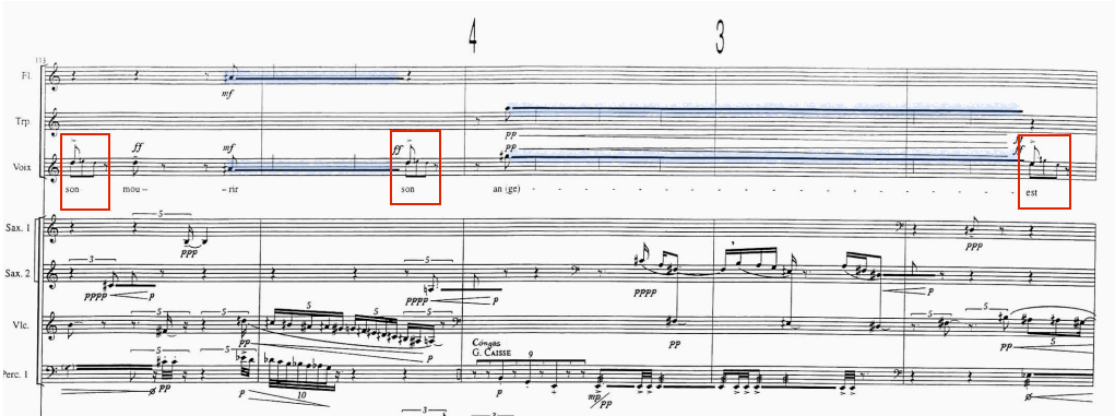

Figure 5.3: The vocal line in the first movement of *Quatre Chants* differentiates itself from the undulating instrumental texture with the short grace note motif, and aligns itself with its "angel chorus" (the flute, trumpet and violin).[66]

The voice alternates in its alignments, at times blending into the orchestral texture, at others asserting itself as primordially human, the vessel for direct communication. For me, as instrumentalist and vocalist, this became a supremely fun game of timbral play, allowing my voice to take on different characteristics, colors and roles in the orchestral verticality. Beyond that, it took on poetic significance: the four poems allude to death—the human relationship to its mythology (can an angel ever die?!), the inevitability of it for each human, individually, as well as for humanity as a whole, even the death of what could be considered the essence of being alive: our voice.[67]

In the final movement, a lilting lullaby (presumably for humanity in its final slumber), this has tonal implications as well, as the ensemble is separated into two tonal worlds, a quarter-tone apart. The voice is pulled, hypnotically, between the two, reconciling two vacillating sonic universes. The resulting sound is familiar yet foreign, like the sound of an imagined dystopian future world, where all have perished yet the poet-voice-singer awakes to yet another dawn. The lullaby begins after a tempestuous fourth movement which ends in the

[66] Grisey, Quatre Chants pour Franchir le Seuil.
[67] Even Stephen Hawking, after all, holds on to the now quite archaic sound of his speech synthesizer, saying it has become a part of his identity.

text (sung by a voice doubled by the string instruments) *"Tous les hommes étaient retransformés en argile"* ("all men were [re]transformed into clay").

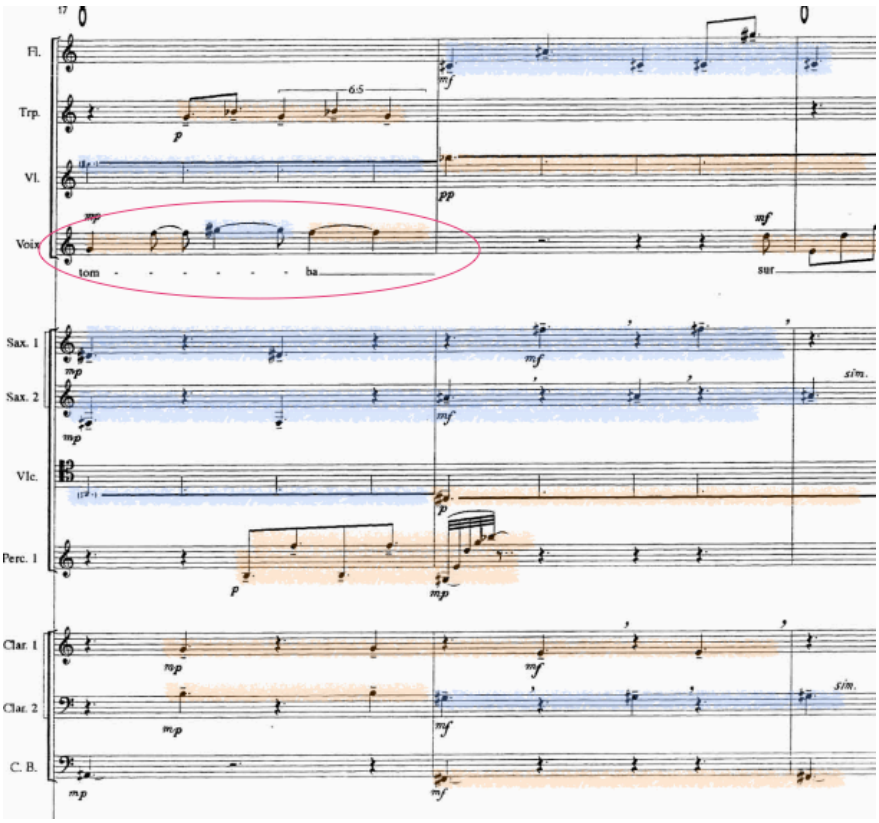

Figure 5.4: Orange and blue lines indicate the two tunings, a quarter tone apart, in the final section of *Quatre Chants*. Note that the voice,in a single phrase, gravitates to both.

The magnetic pull between the two harmonic worlds is extremely strong and sensed deeply in the ear, the voice and the body. I have performed this piece twice now, with two different groups of musicians (the second performance was in Los Angeles with the Monday Evening Concerts Ensemble); in both cases, a closeness, an intimacy, was developed between the players and me as we navigated these intensely visceral terrains: sharing motifs, sharing (or distancing) tunings, pacing the stages of death. And ever-present, deepening the experience to a spiritual level, the specter of Grisey lurking between the sound-shadows, from the other side of the "threshold"…

Musical Transformation as Political: Tyshawn Sorey's *Perle Noire*

In 2016, Peter Sellars was Artistic Director of the Ojai Music Festival. International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) had been hired as the orchestra for Kaija Saariaho's *La Passion de Simone*, which Sellars was directing and in which Julia Bullock starred as Simone Weil. In the planning stages for the festival, conversations between the ICE artistic directors and Sellars brought forth the idea of commissioning an evening-length event or work that would showcase Bullock and the songs of Josephine Baker (Bullock has done arrangements of Josephine Baker songs with orchestra). Tyshawn Sorey, a multi-instrumentalist, improviser and composer would be the composer.

The project, at first, seemed ill-fated. The ICE team and Sorey had settled on an instrumentation—alto flute, saxophones, bassoon, violin and guitar—and Sorey would play piano, drums and percussion. We gathered at the ICE rehearsal space in Sunset Park to learn more about Josephine Baker from Bullock. After two hours of listening and discussing, Sorey seemed at a loss. The Baker songs could not have been further from his aesthetic, and he seemed uninspired. Still, there was palpable enthusiasm from everyone in the room, and the experiment was certainly well enough funded that it was worth his (and all of our) while.

We had several months to put together the piece, but didn't hear from Sorey for a while; we eventually met and played through one song. The commission deadline was approaching, passed, pushed back. There were indicators from her management that Bullock was starting to feel stressed about learning a new work in a short amount of time. Slowly, we found a balance that seemed to strike: Bullock would sing the songs' existing melodies (altered in tempo, and in a few cases, in key) while the ensemble would reimagine a sound world around those melodies. Four songs were composed out of the six Bullock had selected.

The solutions for the remaining two came out of desperation but have successfully remained: one is a dance, done in silence or to an improvisation on drums by Sorey; the other is an upbeat mash-up of two Baker dance songs for Bullock, fiddle, guitar, drums.

Part of the intention of the project was to shine a contemporary light on Josephine Baker's career (the exploitation, the cultural appropriation, her success outside the United States) and her work in the French Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement. Poems by Claudia Rankine were also commissioned for the work, as interludes between songs, almost in cabaret-style; in counterpoint to the love-songs, the dances, the banana-skirt persona of Baker, the poems are raw, "auto"biographical, aggressive, hard. Here is the third of seven poems Rankine composed for the work:

> "Allez, Allez, and I keep going?" I won't stay still and be a target of my thoughts. When the allied forces of freedom reasserted themselves they found me in motion. Because I carried messages copied in invisible ink on my lyrics they called my performance resistance. The music was my only cover. I danced and danced and sang and passed messages on. The lyrics, those sheets, held all our lives. My lingerie too held life - pinned messages for the resistance in silk panties. "Who would dare search Josephine Baker to the skin?" Perhaps it was a joke to put the invisible ink on the invisible girl. I passed by passing codebooks to the Resistance. People saw me even when they did not. I'm the perfection of magic, the magic that makes me unforgettable even as I go unseen.
>
> I don't look at myself. I see only the furs, the diamonds, the headdress. They cover what's been polluted, a body I can't own. I belong to a war that hates its own desire. It holds my nakedness with passion even as it condemns me. To die you have to be alive in a body that can give life. It's pitch dark in my womb. No child will make it out; no child could make it through the slowness of my death.[68]

The project is a marriage of voice and instruments, voice and body, past and present, text and music… The collisions are part of the intended tension. Like many Sorey pieces, the first performance lived in its own, luxuriant time, and presented to a sea of mostly white, well-to-do audience members at the Ojai Festival, did not go over particularly well. Rankine's texts

[68] Rankine, *Texts*.

took the NY Times critic over the edge, calling the texts overly "obvious and stolid"[69] Interestingly, I, too, had doubted the project's good intentions and potential to truly sublimate a human understanding of black "entertainment" in white, Western culture. It is my personal, engaged, co-creative relationship with the piece that has connected me to my colleagues, to the mission of the piece, and to its shape, structure and sound.

By its very nature, this project challenges the idea of single-authorship. Yes, Sorey is the composer of the work, yet the material is completely bound to songs written for Josephine Baker by Bobby Falk, Ary Barroso and many others, and linked by texts written by Claudia Rankine. In almost ever song, there is opportunity for each of us—instrumentalists and vocalist alike—to improvise and invent. We have now performed the work five times, in venues ranging from the Kaplan Penthouse at Lincoln Center to the Stony Island Arts Bank on the south side of Chicago, and each time has been emotionally, musically and relationally different.

Collaboration is the it-word of our generation, and plays right into the neoliberal understanding of affective labor. For this reason, I prefer the experience and the term of co-creation, or co-elaboration, which defies capitalist hierarchies. *Perle Noire* has transformed itself into this kind of project, if only by nature and not in its publicity. Marketing and criticism continue to identify works with the headliner names they associate with them; the members of ICE aren't even mentioned in the NY Times Ojai Festival review. The fact of the matter is, there would have been no work without us; in the multi-month elaboration process, we were the diplomatic glue between Sorey (who comes from a free jazz and experimental music background) and Bullock (whose experiences revolve around the recital and chamber opera stage and orchestral programming with solo voice), whose working methods were not immediately compatible. Gentle, tactful coaxing was done on both sides in order to drive the

[69] Ojai Festival Online.

project forward; in the end, we all feel complicit in its message, its authenticity and its belonging to us.

The most transformative part of the project—seeing, hearing and feeling the songs be transported through decades of musical history, genre collision and social perspective—was also the most satisfying, and overtly political. Baker's very identity was redrawn in the contemporary social context, giving her body and voice contemporary vocabularies to address the continuation of the civil and social movements in which she actually did take part. Coloring the music of the songs with instruments that could easily have been part of her band, yet played by musicians who specialize in experimentalism, and a soprano whose background is mostly opera and art song, enabled Sorey to explore the multitude inside Baker's identity through sounds and approaches. To me, this is a strong argument for re-treating and re-contextualizing existing (even historical) materials for our time. In the following chapter, I explore ways in which materials, experiences and intellect can become part of a cultural commons, revolutionizing elitism through accessibility, discovering alterities via new contexts.

* * *

CHAPTER 6

FREEDOM CAPITAL THROUGH CULTURE AS COMMONS

Experiments with OpenICE and The Atelier

"The likelihood that your acts of resistance cannot stop the injustice does not exempt you from acting in what you sincerely and reflectively hold to be the best interests of your community."[70]
- Susan Sontag

In some ways, the scarcity of resources in our time and communities is an invitation to a) take things into our own hands, b) band together, and c) make new rules. Who better to take on leadership positions than those most affectively involved, and what better power structure than a complex, rhizomatic horizontalism? In the Anthropocene, the survival of one means hope for all; it is a time for a radical repossession of social interdependence and ecology.

The process of becoming delineated in Chapter 4 is one of individual practice become ritual, occurring everywhere simultaneously; these bodies, increasingly fully aware of their own being-in-the-world, continue to engage in social processes of Becoming as well. "A subject whose vitality emerges from behind-the-scenes encounters is a subject immersed in a world in which it is an integral part. It is a subject who both affects and is affected by a vast range of heterogeneous multiplicities, who is formed and informing, and who is a collaborative result involved in further collaboration."[71] Lorraine, to me, is inciting the subject to dynamic, authentic leadership in her own life and the lives of the multiplicities with whom she engages.

In the cultural ennui accompanying commodity capitalism, a war against the commodification and glorification of what McKenzie Wark deems "high theory" is being waged at the level of the Commons. "Low theory" makes itself the center of the curation,

[70] Sontag, *At the Same Time: Essays and Speeches*, 190.
[71] Lorraine, *Irigaray and* Deleuze, 136.

the archival, the public museology of culture. What is desired is not so much a quantitative reward, but rather a qualitative change: in the lived experiences of our audiences, in our agency and fulfillment in professional endeavors, in our own quality of life and the ability to bolster our ecosystem for the benefit of everyone.

If capitalism is not only responsible for "the flows of primary material, the flows of energy, the flows of human labor, but also the flows of knowledge, semiotic flows, which reproduce affects, sensations, attitudes, and collective behavior patterns"[72], there is a window for a large-scale cultural and social shift to occur. The ones with the most to gain, and the least to lose (ie: the affective laborer in a generally marginalized field) are the ones to start the trend. We can, through consistent, optimistic work, recalibrate our audiences' expectations for entertainment, invite the public to engage with listening and sensing in deep, open-minded ways, and slowly reverse the idea that corporate entrepreneurship will work at the cultural level.

OpenICE

Through my work at ICE, I have begun putting into place an initiative that I believe answers—if only liminally—to some of these desires. The conception of OpenICE was born from a musing on the question of an ensemble's (or a musician's) reach into the world at large. When we calculate and maneuver the cultivation of new audiences, what are our expectations of ourselves? What are the sacrifices we are willing to make? How deeply to we hope to engage? Beyond "selling a product", what do we hope will change about the social landscape due to our reach? What are the concrete and tangible ways in which we measure our work, its successes and its failures?

[72] Lazzarato, "Economy and the Production of Subjectivity", online.

OpenICE uses creative music-making and experimental art as a metaphor for continued problem-solving, in a constant search for a collective utopia. Starting from a place where play is work, OpenICE sets up a playground for collective, cooperative and collaborative problem-solving and creativity. Individual members are invited to bring ideas to the table in the form of a) repertoire pieces, b) commission proposals, c) educational activities, d) institutional partners and e) social or political issues to confront.

The first seasons of OpenICE, funded as a three-year experimental project by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, have allowed my co-director Ryan Muncy and me to shape a season-long series that incorporates concert programming, collaborative workshops with commissioned composers, and education activities that run from single classes to large-scale side-by-side projects with youth orchestras. By pulling back the curtain on the processes behind our work, and offering programming live and online and completely free of charge to all audience members and participants, it is our mission not only to broaden the reach of our work, but also to demystify the creation of experimental music and show people of all walks of life the power of collaboration, experimentation and sharing.

This three-year "trial period" is a chance for ICE to see how we can invest in our membership, communities around us (both familiar and not), and partner with organizations to create a sustainable future for our most engagement-forward initiative. So far, we have held OpenICE residencies at the Abrons Arts Center and the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts (NYPL) in Manhattan, at the Chicago Cultural Center, the Harris Theatre, the Chopin Theatre and Stony Island Arts Bank in Chicago, and at gallery spaces in Fort Wayne and Los Angeles. Of those, Abrons and NYPL in New York and Chopin Theatre and Stony Island Arts Bank in Chicago have been partners, donating the use of their spaces and resources, collaborating on marketing and education. Maintaining these relationships—

especially with spaces that are not in the habit of presenting contemporary music—is no guarantee, so Muncy and I carve out a lot of our office time for meetings with representatives from these spaces, in person or by phone.

An OpenICE event, situated (mostly) in a single space over the course of several days, is a type of residency comprised of:

- concert programs (offered at various times of day) that "activate" spaces or resources unique to the partner venue
- open rehearsals
- engagement activities for various types of new audiences (children/families, underserved communities, adults and children with physical and mental disabilities, homeless or low-income persons...)
- opportunities for socializing in a low-pressure context

... all of which are free and open to the public.

The first big tenet of OpenICE is artist-curated concert programming that is free and open to the public. As co-directors, Muncy and I collect “dream projects”, both small- and large-scale, from the membership of ICE, and work to integrate some of those ideas into our budget and personnel capacities. An attempt at increasing availability this year involved fee “buy-outs” for ICE musicians for several days in a row, leading to an organization of mini-festival-type clusters of programming in New York and Chicago. With a group of seven or eight gathered for four days, we plan three different concerts, to be presented on consecutive evenings. This allows for a rotation and sharing of the tasks and responsibilities required to put on concerts: several members to work together to curate a show, one musician may take the lead on producing the show (advancing tech, scheduling rehearsals), another few might head up the education events. Muncy and I co-ordinate with the musicians and keep communication with the venue, so as not to overwhelm our partner organizations.

Artist curation is very popular these days, and ICE can no longer claim this as a mark of its forward-thinking attitude. Still, after 16 years of ICE, and in conjunction with Chase stepping down from her visible role as executive director, involving both long-time members and new additions to the ensemble in the programming and curating process has re-invigorated membership and loosened fears about hierarchical retribution or dissonant styles. With the symbolic and cultural capital afforded ICE today, it is important that we allow the diversification of aesthetic voices, especially if one of our goals (both genuinely and in responsibility towards Mellon) is the diversification and broadening of our listenership.

Practically, this has already led to ICE musicians pitching concerts (developed through OpenICE) at new venues, expanding ICE's reach in institutional ways we did not expect. A good example of this came with guitarist Dan Lippel's interest in developing a concert for alternative tuning methods; his program, *Untempered*, which involves four ICE musicians (guitar, percussion, harp and saxophone) had such success in its original version in New York[73], that Lippel was able to present it three more times, extending not only the reach of those performers, the composers on the program (Larry Polansky, Peter Adriaansz, and Karola Obermueller) but also the ICE ensemble name.

In addition to concert programming, OpenICE as a program has set almost half of the yearly budget aside for commissions. This season, Muncy and I selected four composers to commission for long-term collaboration projects; the entire process is being documented and opened to the public, with a view to sharing the "behind-the-scenes" work with audiences locally, online and in the public library; they are Morgan Krauss, Wojtek Blecharz, Sabrina Schroeder and Monte Weber. This selection is in keeping with the process-based ICELab commissioning model, and increasingly interdependent and fluid composer-performer

[73] The New York Times, which rarely attends free events, had many nice things to say about *Untempered*: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/29/arts/music/review-international-contemporary-ensemble-weaves-among-tonalities.html?_r=0

relations. Whether or not the composer ends up also performing in the work, there is often an intimate involvement in the creation or selection of materials and the preparation of the physical performance; because it takes time to cultivate trust and a vocabulary for collaboration, we have decided that an entire season is spent on workshops and discussions around the future piece, with a premiere date *to be determined* in the following season, allowing for the appropriate selection of venue, circumstances, timing and availability for all involved.

The initial hope was that every component of the process would be both open and documented. In reality, this proved to be both difficult and, at times, limiting. Several of our chosen composers are writing on themes that are political, personal and intense (sexual assault, war and the destruction of culture…); the process between composer and performer becomes quite intimate, involving conversations that are uncomfortable to have honestly in front of a camera or on-looker. In the spirit of adaptability and positive productivity, we have scheduled one open workshop for each composer's visit (of three days, typically), which entails a preview of what the artists have been working on, some rehearsing and a discussion.

The questions of a sustainable self and cultural endurance, referred to incessantly over the course of this writing, and often in our collective conversations revolving around creating new works, carry through to the longevity of a program like OpenICE; with limited foundational support, how does a self-actualizing program turn into a sustainable, revenue-building program? In the first few years, ICE has been building partnerships through conversation, collaboration and a mutual understanding of the mission with larger, stronger organizations, like the NYPL, The People's Music School, and YOLA. We've also bolstered our visibility through partnerships with organizations traditionally outside the contemporary music realm (Stony Island Arts Bank, Abrons Arts Center), launching long-term projects that

are saleable to presenters in future years, and activating membership participation and curation to such an extent that projects can enjoy longer lives.

Another consideration of cultural sustainability, and "reach", implicates arming those younger than us with the skills and wherewithal to set up new frameworks for becoming in the world;

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26

METAFAGOTE: REBEKAH HELLER CD RELEASE SHOW

8:30PM | EXPERIMENTAL THEATER

Rand Steiger: *Concatenation* (2013) for bassoon and live processing

Dai Fujikura: *Following* (2014) for solo bassoon

Edgar Guzmán: *The Purloined Letter* (2017) for saxophone, bassoon and electronics [WORLD PREMIERE] with **Ryan Muncy**, saxophone

PAUSE

Jason Eckardt: *A Compendium of Catskill Native Botanicals, from Book 2: Asarum canadense*, "Wild Ginger" (2015) for solo bassoon

Felipe Lara: *Metafagote* (2015) for solo bassoon and six spatialized bassoons and contrabassoons with **Nanci Belmont**, **Sara Shoenbeck**, **Patricia Wang**, **Clifton Guidry**, **Gabriela González**, and **Morgan Davison**, bassoons and **Alice Teyssier**, conductor

FRIDAY, APRIL 28

HEART OF TONES: COLLABORATION WITH L'ITINÉRAIRE

8:30PM | EXPERIMENTAL THEATER

Pauline Oliveros: *Apple Box Orchestra* (1965)

Francesca Verunelli: *Interno Rosso con Figure II* for accordion and electronics

Chiyoko Szlavnics: *Triptych for AS* (2006) for accordion, two violins, and sine oscillators

Sky Macklay: *White/Waves* for ensemble

Pauline Oliveros: *Heart of Tones* for Trombone, Oscillators, and accompanying orchestra

International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE):

James Austin Smith, oboe
Campbell MacDonald, clarinet
Ryan Muncy, saxophone
David Nelson, trombone
Nathan Davis, percussion
Josh Modney, violin
Kivie Cahn-Lipman, cello

Ensemble l'Itinéraire:

Julie Brunet-Jailly, flute
Antoine Dreyfuss, horn
Anne Mercer, violin
Lucia Peralta, viola
Yano Dubost, bass
Anthony Millet, accordion

SATURDAY, APRIL 29

WOJTEK BLECHARZ: OPENICE COMMISSION PREVIEW

8 PM | EXPERIMENTAL THEATER

Wojtek Blecharz: *music for invisible places* (Work in Progress)

The preview performance will be followed by an informal discussion with the composer and artists

Alice Teyssier, flute
Campbell MacDonald, clarinet
Ryan Muncy, saxophone
Rebekah Heller, bassoon
Ross Karre, percussion

ABOUT

ICE

The **International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)** is an artist collective committed to reshaping the way music is created and experienced. As performer, curator and educator, ICE explores how new music intersects with communities across the world. From youth in schools to audiences in established and alternative venues, ICE engages its listening public in the spark of musical invention.

ICE Staff: William McDaniel, Executive Director • Claire Chase, Founder• Joshua Rubin, Co-Artistic Director • Ross Karre, Co-Artistic Director • Jacob Greenberg, Director of Recordings and Digital Outreach • Rebekah Heller, Director of Individual Giving • Maciej Lewandowski, Production Associate • Ryan Muncy, Director of Institutional Giving and Co-Director OpenICE • Alice Teyssier, Artistic Operations Associate and Co-Director OpenICE • Meredith Morgan, Development of Operations•Levy Lorenzo, Engineer and Technical Consultant

OPENICE

SUPPORTERS

OpenICE is made possible through lead support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Howard Gilman Foundation, alongside generous support from the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the National Endowment for the Arts, public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Yamaha Artist Services New York is the exclusive piano provider for ICE. Wojtek Blecharz's commission was supported by New Music USA, made possible by annual program support and/or endowment gifts from New Music USA project grants.

Figure 6.1: The Spring OpenICE program for the April residency at Abrons Arts Center.

this tenet of OpenICE is confronted directly with the sub-initiative EntICE, in which ICE partners with a youth orchestra program and a composer to collectively create a new work for the youth orchestra side-by-side with members of ICE. In choosing partnerships, we have been careful to include organizations that serve at-risk or underserved communities; so far, our partners have been The People's Music School (TPMS) chamber orchestra (ages 8-18) , Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA) at Heart of Los Angeles Symphonic Winds (ages 13-16), and the orchestra of UpBeat NYC in the Bronx (ages 11-16). Commissioned composers have been Marcos Balter, Tania León and Vijay Iyer, respectively; Balter has worked significantly with youth, and was based in Chicago for many years, León is an inspiring Cuban-American

conductor and composer (she also conducted her own piece), and Iyer is not only a performer-composer, but also the father of a 12-year-old.

The EntICE development process embodies the spirit of playfulness with which we wanted to imbue OpenICE. The ICE members spend three two-day residency periods with the ensembles, developing trust and familiarity through the co-elaboration of a graphic composition unique to the ensemble, as well as coachings, improvisation sessions, lessons and discussions. The collaborative process extends beyond the students, to the teaching staff, who

Figure 6.2: *C.W. Rainforest*, the graphic composition developed by ICE and the YOLA Symphonic Winds.

are highly skilled educators and have sensitivities to the children's needs and circumstances that we do not have, as privileged, (mostly) white, adult visitors. In terms of social and ethical value, we (the musician-educators) stand to gain a great deal in this context, where the

students are old enough to be vocal—to the point of astounding us with their insights—while remaining young enough to not only need guidance but respond to it.

Partnerships with the Stony Island Arts Bank and the Abrons Arts Center allows ICE to reposition its mission in relation with those of these socially-minded organizations. In creating programming and in communication with the staff at both organizations, the beneficial engagement of the community has been a priority; this has meant identifying the surrounding community, evaluating its potential needs (which is tricky, and requires the presence of voices from that community) and being willing to present work side-by-side with its members.

At the Stony Island Arts Bank, several members of ICE created an improvisation installation with artist-in-residence Maggie Brown. The space was open to the public, and the session serves as a meet-and-greet between Brown and ICE; musical vocabularies were exchanged, blended and supported in both directions. Over the course of two hours, trust was built up through playfulness and fun. Brown and her partner attended ICE's performance of Tyshawn Sorey's *Perle Noire* at Stony Island Arts Bank days later; we now have a collaborative project planned for next season with Brown, who would like to connect us to the music class offered on Friday afternoons for students ages 12-18 who do not have access to instruments or musical training.

The Abrons Arts Center has connected ICE to the Henry Street Settlement at large, which is a network for advocacy and community engagement that includes educational services, safe housing, mental health services, senior centers, and other buildings celebrating the history and ethnic diversity of the Lower East Side. In advance of ICE residencies at Abrons, a small group of musicians does a round of "pop-up" performances at various ones of these venues, sharing our work and inviting the community members to attend our free events.

We have also hosted events in which music is created alongside students or seniors, resulting either in a group improvisation or a graphic-score similar to those developed through EntICE.

The metrics of success for this type of engagement are difficult to quantify, and institutional change of this nature is slow, which can be discouraging, but the human encounters—be it with a three-year-old who has never heard a bassoon before or an adult receiving mental health services—are extraordinary and help us contextualize and develop more vocabularies for our work, which can become insular and alienated.

The final tenet of OpenICE is one of continued and universal access, made possible by online platforms. Inspired by the public library, ICE has created a digital library of public performances and events in high-definition video and audio. Through the OpenICE process, interviews, workshops, and discussions have also been included in our archiving; over the last season, the New York Public Library has partnered with us to create "live archiving" events at the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center. So far, we have collaboratively presented four 90-minute sessions introducing and opening the archives to the work of Chaya Czernowin, Ashley Fure, Pauline Oliveros (posthumously) and Anna Thorvaldsdóttir. Each session includes live performances by ICE members, conversation between the composer, artists and audience, and an "open rehearsal" type of performance in which the composer's work with the musicians is also documented.

In *The Beach Beneath the Street*, McKenzie Wark narrates the goals and aspirations of the Situationist International in 1950s and '60s Paris; Wark positions the movement as a collective, coloring and refracting the ideals of its most prominent member, Guy Debord. One of the movements most influential concepts, which still inspires artists and thinkers today, is that of *détournement*, which Wark explains through the lens of capital:

> Capital produces a culture in its own image, a culture of the work as private property, the author as sole proprietor of a soul as property. Détournement

> sifts through the material remnants of the past and present culture for materials whose untimeliness can be utilized against bourgeois culture.[74]

Increasingly, institutionally through my work at ICE and personally in my own musical creative work, I am focusing on the de-materialization of the musical culture through a Commons approach. If all culture, old and new, is historical knowledge owned by and available to all, the potential for a rich, variegated and inventive proposal of future culture becomes greater. In parallel with identities, I am interested in highly transformative and continually becoming forms; I embody this practice in my work with my ensemble The Atelier.

The Atelier

The concept of co-elaboration has been of interest to me for many years, and came from my interest in flattening the roles necessary to create chamber theatre and opera. In 2007 at the Oberlin Conservatory, I was featured in Olga Neuwirth's electronic opera *Lost Highway* alongside my friend and terrific baritone Michael Weyandt. Weyandt (who is also a composer and pianist) and I are like-minded on many levels, enjoying the same types of musical genres and aesthetics, sharing an interest in straight theatre and physical stage work and a frustration with how the opera world is set up today. Back in our undergraduate days, we fantasized about starting an experimental theatre troupe, in which we could create new pieces and reinvent a working model for creating musical stage works from the ground up.

In 2014, as my partner Bradley Scott Rosen was planning his move to New York City to join me here, Weyandt and I reconnected and revived our idea. In a completely experimental, exploratory and unguarded way, the three of us started imagining a collective composition together, calling our project The Atelier. We asked a lot of questions:

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[74] Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street*, 39.

- Can a musical event be created, performed and shared in a horizontalist fashion?
- What is the true power of the acoustic/developed voice?
- What material inspires us?
- Is there such a thing as correct or incorrect performance practice?
- How do text, sound and image collide? How do past, present and future collide?

A search for the antonym of "hierarchy" yields an incredible list of words, including jumble, discord, inadequacy, disarray, and anarchy. One precept of The Atelier is to find alternative ways of creating and performing music, without considering a performer's *realization* or the composer's *intention* as any more or less important than sound and light traveling through space. This process takes a significant amount more time than adhering to traditional, delineated roles, but results in each of us accumulating new skills and feeling a greater sense of artistic responsibility for the finished product. Through our multitudinous roles, each member of the ensemble feels empowered and essential, able to contribute materials to the collection to be used, both in terms of found materials and newly created ones (texts, musical lines, concepts…)

With a nod to the Situationists, the Atelier takes a stand on copyright and using materials without attribution. We have struggled with the nomenclature for our practices, where "collage" and "quotation" are insufficient, even vulgar, terms for the purpose we intend for the materials. "*Reality*, as Nabokov never got tired of reminding us, is the one work that is meaningless without quotation marks."[75] In the end, the most compelling approach have seemed to be détournement:

> Détournement is the opposite of quotation. Like détournement, quotation brings the past into the present, but it does so entirely within a regime of the proper use of proper names. The key to détournement is its challenge to private property. It attacks a kind of fetishism, turning the fetishism of

[75] Shields, *Reality Hunger*, 4.

> commodity into fetishism of memory. It restores to the fragment the status of being a recognizable part of the process of the collective production of meaning in the present, through its recombination into a new meaningful ensemble.[76]

Part of the reasoning for using existing materials is the sheer lack of repertoire for our forces (soprano/flutist, baritone, guitar/electronics); in deciding on materials, we begin with content, affect, memory (both personal and historical); this often leads us into territories we cannot achieve through traditional performance practice. We then consider the affect of the project—in each case slightly different (for example, is humor possible? Will there be movement? How many instruments and tools do we want to be able to "see" on stage?)—in order to figure out whether the material can be included, and how. In 2016, for an original performance at the Resonant Bodies Festival in Brooklyn, NY, we re-arranged the aria of Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasilieras No. 5*, which holds special personal meaning for me,[77] for soprano and pre-recorded bass flutes. Though the piece remained recognizable to anyone who knows it, Villa-Lobos' name did not figure in the program (although the ensemble does list its sources on our website). Other borrowed, stolen and reclaimed materials have come from many unattributed sources, including:

Iannis Xenakis
Luigi Nono
Susan Sontag
Gilles Deleuze
Sofia Gubaidulina
Hildegard von Bingen
Michel Foucault
Heitor Villa-Lobos
B. W. Grant Barnes
Carlo Gesualdo
David Shields
Franz Schubert

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[76] Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street*, 40.

[77] In 2012, over spring break, I received a call from the San Diego Symphony around noon to see if I would be able to sing this work, and the solo of the Fauré *Requiem*, with them that evening, as their soprano soloist had fallen ill. The anxiety, preparation and personal transformation I experienced that day, and through that work, has been a historical part of my becoming.

Stendhal
Thomas Merula
Jasper Johns
(…and many others…)

I was first (pleasantly) shocked and intrigued by this practice in reading David Shields' *Reality Hunger*, in which Shields creates a philosophical, stream-of-consciousness, quasi-narrative questioning of authorship and form made up of lines by a great number of authors (including himself). He instructs the reader to—if she dares—tear out the appendix of the book, wherein attributions are set out in endnote form. To me, this rejection of the laws of appropriation and property represents a political move towards freedom.

"So: no more masters, no more masterpieces. What I want (instead of God the novelist) is self-portrait in a convex mirror."[78] This is essentially the mission statement of The Atelier: opening our identities, our sensual histories, our memories, our ideas to the world and taking the stand that all we can offer is what we know and think, and yet what we offer is for all to take. "When one is, engaged in idle talk, or deliberately ambiguous rather than taking a stand, one is adopting a free-floating attitude that can easily shift. […]That is, one can engage in many forms of conversation with others without having to confront one's own situation as an embodied human being."[79]

This practice of publicly performing one's confrontation with one's embodied self is an ethical invitation to others to take responsibility for confronting their own. Listening, then, becomes much more than a passive state of *being entertained*. Indeed, it becomes the therapeutic work of both producing and furthering one's freedom to know oneself and be in the world. "The whole of the cultural past is a cultural commons that belongs to all of us from

[78] Shields, *Reality Hunger*, 150.
[79] Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze*, 9.

which you can appropriate at will—but to correct in the direction of hope."[80] The goal of this ritualistic pillaging, newfangling and recycling is not utopia per se, but a type of perpetual revolution (in all senses of the word)—awakening a people capable of and open to continued experimentation, finely tuned to an earth and a world in constant flux, change and evolution.

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[80] Wark and Byrne, "A Cavalier History of Situationism", online.

CONCLUSION & INVITATION

In this paper, I have positioned myself, as an affective laborer, within the neoliberal economy of the United States today. I have considered how my sensing body both produces my self and is affected by the surrounding situation, in both productive and challenging ways. I have observed how the immateriality of my activity necessitates my connection with others at various levels of social interaction, and how my personal value system can be converted into immaterial, symbolic and material capital.

I have found that even symbolic capital strives towards a conversion to economic capital, driving our aesthetic and ethical value system. Delineating institutions as clouds of ideology and exploring my personal experiences with different types of becoming, and at different levels of agency, I have charted the path by which I have arrived at my current projects. Yet convictions can be converted also, through artistic work on the brink of social acceptability. Perhaps, according to Gorz's dream, the immaterial may yet be the crisis of capitalism, if we tilt our system of values towards freedom and away from capital, and continue to move in the direction of a social norm that appreciates collective transformation over private property.

Through various socially proliferated forms of knowledge and influence, the production of our Self and our personal value system is one that reflects our innate predilection and our acquired cultural capital. Here, I have just scratched the surfaced of my own becoming, in a moment of transformation at the individual level (bridging my studies with a complex, at times surprising professional life) as well as the social one (a time of civil upheaval, questionable journalism, and informational abundance). It is my intention to continue this ritual and line of questioning throughout my sentient life.

As for others like myself, I extend an invitation to practice this alongside me; I expect there will be many different situations, different sets of values, different proposals for future transformations, which is precisely why I engaged with this topic in the first place. The experimental music-making community is variegated and diverse, and benefits, like any individual, from a multitude of strong, considered perspectives. To this end, may I engage my fellow practitioners in some preliminary questions, that they may feel compelled to join me in this continual becoming:

Who are you, in this moment?

Where would you like to position yourself?

What is your personal set of values, and how do they relate to one another?

In what roles do you feel most confidence, agency? How do you know?

What are your hopes for the future?

What are your identifying memories?

What is the music that speaks most clearly to your innermost self? Why?

What new sounds are you responsible for? How are they transforming the environment?

My dream is for a world in which decreasingly alienated people responsibly make proposals and take action. Performers, who ritualize embodiment and make their vulnerabilities public daily, are prime candidates for innovative, transformational proposals that resist the systemic norm. Performers who are also searchers, experimenters, explorers, inquirers, even more so. In my ideal institution, these people would be my family; these dreamers would accompany me to a better, richer, liberated future.

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