Christian Grüny / Brandon Farnsworth (Eds.)

New Music and Institutional Critique

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Ästhetiken X.0 – Zeitgenössische Konturen ästhetischen Denkens

Die Reihe Ästhetiken X.0 folgt einem Verständnis von Kunstphilosophie und philosophischer Ästhetik, das auf Sachhaltigkeit und historische Konkretheit setzt. Danach sind philosophische Reflexion, wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung und kulturelle Situiertheit aufeinander verwiesen und sollten den Entwicklungen der ästhetischen Praxis in den verschiedenen künstlerischen Feldern, aber auch jenseits dieser Rechnung tragen. Ohne auf eine bestimmte theoretische Position festgelegt zu sein, bringt die Reihe Beiträge aus unterschiedlichen Disziplinen und Feldern zur Artikulation, die für die Gegenwart symptomatisch und wegweisend erscheinen. Dabei ist die Frage ausschlaggebend, was ästhetische Praxis heute bedeutet, in welchen (De)Form(ation)en sie stattfindet und welche gesellschaftlich-symbolische Position sie bezieht. Dazu gehört die Reflexion der Ästhetik als westlich-bürgerliche Emanzipationswissenschaft und normsetzend-universalisierende Disziplin.

The series Ästhetiken X.0 follows a philosophy of art and philosophical aesthetics stressing the necessity of specific analysis and historical concreteness. In our view, philosophical reflection, scholarly practice, and cultural situatedness are interdependent and should account for the contemporary development of aesthetic practices in and beyond the various artistic fields. Without propounding a fixed theoretical position, the series assembles seminal contributions from different disciplines and fields that can claim contemporary relevance. Its central questions include what aesthetic practice means today relative to the cultural context, in what kinds of (de)form(ation)s it takes place, and how it positions itself symbolically within society. This includes reflection on aesthetics as a bourgeois Western discipline of emancipation and normative universalisation.

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New Music and Institutional Critique

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Vorwort der Herausgeber/innen

Unverkennbar ist, dass sich die gesellschaftlichen und personalen Sensibilitäten fortgesetzt ändern. In einer selbstreflexiven und responsiven Gesellschaft, die auf den Wandel politischer Konstellationen zu reagieren vermag, wirkt dies auf politische Haltungen, theoretische Annahmen, künstlerische Praktiken und auch ästhetische Urteile zurück. Selbstbefragungen und Modifikationen der ästhetischen Theoriebildung sind daher allzeit unverzichtbar.

So hat sich das Feld des ästhetischen Denkens zunehmend entgrenzt und im Hinblick auf seine Voraussetzungen hinterfragt: Heute reflektiert es ebenso auf zeitgenössische künstlerische Praktiken und globalisierte Ausstellungs- und Aufführungsdispositive wie auf die politische Verteilung des Sinnlichen und deren historische und kulturelle Bedingtheit. Es befragt das medial erweiterte Zusammenspiel der menschlichen Vermögen, die Interdependenzen von Theoriebildung und künstlerischen Verfahren, die Rolle und Funktion der Künste in Abhängigkeit von sozio-ökonomischen Bedingungen. Es reagiert auf erweiterte erkenntnistheoretische Fragestellungen wie aktuell auf jene des Posthumanen, Medienökologischen oder (Post-)Kolonialen, auf die Infragestellung anthropo- und eurozentrischer Perspektiven, auf nicht-westliche Schönheitsverständnisse und die Aufforderung, die Grenzen tradierter philosophischer Konzepte von Ästhetik zu problematisieren.

Ästhetik hat sich zu einem transversalen Feld erweitert, das aus unterschiedlichen Disziplinen und Perspektiven Anleihen bezieht, um die sich verändernden aisthetischen und künstlerischen Konstellationen der Gegenwart in möglichst umfassender Weise zu reflektieren.

Die im Metzler-Verlag erscheinende Reihe *Ästhetiken X.0* trägt diesen Veränderungen Rechnung und wendet sich der zeitgenössischen Situation, in der die klassischen Bestimmungen nicht einfach fortgeschrieben werden können, mit erhöhter Sensibilität und theoretischer Neugier zu. Ihr Anliegen ist es,

nahsichtig und skrupulös die ästhetischen Veränderungen im personalen, kün-stlerischen und gesellschaftlichen Bereich zu sondieren und auch auf Arten des Nichtwahrnehmens oder der theoretischen Geringschätzung zu reagieren. Damit will sie eine möglichst lebendige Forschung über Grenzen hinweg anregen.

Judith Sigmund
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Christian Grüny

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Contents

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Christa Brüstle is senior scientist for musicology at the Art University Graz where she was Professor for Musicology, Women and Gender Studies from 2016–2021 and has been head of the Center for Gender Research and Diversity since 2012. After receiving her PhD in 1996, she was post-doctoral researcher of the Special Research Unit "Cultures of the Performative" at the Freie Universität Berlin where she did her habilitation. From 2008 to 2011 she was visiting professor at the University of the Arts Berlin and in 2014 at the University Heidelberg.

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Rosanna Lovell is a musician, educator, performer, radio maker and sound artist based in Berlin. Her practice focuses on feminist and postcolonial perspectives in classical and new music which she explores through performance, intervention, sound and research, as well as critical and self-reflexive approaches in the arts and arts education. She studied classical music performance and languages at the University of Adelaide (Australia) and in 2018 completed a Master of Arts at the Institute for Art in Context, UdK/Berlin University of the Arts, where she is also part of the feminist collective FEM*_MUSIC*.

Peter Meanwell is a curator and radio maker exploring the collision of new sound practices with social and political ideas. Living in Bergen, Norway, he is artistic director of Borealis - a festival for experimental music, where he has curated an annual programme of new composed music, performance and sound since 2014. He is also Creative Director of UK based audio production company Reduced Listening, who make podcasts for clients as diverse as Serpentine Galleries and Spotify, and produce BBC Radio's flagship experimental music shows Late Junction and freeness. Peter teaches at the Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music.

Ari Benjamin Meyers received his training as a composer and conductor at The Juilliard School, Yale University, and Peabody Institute. Trading the concert format for that of the exhibition, his internationally presented works—such as *Kunsthalle for Music* (2018), *Symphony 80,* and *Solo for Ayumi* (both 2017)—explore structures and processes that redefine the performative, social, and ephemeral nature of music as well as the relationship between performer and audience. His diverse practice includes a commission for the Semperoper Dresden, a ballet for the Paris Opera, and the experimental music-theater work *Forecast* (2021) for the Volksbühne Berlin. A number of recent works including the *The Long Parade* (2021), *Rehearsing Philadelphia,* and *Werksorchester* (both 2022) focus on the public and civic spheres and involve large scale communal performances.

Berno Odo Polzer is a curator and researcher in the fields of experimental music and sound-related art based in Brussels. His interdisciplinary practice combines artistic, theory-related, dramaturgical and curatorial approaches, with a focus on time as a political category and the politics of listening. He studied Classical Archaeology, Musicology, Philosophy and German literature in Vienna. He was co-curator and artistic director of *Wien Modern* festival (2000–2009) and artistic

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Benjamin Piekut studies music and performance after 1960 and is currently researching the history of sound art. Author of *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-garde and Its Limits* (2011) and *Henry Cow: The World Is a Problem* (2019), editor of *Tomorrow Is the Question: New Directions in Experimental Music Studies* (2014), and co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies* (2016), he is a professor of music at Cornell University.

Trond Reinholdtsen challenges traditional forms while remaining the respectful and struggling composer looking for his musical "spirit" (first portrayed as a phantom-like ghost backstage and then shown falling over into the mud). Reinholdtsen's music has evolved in extremely performative directions and is characterised by the blending of pure music with various non-musical expressions.

Tine Rude is former Managing Director of Borealis – a festival for experimental music, and currently Head of Art and Cultural Development (*Seksjonssjef*) at the City of Bergen. She is committed to creating an organisation that is welcoming and inclusive to everyone, and is dedicated to confronting established truths about gender and representation, and how to make the arts more important for more people. She has extensive experience as a producer in the performing arts and music, and in initiating methods to strengthen the role of the producer and develop strong organisations.

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Patrick Valiquet earned degrees in music and digital media at McGill University, Concordia University, and the Institute of Sonology before defending his doctoral research at the University of Oxford in 2014, and then holding a series of postdoctoral fellowships at the University of Edinburgh from 2014 to 2021. His ethnographic and historical research on francophone experimental music policy, pedagogy, and theory had been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Fonds de Recherche du Québéc – Société et Culture, the Institute of Musical Research, and the British Academy. From 2015 to 2021 he was Associate Editor at the journal *Contemporary Music Review*, where in 2020 he also guest edited the retrospective issue "Contemporaneities". His most recent writing appears in *History of Education*, *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Music & Letters*, *Organised Sound*, and *The Senses and Society*.

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Multi-disciplinary artist **Samson Young** works in sound, performance, video, and installation. He graduated with a PhD in Music Composition from Princeton University in 2013. He was Hong Kong Sinfonietta's Artist Associate from 2008 to 2009. In 2017, he represented Hong Kong at the 57th Venice Biennale. Other solo projects include the De Appel, Amsterdam; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh; SMART Museum, Chicago; Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art in Manchester; M+ Pavilion, Hong Kong; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; Ryosoku-in at Kenninji Temple, Kyoto; Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne; and Jameel Art Centre, Dubai, among others. Selected group exhibitions include Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Gropius Bau, Berlin; Performa 19, New York; Biennale of Sydney; Shanghai Biennale; Sonic Acts Biennale, Amsterdam; National Museum of Art, Osaka; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; Ars Electronica, Linz; and documenta 14: documenta radio, among others. In 2020, he was awarded the inaugural Uli Sigg Prize.

Introduction

1

Brandon Farnsworth and Christian Grüny

1 Prelude

The cover image of this volume greets readers with an ugly spray-painted foam head, filmed in the Swedish barn housing Trond Reinholdtsen's *Norwegian Opra*. Over the course of his video opera *The Followers of Ø*, we learn it is called 'Mother', that it births three disciples, and that their mission is to pursue artistic autonomy at all costs, an aim brought to campy, chaotic, and absurdist extremes over the opera's 17 short webisodes.[1] In a separate series of videos posted to his YouTube channel, Reinholdtsen takes his 'opra' on tour, screening it to 'everyday' people including his rural Swedish neighbours, a garden centre parking lot, the bingo hall on a ferry (without sound), for the trees in the primeval Bialystok forest, outside a Polish nightclub, etc.[2] The video juxtaposes its intention to "directly engage with the proletariat of Europa in the hope that the message of «Ø» will give new power to the struggle of the masses", as the title card informs us, with the tepid responses of motley audiences receiving the work with a mix of

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[1] See also the contribution by Reinholdtsen in this volume.

[2] This work was entitled *Neo-Hippie-Interventionistische-Anti-Internet-Peripherie-Welttournee-Roadshow* (2018) and was produced as part of the composer's commission for the Munich Biennale for New Music Theatre.

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confusion, polite bewilderment, and (for Reinholdtsen seemingly worst of all) disinterest (Reinholdtsen 2018, 1:08).

Between *The Followers of Ø* and the reactions documented in his screening tour, Reinholdtsen captures a sense of cynicism towards the institution of New Music that resonates with many of the conversations we have had preparing this volume. It is the feeling of continuing on in the face of adversity, despite your own doubts in what you are doing. As Žižek mentions regarding the Hollywood movie *Kung-Fu Panda*,

> On the one hand, the movie mobilises […] military mystique, Kung-Fu fate, warrior discipline […]. [But] the thing is that the movie is totally ironic, making fun of its own ideology. What is so fascinating is that although the movie makes fun of its own ideology all the time, the ideology survives. And this is how cynicism functions. (Žižek 2012, 0:15–0:49).

Replacing 'military mystique and Kung-Fu fate' with the fanatical pursuit of musical autonomy and Wagnerian opera makes this into a keen description of *The Followers of Ø* and its roadshow screening tour. Mocking, imitating, and lambasting both the artistic tradition that informs them and the idealistic vision of audience it fails to reach, it nevertheless remains bound to and dependent on it, as if by fate. For Žižek, this cynicism belies a deep reliance on what is being criticised, suggesting that underneath such irony and sarcasm there exists a latent affirmation of the object of critique, leading to its continued survival. But he also calls attention to all the more real insecurities about what value, if any, still exists in what is being maintained. As Reinholdtsen's work illustrates, New Music has such self-doubt in surplus, asking anxiously what value the music its institutions produce, and whether they in any way still live up to its lofty narratives of artistic freedom, societal relevance, etc. Reinholdtsen even stokes this doubt further: the 'everyday' people for whom this zany, off-the-wall opera filled with expanding foam, detuned voices, and dead fish is screened are not offended. Far worse, we are shown on video that they simply do not care. A fear of apathy replaces shock value.

Reinholdtsen's campy lambasting of New Music reveals however not just the composer's own deep uncertainty, it also opens up the possibility for change to take place: in the YouTube comments section for *Ø Episode 16*, as the disciples of Ø dance among mud, fake smoke, and spewing red goo, a commenter writes "10 years of state support for this. 14-year-olds on DeviantArt show more talent and creative ability than this".[3] In an instant, the situation changes. (Finally) provoked, the public speaks up, questioning the funding apparatus that gives Reinholdtsen the resources to make this work in the first place. With Shannon Jackson, we could name Reinholdtsen's composed campy approach a "hijacked de-skilling", wherein artists actively mask their skill "in order to interrogate and

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[3] Translation by the editor from the original Norwegian, "10 års statstøtte for dette. 14 åringer på Deviant art viser mer talent og skaper evne enn dette". The commenter likely refers to the Norwegian Arts Council's stipends for established artists (*Stipend for etablerte kunstnere*) which Reinholdtsen received in 2019 (Kulturrådet 2019).

perhaps explode the art traditions from whence they came" (2014, 58). In order to interrogate in more detail *what exactly* is exploded and why, what this entails, and how far it reaches, all paths inevitably lead us to some form of question about the institution of New Music. This fundamental tension between mockery and adaptation, critique and destruction, drives much of this volume. Sharing Reinholdtsen's insecurity about our field, our intention with this volume is to publicly open the floor for discussion, in an institution which, despite its name, is often all too happy to keep such uncomfortable topics until after the performance is over, the gear packed down, and the audience on their way home.

2   Introduction

2.1   Denormalisation

New Music's relationship to its institutions has never been easy. At its inception in the early twentieth century, it insisted on embodying a radical break with tradition, focussing on the *transgression* of existing norms while continuing to value its innovativeness and ability to create the new as its highest artistic aim. At the same time, New Music has situated itself in the tradition of classical music and continues to rely on and co-exist within its institutions; since Schoenberg and his students, this dialectic of rupture and continuation has been one of its founding principles.[4]

The continued insistence on the new that its name suggests has a further paradoxical effect, tying it back to a certain historical moment that has long passed—the term New Music was coined by critic Paul Bekker in 1919, burdening it with the modernist ethos of constant innovation. When the gesture of a radical break was repeated after the Second World War, the epithet stuck, continuing to do so especially in the German-speaking world where the capitalisation of *Neue Musik* is common until today. In choosing a direct translation of this term over other less established, less specific terms like contemporary music, or contemporary art music, it is this tricky historical legacy and its current inheritants that we wish to invoke and explore here.

In all its radicality New Music today is a *discipline*, understood both in its sense of being a domain of knowledge and as the shaping of bodies and practices through a complex network of institutions, including degree programmes, festivals, concert series, listeners, journalists, awards, funding structures, ensembles, composers, composer-performers, musicologists, etc., each regulated, defined, and

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[4] In a sense, the common denomination 'contemporary classical music' has a vicious accuracy because it captures the paradoxical position New Music finds itself in. Emerson 2023, for instance, argues that while it shares genre characteristics with both classical music and also other more anti-establishment genres, its ties to classical music remain very strong. See also Iddon 2014.

normalised in relation to each other and to the world. When this network is working normally, it by definition recedes into the background, invisible. When some part breaks down or changes, it is *denormalised* and experienced as resistance or conflict ('this is not okay, this is inacceptable'). This network becomes visible, solutions are proposed, themselves constrained by the scope of the knowable and sayable.

The way it sees itself, New Music is an institution of critique, but this also means it is an institution that can itself be critiqued—perhaps all the more because of all the critically minded people who inhabit it—*critiquing the institution of critique.* To this end, a recent profusion of research, activism, and artistic production has suggested that its institution itself has (again) become denormalised, particularly from decolonial, diversity, intersectional feminist, and anti-capitalist perspectives.[5] This volume examines the rift between these registers of critique, rife with mutual misunderstandings, and subtle-yet-meaningful shifts in emphasis.

But to orient ourselves in these shifting grounds, we find it necessary to first establish a position from which to embark on navigating this tricky path. We begin by examining the idea of the institution itself and what it means to criticise it, before contrasting how ideas of institutional critique are addressed in different art historical traditions, and finally concluding by outlining forms of criticality in New Music artistic practices, contrasting the narrative of New Music's perceived acriticality with current and historical approaches that demonstrate the contrary.

2.2   Institutions as Form, Orientation, and Exclusion

In the long tradition of institutional critique in the arts, various concepts of institution have been employed, ranging from a narrow sense that limits itself to firmly established organisations like museums to a broad sense that encompasses the various actors' embodied ways of producing art as well as thinking and writing about it. These concepts have often remained implicit and have not necessarily been explicitly related to the rich theoretical traditions exploring it. Indeed, 'institution' is one of the fundamental sociological concepts that has spawned an immense body of scholarship and a wide range of theories across several disciplines such as sociology, political science, anthropology, and philosophy. Émile Durkheim, one of its founding fathers, even called sociology as such "the science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning" (Durkheim 2013, 18).

To provide some theoretical background for our queries, we would like to take a step back from the analysis of institutional critique in New Music and turn to some theoretical considerations, focussing on two fundamental aspects:

[5] On decoloniality in New Music, see, e.g. Robinson 2020, Agawu 2021, Grüny 2021b; on diversity see, e.g. Farnsworth and Lovell 2020, Freydank and Rebhahn 2019; on intersectional feminist approaches see Scharff 2017; on anti-capitalism see Ritchey 2019, Bull 2019. See also Farnsworth forthcoming for an overview of statistical work related to these categories.

institutions as modes of organising human behaviour and as social entities that raise the question of belonging and exclusion. Rather than giving an overview on theories of institutions, we will base this discussion on two—radically heterogeneous—scholars: Arnold Gehlen and Sara Ahmed. Gehlen is somewhat infamous as a conservative thinker who came to terms with the Nazi government rather easily and who nevertheless played an important role in the post-war intellectual scene in West Germany. Against this background, his praise of institutions appears dubious. Nevertheless, his theory of institutions provides important insights into the reach and importance of institutions for any cultural practice, insights that are particularly relevant for an understanding of musical practices.

Ahmed, on the other hand, is a feminist theorist of diversity and postcoloniality and thus embodies a position that could not be more different from Gehlen's. Her book on institutions explicitly focusses on the question of exclusion and the possibility of change, topics all but absent in Gehlen's work. However, this does not lead her to a generalised scepticism towards institutions as such that was common in the political thinking and practice in the 1960s. Rather than imagining an impossible utopian future that would do away with institutions, she insists on the continuous necessity of working within them and making them less exclusionary. We might thus call Gehlen's and Ahmed's work two contributions to an institutional *realism*: acknowledging their fundamentality and indispensability *and* their inherently problematic character.

For Gehlen, institutions are fundamentally comprised of culturally constituted, stabilised, and habitualised behaviour and its material complements.[6] One example he gives is the knife and the act of cutting, which are strictly complementary, the knife embodying a normative suggestion (*Sollsuggestion*) how it should be used. The term reminds us that the affordances of the objects that surround us have a normative social dimension. This simple structure can be augmented up to very complex societal institutions, which have usually lost any obvious connection to everyday concerns and immediate desires. In the end, society is nothing but a network of institutions, which even ideas and concepts are dependent on.

We can look at musical instruments as a particularly illuminative example of why we must consider even the use of the most elementary tools as institutions. The prerequisites of playing an instrument are extensive, learning to play it requires immense effort and discipline, and a good part of this discipline consists in shaping one's body according to established rules. Some of these rules and norms are built into the instrument, but never all of them, and learning to play it always means learning to play it *right* (which may extend to the 'right' way to play it wrong, etc.), i.e. within a culturally established context, usually an institution in

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[6] We find similarly broad concepts of institution in Mary Douglas, whose minimal definition is nothing more than a convention (1986, 46), and in Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann who write: "Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors" (1966, 54). Note that they introduce the idea that institutions relate to certain types of actors, which Gehlen all but ignores.

the more traditional sense. Institutions can accommodate a great variety of sub-jective motives of action without endangering their function. In fact, the "relief" (*Entlastung*) they offer subjectively depends on precisely this: the possibility to perform actions without reflecting on their form and without having to muster the appropriate motives. Having to rely on a perfect alignment of all individual motives would make the functioning of societal institutions all but impossible. The way the members of publicly financed orchestras in Germany speak about their professional life offers a very revealing example of this: when playing a concert, they are "on duty" (*im Dienst*).

Gehlen speaks, somewhat brutally, of our being "subsumed" by various institu-tions (Gehlen 1956, 68), suggesting a relationship of more or less complete sub-ordination. This observation is echoed in Andrea Fraser's famous statement that "the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside of ourselves" (Fraser 2009, 414). This should not be understood as a defeatist statement based on a sloppy appropriation of theoretical concepts (Raunig 2009, 5–6) but primarily as a recog-nition that an institution is not some mechanism that remains external to us even if we are trapped in it. As Gehlen insists, it shapes our desires and needs along with our abilities.

While it appears harsh and slightly out of place in Fraser's case, Raunig's cri-tique is apt in the case of Gehlen's pitiless evocation of our 'subsumption'. Raunig quotes Foucault's observation that the development of what he calls governmental-ity also engendered a concurrent questioning of its principles, namely, critique

> as at once partner and adversary of the arts of governing, as a way of suspecting them, of challenging them, of limiting them, of finding their right measure, of transforming them, of seeking to escape these arts of governing or, in any case, to displace them, as an essen-tial reluctance, but also and in that way as a line of development of the arts of governing (Foucault 1996, 384).

Relating this to institutions and their critique, critique would thus be a shadow of institutional life, something it engenders and suppresses at the same time. This, of course, is something that Gehlen is not willing to acknowledge. Still, Raunig's flight or escape from the institutions we find ourselves subsumed by is "a flight that is simultaneously an 'instituent practice'" (Raunig 2009, 7). Countering the fetishisation of closure he finds in Fraser, Raunig describes these instituting prac-tices as something not completely apart from institutions but avoiding the closure and calcified power structures they entail.

While we are not convinced that we can make a categorical distinction between (bad) institutions and (good) instituting practices, we would like to point to an interesting remark Gehlen makes. With no apparent intention of explicitly address-ing the question of critique, he writes: "She who raises the question of meaning has either lost her way or expresses, consciously or unconsciously, a desire for other institutions than the existing ones" (Gehlen 1956, 69). His point is that ask-ing for the meaning of institutions and practices already presupposes a minimal distance to them, thus implying that such a distance is possible. Asking *why* things

are done a certain way very soon runs into difficulties, comparable maybe to Wittgenstein's bedrock where all justifications end and "I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do'" (Wittgenstein 2009, § 217). According to Mary Douglas, this is exactly the point where institutionalisation has been successful (Douglas 1986, 47) because it has become completely normalised. Insistent questioning thus implies either unfamiliarity or dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction with existing institutions is the very starting point for Ahmed's research and practice. Her focus is on diversity work within institutions, which by definition is about challenging and changing them. She illustrates the job description of the diversity worker with a picture of a brick wall and contends: "The institutions can be experienced by practitioners *as resistance*" (Ahmed 2012, 26). This is the flipside of the orientating and stabilising function of institutions that Gehlen considers unconditionally beneficial: not only are they resistant to change, they may appear as the very embodiment of resistance. This resistance, however, and possibly the very existence of the normative side of the institution will remain invisible to those who seamlessly fit in it and see no reason to change it. As a normative framework of acting, assigning, and recognising legitimacy, the institution thus might not surface at all for those whose legitimacy is never questioned.

On the other hand, those who are explicitly or implicitly excluded from it or whose legitimacy is constantly put into question experience its active resistance, which is often based on social conventions that are never explicitly stated. Ahmed's prime example is her own as a Black woman in academia (which she has consciously left), but such exclusions exist in the field of music as well. Here, as Scharff argues, gender, racial, and class inequalities have been shown to lead to "underrepresentation of women, black and minority ethnic players, as well as musicians from working-class backgrounds", in addition to "other patterns, including horizontal and vertical segregation, but also more complex issues such as the association of classical music with whiteness" (2017, 41).[7]

The question of exclusion gives another, less harmless meaning to losing one's way: those who are structurally excluded will always appear as having lost their way, and instead of experiencing the institution as providing beneficial and reassuring stability, they will continually feel out of place and be reminded of it. For them, there is no normalisation.

For her analyses, Ahmed draws on the "new institutionalism" in the social sciences (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Brinton and Nee 1998; Lowndes and Roberts 2013) with its attention to the genesis, functioning, and modes of continuance of institutions, shifting the focus away from stability and from the danger of an uncritical affirmation of the status quo. However, her own work leads her to a healthy scepticism towards theories that stress the fluidity and precarity of institutional structures and the categories they embody and enforce. For this reason,

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[7] Our focus on Western art music should not be taken to imply that exclusions like this are absent from other musical traditions: see, e.g. Reddington 2007 on the forgotten women of rock music and Krishna 2013 on caste and Carnatic music.

she may find herself closer to Gehlen than to, for instance, Actor Network Theory, even though she would abhor his position politically. This is where realism comes in: the fundamental question must be "how what is ungrounded can become a social ground" (Ahmed 2012, 182), thus acknowledging the persistence of institutions as well as their contingency and changeability.

All this reminds us that institutions are instances of "legitimized social grouping" based on mechanisms of (partial or complete) inclusion and exclusion (Douglas 1986, 46). Ahmed calls them "kinship technologies" and explains: "a way of 'being related' is a way of reproducing social relations" (Ahmed 2012, 38). This leaves open whether the relations in question are produced by the institution or only actualised and enforced by it. In the case of Western music institutions we have an interplay of both: not everybody is equally welcome, but only those who have gone through the treadmill of institutional training are set apart from everybody else by being legitimised to continue making their way through the institutional network of 'classical' music in which New Music largely participates.

In this context we can consider institutions as places or sites both in a literal and in a metaphorical sense: the university and the conservatory are located in specifically designed buildings, the concert hall *is* a building (and a dispositive that is surprisingly transportable), but entering the building does not make one part of the institution. In order to achieve that, you have to take up residence in it, to inhabit it, as Ahmed puts it—a privilege that is not granted to everyone. Although it may be frustrating or even distressing, not or *not quite* inhabiting an institution and its norms opens a way of critically reflecting on them: asking why. It is in this sense that the apparent outsider who is continually looked upon as if she had lost her way may be in a good position to analyse the workings of the institution, just like the social climber of petit bourgeois and/or provincial origin who is left with "a *cleft habitus*, inhabited by tensions and contradictions" (Bourdieu 2008, 100) is a natural sociologist.

In the broad sense expounded here, the concept of institution involves all four levels of mediation of music that Georgina Born has proposed: the first and fourth, which relate to the emergent microsocialities in musical performances and the institutional framework of music in the more traditional sense, respectively, but also the second, which refers to imagined communities projected by musical practices, and the third, which references wider social identity formations in the way they are refracted in and through music (Born 2012).

How can this be applied to a situation where almost no one will subscribe to being 'subsumed' by the institutions or of being completely at home in them, even those who appear to be at their defining centre? Where the claim of criticality is a discursive prerequisite for being taken seriously? This is certainly much more pronounced in the art world, but we can observe the same tendency in the world of New Music (Rebhahn 2014). Even though the situation Ahmed analyses is much more hurtful individually and socially, this problem can be compared to what she observes in "critical" white colleagues: "When criticality becomes an ego ideal, it can participate in not seeing complicity" (Ahmed 2012, 179). In our

case criticality is not just an individual ego ideal but a professional habitus, a manner of inhabiting the very institution one claims to be critical of.

In the following section we want to consider the way institutional critique has been conceptualised, with a focus on the visual arts. Rather than reiterating its history, which would far exceed the scope of this introduction, we want to focus on the question of how critique relates to its object, or, more specifically, how it situates itself within or vis-à-vis its institutions.

2.3   Critique, the Arts, and New Music

According to Peter Bürger's well-known analysis, it was what he referred to as the 'historical' avant-gardes of the early twentieth century (Dadaism, Surrealism, Futurism, the movements in the early years of the Soviet Union) that launched the first attack on the institution of art, an attack that remains the reference for all later critical endeavours. In their case, the target was not any particular set of institutions but the institution of art as such and its alleged autonomy. For Bürger, the project of the avant-garde was to shock, denounce, and ultimately overthrow the bourgeois construction of the institution of art, which provides its autonomy and thus curtails its ability to intervene directly in society, forestalling its impact. His project involved establishing the historical avant-gardes as a singular historical moment creating a break from tradition that cannot be repeated in the same way again, but also ultimately failing to completely overthrow the institution of art.

From this perspective, the artistic movements of the 1960s, among which institutional critique may be counted, are 'neo-avant-gardes', feeble attempts to revive the original impetus without achieving its radicality: "the neo-avant-garde institutionalizes the avant-garde as art and thus negates genuinely avant-gardiste intentions" (Bürger 1984, 58). For Berger, the critique of art as an institution has been superseded by a plurality of critiques of specific institutions of art, none of which still subscribes to the goal of tearing down the boundary between art and everyday 'life'.

Hal Foster offers a more favourable reading of the neo-avant-garde, arguing that Bürger, in his overreliance on artists' own interpretations of their work, misses the fundamental relationality of artistic critique and its ultimate dependence on a given historical constellation (Foster 1996, 15–16). In its place, Foster argues for a reading of the avant-gardist project as a more generalised schema, fleshed out by specific historical constellations, but in this sense also able to dialogue with itself across history. This leads to what he sees as 'waves' of neo- and neo-neo-avant-gardes across the twentieth century in dialogue with their past manifestations, and a more generalised formulation of its project of critique as "*interminable*" (Foster 1996, 15). Significantly for us, this leads Foster to frame avant-gardist critique as fundamentally *contextual* in its reactions to specific historical and geographical situations (e.g. interbellum Zurich Dada vs. post-defeat Berlin Dada), and *performative* in that "these attacks on art were waged, necessarily, in relation to

its languages, institutions, and structures of meaning, expectation, and reception" (Foster 1996, 16).

From this position we gain two insights. The first is the recourse to the performative situation and a related situatedness of artistic critique. This connection, which with Jackson we will also call a *theatricality*, will be addressed shortly.

Second, such a generalised (genericised) recipe for critique, with its postmodernist undertones, raises the issue of relativising visual arts critique of the parameters of art production and reception into meaninglessness. As Marina Vishmidt remarks, critique has become "hegemonic", "the sine qua non for discursive legitimacy in the circuits of art production and mediation" (Vishmidt 2008, 253). Irit Rogoff has characterised this as a

> move from criticism to critique to criticality—from finding fault, to examining the underlying assumptions that might allow something to appear as a convincing logic, to operating from an uncertain ground which, while building on critique, wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis; other than one of illuminating flaws, locating elisions, allocating blames. (Rogoff 2008, 99–100)

If we accept Rogoff's diagnosis, even 'not quite inhabiting' the institution is now being rejected by many who insist on their belonging to the institutions they critique and their responsibility towards those institutions. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this generalisation of critique to an attitude of criticality leads to a certain degree of mitigation, maybe even neutralisation—as if artists were anticipating and assenting to their own 'subsumption' by the institution. Indeed, Vishmidt observes "a striking overlap between the ideological coordinates of neoliberal dogma and criticality: mobility, adaptation, boundlessness" (Vishmidt 2008, 259).

This overlap has of course been noted before, namely, as one aspect of what Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello famously called "artistic critique" of capitalism since 1968. In their portrayal of the capitalist system, they argue critique is a major (but not the only) force by which it is able to continually renew itself. Artists' utopian claims are dismissed as always-already subsumed within this model. As with Foster's schematic view of avant-gardism, and Vishmidt's argument that critique has become a prerequisite, there is no aspect of escape or beyond in this model, critique's relationality means that it is always in a relationship of maintenance with the object of critique, as they write "even in the case of the most radical movements, [critique] shares 'something' with what it seeks to criticize" (Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, 40). While the first response to critique can be the loss of effectiveness of one rationale for capitalist accumulation, the result is inevitably a new rationale better adapted to the critique itself.

This builds a fatalistic backdrop, wherein the "attempt to escape the web of fate [is] the web of fate", as Timothy Morton sets up this looping relationship (2016, 61). The anxiety and paralysis this produces—artists are as determined to break this loop as they are fearful of repeating it and becoming agents of capitalist expansion—can perhaps partly explain this shift away from utopian critical analysis and denunciation and towards situated solutions. But it seems that criticality

the way Vishmidt understands it, even with such micropolitical adaptations, is in danger of practicing a type of 'anticipatory obedience', anticipating its own utilisation by the institution. By contrast, even though critique cannot shake off its ties to its object, it may be able to retain a minimal distance towards that object and thus gain some room to manoeuvre. It is certainly true that imagining a different future of art, just like imagining a different society, will inevitably share 'something' with the (art)world it finds itself in. Anything else would be naïve utopianism or abstract negation. But it would be wrong to construe this as a choice between utopianism and complicity.

The question we have to ask is whether it is possible to retain a perspective that points beyond the affirmation and amelioration of what is, despite this apparent realism. This problem is closely related to the category of the new—the pivotal category of modernism—that has become problematic in contemporary art but still reigns supreme in New Music, inscribed as it is in its very name. Theodor W. Adorno finds an interesting metaphor for a type of newness that is neither an abstract nor a determinate negation nor manages to leap into completely uncharted territory: he evokes the image of a child searching for a truly new chord on the keyboard (Adorno 1997, 32). This image of searching for the new within a bounded multiplicity captures this separation between the intention of utopian newness, which is embodied by the dynamics of art itself more than the intentions of any specific artist, and its groundedness in the already-existing. It is the *search for* and the *promise of* the new where the utopian spirit is kept alive.

Of course, Adorno is a difficult ally when it comes to institutional critique. For him, the utopian perspective of art is not to be gained by relinquishing its autonomy, however precarious it may be, but by strengthening it (Adorno 1997, 225–228). Art is autonomous and *fait social* at the same time, and truly contemporary artworks inhabit this antinomy and reflect it rather than claiming to resolve it to one of its sides. This reflection, however, is supposed to take place in the way they choose and process their material, not in any explicit critique of its institutions. We will return to this in the following section, as it remains the core of New Music's self-conception. What interests us here is the fact that this way of conceptualising the search for the new might be helpful in our discussion of critique, its relationality, and the institutions' ability to assimilate it in order to transform themselves. If institutional critique wants to hold on to some kind of utopian perspective instead of just being functionalised and absorbed, it may have to find new ways of not quite inhabiting its institutions.

The question of the new and the image of the child at the piano bring us back into closer proximity to music, which is all but absent in Bürger's and Foster's accounts. However, the latter's understanding of the avant-garde as a generalised schema whose contextual and performative dimensions lend it its particular specificity leaves ample room to describe differences between the various artistic disciplines with regard to the role of critique in relation to their own institutions, akin to the specificity of the subject's subsumption of the institution with Gehlen combined with the specificity needed to critique it. Many important and influential movements of the 1960s were born out of an awareness of developments in

other artistic disciplines, with temporary alignments and mutual borrowings often leading to frictions and productive misunderstandings. Since then it seems like the boundaries between the different artistic disciplines have partly solidified again, and while a lot of contemporary artistic work crosses these boundaries, the frictions and misunderstandings proved to be astonishingly persistent.

The scholar who has worked on this most extensively is Shannon Jackson, with a focus on the performing and the visual arts. She relates the critical project outlined by Adorno directly to both institutional critique in the visual arts and to the societal role of the performing arts. The frequently noted etymological link between theatre and theory as a basis for understanding of theatre's societal function as "a space of critique, as a space for 'viewing the very framework' of social and artistic evaluation", she argues, is a parallel development to the phenomenon of institutional critique in the visual arts (Jackson 2022, 13). Thus for her, works focussing on the institutional context of artistic work are what has led to a new, broader interarts conversation around the role of the institution in co-constituting artistic work, the role of the art institution in society, and the questioning of art's autonomy (Jackson 2022, 15).

For Jackson, reflection on and critique of the institutional infrastructure of the arts thus functions as the generalised common ground for interarts discussions. Our question would be whether we could not also turn this argument around: it was and is interarts discussion, interdisciplinary work, movement across artistic boundaries, etc. that have opened the door for a closer look at the various institutions of contemporary art. They come into view precisely when they are defamiliarised by such interdisciplinary work and by hosting people that do not normally inhabit them, as argued with Gehlen and Ahmed in the previous section. Potentially this paves the way for a different kind of critique that might be called lateral. It is, however, revealing that New Music is completely absent from the interarts dialogues Jackson refers to. This may be due in part to her own background and the works she focuses on. However, there is a real absence of contemporary music from these debates, which points to its relatively isolated position in the field of the arts and its complicated relation to institutional critique. In recent years, there has been a surge in intermedial, interdisciplinary, and conceptual work in contemporary music, which may signal a gradual change of this situation. Still, there is a long way to go.

Until then, we find a perfect formulation of New Music's relation to itself and its own situatedness in Morton's book on ecological thinking: "something maniacally deviating from itself in a desperate attempt to be itself" (Morton 2016, 110). As he remarks, this is close to Bergson's definition of what makes us laugh. Taking this humourous view of critique means acknowledging its depressive element, that as Boltanski and Chiapello argue there is no promised escape, no elsewhere that will not be the same as it already is here, but also that the task at hand is not sublimating this depression into artistic practice, but rather inhabiting the already known, the existing, and the problematic in a different way, as perhaps in the case of Adorno's child searching for new chords on the piano. As Morton argues, the goal is not to stop this loop functioning, but rather to "interrupt the

violence that tries to straighten" it, in other words the processes that canonise, that exclude, and that maintain this system of constant manic deviation (Morton 2016, 157).

While such a view hollows out New Music's existential belief in constant innovation, it also opens the possibility of recontextualising practices that perhaps do not 'sound like' the traditional form of avant-gardist critique in music. Latching onto the contemporary interest in searching for excluded and previously omitted voices, we see a new kind of New Music occurring at many contemporary music festivals, one that tries to redefine its capital N Newness in terms of a minority politics.[8] We argue that this approach is in important ways a departure from the established notions of critique present in New Music that also disrupts many of the norming functions of its institution in both artistic and organisational practices.

2.4   New Music and Critique

While Foster or Jackson reveals genealogies of visual and performing arts practices that bring the institutions of art themselves into view, the starting point of this volume is the chronic under-reflection of these topics in New Music. Here, a narrower view of critique has long prevailed, whose horizon remains the concert event, and which remains fixed on an idea of musical production based on technical virtuosity, hardly ever questioning its medium. Viewing itself as inheriting an avant-gardist tradition, we can observe how New Music critically reflects on various facets of contemporary society, however unlike its peers in other musical genres and art forms, this positioning unfolds within the generally score-based performance of discrete, newly commissioned works by authorial composers in an established style. The institution of New Music *qua* institution thus remains largely invisible and unreflected. While New Music can be said to reflect on, develop, and expand its medium, what is usually missing is the recognition that the constitution of the medium is itself a product of the New Music dispositive, i.e. product and part of its specific set of institutions. 'Music' itself remains largely unchallenged, producing a throttling and limiting of the horizon of critique in New Music (Grüny 2021a).

This section examines some of the spaces of exception to this rule both among artistic practices and current organisational practices. In doing so, we wish to explore facets of New Music production that have accompanied it throughout its history, but have been largely neglected from normative histories of New Music.

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[8] For a discussion of this ongoing process within the German music scene, see here also Bhagwati 2019. Cf. the interview with Peter Meanwell and Tine Rude from the Norwegian Borealis – a festival for experimental music in this volume.

2.4.1 Artistic Practices

A key area where self-reflection and discussion about the limitations of the New Music dispositive continue to take place is in approaches most commonly labelled as 'music theatre'. Referencing again Jackson and the questions of interdisciplinarity, critical work, and the interarts conversation, we find clear reason for this. In her reading of Michael Fried's critique of minimal art, the concept of theatricality can be defined as "an 'in-between' state in which forms belonged to no essential artistic medium; to work across media, that is, to violate medium-specificity" (Jackson 2005, 172). Jackson thus advances the argument that theatricality becomes cast as a method for modernist, medium-specific arts to re-evaluate the conditions of their production (173), as the underdetermined-yet-ubiquitous space of encounter with the work. For those seeking to highlight the conditioning and framing of the work by the institution, she argues that 'theatricality' describes the manipulation of the performative encounter with the artwork, bringing into relief how the neutrality and invisibility claimed by its institutional frame occludes as much as it reveals. Understanding theatricality as an extension of the encounter with the work, the argument for music theatre as a key site for artistic resistance to the institution of New Music becomes clear. The ability to address not just materials authorised by New Music, creating instead 'a space for viewing' the authorising framework itself, and ultimately for suggesting how it can be otherwise, continue to be powerful tools used by institutionally critical artists.

The work of Mauricio Kagel is an illustration of such a practice focussing on deconstructing the New Music dispositive. With his concept of Instrumental or New Music Theatre explored in works such as *Staatstheater* (1967–70), Kagel's practice focussed on critiquing established categories through the de- and re-composition of their components. Similarly, the compositional approaches of Vinko Globokar and Dieter Schnebel, and, even more radically, the Scratch Orchestra initiated by Cornelius Cardew reimagine the role of the composer through forms of collaboration in an attempt to overcome the alienation of the musicians from their performance. Adding to this, Cage's music theatre works are some of the clearest examples of the composer engaging directly with institutions and their functioning. This can be seen, for example, in *Europeras 1&2* (1985–1987), which (re)combines elements from 128 eighteenth- and nineteenth-century operas using chance operations, or *Rolywholyover A Circus* (1993), which transposes his aleatoric approach into the museum context, employing chance operations to transform the museum's constituent aspects (collections, staff, visitors) into the materials for a performance (see Skurvida 2017).

Notably, not all these examples took place within the institutional context of theatre, which imposes its own restrictions. While Kagel explicitly relied on the proscenium stage and the degree of control it allows (Kagel 1975) and Globokar's and Schnebel's practice remained tied to the concert hall, the Scratch Orchestra preferred more flexible settings. We can distinguish three different ways of working with theatre or theatrical elements: music theatre in the sense of a new genre that sets itself apart from the more restricted and traditional genre of opera; musical practices that incorporate theatrical elements on the concert stage without

necessarily using them as a mode of institutional reflection; and music theatre as a conceptual tool to describe practices that employ theatricality in the broad sense expounded by Jackson in order to assemble the disparate elements necessary to bring the hidden structures of musical production to light, rather than leaving the constitution of this assemblage to the disciplinary defaults of New Music and its concert format.

A recent example of the latter can be found in Johannes Kreidler's *product placements* (2008), which the composer himself lists as "music theatre" (in quotation marks). The work consists of a short, 33" track consisting of 70′200 musical samples along with video documentation of the process of registering the samples with the German copyright organisation GEMA and delivering the resulting truckload of paperwork to their offices. The work was meant to demonstrate how copyright laws impede artistic creativity and freedom of expression, using a form of malicious compliance to surface the system's absurdity, as the administrative work of processing so many applications would have led to major disruptions at GEMA. In the documentary video, Kreidler explains that "the musical composition, the essay, the sculpture, the performance, and the entire discussion are materials: one could say it's a multimedia theatre work" (Kreidler 2019, 6′27″). In listing these elements together, Kreidler assembles disparate elements together in the Jacksonian sense, producing a situation that violates New Music's medium-specificity and makes visible a portion of its institution.

There has been an increase in recent years in artists assembling such heterogeneous elements together, creating project-specific ways of working with context and formats that emerge out of internal artistic logics. As Jörn Peter Hiekel argues, presentation is increasingly a core part of the artistic concept, blurring the line between music theatrical and concert situations, and thus often between musicians and performers (Hiekel 2018, 23). These productions are also increasingly eschewing interdisciplinary collaborations (defined by discrete roles working together) in favour of more transdisciplinary, team-based, and collective forms of production (Hiekel 2018, 33). While we have already shown the historical precedents for this kind of experimentation in experimental music, it must also be understood as symptomatic of a renewed artistic critique of the limitations of New Music's institutions, with all its affiliated complexity.

While ostensibly undermining the role of composer-as-author, as Groth has argued in her analysis of composer-performers onstage, such experiments also rely on and activate New Music's institutions in new ways, with such "'letting go'" of established hierarchies of composer and performer also paradoxically potentially strengthening auctorial presence (2016, 703). This again illustrates the dynamics of critique, here the attempted departure from the composer-as-author model, and its being interpreted as a potential retrenchment within the institution.

Groth also gestures to Jennifer Walshe's widely circulated "The New Discipline" text as an articulation of Jackson's concept of theatricality as the assemblage of messy and disparate elements to undo medium-specificity. Groth summarises it as

> a practice in which composers no longer remain behind their desks to write scores addressing professional musicians, instead engaging with several aspects in the process of creating a work: the concept, rehearsals, production, staging, and, finally, being present at the performance either off or on stage. (Groth 2016, 693)

While Groth examines works by Hodkinson, Steen-Andersen and Rønsholdt, this approach is also well-represented in Trond Reinholdtsen's *The Norwegian Opra* which opened this introduction.

In addition to addressing forms of collaboration and presentation, many artists are also directly addressing social and political issues with their work, as well as experimenting with new organisational structures. These include projects like Hannes Seidl's *Good Morning Deutschland* (2016) giving a voice to a wave of refugees arriving in Germany through the creation of a radio station, or experimental contemporary music publisher Y-E-S collaborating with C.A.S.C.A.T.A. and the Sardinian anti-militarist movement to publish *A Bucolic Treasure Hunt* (2020), a score for a treasure hunt around the RWM bomb factory in Sardinia. Artist-run networks and groups, often organised around supporting gender minorities in contemporary music, furthermore, are practicing non-normative and experimental organisational structures to support such new practices. These include Damkapellet in Denmark, Konstmusiksystrar in Sweden, and Gender Relations in New Music (GRiNM) in Germany, among others. In addition to providing support networks for those excluded by the New Music institution, these artist-run organisations typically mirror their values in their forms of organisation, such as collective and non-hierarchical leadership, while also experimenting with alternative structures for creating contemporary music performance, such as Konstmusiksystrar's experimentation with chance operations in musical programming (Antonsson and Jakobsson 2020).

2.4.2 Institutional Practices

In part as a response to these institutionally critical approaches, artist-run institutions, and alternative formats carried out over the past decade, as well as due to a larger interest among cultural institutions in issues of representation and minority politics following the mass social movements of the 2010s (Occupy Wallstreet, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, etc.), New Music institutions have recently also engaged in forms of institutional critique as well. This can be described as a form of new institutionalism, following Ekeberg (2003), wherein the organisers of New Music institutions are adapting themselves to the aforementioned working methods of artists, as well as critically intervening in their own embeddedness within institutions of arts funding and patronage, city marketing and tourism, and the vision of experimental musical cultures they reproduce in the city.

Triggered by the recognition of the lack of female composers programmed at New Music festivals, many New Music institutions are currently placing a major programming focus on the inclusion of previously excluded voices. With this new

perspective, they explore the ways in which the musical autonomy they have long sought to provide has not lived up to their universalist rhetoric, and are inflected by larger societal forces that lead them to take note of implicit exclusions on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity/'race', and/or ability.

What appears unique to this moment are these activist approaches to *running* and maintaining the institutions of New Music: historically, many well-known institutional efforts such as, for example, those by Karl Amadeus Hartmann (founding Musica Viva in Munich), Pierre Boulez (founding IRCAM in Paris), or Hans Werner Henze (founding the Munich Biennale for New Music Theater) seem better understood as attempts at achieving the stability that institutions provide in order to more richly realise their ultimately musical goals. By contrast, institutions' stratification and maintenance of a status quo opposed to organisers' commitments to intersectional diversification, decolonisation, and accessibility are now framed as the problem to be overcome. This new approach has more in common with the history of critical and activist institutional work in New Music briefly sketched above, focussed less on reproducing stability than on an expansion of a socially engaged art to the field of organising. Such an approach also connects more readily to Bürger's definition of the avant-garde as "protest, whose aim it is to reintegrate art into the praxis of life, [revealing] the nexus between autonomy and the absence of any consequences" (Bürger 1984, 22), which fuelled initiatives such as Cardew's Scratch Orchestra.

Other movements that from today's perspective might be understood as institutional critique were unique to music: Arnold Schoenberg's *Verein für Musikalische Privataufführungen* was created to provide a space for those who were willing to engage in the challenge of listening to new, complex works, and excluding those who were not, thus *withdrawing* from the public into an even more exclusive space, while Paul Hindemith's attempts of promoting *Laienmusik* took the opposite route of attempting to reintegrate contemporary music—not necessarily 'New Music'—into amateur musical practice, thus *broadening* its reach and impact (Hindemith 1952, ch. 11). While reacting to the "crisis of the musical public" (Kapp 1998) by moving in different, irreconcilable directions (freedom of individual artistic expression vs. social practices to overcome alienation), what these examples share is a rejection of the institution's attempts to make itself invisible.

Significant about the renewed interest among New Music institutions in their own construction is that once again it is the institutions of New Music, their stability, norms, and related exclusions, that come into view. Just as New Music artists have generally been content to operate within the parameters of the concert event set out for them by New Music institutions, so too have organisers operated complicitly with the status quo in this regard as well. But when, for example, New Music was confronted with its longstanding and systemic gender imbalances, there comes also the need to contend with how sustained institutional policies and artistic norms, as well as their interactions, come together to produce

(and continually reproduce) the problem.[9] Attempting to reform the institutional infrastructures in order to address this problem involves returning to the matter of critique of the institution, which must justify itself within the framework of what is possible given the specifics of a particular institution, while also engaging in a different kind of utopian rhetoric and engagement with the new than the art works they aim to support. We view the attempts at addressing these critiques as belonging to two categories, representing bifurcated visions of role of the arts institution in society.

The first are attempts at including more diverse artists in the programming of New Music festivals using measures such as quotas, targeted open calls, workshops, and programming efforts to include people with more diverse backgrounds into the education and commissioning of New Music, thereby attempting to remedy this injustice and widen the group of people offered the possibility for artistic creation with a relatively high degree of autonomy, free of most economic pressures, etc. At the core of this approach is an underlying belief in the continued importance of New Music's institutions. This is all the more significant because in contrast to the general situation of the visual arts, New Music has over the twentieth century cultivated a proximity to hegemonic power, with most of its funding coming from governmental subsidies for the arts. Many hard-fought political battles have carved out this niche where relatively autonomous artistic production is not purpose-bound [*zweckgebunden*], which this position views as needing to be preserved. Acknowledging New Music's shortcomings in terms of its diversity is the acknowledgement that these conditions for production are not accessible to everyone, but that with specific reforms there remains a vision of New Music which this idealist and emancipatory aspiration with an updated effort of achieving civic universality. Here, as with Schoenberg's *Verein für Musikalische Privataufführungen*, the individual freedom to self-realise without constraint is prioritised above all else, and the critique follows the familiar path of holding the institution's promise against its reality—the classical mode of immanent critique that we find in some of the critiques of the institution of the museum as well.

The second set of responses can be characterised as social ones, acknowledging that the functioning of New Music institutions is experienced as resistance to participation, and instituting changes to make more people feel welcome, as with Hindemith's approach. *Borealis: A Festival for Experimental Music*, for example, has focussed a lot of work on this inclusivity aspect, such as working with local security companies to create more tolerant spaces, introducing gender-non-binary bathrooms in all venues, training festival volunteers in non-violent confrontation,

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[9] On this topic as well, see again Ahmed 2012. Arguing in regard to institutional racism, she highlights the institutional strategy of declarations of racism ('we are racist') as a "claim to have overcome the conditions (unseen racism) that require the speech act in the first place" (46). Such attempts create a "before-and-after narrative" (47) that redefines the exclusions of racism as in the past, and the current institution as recovering from this, redefining the exclusionality the concept of institution was introduced to describe.

etc. Such measures seek to dismantle in the words of Ahmed how the institution can present itself as a brick wall to some, or otherwise as a result of its functioning discriminate against certain kinds of people.[10] Here, assembly and music's capacity to elicit the festive and the communal become forms of resistance to a society focussed on individual responsibility and accumulation. Diversification of artists and audiences occurs to these ends, with the increasing of local resiliency viewed as an act of micropolitical resistance to a molar politics in permacrisis, as we have already explored in the previous section. Musical programming is put in service of these goals, favouring collaboration and accessibility over its autonomy.

As these experiments and debates are still in their infancy, these artistically and socially critical approaches remain reconcilable with each other among the most progressive festivals. However, they represent significant-yet-distinct avenues to the future of New Music that must still be debated and explored. Yet this also points to something more fundamental as well. Such fundamental critiques coming from seemingly every direction suggest we are in a current moment defined by a will to renegotiate the assemblage of the institution of New Music itself. Understood as a way of organising human behaviour, as a stratified social entity in which we as subjects are subsumed, its deployment has become denormalised, appearing in this moment of its breaking down, surfacing itself by creating resistances and what are perceived as brick walls. It is from this (already past) moment of rupture and the epistemological break it has caused that the institution itself is moved from background to foreground, becoming the object of study. The historical conditions and shifted power relations that have led to the New Music institution itself becoming the "object of discourse" have become open questions that this publication is now able to explore (Foucault 2002, 44 ff.). This is the project of *New Music and Institutional Critique*, probing this new object from different perspectives, attempting to tease apart the tightly wound knot of institution and critique in light of such sustained, varied, and basal attacks on its core principles. What follows is thus the beginning of our attempt, together with others, of thinking through a discourse shifting away from the limited, internalist discussion of the discrete New Music work within the concert event and towards discussion about music and its place and function in society.

In this introduction, we have used the capitalised term 'New Music' because it refers to the musical genre that unifies this publication. It also points to its situatedness, which we are not attempting to hide: We are writing primarily from a European, more specifically German perspective. This is where our examples

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[10] Inverting this, Mörsch advances the idea of 'other visitors as intervention' in relation to an anecdote about bringing a group of 30 young people to an art exhibition who possessed 'little of what in Swiss society would be considered symbolic capital' (2017, 173), and who were subsequently accused by staff of stealing a small object from the institution. Part of her project is to interrogate the extent to which such rhetorics of diversity remain within the 'system of art', without affecting the actual institutions showing work, another layer to be considered in this discussion of the denormalisation of the institution (176).

come from, and this is the institutional situation we are referring to. However, we have not insisted that authors adopt any specific terminology. Given the subject of this volume, we think it is of particular importance to allow for this heterogeneous cluster of terms with their variously inflected and often locally connotated meanings to be communicated also to the reader.

3   Chapters

Scholars

Contrasting Ari Benjamin Meyer's *Rehearsing Philadelphia* (2022) and Kevin Beasley's *Assembly* (2019) at The Kitchen, NYC, **G Douglas Barrett** presents in Chap. 2 two examples of artists' parainstitutional music projects reimagining the institutions of art music by borrowing methods from contemporary art. While both wield the authorising power of art curatorship to frame certain kinds of experiences as art, they move in opposite directions. At the centre of this chiasma lies Barrett's attempt to reconstruct our understanding of art music as a category of artistic production as vibrant and diverse as contemporary art. He demonstrates how this can be achieved by working within and alongside existing institutions, rather than outright rejecting them, as earlier forms of institutional critique would have it.

In Chap. 3, **Christa Brüstle** then explores why addressing gender and diversity issues remains a fundamental critique of music's institutions. She argues that the thematisation of gender remains a radical critique of music's phallocentric basis, understood as the universalising of the male perspective, which underpins most musical education, performance, and theory. Addressing the specific configurations of this problem in both classical and new or contemporary music, she sketches the range of issues that adopting a position sensitive to issues of gender and diversity would implicate, including addressing gender disparity in canon formation, divestment from a narrative of neutrality, the open thematisation of marginalised sexual orientations, attention to bodies, and the phenomenological aspects of musical perception and listening, as well as the relationship between music and audience.

In Chap. 4, **Martin Iddon** provides a detailed historical account of the institutional critiques of the Darmstadt Summer Course in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, which in addition to providing stunning parallels to today, hones in on a key moment in the institution's history. Critiques of the course's rigidity and academicism in the early 1960s later give way to fundamental calls for its democratisation and diversification in the face of an institution increasingly out of touch with young composers. Iddon portrays how over the course of the 1970s, the reforms initiated in response to these critiques would result in it increasingly turning its attention inwards to territorial disputes between compositional styles and away from critique of the institution itself. He concludes by highlighting the work of some lesser known attendants at the courses during that time, specifically Grillo, Henderson, Kubisch, and Mosconi, who represent for him an unrealised

future past of New Music in the 1980s, and whose progressive visions of New Music may still retain their potency as historical precursors to a rearticulated vision of its critique today.

Patrick Valiquet's Chap. 5 expands a speculative historiography of the same historical period. He focusses on the Centre Universitaire Expérimentale de Vincennes (Paris 8), created as a concession to May 1968 protestors, whose radical music department at an epicentre of postmodernist thinking was both important and has since been largely erased from histories of twentieth-century music. In his reading, New Musicology's trope of music scholarship's lateness is symptomatic of how those critical experiments gave way to an aesthetic and social stagnation of music research starting in the 1980s that continues today. For Valiquet, universities and contemporary musicians have become complicit with each other in erasing the public memory of modernism, but thus find themselves equally disarmed in the struggle against austerity.

In Chap. 6, **Benjamin Piekut** examines the history of twentieth-century Black music in the USA, focussing on how its existential struggles manifested themselves in a range of institutions and institutional critiques. Beginning with jazz's position as the first aesthetic dispositive to challenge European fine arts, he details the lasting importance of its central critiques for thinking about musical avant-gardism, including its impact on post-Cagean avant-gardes. He then outlines numerous strands of Black aesthetic traditions and their relationships to critique, accounting for the socioeconomic conditions of their possibility as an important part of understanding their achievements. Lastly, he connects this extensive overview of historical examples and debates to Raunig's concept of instituent practices, highlighting how Black musicians' approaches to navigating market forces and hegemonic power resulted in a range of strategies and tactics of resistance.

Artists

Opening the book's second section, **Trond Reinholdtsen** details in Chap. 7 how his fanatical pursuit of ultimate artistic autonomy and control of the means of production have led him to founding his own artist institution, The Norwegian Opra. Weaving together Broodthaers' affirmative critique of the museum with the aspirations of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, he makes the case for the musical pursuit of a freely interdisciplinary compositional engagement with musical 'material', casting off historical cruft where it does not suit. Reinholdtsen points to our global institutional instability to underscore the need for musical artists to reaffirm their importance in society in a positive light, while never compromising their artistic expression.

Sandeep Bhagwati's contribution for Chap. 8 also turns the perspective away from critiquing publicly funded cultural institutions in liberal and democratic societies. In doing so, he brings into view the many private, corrupt, or authoritarian cultural institutions around the globe on which critique is wasted, as well as framing the idealistic belief in constantly improving to serve the public good at the foundation of institutions who do entertain critique of their operations. Bhagwati argues that the fundamental social contract underlying these institutions

is threatened across several vectors, and thus that the tools of critique today must take the form of allyship, collaboration, and constructive engagement rather than controversy and idealistic righteousness.

In Chap. 9, **Rosanna Lovell** and **Brandon Farnsworth** reflect on the actions of the activist group Gender Relations in New Music, which has been involved in many protest actions advocating for more diversity in the field of New Music. Sharing an inside view of the motivations, intentions, and challenges of these actions, they reveal the different modes of institutional critique practised by the collective and discuss the important role collectives can play in speaking out against institutions.

In Chap. 10, **Manos Tsangaris** provides a short meditation on the relationship between music and its institution, starting from first principles and exploring the constitution of the musical dispositive to arrive at an articulation of the critical project of the New Music scene. He ends by outlining the gradual stratification of this kind of critique, the slow process of its solidification until it finally becomes an institution unto itself.

Through an exploration of the motivations behind his 'meta-institutional' work *Kunsthalle für Musik*, **Ari Benjamin Meyers** argues in Chap. 11 that the fundamental difference between working in the institutions of music and contemporary art is that the former lacks a sustained critique of its conditions of production, presentation, and perception. By working within visual arts spaces such as the white cube, Meyers argues he is able to draw on just such a tradition of critique and institutional boundary pushing in his practice, affording a greater degree of autonomy in self-defining the parameters of the artistic work. To achieve this in music, he argues, the concept of audience understood as the product of the fundamental separation of musical production from its reception (i.e. its commodification) must be overcome.

Interviews

Chapter 12 opens the final section of the publication with an interview between **Peter Meanwell** and **Tine Rude** (current artistic director and former managing director, respectively) of Borealis – a festival for experimental music in Bergen, Norway, and Brandon Farnsworth. The festival works with an expanded definition of experimentation in both programming and how it is organised. It focusses on including artists pushing boundaries in a variety of contexts, trying to move beyond being a festival for any one genre. The festival also extends its concept of experimentation to include how it is organised, linking the act of hearing others' perspectives that experimental music demands of its listeners with fostering a sense of community among marginalised people and groups. This approach has led the festival to implement a number of accessibility and inclusion measures, creating a unique mix of forms of musical experimentation and community-building that materialise many other contributors' calls for modelling change in both form and content.

Chapter 13 consists of an interview between **Berno Odo Polzer** and Christian Grüny, discussing how Polzer approached being artistic director of the

MaerzMusik festival at the Berliner Festspiele. His approach focussed on strategies for situating contemporary music and sound practices within an interdisciplinary arts landscape, investing a unique level of care into the relation between musical programming and its contextualisation. To this end, Polzer emphasises fostering forms of collectivity and communality as the site of production of musical meaning, while also checking the often-hyperbolic claims that arts institutions make regarding their value to society.

In Chap. 14, **Samson Young** is interviewed by Brandon Farnsworth about his artistic practice starting as a composer of concert works now working mainly in visual arts contexts on musical topics. In discussing his practice, Young reveals a conception of the composer moving away from singular authorship towards collective creativity, and which fosters criticality through the dialogue it strikes with its audiences.

In Chap. 15, **Hannes Seidl** discusses with Christian Grüny the limitations of the New Music institution today through the lens of some of his recent work. His approach bears similarities to Reinholdtsen's artist institution, creating ad hoc coalitions of curious collaborators rather than relying on existing customs and defaults, which lead to creating works that mostly re-actualise the structures they are contained within. In doing this, Seidl discusses how much of his artistic practice unfolds in between the institutional norms and expectations of the venues that host his work, revealing further complex puzzles of audience expectations, working methods, and affordances of spaces themselves.

In Chap. 16, **meLê yamomo** is interviewed by Theresa Beyer about his views on efforts to decolonise New Music, issues of critique that this raises, and how his biographical experience being Dutch and Filipino cause him to reflect on his status in between coloniser and colonised. For yamomo, decolonialism, as with feminism and queerness before it, has already been eaten up by capitalism and now serves as a way of acquiring more capital. He argues that within contemporary music, the goal must not be to replace one system with another, but rather to focus on understanding the methods through which hierarchies and power positions are perpetuated in order to inform our decision-making as practitioners.

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Part I
Scholars

Institutions Against Art Music—Curation, Rehearsal, and Contemporary Art

2

G Douglas Barrett

1 Introduction

Institutions are pivotal in shaping and defining today's art music. Music organisations of various stripes commission new works, fund festivals, support educational programmes, and—in a recent disciplinary borrowing from the art world—curate concerts and performances.[1] Recently, some such organisations have begun to conceive music programming and curation together as a driver of social change, one answer to a broader call for increased diversity through the demographic restructuring of new music. In a rarer development, artists have participated directly in music programming efforts not by taking on jobs as arts administrators but by composing temporary organisations that exist both alongside and partially within existing institutions, formations I'll refer to in this chapter as parainstitutions.[2] This chapter analyses the recent work of contemporary artists who use such alternative organisations to challenge art music's historical ideological construction while gesturing towards its material transformation. Yet in a more radical disciplinary crossing, these artists reframe heterogeneous musics *as* contemporary art through, in one example,

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[1] The literature on music curation has expanded significantly in recent years. Notable texts include Hagen and Young 2020; in that volume, see especially Lewis, 11–22; Farnsworth 2020 and McKeon 2021. Note that for reasons that should become clear below, this essay distinguishes between music curation and contemporary art curation that includes music.

[2] It is unclear exactly when and where this term first appeared. Possibilities from contemporary art include: Gollan and Sobel 2016; Holert 2016; Vishmidt 2017. My usage here is the first I am aware of in the context of music.

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the transformational powers of art curation and, in another, by displaying musical rehearsal within novel parainstitutions. Ultimately, I argue that the consequences of these specific reframings of music as contemporary art are not simply a matter of labels and categories but rather include the concrete determination of *what art music is*, a determination with significant implications for music's timely demographic issues. Analysing such projects will nonetheless require separating out the disciplines of art and art music, while it also involves their overlap.

Consider authorship, for instance. Traceable to the coterminous emergence of the musical work-concept and the autonomous art object alongside bourgeois property rights during the eighteenth century, authorial attribution in both traditions remains discrete and singular despite production's requisitely social and collective nature. The artist and composer Ari Benjamin Meyers's watershed social practice project, *Rehearsing Philadelphia* (2022), consisted of a series of musical events—referred to as Solo, Duet, Ensemble, and Orchestra—held over 2 weeks in various locations throughout the eponymous city. The finale performance by Meyers's Public Orchestra took place on the Cherry Street Pier, a century-old public space now home to an indoor marketplace, artist studios, and artisanal shops. In one sense, the event appeared as an ordinary orchestra programme. Conductors led a large group of musicians surrounded by audience members who listened attentively to a programme of individual musical works. In another sense, the musicians departed from the symphonic tradition in terms of both repertoire and instrumentation. While comprising string, brass, and woodwind sections, the fifty-piece orchestra also included performers of the Bouzouki, Oud, Koto, Latin and Korean percussion, turntables, and synthesisers, along with vocalists whose melismatic ad libs resonated perhaps more with contemporary R&B than a symphony chorus. Performers were also amplified, and the sound production felt top notch. Regarding repertoire, the programme spanned the traditions of jazz, spoken word, popular, and art music with commissions from musicians and composers currently or formerly based in Philadelphia—poet and recording artist Ursula Rucker; singer-songwriter Xenia Rubinos; the surviving member of The Sun Ra Arkestra, Marshall Allen; the interdisciplinary artist Ann Carlson—and Meyers himself. But beyond his own orchestra composition, Meyers claims authorship of the entire 2-week *Rehearsing Philadelphia* event, which despite contributions from over 200 artists contains the subtitle *A Metascore by Ari Benjamin Meyers*. Remarkably, Meyers conceives this project not as music programming or even curation but as a socially engaged artwork (Meyers 2022).

This is not to suggest that Meyers uncritically applies authorship conventions from contemporary art to music, nor is it to contend that presenting music programming as an artwork is even a novel idea, but it is to acknowledge a tension perhaps between this apparent authorship hierarchy and the project's stated goal of challenging "institutions of power".[3] Challenging is of course not overthrowing.

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[3] Meyers 2021a. Commenting on a Meyers's related project, *Kunsthalle for Music*, McKeon contends, "Its authorship is not that of an artist, but a periperformative gesture […] whose reality is conditional on the communities affected by its address—not fixed, but in the making" (McKeon

And rather than rejecting institutions outright, Meyers operates within and alongside them. The project was produced in collaboration with the Curtis Institute of Music and Drexel University's Westphal College of Media Arts & Design and received major funding from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. Understanding 'institutions' more broadly, though, not only gets at the project's use of parainstitutions but also its decidedly participatory conception of social practice, an art movement that takes publics, communities, and collectives as its materials.[4] For instance, the project sought to unsettle the dichotomy between performer and audience (each perhaps an "institution" in its own right). In Duet, performers located in Philadelphia's Love Park (named after the iconic Robert Indiana sculpture it hosts) asked passersby, "Would you like to sing with me?" before inviting each parkgoer to rehearse Meyers's 2014 vocal work *Duet*. (Para)institutions may have social as well as architectural dimensions. For Ensemble, musicians from Curtis invited attendees of a temporary art gallery for music—what the Berlin-based American Meyers calls a *Kunsthalle for Music*—to sit in on rehearsals of modern and experimental scores for various instruments, voice, or, in the case of Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* (1972), the hands. In this sense, Meyers points to various participatory aspects of music that led critics such as Claire Bishop to position it as a prewar forerunner of social practice art—despite, I would add, the significant postwar disciplinary asymmetries between art and art music.[5] These are myriad, but in short: music has remained ideologically modernist, while art understands itself as contemporary. While art music still understands itself as aesthetically organised sound, it is art's postconceptual contemporaneity that allows it to conscript virtually any object or material—artistic or non-artistic; art music or popular music—into or even *as* its products (Barrett 2021). Expanding the notion of 'institutions' even further, to the level of discipline, may let us meaningfully intervene in these asymmetries.

Recent contemporary artists have used such disciplinary incongruities between art and art music to challenge core conceits of the latter while invoking timely questions for music's institutions. For instance, how can organisations offer inclusive programming—especially across race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and class—when art music's very concept (combining notions of 'Western', 'high', and 'art') is ultimately based on a series of exclusions: 'non-Western', 'low', and

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2021, 241). Meyers also insists that he is the composer and not curator of such projects (McKeon 2021, 239).

For a case study of music curation in which a European concert programmer conceives his work as a compositional *Gesamtkunstwerk*, see Farnsworth's treatment of Berno Odo Polzer, curator of MaerzMusik Berlin. Farnsworth 2020, 230–246, 14, 25, 27.

[4] The literature on social practice is extensive. For a seminal study, see Bishop 2012. See also Jackson 2011.

[5] These include the Italian futurists and Russian music theorist Arsenii Avraamov's so-called Hooter Symphonies, in which entire factories were conducted from rooftops along with Russian Persimfans or the conductorless orchestras that began in the 1920s. See Bishop 2012, 63–66.

'popular' or nonart? It may be tempting for music institutions to simply throw out such distinctions in favour of a seemingly progressive pluralism. Yet some contemporary artists working with music have both complicated and critically expanded such gestures through the use of parainstitutions that recontextualise music as contemporary art. Such work relates, genealogically, to institutional critique, a movement starting in the 1960s that has reflected on art's organisational support structures including but not limited to the gallery and museum systems, while pointing to their imbrication in broader social, economic, and political realities.[6] Social practice further extends the project of institutional critique beyond the art world by intervening in, and even creating, social formations at large. Through their use of musical parainstitutions, the artist-led projects discussed below construe music as one such at-large social formation while shifting institutional critique's art-world purview to one of its performing arts cousins. Institutional critique's influence continues to be felt in contemporary art, yet a parallel movement has never quite occurred in music despite the latter's above-noted relevance to social practice. The works described in this chapter, along similar lines, speak to art music's failure to reinvent itself since artistic modernism and the resulting gulf between it and today's contemporary art (Barrett 2021, see also Osborne 2018).

This chapter considers how contemporary artists' experiments with musical parainstitutions have challenged art music's historical conception and its present instantiations. Can such projects reimagine art music towards more egalitarian ends, then, or do they risk reinscribing exclusionary dimensions inherent to its concept? To be sure, diversity and inclusion were explicit goals of *Rehearsing Philadelphia*. Linking aurality to social identity, one of the project's texts contended that, "A sonically diverse orchestra is a diverse orchestra" (Meyers 2021b).[7] Recall the mix of jazz, spoken word, and popular music included in the project's finale. Does Meyer's orchestra programme elevate these vernacular musical practices to the status of high art? Or does it redouble their status as nonart culture by construing such music as fodder for his social practice 'metascore'? The chapter argues that Meyers does devalue these musics, but he similarly debases art music, ultimately figuring them equally as pedagogical vehicles for rehearsal.[8] Meyers challenges the status of art music, then, by presenting these rehearsals—and his parainstitutional containers for them—rather than finished musical performances, as musical artworks. The chapter compares Meyers's project to *Assembly* (2019), an installation and two-week, multi-event performance programme jointly organised by the artist Kevin Beasley and Lumi Tan, Tim Griffin, and Nicole

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[6] For a survey of writing on institutional critique, see Alberro 2009.

[7] An exception to this programme of inclusion appeared in the Solo event held in Philadelphia's police headquarters and its *ex*clusion of cisgender men, which could be interpreted as a reference either to their overrepresentation in such facilities or in new music programming.

[8] "Devalue" refers to a radical formal levelling of musical hierarchy. It does not refer to any kind of negative judgement along aesthetic grounds or otherwise.

Kaack from The Kitchen, a hybrid art and performing arts institution in New York City.[9] Like Meyers, Beasley works within and alongside existing music and art institutions. Also like Meyers, Beasley and The Kitchen deliberately cross musical codes of high and low through site-specific performances and by "thinking about access and collectivity".[10] For instance, the opening event featured a performance by the composer Pamela Z in The Kitchen's third-floor office space followed by the hip-hop musician Suzi Analogue singing and DJing for a dance-floor audience gathered on the ground floor.[11] Unlike Meyers, Beasley and The Kitchen construe *Assembly* not as an artwork but as a curated series of musical performances taking place within Beasley's site-specific installation. And whereas Meyers devalues a range of music by refiguring it as rehearsal, I contend that Beasley and The Kitchen transvaluate musical practices historically understood as nonart into contemporary art—and, potentially, as art music—via the powers of the curator. Both projects, the chapter concludes, use contemporary art to issue timely responses to the problem of *what art music is* today.

2   Re: Assembly—Curation Contra Art Music

At once working within and outside art music, Beasley and The Kitchen use contemporary art curation to reimagine music's ideological and institutional structures. In doing so, they pit one set of organisational and artistic norms (contemporary art) against another (art music) through a third, parainstitutional alternative: a temporary curatorial collaboration between an artist and an art/performing arts venue. Such a configuration not only appears as a parainstitution due to its ephemeral status but also owing to how it refigures norms and expectations of an existing institution. The result of this parainstitutional collaboration is not only a meditation on collectivity and access but also an intervention in art music's historical ontology that reflects on the latter's social and material consequences in the present. Diversity, or at least a version of it that decentres whiteness, was a facet: all of *Assembly*'s performers were artists of colour, and its audiences brought art-world regulars together with followers of new, experimental, and underground musics, as well as other performing arts. With a focus on music, *Assembly*'s sixteen participants also included choreographers, poets, and performance and theatre artists.[12] At the same time, the project foregrounded the work of African American artists, recalling perhaps organisational and artistic precedents

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[9] I thank Alex Waterman, archivist at The Kitchen, for access to and assistance with documentation of the event. I also thank the curator Alison Burstein for sharing research and ideas related to *Assembly*.

[10] Email announcement from info@thekitchen.org, "The Kitchen presents ASSEMBLY. June 15–30", June 4, 2019.

[11] For fuller treatments of Pamela Z's work, see Barrett 2022 and Lewis 2007a.

[12] For an overview, see Cao 2022.

such as the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), which the pianist Muhal Richard Abrams founded in Chicago in 1965; or the Just Above Midtown (JAM) gallery, which the filmmaker and activist Linda Goode Bryant founded in 1973; or, more recently, Clifford Owens's 2011 *Anthology*, a solo exhibition at MoMA PS1 that featured the artist's realisations of performance scores by a multigenerational and transdisciplinary group of twenty-six African American artists and composers.[13] In addition to assembling diverse collectivities, Beasley and The Kitchen help to disassemble the collection of ideas that continue to broadly govern the concept of art music. In effect, they put forth an alternative set of criteria—criticality, reflexivity, hybridity, and transdisciplinarity—for bringing together musics ordinarily understood as ontologically disparate. Through their collaboration, moreover, they gesture towards art music's *re*assembly using the powers invested in the contemporary art curator. What, then, is a curator? How does one operate?

Curation is a decidedly vertical operation. At a minimum, a curator indicates what should rise to an audience's attention. Not unlike artists, the curator designates certain objects worthy of public display, ultimately conferring on them the status of *high* art. Distinct from curators, however, artists have been said to possess what Boris Groys calls a "magical ability" to levitate nonart objects to similar heights, the readymade of course being exemplary. But the distinction between artist and curator has not always been this clear cut, and is perhaps less so today. Prior to the artistic modernism that brought us Duchamp, curators of Europe's early art museums possessed a comparable artistic ability, but rather than upgrading nonart to art they desecrated or downgraded often colonially pillaged religious artefacts to receptacles of "mere" aesthetic contemplation (Groys 2008, 43–52/43–44). This early, artist-like status of the curator, furthermore, anticipates Harald Szeeman's 1960s vision of the "curator-as-artist", which has seen more recent expression in the so-called curatorial turn towards "star" figures like Hans Ulrich Obrist, Nicolas Bourriaud, Koyo Kouoh, Roselee Goldberg, and the late Okwui Enwezor (Smith 2012, 131; O'Neill 2007, 15).[14] The notion of 'curation-as-art' has strengthened further through the initially largely Scandinavian movement of New Institutionalism beginning in the early 2000s. Understood as a kind of reabsorption of institutional critique back into art organisations, New Institutionalism involves a turn away from the art object and towards the exhibition as a social project. The institution becomes a site for collaboration and activist struggle, while the curator takes a "creative and active part within the production of art itself" (O'Neill 2007, 15).[15] The curator becomes an artist, and a social practice artist at that. This is not to say that today's curators and artists are now somehow

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[13] On AACM, see Lewis 2007b and Steinbeck 2022. On Just Above Midtown, see the 2023 MoMA exhibition catalogue: Lax, Thomas and Taboada 2023. A description of Clifford Owens's *Anthology* can be found at Owens 2011.

[14] Since conceptual art, contemporary artists (e.g. Joseph Kosuth) have also been involved in what has been described as the 'artist as curator'. See Jeffery 2015.

[15] Cited in and see also Kolb and Flückiger 2013. For a seminal volume on New Institutionalism, see Ekeberg 2003.

indistinguishable. But it does speak to a growing sense in which curators see themselves not only involved in the conferral of the status of art, legitimating its highness, but also as effectors of social change. No doubt today's curators share the artist's once unique magic.

The 'importation' of such curatorial powers into music appears not only a chance to address its perennial diversity issues but may also have the potential *to change what art music is*. To be sure, art music's ontology differs historically yet is not separate from art more broadly. As opposed to publicly displayed objects, though, art music has understood itself primarily as a *writing* tradition. The audition of its resulting scores through public performance is integral yet ontologically secondary; after all, a piece of music can exist without ever being performed—a sad fact of life for composers of any era. Rather than curators, then, musical literacy has played the role of high art conferral. Certainly various other musical and institutional actors are also involved. Instrumentalists with their select repertoires might be compared to curators, just as concert halls can be said to share some territory with museums and galleries. Patrons and funding bodies cannot be ignored. But the purported uniqueness of the score and an ability to read it have functioned in ways not unlike Western literacy writ large beginning in the Enlightenment: a racialising tool used to exclude and denigrate the other. Indeed, while humanist philosophers considered those who could not read and write subhuman and thus subject to colonialism and slavery, musics not fully adopting Europe's notation system have been deemed nonart cultural practices to be ignored, patronised, or appropriated.[16] Doubtless, art music's ontology has received significant challenges both from within and without. Regarding the latter, jazz and African American improvisational musics have invented new notational forms along with entire musical languages that operate outside them, pointing further perhaps to what George E. Lewis describes as radically "Creolized" practices (Lewis 2017). From within, the transnational movement of experimentalism has used indeterminacy to decentre the authority of the score, leaving elements of its realisation up to chance or the decisions of the performer. Sound reproduction—born alongside a musical modernism that, paradoxically, came to rely even more heavily on notation—opened up the possibility of technologically obsolescing the score, thereby reskilling composition as a democratised or "vernacular" art (Piekut 2019; Levitz and Piekut 2020).

But the magical ability of contemporary art curators to transmogrify practices historically understood as nonart may pose an even more radical challenge to art music's ontology. The second week of performances for Beasley and The Kitchen's *Assembly* featured a riveting set from Mhysa, a musician who describes herself as a "Queer Black Diva and underground popstar for the cyber resistance".[17] A tension between 'popstar' and 'underground' already alludes perhaps

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[16] See Hesmondhalgh and Born 2000.

[17] The Kitchen *Assembly* press release, "The Kitchen Presents *Assembly*, June 15–30 [2019]", Zidell, Blake and Associates, June 10, 2019. Also included in the unpublished *Assembly* document containing artist bios from The Kitchen's archive labelled "PRBios".

to her work's simultaneous celebration and critique of star culture, a ubiquitous trope of pop art whose various musical equivalents have yet to be fully theorised. Nevertheless, Mhysa chooses the form and content of pop music for her critical work around Blackness and queerness set against a cybercultural backdrop. Her performance took place on The Kitchen's second floor, which housed Beasley's large-scale custom-designed audio-visual setup: long fluorescent lights vertically framed two stacks of TV monitors that sat atop speaker arrays facing the audience while bookending the performance area. If the light fixtures invoked a stripped-down minimalism found in the work of artists like Dan Flavin, everything else pointed in the opposite direction. A massive screen projected pulsating diamond collages and morphing floral imagery—along with frame-sized, all-caps flashes of "Afraid?" answered by "Tired"—all behind a lavishly costumed Mhysa who sang and rapped, mic in hand, next to her collaborator. Both musicians faced the audience behind a cloth-covered table hosting a laptop, mixers, and DJ equipment. Mhysa's forty-five-minute set featured selections from her 2017 album *fantasii*, which she has referred to as "an ode to Black femmes" (Dommu 2017). After a dreamily reverbed and delay-rich homage to Beyoncé's 2003 hit "Naughty Girl", a driving drum machine beat entered beneath swirling, phaser-drenched synth chords. Heavy, trap-inspired sub-bass then played against a rhythmically triggered sample of a camera shutter. "So many pics, it's like I got my own strobe light / Click, click, click, click, click", she intoned. Amid her vocalisations, Mhysa manoeuvred through Beasley's installation for an audience that reciprocally swayed in awe. Critical, conceptual, reflexive, intertextual, and performative— what should be so controversial about calling this music art?

Does curating such work as contemporary art ultimately mean throwing out distinctions between art music and nonart music, or does it invite their critical reconstruction? Other 'curatorial' projects that mix high and low music outside of contemporary art do not seem to pose quite the same problem. Consider NASA and Carl Sagan's range of blues, Baroque, classical, folk, gamelan, guqin, jazz, mariachi, and rock music included on the Golden Record sent to space aboard the 1977 Voyager probes.[18] Such a mix may eventually be enjoyed by aliens inhabiting far-off worlds without necessarily challenging human musical hierarchies back on Earth. But if a curator recasts nonart music as art *within* contemporary art, does that de facto make it art music? On the one hand, a negative answer might either deny curators a power considered uncontroversial by today's standards, or suggest that art music is somehow sealed off from or immune to the workings of contemporary art. But an affirmative answer, on the other, might imply a disciplinary symmetry between contemporary art and art music that, arguably, does not presently exist despite their complex genealogical entanglement. That is, while today's art music and contemporary art both derive from the same artistic modernism, the

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[18] For an analysis of the Golden Record in the context of music theory, see Chua and Rehding 2021. For a more journalistic account, see Scott 2019.

field of music, as noted above (and as I've argued elsewhere), has remained ideologically modernist versus art's contemporaneity (Barrett 2021). An affirmative answer could also suggest the authority a genus (art) may have to determine the content of its species (art music) (Barrett 2021). Yet the categorical relationship between these two fields has not necessarily been so straightforward, and, in fact, historically the opposite was once true: recall Walter Pater's famous insistence on modern art's supposed striving towards the condition of music (Pater 1877). This historically shifting disciplinary relationship further complicates the question of whether contemporary art curation's challenge to art music's ontology ultimately comes from within or without. Are curatorial projects like Beasley and The Kitchen's instances of music finally coming to terms with its own historical and disciplinary blind spots or something 'imposed' on it by an exterior force? If they prompt such a disciplinary refiguring, would those to whom a reconstructed concept of art music might apply even desire such a recategorisation? If not art music, though, what else to call this music that is also (contemporary) art?

To be certain, some music already points to a need to rethink its ontology—with or without the aid of curators. Working at the intersection of contemporary art and jazz, the composer, pianist, and artist Jason Moran foregrounds Black music as site, subject matter, and material. A prolific musician, he publishes recordings and scores extensively, and frequently collaborates with other artists such as Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker, Joan Jonas, Stan Douglas, Carrie Mae Weems, and Adam Pendleton. Moran's 2020 solo exhibition at The Whitney featured musical recordings and videos alongside three selections from *Staged* (2015–2018), a series of life-sized architectural recreations of legendary New York City jazz clubs that operated between the 1920 and 1970s.[19] Moran appeared on the closing evening of Beasley and The Kitchen's *Assembly*. An audience greeted Moran sitting at a piano in the centre of the venue's first-floor performance area just beneath Beasley's monumental audio-visual textile installation. Lights softly glowed through patterned tapestries and resin-coated clothing suspended from The Kitchen's ceiling, partially covering a circular loudspeaker array. A similar set of interior-lit fabrics swept upward from Moran's open-lid, microphoned piano to speakers that projected processed piano and varispeed audio playback throughout Moran's roughly forty-minute performance. Initial atmospheric chordal dissonances accompanied unintelligible speech fragments—alternatingly sped up and slowed down—which altogether evolved into a chorale-like gospel texture whose plagal cadences felt both uplifting and bluesy. A pre-recorded piano chord microtonally drifted upward with multiple iterations, echoing Moran's fixed-pitch acoustic counterpart. Rapid, single-note trills in a low register then exploded into animated, vocal-range bebop runs. Structurally, such unpredictable local disjunctures contrasted with a global series of drawn-out climactic ebbs. The speech fragments returned with a drum machine loop that gradually built intensity. Finally,

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[19] https://whitney.org/exhibitions/jason-moran. Accessed: September 8, 2022.

Moran's percussive yet subtle piano clusters repeatedly accented a stripped-down electronic dance music loop, both slowly fading into silence. Overall, Moran's musical tapestry masterfully weaved jazz and African American improvised idioms together with tropes of musical modernism. If *Assembly*'s opening night with Pamela Z and Suzi Analogue challenged accepted musical hierarchies by juxtaposing "high" and "low", Beasley and The Kitchen closed the event with what Lewis might locate as a "Creolized" musicality in Moran's radical hybrid (Lewis 2017).

Broadly, Beasley and The Kitchen use contemporary art curation to reassemble a concept of music that challenges its longstanding hierarchies. In addition to curating diversity, they proffer a revised basis for assembling musical collectivity. Beyond (yet not excluding) musical modernism's aesthetically organised sound, they suggest an alternative set of criteria for evaluating musical art: criticality, reflexivity, hybridity, and a transdisciplinary relevance to contemporary art, on the one hand, and to art music's onto-historical constructedness, on the other. As a hybrid exhibition and performance series, furthermore, *Assembly* attends to the centrality of *site* in the generation of musical and artistic meaning. It was remarkable to observe *Assembly* musicians' heterogeneous powers to shape the social, corporeal, and affective dynamics of The Kitchen's respective spaces: one minute, a seated audience carefully attuned to Logan Takahashi's experimental modular synth textures; another, a dance crowd collectively entrained to the pulsing rhythms of Mhysa; yet another, a mix of stillness and swaying for an experimental DJ set from Hprizm (also known as High Priest or Kyle Austin): an artist and composer known for mixes that combine the likes of Nam June Paik, Sun Ra, and Public Enemy. In this sense, despite Beasley's not typically being associated with social practice art, the project understands the arrangement of social space as one of its primary materials, even one of its mediums.[20] Altogether, the project sought to recognise how, in their words, "sound and the structures of certain spaces may yet lend themselves to nuanced and rich cultural exchange".[21] Indeed, *Assembly* operationalises music's latent socio-spatiality, mapping it onto the architecture of a notorious New York City art/performing arts institution. Not unlike Beasley's fabric installation, *Assembly* sweeps across musical, artistic, architectural, and historical striations to compose alternative formations both social and (para)institutional. Like Meyers, Beasley and The Kitchen point to ways music is already a kind of social practice. Here I turn to the pedagogical resonances between practice and rehearsal in Meyers's work, which can be said to differently provoke art music's ontology.

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[20] A nod to Bishop's formulation that social practice uses "people as a medium" (Bishop 2012, 2, 39, 284).

[21] The Kitchen *Assembly* press release, "The Kitchen Presents *Assembly*, June 15–30 [2019]".

3   Unlearning Art Music—Rehearsing Social Practice

If Beasley and The Kitchen recontextualise practices historically excluded from the category of art music on the basis of musical literacy, Meyers frames the latter as an intrinsically pedagogical process. Reading music is only possible, that is, through learning. Western music education has of course taken many forms, stretching back to the early integration of pedagogy and music in the ancient Greek concept of *mousikē*. Today, one thinks of private piano lessons, high school marching bands, university music ensembles, and community chorus recitals. All typically understood as providing a universal good for society. All sharing a common basis in rehearsal. Practice makes—well, maybe not perfect but perhaps better citizens, we're told. Yet despite the centrality of rehearsal, it remains obscured from an audience's direct view, implicitly a part of the musical gaze yet nonetheless concealed. Rehearsal is, as Derrida might have it, an emblematic "parergon": supplemental to the musical work the same way a frame is to a painting (Derrida 1987, 331). At the same time, though, we invariably perceive rehearsal's results—illustrated perhaps most grotesquely in the figure of the virtuoso, which Adorno describes as an artistic "martyr" who demonstrates that "something sadistic has become sedimented, some traces of the torture required to carry it out" (Adorno 1997, 280). Yet as much as musical modernism has produced plenty of torturous music—see, especially, new complexity—it tends to refrain from putting its rehearsals on display.[22] Exceptions might be seen in Erik Satie's *Vexations* (ca. 1893), a work that consists of a keyboard passage to be repeated 840 times (roughly eighteen hours' worth), which makes its more abbreviated 'performances' effectively rehearsals; or in Edgard Varèse's *Tuning Up* (1946), which despite its title only sounds momentarily like an orchestra tuning. Nonetheless, musical rehearsal is more complex and expressive than its conception as a mere generator of sound, organised or not. Indeed, it involves deeply musical components—bodies, spaces, rules, disciplining, learning, negotiation—that become occluded when reduced solely to its outcome in performance. When transposed to the context of contemporary art, however, rehearsal becomes not only perceivable, potentially through any number of mediums (sound, performance, photo, video, text, etc.), but also legible as social practice.

Moreover, the designation of rehearsal as contemporary art has profound implications for art music's ontology. As opposed to Beasley and The Kitchen's transvaluation of nonart music into art music, here I contend that Meyers *de*values both forms, construing them equally as vessels for rehearsal. *Rehearsing Philadelphia* reimagines art music, then, not as the determinate outcome of a hierarchy built on musical literacy, but as an open-ended series of pedagogical processes involved in music's mediation and transmission. In recontextualising rehearsal as contemporary art, that is, Meyers decentres art music's work-concept while reframing an

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[22] However, I discuss open rehearsals briefly below.

archetypically parergonal component of its—and other musics'—production. The object of rehearsal, Meyers further suggests, may not be restricted to the musical work, as in practicing a Bach cello suite, but can also apply to the individual musicians involved in rehearsal, as in a soloist improving their technique—a process Meyers applies to (para)institutional formations ranging from duos to ensembles to even, in the artist's vision, an entire city. In this sense, rehearsal might be said to promote liberal-humanist values involved in producing social harmony, working towards the greater good, etc. Yet rather than a teleology beginning with scores and ending in idealised performances, Meyers asks us to attend to the messy, imperfect processes involved in music's preparation, prior to its reification in concerts and public presentations. To paraphrase the manifesto for Meyers's *Kunsthalle for Music*, music is not necessarily what one imagines it to be—not its mediation via scores or even their proper culmination in performance (Meyers 2017). By displaying rehearsal as contemporary art, Meyers iteratively returns music to an unfinished, provisional state of (social) practice.[23] He unlearns music as artistic-literary object in order to relearn its pedagogy as social process. But, alas, this is no easy task.

We soon learn, for instance, that exhibiting musical rehearsal represents a thorny paradox. Upon being displayed, that is, preparation for a performance or presentation ceases to be itself and becomes the thing presented, making a "performed rehearsal" a kind of self-cancelling aporia. This dynamic appears not only in Meyers's larger parainstitutional formations of Orchestra and *Kunsthalle for Music*, but emerges perhaps in distilled form in *Duet*. Bundled under a red jacket and sock hat, an elder visitor to Philadelphia's Love Park approaches Eduardo Luna, a member of the Philadelphia Heritage Chorale who beneath an unzipped hoodie dons a t-shirt emblazoned in primary colours with the *Rehearsing Philadelphia* logo. Both sing as they stare down at a music stand. Yet whereas Luna projects confidence with an outstretched right arm as though conducting, Jerry Forman appears tentative. Indeed, the trepidation seen on the fellow park-goer's face, unlike his musically trained counterpart, can also be heard in his more restrained voice (Reyes 2022). The two are performing—or, rather, rehearsing—*Duet* as part of Meyers's Duo event. The three-page 'score' on the music stand they are reading from is, in fact, what Meyers calls a 'text/script': a formulation at once referring to the dramaturgical role of assigning speech to characters (Meyers has often presented his work in European theatres), and an ordinary musical score albeit partially in text form. The first page explains the process by which one performer (in this case, Luna) invites a participant (here Forman) to rehearse the conventionally notated vocal music that appears on the following two pages. Meyers

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[23] A similar use of musical 'display' appears in Rafael 2016. Meyers's work registers as contemporary art, for one, because it foregrounds its codes and institutional norms, even if it presents internally consistent musical materials (including institutions, ensembles, etc.) within a contemporary art frame.

suggests a couple of spoken lines for initiating the rehearsal, beginning with "Would you like to sing with me?" In its mildly self-mocking naïveté, the prompt recalls perhaps the bewildering icebreakers issued by children and museum staff in works by Meyers's long-time collaborator, Tino Sehgal.[24] Yet opposed to the way Sehgal conceals the instructions for his performances, effectively rendering them immaterial, Meyers presents the process of learning and rehearsing his score *as* the artwork.

Rather than rejecting musical literacy, Meyers rehearses it as artistic content. *Duet*'s invitation to participate is labelled on the text/script's first page as "Before". "After" consists of thanking the participant, while "Rehearsal" is more involved. Tellingly, there is no "Performance" section. Following the invitation, "Rehearsal" attempts to explain to the newly obtained participant what exactly they've signed up for. While anachronistically invoking the 'tell-teaching' techniques of oral tradition, its conspicuous self-reference and iterative use of Jakobsonian shifters also alludes perhaps to conceptual art.[25] Picture Luna saying to Forman, "This is a composition by Ari Benjamin Meyers. It is called *Duet*. It has two parts, for two singers. One part is labeled Me, and the other part is labeled You. I will sing Me; I always sing Me". After explaining that the 'piece' is not simply the resulting music, but rather "an ongoing series of fleeting moments"— that is, the rehearsal—the spoken text turns to pragmatics.

> - Can you read music?
> (That's OK, neither can I…)
> - There are three motives that you sing. Each motive is numbered and sung by me first.
> [*go through each one, by first singing and then repeating*]
> - Sing at whatever volume is comfortable for you.
> - You can also sing the part one octave lower if it's too high for you.
> - This is the tempo.
> [*play metronome*]
> - This is the first pitch.
> [*play tone*]
> - OK? Are you ready?[26]

An odd contradiction inheres between the speaker's casual dismissal of a need to read music and the lines that follow which assume a veritable lexicon of musical knowledge. Motive, octave, pitch, tempo—all terms that despite having perhaps non-music-jargon equivalents are not defined or explained. Simultaneously obscurant and demystifying, at once flexible and overprecise, the instructions

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[24] I am thinking mostly of *This Progress*, realised at The Guggenheim in 2010, in which a child greets each visitor with "May I ask you a question? What is progress?" Sehgal collaborated with Meyers on *This Variation* (2012), which consists of a darkened gallery and performers who dance and sing amid improvised electronic music.

[25] See Krauss 1977.

[26] Typography, spelling, and punctuation slightly modified. Text available at Meyers 2014. Score available at Schipper 2022.

allow the participant to change octaves, while requiring them to sight-sing using, in the terms of solfège, *fixed Do*. "Volume" (and not dynamics) is a matter of comfort level, while tempo—♩=84 according to the next page—is exactingly determined either mechanically or electronically. No less frustrating for a beginner are the thirty-seven measures of two-part vocal music contained on the two-page score that follows. Granted, the only text is "La", it's in 4/4, and it consists mostly of half and whole notes. But there are also dotted rhythms, tied notes, phrasing/legato markings, a fermata, and chromatics. Furthermore, there's no key signature (it's definitely not in C), and the tonal centre is shifty, at times ambiguous. Motive 1 contains the first three notes of a B major scale, whose D# then begins to sound like a leading tone in E minor when the other voice answers it with a descending stepwise figure in that key. One does not need to be musically literate to sense that this is no walk in the park. Which of course is the point.

If the music were too simple, that is, there would be little to rehearse. If it were thoroughly deskilled, there'd be nothing left to teach. *Kunsthalle for Music* applies this principle to Meyers's parainstitutional music gallery formation. While many works included in the gallery's songbook dossier are written using relatively standard notation (e.g. Charles Ives's *The Unanswered Question* [1906] or Julius Eastman's *Stay on It* [1973]), others are Fluxus event scores or text scores of experimental music. Yet, regarding the former, even Yoko Ono's *Sky Piece to Jesus Christ* (1965), which calls for orchestra performers to be wrapped in gauze bandages to the point of rendering them inert, implicitly requires at least the semblance of a traditional orchestra with relatively acceptable instrumental competencies. Otherwise, a performance risks the punchline not quite landing. Although Pauline Oliveros's *The Tuning Meditation* (1971) does not require a trained orchestra, it rehearses an operation common to all sorts of manipulatable pitch instruments. Oliveros, unlike Varèse, does ask musicians to tune. "Begin by playing a pitch that you hear in your imagination. After contributing your pitch, listen for another player's pitch and tune in unison to the pitch as exactly as possible". Oliveros's score thus requires various musicianship skills, including the ability to produce an imagined pitch and tune to another's sounding frequency. Not unlike Meyers's broader project, Oliveros recasts this ordinarily utilitarian musical activity associated with rehearsal as a source of artistic meditation. As it happens, Oliveros was also involved in organising ensembles, including the feminist musical parainstitution she assembled at the University of San Diego, the ♀ Ensemble, to whom she dedicated her related *Sonic Meditations* (1971) (Oliveros 1981, 13; Mockus 2007, 40). Part of *Rehearsing Philadelphia*'s Ensemble event, *Kunsthalle for Music* expands the artistic frame from the ensemble to the venue and from the institution to what happens in it. Rather than scores or performances, again their rehearsal becomes the work.

This recursive operation of designating the artwork as the artwork's preparation produces an infinite regress, as paradoxes often do. Yet Meyers escapes this vicious circle, at least in principle, by devaluing art music's score-based work-concept and locating its ontology elsewhere: either in the ephemeral, 'fleeting moments' of rehearsal seen in *Duet* or, indeed, in the parainstitutional frames

designed to host them. Prior to this re-siting—or reinstituting—of music, however, Meyers must first negate it. Meyers's *Anthem* (2017) is a partial text setting of his *Kunsthalle for Music* manifesto. Condensing down the latter's multiple paragraphs to a single slogan, *Anthem*'s only text is "Music is not!" Its two-page score is comparable to *Duet*, yet the single-part *Anthem* is considerably slower at ♩=60 and more than twice *Duet*'s duration. While roughly in C minor, it contains numerous dynamic markings and frequent time signature changes. Although *Anthem* appears to be for solo voice, the *Kunsthalle for Music* participants gathered in Drexel University's Leonard Pearlstein Gallery decided to try it tutti. This partially ad hoc group included Curtis students and faculty, a couple of gallery visitors, my nonmusician guest, and myself. The music began quietly with a drawn-out, multimeasure "mmmm" on middle C. This humming continued, not quite in unison, and we attempted a slow ornament. Upon changing from common time to 5/4— thankfully, one of the Curtis faculty conducted—the "mmmm" expanded into an entire melodic phrasing of "music": the first syllable melismatically outlined a minor third— "muuu-*UUUU*…"—before a half-step descent to "…sic". These softer "music" figures repeated, slowly building to a dramatic *forte* climax with a pair of melodic leaps around "is not!"[27] Applauding ourselves, we managed to get through the nearly five-minute score, which surely would have benefitted from more rehearsal. Reflecting on the experience, I recalled one of the philosopher Peter Osborne's interpretations of Meyers's "Music is not!" slogan: "The negation of what music *currently is*, via the negation of one or more of what are taken to be its essential predicates" (Osborne 2022, 67). While Osborne's other two interpretations are more totalising in scope—negating music as a whole and music as such, respectively—this one produces, paradoxically, an immediate and perhaps more extreme contradiction when sung in *Anthem*. Although the phrase is supposed to negate what music currently is, while singing *Anthem* music *currently is*. Indeed, we're singing it. And if we follow Meyers, this is true even—or especially—during its rehearsal. His manifesto continues: "Music is inherently not about perfection or reproducibility. Music is the act of an orchestra rehearsing" (Meyers 2017).

This brings us, full circle, to Orchestra, *Rehearsing Philadelphia*'s finale. Recall again the Public Orchestra's performances of commissioned works by Allen, Rucker, Rubinos, Carlson, and Myers. If music is inherently not these virtually perfected, presumably reproducible public performances, what is it? Continuing to follow Meyers, if we had attended only the advertised Cherry Street Pier performance, we would have simply missed it. Had we skipped the Orchestra's rehearsal and saw only its recital, we would have merely witnessed an index of the music's preparation, evidence of this ordinarily parergonal activity. Which is to say, we'd have skipped the actual musical work because, in an inversion of convention, again, the music is its own rehearsal. At the same time, as is well known, symphonies frequently provide an exception to this convention. In

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[27] Exclamation mark added here for clarity.

fact, many orchestras offer open rehearsals, some requiring audiences to purchase tickets, while others invite the public to participate in choruses or even instrumental sections. How does this differ from Meyers's project? More often than not, professional orchestras unambiguously separate high musical art from community outreach, just as they clearly demarcate performances from their preparation. Music may be *a* social practice, but it seldom rises to the level of social practice art.[28] For Meyers, however, the cultivation of communities along with the parainstitutional frames he puts around them—beyond their resulting performances—figures as the work, and connects further to contemporary social practice art. To return, finally, to the question of the status of the nonart music works in Meyers's transgenre orchestra programme: does he elevate them to the status of art music or do they remain merely artistic material? I contend that Meyers demotes these works *and* their art music counterparts into vehicles for rehearsal. In reinstituting, re-siting art music's ontology in rehearsal, Meyers debases these heterogeneous musics equally, indeed, by construing them as fodder for his social practice metascore. There are no more high and low, if only in a propositionally utopian sense, because none stands as a complete or finalised musical work in the first place. All become instruments for social process.

4   Conclusion: Institutions Against Art Music

In sum, the respective projects of Beasley and The Kitchen and Meyers suggest ways artistic (para)institutions can challenge art music's ontology. Meyers's approach, while prosocial in appearance, is propositionally destructive: again, to cite his manifesto, "Music is not!" There is no art music, at this extreme, because *all* music remains caught in a perpetual state of deferred preparation, construed merely as material for rehearsal within the artist's parainstitutional contemporary art frames. While hypothetical, even theoretical at its most powerful, Meyers's project gestures towards a levelling of musical hierarchy through the pragmatics of social practice. Rather than avoiding musical literacy, Meyers's relativises it by presenting it as another pedagogical item for rehearsal. Yet as opposed to Meyers's musical negation, Beasley and The Kitchen operationalise the constructive metaphor of assembly. Through their temporary artist-institution collaboration, they harness the powers of contemporary art curation, which at present uncontroversially include the ability to designate nonart as art. In their usage, this results in recontextualising practices historically understood as nonart music—rap, hip hop, jazz, pop, DJing—as contemporary art and, potentially, also as art music. This is not, however, to flatten the distinctions internal to those musical forms, nor is it to ignore the challenge that some musics already pose to art music's ontology; recall

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[28] For a study of music as a social practice from 1994, prior to the term's wide-spread circulation in contemporary art, see Chanan 1994.

the work of Moran. But rather than understanding musical literacy as a basis for conferring the status of art music, Beasley and The Kitchen propose a revised set of criteria for the evaluation of musical art: criticality, reflexivity, hybridity, and a transdisciplinary use of contemporary art materials along with an exhibited challenge to art music's historical ontology.

Importantly, this transvaluation—or devaluation in Meyers—of music is not simply a matter of labels and categories, as much as it may have implications for both, but rather concerns the problem of *what art music is*. While art music is no doubt the result of an underlying ideology—specifically, artistic modernism in the case of new music—it is also an expression of that ideology materialised through practice, including but not limited to that of music institutions. As a hybrid concept itself—just consider the two linguistic units that compose it—art music further results from its imbrication in a broader artistic field that, crucially and paradigmatically, also includes contemporary art. Disciplinary disparities aside, contemporary art remains the current expression of that component of art music historically associated with its highness. Pretending that musical hierarchy does not exist, decreeing all musics as somehow simply equal, insisting that one need not hear labels, or even dismissing art music as irreparably colonial or racist are ultimately ways of ignoring the problem, avoiding the critical reconstruction I think art music deserves. Illustrated in the work of Beasley and The Kitchen and Meyers, contemporary art may have an important role in such a reconstructive process. With this, music institutions might be wise to take its challenges to art music seriously, to see themselves—*with* contemporary art—as materially and ideologically involved in art music's transdisciplinary concept construction and critique.[29] This is not to say that contemporary art has the power somehow to save art music from mediocrity or social injustice. But it is to suggest that addressing this vexed problem of what art music is—a problem that no doubt cuts across multiple fields—may also, if only in a small way, provide a key to its pervasive diversity and inclusion problems. Meyers and Beasley and The Kitchen offer two models by which parainstitutions can push against art music in its current formations. Proper institutions do not necessarily need to organise against art music to push with them, towards its reconstruction.

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[29] Peter Osborne uses the italicised phrase "*transdisciplinary concept construction and critique*" in a related context: Osborne 2019, 136.

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Gender Issues as Criticism Within (New) Music Institutions

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Christa Brüstle

1 Introduction

One of the objectives of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) is to achieve gender balance in all areas and at all hierarchical levels of national scientific and research activities and institutions in the EU (vertical and horizontal segregation). This equality-related goal was briefly summarised as 'fix the numbers'. It mainly refers to eliminating the underrepresentation of persons or groups of persons in certain fields. For a long time the main aim was to reduce the underrepresentation of women through measures to promote women. In the meantime, an expansion has taken place as part of the development of gender mainstreaming and diversity management: on the one hand, more emphasis is being placed on equal opportunities for everyone, while on the other hand, some of the responsibility for achieving gender balance has been transferred to (institutional) communities (cf. Cordes 2010, 924–932). Apart from that, it is legitimate to ask why the 'numbers' are a central aspect in this context and why statistical data are of such great importance. First, empirical data and statistical reports can make the underrepresentation of women and minorities highly visible. Second, they suggest the importance of determining the reasons for this underrepresentation. Third, they can inspire initiatives and measures to change the data. Such measures include quotas or parity arrangements, but they are not uncontroversial (cf. Cordes 1996). Figuring out the reasons for certain numerical ratios and then changing their origins is a far more complex and difficult matter. This also involves not only focussing on the 'numbers' but also bringing about a cultural change within institutions

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('fix the institutions') as well as increasing and strengthening general gender knowledge and intersectional gender competencies in different areas ("fix the knowledge"). Only in the complex interplay of these three factors is it possible to formulate a meaningful equality policy that includes gender but also other diversity categories, such as religion, ethnic origin, social status, age, sexual orientation, and world view.

Thus, the thematisation of gender in very different contexts usually not only addresses concerns of society as a whole but also almost always touches on very personal areas, often provoking defensive attitudes. In addition, to this day feminism holds critical potential as a starting point for the thematisation of gender that has not completely disappeared even in the post-feminist age—although it has changed and been partly relativised.

> It is now also accepted that feminism itself is characterized by diversity, fragmentation, and a series of internal contestations. […] However, as a methodological strategy, starting from women's experience is consistent with understanding how gender identities and relations are being remade within the contradictory dynamics that constitute the post-feminist gender order (Budgeon 2011, 1, 189).[1]

This still includes criticising dominant cultures, denouncing and combating different forms of discrimination (of women), and advocating for equal rights (of women). It is important in this context to recall the importance of figures and statistics: they highlight systematic discrimination and institutional power structures as well as inequalities and disadvantageous differences.

In 2016, for example, the presentation of statistics from the Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music by composer Ashley Fure gave a clear picture of the exclusion of women until the 1980s. Hardly any works by female composers were played, and for a long time no women were invited as lecturers (GRiD 2016). The reasons for this are certainly to be found on the one hand in the male-dominated decision-making structures but on the other hand also in the lack of dissenting voices or in the lack of awareness that there was a considerable imbalance in this regard. The dominance of male representatives was not seen as dominance but as normality, which is known as 'phallocentrism'.

> Phallocentrism is a specifically discursive series of procedures, a strategy for collapsing representations of the two sexes into a single model, called 'human' or 'man,' but which is in fact congruent only with the masculine, as if these were genuinely representative of both sexes. The masculinity of the 'human' goes unrecognised. In other words, phallocentrism effaces the autonomous representation of femininity […] Within phallocentrism paradigms femininity can only be represented in some necessary relation to masculinity (Crosz 1990, 150).

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[1] Cf. Heywood and Drake 1997; McRobbie 2009.

The thematisation of gender (under feminist auspices) thus contains a critique of this phallocentric 'normality'. In the following remarks, I will discuss the extent to which a critical attitude towards the existing circumstances is generally linked to the discussion of gender. Why is the addressing and thematisation of gender relations and sex/gender topics always associated with conflicts and debates? Why do gender equality policy and increasing gender competencies in institutions simultaneously mean a critique of institutions? Why is the music sector usually very resistant to these critical approaches? Why are traditional patterns of canon formation and outdated gender discourses also reproduced in the field of contemporary music? To what extent does it make sense to classify related changes in the context of neoliberalism in terms of education and science policy? What counterarguments are to be expected? These and other related questions will be the focus of the following discussion. My perspective results from my work in the field of women's and gender studies as well as in university gender equality policy. Therefore, my own personal experiences will also be included.

2 Gender Issues as Criticism in Society and Institutions

Why is the thematisation of gender linked to social criticism and criticism of institutions? Why is the addressing and discussion of gender relations and sex/gender topics almost always associated with disputes? Why is "feminism that has become academic" usually regarded as "critical", "dissident", or "resistant"? (Hark 2005, 10–11).

Answers to these questions are manifold. Thus, the discussion of gender still contains a critique of primary and secondary patriarchal relations (see Beer 2010, 59–64) and of male hegemony, although this thrust is often downplayed today because it all too easily suggests a perpetrator/victim dichotomy. From the male side, the clichéd role of perpetrator has long been rejected; conversely, women no longer want to be automatically interpreted as victims.[2] However, this leads to a decline in attention to the 'boy groups'. Women are also recommended to found their own networks in order to empower themselves and pool their efforts, which often leads to a cliché image: Women are the better networkers and team players anyway, because they have traditionally practiced this role in the family. But is this possibly a reason why female leaders are lacking (because women prefer the role of networkers to that of leaders)?

The last question was of course meant ironically, but these and similar circular trains of thought constantly accompany the thematisation of gender. However, this suppresses criticism of the existing circumstances. Instead, it appeals to the dominant groups (males) to turn against themselves, so to speak, in order to show solidarity with the non-dominant groups and to rehabilitate or strengthen them. This is not really visible to many people. It remains in many respects idealistic wishful

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[2]Although in the face of increasing violence against women, the perpetrator-victim image is reproduced in real life.

thinking, because it ultimately threatens to limit or minimise one's own (male) personal privileges.

However, it may be assumed that the discussion and reflection of gender is usually associated with a critique of power structures or a critical penetration of power fields. Power should be understood as "power relations in which only one stronger side asserts itself" and as "influence that individuals—based on their disposal of resources or their abilities—achieve in social relationships" (Lenz 2010, 31, 32).[3] Gender-specific power structures and fields of power affect gender polarity as well as relationships between men and men or women and women. In addition, the ratio of minorities to majorities also plays a role. In the European-influenced social structure, it can still be assumed that the heterosexual matrix and the sovereignty of action and discourse of male hegemony (cf. Connell 1987; Meuser 2010) have prevailed, both of which—albeit only slowly and not without resistance and setbacks—have come under discussion in recent years precisely through the thematisation of sex/gender issues.

The critique of power structures and the critical reflection of fields of power often have societal relations as reference points, which are contrasted with and supplemented by private and personal reference points. Thus, the thematisation of gender usually also means a critique of fixed general, religious, and other group-specific opinions and principles as well as very personal, experience-based individual ones.

"Feminist theory is therefore basically only conceivable as a project of the continuous deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge" and as a "challenge of *thinking differently*" (Hark 2005, 395).[4] This includes not only a reflection on the social constitution of gender but also a deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge about physical conditionalities and sexual orientations. The latter are often regarded as private matters that you do not talk about (publicly) and do not want to be addressed (publicly) about. However, it is a real challenge to start at exactly this point, because changes in society as a whole can hardly be achieved without a change in private, individual attitudes. An example of this are manifold discussions about the supposedly unambiguous, 'natural' gender dichotomy or gender dualism, which begin with the rejection of or insight into the social constitution of gender and continue with the negation or recognition of scientific findings on (for example, endocrinological[5]) gender diversity or with discrimination or tolerance of people who cannot or do not want to meet certain gender norms, either physically or socially. As these discussions have long since reached the

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[3] "Machtverhältnis, in dessen Rahmen sich nur eine jeweils stärkere Seite behauptet", "Einfluss, den Personen – gestützt auf ihre Verfügung über Ressourcen oder ihre Fähigkeiten – in sozialen Beziehungen erreichen".

[4] "Feministische Theorie ist daher im Grunde nur denkbar als ein Projekt der fortwährenden De- und Rekonstruktion von Wissen", "Herausforderung des *Anders-Denkens*".

[5] Cf. Kaplan and Rogers 1990, 205–228; cf. Richards, Bouman, Barker 2017.

public and politics, they should no longer be regarded as private matters (with positive and negative consequences).

Institutions and institutionalised organisations should be regarded as intermediate instances located between society as a whole and the individual, as "intermediate levels of social organization" (Connell 1987, 119) in which human relationships are pronounced and controlled but also negotiated. In them, gender relations are also created and reproduced, discussed, and transformed: "the state of play in gender relations in a given institution is its 'gender regime'" (Connell 1987, 120).[6] The thematisation of gender and the associated criticism within an institution or organisation then means dealing with this 'gender regime', that is, also with the gender-specific power relations and fields of power as well as the interests of an institution or organisation and its members, groups, and networks. Since an institution or organisation usually seeks stability, such an intervention is only effectively possible if it does not fear destabilisation and, as a result, the intervention can even be considered a gain.

The arts and art sciences as institutions are open to this in different ways (Brüggmann 2020). While in the visual arts the discussion of gender belongs to institutionalised art criticism and self-reflection as well as theory formation of art history, meaning the topic of gender therefore seems to have already been exhausted, the music sector is less committed and more immobile overall. The critical potential of thematising and reflecting on gender hardly plays a role in music practice. While it is discussed in musicology and music theory, it is only seldom used for self-reflection and theory formation in the subject. Impulses for this have been provided especially since the 1990s in the USA, for example, with Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (1991) and other appeals for a 'feminist music criticism' (see McClary 1993; McClary 1994). In German-language musicology, the most important impulse is still the book by Eva Rieger, *Frau, Musik und Männerherrschaft. Zum Ausschluss der Frau aus der deutschen Musikpädagogik, Musikwissenschaft und Musikausübung*, published in 1981.

The spectrum of approaches in art and art studies for thematising gender thus ranges from criticism of the exclusion of women from history and historiography to criticism of the dominance of certain discourses, such as the concept of genius or the idea of objective art and art analysis without consideration of the subject and sociocultural context. A special aspect, however, arises from the combination of the assumption and expectation that art itself (immanently and always) practices social and institutional critique with the thematisation and discussion of gender as a critical approach. The artistic means, forms, concepts, and ideas are thus linked to gender issues, such as gender stereotypes, corporeality, sexuality, or the

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[6] Gender "is institutionalized to the extent that the network of links to the reproduction system is formed by cyclical practices. It is stabilized to the extent that the groups constituted in the network have interests in the conditions for cyclical rather than divergent practice" (Connell 1987, 141).

performance of gender. This leads not only to the creation of art about gender or on gender topics but also to the creation of art that views the foundations, materials, and media of art itself through the lens of gender theory or reflects on their gender-specific manifestations.

However, the presentation and exclusive deconstructivist self-reflection of material and media is already outdated. Instead, playful, subversive, and hybrid approaches overlay reconstructivist approaches that do not exclude (humourous) criticism.

A good example of this is the sculptures and installations of the British artist Sarah Lucas, for example, *Au naturel* (1994), in which male and female body parts evoke the heterosexual matrix, confirm their cliché images, and at the same time undermine them, because they consist, for example, of melons, cucumbers, oranges, and a bucket draped over an old mattress (Malik 2009).

3   Gender Issues as Institutional Critique in the Field of Music

Educational institutions, such as music academies and colleges, are institutionalised social organisations that mainly teach music practice and music knowledge or discourses. Why does the discussion of gender in this area at the same time mean a critique of institutions? Why are music education institutions sometimes very resistant to gender equality policy on the one hand and to efforts to increase gender competencies and knowledge on the other? Why are gender-theoretical approaches in music theory and musicology still received with scepticism or ignored?

Practical music training in European-influenced music education institutions is largely based on the reproduction of structures that originated in concert and opera culture and conform to the bourgeois music cultures that have been firmly established since the nineteenth century as well as the associated music market (cf. Weber 1975). This includes not only the performance, interpretation, and presentation of composed and notated works but also certain forms of staging the presentation of music in the concert hall or in the opera house. Improvisation or the performance of music outdoors, for example, are marginal phenomena in classical music education, although they have not always been marginal in the history of music performance. In conventional music practice, therefore, there are some clear hierarchical structures that prescribe, for example, that musicians understand the score as a reference medium or that the audience cannot actively play along at a concert (cf. Heister 1983). In addition, there are other rules in music education that are taken for granted, such as learning in individual lessons with a teacher and in so-called 'master classes' or the imprinting of stereotypical personalities in instrumental and vocal classes (cf. Busch-Salmen and Rieger 2000; Scharff 2017; Bull 2019).

This results in a number of fields of practice in which gender and the gender category play a major role. For example, the authority of the score is combined

with the fact that the persons represented are predominantly composers, particularly male creators of works. In this context, the ideal of a male genius and canon formation has been decisive since the nineteenth century. "Canons embody the value systems of a dominant cultural group that is creating or perpetuating the repertoire, although it may be encoding values from some larger, more powerful group" (Citron 2000, 20).[7]

In the concert hall or in the opera, the works are predominantly performed by conductors, who also embody authority and power in their role as creators and enjoy the highest reputation. Only in recent years have women who can acquire this role become known at the conductor's podium (possibly transforming it).

The question of gender in the classroom—who teaches whom and how or who is taught by whom—is another area that affects not only the consideration of personal differences and diversity but also includes aspects such as sexual attraction to harassment and coercion. The handling of power is decisive in this context too, because power does not automatically and exclusively mean domination over people but also represents a form of motivation, support, and enablement (Klinger 2004). It is therefore a conscious decision on how to use power, leave it unused, or abuse it. In addition, it is important to perceive, comment, and if necessary discontinue or punish the exercise of power or the use of power, in particular the abuse of power.

In addition to instrumental or vocal virtuosity, music education also promotes certain personality profiles that are linked to clichéd gender performances, be it the blonde, especially female soprano or the extroverted, self-confident trumpeter. Here, a gender-specific choice of instrument sometimes overlaps with gender connotations (harp is still considered a female instrument, brass instruments and drums are considered male instruments) (cf. Abeles and Yank Porter 1978; Hoffmann 1991; Abeles 2009).

In singing, high male voices or low female voices are considered rather androgynous, so they do not fit into the traditional separation of high female (soprano, mezzo-soprano, alto) and deep male voices (tenor, baritone, bass), although there are flowing transitions. Only the rediscovery of baroque operas in the twentieth century created a greater understanding of this, which, however, is taken into account almost exclusively in vocal training in special areas of early music. In classical vocal training for choir, oratorio, opera, and song, lessons based on vocal specialisations as well as traditional women's and men's voices predominate.

Efforts to raise awareness of such conditions are often seen as unnecessary interference, because they could obstruct routines and customary rights, but also any training premises deemed necessary. However, what the prevention and elimination of negative consequences of these premises and significant changes in traditional conditions require above all is a clear awareness of the connections of musical cultures with the category of gender (and other diversity categories) or

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[7] Citron describes musical canons as disciplinary and repertorial, which are intertwined.

increased gender competencies and extended gender knowledge. Actual changes in music institutions or in the Western European musical culture they are derived from would therefore result in complex and far-reaching cultural change. The thematisation of gender in terms of expanding social and pedagogical gender competencies and gender knowledge therefore also holds critical potential because it attacks existing hierarchies and conventions.

The discussion of gender in the fields of musicology, music biography, music analysis, and critical studies of music proves to be mainly a discourse critique. What this involves primarily with reference to the classical music canon is establishing a connection between music and gender in the first place, so that music is not understood as an absolute or autonomous art. Then it is a matter of incorporating certain aspects into music analysis and music criticism, such as the effects of gender polarity in music or the importance of different sexual orientations for the composition, thus ensuring that they are no longer concealed or declared irrelevant (cf. McClary 1991).

In principle, this encompasses the whole field and all connections between music and sexuality. It may be called prudery that this field has been little touched on in music theory and in musicology, but in reality there is more to it. On the one hand, the inclusion of comprehensive biographical contexts and the assertion that social conditions, including gender and family relations, dealings with women or partners, and desire and sexuality have an influence on music biography and music interpretation, including the history of its origin and impact, could or cannot only mean a de-idealisation of composers but also a 'devaluation' of their music.

On the other hand, the inclusion of gender aspects in the interpretation of music constitutes a critique of the idea and ideology of absolute or autonomous music, a critique of the idea of music that is determined solely in rational terms and guarantees the highest quality and aesthetic value through its technique, compositional form, and structure. This idea has a masculine connotation and is also supported by a correspondingly abstract, formally or compositionally oriented music-analytical language (see Maus 1993). The inclusion of gender aspects in the interpretation of music therefore also means criticising this one-sidedness and pointing out that musical factors with female connotations, such as emotionality and physicality, must be taken into account on an equal footing.

Apart from the fact that gender-connoted fields of meaning can be observed in the interpretation of music, however, their emphasis or negation should not be regarded as a neutral process. It makes a difference whether one emphasises the rational and technical ability or the emotionality and physicality of a male or female composer's music, because a male composer genius is in principle granted both levels (Battersby 1989). A female composer, on the other hand, was for a long time not trusted or regarded as possessing rationality and masterful musical technique. What including gender aspects in music institutions and in music education, music theory, and musicology therefore means not least is acknowledging that there is a complex interrelationship between the two sexes—however justified and defined—and gender as a social category and performance as well

as historically based gender connotations of language and knowledge and gender metaphors, and that this interrelationship pervades the music field in many ways.

4   Gender Issues as Institutional and Discourse Critique—Contemporary Music

In the field of new and contemporary music in the twentieth century, traditional patterns of canon formation and conventional gender discourses were initially reproduced, although changes gradually took place at various levels. It is clear that canon formation remained oriented towards male composers, be it Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, and Stravinsky, Hindemith, Bartok, Milhaud, and Messiaen, Boulez, Stockhausen, Nono, and Cage, or Feldman and Ives. There were no female composers in these series who were visible in this context. They came into focus only gradually since the 1980s, when the women's movement as a whole began paying more attention to female artists. Meanwhile, female composers such as Younghi Pagh-Paan, Adriana Hölszky, or Kaija Saariaho and Chaya Czernowin are among the best-known names, at least in the European context, but can they also be described as part of the canon? And do internationally famous artists such as Pauline Oliveros, Meredith Monk, or Laurie Anderson also belong in this series?

According to Marcia Citron, the series are related to repertorial and disciplinary canons, meaning that they are linked to performance and critical areas, so in fact, the question is:

> But who decides what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in canons – or more colloquially, what is in and what is out? This suggests the pivotal issue of the participation of interests in canonicity. Canon formation is not controlled by any one individual or organization, nor does it take place at any one historical moment. Rather, the process of the formation of a canon, whether a repertoire or a disciplinary paradigm, involves a lengthy historical process that engages many cultural variables (Citron 2000, 19).

We might ask here which cultural variables have been important in the realm of contemporary music in the last decades. One of them is surely the fact that contemporary music discourses were mostly named and described by male writers. Other variables are, for example, cultural approaches towards experiments in the arts, including experiments with musical instruments, the body, and the voice.

However, it is not only a matter of the gender disparity in canon formation but also of what composers produce and how and of how certain compositional directions and genres are connected. Gender connotations become important again in this connection, specifically the relation between ways of thinking and working with categories such as masculinity, femininity, or androgyny and with whether they are regarded as predominant, hegemonic, subordinate, deviant, integrated, or excluded. A key point in this regard are the cultural and artistic contexts in which gender connotations and their evaluations take place.

Recent decades have been characterised by a great pluralism of styles and international growth in contemporary music, but until the 1970s, more polarising directions were developed in music and strengthened above all by musical aesthetics and music historiography. In addition, there was a broad orientation towards developments mainly in Europe and the USA. The implementation of certain directions and discourse formations derived from them were the focus of many efforts by composers, musicologists, and critics, be it the implementation of atonal, serial, experimental, complex, or post-serial music. Theodor W. Adorno, for example, was heavily involved in the musical discussions in the German-speaking world after his return to Frankfurt, even if his statements hardly did justice to the current compositions of the 1950 and 1960s, because he based his arguments on the compositional developments of the 1920s (cf. Adorno 1949; Borio and Danuser 1997). In France, it was René Leibowitz and Olivier Messiaen who initiated innovation spurts as composers and teachers (see Kovács 2004). Boulez and Stockhausen followed as leading composers of a new musical constructivism, the basic lines of which corresponded to a rationally ordered music and material mastery—a compositional and work aesthetic that may be characterised as quite masculine. This was opposed by composers espousing experimental working attitudes and improvisational, intuitive approaches that ideally granted openness and freedom to both sound events and interpretive processes and changed the role of the compositional subject. If this is associated with more feminine connotations, it is probably significant that it was precisely in this environment that female artists such as Meredith Monk, Laurie Anderson, Pauline Oliveros, or Annea Lockwood first became known and that for a long time no serious interest was shown to them (Brüstle 2013). The fact that some of these female composers are lesbians and have linked their music to their sexual orientation has certainly contributed to their marginalisation (Mockus 2007). The situation was different for homosexual composers, who, for historical reasons, excluded or chose not to address their sexual orientation (such as Pierre Boulez and John Cage), not least because it was illegal. Sylvano Bussotti was an exception in this respect in the 1960s and also caused a certain (albeit quite calculatedly scandalous) opening in the context of contemporary music (Attinello et al. 2007). At the same time, Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett became the most important composers of the mid-twentieth century in Great Britain, and they could not really reveal their homosexuality at first either (Brüstle 2010). Privately practiced homosexuality among adults has been legalised in much of the UK since 1967 (*Sexual Offences Act*, extended 1980/82) (see Cook 2007).

In any case, nothing changed in the canon formation of these male composers, even if they later revealed their partnerships. Heterosexual composers, on the other hand, were able to live out their sexual orientation. Karlheinz Stockhausen, for example, staged private matters publicly and demonstrated his promiscuous potency by showing his family and partners (Stockhausen 1963–2014; Bauermeister 2013). His turn to open or variable forms or to intuitive music—that is, to areas with female connotations—has in principle only underlined his role as a male genius in the spirit of the nineteenth century.

In recent years, Georg Friedrich Haas has acted in a similar way, openly coupling his compositional production and his artistic success with the fulfilment of his male sadistic needs, in which he also integrates the relationship with performers and audiences (Woolfe 2016).[8]

However, sexuality and classical as well as contemporary music are by no means topics that have been discussed generally and comprehensively in recent years (cf. Sofer 2020, 2022). They may still be too close to scandals and at the same time to abysses that have become apparent in cases of abuse recently brought to light, especially in the music sector. Feminist-underpinned gender discussions have not least also led to the initiation of the #MeToo debates, in some cases revealing years of abuse of power. This was also perceived in the context of contemporary music but was for a very long time 'overlooked' or glossed over and concealed (see Knobbe and Möller 2018).

In any case, the thematisation of gender implies different critiques of power relations and discrimination in the context of contemporary music as well. This is also evident if one takes into account music-theoretical and musicological discourses and contemporary music creation itself, which I will now discuss in more detail.

In music theory, dealing with gender means moving 'outside the canon'. Although this is something that is increasingly being done, Ellie Hisama still had to state the following in 2000:

> Not only is there still a pressing need in the new millennium for our music theory societies to diversify their membership with regard to gender and race, but music theory journals [including, e.g., *Perspectives of New Music*] also need to publish scholarship on music by women, popular music and jazz, American music, and non-Western music on a much larger scale. I am not suggesting that research on canonical composers should be dispensed with; I am saying that music theory journals need to become more diverse (Hisama 2000).

However, canon criticism is only one aspect of this demand. Also criticised are conventional music-theoretical methods of analysis focussing on objectivity and traditional quality criteria such as high complexity or a sophisticated compositional structure. It should be recalled here that the preoccupation with these complicated areas often falls back on the analysts in a quasi-ennoblable way.

The question arises, for example, what is excluded or brought to the fore by the inclusion of gender issues within musical analyses. In any case, it is not only composing women but also the subjective position and performance of the analyst (cf. Cook 1999). This would imply that the rational, analytical penetration of a piece of music would be supplemented by reflection on its phenomenological, physical-sensual, and emotional effect (on the interpreters, analysts, listeners, users), its perception and re-actions, because it is precisely physicality, sensuality, perception, and listening positions that have often been excluded. Although these aspects

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[8] Cf. the film *The Artist & the Pervert* (2018).

have increasingly been taken up in music theory and musicology in recent years, their connection to gender theories and gender issues is often left aside.

A composition such as *?Corporel* (1985) for a drummer on his body by Vinko Globokar, for example, clearly places the male interpreter with a naked upper body in the centre. This excludes female drummers from the outset or at least restricts them in their execution of the piece. The composer seems to have little understanding for this. Percussionist Kira Dralle reports: "When I asked him if he thought that a performance was any less aurally authentic to his composition if a woman would perform with a shirt, he merely replied, 'I don't know, how attractive is she?' This was devastating" (Dralle 2013). Nevertheless, this fact is hardly touched on in analyses, as the author has to admit from her own experience. Instead, the male body is described as a neutral, human body, and the focus is on the analysis of the score, on the description of the structure of the piece, and on the interpretation of the composer's intentions (cf. Zenck et al. 2001; Beck 2004; Brüstle 2013a, b, 228–233; Balkenborg 2013; Schmitt-Weidmann 2021).

The relationship between music and audience or listener has also been increasingly addressed in recent years. Here, the integration of gender discourses leads to a questioning of the active and passive roles. Is music a masculine power due to its penetration of the auditory organs, especially if it is overwhelming in expression and emotionally intrusive? Is the listener always passive and therefore 'receiving' connoted with the female? If this is not the case, is there (always) a homoerotic relationship between music and listeners (regardless of their biological sex) (cf. Brett et al. 2011)? Central discourses of contemporary music must be linked to these questions, because it was precisely the parameters of expression and emotion (together with the factors of enjoyment and pleasure) that were rejected and suppressed as a weakness or constriction of music at least in the middle of the twentieth century. With this, however, the modernist, avant-garde, artificial music lost part of its masculine power and a large part of its audience. However, it has been reassessed on the one hand precisely due to its exclusivity and rational foundations and on the other hand due to its idealisation of naturalness and liberation, presence of sound, noise, and silence. For gender connotations and associated evaluations, this resulted in other reference points: rationality and construction for masculinity, naturalness, and liberation for (male) femininity.[9]

The dichotomy of male/female attempted here is clearly outdated, but it should and can contribute to clarifying the developments. After all, the renaissance of expression and emotion in contemporary music since the 1970s gave rise to another change. It raised the question as to which compositional means should be used to combine expression and emotion: Was it the ingenious expressiveness of Wolfgang Rihm, the minimalist repetitions of Philip Glass, or the neo-romantic tonality of Judith Weir? Has music regained its masculine power as a result?

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[9] This reasoning assumes that these discourses were led by male composers, not female composers.

However, the broad international audience was recaptured above all in minimal music. It may be assumed that people feel emotionally addressed by this music on the one hand and associate pleasure with it on the other. Both of these categories were located under other aspects in postmodernism (cf. Lochhead and Auner 2002). But let us ask again: Has the masculine-connoted power of music towards the listener been reconstituted by expression, emotion, pleasure, tonality? Will listeners be overwhelmed (again), perhaps even against their will? Or has an interaction based on mutual consent not perhaps become possible again?

However, it should be borne in mind that the audience or listeners cannot be seen as a uniform mass but as a completely heterogeneous unit. This aspect is central to the field of contemporary music, as it has produced its own audiences, including analysts and interpreters, ranging from those who know and enjoy serial music (cf. Ashby 2004) to those who prefer improvisation and instant composition or enjoy minimalist music. What I am getting at is that a listener and lover of serial music may not spend an enjoyable evening with music by Philip Glass.

The different receptions of contemporary music are charged with evaluations, some of which are still very much determined by Adorno's arguments in favour of a socially resistant music that negates the commodity character, as he wrote about art:

> What is social in art is its immanent movement against society, not its manifest opinions. Its historical gesture repels empirical reality, of which artworks are nevertheless part in that they are things. Insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness. Through their difference from a bewitched reality, they embody negatively a position in which what is would find its rightful place, its own. […] Artworks are plenipotentiaries of things that are no longer distorted by exchange, profit, and the false needs of a degraded humanity (Adorno 1997, 227).[10]

Hence a discourse of 'authentic' new music that still endures despite all the diversity of contemporary music. Although the younger generations of composers have probably read Adorno little, they are still measured (or they measure themselves) by this discourse by teachers or in reviews, for example, at least in large parts of contemporary music in the European context.

If this discourse is still effective and thus connected with the idea of a primacy within contemporary music that is more or less strongly associated with construction, rationality, and self-reflection, one could assume that this discourse is male-dominated, even if expression and emotion are no longer suppressed. Fred Maus

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[10] Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, 336–337: "Gesellschaftlich an der Kunst ist ihre immanente Bewegung gegen die Gesellschaft, nicht ihre manifeste Stellungnahme. Ihr geschichtlicher Gestus stößt die empirische Realität von sich ab, deren Teil doch die Kunstwerke als Dinge sind. Soweit von Kunstwerken eine gesellschaftliche Funktion sich prädizieren lässt, ist es ihre Funktionslosigkeit. Sie verkörpern durch ihre Differenz von der verhexten Wirklichkeit negativ einen Stand, in dem, was ist, an die rechte Stelle käme, an seine eigene. […] Kunstwerke sind die Statthalter der nicht länger vom Tausch verunstalteten Dinge, des nicht durch den Profit und das falsche Bedürfnis der entwürdigten Menschheit Zugerichteten".

has suggested a way out of this dilemma by proposing to understand the non-tonal music of this direction as 'queer':

> Perhaps it is already easy to see that non-tonal compositions are queers in the concert hall, without any special arguments on my part. To many listeners and performers, they are marginals, oddballs, outsiders, often tolerated rather than loved, sometimes not tolerated at all, products of the degeneration of tonal order, needing a special etiology to explain why they are so peculiar (Maus 2004, 159).

Fred Maus's proposal is charming and worth considering, but it implies the danger of attributing the role of a 'queer' victim to elitist and discourse-demanding thinking and composing within contemporary music. This only works against the background of the general concert hall audience; not against the background of the discourses of contemporary music. In this context, the music of Philip Glass or Judith Weir is despised and rejected, or at best just tolerated.

5   Conclusion

The integration of gender in the field of music implies much-discussed aspects and measures of institutional gender equality policy as well as fundamental perspectives critical of music discourse, music theory, and musicology, and thus also institutionally critical perspectives. The entire field of music is permeated by practices and theories that create, confirm, and—far too rarely—reflect on unspoken and pronounced gender relations and connotations. In addition, there is a continuous interplay between numerically identifiable gender relations, (powerful) institutional gender strategies, and the state of gender knowledge or gender competencies, whether within a music education institution, in the concert business, or in the circles of composers and interpreters, including analysts of contemporary music. In this respect, the three lines 'fix the numbers', 'fix the institution', 'fix the knowledge' form a mutually dependent unit. In addition, it is clear that gender aspects must be extended intersectionally by further diversity categories, such as age, religion, class, race, religion, and sexual orientation, in order to achieve a deepening of this unity that at least comes close to real constellations (cf. Andresen et al. 2009).

In closing, I would like to deepen these aspects once again using the example of two artists and their compositional projects. In contemporary music—except operas, in which sex/gender-related subjects still matter—few artists explicitly refer to gender aspects in the sense that they reflect masculinity, femininity, or sexuality in their music, criticise power relations, or question conventional gender norms. As one can assume, music or sound composition itself will not be able to make certain statements, but messages in music can result from ethical or political attitudes of the producers and from musical contexts or from the material of the music, its use, and its effect in the comparison of different pieces or compositions (cf. Dibben 1999).

However, those who integrate gender aspects into their work are not in the mainstream of the music being composed today but more or less successfully occupy niches, such as the Austrian composer Pia Palme, or work across genres and engage in activism, like the Japan-based American artist and DJ Terre Thaemlitz. In both cases, the self-reflexive, partly autobiographical preoccupation with gender issues also means a critique of hegemonic discourses of contemporary music. How does this manifest itself?

Pia Palme already dealt with the question of possibilities of interweaving composition, interpretation, improvisation, listening positions, and feminism in her 2017 dissertation in composition under Liza Lim at the University of Huddersfield, entitled *The noise of mind: A feminist practice in composition*, Palme describes "feminist practice in composition" as "a compositional practice that is grounded in feminism, meaning that feminism underpins how and what kind of decisions are made during the compositional process and around it. This practice does not seek to produce 'feminist' works. The feminist practice in composition is essentially personal and individual" (Palme 2017, 14–15). This addresses a specific compositional style that is characterised by great flexibility and openness to collaboration, and by a refusal to define a (compositional) artistic identity. One might speak of the manifestation of a 'nomadic subject' who seeks to discover and pursue an 'écriture feminine' (Kogler 2017). Similar to Pauline Oliveros, Pia Palme thus represents a 'cultural feminism': "Cultural feminists tend to believe that they should make an environment free of masculine values as they perceive them, and that specifically female body experiences are powerful forces in constructing a female ideology" (Taylor 1993, 386–387). It is therefore assumed that female artists create their own working, cooperation, performance spaces, and forums that they practice empowerment in order to evade or oppose male networks and power structures. The preoccupation with one's own body, especially the work with one's own voice, also appears as a feminist artistic refuge, presumably among other things because the female voice suffers (almost) no voice mutation and thus represents a continuous, albeit flexible, and fluid identity, which is not least reflected in the multiple role of a composer, performer, musician, and improviser (Cusick 1999). In the context of contemporary music, however, occupying and expanding one's 'own female space' means a form of institutional critique that—even if it can be ignored—aims to set an example in the present and to work hopefully for a future in which female artists receive full recognition, as Virginia Woolf 1929 put it in her famous statement:

> As for her coming without that preparation, without that effort on our part, without that determination that when she is born again she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry, that we cannot expect, for that would be impossible. But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while (Woolf 1993, 103).

The artist Terre Thaemlitz positions herself musically and activistically somewhat differently from Pia Palme, but she is equally concerned with "fighting [dominant]

culture with culture" (Thaemlitz 1997). Palme and Thaemlitz also have a basic attitude in common, which refers to the fact that their art does not arise and exist absolutely and independently of social and artistic contexts. In addition, authorship is a permanent open question for both, which arises on the one hand through collaborations with colleagues and audiences and on the other through consciously established musical and performative references. One example is Thaemlitz's links to the music of the American synth-pop band Devo, to the British electropop musician Gary Numan, or to the band Kraftwerk (Thaemlitz 2018). Thaemlitz also combines her music with social, gender, and capitalism-critical messages, which result above all from her experiences and perceptions as a transgender person. Thaemlitz does not want to clearly define herself as a person or her music, which cannot be described as commercially oriented pop music and also does not fit into the context of artificial, contemporary composed works:

> For myself, the power of transgenderism – if any – rests in this vagueness and divisiveness. It is not a power of distinction or difference from other genders, but rather the power of seeing representational systems of distinction or difference between genders collapse. It is not a power of transformation, but rather the power of transition. It is not a 'third gender' offering unity, or a middling of genders. It is, by all means, a threat to the myth of social unity. Within the transgendered community, it is the potential to de-essentialise acts of transitioning in relation to social process. It is hard reality like a fist in the face (as many of us unfortunately know). The more you attempt to define it, the more it eludes and betrays you (Thaemlitz 2004).

The musical ambiguity in Thaemlitz's works can be seen, for example, in their appearance as electronic dance and ambient music, with repetitions and psychedelic spatial sounds. But they also undermine the pure formation of atmosphere, for example, through messages in titles, through quotations of speeches, or certain references in remixes. In addition, it is the performance contexts and the audience that Thaemlitz prefers and appeals to that indirectly form a 'counterculture', be it certain subcultural bars and clubs or the audience of contemporary performance art and experimental electronics.

The thematisation and discussion of gender aspects in music, in music theory and musicology, and in music institutions such as music colleges and universities is always associated with a critical awareness-raising, which, among other things, makes power relations visible and attacks them. This implicit and explicit critique within the thematisation of gender aspects is often noticeable through the concern and defensive attitudes of those addressed, who, for whatever reason, adopt a counter-attitude. Especially in the field of music, it is also common to declare gender aspects irrelevant because music is allegedly apolitical or, as art, has no contact with sexuality or sexual orientation. We experience the opposite every day, whether in music appropriated by right-wing populist parties or in associations triggered by Ravel's *Bolero*, not to mention cases of abuse that take place especially in music practice. Precisely for this reason, knowledge transfer and competence building regarding intersectionally extended gender discourses and gender are necessary in institutions of music, to which music as art belongs.

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Darmstadt and Its Discontents

4

Martin Iddon

1.

Just as there had been art which—before the 1970s, before Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, or Hans Haacke—might have been characterised as falling within the ambit of institutional critique, so there were musical precedents in the post-war avant-garde metonymised in the name Darmstadt. The most prominent event that might be viewed in this light is inevitably John Cage's visit to the Darmstadt courses in 1958, perhaps at its zenith in his implicit criticism of any institution which might privilege theoretical reflection over listening:

> Which is more musical, a truck passing by a factory or a truck passing by a music school?
> Are the people inside the school musical and the ones outside unmusical?
> What if the ones inside can't hear very well, would that change my question?
> Do you know what I mean when I say inside the school? (Cage 1968 [1958], 41)[1]

Pointed though Cage's question may have been, his lectures also, perhaps more pertinently, blurred the line between whether they really were lectures or were, themselves, artworks. Position-taking with respect to Cage was the flashpoint for one of Darmstadt's most notorious clashes: while Karlheinz Stockhausen had implicitly shown his support for approaches which riffed on Cage's indeterminate notations, in his 1959 *Musik und Graphik* lecture series, Luigi Nono made no less clear in his presentation "The Presence of the Past in the Music of the Present"

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[1] For a fuller account of Cage's visit, see Iddon 2013, 196–228.

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that, even if Cage might know what he was doing, his epigones seemed often to be using indeterminate notations more or less because performers of the quality of David Tudor seemed able to spin gold out of them (Iddon 2013, 231–52 & 255–60).

Yet for all Cage apparently caused European composers to orient themselves with respect to him, his impact in institutional terms was relatively small, perhaps by virtue of how straightforward it was to quarantine him, safely, as an outsider—an American cowboy—whose opinions regarding the infrastructure of the old country's new music scene could be regarded as entertaining but fundamentally irrelevant. That said, perhaps there was, too, an underpinning fear that he might have had a point, made visible in the unofficial ban on his presence at Darmstadt through the tenure of the second director of the courses, Ernst Thomas, for whom the sign-sound relation encoded in the score acted as a guarantee that he was not being taken for a ride (Thomas 1959). In many respects, the Contre-Festival in Mary Bauermeister's Cologne Studio in 1960, though both conceived explicitly in opposition to the International Society for New Music's annual festival, held in the same city, is similar, in the sense that it had to be undertaken outwith the institutions of new music, with almost the only contact between the officially sanctioned festival and Bauermeister's the presence in both of Tudor, who premiered Stockhausen's *Kontakte* on 11 June 1960, before a few days later, on 15 June 1960, in a sort of *salon des refusés*, performing the music of Cage, Toshi Ichiyanagi, Sylvano Bussotti, George Brecht, La Monte Young, and Christian Wolff. Other members of the broader Stockhausen circle—including Aloys Kontarsky and Christoph Caskel—ultimately performed at the atelier and Stockhausen himself attended concerts there, surely in part trying to have a foot in both camps, a part of the 'official' avant-garde, but simultaneously opposed to it (Zahn 1993).

To speak of Kontarsky and Caskel as part of the Stockhausen circle is, too, to misrepresent, at least a little: they were no less close at the time, to Mauricio Kagel. Kagel's *Sur scène* (1959–60) blurs the distinction between presentation and representation of musical performers: an actor plays the part of an audience member—largely unimpressed by either the music or the audience 'proper'—while a speaker takes on the role of critic, who delivers a second-hand collage of sources, from the pretentious to the profane; three instrumentalists play the roles of performers, such that the moments when they do play notes take on the guise not only of the performance of rehearsal, but even seem to do so in quotation marks. Though premiered in Bremen the previous year, *Sur scène* was also the closing piece of the 1963 Darmstadt Ferienkurse: Kagel's description of the piece—and particularly the role of the critic—as a "reaction to the academicism of Darmstadt" leads Heile to conclude, rightly, that its position in the programme made it seem "a distorting mirror of the whole event" (Heile 2006, 40). Yet the object of this discontent is a stark reminder that, to the extent there was criticism of the institution to be had in the 1960s, it largely went only so far as to wish that Darmstadt might be less boring, recollecting Cardew's note the following year that Darmstadt represented "an excellent Academy [where] where problems like Notation and

Electronic Sound are competently handled in a rather academic way" (Cardew 1964), or Wolf-Eberhard von Lewinski's more biting 1966 judgement: "a prosaic works convention" (Lewinski 1966). In this context, *Sur scène* might be read, above all, as a complaint about how dull it was to hear senior German intellectuals deliver their (all too) serious thoughts on the subject of new music.

2.

It was not tedium which led to real friction, but authority. In 1968, Thomas and Stockhausen felt the need to redact critical student responses to the ways in which Stockhausen had run his composition course that year. Against the apparently egalitarian ideas that might seem to have lain behind both intuitive music more generally and the collective approach to composition that the *Musik für ein Haus* project specifically seemed to embrace, the students felt that Stockhausen had been doctrinaire, regarding how they went about devising their intuitive scores, how those scores would be combined in collective performance, and what performers were expected (or, even, allowed) to do with them. Yet, through the ministries of senior composer and institution, those critical voices are absent from the publication devoted to the course (Iddon 2004).

The following year, it was impossible to hide away criticism of Stockhausen. His seminars that year focussed on the intuitive music of his *Aus den Sieben Tagen* (1968) pieces, performed jointly by his own ensemble and the trombonist Vinko Globokar's New Phonic Art. Globokar himself argued that, so far as he was concerned, there was little distinction of note to be made between what happened when he improvised and when he was guided by Stockhausen's texts and, moreover, that if what Stockhausen truly wanted was intuition, then the ways in which he manipulated sound at the mixing desk—highlighting, for instance, what he would like to hear more of—militated directly against this. The apparent breach of protocol—a performer taking issue so stridently with the composer whose music they were performing—may well have been related to the former Nono student Helmut Lachenmann's provocative question to Globokar: when he played these pieces, from which of Stockhausen's fingers did he hang? Globokar had little intention of being thought anyone's puppet (Cavallotti 2020).

By 1970, participants at Darmstadt had brought their discontent into public, holding open meetings not only to make clear their objections to the direction Darmstadt had taken, but also to propose concrete actions. Above all, the participants seem to have felt that the aesthetic direction of the courses was too limited, especially because of Stockhausen's centrality, and that part of the core reason for those limits was how out of touch the leadership—Thomas, that is—was with what young composers were interested in. The excessive, as it seemed, authority of both senior figures was a bone of contention. The demands appear, at this distance, rather moderate: more time spent learning to compose, in seminar and group learning contexts; in those same group contexts, a breaking down of the divisions between composition and performance and, too, between notated

and improvised approaches to both; increased diversity, especially in terms of internationalisation, both among participants and faculty; more opportunities for participants to play a democratic role in the institution. The participant meeting elected a delegation to put their suggestions for change to Thomas, which included Bauermeister and Caskel, as well Reinhard Oehlschlägel, Rudolf Frisius, Ernstalbrecht Stiebler, and Nicolaus A. Huber, whose expertise encompassed journalism in print and on radio, musicology, and composition. Huber had a personal reason to feel aggrieved since, although his *Versuch über Sprache* (1969) had been awarded a prize at that year's courses, the first time a prize for composition had been awarded at Darmstadt, it was a second prize. The implication was that the jurors felt that no composition was of sufficient quality to merit a first prize. There were rumours that Huber's principal offence was to have taken part of the text for the piece from Marx (Iddon 2006, 257–63).[2]

Contrary to the general perception of Thomas as a rather staid, unimaginative, and diffident leader, he did act, revising the structure of the courses over a 'fallow' year in 1971, before the courses took on a regular biennial pattern from 1972. Though there was no democratisation—on the contrary, Thomas instituted an advisory board of new music luminaries: Caskel, Kontarsky, and the cellist, Siegfried Palm—he did institute a new studio space for composers to develop new work, a space in which composers could work collaboratively and do so in dialogue with faculty members: in the first year, the composition studio was run jointly by Lachenmann and former Stockhausen Ensemble member, David Johnson. In previous years, the lecture-led format of the courses had created the impression that faculty members largely spoke to—or worse *at*—rather than with participants. Despite this, the three dissenters who worked most prominently as journalists of various kinds, Oehlschlägel, Frisius, and Stiebler, found themselves—in Stiebler's case, only briefly—barred from the courses, on account of having been involved in the (attempted) distribution of a pamphlet which seems to have been less scurrilous than a blanket ban would suggest. The three demanded, among other things, increased discussion of political aesthetics, a reduction in the centrality of established composers, and an elected advisory panel, to replace Thomas's *selected* one. In response, Kontarsky insisted that politics *had* been a significant focus, in lectures delivered by Carl Dahlhaus, Reinhold Brinkmann, and György Ligeti, not least, as well as in the premiere of Huber's *Harakiri* (1971) (Iddon 2006, 267–74).

By rights, *Harakiri* ought to have been premiered earlier in 1972, but its commissioner Clytus Gottwald had rejected it. Huber's earlier *Informationen über die Töne e–f* (1965–66) reduced its material to a tiny pitch band which it exploded, revealing its interior life. By contrast, *Harakiri* exhibits a deep cynicism about the ability of musical material to *express*—"the acoustical even does not establish

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[2]Although the LP release of *Versuch über Sprache* claims that it won that year's Kranichstein Musikpreis, this is untrue, since that prize was not awarded for composition until the next instance of the courses, in 1972.

itself immediately as music. In this respect it is not music. […] I made it diffi-
cult to mistake what are presented as elements of music as music itself" (Kutschke
2009, 84)—through a similar reduction: the opening ten minutes of the piece cen-
tres around an extremely quiet and unfocussed—in fact, unfocussable—drone, cre-
ated via thirteen violins, playing their open A strings, detuned by over two octaves
to the G-flat at the bottom of the bass staff. Throughout this whole section, the
music actively performs its own inability to speak: from Huber's perspective,
music's noble suicide might open up a self-reflective space in which it could, at
least, reveal the ways in which listening to music *as music* prevented engagement
with live political problems; to Gottwald, it looked more like a hitjob (Kutschke
2009). In this sense, Huber's music looks like a sort of prototype for precisely the
sort of critique that would prove to be unwelcome at Darmstadt for the rest of the
decade.

   The newly instituted composition studios had presented the work of younger
composers in concert, many of whom would become established over the
next few years: Michaël Levinas, Wolfgang Rihm, Clarence Barlow, Horațiu
Rădulescu, and Gillian Bibby among them, the last of whom would be one of
the joint winners of the first Kranichstein Musikpreis awarded for composition in
the same year. There were many more informal performances of new work dur-
ing the studio sessions themselves, often including senior performers, as in Nicole
Rodrigue's *Nasca* (1972), which involved both Caskel and Kontarsky, as well as
Michel Portal, and was conducted by Globokar. The material demands of the pro-
tests having been met, perhaps it is no surprise that Kontarsky was unconvinced
by the insistence that he ought to be replaced by an elected representative of the
participants, not least since relatively few participants returned year after year. In
combination, this suggests that though the protests were demanding things of the
leadership, the only acceptable response would have to be one which originated
outside the territory occupied by the leadership.

3.

Arguably, the composition studios had precisely the scope to become this space,
even if that was not obvious in their first year. By 1974 it was rather better known
than it had been in 1972 that intractable rifts had developed in the Stockhausen
camp. Then, it would have been eminently possible to think that the studio lead-
ership continued to mirror Darmstadt's own institutional history: Lachenmann
standing for his teacher, Nono; Johnson standing for his former collaborator,
Stockhausen. In 1974, Rolf Gehlhaar, himself formerly Stockhausen's assis-
tant, took over running the studios. The usual critical press voices pointed to the
ways in which Gehlhaar made use of process plans, which seemed reminiscent of
Stockhausen's process plans for, for instance, *Prozession* (1967) or *Kurzwellen*
(1968) (Frisius 1974). Frisius's description of this does not note, though, that
the process plans Gehlhaar used were—recognisably, and not only because of
the copyright notice—Feedback Studio process plans, the Cologne Feedback

Studio having been set up precisely by Gehlhaar, Johnson, and Johannes Fritsch in dissatisfaction with the direction their work with Stockhausen had been taking, especially after the inevitable exhaustion of a months-long stay in Japan in 1970 (Fritsch 2010 [1993], 40).[3] Nor does it acknowledge that part of that dissatisfaction stemmed precisely from a sense that, in a parallel with Globokar's complaints, their involvement in Stockhausen's process pieces ought, by rights, to have given them a stake in the compositional ownership of those processes.

Stockhausen's personal authority fomented more dissent in 1974. His demands for total, rapt attention to his seminars led him to suspend a participant for—accounts vary—having arrived late or seeking to leave early, perhaps because of feeling unwell or to get some water, on account of the extreme heat in the unventilated hall, or because he already had a practice room booked. In response, Gerhard Stäbler, Johannes Vetter, and Jürgen Lösche produced a pamphlet under the auspices of the self-styled Initiative for the Foundation of a Society of Socialist Makers of Art, which critiqued Stockhausen's demands for seeming absolute authority and deference, and, perhaps more devastatingly, organised a walk-out of Stockhausen's next seminar (Iddon 2008).

Stockhausen might have been to some extent perplexed by the degree to which attacks were directly at him personally. From his perspective, it may have seemed only a few years ago that he was part of the crowd kicking against institutional pricks, even if the way in which he had—in 1960's attendance at the Contre-Festival, say—tried to position himself outside, while still very much taking advantage of, the establishment surely looks, with more critical distance, cynical. It is precisely on this fracture that the events of the 1974 courses rest, including the ways in which they present a possible alternate future for new music which never came to pass.

Stockhausen's major new piece—*Herbstmusik* (1974)—in many respects feels like it is intimately in touch with the mood of disquiet. The first three of its four movement titles are literal descriptions of the on-stage events: "nailing a roof", "breaking wood", "threshing". In its last—"leaves and rain"—a tussle in the leaves between clarinettist and violist becomes apparently consensually erotic—if musically metaphorised, Stockhausen suddenly somehow bashful—in a closing duet. In the abstract, this might be thought of as a piece concretely figuring the problematics of ideas of musical autonomy, insulated against the realities of lived, and living, experience. Though Stockhausen's name was attached to the piece, *Herbstmusik* feels, too, like the devising process is still visible in performance. One way of reading the piece is that it also seeks, if a little ham-fistedly, to undo the authority of the composer through collectivity, *revealing* the collectivity that was at play in the *Aus den Sieben Tagen* performances, but which Stockhausen struggled to admit. This was certainly not the view taken by those who

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[3] Fritsch points out, too, that Stockhausen endeavoured to persuade the rights agency, GEMA, to pay musicians a higher fee for performances of pieces where they had an increased level of creative involvement, on the model of jazz musicians, but was unsuccessful.

encountered the piece, though: any critique was invisible to Gustav Adolf Trumpff (1974), for whom the theatrical elements failed to obscure that the music—music and theatre apparently neatly separable in his view—was "thin", while Lewinski (1974b) cuttingly noted that the quality of the performers was rather greater than that of the composer. Hans-Klaus Jungheinrich (1974) struck at the heart of things when he noted that the final movement may well have been satyrical, but it was not satirical. He also, bitingly, observed that it was the anonymous stagehands who cleared the stage afterwards who were responsible for the most important job of work. This in combination with the student protest was the trigger for Stockhausen to be ejected from the courses, in which he had been (at least one of) the dominant figure(s) since the 1950s. The idea of an individual *so* entwined with the institution offering such a blunt critique of that institution was unfortunately—and to a pretty large extent literally—laughable. Perhaps part of the problem was that Stockhausen did not seem to think it might be funny.

The waning—if not total collapse—of Stockhausen's star definitinally opened up space for others, just the sort of space that protests against the institution had been calling for. Perhaps ironically, the most immediately obvious candidates were undertaking work explicitly critical of the institutional presumptions of new music in ways which at least touched the field occupied, unsuccessfully, by *Herbstmusik*. Arguably the best of these, one of the stand-out pieces of the 1974 Ferienkurse, was Moya Henderson's *Clearing the Air* (1974), composed and performed as a part of Gehlhaar's composition studios. As the piece began, it could have been mistaken for something almost wholly recognisably new musical: the double bassist, Fernando Grillo, seemed to be accompanied by a fixed tape part, diffused through four—at the time stereotypically—over-sized loudspeakers, which interfered with what Henderson described as Grillo's "exotic, high-pitched extravagances" (quoted in Kouvaras 2016, 90). Yet the acute listener might already have thought that the fidelity of the electronic sound was too high, that the speakers reproduced acoustic sounds too perfectly. That listener would not have long to wait to have their suspicions confirmed: the live performers concealed inside the speakers—Christina Kubisch (flute), Davide Mosconi (oboe or, possibly, mizmar), Gehlhaar (clarinet), and Henderson herself (didgeridoo)—began to cut their way out of the paper speaker cones, before advancing, threateningly, on all fours according to Herbert Henck's account, towards Grillo with the same scissors they had used to escape their electronic prisons. Just at the point at which they raised their scissors, the lights were cut and the piece ended (Reese 2021, 54).

That same group was the source of no shortage of critiques of the environment and presumptions of new music. Kubisch's *Divertimento* (1974) asked five pianists—at the same instrument—to play the same, increasingly complex, material, at different tempi. These tempi were provided to the pianists via what would now seem a simple means—in-ear click tracks—but which at the time involved Kubisch in some rather complicated manipulation of physical tape and the performers with obtrusive headphones. The piece represented, as Kubisch described it, "a parody of the precise demands of new music, which often leave little scope to the performers for interpretation. In contrast was the rather absurd image of

five men at one piano, slaving away at the instrument while wearing headphones" (ibid.). One of the pianists was Davide Mosconi, whose *3 For* (1973) operates in not unrelated territory: here there are three pianists and one piano. The instructions of the third pianist ask them to move the piano in ways which make it impossible for the first to carry out the actions on the keyboard and pedals asked of them. The second pianist, having smoked a cigarette, waits in the curve of the instrument until the first pianist is inevitably unseated by the third, and then helps them off stage. Grillo's own *Itesi* (1974) was composed for double bass and dancer, performed by the composer himself and Muriel Jaer. According to one of the courses most regular reviewers, Wolf-Eberhard von Lewinski, Grillo was not disturbed by the noise of audience dissatisfaction with a piece which concentrated on finding different ways to generate sound from the double bass—under the strings, on the nut, a set of "circus effects", Lewinski thought—even if one's jaw might drop to read Lewinski's assertion that it was fortunate there was so much to watch Grillo do since Jaer was "no eye candy" (Lewinski 1974a). As Lewinski's later review of the courses as a whole made clear, "music as theatrical action" should be understood as no less critical of the Darmstadt institution, no less a reaction against the status quo, than explicit protests against Stockhausen. The young composers may have been "clueless", in Lewinski's view, but the fault lay with their teachers (Lewinski 1974c).

It was Henderson who would be the principal winner of 1974's Kranichstein Music Prize. On a certain reading—since the inaugural 1972 award was split equally three ways, between Bibby, Helmut Cromm, and Martin Gellhorn— Henderson's win of the major award in 1974 brought the last, and only occasion on which an equal gender balance was achieved. This did not seem to be a cause for celebration at the time: Frisius, admittedly one of Thomas's most trenchant critics, implied that the verdict in favour of Henderson was suspect since the jury for the prize was made up of six performers and just one composer, Gehlhaar himself (Frisius 1974). No less significant was the fact that one of Henderson's co-winners—of the lesser prize of DM300 rather than the DM800, awarded to Henderson—was a composer of colour, Alvin Singleton, for his game piece, *Be Natural* (1974). Intriguingly, neither is mentioned in the *Basler Nachrichten*'s review of the courses, which awards the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis to Detlev Müller-Siemens who, like Singleton, won one of the smaller awards (Damm 1974).[4]

Grillo, Henderson, and Mosconi returned in 1976. All three appeared on the programme, in different guises. Henderson, as might be expected from the major prize winner of the previous courses, had a piece presented on the main programme: *Stubble* (1975–76) for an on-stage soprano and an unseen bass, playing

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[4] The Indian composer, Clarence Barlow, would win in Thomas's final year as director, 1980. There is a decline between the first and second decade of the award: of twelve awardees between 1972 and 1980, two were composers of colour, and two were women. In the following decade, there were fifteen awards made, two to women and none to Black or Asian composers.

the role of the soprano's talking table. At that table, the soprano is making prepara-
tions for a date, preparations which become increasingly absurd and, to the same
degree, increasingly pointed: she shaves her legs—recalling her mother's warning
that she could be regarded as a "gorilla" if she didn't—before continuing her hair
removal regime to nostrils and eyebrows, then to merkin-esque armpits, eventu-
ally drawing improbable lengths of black thread from the nipples of the fake
breasts behind which the soprano has been standing. The score's dedication "to
all those women emancipated in the Year of the Woman 1975" unpicks any read-
ing that Henderson's female subject should be read as a powerless hysteric sub-
ject to the imagined whims of an absent male body, making the piece rather more
pointedly critical of the ways in which second-wave feminism might be seen to
have achieved *symbolic* progress at the expense of genuine societal change, neatly
exemplified through the stalling of the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment
in the United States, which ground to a halt after North Dakota's ratification on
3 February 1975 (Macarthur 2001, 160–64). The piece passed by largely with-
out comment, however. Robert Rollin's retrospective—a near-lone report, which
seems unfortunately to have rather misread the point—suggested that in "ridicul-
ing" the desires of the female subject to "please", "Darmstadt's unwritten tradition
of having one work involving nudity was upheld" (Rollin 1976, 22).[5] Lewinski
(1976) refused even to name Henderson: his suggestion that, for some of the com-
posers who had worked with Kagel in Cologne, their acuity of their satire was
undermined by the fundamental technical flaws it concealed, nonetheless evidently
had Henderson as one of its principal targets. It is, too, difficult to see a piece like
Henderson's reflecting Jungheinrich's claim that the courses seemed like "dull
exercises for a specialist audience of composers" (Jungheinrich 1976).

Davide Mosconi's *Quartetto* (1974–76) featured a harpist encased—along with
her harp—entirely in close-fitting purple knitwear, a pianist hidden inside a black
box, a violinist whose bow and violin are enclosed inside a purpose-built yellow
steel case, and a fourth player—Mosconi in this performance—who is directed to
play accordion, bandoneon, and harmonica simultaneously, while being wrapped
in Scotch tape, until performance is impossible. The performance was surely
striking but, as with Henderson, practically ignored, save by Gerhard Schroth
(1976), who regarded Mosconi as a prime example of those young composers
who remained concerned that the boundaries of music should not be drawn simply
where sound or notation seemed to end, and Klaus Trapp (1976), who did seem to
sense some of the critique at the heart of things: "a sarcastic vision of the end of
all music or despair about there being any sense in 'composing'?".

Despite 'collective composition' having been one of the things most demanded
only a few years earlier, when it was undertaken within the 1976 composition stu-
dios—again run by Gehlhaar—it received little fanfare. Although Trapp's review
is entitled "Musical Olympics"—a recollection that the courses that year coincided

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[5] This is, incidentally, a tradition unknown to the present author.

with events in Montreal—he filed it before the final concert, which delivered more fully on that conjunction, in a collective composition, *Laufarten* (1976), which is to say "running styles", devised by Grillo, Mosconi, Ines Klok (who had been the harpist in Mosconi's *Quartetto* and earlier a member, with him, of the avant-jazz group, the Natural Arkestra de Maya Alta), Alain Dubois, Glen Hall, and Nouritza Matossian. All were involved in the performance, supplemented by Caskel, Henderson, Gehlhaar, Michel Gonneville (the bass in Henderson's *Stubble*), and Benny Sluchin. One of the regrettably few reports of the piece recounts musicians undertaking gymnastics on the horizontal bar, according to the demands of Gehlhaar's trainer's whistle, and, more specifically, a leapfrogging Caskel and Grillo, with double bass, on the trampoline (Grabmann 1976).

Grillo's central contribution to the courses—performances of Iannis Xenakis's *Theraps* (1976) and his own arrangement of Giacinto Scelsi's *KO-THA* (1967/75)—won him the Kranichstein Musikpreis, for performance, but his compositional efforts were limited to his involvement in *Laufarten* and the promise of a return visit in 1978, specifically to develop a site-specific piece for Darmstadt's railway museum, in the suburb of Kranichstein, jointly with Mosconi: the two had spent enough time there to convince the chairman and the press officer of the museum not only to record sounds from the museum, but to provide them with floor plans so that they could sketch out where musicians and audience members might be within the space (Höfer 1976). Of this small group, which seemed to be making critical work which, nonetheless, also delivered on the demands of the protests of the early 1970s, none would return in 1978. The composition studios *had* done their work of creating a space where the institution itself could be (safely) criticised, but it required the rest of the infrastructure—both the institution itself and journalists, several of whom had pressed for change in the first place—to attend to, promote and integrate, those critiques for their force to be felt.

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Siegfried Palm had noted, of the 1974 courses, that the two major trends that could be observed were, on the one hand, the composers interested in the critical deployment of theatre and, on the other, those composers who would ultimately become gathered together under the general description of the *Neue Einfachheit*, at this time more likely to envision Müller-Siemens as its future leading light than Wolfgang Rihm (Lewinski 1974c). Lewinski, at least, felt that Rihm was struggling to shake off the influence of his teacher, Stockhausen (ibid.). By 1976, broadly the former had almost entirely supplanted the latter, whether in Frisius's withering claim that the courses were taking 'a confident step into the nineteenth century' (Frisius 1976) or the many plaudits afforded Detlev Müller-Siemens and Hans-Jürgen von Bose. The sense that tonality was very much back on the agenda was surely bolstered too by the presence on the programme of music from, first, Tilo Medek—a visitor from East Germany, perhaps most obviously in his *Eine Stele für Bernd Alois Zimmermann* (1975–76)—and, second, Cristóbal Halffter,

whose native Spain was in its transition towards democracy. His Cello Concerto (1974) was, on account of Siegfried Palm's illness, given its German premiere by Ulrich Heinen. Indeed, this coverage of the bold step forward into the past seems to be exactly that which eclipses the much more obviously progressive and radical work being undertaken by Grillo, Henderson, Kubisch, and Mosconi, notwithstanding the complaints of many commentators that what they really *wanted* was progressive, radical work.

Ernst Thomas and his advisory board *could* have brought these composers into the fold, as it were, demonstrating the openness of the institution to critique and, through that, renewing it. Yet Henderson and Mosconi would never return to the courses. Grillo, even though he had won the courses' major interpretation prize, would not be back until the accession of the next director in 1982 and, even then, there was more interest in his abilities as a double bassist than his activities as a composer; Kubisch would not return until the next director *after that* took over, in 1996. The institution instead doubled down on the other side of the equation: the opening concert featured the premieres of three new string trios, by Bose, Rihm, and Wolfgang von Schweinitz, commissioned by the courses. Elsewhere on the programme, via the composition and interpretation studios, could be found music by Manfred Trojahn, Hans-Christian von Dadelsen, Müller-Siemens, and a further piece by Schweinitz. Dahlhaus—whose lectures were often positioned as a sort of intellectual 'state of the nation' address—spoke on "the simple, the beautiful, and the simply beautiful" the link to the *Neue Einfachheit* composers rather clearer in his German title: "Vom Einfachen, vom Schönen und vom einfach Schönen", his title in any case recollecting a presentation given earlier in the courses by Bose: "The Hunt for a New Ideal of Beauty".

It was Rihm's lecture, "The Shocked Composer" however, which made clear that, at least from Rihm's perspective, his *Musik für drei Streicher* (1977) represented a very particular sort of institutional critique. New music was, Rihm argued, governed by a sort of dialectical refusal, which guaranteed its progress into the future. Yet one refusal—the refusal of tonality—had become so sedimented in new music that, if there was a manoeuvre which was reactionary, it was to continue to insist upon the absolute abhorrence of the major third and the formal possibilities implied by it. To acknowledge this might be to begin to accept what it would mean to be "free", compositionally speaking, Rihm argued (Rihm 1978). Moreover, Rihm's trio was the embodiment of his critique: the ways in which it enters directly into an evocation of Beethoven—noted by reports at the time—and also—surely more strongly, but *not* discussed in contemporary coverage—Berg, in his *Lyric Suite* (1925–26) above all, but *without* the arch, ironic quotation marks in, for instance, Medek's evocation of Mozart, speak to an active recovery of and engagement with tonality in direct fashion (Lewinski 1978a; Ely 1978).[6] It was Berg, too, who was the subject of the homage in the subtitle

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[6] The relationship with Berg was, however, stressed a few years later by Christopher Fox (1982), 51.

of Klaus K. Hübler's First String Quartet (1977), a reference much more tangible in the piece than those familiar with his later music might expect. Explicitly, Rihm's critique cavilled against the institution, against what it had refused, but in a literal sense to return it to itself, to reject its own disavowal, so that music could *be music*, in a fairly clear opposition to those approaches which deployed music *against* itself, in a sort of scepticism of the possibility of saying anything at all, certainly without going *beyond* what music might have seemed to be. For all Rihm's dreams of freedom, his critique was aimed squarely at remaining *within* a particular sphere, even if extending the forms of motion possible within it.

Institutionally, Darmstadt sanctioned *this* critique, but not the other. It had done so on a programmatic level by the prominence given to composers who, by this point, were fairly securely categorised as a loose group, in the concert hall and lecture theatre. Much more potently, however, Rihm was awarded the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis for his *Musik für drei Streicher*. The norm developed since 1972 was that the prize would be awarded to a student: with a piece on the main programme and a scheduled lecture, Rihm could hardly be considered that. Moreover, his music was already, as it were, pre-approved, in the sense that Darmstadt had itself commissioned the piece, an act which also guaranteed it a rather better performance than those which could only be developed during the ambit of the 2 weeks of the courses.[7] In a sense, Darmstadt as an institution might have been seen to have been saying 'yes, critique us, but like this, not like that'. In 1978, both Caskel and Kontarsky were Kranichstein Musikpreis judges, even more implicated within the institution by virtue of having been part of the advisory board that planned the courses.

1978, in fact, looks to be the template for the European new musical sphere of the 1980s: Brian Ferneyhough, who had delivered one of the previous session's analysis lectures, was promoted to become one of the senior composers, alongside Lachenmann: the pair were the compositional representatives on the Kranichstein panel. Gérard Grisey provided an analysis lecture, his "Zur Entstehung des Klangs…", a foundational text of the nascent spectral movement. Gérard Condé's review in *Le Monde* was not mistaken in suggesting that the implicit choices to be made in 1978 were between Rihm, Ferneyhough, and Grisey, but without noting that, in certain respects, this was to suggest a choice between three flavours of Stockhausen: Rihm had, it seemed, finally sloughed off the excessive influence of his former teacher, but Ferneyhough was already starting to be seen as a sort of hyper-serialist developing the language of Stockhausen's early Klavierstücke, while the impact of *Stimmung* on Grisey's musical practice was immediately, aurally, apparent. Condé even neatly flags them as "the new Darmstadt School" (Condé 1978). The addition of Lachenmann—both Stockhausen's tormenter in 1969 and the person who handed on the composition studios to Gehlhaar, who was tainted, if unfairly, by his association with Stockhausen—to this grouping in a way

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[7] The argument is briefly rehearsed in Lewinsk 1978b.

merely recalls Lachenmann's own heritage, as Nono's most famous pupil. In some respects, Lachenmann might be seen as the 'acceptable face' of the sort of critique posed by Huber, in that *his* version of *musique concrète instrumentale* is always suffused with a nostalgia for the past—sometimes seemingly literally and tangibly erased—as opposed to Huber's use of similar resources to express a scepticism that there can truly remain new worlds to be won. Ferneyhough, even, might be seen to be presenting the 'properly musical' version of Kubisch's critique, in that both tilt at what happens when the strictest demands of new music are pushed into limit cases.

This was the situation inherited, but also promoted, by Thomas's successor as director, Friedrich Hommel, from 1982. A sort of factionalism between these camps rapidly developed, as might be expected given the structural sense in which they replicated historical antagonisms. In 1984, the factions were joined by a small group of minimalists who, just as one might have half-hoped, joined in with the local internecine conflict, booing Ferneyhough's *Études trascendentales* (1983–85)—presented in not quite finished form—and, by some reports, throwing paper planes during the performance (Post 1984). Minimalism, as it were, completed the set, since from the German perspective it was ineluctably bound up with a Cageian tradition and had, in fact, first been brought to Darmstadt by Christian Wolff in 1974, in the form of Glass's *Music in Similar Motion* (1969) and Fredric Rzewski's *Coming Together* (1971). Hommel—in one sense surprisingly, though equally he arguably had little choice—suggested that he actively *welcomed* these conflicts among participants, insisting that it embodied the lively passions of young musicians, passions which it was Darmstadt's fundamental job to support and encourage (Iddon 2012).

On this reading, what may well have genuinely seemed to Christopher Fox like "almost anarchic openness" (quoted in Gronemeyer 1996, 76) appears more like an institutionally sanctioned re-run of Darmstadt's greatest bust-ups. They follow a script known since the late 1950s, a script which, for a brief time in the 1970s, looked like it might get rewritten. More, Hommel's embrace of this—his insistence both that it is a *good thing* that the participants cared enough to be at such significant odds with one another and that those disputes are matters in essence *for* the participants, but not for the institution—effectively defangs them as critiques. In short, these 'official' critiques are ones for which the endgame is already known, because they have already taken place. Not only that, but they are critiques that point entirely inwards, within and towards the sphere of compositional activity: there is no scope for the same critiques to be directed towards the institution, especially not an institution actively engaged in *enabling* those critiques.

The most potent critiques made of Darmstadt in the 1970s—or, perhaps, the ones that look most like the sorts of critique that a contemporary world would *want to have been made* of Darmstadt in the 1970s—were precisely those which sought to escape the institution and which were, in so doing, so unacceptable to it that the only option was to eject them, thinking in particular of the contrast which might be drawn between Foucault's reading of critique—not that it demands not to be governed but that it demands not to be governed like *that*—and that of Jack

Halberstam or in José Esteban Muñoz's embrace of what they term queer failure, a failure which never wanted to "win", "a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and […] a form of critique" (Halberstam 2011, 88). The prospect of that 1980s Darmstadt which didn't take place—one where the major figures might have been the compositional quartet of Grillo, Henderson, Kubisch, and Mosconi, rather than Ferneyhough, Grisey, Lachenmann, and Rihm—looks like a sort of utopia, the most progressive new music that could have been imagined looking forward from the 1970s, an imagined past which might still inspire the present, the potency of which derives from the fact that it did not happen. "Queer failure is", Muñoz opines, "about escape and a certain kind of virtuosity" (Muñoz 2009, 173).A future critique might very well want to lay claim to this (r)ejected territory.

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Epistemological Stagflation and the Crisis of Democracy in Contemporary Music Research

Patrick Valiquet

Tracing a speculative path through the economic history of experimental music research, informed by the New Musicological trope of the discipline's 'lateness' to postmodernism, this chapter explores an alternate historiography foregrounding the slowness, partiality, and ambivalence of epistemic change under the accelerating austerity and privatisation measures imposed on American and European universities since the 1980s. In this new perspective, the rapid expansion of music research in the high modernist universities of the 1960s and 1970s contributed to the production of what economists called a 'crisis of democracy', threatening to turn burgeoning youth publics against the violence and exploitation that made the expansion of state systems possible in the first place. Then, from the early 1980s to the middle of the 1990s, academic contemporary music research stagnated aesthetically and socially while questions of modernisation devolved into an intensifying series of intergenerational and intersubdisciplinary competitions for symbolic power. In contrast with neomodernists who profess esoteric, subject-centred, dialectical critique as the key to renewing the university as state apparatus guaranteeing a rational and just distribution of cultural and epistemic resources, this chapter suggests that the first critical step is to ask new empirical questions about the modes of subjectivation made available by uncritically 'disruptive' institutions that have willingly traded away their capacity for social and aesthetic critique in exchange for access to financialised markets of funding, personnel, and reputation.

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1   Musicology's Critical Lateness

Surely one of the most emblematic historiographical strategies of the self-pro-claimed 'New Musicology' in the late twentieth century was its complaint that music scholarship was *late* to certain transformative currents in critical thought. Not only, chides Joseph Kerman, is the musicologist "a relative latecomer" in the history of the university, but "nearly all musical thinkers travel at a respectful dis-tance behind the latest chariots (or bandwagons) of intellectual life in general" (Kerman 1985, 14–17). The rhetoric of lateness signals a respectful orientation towards the past as well as a desire for renewal. But why should contemporane-ity elude musicologists so persistently in the first place? Reflecting, some two decades after Kerman, upon music scholarship's specific deferral in relation to the epistemological and aesthetic innovations associated with 'postmodernism', Judith Lochhead observes a dialectic in which, on one hand, professional theoreti-cal writing was still dominated by the formal and technical concerns of mid-twen-tieth-century modernist pioneers, and on the other, practitioners and critics held to an even more antiquated belief in the ineffability of music's expressive power (Lochhead 2011, 169). It seemed natural at this time that intellectual and theo-retical innovation was going on elsewhere while musicians and musicologists were preoccupied with practice.

This conclusion bears closer scrutiny from a contemporary perspective in which postmodernism is no longer as novel nor as simple a category as it was almost four decades ago, when New Musicology was at its newest. Lochhead's retrospection is instructive in that it draws attention beyond the bad habits of par-ticular musicians and audiences to highlight the unequal distributions of cultural capital that *produce* musicology's theoretical inertia as a complex, dynamically differentiating assemblage. Notice, however, that her focus is exclusively on late-ness as *lack*; there is no attention to the actual theoretical activity that did happen in universities while music theorists and composers supposedly keep the world around them at bay. Absent are the institutional conditions that produced postmod-ernism, before it became the innovation that musicologists were supposedly miss-ing. Both aporias were essential to the New Musicology's performance as heroic arbiter of musical contemporaneity at the turn of the millennium. But are we to believe that English literature and Philosophy departments discarded modernism quicker and more eagerly than Music departments? Was the postmodernism that came after the watershed of the late 1980s just a set of natural practices emerging in the wild?

Ironically, not only does the trope of lateness oversell the originality of those who invented it, it now also frequently serves as evidence of a hidden alliance between postmodernism and neoliberalism, which critics like J. P. E. Harper Scott (2012), Björn Heile (2011), and James Currie (2012) portray as the main adver-sary of contemporary musicological rigour. These nostalgics seem to want to fol-low Theodor Adorno in conflating serious music's capacity to "satisfy its own concept" with musicians' moral right to produce social critique (Adorno 1976,

28–29). The problem, however, is that Adornian critique presumes a perspective on the social that contemporary universities no longer pretend to make possible. Working in tertiary education today in the so-called 'European Research Area' all but obligates arts and humanities researchers to *renounce* the kind of protective material detachments that were so central to the production of modernist critical theory when it was new (cf. Arendt 1961; Bourdieu e al. 1991; Birnbaum 2018). I will not be the first to note, however, that the past for which these critics pine was one that blocked participation by the increasingly feminised and racialised workforce which is now faced with the challenge of rethinking academic music instruction 'from the inside' (cf. Hisama 2021). The trope of lateness inadvertently gives the frustrated modernists who toil under neoliberal doxa a scapegoat for the violence they endure—it shifts responsibility for austerity away from the managers, politicians, and oligarchs who impose it and on to the anti-imperialist, feminist, socialist subaltern who voices the complaint.

Modernists are entirely justified, of course, in their opposition to four decades of ruthless managerialism, depleting resources and ever sinking labour standards in universities, but identifying postmodernism as cause of this configuration is dubious. Rejecting postmodernism offers no protection against the demise of the contemporary university's ability to foster critical cultural production. Of course, understanding the real conjuncture of postmodernism and neoliberalism in European and American universities still requires something like a 'critical' framing of the events. I agree with Marianna Ritchey (2021), however, that this implies also finding new ways of understanding what grasping critically *is*, if not simply advancing 'reason'.[1] If returns to or redistributions of critique are to bring order back to scholarship in any sense, then, as Stephen Muecke has recently argued, they must also avoid folding the real complexity of events and experiences *back* into anything like a universal subject of reason (Muecke 2021, 37). Indeed, recent historical research shows more and more that modernism itself never actually amounted to the serene and impartial instrument of sociocultural progress that its adherents imagined (e.g. Geoghegan 2020; Saint-Amour 2018).

Luckily for the New Musicology, the historiography that supports the Adornians' accusation is spurious, and the reality of postmodernism's intersection with neoliberalism still awaits empirical articulation. A brief look in the archive will show that musicologists *did* participate in the invention of postmodernism, but also that this work was frustrated and even suppressed in the very first waves of austerity. In fact, suppressions of postmodernism persisted for nearly two decades until enough power had accrued to new methods that they warranted mainstream attention in seminars, thesis defences, and conferences. Music departments were never actually *late* to postmodernism: it lived among them from the beginning and they actively repressed it until the gaps it had opened became too big to fill.

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[1]And, indeed, there is a growing body of work seeking answers to this question for the classical music industries and the musicological professions. See, e.g. Cheng 2016; Scharff 2017; Levitz 2018; Bull 2019; Lochhead et al 2019.

This chapter is too brief to offer an exhaustive account of the resistance post-modernism faced in music departments during the first neoliberal attacks on the modernist university in the 1980s and 1990s. It can, however, explore some of the reasons why postmodernism's advent in the 1970s came as such a shock to musicological norms, taking as its case study the music department at the centre of the debates that defined postmodernity—the site of the concept's maturation, if not exactly its birthplace—the Centre Universitaire Expérimentale de Vincennes (Paris 8), established in haste to quench the revolutionary fervour of May 68. The richness of the experimentation that took place at Vincennes, in the face of severe austerity and moral panic, illustrates how much early postmodernism *depended* on a modernist model of university life, even as governments increasingly sceptical about the returns on state investments in education were questioning their efforts' fitness to purpose. The music department at Vincennes was so radical that it escaped the attention of anglophone contemporaries almost entirely and is now largely absent from histories of twentieth-century music in spite of its importance. It would be decades before New Musicologists could begin to absorb the shock, and when they did, they ignored the musicology produced at Vincennes and took to domesticating the work of philosophers and sociologists anew. But maybe the high modernist university produced a monster and then immediately disowned it. Maybe the value of its epistemological innovations spiked at exactly the moment when productivity flattened out.

Evidently, avoiding the modernists' errors is not a simple matter of placing our bets on the opposite side. Rather, we need to re-stage critique in something like a 'non-modern' perspective (cf. Latour 1993; Pickering 1995), de-naturalising the relation between music research and the university, and moving beyond naïve assumptions about the historical 'progress' of technological and aesthetic commodities. It is not a simple question of multiplication, however, solvable by mapping out larger and larger webs of musical action, in the manner of actor-network theorists (cf. Piekut 2014). Instead, we need to use myth and metaphor to speculate about new explanations for empirical data that has previously been forgotten and thus cannot be folded into existing ontologies. What musical institutions *are in fact* is a question of complex, pluripotent machines producing continuous and discontinuous events of material, mental, and social individuation at the critical edges of the dynamic milieux they inhabit (Stiegler and Donin 2004).

Thinking with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's later work on analysis, I propose to treat actor-networks not as a neutral descriptions of social ecology, but rather as specific machines for producing and studying specific social ontologies at specific times (Deleuze and Guattari 1994; Deleuze 1993). In this account, objects do not *have* relations as properties: 'strokes' of relation need to be 'drawn' between objects from particular, situated points of observation, which in turn have their own horizons, vanishing points, and 'lines of flight' (Deleuze 1993, 20; cf. Strathern 2020). Since the energies needed to produce relations are always finite, no network can simultaneously present the same features to all of the different agents moving across its edges and folds. Paths across an actor-network have an inherently contingent and speculative quality, which neither modernism nor postmodernism can explain away.

Although my approach may seem negative, the point of the alternate history I set out below is not to dismiss the range of new ideas that did survive the 1980s and 1990s in spite of austerity and conservative retrenchment. I present a positive, empirical account of a site of theoretical innovation that tests theories of progress in the face of newly excavated evidence. I want to find a new metaphor to explain how the neoliberalisation of European universities helped to manage specific epistemic ruptures and prevent them from overflowing into revolutionary social change. In doing so I propose to, both experimentally and with the support of new empirical findings, bring the European university into the foreground of the story of the progress of generic 'contemporary music' in the late twentieth century.

My motivation, like those of countless far more famous and astute critics before me, arises from a real breakdown in my own relations with the university (cf. Birnbaum 2018, 158; Harney and Moten 2013): for most of my short 'career', I have remained a relative outsider to academic life, surviving as an unpaid or low-paid researcher on short-term contracts or charity, indentured to my profession by student loans, fragile collegial bonds, and a steady stream of unfinished writing. In my conclusion I explore how this position relates to constraints on the production of institutional critique in academic music research today.

2   The Crisis of Democracy

By the middle of the 1970s, as new forecasting techniques reconfigured the future as a site of heated commercial and political speculation (Connolly 2011), a worry grew among education and research policy-makers that the continued expansion of institutional access could lead to a literal 'crisis of democracy'. What if political participation and social experimentation could only be intensified for so long before they risked causing rational, modern order to tip over into utter chaos? According to a report by the ominous Trilateral Commission in 1975, the rapid increase in tertiary education provision that had helped fuel industrial and military expansion after the Second World War would soon be unsustainable (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975; Andersson 2021). In simple terms, a rising number of knowers seemed to portend related rises in both the amount of actual knowledge and in the number of possible ways to know it. This trajectory threatened to bring about unprecedented transformations in the distribution and scope of democratic sovereignty. Without acceptable mitigating action, the Commission found, these transformations could one day begin to upset the delicate balance between public and private interests that distinguished the 'West' from the great socialist and subaltern others gathering at its borders. Thus, the modernising new universities of the 1960s and 1970s were enlisted in a race for imperial power that required a vast administrative, architectural and legislative infrastructure. Ultimately, any conventional musical apparatus in terms of works, instruments, or musicians that made it into these institutions had to compete for attention, funding, space, and time with a recalcitrant administrative instrumentarium of assessments,

committees, conferences, critiques, forms, hearings, offices, plans, posters, projects, surveys, meetings, tests, workshops, etc. It is instructive to remember that the very articulation of 'contemporary music' as a university research practice does not predate this Cold War administrative explosion, and indeed could probably be fruitfully viewed, provocatively or not depending on one's moral and aesthetic convictions, as one of its key managerial and commercial innovations.

However, precisely because they were orientated in this way towards the production of public authority, these institutions also took on an affordance that followers of Ivan Illich called 'conviviality', a feeling of embodied, intimate, and interdependent 'effectiveness' that arises when local collections of people find themselves forced to oppose the compulsive, industrialised order of 'productivity' governing their work (Illich 1973, 183). As soon as pockets of contemporary music researchers existed in the modern university, that is, they could conceive themselves as 'critical' of their institutions only insofar as they performed bounded acts of exception to the rational, modernising programme that structured their activities there. This structure of feeling will be familiar to anyone familiar with the work of experimental music educator Christopher Small', who uses it to motivate questions of embodied, emancipatory agency, and social democracy that would later become central 'postmodernist' concerns as well.[2]

New, suburban, concrete, and plate-glass campuses rose across Europe from the mid-1960s onward. Carried upon an unprecedented wave of new science and technology training initiatives, negotiated through international treaty organisations like the OECD and UNESCO as well as by private philanthropists, these universities translated the universalising language of educational modernism into the language of common sense and current affairs, articulating local needs such as absorbing the shocks of demographic changes at home and a shrinking empire abroad, responding to environmental and economic crisis, and realigning workforces towards production for the nascent weapons and space races.[3] In 1963, Charles De Gaulle's neoconservative government in France initiated planning for massive education reforms to be carried out as part of a 5-year economic plan ending in 1970. The disaster of decolonisation brought generational and racial strife immediately into the foreground of these new institutions. The events of May 1968 at the new 'red' campus at Nanterre, opened in 1964, garnered concessions to the student Left in the orientation of some high-profile reforms. Notably, two new 'Experimental University Centres' would be provided on surplus military land in the outskirts of Paris to serve the working class, adult and immigrant students who would now be accessing university education for the first time: a spacious complex at Porte Dauphine in the northeast would be devoted to management and

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[2] On Susan McClary and Robert Walser's specific roles in disseminating Small's work see especially Walser 2016; cf. Cohen 2000.

[3] See Argles 1964; Charlot 1987; cf. Hicks 2017; Valiquet 2018; Simon 2020; Holert 2021; Valiquet 2023; Anicia Chung Timberlake (2015) shows that such initiatives were not exclusive to the countries lying to the west of the Iron Curtain.

commercial research, and a state-of-the-art pre-fabricated structure at the Bois de Vincennes in the southwest for the humanities and social sciences (Merlin 1980; Musselin 2001).

The music department at Vincennes opened in January 1969. Its founding head, Daniel Charles, had recently headed the government commission to implement the post-May reform for music, and set new standards for professorial music chairs across the country. Charles came to music as an ambitious but frustrated composer. Trained by Messiaen at the Conservatoire, by Schaeffer at the GRM, and by John Cage at Darmstadt, he bowed out of composing, took an additional teaching qualification in philosophy, and was posted to lecture in aesthetics at Nanterre in 1966. His philosophical project revolved around examining the ontological and ethical questions opened up by the work of his favourite teacher, Cage, a project that culminated in the publication of a book of interviews in 1976, *Pour les oiseaux*, and a book of critical exegesis in 1977, *Gloses sur John Cage*. Although hampered by poor experiences with translators and never gaining a strong following in the anglophone avant-garde, Charles did travel extensively to the US and Canada to give seminars and conferences alongside Cage, including at the November 1976 International Symposium on Post-Modern Performance at the University of Milwaukee Center for 20th Century Studies, where speakers included Dick Higgins, Carolee Schneemann, Alan Kaprow, Umberto Eco, Ihab Hassan, and Jean-François Lyotard, a close colleague from the Vincennes philosophy department.

Charles' syllabus for the Vincennes music department's first semester features electroacoustic composition studios led by Martin Davorin Jagodic and Jean-Claude Eloy, ethnomusicology with Claude Laloum, and free jazz workshops led by Daniel Caux, who, through his contemporaneous work curating the groundbreaking Nuits de la Fondation Maeght, was also helping to build new European audiences for Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, Albert Ayler, Terry Riley, and LaMonte Young. Charles himself taught aesthetics, developing the interests in musical time, orality, and vocality which he would later elaborate in a series of books including his thesis for the doctorat d'état, published in (1978) as *Le temps de la voix* [*The Time of the Voice*]. True to the university's mission, Charles' doctoral students in the 1970s were predominantly migrants like Julia Kristeva's younger sister, Ivanka Stoïanova, and the composers Horatio Vaggione and Costin Miereanu. Charles' own doctoral work had been supervised by the phenomenological aesthetician Mikel Dufrenne, who had spent the occupation in the same prisoner of war camp as Paul Ricoeur, and had also supervised Jean-François Lyotard's doctorat d'état in 1973. Lyotard, of course, soon went on to popularise the very notion of a 'postmodern condition' (1984a) for a government commission on the computerisation of higher education in Quebec, where Charles also had close friends. Under Charles' watch, any theoretical production had to be embodied, politicised, and socialised in the dynamic flux of an evolving, experimental, media-saturated classroom life (not least because there was no space for individual offices). Even the harmony lecturer, Éveline Andréani, a *Prix de Rome* winning composer trained

by Nadia Boulanger, asserted an embodied, affective view on the practice that she saw as rising to the challenge of contemporary pluralism: "integration into music, not only of *all sounds*, but also of *all noises of the contemporary world*" (Andréani 1979, 16, my translation).

Just as Charles had been chosen to select and head the staff of the music department at Vincennes, the staff of the philosophy department was to be selected and headed by similarly rising star Michel Foucault, although the latter quickly escaped to a more relaxed and prestigious post at the Collège de France (Dosse 2010, 347). Foucault too attempted to defy tradition, staffing his department with young Althusserians and Lacanians alongside emerging authorities in the new post-phenomenological orientations emerging at Nanterre, including Lyotard, Deleuze, and Michel Serres. As factions arose pitting youthful radicals like Alain Badiou and Guy Hocquenghem against these 'stagnant' philosophers of 'difference', Charles took up the challenge of mediating the gap, a feat documented across a web of mutual readings and references. Following Lyotard's anti-Lacanian 'figural' metaphysics, Charles theorised the emerging 'free' and repetitive musics as material eruptions rising from the interval between two musical modernisms: an older, slower tradition of accumulating, universalising, mnemotechnical inscriptions, and a new, accelerating orality/vocality of embodied, micropolitical, sociotechnical becomings, spilling over the edges of the traditional concert hall (Charles 1978, 256–269). Charles' music department presented this analysis to a diverse and often divisive student population, which included a high proportion of adult learners, a large minority of recent immigrants, especially from France's collapsing African and Southeast Asian colonies, several patients of Guattari's from the experimental psychiatric clinic at La Borde, and an unpredictable daily influx of addicts wandering in from a surrounding park as infamous for its drug market as for its gay cruising scene (Merlin 1980; Birnbaum 2018; Robcis 2021). In conversations with Claire Parnet for the film *Abécédaire* in 1988, in the section aptly entitled 'P comme Professeur', Deleuze fondly recalls the challenging complexity of teaching new student publics who could never before have gathered under statutory protection, and whose resistance to normal conventions of student–teacher relations made it not just interesting but necessary to use metaphors that would translate his ideas across disciplines, cultures, and socioeconomic positions.

Published musicological writing from the time contains only scattered reports of the moralising reactions that this 'explosion of voices' elicited among the academic authorities of the time. Charles quips that inspectors overseeing the French state music education examination had complained of a 'satisfied amateurism' among his students (1978, 257). Meanwhile, structuralists like Jean-Jacques Nattiez openly mocked the prospect of figuring musics as 'open' circuits of human and nonhuman libidinal economy, and not as closed systems of signification (1990, 85–87). Economic austerity and moral panic put a lid on the funding and

the motivation for modernisation, and in 1980, after years of virulent disputes over its devolution from a 'showcase' to a 'ghetto' for the radical Left, the whole complex of buildings at Vincennes was demolished by municipal authorities.

3   'Relocating a Cemetery'

What if, contrary to what readers of neoliberal economist Jacques Attali's popular assessment of the period might still assume, the music department at Vincennes was not an anticipation of a new, utopian order, but a desperate, inflationary spike, the last gasp of a dying epistemic economy? The institutional legacy of these experiments never lived up to economic forecasters' dream of continuous epistemological revolution. In fact, what followed was a long, difficult period of slow domestication and professionalisation. As universities succumbed to increasingly perilous political and economic pressure, the glib relativism of Lyotard's and Charles' music criticism became more and more unfashionable.[4] Societies and conferences were quickly launched to conserve the newly applied and 'popularised' academic disciplines, while education ministries and university managers organised market-like infrastructures for study and scholarship, and governments began a large-scale transfer of university debt from public to private accounts in the form of student fees and loans (Musselin 2010; Raunig 2013; Brown 2015). In Britain especially, additional legal and financial restrictions had to be imposed to curb student and faculty labour power, and curricula and assessment were centralised to avoid undue influence from the Left (Anderson 2006, 163–182). Student numbers advanced rapidly during this period of epistemological and political retrenchment, especially in the engineering subdisciplines of music research, although it would take decades longer for concrete action to be taken on the glaring gender and racial inequalities (cf. Born and Devine 2015; Ewell 2020). As the historiography of New Musicology shows, the end of the century retained almost no memory of postmodern musicology: it had to be invented anew.

Today, as economic historian Melinda Cooper has shown, monetary value is no longer dependent upon alternating exchanges of equivalent commodities, because it can now occur instantaneously and ubiquitously as an index of abstract, non-dialectical 'turbulence' across digitalised global financial markets (Cooper 2010; cf. La Berge 2014). Academic capital now shares this economy's technical and conceptual infrastructure, if not quite yet its 'spirit'. Success in contemporary academic work depends not on interpretations of one's production being inherently justifiable or verifiable in comparison to that of one's peers, but rather on

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[4] See, for example Lyotard's memorable reflection on the toilets at Donaueschingen in Chap. 3 of *Libidinal Economy* (1993, 122–127).

one's ability to perform and accumulate the kind of relations to power that make research traceable across the closed topology of a particular 'career stage', 'field', or 'network'. In turn, the success of university management is measured not in terms of the quality of research findings, but in terms of models of system-wide socioeconomic effectivity related to like those of Illich and his followers. The ideal subject of this economy is the increasingly feminised and racialised 'early career researcher', acritical agent of libidinal investments in entrepreneurial ambition, mobility, and disruption (Sautier 2021; Else 2014; cf. Berlant 2011).

Notice *how little nostalgia* academic music researchers today express about the pursuit of half-a-century-old postmodernist concerns like embodiment, ecology, and social participation. Contemporary university staff are obliged to produce and manage the effects of social and aesthetic critique in an eternally 'turning' present (Straw 2017). Recent Latourian calls to 'deflate' theory and unlearn the modern gaze are more than sufficient to justify the inexorable cycle of returns to theoretical innocence (cf. Piekut 2014). In some circles, 'theoreticism' still counts as the cardinal modernist sin: here, renunciations of modernism thus folding into the long-standing utilitarian preoccupation with de-intellectualising normative aesthetics (Born 1995, 42; cf. Ahmed 2019; Rekret 2018). Meanwhile, in many parts of the world, academics regardless of their politics have no right to dissent, being forced to sign hiring agreements forbidding them to disparage their employers.[5] What better way to ensure that students never learn about the technocrats, petrocapitalists, and property developers whose successes have helped to fund, to choose only the most ironic example, the enthusiastic 'material turn' and concomitant wave of new music technology and 'critical organology' research that arose during the apparent 'art bubble' of the debt-locked 2010s?[6]

It is instructive to recall how much of the state funding that has supported the past decade-and-a-half of contemporary music research in Europe was mediated by institutions designed to insert 'stimulus' (especially in the form of urbanisation and privatisation) into national economies following the Greek debt crisis. The economic rescue that ensued was one of the main motivations behind the realignment of European tertiary education as a system of creative knowledge markets over the decades that followed. In his keynote speech to the European Conference for Education Research in September 2007, founding ERC Secretary General Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker harkened his audience back to a time *before* modern nation states, when elite individuals and institutions had evidently been free from the bonds of bureaucratic oversight. The planned 'single knowledge area' would

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[5] Since documentation of this is hidden by definition, I can only appeal to my readers' experience.

[6] Viz. since 2017, when the fog of Trumpism and Brexitism was just beginning to descend upon the anglosphere, the series of conferences on electronic music technology beginning with Alternative Histories of Electronic at the Shell-funded Science Museum in London, or Mark Fell's *The Geometry of Now*, a music and sound art festival curated by Mark Fell and funded by Russian natural gas oligarch Leonid Mikhelson. On the historiography of the 'art bubble' see Diamond 2016.

approximate this feudal utopia by setting up a 'champion's league' for industrial and social innovation. Affluent young migrants from around the world would be enticed by the promise of Europe's "three Ts […] talent, tolerance and technology" to pad the local 'creative class' and drive gentrification (Winnacker 2008, 127). In effect, universities had to learn to process talent without the security of the modernist public order to protect them. Reductive local traditions would be replaced with a uniform, anglophone, liberal democratic environment where business-like research teams could compete to provide solutions to the 'complex' and 'emergent' problems of the digital age. 'Autonomy' might even return one day, Winnacker teased his audience, with the abundance and prosperity which would be the inevitable future result of the denationalised competition for excellence. In the meantime, reform would have to take place without internal support, rather like "relocating a cemetery" (129).

The deliberate avoidance of distributive justice at the heart of the ERC funding model provokes speculation about the kinds of peripheral or oppositional work in the humanities that might have been possible without the clear concentration of funding in elite universities and rising postindustrial regions. If we take seriously the funder's inflationary rhetoric, then it quickly becomes clear that the ERC's main business today, in much the same way as more widely criticised neoliberal institutional networks like American private prison industry (Wacquant 2009) lies in the production of social inequality. Writing and teaching in the arts is more and more heavily imbued with anxiety about 'excellence', defined, again, not as a measure of inherent quality but as a quantitative function of system-level readiness to respond to the asynchronous interests of evaluators and stakeholders (Raunig 2013; Beer 2016; Morrish 2019; Osborne 2021). And since the managers of this environment know no shame, the very same anxiety can then be measured again to produce raw material for derivative products, which universities can then use as currency to sustain their accelerating ambitions as information processors *without* the need to increase knowledge production—just as student loan systems allowed the state to *both* avoid paying for education *and* provide opportunities for bankers and property developers to draw profits from the resulting insolvent public institutions and citizens (Brown 2015; Lazzarato 2015). In the end, Winnacker never actually has to move his cemetery. Engineers can simply redefine the hoards of dead labour as 'content' and sell access by subscription.

The lower European universities drive the price of knowledge production in pursuit of more and more granular forms of excellence, the more competition they seem to attract from private businesses and micro-institutions modelled as think-tanks or start-ups. Funders are attracted to these more agile competitors precisely because, although they welcome state intervention, they lack the resources necessary to ground strong critique. Just as the Vincennes music theorists in the 1970s warned it would, molecularity of this kind renders dialectical avant-gardism obsolete (cf. Lyotard 1984b; Charles 1978). Success happens in hybrid institutions like IRCAM that have the advantage of complete detachment from the 'democratising' activity of undergraduate teaching, allowing them to pursue high class

electroacoustic music alongside electric vehicle sound design and stylish ambient electronica.[7] Increasingly, research councils are realising that they can just as easily fund projects at private maker spaces, who offer all of the dynamism and community engagement of a university with far less moral and epistemic baggage.[8] The most important critical concern in this environment is not the production or exchange of musical objects at all, but rather the processing of that activity and attention into fuel for abstract violence and extraction elsewhere. Austerity has worn contemporary academic music research down into a distracted bureaucracy, dutifully churning out nothing but justifications for the dire machine that seizes and exploits its labour.

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[7] E.g. in the work of Andrea Cera, cited in Stiegler and Donin 2004, 42.

[8] E.g. Alex McLean's new UKRI research project *Alpaca* (https://thentrythis.org/projects/alpaca/) affiliated with Then Try This, a maker platform in the provincial town of Penrith.

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Black Music's Institutional Critique

6

Benjamin Piekut

In November 2021, the artists Mendi and Keith Obadike declined to accept an honourable mention for the Giga-Hertz Award of the ZKM Center for Art and Media after a representative of the German exhibiting institution made reference to a choice between quality and diversity in a rehearsal of the awards ceremony. The implication was that the ZKM could award *either* high quality or diversity, but not both. In a statement explaining their decision, the Obadikes denied the ZKM's authority to evaluate them: their work, they wrote, is "informed by the world", and the ZKM is "in no position to honor or rank us" (Villa 2021).

I begin an essay on Black music's institutional critique with this incident not simply because the Obadikes criticised the organisation, but rather because they posit (at least) two systems of aesthetic value: one, local, in which the historically white European institution has the authority to judge, and another, global, in which it does not. Cultural prizes bestow as much legitimacy upon the institutions who distribute them as they do to the artists who receive them (English 2005). By refusing the legitimacy of the ZKM to evaluate their art, the Obadikes appealed to an aesthetic system beyond the European fine arts, a possibility that has existed, at least in some germinal form, since the *art nègre* movement of the 1910s and 1920s (Biro 2020).[1] I use the phrase *aesthetic system* to distinguish my meaning

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[1]Although space prohibits a fuller discussion, the emergence of the European avant-garde in counterpoint to *art nègre* warrants careful scrutiny. For example, Peter Bürger attributes a crisis of judgement—"the legitimate side-by-side existence of styles and forms of which none can any longer claim to be the most advanced"—to the failure of the historical avant-garde to destroy the institution of art itself, but he makes no mention of the importance of African art to the articulation of European modernism; see Bürger 1984.

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from a more general aesthetic 'experience', which has always existed outside the narrow band of experience analysed so thoroughly in the European philosophy of the eighteenth century. By 'aesthetic system', I refer in the first instance to a discursive formation of value, a coherent field of concepts that inform debates about standards and theories of art and that make possible distinctions and oppositions, within tacit limits of relevance. But I also refer to the infrastructure that licenses this discourse and contributes to the distinctions that it makes: a set of often implicitly ranked, interlinked institutions that manage exhibition and dissemination, critical commentary and interpretation, and education and appreciation.

By the 1930s, when it began to appear in long-running conversations about 'good' music in the vernacular press, jazz had developed just such an aesthetic system. Its participants took agonistic positions in a discourse about progress vs. tradition, stylistic evolution, aesthetic autonomy, historical preservation, and authenticity (Gendron 1993; Lopes 2002). These debates played out in specialist periodicals and books and eventually moved into the mainstream, middlebrow press. For musicians, prestige (and compensation) was organised around live venues, broadcast media, record companies, and management agencies, all of which contributed to the permanence of the formation and the production of a set of 'experts' whose judgements about the music were viewed as authoritative. In the 1950s, a new web of associations with other high-status cultural sites—concert halls, art museums, college campuses—cemented jazz's aesthetic system.

When I say that jazz advanced the 'first' alternative aesthetic to the European fine arts, I do not mean to imply that Japanese court music or Hindustani classical music, for example, had no aesthetic system, or that they had no modern aesthetic system. I mean that Black aesthetics, and particularly jazz, offered the first challenge from inside Europe and the US to a hegemonic disciplinary arrangement that consigned any cultural production that was non-European or not Fine Art to the domains of anthropology or folklore.

Any discussion of 'institutional critique' in the art world of the 1960s and 1970s must begin from this premise of more-than-one aesthetic (Wynter 2014). I concur with critic Simon Sheikh, who expresses confusion about why so much art world discourse about institutional critique upholds "a 'we' of the art world itself", he writes. "Who exactly is this 'we'?" (Sheikh 2009, 30–31). In fact, the de-universalisation of the European aesthetic tradition may have been noticed the least in the visual art domain, for the challenge first emerged most clearly in jazz and then in the drama and poetry of the Black Arts Movement.[2] Accordingly, the classic theoretical texts on institutional critique produced by visual artists and critics exhibit a certain blindness to the wide range of institutions an artist

[2] *Down Beat* magazine was founded over thirty years before *African Arts*. The first critical journal devoted to African plastic and visual art as aesthetic rather than ethnographic objects, *African Arts* kicked off, unsurprisingly, with an essay by Léopold Senghor on critical standards of judgement (Senghor 1967).

might face depending on their position in the social and artistic fields (or indeed within the legacy of that most peculiar institution of all, chattel slavery in the US south [Stampp 1956]). Blake Stimson explains that, for these influential writers, "Institutionality was another name for received thought congealed into a social form that veils or otherwise inhibits the possibility of self-creation" (2009, 23). For another set of artists, namely, the musicians of the black avant-garde, such an opposition between social forms and self-realisation would not play a meaningful role in the interpretation of the art-making process. In fact, a close connection between individual and group achievements was one of the central tenets of the jazz tradition (Monson 2007).

Moreover, the Black aesthetic had a distinct relationship with the notion of the autonomous artwork that, as Benjamin Buchloh and others have demonstrated, was rendered increasingly obsolete by the post-conceptual artists. Buchloh writes,

> Any historicization has to consider what type of questions an art-historical approach […] can legitimately pose or hope to answer in the context of artistic practices that explicitly insisted on being addressed outside of the parameters of the production of formally ordered, perceptual objects, and certainly outside of those of art history and criticism (1990, 105).

The creative practices described by Buchloh aimed to exceed the limits of their institutional framing as (autonomous) art by addressing political, economic, and social life. Outside of the European fine arts, however, such interanimation of aesthetic and social practices was unremarkable. Yet I am less interested in pointing out the ubiquity of heteronomous art practices outside of the European aesthetic tradition—and especially in the Black radical tradition, which conflated the aesthetic and the ethical to productive ends—than I am in accepting Buchloh's perceptive comments as an invitation to circulate the themes and concepts of institutional critique in an overlapping cultural space.[3]

By desedimenting these concepts, or releasing them just a bit from the tightly argued positions and players of a specific aesthetic system—once thought universal, now with some company—I hope to do a little more than transpose the critique of institutions into a different disciplinary topos. I mean that, although a search, in music, for the "rigorous redefinition of relationships between audience, object, and author" (1990, 140), to quote Buchloh on institutional critique again, might lead naturally to John Cage (or, at least it would for this Cage scholar), and specifically to the radical collaboration he essayed with David Tudor in the 1960s (Piekut 2022), my intuition tells me that it would be more productive in this case to consider early minimalism, not least because the series of practical and theoretical steps leading through conceptual art to institutional critique began with minimalism's phenomenological investigations.

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[3] See also Bryan-Wilson 2003 for another productively expansive treatment of institutional critique.

Centrally important to the development of minimalism's aesthetic concerns, La Monte Young had already by the late 1950s begun to reformulate the role of the listener in his music. Static and long sounds, he explained in 1960, encouraged one to listen from inside the sound and to pay attention to one's experience of it (Young 1965). With the Theatre of Eternal Music after 1962, he and his collaborators examined the other two terms of Buchloh's triumvirate, the (musical) object and the author. By dispensing with the score in favour of sound recording, they threw into question the ontological specificity of their musical work, and by proceeding by improvisation and collective decision-making, they likewise unsettled the secure authorial position of the composer (Nickleson 2017). Yet Black music formed the basis of these reformulations of ontology and authorship, evident in Young's emulation of John Coltrane's style of improvisation and his switch to the soprano sax in 1961. As Patrick Nickleson argues, the Theatre of Eternal Music's challenge to single authorship and the stable musical object

> took place through several interrelated aesthetic and political priorities: the different though related prior impacts of models of textual and organizational egalitarianism in free jazz; the emergent supremacy of their drone over any single performer's virtuosity or individuality […]; and their collectivist and deliberative practice of daily rehearsal and listening. (Nickleson 2022)

Given the importance of Black music in establishing models for Young—and given the importance of Young to the post-Cagean avant-gardes of Fluxus, minimalism, and post-conceptualism—we might say that something of this Black aesthetic—its possibility, its difference, its supplementation—remains threaded through all the developments of post-conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s.

Young's close associate, Henry Flynt, author of the 1961 essay "Concept Art", was certainly aware of the reasons for and ramifications of a de-universalisation of the European aesthetic by 1964, when he led demonstrations against the German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen in New York City. In his leaflet, "Picket Stockhausen Concert!" Flynt excoriates European musical aesthetics for supporting political claims to global supremacy by "develop[ing] the most elaborate body of 'Laws of Music' ever known: Common-practice harmony, 12-Tone, and all the rest, not to mention Concert etiquette" (1964). He also targets the musicologist Alfred Einstein's denigrating statements on jazz—"the most abominable treason against all the music of Western civilization"—as an example of a powerful intellectual apparatus that produces the standard by which all musical value is assessed. "Everywhere that Bach, Beethoven, Bruckner and Stockhausen are huckstered as 'Music of the Masters,' 'Fine Music,' 'Music Which Will Ennoble You to Listen to It,'" Flynt wrote, "white aristocratic European supremacy has triumphed" (1964). In an unpublished document from the following year, Flynt notes that the modern colonial powers had left a legacy of conservatories, international competitions, and music appreciation courses in European art music throughout the Third World, cementing the normative assumption that the European aesthetic was the universal standard to which all nations should aspire (Flynt 1965).

Frantz Fanon's "Racism and Culture" essay, published in French in 1956, indicates that Flynt was certainly not alone in thinking through the implications of de-universalised European aesthetics—or what we might call, following Souleyman Bachir Diagne, the aesthetics of a 'post-Bandung world' (Diagne 2020, 24)—but it is exceedingly difficult to find other writers taking up this subject in music with the clarity and prescience that Flynt's texts display. In fact, one of them, Amiri Baraka, observed one of Flynt's anti-Stockhausen protests from across the street. Baraka had recently published *Blues People*, a landmark text in US music studies that closes with a thoughtful consideration of the then recent emergence of an alternative system of aesthetic value distinct from the hegemonic, European fine-art formation. "The important development, and I consider it a socio-historical precedent", he wrote,

> is that many young Negroes no longer equate intelligence or worth with the tepid values of the middle class, though their parents daily strive to uphold these values. The 'New Negroes' produced a middle-class, middle-brow art because despite their desired stance as intellectuals and artists, they were simply defending their right […] *to be* intellectuals, in a society which patently denied them such capacities. And if the generation of the forties began to understand that no such "defense" or explanation was necessary, the young Negro intellectuals of the fifties and sixties realize […] that a society whose only strength lies in its ability to destroy itself and the rest of the world has small claim toward defining or appreciating intelligence or beauty (Jones 1963, 231–232).

Black intellectuals of Baraka's generation, he observed, no longer felt beholden to the European aesthetic values of their parents. His colleague, the drummer Milford Graves, wrote, "Western thought in this sense has only limited and deprived the Afro-American and his own inner knowledge" (Graves and Pullen 1967). Because the power brokers of the swiftly institutionalising jazz world—its journalists, its club owners, its label bosses, its impresarios, its broadcasters—were almost entirely white, its dissenters and critics were inclined to understand their project in the terms of Black liberation. Baraka made this point explicitly in his 1963 essay, "Jazz and the White Critic", in which he takes to task the white writers who, after only knowing about Black music for about 30 years (since, presumably, around 1917), were "already trying to formalize and finally institutionalize it" (Jones [1963] 1967, 18).

Yet Baraka critiqued the deficiencies and errors of this white and middle-class taste formation, not the very idea of institutionalisation itself. The 'bad taste' of the blues and jazz, he argued, advanced unique aesthetic virtues that remained unassimilable to middlebrow tastes, white or black. In other words, the two aesthetics were incompatible: expertise or aspiration in one ruled out the cultivation of taste in the other. The Black writer of decades past with ambitions in literature, he wrote, "was likely to have developed so powerful an allegiance to the sacraments of middle-class American culture that he would be horrified by the very idea of writing about jazz" ([1963] 1967, 12). White critics, on the other hand, were only 'hobbyists' who lacked expertise in the basics of Black experience and therefore could not properly evaluate the music produced by it (15). In sum, Baraka's

critique of institutionalised jazz criticism turned on his contention that the institution was illegitimate. In order to produce "valid critical writing", he argued, Black music had to establish a different institution, one based on "standards of judgment and aesthetic excellence that depend on our native knowledge and understanding of the underlying philosophies and local cultural references that produced blues and jazz" (20; see also Smethurst 2020, 59–89).

If the system of modern aesthetics sought a standard of taste to help bourgeois Europeans sort through the flood of consumer goods coming in from the colonies, as Simon Gikandi has suggested (2011), the fraught entwinement of art and commerce would continue in the new Black aesthetic in music. In this latter domain, however, the debate over institutions played out in a decidedly commercial context: Black music's governing institutions in the 1960s were the recording label, the night club, the summer festival, and the mass periodical. As Peter Bürger has written, the European, historical avant-garde attacked the autonomy of the bourgeois institution of art in order to open it up to the praxis of life. With his frequent use of the terms *middle-class* and *middlebrow*, Baraka targeted a different aspect of bourgeois culture, namely, its commercial exploitation of art. Therefore the jazz avant-garde, in Baraka's formulation, had to preserve and protect the spirit and social force of the Black aesthetic from its desiccation and exploitation at the hands of a white institution devoted to the middlebrow. As McCoy Tyner is said to have remarked about club owners facing the ambitious music of the 1960s, "Usually they liked the music to stop at a certain point, so that they could make more on the drinks" (Priestly, 1947, 49). This sceptical, if not critical, stance towards the institutional conditions of jazz performance extended to countless artists in the post-war period.

The many short-lived entrepreneurial ventures of Charles Mingus attest to the entwinement of Black music's critique with the culture industry; he targeted jazz's commercial infrastructure, not museums, academies, or concert halls devoted to art-for-art's-sake. Mingus founded three artist-run record labels, two publishing companies, an alternative jazz festival, and a musicians' collective (Saul 2003, 147–79). Across all of these endeavours, he pursued the goal of eliminating the mediating apparatus that stood between artists and their audiences (and between them and their fees). These projects succeeded as pointed interventions or statements of dissent more than they did as enduring alternative organisations. The Newport Rebels festival of 1960 articulated a critique of the bloated commercialism of George Wein's Newport Jazz Festival and its racist programming and fee structure. Shambolic in its organisation and underattended, the Rebels festival nonetheless created intergenerational collaboration among musicians and allowed a glimpse of another future for artists in the jazz world. The Jazz Artists Guild, formed by Mingus, Jo Jones, and Max Roach shortly after the Newport event, suffered similar problems of a vanishing audience during its brief existence, but it produced press coverage that directly inspired later ventures. "If you care about progress you will be pleased to know that the new Jazz Artists Guild […] represents the first clear-cut mass break by Negro jazz-men from their former economic strangleholds", one journalist wrote (quoted in Saul 2003, 127). The industry's

blacklisting of Abbie Lincoln in the years following her strong public stance on the exploitations of the jazz industry stands as an important example of the consequences of such "clear-cut mass breaks" (Porter 2002).

Composer Bill Dixon probably had the example of the Newport Rebels and the Jazz Artists Guild in mind when he produced the October Revolution in Jazz over four nights in October 1964 at the Cellar Café in New York's Upper West Side. There, the audiences were comparatively enormous, but the goal was the same: to share artistic work outside of the stultifying conditions of the jazz establishment. Big names like Sun Ra, Paul Bley, and Jimmy Giuffre drew crowds, but the October Revolution found its greatest significance in the platform it offered for a whole generation of younger players who had not yet broken into the name clubs; these included Milford Graves, John Tchicai, and Don Pullen, among many others. Exasperated by the poor state of intellectual discourse about the art in the jazz press, Dixon also programmed nightly panel discussions on economics, genre, race, and composition at the festival.

In the weeks following the Revolution, Dixon joined several musicians—Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, and others—to announce the formation of the Jazz Composers Guild. It aimed to change the terms upon which club owners and recording companies would negotiate with its members, who brought individual opportunities to the Guild for discussion about whether they would or could be advantageous for all. The effects of withholding their creative labour from the market may have been diminished by avant-garde jazz's small economic footprint on the scene to begin with, and the Guild only lasted a short 6 months, but it garnered considerable critical attention and succeeded in asserting a critique of jazz's existing institutions (Piekut 2009).

Its legacy included the Jazz and People's Movement (JPM). Lasting about as long as the Guild had—from the summer of 1970 into early 1971—the JPM staged noisy disruptions of the Merv Griffin Show, the Tonight Show, and the Dick Cavett Show. The message: television had a responsibility to educate viewers about the history of Black-US music, and it should commit to increasing exposure for well-established and up-and-coming Black artists. JPM demanded that the networks hire more Black studio musicians to modulate the glaring uniformity of white bands on air, that they increase hiring of Black producers, directors, and talent scouts, and advocated for giving Black musicians the option to be interviewed after a performance.

In the petition he circulated in the summer of 1970, JPM instigator and multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk wrote, "The media have been so thoroughly effective in obstructing the exposure of true black genius that many black people are not even remotely familiar with or interested in the creative giants within black society" (quoted in Tress 2008, 133). JPM's specific demands about Black labour at the broadcast networks drew the support of Jesse Jackson's Operation Breadbasket (Tress 2008, 84). The interventions of JPM had consequences: members had interviews on the Today Show and the Dick Cavett Show, and Kirk famously rushed an all-star band through a raucous rendition of Mingus's *Haitian Fight Song* on the Ed Sullivan Show in January 1971. Later that year, composer

Archie Shepp, who had played in the band that night, led the JPM offshoot Black Artists for Community Action in a protest at the offices of the Guggenheim Foundation to pressure that body to increase its support of Black artists. These chaotic confrontations remind one of roughly contemporaneous actions of the Art Workers Coalition analysed by art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson, yet, again, Black protest largely aimed at a commercial institutional framework, not the fine-arts establishment (Bryan-Wilson 2011).

In concert with these explicit attacks on Black music's material conditions of existence in the 1960s were more indirect, speculative, and experimental forays into a world not yet defined by those institutions or their dismantlement. Ornette Coleman's decision to take a break from public performance and recording at the height of his career in 1963–64 is one example of an artist reflecting carefully on how he wanted his music to be experienced. Coleman's compositions for chamber ensemble and for R&B band (already in 1962!), his 'return' to thematic bebop in the mid-1960s, his collaboration with Gnawa musicians in Morocco, his symphony (Skies of America), his formation of the fusion band Primetime—all of these activities outlined an almost programmatic experiment into what his music was, what it could do, and where it could belong or visit. The large live/work space on Prince Street that he acquired in 1968, known as Artist House, was but one outpost in a vibrant archipelago of downtown lofts where both junior and senior members of New York's jazz community gathered to essay new forms of life and work, whether by listening, cooking, playing, eating, hosting, or discussing (Heller 2017).

Don Cherry's itinerant musical life in the 1960s, as well as his marriage to Swedish textile artist and designer Moki Cherry, meant that the New York loft jazz scene was never really his home, but he and Moki nonetheless cultivated the same sense of domestic experimentation in the late 1960s and 1970s (Kumpf 2021). In their projects Movement Incorporated and Organic Music Theatre, they militated against the strict demarcation of the performance from the living environment by decorating the stage with tapestries and carpets, inviting audience members to do the same, and cultivating a hospitality and openness to the musical contributions of their listeners. Don declined the authority of the composer by pursuing collaborative musical arrangements with non-Western artists, and his keen interest in learning and trading songs expressed an abiding love of pedagogy and playing with and for children.

Indeed, Don Cherry's exploration of non-commercially mediated social frameworks for music-making brings to mind the contemporaneous journey of Alice Coltrane, who underwent a spiritual transformation between 1968 and 1970, eventually withdrawing from conventional public performance, founding a Sufi spiritual centre in Southern California, and recording several albums of devotional music. These activities were less motivated by a direct 'critique' of Black music's institutions than they were by an experimental impulse to rethink art itself and its place in social life, a point made by Addison Gayle in his 1971 introduction to *The Black Aesthetic*, where he considered the deeply entwined practices of ethics and aesthetics in Black traditions (Gayle 1971).

Jazz was not the only site hosting such profound challenges to the pillars of a universal European aesthetic. Few musics of the 1970s matched the philosophical depth of dub in its deconstruction of authorship and subjectivity (Veal 2007), or in its reconfiguration of the recording studio as a place of improvisation and incompletion. One searching for Buchloh's "rigorous redefinition of relationships between audience, object, and authors" could do far worse than considering the work of King Tubby or Lee Perry and the sound system culture that supported and enabled their innovations.

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On the whole, Black music faced institutions that were distinct from the ones that mediated the work of Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, Fred Wilson, Andrea Fraser, and, on the music side, John Cage and La Monte Young. Its artists directed their critiques at the white-owned culture industries that failed to understand, support, or represent the full range of their creative expression. Yet in addition to these fresh insights on art's institutionality revealed through the example of Black music, one must also consider the creative and emancipatory uses of institutionalisation for Black activism of the 1960s and 70s. Gerald Raunig would call these "instituent practices" (Raunig 2009). They were centrally important to Black activism of the post-war period (Smethurst 2021). Indeed, for those populations who did not 'have' the institution in the first place, the predominant mission was to build, to revise, or to defend—not to dismantle. As Russell Rickford notes in his book on Black nationalist schools of this era, parallel institutions "offered a means of pursuing self-reliance, meeting social needs, and conveying moral and political principles" (Rickford 2016, 13). In Baraka's estimation, a nested structure of institutions would keep "energy" within the community:

> We must control the spread of the new music. We must receive the energy because we produce it with our energy it is our energy. But the institution to be powered with the resources must be formed in our mind before we have sense to harness the energy in them. Community Cultural Institutions; Municipal Cultural Institutions; State Cultural Institutions; National Cultural Institutions; PanAfrican Cultural Institutions. Dig? (Baraka 1971, 7)

Not everyone approached the matter of institution building with Baraka's ambitious optimism. His colleague in jazz criticism, A. B. Spellman, surveyed the new initiatives in Black studies emerging in universities across North America in the late 1960s and warned of "new subtle forms of cooptation of articulate black people" (Spellman 1969, 22). He continued, "I think that in 1980 we will find dozens of colleges turning out hundreds of black-talking *bourgies* with PhDs in Malcolm X and John Coltrane. What a horror!" (22).

Spellman may have found himself collaborating with many of those scholars in his subsequent career as an administrator at the National Endowment of the Arts, and he certainly would have taken note of the maturation and success of several institutions devoted to the support and dissemination of Black music. Such initiatives spanned the range of Black musical expression. Experimental musicians in Chicago founded the Association for the Advancement of Creative

Musicians (AACM) in 1965; dedicated to the support of composers writing original music, the AACM created a framework for its Black membership to explore musical styles and materials that exceeded the narrow expectations of jazz (Lewis 2008). In addition to producing and publicising concerts by members, the AACM ran a music school on the weekends, and among its significant achievements was an organisational structure that far outlasted its founders: leadership has been passed down across generations of members, and the group also founded a New York chapter in 1983. Another example of the institutionalising impulse in Black music was the Union of God's Musicians and Artists Ascension (UGMAA) and its working band, the Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra, both founded under different (though related) names by pianist and composer Horace Tapscott in 1961–62. Aggregating various strands of the Los Angeles avant-garde, the UGMAA, like the AACM, prized collective artistic and organising labour, maintained a pronounced commitment to education about Black cultural traditions, and eventually formed a non-profit entity to receive grant funding (Isoardi 2006). The Black Artists Group (Looker 2004) and the Black Rock Coalition (Mahon 2004) offer further examples of creative institutionalisation as an emancipatory practice for Black musicians and artists in the US.

All of these organisations "produced a conceptual approach and practice", as Herman Gray has written about the AACM, "that considered exploration and experimentation as the rule rather than the exception" (Gray 2005, 59). They all relied, he explains, on an infrastructure built upon social and professional networks, collaborations, and local performance and community venues—their institutionalisation, in other words, often remained provisional, low-budget, and noncommercial. But another very different type of venture was based on ties to dominant and powerful institutions; the most important example of this type of organisation was Jazz at Lincoln Center, founded in 1991 with Wynton Marsalis as artistic director. According to Gray, such institutions fostered a conventional understanding of the jazz tradition through a discourse of "greatness", genius, canonisation, and careful policing of genre for impurities. Although one might view such intractable concepts as precisely the point of institutional critique, Gray urges caution in the rush to condemn such aesthetically conservative ventures in the late 1980s: "In a climate of political conservativism, attacks on affirmative action, and suspicions about multiculturalism, this view defends important cultural terrain" (71). Indeed, as I hope this brief essay has made clear, basic questions of institutions and critique must be formulated differently and with greater complexity when taking into account Black aesthetic traditions and their socioeconomic conditions of possibility.

One final example that tests the very meaning of 'Black music' will serve to solidify this last point. In 1964, fourteen activist musicians (12 Black, two white) founded the Symphony of the New World, "with the purpose of righting the wrongs in hiring practices of major symphony orchestras and establishing a highly artistic musical aggregation that would bring great music to the regular concert audiences and to the communities" ("TOWARD A REAL NEW WORLD", n. d. [1975]). By no means the first such effort, the Symphony of the New World joined

a decades-long history of Black institution building in classical music that went back at least as far as the Clef Club (founded in 1910), the Negro String Quartet (founded in 1919), and the Cosmopolitan Symphony (Lewis 2008). This last group had been founded in 1947 by the Black violinist and conductor Everett Lee, who assembled the interracial and gender inclusive orchestra with "a civil rights mission at the core of its organizational philosophy", as musicologist Carol Oja has put it (Oja 2014, 194). Lee's departure for a career in Europe in 1952 spelled the end of the Cosmopolitan Symphony, but he would frequently return to the US as a guest conductor, as he would do in the early years of the Symphony of the New World. In fact, Lee was named Music Director of the Symphony in 1973, a post he held until the ensemble's dissolution in 1978. The Symphony, which was 40% Black and 30% female, aimed to integrate and diversify not only its musicians, but also its conductors, composers, soloists, directors, and audiences.[4] Joining Lee as guest conductors were George Byrd, Denis de Coteau, Leonard de Paur, James De Priest, James Frazier Jr., Paul Freeman, Charles Ketcham, Kermit Moore, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, and Leon Thompson, many of whom were introduced to New York audiences by the Symphony. They commissioned new works from Arthur Cunningham, George Walker, Howard Swanson, Noel Da Costa, and performed music by a long list of other Black composers: TJ Anderson, Talib Rasul Hakim, Hall Johnson, Tania León, Randy Weston, and many others. The orchestra persisted through internal struggles among white and Black personnel, and between the musicians and management (including its first music director, who was white), and through disagreements about whether the Symphony should concentrate solely on the music of Black composers (it did not) (Handy 1975). Presenting about six concerts per year at Avery Fisher Hall, Symphony of the New World ultimately folded in 1978 due to financial mismanagement and poor leadership (Vaccaro 1976). Beyond these immediate reasons, one might interpret the organisation's ballooning debt in the 1970s as sharp evidence of the near impossibility of running a $300k-per-year orchestra without the material, structural benefit of a Board of Directors well connected to circuits of power and affluence. In spite of these difficulties, the Symphony made contributions and critiques that exceeded their many concerts. They built a pipeline into professionalism for talented young musicians of colour, and several alums of the organisation found permanent spots in other symphonies across the US. And, through well-placed op-eds, representatives of the Symphony drew attention to the woeful state of racial discrimination in orchestral hiring (estimates put the number of Black musicians in major and regional orchestras at around 1 percent in 1975) (Dixon 1971, Campbell 1975).

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[4] An undated fundraising document in the organisation's archives boasted that its Philharmonic Hall concert on May 8, 1966, had attracted 2,450 attendees, 60% of whom were Black (untitled typescript, Symphony of the New World records, Sc MG 171, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, box 1, folder 1).

The case of the Symphony of the New World suggests that Black music's institutional politics extended beyond Black music itself; for many members of historically oppressed populations, a 'critique' of traditionally racist cultural formations was best delivered through hard-fought and -won participation, not abandonment. (See also the Society of Black Composers and the Collective Black Artists for further examples of this kind of activist institutional formation.)

To conclude this essay on institutional critique from the perspective of an 'other' aesthetic system, I will turn to Gerald Raunig's creative interpretation of the history of the practice in the art world, as well as his proposal for reconceiving it in the twenty-first century in terms of "instituent practices" (Raunig 2009). Raunig draws on Michel Foucault's lecture, "What Is Critique?", where the philosopher reformulates the problem of power in the modern period as one of governmentality, or conducting the conduct of another through a politics of truth. The critical attitude that responds to the arts of governing might be expressed not in an absolute refusal of government itself, but rather in a refusal to be governed *like that*, in those terms, or to those ends. While the former negates power absolutely, the latter carries out its struggles on the plane of immanence: escaping, revising, or transforming the arts of governing by "question[ing] truth on its effects of power and question[ing] power on its discourses of truth" (Foucault 1997a, 47). Such a critical attitude might be brought to bear on the institutions of governance or on the self that has been formed through them; in either orientation, critique "takes the form of a possible crossing-over", to quote Foucault's "What Is Enlightenment?" ([1984] 1997b, 315)—a line of flight to some otherwise possibility, beyond the limits of the known.

According to Raunig, the first generation of institutional critique in the European fine arts (i.e. Buren, Broodthaers, Haacke, Smithson, and so on) sought 'distance' from the institution, which I understand to refer to the purported negations of the historical avant-garde. And the second generation of the late 1980s (Fraser), for Raunig, asserted the artist's own internalisation of the museum's power relations and the impossibility of escaping the art institution through critique. He argues that there may yet be room for a third approach to institutional critique that follows Foucault more closely in declining a politics of negation *as well as* the examination of the self as mere evidence of subjectivation (*assujettissement*). This third approach would test existing arrangements for immanent openings and lines of flight that elaborate new relations of power and practices of self-making: "Flight and exodus are nothing negative, not a reaction to something else, but are instead linked and intertwined with constituent power, re-organizing, re-inventing and instituting" (Raunig 2009, 8). In recognition of one's necessary embroilment in relations of power, a Foucauldian critique would proceed through strategies and tactics of de- and re-institutionalisation, undermining and revising existent material and discursive stabilities without ever fully escaping them.

Foucault scholars have documented and discussed the importance of Black-US theorists to the development of the French philosopher's analytic of power that

culminated in *Discipline and Punish*.[5] Texts on race, class, and incarceration by George Jackson and Angela Davis, in particular, reached Foucault and other members of the Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons through the Black Panther Party's newspaper, which had established an international distribution network by the end of the 1960s. Although their influence on Foucault's thinking on genealogy, discipline, and biopower was neither exhaustive nor exclusive, the importance of these writings nonetheless suggests a fascinating parallel with the matter under discussion here. Indeed, the Foucauldian instituent practices described so persuasively by Raunig as a kind of programme for institutional critique in the 2000s appear to be prefigured by Black music's institutional politics in the post-war period. Largely shut out of the fine-art institutions devoted to European culture, Black musicians dipped and weaved in the commercial marketplace, where they improvised protections, alternatives, and refuge from the predations of the music's white owner class, but rarely had the option of withdrawing from the market completely. They experimented with exodus from the governing categories and sites of musical production, not in pursuit of artistic hermitage and isolation, but rather with an aim of inviting community invention and collaboration. And they took advantage of jazz's increasing sacralisation to create new institutions that could foster self-reliance, support, and shared responsibility for the production and presentation of their art.

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[5] See Heiner 2007 for a strong version of this argument and Demers 2016 for a more moderate one.

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My Via Dolorosa from (Impotent) Institutional Critique to the Founding of My Own Institution, the Norwegian Opra, with the Gradual Construction of the *Followers of Ø* Opra-Dorf on a Meadow in the Swedish Forest, Thereby (Maybe) Saving the Autonomy of Art

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7

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Trond Reinholdtsen

This is the basic narrative of my series of opras (not 'operas') called *Ø:* A kind of mysterious monster, let's call it Mother (the musicologists quarrel around the question if she/he/it is loosely based on Ymir from the Norse mythology, Herzeleyde from the Parsifal legend, Francis of Assisi, or Erda from Wagner's Ring) wakes up in an unknown place. She/he/it utters the sound 'øøøøø' and gives birth to three figures that will be the protagonists of the following episodes. These three slowly develop a form of private language, and their first communicative interactions seem to gravitate around the notions of 'Existence', 'Time', and 'the We'. They have barricaded themselves in a cellar in a hidden location in a forest in Sweden. Their aim is to live as *disconnected as possible* from 'the Outside', from 'the System', from the 'Networks' and from all practical considerations (family, work, money, Internet). In this centripetal world—through contemplation and concentration, meticulous planning and private experiments in art, politics, and alchemy—a big world changing 'Event' is prepared.

Thus the setting in *Ø* is outspokenly anti-institutional. The only way to break out of the deadlock and silent violence of the status quo is to force an independent position. A radical withdrawal from the terror of society with its constraints and inherent prohibitions is necessary. But what exactly is the pre-history of the Mother? How long has it been sleeping? Why was it so exhausted? Where did it come from and why did it need to escape?

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It is a strange time to write about or against institutions. With environmental disasters, the growth of anti-democratic forces, digital dystopia and even war in Europe, even people like the prime ministers of Sweden and Finland seem to want to rethink their relation to institutions (like NATO), in a move that seems conservative at first sight. And: What powers other than the democracy-deficient, market-celebrating economic cartel of the EU can, in today's political reality, save what is left of the welfare state and perform some minimal action in response to the climate disaster, in a fight against no-limit capitalist exploitation of human and natural resources? Is it our job at this point in history, even though one should wish for a radically different society from the one that prevails today, to explode institutions like the EU? On a more local level, art institutions, especially the ones subsidising the free scene, are also under constant attack, and threatened with defunding. Who are artists to engage in institutional critic when the hard ultra-populist economical right, the big corporations, and neo-fascist groups are doing this in a much more spectacular way? It is surely a sad time to be an institutional critic…

None the less, I will hereby make an exclusive revelation for you, dear readers: I confess that I identify somewhat with the Mother and the three protagonists of Ø. The truth is, there is a bit of autobiography involved. In the year 2009 I woke up from a long intellectual sleep, after an exhaustive period of manic masochistic attack on the institutions of new music (this failed revolution is described in allegorical form in *Ø episode 12* which functions as a prequel to the episode 1 already mentioned). When I finally opened my eyes again, I was pregnant with my OWN INSTITUTION. But more about that later. Let's stay in the past for a while.

In the hard years before 2009, I was lacking faith concerning the ever less convincing exploration of musical 'material' that seemed to still constitute the mainstream of the musical festival scene (especially the ever increasing, but still pretty worn-out catalogue of 'extended techniques'). I did find the ensemble structures suspiciously static since at least the time of Schoenberg and his *Privataufführungen* (with the consolidation of the sinfonietta). Music seemed much too closed for impulses from contemporary theatre, from the art discourse, from recent philosophy, or even from pop music. My feeling was that the superego of contemporary music was a strict bureaucracy of academicism, and that its subconsciousness was a dungeon of artistic fear.

Very little about contemporary music was self-evident for me anymore. Accordingly, my artistic approach became to investigate the very basic *conditions* of the genre in all its aspects. Let's consider a case study from the year 2012:

For me, it was natural that when I was invited to the very institution embodying the avant-garde since its beginning in 1921, the Donaueschinger Musiktage, I decided to compose a piece simply called *Musik* ('Music'). As is maybe clear from its title, the ambitious programme was to confront the art form of contemporary music in its totality.

A small episode in the (too?) long piece (which changes perspectives, listening contracts, media, and format several times) got a lot of unexpected attention. After a section of some meaningless MIDI fake new-complexity music, there comes a blackout and a pre-recorded trio of digitally manipulated voices singing "Danke

Armin Köhler!" The lyrics continue something like this: "Thank you, dear festival director that we can perform here. It is very good for our careers. This we can use next time we apply for funding from the Cultural Council in Norway". Somehow this little banal intermezzo became a small scandal. I always loved the works of the pioneer institutional critic Hans Haacke, who famously exhibited carefully researched material and diagrams exposing dubious real estate businesses of the trustees of the museum he was exhibiting in *(Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971.).*[1] The exhibition was cancelled and the curator was sacked, but after this seminal work, no museum boss or festival director is safe anymore! My intention for the Donaueschingen-piece was nothing of this kind. I didn't have anything dark or hidden to reveal about the festival director or the festival itself. While Haacke pointed at serious and criminal circumstances that in an ideal world should have started a revolution concerning the connections between art and money (which it didn't), I for my part plainly stated the extremely banal circumstances of how a festival and its totally necessary inclusion/exclusion mechanism functions. If anything, I merely staged myself, and the ensemble, as complete amateurs and tourists from a provincial backward culture (which on some level is always true). That there IS a festival director, and that this person has an important say on which composers and ensembles are invited, should be no breaking news.[2]

I don't want to exaggerate the weight of these three minutes (I was even close to cutting it out just before the premiere, because it is, well, just a bit silly), but at least for myself, this more or less unimportant episode in the history of the Neue Musik-Szene pointed to the fact that the institutional framework of music is not very much reflected. And that to suddenly put it in an unexpected spotlight create a form of unease. And maybe even that to challenge the paradigm of 'absolute music' or some kind of 'pure listening', and instead shifting the attention to the whole framework of music production (and listening), still has (or had) its taboo sides.

But how did it come to this (you may ask)? My trajectory as a student of composition was fairly mainstream and modernist: I spent quite some time trying to approach, more or less chronologically, what in my view constituted the new music canon (which was also the music that I loved the most): serialism à la Barraqué, algorithmic composition à la Xenakis, extended instrumentalism à la La-Lachenmann and new complexity—o la la!—à la Ferneyhough, but soon I became disillusioned (tra la la) à la Kagel.[3] Taking for example his *Sur Scène*

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[1] Actually, Shapolsky was NOT a trustee, but his was mistakenly taken to be the case from the context of the whole exhibition.

[2] I guess that my artistic strategy here is quite close to what some philosophers has termed 'over-affirmation'. That, as a kind of a negative of traditional 'critique', one instead confirms the status quo of the situation, but in an exaggerated, naive, or over-enthusiastic way that may reveal some absurdity of it all.

[3] Was he even disillusioned? I find his works a bit too happy now, for my taste.

(where famously a lecturing mock musicologist is the soloist of the ensemble) as the paradigmatic work on which to orient myself, I began a period of maybe 15 years. Let's call them the 'Institutional Critique Middle Reinholdtsen Period'. Like Kagel, but hopefully in a more contemporary manner and with different use of media and references, I wanted to investigate power structures, the relation composer-musician, the festival *dispositif*, conservative structures of the ensemble world, the score, the ritual of the concert and the Commission. And maybe most importantly (although it is stretching the concept of 'an institution' a bit far) I wanted to challenge the *institution of listening* in contemporary music. I found that there was a kind of hegemony of listening practice with too strong roots in the idea of absolute music, like say Mozart's string quartets (do I need to add that this is my favourite music? No, it is beside the point), but where the pieces themselves follow a very different logic.

I did a very unscientific study among colleagues and musicians, asking them immediately after hearing a new piece: What did you actually hear? How was the piece organised? What information came across? Very seldom my (un-knowing) objects could extend the elaborations of their experiences beyond an appreciation of one certain 'sound' (very often one bit of instrumentation), or the remembrance of a certain nice 'moment' that stuck out. Using this admittedly meagre data, I made a grand generalisation, concluding that rhetoric in any traditional sense (meaning that the piece is supposed to be 'followed' in real time) is (often) missing in contemporary music. At the same time, when you ask composers how they construct their pieces, it is not lacking in formal or architectural constructions, nor in intricate systems of compositional technique. I saw this as a legacy of a modernist practice where a new music theory was developed in parallel to the actual pieces. The clearest example of this maybe Xenakis, whose early pieces only make aesthetic sense if one carefully reads his theoretical explanations in the book *Formalized Music*. Pushing my theories even further, this would mean that this very influential form of modernist music already is an interdisciplinary art form. Instead of asking 'Who cares if you listen?', I claimed (to myself) that 'listening is not enough'. Contemporary music had become an art form that now involved reading of text (and often diagrams), and in Xenakis' instance included the disciplines of mathematics, physics, and pre-Socratic philosophy. This was my response: There is nothing wrong with this! This is not a fault! Reading is fine! Interdisciplinarity is ok! It was probably always here (except maybe for the eighteenth-century string quartet heydays)! Music was always also theory, cosmology, social situation, dance, ritual, visuals, and drugs. Xenakis toyed with the notion of 'Meta Music', and for me this moment in music history defines a distinctly conceptual turn, something like 15 years before the term established itself in the context of visual arts. The whole interdisciplinary circus in all the art forms has of course challenged (if not exploded) the idea of 'pure listening' even more. As an immediate response to the new problematic relation (in my brain) between listening and theory, I wrote the piece *Faust—or the Decline of Western Music* in 2011, where the formally complex piece is analysed in real time on a screen, thereby lifting the cognitive experience of the audience to hopefully new unexpected heights.

The textual comment on the music is not something outside, but a necessary part of, the piece.

But I also needed to challenge the institutional boundaries in a more profound way. In 2009 I founded The Norwegian Opra. It was located in my own living room in the slums of Oslo. A direct inspiration was the *Musée d'Art Moderne* by the Belgian poet turned visual artist Marcel Broodthaers (another obvious inspiration was Richard Wagner's Bayreuth, but let's leave that reference for now). His conceptual museum was initially more or less empty. It consisted only of a space and an announced 'opening event'. The genre in question was 'the museum', the institution in itself (although later his different 'departments' of the museum became content with a very specific aesthetic). The work is considered a classic of the branch of institutional critique and is of course a kind a negative of the traditional museum, like a dead skeleton. But the essential aspect for me was that it was doing this in a powerfully affirmative way: Broodthaers formed a NEW institution, not limiting himself to criticising the existing ones (like Haacke, one might say). The void of the old museum became the birthplace of a kind of museum that could be defined from scratch.

My new opera house was also in the shadows of Oslo's new 420.000.000 (or 7.000.000.000 depending on how you count) Euro Norwegian Opera and Ballet, which opened at exactly the same time (one could actually view the building while sitting on the toilet of *my* The Norwegian Opra). But while Broodthaers' initial work was a performance of emptiness, my aim was to have an overload of production as a violent contrast to the other opera house that typically produced close to zero new operatic works (other than new versions of the standard repertoire, of course). I announced 15 new premieres made on a zero budget. The art form in question is no longer the long-time dead genre of 'opera',[4] but rather the new and potentially virginally fresh 'opra', a genre devoid of the Schlamm of traditions, expectations, and definitions.

The founding principle of The Norwegian Opra was formulated according to the old Marxist maxim to gain 'total control over the means of production'. All aspects of the institution should be treated artistically. The aim was, through a radical downscaling of the opera apparatus, to reclaim nothing less than ARTISTIC FREEDOM AT ITS PUREST. I was myself the dictatorial opra director, the composer of all works, as well as the librettist, director, Heldentenor, scenographer, propaganda minister, web-designer, ticket master, cleaning assistant, conceptual consultant, head of the Worker's Union, restaurant chef etc. No more weak institutional criticism aiming to modify the system from the inside! From now on, I build my own institutions! A long series of masterworks were created and produced in the apartment at the now legendary address of Oslo gate 7.

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[4] I consider *Wozzeck* from 1925 the ultimate artistic culmination, but also the end point of that great line of works.

In 2015 The Norwegian Opra had grown to a small crew of dedicated Opra-Superstars and moved its location to the forest in Sweden to further radicalise its quest for 'isolation and concentration', in the end also abandoning the concept of 'the audience'. Instead, in the cellar of the NEW opera house, an infinite series of opra-films was begun under the name Ø. It is a mixture of dystopian science fiction, *verismo*, communist propaganda, outdated existentialism, and plump autobiography. In other words, a little like *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (but much longer of course). The operatic series counts 17 episodes at the moment of writing, and the initial narrative has already been sketched at the beginning of this text.

A meta-level has recently been introduced, at least since the performance at the Münchener Biennale für neues Musiktheater in 2018: The Ø films are posted on the so-called 'Internet', and a group of viewing enthusiasts, a gang of idealised audience members, a true cult of Precariat-Proletariat of Chosen Ones that go under the name of 'The Followers of Ø' has gathered together from all over the world, transcending all identitarian borders, to a big meadow in the forest of Sweden. Towards this unlikely spot they all gravitate: The old, the sick, the converted capitalists, the minorities, the incels, the Lumpenproletariat, the stupid, the sick, animals, monsters, un-organic things, all forms of matter—in short: the radical universal Everyone. They aim to interpret and translate the message of Ø into potent action in the concrete reality of our world: An affirmative transition from theory to PRAXIS.

A kind of nucleus commune is declared on the paradisiacal meadow in Sweden. In the new opra-film-series *Followers of Ø* (at the moment of writing it exists two episodes), the viewers are allowed to follow the gradual growth of the village. A big 6-hour theatrical spectacle is being prepared for 2023, where the audience at last is invited to the meadow and the adjoining buildings.

I agree with the visual artist Andrea Fraser that "institutional critique has the form of melancholia" (Fraser 2009, 307). There is a sense of loss of a beautiful tradition involved. My earlier pieces that referenced the tradition of institutional art were in a way tragic pieces, sometimes created on the edge of desperation. And, of course, institutional critique often is a highly personal affair, where institutions gain metaphorical weight and stand in for whatever private psychological troubles. The Norwegian Opra though is an attempt at insisting on an affirmative approach: The New is still possible. True Change is an option. *The Followers of Ø, part two* even ends with an emphatic 'ja ja ja' ensemble finale. This self-created context (which involves over-the-top Outsider Art theatricality with absurd masks, costumes, and non-realistic acting) is so far removed from any conventional framing of contemporary music that, perhaps paradoxically, it again opens up (for me) an unexpected possibility to compose quasi-freely again. Seen from my institutional critique point of view in 2009, everything in contemporary music felt like citations necessarily loaded with some sense of conscious or unconscious irony or careful distance. In the universe of The Norwegian Opra, this has been turned on its head. Not only can The Followers of Ø sing and play in any way they like without any stylistic limits, but also through the institution The Norwegian Opra, I am completely free in regard to choice of media, length, format, and questions

of interdisciplinary balance. The framing of The Norwegian Opra, which, from the standpoint of the creator (me), functions as a non-frame, gives a possibility, a licence, to again attempt to compose true Autonomous Art! I must surely be fooling myself again, no?

Reference

Fraser, Andrea. 2009. What is Institutional Critique?. In *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Weshman, 123–136. Zurich: JRP Ringer.

Sheltering Each Other from the Storms to Come. Why We Need to Become Allies Rather Than Critics of Liberal Cultural Institutions

Sandeep Bhagwati

1.

At the end of August 2022, the Berlin Academy of Arts hosted a gathering of sound artists and sound researchers entitled "Soundings. Assemblies of Listenings and Voices from the Souths". This meeting was intended to develop new models for aesthetic and structural equity that would give adequate and audible voice to artistic and theoretical concerns emanating from Asian, African, Latin American cultural contexts, explicitly including Indigenous and Folk practices in the so-called 'Global North'. About a hundred participants from these contexts, the overwhelming majority so-called 'people of colour', passionately and intelligently demonstrated and argued against the many ways in which sonic and aesthetic, but also structural bias in cultural and academic institutions 'in the West' propped up its cultural 'soft' power. They looked for common ways to deal with this situation, for networks and—not the least—for mutual comfort and support.

One participant even questioned the place chosen for this gathering: was it not strange and illogical to initiate these important and ground-breaking discussions within one of the hegemonial cultures? Why had we not held this gathering in, e.g. India, China, Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Venezuela, Mozambique, Senegal or Nigeria? A collective discussion of this question boiled down to: because then it would have taken years (or forever) to convince local 'non-Western' authorities and funders of the usefulness to spend a considerable amount on a non-glamourous critical reflection event on sound practices (instead of the 8 months from idea to realisation it took in this case). Moreover, many of the participants might not have been able to attend—e.g. because of political/religious

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tensions between their countries, or because of their unacceptable gender orientation or unwelcome political stance.

As one of the initiators of this conference, I know that all the flight tickets and hotel rooms for the participants had been paid for by a Canadian academic grant,[1] that the meeting spaces, tech, diplomatic work and personnel had been donated by the Academy of Arts, that the organising team and the contractors for catering and website and design, publicity and video documentation sent their bills to a Norwegian festival, a Berlin-based new music magazine and a Dutch cultural fund. Not a single cent had been sourced from the cultural contexts or countries the participants came from.[2] Yet none of these institutional funders in the so-called 'Global North' ever made the slightest attempt to interfere with the curatorial, academic, even organisational choices of the globally sourced steering committee, quite to the contrary: they explicitly styled themselves as 'the silent partners'. Their leading representatives and some of their staff were present throughout the gathering and listened intently to our discussions, curious and non-confrontational, as if asking for their minds to be changed.

Only in the aftermath, at our de-briefing meeting, did one member of the steering committee begin to wonder about this behaviour. He usually is a vociferous critic of Western cultural hegemony, ready to apply the epithets 'autocratic' and 'colonialist' to any perceived constraint or power imbalance. But now he musingly asked himself and us: How it could be that institutions and funders of 'the Global North' would not only allow such a gathering to take place on their premises, but to also support it substantially—not grudgingly, but rather with a friendly readiness to fulfil almost every need, wish and demand of precisely those people who came to criticise the way they were doing things, who attacked the very foundations of the place that hosted their meeting?

2.

Cultural institutions in many 'Western' countries indeed seem to be under attack—and this from multiple directions. On one side, activists argue convincingly that most of them embody and practice hegemonial systems of privilege slanted towards white, male, Eurocentric thought and aesthetics. They ask these institutions to open up their programming, to diversify it, to make it more inclusive (of the particular social section that this activist has chosen to focus on). From another side, traditionalists and self-declared defenders of tradition (canon fundamentalists, as they have been dubbed) warn institutions to not change their programming focus, to not adapt mindlessly to the current *zeitgeist,* and to ignore or actively

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[1] Obtained through my own position as a professor there.

[2] Many of those who represented African and Asian artistic contexts actually were at the time living in Europe anyway—as academics, PhD candidates or post-Docs, as free-lance artists whose work was being supported by European arts funding.

counteract what they perceive as ephemeral and spurious claims against time-honoured practises and behaviours. Both groups of critics, radical and intemperate as their language may sometimes be, do not usually question the very existence of the cultural institutions they criticise. They just want the largely undisputed 'good(s)' that these institutions can deliver to confirm and support their own perspective.

Two other schools of thought, however, tend to see public funds spent on cultural institutions as a waste of resources that should better be put to use elsewhere. Depending on their political persuasion, they believe that public funds sunk into 'unpopular and unproductive' culture should rather benefit social needs, the fight against climate emergencies or, alternatively, as tax cuts, wander into their own, often already well-lined pockets. Extremists even sometimes demand to defund cultural actors if their practice does not fit within the framework of the critics' ideological criteria. Such detractors are convinced that they would not miss cultural institutions promoting the freedom of expression of arts and artists, should they disappear. Scandalisations of the work done in these institutions, from whatever direction, in a media landscape that thrives on minute breakdowns of scandals, are water on the mills of such activists who are opposed in principle to liberal public cultural institutions: 'Look', they will say, 'how corrupt they are!'.

None of this is new in substance—yet: the conjunction and mutual amplification of all these de-legitimising streams within the scene comes at a time when real economic and ecological crises offer facile outside arguments for those who would love to either align publicly funded cultural institutions to their own agenda—or abolish them altogether.

3.

For most of the cultural institutions upbraided for not being inclusive enough of people or practises that the critic would like to see in their programming or their staff have something in common: Their funding comprises a big share of public funds (i.e. taxes). They thus have a mandate to attract (or provide experiences to) a general public. They are therefore usually managed by people accountable to the public—people who for the most part came to their job through a procedure-driven hiring process. Most importantly, these institutions are almost all situated in or financed by liberal civil societies where misdemeanours, corruption and misuse of public funds can be career-ending offences, sometimes even before allegations are proven to be true: where the mere whiff of scandal can pose a serious risk to one's reputation—both that of an individual or that of an institution.

Only this type of public cultural institution working from a liberal political context will at all be amenable to publicly voiced institutional critique or moral arguments, from academic tut-tutting to public debates, from demonstrations to viral shitstorms. Apart from reconfiguring their personnel towards more equity through changes in hiring policy, they also have the option to optimise their processes to enable more transparent, more inclusive decision-making on curatorial and artistic

decisions. They can make efforts on all levels of their activities to become more equitable and more considerate. And, most crucially: such changes are not alien in principle to their desirable mode of operation. As publicly accountable institutions and as artistic tastemakers, a drive towards more equity and diversity will help them to become truer to their idealistic brief.

Agreed: not all—maybe not even most—Western cultural institutions have taken advantage of these options yet. Not all people working in and for them already see a necessity for or the benefits of the changes these efforts would afford. But only when an institution is at all able to evolve *within* the confines of its mandate, when all it requires is tweaking a few parameters, can a critic have any realistic hope of ever experiencing such a change.[3]

Critique of other types of cultural institutions (and here we speak about the majority of cultural institutions in the world), not surprisingly, is therefore much rarer. When an institution is financed by private funds and does not lay claim to a broad public mandate or does not need/want to attract a general audience (say, a private collector's museum or a oligarch's yacht cinema or a religious minority's ritual performance, a concert solely financed by subscriptions, a privately owned punk or hip-hop venue, or a commercial arts gallery), public criticism of their aesthetic bias, social discrimination, or even corruption would have nothing to bite into. One cannot really criticise someone for not being something they do not claim or want to be, and it would be disingenuous to demand a say in something you clearly have no stake in.

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[3] As I am a composer, ensemble leader and music researcher, this text draws primarily on examples and trends within this field. It might appear to some readers that the visual arts, with their biennales and documentas, have been earlier and more successful in decentering arts, in opening up to other traditions, with many of the critics and criticised methods already established in contemporary practice. And that institutional critique in the visual arts today must therefore start from another level. I am not entirely convinced. It is true that major western arts institutions such as documenta, HKW Berlin, but also many museums, artist-run centres and art fairs have over the past two decades been according ever-increasing space, time and structural opportunities to names and people that do not come from European contexts. Some cite the growing importance of biennales in Gwangju, Kochi, Johannesburg, etc. as evidence of a decentering of the arts world in which perspectives from different cultures enter the common arts sphere. But already in 2007, Buddensieg and Belting, in their book 'The Global Art World' confirmed what many who know visual artists from such contexts already were aware of: that there is such a thing as global art, dominated by western biases, tastes and markets, to which artists from all backgrounds cater— and that often the same artists will produce very different art for their domestic contexts: drawings, modernist paintings and sculptures for their friends at home—and critical multi-media installations for the biennale and documenta curators and audiences. With rare exceptions, such as the Muziris or Mekong biennales where such 'global art' highlighting local aesthetics are explicitly excluded, the performance of inclusivity at such global events remains a purely demographic gesture that does not necessarily entrain any artistic consequences—too often it involves nothing more than people with other names and a wider range of mind-body-gender relationships submitting to a globalised, west-hegemonic concept of art. Not so different from the situation in experimental and commercial musicking, after all…

One might, of course, desire that the world be rid of oligarchs—or of that obnoxious private music club that noise-pollutes one's sleep. Or be idealistically convinced that the arts would be more noble without any commercial or political agenda interfering with our access to it. One might even hope that private funders of such institutions care for their public image enough to at least pretend to mend their ways—a vain hope in many cases, as we know. In such cases, moral outrage seems like a waste of breath—which is precisely why it is so rare. Shooting shrapnel at the fog, hoping it will change into a frog, is never a fulfilling pastime.

Finally, moral outrage may be outright stupid when an institution is tax-funded, but unfortunately located in a (semi)-authoritarian state and thus managed by corrupt politicians appointed 'from above' (e.g. for their loyalty rather than for their expertise). Public or academic criticism will most likely not really inconvenience such an institution nor its leadership. In some cases it will, rather, endanger the personal safety of the critic. The infamous 'tin ear' that indigenous music scholar Dylan Robinson has attributed to the colonial mindset is a well-oiled organ much employed by cultural institutions in autocratic contexts: Even when their functionaries work in sound or music, their primary job skill is their ability to not listen to dissenting voices.

It cannot be a surprise, then, that we see almost no local public or academic institutional critique centred on the non-inclusiveness, aesthetic bias or moral corruption in cultural institutions situated in current Hungary, Poland, Russia, Turkey, India, Brazil, China, Myanmar, Indonesia, Nigeria, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and many other locations around the world. And why we rarely read tweets asking why there are so few works of Kurdish and Armenian artists in Turkish museums or why so few Uighur or Taiwanese musicians appear on Chinese concert stages, why so few women perform anything publicly in Afghanistan, why so few South Korean or African American artists are invited to perform, exhibit or speak in Pyongyang's cultural institutions, or why there are almost no publicly funded expressions of queer culture in the Russian or Nigerian cultural scene. We know why. It is obvious to everyone that most cultural institutions in these countries are exponentially less diverse and more morally and financially corrupt places than almost any contemporary publicly funded festival or cultural institution in most of Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Argentine, Japan, South Korea or North America, etc.But no one harbours the illusion that any single or even sustained critique might lead to significant change in the behaviour of these autocracy-infused cultural institutions.[4] And there is no certainty that those who voice their criticism

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[4] The many biennales and/or several documenta editions since Okwui Enwezor's documenta 11 (2002) have not been able to fundamentally affect this global bias towards western-style arts institutions. Artists from post-colonial cultures could be invited to these events, and by their very presence demonstrate the need for a cultural change also in their home countries—but did their biennale or documenta project indeed occasion a fundamental change in the art scene there, in particular by supporting more internal and external diversity and/or abolishing internal and external hegemonies? Decentering and Equity, by their inner logic, are expected to also have a noticeable, beneficial effect on source communities and ultimately de-centre also other cultural

from within those countries will be able to enjoy their freedom or any equity—artistic or otherwise—for a long time to come.

4.

All this is painfully obvious—and to many this state of affairs seems too trivial to even mention it. This is why texts that drive the discourse on institutional critique focus mostly on publicly funded institutions in liberal societies: Most people lack the quixotic stubbornness that will pick fights even when you have no chance. It seems more effective to direct critical words only at those who are willing to read them—and who are able to improve themselves. It seems intuitive to shame only those who are prepared to feel shame. But this stance leads to a slightly worrying consequence: for as justified and valid and genuine their concerns may seem to their proponents, cultural criticism, institutional critique and moral outrage that only address public cultural institutions in liberal societies might not actually bring about the change that activists desire—and might indeed be counter-productive.

If you only preach to the converted, you do not need to make your arguments watertight and persuasive—often a bold claim will be enough to provoke a desired reaction. If you blow your trumpets only at those walls that you know to be already rattled, you will not develop new intellectual and political strategies to confront the ideologically fortified. If you weaponise shaming, you will trigger defiance and an emotional closing of the ranks even among those who might otherwise agree with you. It is therefore somewhat astonishing that the general thrust of institutional critique around equity, diversity, inclusion still mostly does precisely this: preach, trumpet, shame those who already are closest to your own worldview. We content ourselves with pointing out the blemishes in low-hanging fruit—and leave those higher up and out of reach alone. We just let them rot or flourish, whatever.

Maybe this skewed perspective also is the reason why institutional critique of cultural institutions likes to exaggerate the actual influence of liberal cultural institutions on society—and why it so often morally pimps up its language. As a composer trained in the eurological 'new music' tradition who has extensively written on and criticised flaws in the self-image of this musical praxis for over 30 years, who has deconstructed its claims of universality, its colonialist missionary zeal, its limited and self-serving perspective on musical evolution, its geographically and racially myopic and misogynist canon, and its classist and capitalist concept of musical performance and creation, I have certainly contributed my share of

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hegemonies around the world—not only in Europe/North America and not only with respect to eurological art. But in all likelihood, it will probably still be some time before art institutions in North Korea, Iran, Qatar or Russia become queer-positive and post-exotistically diverse.

over-emphasised rhetoric to such discourses. As my polemic list above shows, I have no intention to qualify my criticism, but: when I travel the world and see how music and its institutions try to survive elsewhere, I begin to sincerely doubt that those 'Western' cultural music institutions (festivals, orchestras, opera houses, etc. and their respective curators and canons) that are most often criticised should continue to serve as the primary objects of our legitimate concerns.

5.

Perhaps it was necessary for Pierre Boulez in the 1960s to exclaim that he would like to 'blow up all opera houses!'. His was a time when not only the entire social body of European/North American culture was much less open-minded and diversified than it is today, but also when opera and classical music audiences unfailingly comprised the most powerful (and socially brutal) people in society. He said this at a moment when it seemed as if calculated violence might be the only way to shake off constraining shackles of prejudice, entitlement and hegemony in Western societies.

This is no longer the case in our day. Opera houses, orchestras, concert organisations and the society in liberal democracies at large, in many ways and for even more reasons, have come a long way and have demonstrated their own inner potential for change. Awareness raising by activists over the last 50 years—with growing momentum over the last two decades—has already engendered a widespread re-thinking of the biases inherent in the structures of cultural support in the West. New funding bodies and private foundations have offered financial alternatives to institutions hampered by bureaucratic constraints so that they can hire more diverse staff, or engage with individual artists, activists and institutions in other countries. Thinkers on these issues from around the globe have become much sought-after leading voices in conversations on institutional change. In some cases, they even have been invited to lead the very cultural institutions they once confronted.

Today, far from stone-walling calls for more aesthetic openness, inclusion and diversity, many of the people who work on programming in cultural institutions, most of the curators and artists, most of the audience members I have met over the last 15 years would immediately agree on the need for continued work on internal re-makings of these institutions—in order to better fulfil their own stated mandate not only for their own social contexts, but in a global perspective. All of these people, however—and precisely because they operate in societies where public money is expected to be handled transparently and equitably—often come up against fiscal rules that were once made in an attempt to counteract the rampant abuse of public money by multinational corporations and international crime. They also often come up against their counterparts of the canon fundamentalist variety—often working with them side by side in the same cultural institution—who desire no change, and who sometimes even aim to roll back the social, aesthetic, artistic and cultural emancipations of the last 100 years: who want 'their' art to remain

more or less true to social concepts and cultural practices of the nineteenth century—even though they often see themselves as part of an artistic avant-garde.

In this situation, activists and critics for equity, diversity and inclusion alike may well need to alter their *modus operandi*. The heatedness of confrontational and accusatory critique that many activists for various EDI causes still employ, their joy in subverting and toppling establishment symbols, as well as the often triumphant gesture of pulling off the masks of 'the establishment(s)' to shame them for their ugly face might well be strategies unfit for engaging with the current reality, the current predicament of cultural institutions. Engaging in the battles of today using yesterday's strategies can often harm one's own cause. And why harass those who already want to join in walking one's walk, when they all they can do right now is limp—or when they do not always go in the 'right' direction? Would it not be better to assist and guide their moves in a friendly and cooperative manner?

Counter-intuitively for many, the most effective strategy for activists like myself to achieve their stated goals in today's often toxic media and political landscape may well be: to help strengthen these people, and thus the liberal institutions they work in—if they are already on the way to more inclusion and equity. Thus, instead of attacking them publicly for their currently unsatisfactory achievements in this area, it might be wiser to include the pro-active people working from within these institutions in an allyship: by providing them with more intellectual tools as well as with more (not less) emotional and structural support against their other detractors—and thus prop up their (and our) hope of a sustainably diverse aesthetic agency against both the growing tide of conservative rollback and the foreseeable financial and social turmoils that will unavoidably be occasioned by the growing pressures of climate-occasioned emergencies. As the world we live in grows darker and more turbulent, as we confront an ever-gathering storm, we all will need these open-minded and publicly financed institutions and the aesthetic, intellectual and societal benefits and potentials they can afford us—perhaps more than ever before.

6.

What precisely are these benefits and potentials of publicly funded cultural institutions in liberal and democratic societies? A historically deep and detailed discussion would exceed the confines of this text. But here is a sketch—admittedly idealised for the purposes of argument.

Autonomous and self-conscious public institutions as described above are a rather recent invention in the history of European civilisation. They were established to shelter cultural activity from the harmful influence of dogmatic theology, autocracy, populism, political posturing, anti-liberal ideology and wilful control by powerful individuals. Like all democratic institutions, they essentially operate through a kind of *jiu-jitsu* strategy: in their case, they absorb attack and critique by converting them into artful expressions, just as other institutions convert them

into the protection of individual agency, social inclusion, environmental aware-ness, etc. The freedom of artistic expression held aloft by these institutions (even when their behaviour in hindsight sometimes seems myopic) has always amounted to a precarious balancing act on societal forces: as each powerful critic wants dif-ferent things from them, they try to briefly stabilise fleeting opportunities for free thinking and expression wherever they may emerge from the violent interplay of opposing forces. They aim to view and interact with the world from the eye of its societal storms—much as mediaeval Christian monasteries with the support of nobles and kings all around the Mediterranean endeavoured to preserve (or re-import from Arabia) the virtues of knowledge and discourse through the violent turmoil that followed the collapse of the Roman empire.

Liberal public institutions offer shelters of various kinds: shelters for artists to create under significantly reduced financial pressure, often in connection to other creators and thinkers, and with practical support—this is such an elementary ser-vice that many artists take it for granted or feel entitled to it. Private sponsors may provide similar shelters, sometimes better equipped—but also more dependent on the sponsor's personal whim, taste—and lifetime.

Liberal public institutions provide shelters for socially endangered groups to work and meet in safe, protected spaces—this is especially true for public insti-tutions in contexts of contestation, such as foreign cultural centres in authoritar-ian states. This role as a shelter for dissident discourses has proven valuable time after time—and if the next 'Soundings' event were to take place in Modi's India, Erdogan's Turkey or Bolsonaro's Brazil, it is a reasonable assumption that the local organisers will still need to involve the funding—and most likely also the offices and spaces—of one or more liberal 'Western' liberal public institutes for cultural exchange—at least until locally funded and managed institutions can truly work for free expression in arts and culture, until the people who work in them are able to inhabit their eye of the storm with dissident expressions.[5] Sometimes it seems quite inconsistent when harsh critiques of Western public institutions, of colonial time and access structures, of hegemonic bias are voiced by people who themselves hail from societies where diversity of opinion or liberty of artistic expression is under severe pressure. Even when their analyses of Western institu-tions are essentially correct, even when they as individuals cannot singlehandedly untangle their home context. But is it truly strategically wise to pounce on unto-ward facets of a privilege you enjoy (even if only partially)—while others who have no access to *any* facet of it are left to fend for themselves?

Equally important is the role of liberal public institutions as shelters for the nurture of incipient, emergent and local political/artistic ideas that would not sur-vive in an art fair or at a political rally—the odd, the timid, the quietly believing, the nerdy, the modest, the unkempt, the neighbourly, the unspectacular, the inward

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[5] In authoritarian states, the roles are often reversed: public institutions tend to toe the oppressive government line. Often only private or foreign institutions can offer safe spaces for cultural dis-course and relatively free artistic expression.

and awkward, the un-contemporary, the Bartleby-esque, etc. If art consisted only of the critical, the brash, the convincing, the compelling, the loud-mouthed, the coherent, the internationally relatable, the relevant, the zany, the well-coiffed, the incisive, the ardently visionary, the current, the Instagrammable, the actionable, etc. it probably would most likely not need the shelter of cultural institutions. But the resulting cultural environment would not be true to the full range of human artistic sensibilities. And it would be a profoundly and structurally hegemonic and ableist affair—and thus precisely what one has railed against.

7.

Liberal public institutions will not always fulfil their equitable, illuminating, safe, protective role to a T—this may to a certain amount be due to the things they are justly criticised for: unacknowledged bias, indolence, ideological and structural discrimination, etc. But instead of standing aside and seeing this as a built-in failure, instead of asking them to re-invent themselves from the ground up, it might also just be possible that despite best intentions the people working in these institutions just lack some tools and conceptual knowledge to keep them afloat in a new configuration of winds and crosscurrents. It would not help anyone, and least of all their post-colonial, de-colonial, feminist and queer critics, if these shelters for free thought and free expression were washed away.

In such situations, the robust debate culture that we usually associate with free expression can easily veer into toxic corrosion. Ernst Fraenkel, persecuted as a Jewish socialist by the Nazis and, then, after World War II one of the foremost political thinkers on post-authoritarian democratic Europe, once stipulated (in response to the viciousness of political discourse in the 1968 student protests which made him consider emigrating from Germany a second time) that in addition to the conflictual negotiations and political fights which are essential to any democratic process in a liberal society there also need to be non-controversial areas of mutual consent—such as institutions that safeguard these debates and ensure their continuing impact on societal processes. These institutions must of course be open to reform—but if their purpose of safeguarding the debatability of issues is itself eroded or denied, they will become prey to partisan, ideological, commercial and thus: authoritarian players who prefer to keep their machinations out of public scrutiny.

How about not just dashing off a shocked or accusatory tweet about a perceived bias—and instead making a serious and well-thought-out offer to co-develop a policy or a curatorial concept that would address that bias head-on? How about not once more pandering to a prevalent (right-wing) populist perception that public cultural institutions are corrupt, inept and irresponsible—but instead finding ways of highlighting the democratic and tangible benefits to society and arts that they provide, especially by giving voice to and nurturing marginal and controversial artists and thinkers like oneself? It may seem hard to accept for minds predicated on the assumptions that their primary role is critical opposition to the status quo,

but: in dangerous and uncertain times like these, the established status quo of liberal public institutions may not be the most problematic issue that one needs to confront—especially when it is already being eroded by forces that are much more inimical to the issues we care about than these institutions ever could have been.

It may be time to enter the fray—in outspoken alliance with the same so-called institutions one had grown so fond of criticising to the core. To become their ally in order to keep afloat these precious shelters for values that we as cultural actors all cherish alike: openness to fundamental and incremental change, to the margins and the unpopular, to the inarticulate and the controversial—and to the politically or socially undesirable. Shelters for all the words that need to be said, all the images that need to be seen, and all the sounds and cries that need to be heard. It might be time to help these institutions balance our precarious cargo through the many storms to come.

Gender Relations in New Music is Institutional Critique

9

Rosanna Lovell and Brandon Farnsworth

1   Introductions and Origins at Darmstadt

Gender Relations in New Music, or GRiNM for short, is a heterogeneous collective of individuals advocating for increased gender equality, inclusivity, and further diversification of people and practices in New Music. It continues the work of Gender Research in Darmstadt or GRID, which emerged in 2016 during the Darmstadt Summer Course for New Music as a spontaneous group spurred into action by statistics on the gender split in commissions made to (male or female) composers over the course's history. Since then, GRiNM has continued as a loose network of individuals engaging in various kinds of critique and protest actions mainly at New Music institutions and festivals in the German-speaking countries. The group's organisational structure has remained deliberately opaque since its inception, with many people able to use its acronym to represent its interests and speak out against established institutions and individuals in the often tightly knit New Music community. This opacity and lack of formal structure have also been strategies chosen by the group in order to maintain critical distance from the institutions it critiques.

This chapter will present several protest actions undertaken over the course of the history of the group Gender Relations in New Music from our own perspective. In presenting these actions, the goal is to produce a detailed account of what institutional critique in New Music can look like, as well as highlight some of the

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key sites of struggle that are unique to the dynamics of this particular field of the arts. We also briefly discuss the limitations of who is able to critique the institution, as well as the role of collectives in potentially helping to address this.

By ways of situating itself within a particular context, GRiNM views itself as part of a larger movement of collective-forming that has taken place over the last decade in response to issues of gender and diversity within the field of New Music.[1] To mention just a few, this includes Konstmusiksystrar in Sweden, Sounding the Feminists in Ireland, Yorkshire Sound Women Network and its regional offshoots in the UK, as well as Paye ta note, LOUD'HER, and Fair_Play, all in France. Gender Relations in New Music is (just) one of such collectives in which both authors happen to have been active. In our view, what these collectives have in common is their growth out of local concerns from practitioners who feel the need to unify and present themselves using a collective name to speak out against powerful institutions central to their professional lives. They seem to mostly be grounded in a critique of the specific deployment of cultural institutions within their respective countries, including higher education institutions, festivals, established concert venues, scholarships and prizes, and funding structures. This localness, combined with the act of coming together to speak out, highlights the importance of such collectives when considering forms of institutional critique.

To this end, we wish to highlight two important aspects of collective work for GRiNM. The first is that the collective as a format offers a space for multiple perspectives to converge. It allows for a range of affiliations and connections to established institutions to come together and speak as a coalition on a single issue, giving it a particular form of resonance and collective wisdom. In this way, it also undermines the focus on the individual that remains dominant in much New Music thinking and practice.

Second, we see the collective as a moment of speaking together, anonymously, as the product of so many different points of view, from young artists just starting their career, to established professionals with decades of experience to those occupying various roles and positions within the musical ecosystem. In music and the arts, where opportunities and success are built through relationships and networking, this kind of anonymity can also serve to protect from being given labels that will hurt one's career, while providing the necessary support offered by a collective in order to "keep the complaint going" (Ahmed 2020).

2   Key Actions

With this particular positionality in mind, we now wish to explore some key actions attributed to both Gender Research in Darmstadt (GRiD) and Gender Relations in New Music, or GRiNM, which continued its work. The group formed

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[1] Though important collectives in this regard have of course been around much longer, see, for instance, female:pressure.

as a way for participants at the Summer Course to discuss and 'digest' statistics produced by Ash Fure about the historical representation of women at the Darmstadt Summer Course. In the initial report, Fure writes

> Digging through the labyrinth of digitized material, the most pressing question that came to my mind wasn't what's *in* this archive, but what *isn't*? […] What histories speak through the cracks and absences in the archive? An impossibly complex question, perhaps, but one I thought I'd start chipping away at through the lens of gender. […] Our aim is not to impose an interpretation, but to carve out time for collective, focused engagement with the information. (Fure 2016, 1)

Fure's research showed for example that until 2014, only 7% of compositions performed at the Summer Course were by female composers. The statistics unleashed a fury of informal meetings in the Course's Open Spaces, where people of all genders expressed great concern for the imbalances within the contemporary music scene, not only based on gender, but also on many other factors such as class or ethnic background. This outcry also led to guerrilla protest interventions, from asking attending students, faculty, and artists to sign lifelong binding declarations in which they agreed to always promote gender equality while teaching, curating, and publishing, to attaching biographies of female composers from the Darmstadt archives onto rental bikes popular with course participants as a way of addressing these gaps in the archive that Fure outlines.

Following these actions a GRID representative was invited to the Summer Courses' official autumn feedback think tank. The group moved online and put together a document with a list of proposals for both short- and long-term change to help the institution improve. The proposals were well received by the administrators and have since been partly implemented, such as changing the student demographics by splitting the 'first come, first served' policy into two (unfortunately gender binary) options: female/non-female, as well as having more gender diversity in the teaching faculty.

After the summer of 2016 the group had built up significant energy and, rebranding itself as GRiNM, went on to organise several more actions to generate statistics, which at that time were lacking, on gender representation at New Music festivals in Germany. Its next meeting took place at the MaerzMusik Festival in Berlin in March 2017. The meeting focussed on brainstorming various ways people could take action, forming working groups, and creating connections in order to sustain the group long term.

GRiNM produced statistics through crowdsourcing them via 'data-harvesting workshops' where attendees would be invited to sit together with their laptops and go through physical or digital festival archives, entering them into a shared Google Sheet (which allowed for many people to edit at once). The first of these workshops was held at the 2017 Hoffnung 3000 festival in Berlin, a smaller, 'self-curated' artist-run festival attended by many members of GRiNM.[2] The statistics

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[2] See https://hoffnung3000.de.

revealed, for example, that at Donaueschingen Musiktage, an important New Music festival in Southern Germany, between 2011 and 2017 only 18% of pieces were by women composers.

Equipped with statistics from the data-harvesting workshop, GRiNM's next action took place at the Donaueschinger Musiktage in October 2017, where we engaged in several actions. The first was to use the statistics to create an advertisement placed in the festival's printed programme reading "Donaueschinger Musiktage: 92.44% of pieces made by men since 1921". GRiNM also made a presentation to composition students attending a programme at the festival, and distributed stickers to passers-by reading '92.44% MEN' and '50/50?', stating a discontent with the current state of gender imbalance in the programming and hoping to provoke discussion about quotas and tangible actions that should be taken by festival programmers against gender discrimination. For the traditional and established New Music audience of this festival, these questions seemed to be very provocative, and garnered attention for the importance of these issues at this prestigious festival. These actions were the product of collective work and discussions, yet were strategically undertaken by three members of GRiNM who firstly felt they could take on such a role at the festival (without potentially jeopardising their career) and secondly who had both the time and financial means to attend the festival, an example of how who is or can be GRiNM constantly shifts and depends on a variety of factors.

GRiNM continued with the workshop format as it was invited to subsequent New Music festivals in Germany. This included what would be a second workshop for the MaerzMusik festival in March 2018. The workshop's goal was to calculate statistics on female identified, trans-masculine, and non-binary composers that had been commissioned over the festival's history (GRiNM 2018). At the festival, GRiNM also launched its website, GRiNM.org, which was designed to both present the group's statistics and activities, but also to allow for anyone else to submit posts, an extension of the group's community-run spirit. The first part of the workshop included a presentation on post-colonial aspects in considering the new and experimental music context of Germany with researcher Thao Ho, followed by a discussion session with international visitors to the festival. The second part of the workshop was focussed on a data-harvesting of the MaerzMusik festival. The workshop found that, from 2010 to 2018, just 28% of pieces performed at MaerzMusik were by women, trans-masculine or non-binary people (Gender Relations in New Music 2020a).

It is important to state that the intention of the data-harvesting workshops was however not only to create statistics. First, while the findings did not come as a surprise to any experienced observer, they did indeed make the very blatant inequalities in this field visible and sayable. They provide quantifiable evidence that can be used in discussion and to further activist goals (see also Scharff 2018, 42). But the crowdsourcing activities, as with the initial GRiD debates spurred by Fure's statistics, also had the purpose of connecting like-minded people together who were interested in this topic. The data-harvesting activities gave a

straightforward, informal, repetitive goal that led to people chatting and getting to know each other. This was found to be particularly effective because many participants were interested in these topics, but felt unqualified to discuss them. Inevitable questions of categorisation, like assuming gender based on names, or how to deal with composer/performers or other non-standard categories led to equally productive discussions about the challenges of categorisation, and the nuance and complexity associated with achieving equal representation in real-world conditions. In many cases, GRiNM was also able to rely on the community's collective pool of knowledge about festival artists' self-identification (in terms of both gender identity and the spectrum between composing and performing) to fill in data. In others, the group used the close collaborative situation to decide collectively on the best ways to categorise information, and apply the same rules of thumb consistently across the dataset. In this way, the core of the exercise was always to emphasise that when looking at the data itself, the inequalities were so blatantly clear as to leave no question about the lack of representation of women and non-binary people in festival programmes, irrespective of how any one particular composer/performer was categorised. Through the community act of categorisation, the workshops also attempted to demonstrate that the strict or rigorous categorisation emphasised in music training programmes inevitably fails to capture the complexity of lived experience.

Marking 2 years since GRiNM's inception, the group returned to the Darmstadt Summer Course in 2018. Due at least in part to the group's continued activism, there appeared to be a growing awareness of the importance for festivals to address and coherently respond to issues surrounding gender and diversity. As part of this movement, the Summer Course organised a conference entitled *Defragmentation–Convention on Curating Contemporary Music*, part of a larger research project funded by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes and jointly initiated by the Darmstadt Summer Course, Donaueschingen Festival and MaerzMusik Festival, in cooperation with the Ultima Festival Oslo. According to the statement on the project's website, the goal of the conference was to "accelerate structural and habitual change" and "develop better practices" around the issues of "gender & diversity, decolonization and technological change" in New Music Institutions (Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt n.d.).

In the view of the group, the conference did not go far enough in addressing deep-seated structural problems with how New Music continues to discriminate and reproduce mechanisms of exclusion. Following the conference's opening speech, members of GRiNM stood up and read in unison a statement criticising it as tokenistic and merely paying lip service to this slew of crucial issues. The manifesto began by stating that

> "New Music" remains a bastion of racism, sexism, classism, ableism. The unacknowledged systemic violence of our community is a scandal. Acknowledging the seriousness of "New Music's" continual exclusions demands an equally serious and systematic response. (GRiNM, personal communication, 2018)

It later outlined what in GRiNM's view were the critical questions to be addressed to develop the way forward for the Darmstadt Summer Course:

> The GRiNM network is made up of as many divergent ideas and identities as individuals. We make no claim to have simple "solutions" to the problems at hand. Instead, we are unified in our commitment to doing the hard work that is the only way to enact infrastructural change. What is a "New Music" Festival? What could it be? Not shying away from discomfort, confusion, and complexity, we want the audience of this year's Darmstadt Summer Course to take ownership, to understand themselves as the ones in charge of "New Music" and the story of its future. (GRiNM, personal communication, 2018)

GRiNM's argument was that the solution to New Music's 'diversity problem' would not come by making a list of set demands, but through open discussion about the very categories that shaped New Music. Critiquing the stultification of the conference's planned frontal lectures, GRiNM invited delegates to join the group in a temporary marquee set up in the front yard of the school building where the Summer Courses take place. Over the next week GRiNM held a series of open discussions in the marquee on various topics with participants from both the Summer Courses (students and teachers) and the conference (academics and artists), creating an 'off' or 'para' space to have discussions on these issues as well as crossing the divide between discourse and practice.

GRiNM also engaged in other forms of creative activism at Darmstadt, creating an Instagram account to post memes that were both making fun and being critical of the Darmstadt Summer Courses.[3] The group tagged its posts with official hashtags in a practice known as 'hashtag hijacking' in an attempt to insert itself into the online presence of the Summer Courses, as well as to address a larger online community interested in New Music. The group also engaged in more performative interventions, such as raining down flyers onto the audience at the end of the premier of Lisa Lim's opera *Atlas of the Sky* which contained the provocative statement "Darmstädter Ferienkurse 2020 – 0% of pieces made by white cis men" in order to raise awareness about what the Darmstadt Summer Courses are, and more importantly, what they could be.[4]

3   Assembling a para-institution

The concept of 'para-institutionality' was important to the group's internal discussions during that time, which had become defined as a strategy for 'parasitically' inhabiting, as the collective noun GRiNM, the institutions that the group's individuals were already in some way part of. The idea was for GRiNM itself to never need to undertake activities to 'maintain' itself as an institution, instead co-opting

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[3] See https://www.instagram.com/genderrelationsinnewmusic/ Accessed 1 January 2023.

[4] In an instance of life imitating art, the 2020 Summer Course was postponed, thus effectively containing 0% of pieces made by white cis men.

the resources of other institutions that its members were associated with in order to continue to exist. This involved tactics such as redirecting resources from other organisations to support the group's cause and reappropriating the logics of institutional collaboration to apply for funding monies. The group also insisted on occupying speaker positions on conference and festival programmes simply under the acronym 'GRiNM' rather than individual speaker names, in order to maintain flexibility in regard to who would speak or felt able to speak, returning to the question of 'what have you got to lose'. In another example of this approach, the group funded the various actions at the Darmstadt Summer Course using the speakers fees which two members of the group received for running a workshop at the Defragmentation conference.

After the actions at Darmstadt in 2018, GRiNM wanted to avoid continuing to be invited (often last-minute, and with little funding) as a kind of 'pressure-release valve' for festivals who felt obligated to discuss their lack of diversity, deciding therefore to initiate its own event. In November 2019, the group thus organised the *GRiNM Network Conference 2019: Experiences with Gender and Diversity in New Music* at the Zurich University of the Arts. The idea was to bring together a wide range of people working in the fields of research, education, programming and administration, to share their experiences on the topic from different perspectives. The resulting conference activated the network that had been forming in/around/through GRiNM, bringing it together as a peer group as a way of communicating to the New Music community that the issues that GRiNM had been advocating for were important for the larger CCM community to take seriously.

GRiNM extended the unifying gesture of the conference with a special issue of *OnCurating Journal* that included the academic papers and reports from the field presented at the conference, solidifying the existence and importance of these positions within the growing debate in CCM and sharing them with an audience beyond those who attended the conference in person (see Farnsworth and Lovell 2020).

4   Pandemic Activism

By the time GRiNM had launched the journal issue, the COVID-19 pandemic had begun, which would have a substantial impact on the group's activities. Until this point, GRiNM mainly focussed on meetings and actions at (in-person) festivals. Due to the situation, during 2020 and 2021 GRiNM turned to mostly text-based interventions.

At the beginning of 2020, GRiNM engaged in a collaboration with the German New Music magazine *Positionen*. Over four issues, GRiNM directly addressed its readership through a series of 2-page spreads.[5] The group returned to working

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[5] See GRiNM 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2021.

with statistics, taking a playful approach, calling the series *Checking Boxes with GRiNM*, referencing the complicated relationship between institutions committing to policies to promote diversity and the difficult work of putting these commitments into practice, which often requires a "move beyond the tick box approach to diversity, in which institutions go through or along with a process but are not behind it" (Ahmed 2012, 118–119). "Chapter 1: Composition Professors", focussed on the gender of those holding professorship positions (not teaching contracts or lectureships) at major universities and music schools in German-speaking Europe (Germany, Austria, Switzerland). For this the group adopted a 'tick the box' approach with three options, taken from what has now become standard for all job advertisements in German: Male (M), Female (F), Divers (D). This highlighted the fact that the vast majority of professors were male. "Chapter 2: Curators of some New Music Festivals" in the next edition left the boxes unchecked as an open invitation to readers to tick the boxes themselves, and as a gesture back towards our desire to crowdsource statistics as itself a form of activism.[6] Here the group included more categories such as class/socio-economic background and race/ethnicity/migratory background, wanting to move away from solely gender-based categorisation and make visible the many ways in which discrimination manifests itself. This change was part of GRiNM's shift to a more intersectional approach to diversity that became core to the group's understanding of these issues over the course of its work. "Chapter 3: Selected Juries" looked at the people making the decisions about composition awards and prizes. In the final contribution, a letter to readers titled "Out of the Box with GRiNM", the group wrote about the limitations of statistics in understanding the complexity of privileges and exclusions which exist, but also their necessity in illuminating the reality of institutions and power structures in the European New Music community, asking readers to engage with a series of questions posed by GRiNM around diversity, such as "To what extent should music institutions support new and diverse forms of performing, listening, and creating, rather than continuing to solidify existing norms?", a question which resonates closely with the direction of the current volume (2021, 9).[7]

In September 2020, GRiNM was invited to be part of a symposium organised by the Creative Europe project *Sounds Now* entitled *Curating Diversity in Europe– Decolonizing Contemporary Music*. It contributed to the symposium by publishing an online questionnaire in advance of the event, and distributing the answers the group received during the conference as printed handouts. As explained at the beginning of the document,

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[6] Though GRiNM did receive feedback on the first chapter from readers, it unfortunately did not receive any feedback or filled-out forms from this second chapter.

[7] Translation from the original German by the authors. The original reads "Inwiefern sollen Musikinstitutionen in der Lage sein, neue und vielfältige Arten des Performens, Zuhörens und Gestaltens zu ermöglichen, anstatt bestehende Normen weiter zu verfestigen?" (GRiNM 2021, 9).

> A danger of symposia on such fundamental issues is to spend too much time establishing definitions and problems. Our goal is rather to jumpstart this process so that we can spend more time committing to meaningful exchange and enacting prompt, lasting, and tangible changes. (Gender Relations in New Music 2020d)

The action tried to highlight the danger of 'diversity talk' becoming an end in itself among those concerned about a lack of diversity in New Music. Responses to the survey confirmed this danger, while also revealing a large amount of what Ahmed (2004) has called 'declarations of whiteness', where declarations of bad practices such as racist attitudes (saying you are racist) are implied to be the same as good practices (not being racist), when they are not. This suggested that there were complicated dynamics at work around the perceived role of the symposium that could have been further explored during the event.

5   Post-Pandemic

During the pandemic, there was a worry within GRiNM that the restrictions and lockdowns would have the greatest impact on exactly the minorities the group advocated for. While anecdotally, this seems to have been the case in much of larger society, as is typical, the statistics for New Music do not currently exist. Writing in early 2023, we can see in retrospect that although issues surrounding gender, diversity, and decoloniality have become increasingly mainstream, the 2–3 years of ever-changing hygiene restrictions and cultural shutdowns in Germany effectively put a halt to GRiNM's efforts. We mention this insight not in order to position ourselves as armchair experts on governmental pandemic response, rather we think this result is somehow intimately linked with the structure of the group itself, and by extension the way that it positions itself (still insisting on the present tense) in regards to institutional critique.

As a group, GRiNM resisted investing in the forms of stability that being an institution can provide, in order to avoid needs for stability influencing its critical positionality, relying instead 'parasitically' on other institutions to provide this kind of stability to its members. The belief is that GRiNM's critique must stand on its own, and not end up becoming an institution itself that would inevitably need to navigate the semantically simple but operationally impossible act of moving from a critique of institutions of New Music to GRiNM itself becoming a New Music institution providing critique.[8] Taking this position also apparently meant that the ambient entropy of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly interrupted the group's work. Returning to the earlier reflection on collective work, it raises a broader question: when collectives are about coming together, what happens when collectivity is interrupted?

In mentioning these aspects, we would however be remiss in not also calling attention to the form of capital that can accrue through writing about GRiNM (as a quantifiable research output, as a line in a CV, as promoting something you were

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[8] This turn of phrase of course echoes Fraser's famous text (see Fraser 2009).

involved in within further networks, etc.). This is once again why it is crucial to emphasise the collective and distributed nature of the work GRiNM does, as distinct from the work of writing about it as named authors.

With this in mind, we conclude this article asking: who is in the position to *do* institutional critique within New Music? When the effects of COVID-19 wipe out many of the more fragile connections, we could propose that it is, problematically, often those in the greatest positions of institutional stability, for example having secure positions at universities or cultural institutions that are able to engage in the labour of critique at all. Scharff calls this situation "vertical segregation", referring to "the over or underrepresentation of particular groups in positions of power and prestige" (2018, 43). She adds as well that "In the cultural and creative industries, women are underrepresented in positions of authority and prestige" (Scharff 2018, 43), citing a report commissioned by the Bundestag in 2013 (Deutsche Bundestag 2013). This then raises the question: what forms of critique can such practitioners offer and what or who is included or excluded?

Through describing the work of GRiNM and several of its key actions in this chapter, our goal has been to present some of the potentialities and challenges of collective, institutionally critical work in New Music. Considering the interconnectedness of its various institutions and the consequences of potentially being ostracised from them, institutional critique as an individual can be highly risky. Power relations are often far from equal and personal opinions still have a strong influence, despite discourses centred on recognising 'high quality'. By contrast, collectives offer an opportunity to come together, exchange, discuss, strategise and speak as a group with a stronger and louder voice. The modes of critique practised can be performative, playful, comical or, otherwise, depending on what people feel comfortable doing with a group (as opposed to alone). If Ahmed describes much of diversity work as "banging your head against a brick wall", then mustering a collective can be a way to amplify the power of those who perceive the institution as resistance (2012, 26–27). By presenting GRiNM as an example, we insist on the incorporation of such collective, critical and sometimes invisible or imperceptible perspectives into a rigorous and reflective institutional critique of New Music.

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Ark

10

Manos Tsangaris

Institutions are social arrangements.

This implies orientation and alignment.

They give directions

Something to go by.

Sometimes you have to align with them too.

They are systems of rules

They are made of rules.

Sometimes these rules are precisely articulated

Some change and are subject to organic processes. Mostly both.

Institutions of the state and the church

For instance

Have to be fairly rigid and binding

Like the parliament

The Taxpayer's Union

The Catholic Synod

Others have a form that is more loose and open, like the Chaos Computer Club or the Alte Feuerwache community centre in Cologne.

At what point can something be considered an institution?

Maybe once its rules are so advanced that the societal metabolism can continuously and safely rely on the institution and interact with it.

By the way, the word rule is derived from Latin *regula* and originally means the "straightedge" or "gauge" with which and by which things can be measured.

Within a specific societal metabolism defined by its usefulness, we use the institutions to gauge ourselves.

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At any rate they always pursue a certain aim.

The institutions of musical life in general, like concert halls, broadcasting companies, festivals, music academies but also the music industry and institutes of musicology are there to foster and promote music.

MUSIC. In a common understanding this is still the isolated, decontextualised sonorous event, as it was built, understood and—institutionalised in the nineteenth century in the course of the development of reception.

Has *this* music thus become an institution? A set of rules that can be interacted with safely that gauges and provides orientation?

We will return to this.

The fact that we can return to it suggests that MUSIC assumes a specific space in society, a place in the public mind that has turned it into an institution. At least we seem to still know what we are talking about when we say "music". This talk is part of the institution. The particular language (including professional language and terminology) defines and formulates the relevant set of rules.

By promoting the rules of musical life and keeping them going, the music institutions perpetuate their specific language regimes, like the one that says what music is. The most established one is that music is what can be heard ("tonally moving forms"). This used to be truly progressive. Until it bit its own butt. The bite was the reproduction and commodification of sounds. The first phonograph was invented in 1876. Its impact could not have been anticipated. A few decades later an industry has developed that taps this purely SOUNDING substance and packs it into LOUDSPEAKERS. No, into memory media, records at first, which can store the sounds and from which they can be retrieved at any time. Music as 'musicmusic', that which only sounds, and is turned into a commodity. GEMA, ASCAP and the like are founded. Everyone profits.

Especially the representatives (almost exclusively men) of ART MUSIC. That is the one that slipped from the island (and isolation) of the nineteenth-century illusion into the islands of the loudspeaker.

The music industry, based on new technology, is an institution.

It is determined by the rules of the maximisation of profit, determining what works, what is supported and funded and what isn't.

State institutions also enter into intimate relations with the institutions of the industry. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. Liberalism. No objections…

But what happens, then, to the intellectual (rather than monetary) metabolism that music could or should be about?

In the treasured concert space (hall and ritual), our beloved concert music turns into a museum-like event. Bow, ye lackeys! Be moved, ye masses! Buy, ye enthusiasts!

Art—in the specific sense, referring to its precision, its painful analytic force, its aspiration, its essential impact, its variability, its nutritional value, its emptiness, its exemplariness—cuts its own path again. It is pragmatic. What do we experience? How do we not understand it? What are the things, the rules and connections we just cannot avoid in real life? What are we REALLY thirsty for? Art regulates this subliminally and superficially at the same time so that we will keep

searching. This endless search and also the fact that all answers will be temporary establishes points along the way, different forms of being in between, of intermediacy, *metaxy*.

In all, a rigid, performative set of rules, no matter how powerful and weighty, has no chance. Art (in the sense that it has to move into the infinitely small in order to bring its weight to bear), the spiritual in art will create new rules, i.e. straightedges, guidelines, new alignments, new *arrangements*. At least in the long term.

Because this concept of musicmusic, which can be turned into profit so well and which can populate a museum of sonorous ritual for society's inertial force, this concept is too rigid, too inert and it impedes the creative potential of the compositional thinking of the next generations, of society, of the societal metabolism, of collective interaction. Hence it hardly matters whether the new art (I can't think of a better word right now), this formation that is alive and possibly has not been contained by definitions, that performs model experiments that pay no heed to the boundaries and limitations of the concert hall, the institutions, etc. perforates the old institutions or creates new ones. This something that grows from a profound and painful degree of attention (in life), the resultant precision in perception and the resultant articulation calls for a honing of the instruments (tool box!) and creates its own sets of rules. This arrangement *from within* generates centres of gravity. Sometimes it moves by leaps and bounds from one work, one workplace, one dispositive to the next, sometimes latently, slowly, furtively, subliminally, protected or dangerously unprotected and open, unnamed, employing languages, creating the languages it needs.

This art is necessarily pragmatic, not just in perceiving the current situations but also in perceiving opportunities to unfold.

Everyone is an autodidact, every scene is free. Everything that is absorbed by the given institutions—which do this *with good reason* and out of the profound instinct of self-preservation of the pork barrels they are built around—everything comes from humans and groups of humans who found each other, let's say freely, and then accrue to the pre-existing institutions. And why not. By the way, the word scene is derived from Greek *skené*, the tent. Small (free? what does free mean when something necessarily emerges?) scenes are created. A meta-metabolism arises that begins to question musicmusic. Oh what suffering for the keepers of the Grail. The concert (as institution) is in danger. The rules of sitting, then applauding, then being silent, being moved or not, waiting ("to express in action passivity of thought"), unsettledness, etc. are themselves unsettled. But don't worry, my dears. First of all, this protected space of listening will continue to exist. It is still very useful. But not just that. It is not only useful. It is also harmful in its absoluteness. There will always have to be new forms and rules for the use of performative events. Secondly, there will be new forms of events (and some of them already exist), which neither aim for the concert nor the hubbub of the picture stage nor technological reproduction but which produce their own rules from inner necessity, from a thirst for composition, for a third space (transgression!), from compositional thinking that mediates itself into itself. The question of the framing of

the work, the conditions of its perception, produces new, friendly monsters. But not in order to perforate compositional thinking, as is often presumed, but in order to reshape it. Which will probably raise the very old, the even older questions, as timely as they are.

This creates new institutions from within. First they are like cleaner fish, attached to the big animals, festivals, broadcasting companies, etc. Then, little by little, if civilisation gives them a little time, they create their own organisations, etc. Then also the physical ark (hopefully). Later, the next ones will arrive. History breathes. Maybe eventually even tighter spaces will be sought again, new rituals again to enable other types of mobility. Who knows.

On the Kunsthalle for Music and (Music-)Institutional Critique

11

Ari Benjamin Meyers

> [I]n the realm of public music, the concertgoer is secure in the knowledge that the amenities of concert going protect his firmly stated "I didn't like it" from further scrutiny. Imagine, if you can, a layman chancing upon a lecture on "Pointwise Periodic Homeomorphisms." At the conclusion, he announces: "I didn't like it," Social conventions being what they are in such circles, someone might dare inquire: "Why not?"
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> Admittedly, if [new] music is not supported, the whistling repertory of the man in the street will be little affected, the concert-going activity of the conspicuous consumer of musical culture will be little disturbed. But music will cease to evolve, and, in that important sense, will cease to live.
> — Milton Babbitt: "Who Cares if You Listen" (Babbitt 1958, 40; 127)

In relation to (for lack of better terms) contemporary new music, institutional critique is at its heart an implied critique of the music-going audience. I say this because the audience at a contemporary art gallery, museum, or space is often *already a contemporary art audience.* So in that setting, the power to alter the institution can shift to the artist. In live music, the power is totally with the consumers, the audience; the entire and sole economy of music is one of quantity. One might go so far as to say that music institutions are the way they are *because that's exactly how the audience wants them to be.* Not that we as artists can let the institutions off the hook: the institutions are only too glad to oblige because they

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themselves are, again, reliant on audience, maximum ticket sales equalling maximum success. If no one visits a philharmonic hall concert it's a disaster; if no one visits a museum exhibition, it's a Wednesday.[1]

Milton Babbitt already spoke to this in his essay from 1958, "Who Cares If You Listen?". Although not the central point of his infamous text, he correctly perceived that the main purpose of the existing Western classical music institutions (summed up in the wonderfully evocative phrase 'the amenities of concert going') was to protect the listening audience (and it must be said, a fairly homogenous listening audience at that).[2] The concert hall as a place for the audience to engage in an historically set ritual, and thereby a place to first and foremost feel safe. A safety also related to the fact the modern concert hall and indeed the modern concert are set up to replicate the personal listening experience, at-home or via headphones: high-quality sound, perfect acoustic, silence, dim lighting, etc. and, in particular, anonymity of the listening public itself. It is therefore interesting to note that when faced with this situation, Milton Babbitt chose to directly speak with the audience, not the institutions.

But looking at it from the artists' perspective we could ask: for whom do the music institutions work well and for whom not? For those for whom it works well, there is obviously little to no need to even contemplate an over-arching programme of institutional critique. And for those for whom it doesn't work, are they even important enough (economically viable enough) for the institutions to consider? The 'music business' would clearly say no. And therein lies the rub. For the artists for whom the system works there is little incentive to, as it were, mess with a running system, and for the artists who urgently need the institutions to change—in order to do their work or even be let into the system to find an audience (a new type of audience) in the first place—there are no practical means to make this happen. It is therefore a question of will but also very much of agency. For the visual contemporary artists who have made up the different generations and phases of institutional critique, both will and agency were on their side.

It was this observation that led me to consider my own action towards music-institutional critique, not positioned as a composer within the music world but as

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[1] In this essay I will mostly focus on two classical institutions, the concert hall and the museum. But it is important to ask: what are 'the institutions' of music? Performance spaces? Record labels? Music schools and conservatories? Clearly, it is all of the above.

[2] Although a favourite of mine for its sheer audacity and boldness, I disagree strongly with many of this text's points and aims. In a sense, Babbitt—understandably—tried to take back control of the difficult situation new music found itself in by re-locating it completely into the domain that he already occupied, namely, academia. This 'taking back of control' is a key motivation in much institutional critique but Babbitt in my opinion lets the institutions (and audience) off too easily, in essence proclaiming 'if you reject me, then I reject you'. Again, though understandable and attractive in its clarity, this position in the long run is unsustainable and in fact untenable since to deny music its social nature is to deny its very basis of existence.

an artist working with music in the contemporary art world. And the prime manifestation of this is my meta-institutional work Kunsthalle for Music. Here then follows a brief description of the Kunsthalle for Music, including its inception and creation, as it pertains to my thinking around music-institutional critique.

The first time I used the phrase Kunsthalle for Music in print was in an extended interview with the art historian Marie-France Rafael that later became the book *Music on Display*. This is what I said there:

> In today's classical concerts there is very little room for this, for the unrehearsed, the so-called extraneous or the contingency, even (or one could say especially) within contemporary music performance practice. We need the Philharmonie or La Scala in all its perfection like we need museums to display the old masters, but we also need another kind of space for contemporary music performance that hasn't really existed until now, let's call it a 'Kunsthalle' for music. We as composers and musicians haven't traditionally had this playground as we know it in contemporary art. As a composer I feel a strong pull towards a non-goal oriented musical space, the derive. An art space has of course its own rules, but is still a space you can navigate at your own pace (Rafael 2016, 38).[3]

Defne Ayas, who was at that time the director of Kunstinstituut Melly in Rotterdam (at that time called Witte de With) read this book, which lead to her invitation to me to create the inaugural iteration of Kunsthalle for Music there. About 6 months after our initial exchange the project was officially announced via e-flux with the Kunsthalle for Music manifesto:

> Music is not necessarily what you think it is. Can we imagine a space for music that exists outside of any media and beyond the stage? A space for unrecordable music, music of undefined duration, existing even when no audience is present? A dissolution of performer and audience, of rehearsal and performance? A music existing in the world based in a space of musical action and activity, production and performance that can be entered into and exited from at will. A space wherein the ideal listening and viewing position is determined independently by each artist, performer or visitor, not determined beforehand by a seat number on a ticket. Having an ensemble at the center of its activity carrying out or otherwise enacting the work which continues during the opening hours whether there are visitors present or not (Kunsthalle for Music 2016).

This was the first part of the manifesto, basically an outline of some of the formal conditions of this envisioned institution, conditions that would practically work towards a new framework for the composition, presentation, and perception of music, and at the same time potentially trigger some reflection about the rules and conventions that prevail in the concert hall on the one hand, and the ways in which music could be present in the art space on the other. The manifesto continues:

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[3] I wanted to make a direct comparison between the perfectly controlled, hushed environments of traditional museums and the situation in classical concert halls. And yet there is one major difference: the concert hall has seats. Imagining a Kunsthalle for music, a kind of fun palace à la Cedric Price, seemed like a good first step.

> Music today is encountered primarily as that which we consume, through a remove, usu-
> ally neatly pre-packaged, either as a recording or on a stage. And yet throughout most of
> its history, to experience music one had to perform it. Music was by definition: live, social
> and spatial. In other words also: messy, political, meta-temporal. Music was not merely in
> space; it was space. Music was not only social through listening; it was social in its con-
> ception. Music didn't happen in time; it defined time.
>   Music is not necessarily what you think it is. (Kunsthalle for Music 2016)

Here it was important for me to stress the great extent to which music has funda-
mentally changed from what it was since its inception until about roughly 90 years
ago with the advance in recording technologies and amplification as well as the
rise of commercially available recordings and home radios and later, stereo sys-
tems. This extreme shift from an exclusively live, social form to a predominately
mediated one cannot be overemphasised in terms of the impact on the classical
music institutions. In fact, it is precisely this situation that has led to their ossifica-
tion. The manifesto goes on:

> Music is inherently not about perfection or reproducibility. Music is the act of an orches-
> tra rehearsing. Music is "John Baldessari Sings Sol LeWitt". Music is a group of people
> becoming a choir, or a band, whether they perform publicly or not. Music is two strangers
> singing a duet.

> In short, how can we imagine contemporary music, composition, and music performance
> as contemporary art today? When did we forget that music—compositional strategies,
> formal structures, harmony and dissonance, orchestration, scoring, arrangement, rhythm,
> tempo—is at the base of it all? Music traditionally had been a driver of the contempo-
> rary; all the more striking then the situation wherein music qua music has mostly sepa-
> rated itself and been separated from what is considered to be contemporary art. It is in this
> schism that the Kunsthalle for Music operates (Kunsthalle for Music 2016).

And in fact, *John Baldessari Sings Sol LeWitt* later became one of the central rep-
ertoire pieces in the inaugural show. Precisely this kind of work, a loose collection
of seemingly tossed off melodies albeit inside a tight conceptual frame arranged
from a video work into a musical work, was a perfect starting point for imaging
the Kunsthalle's 'collection'. The video itself already hints at a performative mode
somewhere between rehearsal and performance that would become a central line
of attack, since 'perfection' is so often used as a catch-all excuse for keeping the
concert—and concert hall—ritual as it is (Baldessari 2019 [1972]). (Not to men-
tion music schools and conservatories.) The manifesto concludes:

> So what, in this sense, would be the institution for music inside and alongside the con-
> temporary art institution? What would be its repertoire? What kind of a school and educa-
> tional attitudes would it have at its heart? How would it contemplate the state of musicians
> and music today? How should it relate to the musical and visual avant-gardes of the past
> that strived for a symbiosis of sound and image, music and concept? Would its ensem-
> ble include musicians and non-musicians alike? Would it have a collection and if so how
> would music-works enter the market in the first place? What kind of mythical audience
> would it desire? (Kunsthalle for Music 2016)

In other words, the creation of a new institution to create a new audience. The manifesto is not dictating anything but rather asking a series of questions around the notion of institutional critique as it pertains to the music institution, including its modes of performance and rehearsal, and its economies. Specifically, it imagines a new institution for contemporary music performance within the model of a contemporary art institution. Worth noting is that, like Milton Babbitt, in the last sentence of the manifesto I address the audience issue directly, underlining the fact that audience critique and institutional critique are very much related when it comes to music.[4] Not so much 'Who cares?' as much as 'Who are you, who could you be?' And then further: 'Where are you, what do you need to exist?'[5]

This manifesto, the many questions and issues it raised, leads directly to the next step which was a symposium held at Kunstinstituut Melly taking place on 25–26 May 2017, called *Music is Not! A Symposium On and Around the Kunsthalle for Music*. The title, taken from the first sentence of the manifesto, was intended by me as a kind of positive, productive negation. At the symposium we brought together artists, composers, curators, philosophers, and theoreticians to discuss the Kunsthalle for Music. Among them was the philosopher Peter Osborne, whose keynote talk focussed on the idea of negation as addressed in the title of the symposium and gave an analysis of this negation as attempted by the project of Kunsthalle for Music.[6] He outlined three possible forms of negation in relation to music that I would quickly like to summarise here.

"Music Is Not!", he said, might be misunderstood as: "The negation of music as such, not merely in its historically developed forms, but in principle, in all conceivable forms" (Osborne 2017, 12:46) This total negation, presented for the sake of completeness, quite literally leads us nowhere. Its utter nihilism is a dead end. But the next negation was: "The negation of what music currently is, via the negation of one or more of what are taken to be its currently essential predicates" (Osborne 2017, 12:13). This is essentially the negation strategy that has produced what we call contemporary music. In other words, negating through alternative compositional strategies one or more aspects of music and/or music-making that

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[4] And here one must wonder, how far have we really come since Babbitt laid down his famous challenge almost 70 years ago. I must confess, his anti-consumerist (albeit somewhat elitist) stance seems if anything even more radical and heretical today.

[5] There is a chicken and egg quality to the question of institution and audience. To break the cycle of 'music institutions' as a totality, where does one strike first, where does one start? In this essay, but also in my work generally, I start with the audience; this is not the same as catering to them, or blaming them.

[6] Peter Osborne is the Director of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy at Kingston University and wrote among others the book *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (Osborne 2013). Here I would like to acknowledge that I first met Peter at the *Wirklichkeiten Symposium* held between 19 and 21 May 2016 at the State University of Music and the Performing Arts Stuttgart–Studio Neue Musik, curated by Christian Grüny and Martin Schüttler.

were at one time or another in the past deemed as essential to understanding something as being music in the first place. So, for example, atonality, or later indeterminacy. And precisely this piecemeal approach could indeed be seen as a failing of contemporary music as a project writ large. It is the final musical negation that is of particular interest as it pertains to institutional critique and Kunsthalle for Music: "Music is not!", Osborne went on, could be more correctly interpreted as: "The negation of music as a whole, in its historically developed totality, *as it is currently understood*" (Osborne 2017, 12:32, emphasis by the author).

In other words, neither a complete negation of all music nor a selective adjustment of particular compositional strategies but in fact a reframing, a total reframing that includes not only the sound of the music, but its presentation, its educational systems, its production models; in short, its institutions as they exist today. This is the reframing that the Kunsthalle for Music is attempting, and one critical element of this attempt has been to reframe this 'whole' within the context of what we think of as contemporary art. A prime example of this reframing is an early work of mine, *Solo* from 2009.

The idea behind *Solo* is actually quite simple. It is a composition for an opera singer, a soprano, performing for one audience member in a small room. The whole piece lasts around 15 minutes. It's written out in the normal way, but the score also contains instructions for the singer involving her choreography and positions in the room. The singer's relationship to the single audience member is integral to the piece, to the composition of the piece; it cannot be performed any other way. (Incidentally, a recording of the piece is therefore equally nonsensical.) And so, as one might imagine it was very difficult, in the end in fact impossible, to have this work performed in any of the standard concert venues or opera houses.[7] So of course I had a problem showing *Solo*. Around that time, I also had one of my first possibilities to show a work in a gallery setting and it was a revelation to see that in that setting there was absolutely no problem with the set-up of *Solo*. In an art context, it was simply a performative installation for one audience member at a time: it was performed in a loop, people waited their turn or signed up for a time slot. The same work that had little to no 'value' in the music institutions, that is to say a work for which no tickets could be sold and that could not be recorded, worked perfectly within the contemporary art institution. That was a very important object-lesson moving forward.

Obviously for many visual artists the white cube is the proverbial elephant in the room, or rather the elephant that is the room. But, coming from where I came from, coming from the performing arts, the white cube was nothing more or less than an empty space that one could freely inhabit. Of course, the white cube finds

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[7] During the pandemic, quite weirdly for me, many opera houses and concert halls started doing one on one concerts; but they did it out of necessity, more of a plan B until things finally got back to 'normal'. But back then it was a choice, a provocation to the music institutions and their quantity-based economies, i.e. selling the maximum number of tickets or records or downloads to the maximum number of people.

itself within certain institutions of its own like the gallery, the museum, the public collection, etc. But precisely because of the artists who have pushed, expanded and even rejected notions of these institutions there is this freedom, even the freedom to completely re-imagine and remake the institution itself. This is precisely why today it is hardly even necessary to talk about the white cube. In comparison, and hence this publication within which this essay finds itself, music has not yet had its institutional critique moment; this freedom quite simply does not exist within the traditional music institutions.

I want to in closing to be clear what I mean by this: there has been no fundamental *artistic* movement in music that would systematically analyse, question, and criticise the conditions that govern the production, presentation, and perception of new music as artistic work needing today completely reimagined institutions, modalities, and audiences. Especially now, when the very idea of institution writ large is being re-examined and questioned (and very rightfully so), this is a long overdue and urgently necessary corrective.

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Part III
Interviews

"We Started Expanding the 'Us,' Rather Than Including Someone Else"—Peter Meanwell and Tine Rude Interviewed by Brandon Farnsworth

12

Peter Meanwell, Tine Rude and Brandon Farnsworth

Brandon Farnsworth: Could you start by telling us a bit about the background of the festival?

Peter Meanwell: Borealis—a festival for experimental music is a 5-day festival that takes place every March in Bergen, Norway. We exist to present artists pushing at the edges of their genres. It is not just about conservatory-trained, scored music, not about free improv, or sound art or noise music, it is about people who are exploring sound, music, time, and listening in all its forms. We programme artists that are exciting, dynamic, and boundary pushing both from Norway and internationally, while also working out how the festival can have a positive effect on the society in which we live.

Tine Rude: We started at the festival at almost the same time as a dual-leader team. When we started, Peter and I were both in part-time positions, and now we have created a much more robust organisational structure with a year-round organisational staff and more secure financing. We wanted it to be a platform where new perspectives and ideas get to the community throughout the year, building an audience and a better understanding of the perspectives we present. For example, we launched a mentor programme for young composers, a yearly programme

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where we develop new voices to be heard in the future. We also have a monthly listening club where we are breaking down the barriers to entry into the music, art, and ideas that we present. More recently, we launched an artist-in-residence programme that has had an enormous impact on how we look at our own organisation, and how we plan to achieve our vision.

PM: We have a dual leadership model at the festival because these decisions are not separate. As artistic director, I have responsibility for the programme, and as managing director, Tine Rude is responsible for the budget and staff, but naturally one impacts the other. We continually discuss how we can evolve and effectively realise our aim of presenting excellent, surprising, brilliant new work in a way that impacts the world.

   We do not believe that art exists in a vacuum, so we have also become very intentional about how our curatorial and organisational decisions impact accessibility, resources, and sustainability issues. This has led us to think a lot about implementing gender equality in programming, but also staffing, how we use our money, the festival's environmental impact, our impact on the local Bergen music scene, who we give a platform to, who do we support through employment, how our commissioning money gets spent, etc.

BF: You mentioned the impact your artist-in-residence programme has had. What has that impact been?

PM: For the artist-in-residence programme, we wanted to invite people who had experimental sound practices that were intertwined with a deep involvement in social justice work. We wanted to find out what happens when we bring this kind of artist into our organisation and give them space to create, as well as work with us as an organisation, giving us feedback and challenging or critiquing us.

   Our first artist in residence was Jenny Moore. She runs F*Choir, an all-genders community choir in London that is very active in terms of gender equity and developing a music pedagogy that dismantles gender hierarchy and gender violence. She is very good at asking quite pointed questions to us about how you do this [*laughs*]. For Borealis—a festival for experimental music, she initiated a project called *Doing Not Saying,* as we were in a post-2016 moment (post-Brexit, post-Trump) where there was a lot of performative allyship going on, but she wanted to focus on what we are actually doing and changing. She also created a feminist militia that was present at the festival as a support network patrolling our concerts for people who did not feel comfortable. It was both a real thing and an art project. Out of that came various other ongoing initiatives, like providing small business cards with crisis lines, reporting procedures within the festival in case of abuse, and what we put into our contracts about our values.

   Our current artist in residence is the improvising drummer and music research strategist Marshall Trammell, who is looking at notions of solidarity and the specificity of the black experience in Bergen, which is quite distinct from the black experience in the UK or the US. Our next artist in residence is Elina Waage

Mikalsen, who is a Sámi sound artist and visual artist we will be working with. This is part of us taking a look at specifically Norwegian colonial history, a topic that has long been overlooked.

TR: With Jenny Moore, we wanted to have someone who could ask these challenging and difficult questions, and also to be honest with us when we were saying something but not doing it. This was challenging, and started off with Peter and I directly, then later on we added to this to include the team, then other groups in our festival team, and then to get it into the DNA of the organisation.

PM: Out of that project came a lot of practical things. Together with Jenny Moore, we started giving our festival volunteers training on how to create safer spaces and how to diffuse aggression. We also worked on small things like if someone asks you where the toilet is, not to assume their gender, but just to inform where they are. We also now insist on gender neutral toilets in all our venues. We got a lot of feedback from gender-non-conforming people who said they finally felt seen when they went to a concert, and now they will come back to this festival.

We dug into the question of who was not present and why. For example, if all parties are in bars, does that exclude a non-drinking audience? We created chill-out rooms where possible in all of our venues, quieter spaces where you could take time out. We thought about door policy in classical music concerts. If someone has anxiety issues, then getting locked in and not able to leave is a barrier to them, they should be able to leave and come back in again. We figured out how we could achieve this without distracting from the music, making seats available for this purpose. We thought about the many small barriers that stand in the way of engaging with music, considering programme duration, what information is given, how the festival's economic power is being used, where we find our music, where are the concert venues we would not normally go to, etc. It became an ingrained part of everybody's thinking, embedding the diversity values of the organisation into the future strategy for the festival.

To mention one last thing we are working on, a lot of projects that travel to Bergen are presented in English by US or UK artists. We have been thinking a lot about how to translate these ideas into Norwegian, as this is more impactful for the local audience, but often find there are no words to properly translate. For example, if we try to unpack the concept of BIPOC (ed: Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) in Norwegian, you run into a world of words and definitions that do not exist or do not translate. It is not just about transplanting a global sense of injustice onto Bergen, although there is a lot of global injustice that is relevant here too, but it is also about finding the words that make it relevant to the community.

TR: We also started expanding the 'us', instead of talking about including someone else for them to feel welcome. One of the lessons that was very crucial was that we spend a lot of time on this. The outcomes are almost mundane, like putting up gender neutral toilet signs, but it does not feel like a list that you can hand over

to every organisation, we needed to go through the process ourselves and understand why it was crucial for us to be doing this ourselves.

BF: Do you see these reforms at your own institution as a critique of the larger institution of music itself?

PM: Why would we not do this? Why would we exclude part of the population from being involved? Why would we operate with a policy from the 1850s? We are recipients of public money, why would we not spend it in a way that benefits all of society and includes more people? Of course there is an implicit critique, because a lot of other people do not do it. We feel very strongly that we serve a community and an audience, and that community should not be limited to one idea of what the eligible people are in that space. It is something that we have also inherited, this festival is not immune to the colonial history of classical music that it emerged from, which is something we are working to change. If you are not actively doing something, then you are supporting the status quo, which is patriarchal, racist, misogynist, and colonial.

TR: But important to add, we also do it wrong, this is part of the conversation and the process. We have to try to do something and make changes. We also share our knowledge, it is not just for Borealis – a festival for experimental music, it is for Bergen, for the community. We are now part of a bigger project that Bergen Kommune (City of Bergen) has initiated to make the general music scene in Bergen into a safer space, building on both our knowledge and other organisations in Bergen that are trying and testing different methods. We are sharing with those who also seek to change, we also dare to stand up for what we believe in, take on difficult conversations, and to face those who believe differently. These are all important parts of what we do, although they are not always comfortable.

PM: Out of the *Doing Not Saying* programme also came our 3-year Borealis Radius project focussing on changing institutional knowledge and about grassroots engagement. It was also about creating a long-term programme that worked on building relationships to communities that have been marginalised by the art scene and then develop in a way that means we have a long-lasting relationship and can build institutional change to incorporate new voices into our community in order to become a diverse group of people that create the festival.

BF: Do you see an opposition between working with communities in Bergen and giving platforms for individuals to push boundaries?

PM: I am not sure I see a contradiction. The values of the music we present are exploratory, and that is about trying to do something that you are not comfortable with. The other value of the festival is to create a safe frame for people to come in and explore without feeling alienated or pushed out. It is about creating trust then bringing new experiences.

The notion of listening is also key. If we take it in the Oliveros sense of listening as a radical act of hearing other perspectives, it is not a large step from experimental music to marginalised people. Often musicians will say, e.g. they are working with synthesisers because the orchestra would not perform their work, or they are making sounds because they did not find them anywhere else. There is a connection between experimental music creation and people who are marginalised in the community and who have not been listened to.

BF: Is the festival responding to artists' changing practices, or is the festival itself changing practices through commissioning in new formats?

TR: Commissioning always starts with the artist, but we can make new ideas come alive in a bigger context. It is not about changing practices, but about making sure that we as an organisation can fit different projects. We always start with the biggest idea possible, and then we see how we can make that happen. Sometimes it can take us years to find the right people to collaborate with to facilitate a project.

PM: We are choosing people because we support their values in the artistic projects that they do. There is also a reciprocal effect though, in that being given the platform of an organisation allows people to explore their own praxis. For example with Jenny Moore's artist residency, we gave a bigger platform that opened up a new space for everyone.

BF: From afar, much of how you approach your festival reminds me of New Institutionalism, focussing on adapting formats to what artists currently need, long-term collaborations as in your artist-in-residence programme, engaging directly with artists' critiques as in the *Doing Not Saying* project, and engaging with local histories and communities as well as a more expanded international community of artists 'pushing boundaries'.

PM: Talking about Jonas Ekeberg and New Institutionalism, it ties into the *Doing Not Saying* project like you mention, but also into Tim Ingold's idea of thinking through making, where the act of making things is itself a thought process. We did not set out to copy New Institutionalism, all we set out to do was to create a festival that was ethically right. We make Borealis – a festival for experimental music in response to the world that we live in. What the festival does now is urgent because it is how we think our institution should exist within society, doing this by creating platforms to show work from myriad different backgrounds, ideas, and viewpoints, and constructing the new 'we' of the music institution.

"Don't Expect the Wrong Things from Institutions."—Berno Odo Polzer Interviewed by Christian Grüny

Berno Odo Polzer and Christian Grüny

Christian Grüny: You have been the director of several music festivals and until recently you were the artistic director of Berliner Festspiele's MaerzMusik, where last year you finished your eighth festival edition since 2015. You started out by introducing a lot of changes, the most visible of which was changing the name to Festival for Time Issues (*Festival für Zeitfragen*). Could you tell us about your initial ideas for the festival back then?

Berno Odo Polzer: In 2014, when Thomas Oberender invited me to direct MaerzMusik, my goal was to develop a diverse platform dedicated to music and listening that reflects the societal and political realities of the world we live in—something I often miss within the contemporary music world. Given the long tradition of this festival, the question was how to deal with change and continuity. Keeping the name MaerzMusik while adding the subtitle Festival for Time Issues was a way to acknowledge the merits of this important festival—not cutting off a tradition for the sake of making one's own mark as a director—while making explicit that its nature and focus would change. My goal was to bring together my different practices as a curator and researcher, combining artistic, theory-related, dramaturgical, and curatorial approaches to investigate the 'politics of time'. *Zeitfragen* carries a double meaning: questions about time and questions of our time.

These questions came from the doctoral research for my PhD in Politics at the University of Lapland I was working on at that time. It led me to early Christian philosophy and political theology, to a period—between the first and the fifth centuries CE—when Christianity's distinct conception of linear time was formed,

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alongside its notions of salvation and history: that is the basis of the chronopolitical regime that came to dominate the world until today. The specific way in which this regime was forged amidst Christianity's struggle for state power made me understand time as a political category. Time is a social and political construction; its conceptualisations and practices determine the way we are present in the world, the way we work and produce, the way we relate to past, present and future, tell our histories, etc. Christianity construed a notion of time marked by linearity, singularity, finitude, measurability and control. It enabled Western chronopolitics and chronotechnology, which colonised the world and facilitated the global chronologistics without which capitalism as we know it could not succeed, to give just one example. This perspective was one main pillar of the festival. The other one was the experience of, and experimentation with, time in music and other time-based art forms. Thus this Festival for Time Issues aimed at situating contemporary music practices within an interdisciplinary and sociopolitical landscape.

CG: Time is an interesting topic in several regards: music has of course been called the art of time, a configuration of temporality, but, as you implied, it has often been accused of being out of touch or out of step with the contemporary world. So time and temporality are a nexus that brings many things together: the temporality of music, the temporality of the institutions that you talked about, the temporality of our Western understanding of time and how it's related to capitalism and to colonialism, and then also the issue of decolonisation. So time as a nexus allows you to manoeuvre within this field and to stress certain of its aspects and axes.

BOP: Yes, exactly. I think that questions of time, timing and temporality are fundamental to almost everything, if often overlooked and neglected.

CG: I would like to talk about the specific form that you gave to the festival. There is a standard format for festivals of New Music, which consists of concerts with two, three, four pieces, mainly original compositions, lots of premieres, very little discourse. Attending such a festival always has an element of being completely overwhelmed and having very little chance to think and talk about it. The way you programmed the festival was different. There are two things that stick out: first, the idea of curating or even composing concerts with a certain dramaturgical arc running through them, and second, giving discourse and thinking much more space than at any other festival that I know of.

Can you talk about your role when you compose concerts and how that relates to the sovereignty of the composers and their pieces, as well as about *Thinking Together*, the discourse format you introduced?

BOP: The term "programming" does not capture what I want do. For me, making festivals is an artistic practice of sorts: a practice of creating an experiential realm in space and time. That doesn't mean I consider myself an artist. My materials, my tools and my position in the social fabric are different. Still, to me a festival is a

multi-sensorial composition in time and space, and being a festival maker is to co-create a temporary world that invites all participants to enter. The 'co-' is key here, as it is all about collaboration. Festival-worlds are created by many and co-evolve with the artworks they host. They're not supposed to impinge upon the autonomy of the artists, rather they are environments for art practices to temporarily breathe in.

The main, recurring formats I introduced at MaerzMusik were *The Long Now* and *Thinking Together*. Next to the "composed concerts" you mentioned, these were my main contributions to the festival as a curator. But for a festival like MaerzMusik, a diversity of perspectives is most important, that's why we presented a wide range of projects and formats, often in close collaboration with artists, curators and other institutions. Our long-term collaboration with SAVVY Contemporary, for example, was very important. Hence my role in the festival varied widely, from that of an artistic director as a mere host or organiser, to a role closer to that of a choreographer or stage director, like in the case of *TELE-VISIONS. A Critical Media History of New Music on TV* in 2019; or *TIMEPIECE* in 2021, which was my attempt to respond to the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic: a 27-hour-long, live performed and live-streamed speaking clock based on Peter Ablinger's piece *TIM Song*.

But the "composed concerts" you mentioned, of which I curated no more than one or two per year, are something else: attempts to work with the dispositif of the classical concert format by putting more attention and imagination into the relation between the artwork and its context of presentation.

CG: Normally, classical and contemporary music concerts have a very clear ascription of authorship: there's a composer who presents a piece, there are listeners who are force-fed what the composer devised, and the curator is sort of an intermediary figure who doesn't really interfere with the sovereign space of the composer. The way you described your composed concerts redistributes authorship, authority, and freedom, which potentially creates a lot of tension. The collective discursive dimension maybe modulates this tension but doesn't resolve it.

BOP: The way I often experienced contemporary music concerts and festivals was that they do not put much thought into the relation between the pieces and their context, as if they would just follow pre-programmed routines of compilation. My impression as a listener often was that of trade fairs where highly different items are presented—or maybe rather marketed—in a seemingly random way. There is a sense of disinterest in this approach, disinterest towards the pieces themselves and the concert format as much as towards the spectator/listener. One can still trace nineteenth-century culture in this practice: the idea of 'absolute music', the worship of the art work and its creator, the normativity of context, the marginalisation of the audience. This matrix—which is not least a political one—is of the past. I simply think that there is much more to explore in the way concert music can be shared.

I should also mention that my practice as a curator is strongly influenced by my artistic collaborations, as a dramaturg and collaborator with choreographers and

stage directors starting around 2000, notably with Jerôme Bel and Xavier Le Roy. I was lucky enough to collaborate on stage pieces that had music at their centre and that reflected the apparatus of the concert. There I learned that any action on stage is inevitably a stage(d) action, and every movement, e.g. of a musician, can be read as a choreographic movement. What's more, seemingly small details of timing, performative intention, light, etc. make a huge difference in the perception of the spectator/listener. I try to elaborate these experiences in my own work and bring them into discussion, e.g. with performers and ensembles.

To my mind, this kind of work brings a richness without taking anything away from the autonomy of the composer or the experience of listening, on the contrary. If you consider the entire experiential spectrum of a concert, from the choice of space and the moment you enter, all the way to the very pieces you encounter, their musical and energetic constellations, their order and staging, etc., you discover a great wealth of relationality—between the listener, the performers, the sounds, space and time—a richness that calls for exploration and experimentation.

You address tensions in the wake of experimenting with authorship, authority, and freedom. I did not encounter much tension on this level. And besides, tensions are a sign of being alive. There is much need for scrutinising our practices, especially in a context that claims contemporaneity. When it comes to the artwork and the composer, notions like 'sovereignty' are tricky. Which political imaginaries are they rooted in? For sure there is autonomy in artistic creation, e.g. in creating a score. But the rest is collaboration and interdependency. Look at the countless—and mostly invisible—people and skills involved in producing a festival and bringing a composition onto the stage. Sheet music would be mere paper without every single part of this complex apparatus. Festivals are spheres of co-creation and interdependency, much like the rest of the world. The notion of the Sovereign is problematic in our present.

Curating in this sense is simply another voice in the ongoing conversation about the direction of contemporary music. And it is important to make its agency visible and explicit, its power as well as its limitations. Traditionally, programmers of contemporary music tended to be hidden. In this idea of programming as a quasi-objective process of developing a canon of pieces of a seemingly given quality, nobody takes responsibility for their choices. But the practice of curating itself should be visible and scrutinised, available for critique and exchange. I always try to keep a balance of perspectives between the traditions that I love and experimentation. But the parts that are closest to my heart are those that try to make new proposals.

Thus this Festival for Time Issues wanted to cultivate an open-mindedness, sensitive to the transformations of our time. I am dedicated to listening, the politics of listening, listening as a way of relating to the world. Some reactions to this approach, in conservative music circles, were telling, and some surprising. For instance, the introduction of an ongoing practice of discourse into a music festival was interpreted by some as a gesture of taking away the importance of the music, ignoring the fact that *Thinking Together* was added to, not replacing the artistic programme.

CG: Just to be sure: by conservative music circles you mean conservative contemporary music, not the classical music, right?

BOP: Yes. *Thinking Together*, the discourse format that accompanied MaerzMusik, originated in 2014 in Darmstadt in the context of the *Osthang Project*, an "International Summer Academy and Festival for Future Forms of Living Together" that I collaborated on with Jan Liesegang of raumlabor Berlin. I called it *Thinking Together* because I wanted to create a space for sharing thoughts beyond the usual, asymmetrical and unidirectional constellation of speaker and listener—typically an 'enlightened' speaker talking to a 'non-emancipated' listener, to hint at Jacques Rancière. Of course, this reflects how knowledge transfer is understood in academia and in contemporary music, too. Instead of what I call 'knowledge performances', I wanted to provide another type of sharing space that appreciates the fact that every person holds valuable knowledge and experience, especially when it comes to music and the politics of time. *Thinking Together* brought thinkers and practitioners from different disciplines together with artists and audiences.

Maybe I should say something about my background here, as it is important to take into consideration where people come from. I studied classical archaeology and musicology at the University of Vienna in the 1990s, where I worked on two master's theses, both of which I aborted in response to a felt crisis with the university and a struggle with the way—as I would put it in hindsight—in which power-knowledge was exercised within institutions of academia. This struggle and sensitivity has stayed with me in my work inside and outside of institutions. For me, it was always important to have times outside of institutions, in order to stay awake and aware of the specific modes of operation in institutional environments.

CG: As far as introducing discursive formats, you were in a unique position because the festival lasts 10 days and you could programme for 24 hours a day if you liked. For a festival that lasts two and a half days, it really is the case that everything is crammed with concerts, so if you want to have a discursive format, you have to have one less concert. This has to be a conscious decision, based on the conviction that having a discursive format that involves all the things you talked about has to be an integral part of a music festival.

BOP: Indeed, having enough time for reading groups, listening sessions, but also longer lectures and discussions, presentations and seminars, was an essential aspect of this format, that is why it mostly took place during the daytime. Contemporary music creates incredible, often new listening experiences and raises a lot of questions. What we need is time and space for a community to make sense of these experiences.

CG: I find that oftentimes the judgemental part of discourse is stressed too much. After each concert you are expected to be able to judge the pieces and say something meaningful about them critically, but the question really could rather be how

we collectively make sense of what we just heard, and how we fit it into the way we experience the world, how it might change this experience, what kind of meaningful things it might say about matters other than itself. This kind of discourse is missing.

BOP: I agree with you. It is important to point that out because critique as an attitude and a form of subjectification of the speaking individual can take on its own dynamics. Often those who perform most critically and eloquently dominate the discursive field, often at the expense of real debate and exchange. Talking about musical experiences should not require any foreknowledge. Whatever the intention of the author, the meaning is co-created by the listeners.

CG: Documenta, which had its fifteenth edition last year, has always been a space where different concepts of curation have been tried out, heavily criticised and then rehabilitated, sometimes turned into beacons of new ways of curating. Documenta fifteen, for all its shortcomings and controversy, was the first time a collective (ruangrupa) curated it, emphasising communal exchange and working together, not just between themselves but also among the temporary collective of artists and visitors. One could say that a community coming together has always been present in many types of music, while it was only recently introduced into the visual arts. How would you say this idea of community and the communal comes into play in the festival outside of *Thinking Together*?

BOP: Documenta fifteen's focus on collectivity and the communal is highly relevant. Listening together to live music is communal in nature, and this aspect is very important to me when it comes to festivals. It is about relationality, sharing time and experiences with people you don't know, and thereby maybe experiencing other ways of being together. *The Long Now*, which I co-curated with Laurens von Oswald and Harry Glass and which ended each MaerzMusik edition until the pandemic made it impossible to realise, was explicitly about creating a situation where a temporary community of people comes together for a long time—night, day, night—of listening and being together in their own, idiorhythmic ways.

But we should not forget that temporary frameworks of representation—which festivals necessarily are—have their limitations when it comes to collectivity and communality. Neither Berliner Festspiele nor Documenta are likely places for future communities to arise. They are showcases for artistic and communal practices to be rendered visible. I learned a lot, not least about this difference, at PAF—Performing Arts Forum, an independent, collectively run residency space in St Erme, France, founded by Jan Ritsema and Bojana Cvejić. And especially in some of the formats that take place there, like *Elsewhere & Otherwise*, initiated by Daniela Bershan and Valentina Desideri. Still, institutions can and should play a role, open up, create awareness, lend support, inspire. At least that was the goal of this Festival for Time Issues.

CG: I see why there's a problem with the sort of fetishisation of community, the idealisation of the kind of community that an artwork can bring about we also find in Bourriaud's idea of relational aesthetics. I think it makes sense to have a realistic view of what this can do, like you said: the new society will probably not originate at the Berliner Festspielhaus—which does not mean that what happens there is irrelevant for what happens in society in general.

BOP: I think we should be honest when it comes to expectations towards institutions and their claims. Often institutions, being part of a competitive marketplace, are drawn into self-deception and hyperbolic language and claims. We shouldn't expect the wrong things from them. Discourse and practice often don't match, especially when it comes to current political questions related to equality, diversity, and decolonisation. This makes me think of Rolando Vázquez' decolonial work and his notion of humbling. He was a regular guest at MaerzMusik.

CG: It is an interesting observation that claiming to be able to institute communities and commonality could just be a continuation of the hubris of the autonomous creator and author of works and events and festivals, so that now we are not only creating artworks but also communities, as if it was within our power to do that, as if it was within anybody's power.

BOP: Absolutely, and I think this reaches very deep in fact. We all have a lot of work to do—on a personal and systemic level—together. To listen and connect in new ways, to develop new relations and practices. I could not think of a better context for this work than music.

"Pockets of Obscure Skills"— Samson Young Interviewed by Brandon Farnsworth

14

Samson Young and Brandon Farnsworth

Brandon Farnsworth: Your education and early career started in New Music, however now you are now mainly working in contemporary art. How did this transition take place?

Samson Young: When I started out, I was trained as a pretty standard concert-hall composer. I studied music in my undergraduate degree and also my masters and PhD were in music composition, although in my bachelor's degree I also majored in gender studies and philosophy. After my graduate studies in Sydney, Australia, I came back to Hong Kong to do a Masters' degree at the University of Hong Kong. During that time, I met artists from different disciplines, especially new media artists through Videotage. Although they started by supporting media art, they have since evolved to supporting many new media.

I started working collectively with people that I met through Videotage, so I was doing a lot of collaborative work during that time. New media art was very different to music in its relationship with tools, which really opened my eyes to different possibilities. When I moved away from Hong Kong to do my graduate studies in the US, I wanted to keep making installations and video works, so I started learning on my own how to make videos and hack stuff, working especially with electronics and physical computing. My practice slowly evolved through these different pockets of obscure skills I developed.

I still make music and work with musicians though. I write music for concert spaces in a more traditional way, but even when I am making installation-type

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works in a gallery or museum space, I still try to find opportunity to compose music. For example, in *Utopian Trilogy* (2018–2019), even though it was a series of video installation with animation and multi-channel sound, there were still a lot of compositional and musical elements.

I am very aware of how people listen differently in a concert space vs. in a gallery, and how that bears upon writing music. I am not interested in recreating the concert conditions of listening in a gallery space, like having a definite beginning and ending, or soundproofing the space perfectly to recreate a concert situation. That being said, there are certain things I can do in a gallery space that are not as easy in a concert space, like how you can walk around while listening, or how movement affects the listening experience.

I would not want the gallery space to become a concert hall, but acoustic considerations could benefit the viewing experience, and I noticed that curators are becoming more sensitive to how sound works in space too. Video spaces are now typically laid with carpet to dampen the reverberation, and people are more careful with the choice of speakers. At the same time, I can see that concert spaces are evolving too. Even places like the Darmstadt Summer Course are becoming aware of different kinds of practices, like sound installations, or compositions with visual or theatrical elements. What I am interested in though is not turning one space into another, but rather, asking how listening functions differently in various spaces.

BF: What are the challenges of working in the field of contemporary art?

SY: I think there is a higher level of critical engagement in the contemporary art world in general, which is good. There are more multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary conversations too in general. But I sometimes also do miss what you could call the concert world's obsession with analysis, where there is more of an engagement with form and with material. In the concert world I think the musical text is still a sort of baseline, for better or for worst.

I once wrote a short analysis of Cardew's *Treaties* to get my head around what makes the work interesting. What could one get out of a 'close reading' of it? Is it a futile project?

Treatise is one of those moments in the history of contemporary music that curators just love to bring up. When I hear curators talk about it, I sometime wish that they would just point us to a page, and actually show us how the marks on the page do the work that they want the work to do for them, instead of just dancing around the marks. The thing is that I think this can be done, because Cardew had already made it easy for even non-musicians to engage with the notation intuitively.

BF: Your work is often realised with the help of a team. What is your role within your artistic practice?

SY: It really depends, in more complex works that involve a team of people and a bigger budget, I play the role of a director and producer. If the work involves music, the music of any production that featured Michael Schiefel (a jazz singer

who is also one of my more regular collaborators) would be improvised by Michael; otherwise, more often than not I compose the music. Sometimes I also appropriate pre-existing compositions, in those works, I am more of an arranger. If it involved video or animation, then I am usually the one who did the animating, the editing and the post-production, but I would work with camera crews to capture the footages, and I purchase 3D assets from the internet for my animation.

I think the world is slowly moving away from singular authorship though. I am currently involved in this side project with a couple of friends called EnsemblDAO, which is using decentralised autonomous organisations [DAOs] to think about collective creativity. As a member of EnsemblDAO you can claim a 'stake' in the project through conceptual contribution, through monetary contribution, by putting the actual artistic or manual labour into it, or by writing about it and furthering the discourse of the project, etc.

BF: Where do you locate criticality in your practice?

SY: This is quite a broad question, but recently I have become interested in these moments when different logics collide. Currently, I am researching the history of systems for categorising musical instruments in museum collections. Categorisation systems like this are precisely the point where bodies making the music meet the 'grid' and get swallowed up by it. Another example is my work *The World Falls Apart Into Fact* (2019), which follows the history of the Chinese *Molihua* melody through the ears of English statesman Sir John Barrow. In the piece, I explore this very complicated history of transmission, where an English mishearing of the melody now actually constitutes the song's identity, and by extension, a nation's musical self-perception. Audiences of art these days are already educated in post-colonial currents and other progressive discourse. Rather than straight-forwardly reaffirming their positions, I try to take them through a thinking process with me, and complicate things further for both myself and for my viewer.

"Positioning Myself Between Stools"—Hannes Seidl Interviewed by Christian Grüny

15

Hannes Seidl and Christian Grüny

Christian Grüny: You have been working in very different institutions and contexts in recent years. There was a piece that took place in a refugee shelter, another that was staged in a park, one that was placed in a visual arts institution, as well as often working in performing arts institutions like Mousonturm in Frankfurt, Sophiensäle in Berlin, and others. What all these different places have in common is that they are not the concert hall, to put it bluntly. Maybe you can tell me something about how these projects came about.

Hannes Seidl: Yes, it is important that they are not the concert hall, but I wouldn't say that they are not within the institution of New Music. For instance, it was essential that the radio project *Good Morning Deutschland* that was installed in refugee shelters was tied to artistic institutions. I think it would have developed differently and also would have been received differently if this hadn't been the case. If we had just approached the refugees with the idea of creating a radio programme where they could exchange information, music, stories, etc. in their own languages and create a network between different shelters, which we did, without any connection to art institutions, this would have been considered exclusively as a social project and might have drawn the attention of a few local newspapers without anyone else taking notice.

Because it was also part of the Donaueschinger Musiktage and was presented in the context of New Music, it automatically led to a reflection of the institutions of contemporary music itself and posed the question whether it might not have to

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be considered contemporary music as well. That only works when it doesn't position itself completely outside the institution.

The same is true for the music theatre projects I did with Daniel Kötter that took place in Mousonturm, Sophiensäle, etc. We always tried to find a way to also have them performed in the context of New Music so that they could have some effect there. Some were originally performed at MaerzMusik in Berlin, were invited to the KLANG festival in Copenhagen, etc. So there were always points of contact. I think that's very important because these institutions need some flexibility, they need to periodically ask themselves whether they are still adequate to what is being created and presented. I don't think there is such a thing as the one perfect place where you can just continue to present art for the next hundred years. You get an art that is perfectly geared towards this place, and the whole thing appears to run smoothly but has in fact died long ago.

You can see this in many sclerotic areas in contemporary music: they take place, they have their audience, they have their funding but they don't move anything anymore. This raises the question whether the institutions, including the artists who work there, might be fooling themselves when they think they are still radical and therefore important. Of course, there is always an interplay between the institution and the artists that are working within it because they move in other contexts as well. Even if they don't work in other artistic fields but exclusively write scores for New Music ensembles, they live in our common world, so there's always some movement. But that doesn't change the general situation.

CG: I see several different points there that we could follow up on. First of all you made a distinction between the real, physical but also institutional place that provides a framework and has some implications for the work, and the institution in the sense of a discourse, funding structures, recognisability, categorisation, etc. that may remain in place even if the work physically takes place somewhere else. The second point is the difference between leaving the art institutions altogether, like with *Good Morning Deutschland*, and moving into institutions of another artistic discipline, which leads to certain frictions and interferences that can be worked with. You have done both, and sometimes the two are connected.

We could distinguish three ways of critiquing art or music institutions: working within them in order to change them, simply leaving them and moving somewhere else, and inventing or postulating new institutions. From what you've said it seems that you don't want to consider them as alternatives. You are saying that even when you're leaving them you remain within their purview, and when you invented a new institution it always meant to reflect back on the traditional ones and change them. Is that a good way of putting it?

HS: That's my approach, yes. That's what I wish for. But it had a much more pragmatic starting point. It's not that I set out to critique New Music as an institution because I thought that was necessary; it was more of a feeling of discontent with the working conditions in the New Music scene, this particular division of labour. For instance, I'm too slow for the usual rehearsal routine. I cannot assess a

piece that I wrote after three rehearsals just before a premiere without the chance to make any major changes. I need time to react to what I've heard, time to understand why certain sections don't work, whether it's because of the composition, whether the performers simply haven't mastered it yet, or whether there was a problem in the communication. I found that when I have more time to rehearse with the musicians and also more time between rehearsals, I get completely different and much better results.

The other thing is that in a standard concert setting where four or five pieces are played whose only commonality is the instrumentation, my pieces sometimes didn't work at all. Obviously, the pieces impact each other, and not always for the better. Sometimes I directly reacted to that, like in *The Art of Entertainment*, which is distributed over the whole evening, takes something from the other pieces and intermittently intervenes into this strange dramaturgy.

I found that these two aspects, rehearsal time and the dramaturgy of a show, work much better in theatre venues where it is common to start half a year in advance with tryouts and then rehearse for 2 weeks. Also, you have the evening to yourself. The show can be five hours or less than an hour long, and everyone works together on the format of the evening. Those were the fairly pragmatic reasons why I entered that field.

Once you do that, you see that you have to make all kinds of decisions: will the audience stand, will they sit, will they move around, are they placed in front of the performance or around it, what about light, video, text, what media will be used, etc. This process of finding the appropriate form for each piece became quite central to my work. I found that formats like *Good Morning Deutschland* don't have to be theoretically devised in order to produce something that is a far from the classical image of New Music as possible. Rather, I asked myself how I could react to the situation in 2015 where all these refugees from Syria and Afghanistan came to Germany and found it completely inappropriate to express my feelings about that in a conventionally composed piece of music.

So I thought about what could be a situation that makes sense coming from what I'm interested in, namely, hearing and listening. That's how the idea of creating a radio station came about. When we started working we walked around Donaueschingen looking for a suitable place, and we found this old casino in the refugee shelter with a sunroom that was just perfect, like a campus radio that even had a kind of stage. It was always important to me that the programme was produced at a visible place that you could visit and see it as a kind of stage play.

For all this I didn't have to invent an institution but could say that this is New Music, at least as I understand it, as a process of reflection about music, about listening to music, and the expectation of what music can be. Again, the origin is rather pragmatic, and actually founding an institution would need a kind of momentum that you couldn't produce as a single person and also it wouldn't be that interesting in terms of communication.

CG: I wasn't thinking of permanent institutions but rather of a kind of ad hoc institutions, small organisational units that don't quite fit into the standard

institutions and that you dissolve again after the fact. You once wrote about music as a social situation, and this could be a temporary institution as a social situation. And the way you wanted to react politically and artistically to the current political situation didn't fit well into the institutions of New Music, so there had to be some kind of transformation.

HS: Right. My hope was that this kind of approach would have some effect on the predominant institutions and the New Music scene so that there would be an irritation that triggered a different way of looking at the calcified structures. There are plenty of examples in music theatre that took place within the conventional frame with the standard structure of rehearsals, staging, etc. and failed because of this and because of the hierarchical structures from classical music where the composer calls the shots, there's a conductor and a concertmaster and not a team working together. In some of the smaller ensembles things are a bit more flexible but still there's this crass pragmatism of 'now we have a rehearsal, which lasts three and a half hours and that's it'. Of course, there are some advantages to that too, especially when you have a family. But you could also say that a working day lasts six hours and then we'll see how far we get. The pieces that try to create something new within these structures tend to primarily reproduce them politically and artistically.

In this context the piece we did last year should be mentioned, *We Can Be Heroes*, where I withdrew as a composer and took the role of artistic director or curator. I hadn't planned it that way, I thought I'd compose something as well but it became apparent that that would have created an imbalance. What was particularly important to me was to create a performative project that retained its own temporality, not like an exhibition where you can spend as much time as you want but as something that lasted an hour.

CG: But it did switch between the two models depending on the room.

HS: Yes, there were two rooms where you could stay as long as you wanted while the others were only activated for a specific time. The format was meant to be hybrid, but it was also clear that we need an exhibition space to realise it. We couldn't have done it within a music festival. Firstly because it called for the infrastructure of an exhibition space, eight rooms, white walls, etc., but also because it needed to last for some weeks as people were only allowed to go in one by one. Of course I still want the piece to be received within the contemporary music context, which doesn't always happen. In a way it's a bit absurd: I position myself somewhere else, on the outside or between stools, and then want everybody to follow me and praise what I do.

CG: You want it to be perceived as a statement within New Music, as something that is relevant for its own practice.

HS: Exactly. That is one of the reasons why inventing ad hoc institutions only makes sense to me when they have some connection to those larger structures so that there is some communication. Artworks that aren't seen or heard are a bit pointless. There are works that you can still perform and listen to in 50 years so things might not be quite so urgent there, but these performative works are just gone once they are over.

CG: When you described the standard structures and workings of the traditional institutions it reminded me of McLuhan's 'the medium is the message': the works that remain within these structures turn into mere actualisations of the structures themselves so that really the institution is the message.

HS: Most of the time I think this is true. But I'm still surprised that sometimes there are people who manage to neutralise the framework, as it were, so that the institution becomes irrelevant. For me the performance of an orchestral piece by Iannis Xenakis in Darmstadt 2006 or 2008 was such a moment. For this piece—I think it was *Jonchaies*—the orchestra didn't matter so much because the piece had such a strong, autonomous musical language. For him it's about the structure as such, and if it's three flutes who can play it, fine, if it had been three synthesisers it would have worked just as well. The music sounds like it doesn't care that there's an orchestra because it aims at something else, like thinking about rhythmic proportions, about pulses or something like that. But it's very rare that this works.

CG: There are a lot of people who situate themselves inside the institutions of the concert, of New Music and listen to the pieces without perceiving the institution itself. The prerequisite for this is neutralising the frame and only noticing what appears inside it. Couldn't it be that someone for whom the institution constantly gets in the way is already halfway out?

HS: That's not something that I chose. I simply never felt completely at home. In my early experiences in clubs listening to ska, hip hop or funk I really liked the frame and found it completely appropriate but it was just half of my world musically, I never found a band I was comfortable playing in. On the other hand I found the music I heard within the New Music institutions really fascinating, Xenakis in particular but also Beat Furrer, Bernhard Lang, Nicolaus A. Huber, also Lachenmann for a while. It is not this was foreign to me, otherwise I would never have entered this world. It's more of an ambivalence. The unease came automatically when I couldn't forget that I always have to behave in a certain way. This world is so closely tied to the world of classical music and its norms of behaviour. Sometimes I managed to forget it for a while, but then I went to a concert with friends who weren't from the New Music scene and who were shocked by the rigidity of it all. All this leads to the strange situation where for people from other areas the frame is so strong that they cannot enjoy a concert musically at all. That includes the instruments, the fact that you have an orchestra, the whole classical

apparatus. All these sounds, instruments, clothes, behavioural rules mean something and still point towards a bourgeois nineteenth-century society.

In the last project I did, *Die Flexibilität der Fische* (The flexibility of fishes), for example, we tried to use the language of a singer-songwriter evening concerning stage, light, volume, etc. The evening consists of two ballads, one twenty minutes and the other little over half an hour long, so it's not a long concert. Still, I wanted a break in between to catch some air, get a drink… Also, Diamanda La Berge Dramm, the violinist performing the first part, addresses the audience directly in the beginning as if she was on stage in a bar or somewhere like that. It was important that Diamanda would establish contact with the audience so she as a person wouldn't disappear behind the music. As everything was amplified, the audience didn't need to be extra quiet and didn't monitor their behaviour so much.

CG: But the two-part concert with an intermission in between is a very traditional format in classical music, unlike in the performance world. In a way what you did was cross two formats.

HS: Yes, that's true, the intermission itself is very common in concerts. It was more the luxury of time I was seeking for. To have a concert with 'only' one hour of music but still with an intermission. I have seen the complete overload in music festivals often enough, which makes them turn into a kind of discounter of music. It seems like that's the institution itself speaking and saying 'look how big I am!' Often there is no recognisable motivation for placing things side by side, which devalues the individual pieces. So I thought why not take a break after twenty minutes and not have two or three more pieces, which would only make me forget what I heard.

CG: Of all the pieces we mentioned, *We Can Be Heroes* was the one that most explicitly worked with the different frames and dispositifs of the institutions it situated itself between, namely, the gallery space that normally houses exhibitions and New Music, which is where you and most of the people you invited to participate come from. What was your experience regarding the realisation of the piece? In each of the different pieces you confront the institutions with unusual demands, you ask them to do things they wouldn't normally do.

HS: Interestingly, the two pieces I thought would be most problematic in this context worked best, Michael Maierhof and Christoph Ogiermann's pieces. They were the ones who paid almost no attention to the institution in terms of how they worked but did what they would have done in another context as well. Maierhof composed a ten-minute piece for one performer and video and introduced an interactive element by letting the audience choose between five variants. But that remained virtual for most of the visitors because very few went through the exhibition more than once. Still, it was nice for the performers who had to do it for 10 or 11 weeks.

Christoph Ogiermann had additional walls installed with mirrors on them and subwoofers behind them so that everything shook and rattled. I thought this wouldn't work for the 9 weeks because it was based on an erosion of the material, screws coming loose, glue failing, so we had to constantly repair it. But the people at basis Frankfurt had no problems with that at all.

Also we had to find fourteen performers, three for every day, which they really helped us with. And when it was up and running, it only took some problems with public transport or a performer becoming sick to cause serious problems. In situations like that the institution has to react quickly, which they did. There is always somebody there to take care of these things, and the performers also organised themselves really well. There was constantly something that needed to be fixed, mirrors crashing, projectors or robot vacuum cleaners breaking down, and they had no problems dealing with that. I think everybody involved kind of identified themselves with the project and made it partially their own. This way it becomes much easier to solve problems because everybody feels responsible. I guess that is an important thing in collaborative works—to take everyone involved seriously and to trust them so they will take their work seriously as well.

One thing that was really difficult was communicating the project to the public. People who go to a gallery are just not used to something starting at a specific time, so that when someone came spontaneously and would have had to wait for the next time slot, they just left again. It really runs counter to the expectation of being able to visit an exhibition at your own autonomous time and speed, and with larger groups as well as you were only allowed to go in alone. We were asking a kind of flexibility that seemed unreasonable for a lot of people. On the other hand, hardly anyone came who didn't know the institution.

CG: You mean basis Frankfurt as an institution.

HS: Yes, and people like the New Music crowd just don't take notice of these things. In a relatively small city like Frankfurt where the arts scene isn't huge, you should think that it should be possible to follow what's going on in different fields. But everyone is in their own bubble, myself included. So maybe what I'm asking for artistically is something that I couldn't fulfil as a viewer. Outside communication is the most difficult task.

Interestingly, the parts that I thought would be difficult like introducing a concert format into the white cube worked really well. But they needed to be complemented by others who were closer to the visual arts, like the pieces by Christina Kubisch, David Helbich, and Lea Letzel. I was glad that there were all these different formats because just having a series of concert pieces would have raised the question why they had to be in different rooms at all.

CG: Outside communication is a really interesting topic. There are a lot of different things involved like audience expectations and attitudes, very concrete questions like the need to book a ticket in advance for a specific time slot, which is common practice for a concert but very unusual in a museum (except maybe

places like the Louvre), and then the fact that only one person per half hour can enter at all, which is unusual for both institutions. In a way you are placing yourself between two (or more) stools.

Besides those formal aspects there is the problem of criteria and evaluation. You necessarily ask yourself what is the benchmark for this, or do I have to have a whole range of different benchmarks depending on which room I am visiting because they were all so different. How do I have to watch this and listen to it? How do I judge it? That's an obvious challenge for the visitors no matter which field they're from. In a way the problem that people just don't take notice of a piece like this at all because it takes place outside their own bubble should be the easiest one to tackle.

HS: Funnily I always thought that that is precisely what New Music is there for! Challenging people's frames of reference and judgement. I always loved coming out of concert completely confused, not thinking 'that was a great concert' or 'that was a lame concert' but rather 'I don't even know what that was'. That's what engages me most and longest.

I found the question how people perceived and judged the pieces really interesting. I think some were a bit anxious to be on their own with a single performer in this really intimate situation. And then it lasted 70 minutes and you couldn't just move in an out as you please. In a way these are strange attitudes because what they seem to say is 'I don't want this to have anything to do with me, I just want to judge it from a distance'. But that is precisely what the piece makes impossible.

CG: Traditionally, there are two types of freedom for an audience: in a museum or a gallery it's your own choice how you move and what you look at in what order, in a concert hall you can retreat and become invisible as a person. You made them both impossible, and it's no wonder people reacted to this with a bit of reservation.

HS: It doesn't surprise me either. I don't know if I would call this freedom but you certainly have to give up some independence. You have to trust the artwork to treat you right. These are the things I am working with, and what it basically means is that there is an increase of intensity. Interestingly, most people felt really relaxed once they were inside the piece. Once the performers had a certain routine, they acted more like stewards or stewardesses who guided you, which led to an easy acceptance by the audience. When people where in the piece the questions tended to recede; it is only once they came out and asked themselves what had happened that the questions reappeared. I think it actually made it easy for the visitors—only entering it was difficult.

CG: I'd like to stay with the question of criteria a little longer. Saying that New Music is precisely the place where criteria are questioned or subverted only works within a certain frame that remains stable. Even questioning the frame somehow remains within it because it calls for a revision of its criteria, not criteria in

general. When you move between institutions like you do, these criteria or meta-criteria become a problem because you don't know what to compare the piece you are seeing and hearing to. That's precisely what makes it interesting because it really confronts the audience with this problem.

We all know the situation where people from the performance world come to a concert and find it uninteresting because for them 'nothing happened', just some people playing music, and on the other hand people from the music scene going to performances that use music and then disregarding the performative dimension and listening to the music formally, also finding it uninteresting. You systematically produced such a clash of norms and modes of attention.

HS: Even though I don't aim at raising these kinds of questions, I often had situations like that. In the music theatre pieces I did with Daniel Kötter there were people from New Music who said 'but there wasn't any music!' and others from the performance scene finding the pieces 'incredibly loud' when what they meant was a certain polyphony or just many things happening at the same time. For instance, *Kredit* [credit] is a chamber piece with three musicians and two speakers plus a choir on stage, and it's mostly very quiet but there are always many layers. A lot of people translated this into a strange understanding of 'loud', so there is some confusion there. The musical complexity produced a stress level to some people it didn't foresee at all.

Actually when I go to a concert or a museum show, even bad ones, I feel like the whole situation is so carefully designed and constructed that it is much less threatening than, for instance, walking through the city. Here I have to make all these decisions, choose what to perceive and how, etc. I find the everyday much more stressful than any art. Do I answer all these emails? Then I won't have time to compose. And if I compose I'll probably get a dunning letter from the revenue office because I failed to do my taxes. In perceiving art I have to make none of these decisions, and if there are decisions to make, they don't have such serious consequences.

CG: I don't mean that you're placing an excessive demand on the audience but rather that you create the need for a certain flexibility in your judgement. People might not even notice that as a specific challenge and just continue applying the criteria they are used to, never actually doing justice to the pieces.

HS: That's true, and I know it from own experience as well. For instance, it took me a long time to appreciate Heiner Goebbel's works for the stage because I found them musically so daft without even noticing what kind of interesting constellations he produces and what I can take from them. Recently I analysed Steve Reich's *Music for 18 musicians*, which I used to discount as formally uninteresting minimal music, with students in a seminar. What's interesting about it is not the constellations of pitches but other things that concern the institution. There is no conductor, which is really important because it raises the question of how to organise such an hour-long piece, what kind of cues there are, what ideas of

playing together, etc. It has a lot of very productive aspects, which I used to completely miss because of my own limited perception.

So when you address the frame and the institution it becomes a lot harder to process. I used to think that festivals would be happy about pieces that worked differently but found that they really aren't. For most of them, especially in Germany, it's a lot less hassle to have three more orchestra pieces because the orchestra is there, rehearsal times are set, nothing else needs to be done. You have to put a lot of extra work into doing something differently, communication included, which is a real challenge to institutions of New Music.

CG: What we're talking about aren't grand gestures of transgression but rather a kind of flexibility that doesn't take everything for granted. In the institutions of the performing and the visual arts there seems to be less resistance against this kind of flexibility because they're more used to reorganising and rebuilding. Of course it's not like there is complete openness on one side and complete closure on the other.

HS: Even in the performing arts there aren't many institutions like Mousonturm where you have this degree of freedom where there are all these rehearsal spaces, the technical team that supports you, etc. There is a different standard there: you have a certain space to yourself for a certain time, not a rehearsal room you have to rent on an hourly basis and then vacate again. And it seems to me that the people who work there are just waiting to be challenged because that's where the fun part of the job starts. It's really important to have a good relationship with the technical team because then they actually enjoy solving difficult problems.

That's actually similar in New Music: Doing *Good Morning Deutschland* at a festival and presenting it as New Music must have been very difficult for the communications team, but the technical team was having a blast. They could build radio studios and were really happy about it because it revitalised a certain urge to try things out. Wherever you are, you have to find accomplices for what you want to do.

Like I said, the reason why I don't want to write for an orchestra isn't because I don't like the sound of it but because I don't want to deal with the rehearsal situation, and I don't see why I should work with a group part of which isn't interested in playing New Music at all. It would mean perpetuating alienated labour, as it were, even for myself. I find assembling a coalition who really want to work together much more interesting, maybe including untrained people. This can turn an institution inside out rather easily. At least that's what I experience in those smaller, independent venues for performing art like Mousonturm.

CG: So there's a difference between challenging the institutions and challenging people. Instead of forcing something on them they don't want to do you assemble a different group of people, kind of like building ad hoc institutions within the institution similarly to what we talked about earlier.

HS: Yes, exactly. But it's the communication for potential audiences that only actual established institutions are capable of. I can do things I find artistically completely convincing in my hood or my garden, but without anyone who convinces others to listen to it and talk about it becomes very frustrating. Only in an institution there is an exchange of different positions and a way of framing it so it can find an audience. There is an alarming tendency of individualisation and solitude, artistically and also politically, and we need institutions to counteract that.

"Framing Europe"—meLê yamomo Interviewed by Theresa Beyer

16

meLê yamomo and Theresa Beyer

Theresa Beyer: Your research reflects on music in the context of global economies, colonialism, and patriarchy, and pursues a performative practice exploring these same issues. What does institutional critique mean for you?

meLê yamomo: In a healthy democracy, criticism is necessary. However, the consideration of how equal the relationship between the institution asking for critique and the people it is asked from is even more pertinent. I would then reformulate your question from 'what is institutional critique?' into 'for whom is institutional critique?' What matters most is for whom and by whom is the critique formulated.

As a researcher, artist, and activist, I've sat on both the institution and community sides. From the institutional perspective, I wonder how a (invitation for) critique is a defensive response by hegemonic institutions. I'm curious to what extent it is a social experiment in how far institutions can push their power envelope with the least wrist slaps from civil society. What might come across as a critique of an institution is often simply a statement of basic needs for equal political and economic rights from a disenfranchised community.

TB: In recent years, several important contemporary music festivals have addressed post-colonialism and diversity, with the awareness of these issues in curation definitely growing. What is your impression? How serious are these institutions about this?

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MY: I don't think European contemporary music, with its relationship to European classical aesthetics, is where paradigmatic shifts could happen. My decolonial research and practice reveal the limitations of the hermeneutic logic of contemporary European aesthetics. In considering the contemporary practice of *Neue Musik* for example, I see Europe polemicising itself within its hermetically sealed aesthetical and musical logic. Even when it purports artistic revolution, it lacks the epistemic humility to converse with non-European artists and aesthetics without relegating them as either foreign 'migrants' or exotic bodies and knowledge to be extracted. In this Eurocentric imagining, terms such as 'migrant' formulate colonially constituted roles, and expectations of how (non-white) bodies and the knowledge they carry exclude them from the institutional practice of artistic legitimisation and canonisation. In such an imagination, movements of bodies, ideas, and aesthetics are unequal: Europe is the centre where non-white bodies immigrate, whereas European aesthetics are imposed on the rest of the world by European ex-pats or philanthropic cultural institutions. Or when it does permit previously 'othered' bodies within its institutions, they are the ones who have successfully embodied the canons and aesthetics—as the trophy children of colonialism.

Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha calls this the 'metonymy of presence': An English colonial subject can only be Anglicised but will never be fully English. Through this lens, the empire will never recognise the colonised as a complete being. Rather the empire only sees the insufficiency of the 'Other' in its aspirational mimicry of the European 'Self'. Suppose we apply Bhabha's critique to European 'contemporary music' (a practice originating from and situated in German classical music tradition). In this case, contemporary music composed by non-Europeans and outside the central European aesthetics will only be a metonymy—an incomplete Germanified copy of the standardised German aesthetics.

Despite knowing that Europe's interaction with non-European aesthetics brought about the 'contemporary' in European art, these aesthetic developments operate within the colonial and neo-liberal capitalist logic. Contemporary European aesthetics is colonial because it extracts and usurps non-European aesthetic systems to produce its appropriated 'contemporaneity' which, in turn, it sells as a universal cultural necessity to the rest of the world (that simultaneously spawns more self-referential value and surplus profit).

TB: Still, contemporary music programming is more diverse than 10 years ago. Isn't this evidence that things are slowly changing, at least?

MY: I look at this from a Marxist perspective. Through such a lens, we can unravel the relationship and flows of power, economics, and aesthetics. Today neo-liberal capitalism has developed in a specific way: 'Wokeness', feminism, and queerness are usurped by capitalism. The latest mutation of capitalism generates market value and surplus profit from feminist, queer, or Black Lives Matter movements. Decolonialism is the latest edition to this. An entire 'decolonial industry' is now operating to generate social and cultural capital that circles back to cultural institutions to maintain and amplify their hegemonic status.

Classical concert halls opening up their stage for Black musicians or queer musicians are not necessarily interested in Black or queer artists. These curatorial acts often usurp the Black or queer body to perform a self-congratulatory act that reinstates their cultural relevance—while simultaneously policing. Usually, the marginalised bodies permitted in such houses or festivals are by those who have 'culturally integrated' into the canons and repertoires of these institutions.

What used to be excluded—other musics and sound cultures—may also now be welcomed in today's music programming. But they are merely added to or included in an existing canon that remains unquestioned. Hence, contemporary music perpetuates an imperialist stance in its refusal to consider other systems as equal.

TB: With your practice, you aim to reveal the power structures behind music, asking who is allowed to define what music is. You define a broader understanding of sound. What are the challenges of such an approach when you enter institutions?

MY: I am perpetually confronted with many colonial mechanisms, such as the constant need to legitimise myself within Eurocentric institutions. White male composers freely speak for themselves and their art. Before I could even get to the point of creation, I had already used half of my energy and time to legitimise my presence, my work, and my being. I have to justify my brown queer body and my embodied archive of aesthetics and practices—made illegible and invisible through the white and heteronormative lens of Western history and institutions.

The institutionalisation of music, theatre, and art is Eurocentric and, thus, imperial projects. As a project, its intellectual labour invested in the standardisation of aesthetics that privileged the male bourgeois able, cis, straight white European. Throughout my childhood and early adulthood, despite studying and embodying an academic appreciation of European music, I always felt alienated by its repertoire. It would take several more decades, after a Masters, a PhD, and a postdoctoral project, that I would understand that my discomfort was less about my intellectual or artistic flaws in relation to the canon. Rather, this was an experience of epistemic violence. Not only am I demanded to think and feel inadequate to the 'universalised' subjectivity of this canonised repertoire, but as an artist I am punished for having my artistic failure equated to my inability to embody a hegemonic identity—the very identity which oppresses my queer and racialised being.

These conditions led me to a paradigm shift in my thinking and practice. I decided to bring my artistic and intellectual work outside the disciplines of music and theatre. I now purposefully situate my thinking and practice in performance and sound. Within these epistemological spaces, I strive to find new praxes of performativity, listening, social dramaturgies, and social compositions parallel to or outside the European logic of theatre and music.

My decolonial method working within the sound discourse is a liberatory act to remove myself from the hegemonic framework of music. I think about the

multiplicities of sound practices without the need for polemics or defensiveness from music's imperialism. So, to circle back to the topic of our conversation, I see 'contemporary music' as just one province among the multitude of sound cultures.

TB: Is this one of the reasons why you decided to go to a university instead of a conservatory when you came to Europe?

MY: Before coming to Europe, I already studied theatre and music in art school and completed a BA in Art Studies. I came to Europe to study for a university MA through a scholarship from the EU. After that degree, I wanted to further study music composition or opera directing in an art school. However, as a self-funded student from the Philippines without income, I could not afford it. But also, 15 years ago, the aesthetics of most European art schools and the type of students they attract and recruit were far from my artistic and biographical profile.

I was, however, offered a funded PhD position in Munich, which I accepted. My focus shifted towards academic research. This opened up a different way of looking at music, theatre, and the arts. But it also put me on another career rail track. Back then, I thought I had left behind my artistic practice. It took me several years before I circled back. And it would take a while to realise that the two paths I followed would merge and open up new roads. Retrospectively, I am grateful that I did not go to an art school. If I had done that, my studies would have imposed on me the canons that had to be replicated, and trained me to commit to its institutional hierarchies that I would have been expected to climb up and symbolically preserve.

TB: You mean the hierarchy of how to build an artistic career?

MY: In continental Europe, artistic careers are shaped by training institutions that prepare you for the production needs of concert halls, theatres, museums—the cultural institutions, or from a neo-liberal capitalist perspective: industries.

The contemporary development in art schools and art institutions is entangled with the economic shifts of the twenty-first century—where efficiency, low investment/high profit philosophy becomes the rule perpetuating a self-serving industry. Students are trained for skills that replicate the canon and that are useful to the standardised repertoire—which means critical thinking (towards the institutions) would not be encouraged.

Institutionalised degree-granting schools train students in the profession of acquiring privileges (degrees, awards, and institutional affiliations). To stay in this career, one must learn to collect as much privilege within the institution as possible. This obfuscates how these institutions and their practices are intertwined with centuries-old epistemologically violent constructions and modes of operation.

TB: What role do these constructions play in the political and economic situation of the present?

MY: When neo-liberalism prioritises efficiency, it means relying on the status quo. When institutions' artistic and curatorial programming is dependent on 'market-safe' productions, it perpetuates the trap of colonialism, patriarchy, racism, and classism. This, in turn, informs the training provided in art schools that are also pressed to design efficient syllabi that is complementary to the needs of the market. If we consider that an art career is about collecting privileges, this means that diversity in student recruitment and artistic programming is less about the diversification of aesthetics and new perspectives, but rather a diversification of the market. Art education and art institutions maintain the imperial regime by reinforcing the dominant canons and aesthetics by recruiting 'diverse' students and performers as the industry's new labourers and prospective market of the dominant repertoire.

TB: How does this relate to your own discursive position? Would you agree that constantly experiencing borders and exclusions lead to critique becoming an embodied practice?

MY: I am a post-migrant Filipino-Dutch person. I was born, raised, and educated until my Bachelor's degree in the Philippines. I moved to Europe 14 years ago for graduate studies and have since lived and worked in the Netherlands and Germany. Having a hyphenated position, I constantly ask myself: Where are my privileges? And where are my marginalisations? We all have the coloniser and the colonised within us. How do both roles play out within me? In her famous essay from 1988, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asked: 'Can the subaltern speak?' The short of her answer is no. To hear the subaltern means that they already speak the language of the empire and have ceased to be subaltern. I critically reflect on my flawed positionality in how I speak about my decolonial work in the language of the empire.

TB: Would you go so far as to say that the patriarchal, colonial system has made you an ally?

MY: I will respond to this question with an analogy from the tech industry. Silicon Valley tech companies employ the very hackers that reveal the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of these multinational corporations' systems. Paradoxically, the expertise of the hackers is utilised to make the very systems that they are breaking better. In my work, I have to be aware of this potential to be instrumentalised. When a festival or an institution invites me and my art or research, am I just then hired as a 'hacker'? When I criticise the hegemonic system, am I then complicit in making the same system stronger? This makes me extremely careful in choosing whom to collaborate with.

TB: In Ballhaus Naunynstraße in Berlin, you host your own festival and concert series called Decolonial Frequencies, where you decide with whom you collaborate. The theatre is a safe space where nobody has to legitimise themselves, a space dedicated to the perspectives of queer people, artists of colour, and

post-migrant experiences. How do you address the issue of framing when you are the curator?

MY: The agenda to engage sound cultures more democratically and in a decolonial way is the driving impetus for the Decolonial Frequencies Festival. The festival was intended to serve as a laboratory to practise and experiment with different decolonial strategies and methodologies through soundings and listening.

I strive to give my collaborating artists as much autonomy as possible. I want them to honestly criticise me as a curator. They should be able to tell me when they think I am trying to frame them. The goal is not to extract their knowledge for my gain. We reflected together on how their practice might be subjected to translation for white legibility or to be objectified as ethnographic subjects to be catalogued.

TB: What would happen if you did the same series in another venue?

MY: The issue of legitimisation, white gaze, and performative expectations consciously or subconsciously come into operation. Even at Ballhaus Naunynstraße, the relational dynamics shift as soon as a white male body comes in during rehearsals. But I'm curious to find other spaces and contexts where such practice and experiment could transpire.

TB: Do you think these spaces can have an impact on bigger institutions and initiate change? Where would you place Ballhaus Naunynstraße in the institutional matrix?

MY: Ballhaus Naunynstraße opens up a space and working condition that avoids the default modus operandi of white institutions. In the work that I do there, conventional expectations and categories of success are postponed: Feminist, queer and decolonial positions require space and context to fail—over and over again. Ballhaus Naunynstraße is one of the places where we strive to create such a safe space.

TB: I would like to come back to one point: You said that it is not your objective to make the artists participating in Decolonial Frequencies Festival legible for the white European audience. Why do you feel this is a risk?

MY: First, I'd like to distinguish between the white gaze and the European audience. The white gaze is not necessarily a white body perceiving. The white gaze can be internalised even by racialised minorities. Hollywood and classical music institutions embedded this white gaze in all of us through colonial education. Secondly, not all European audiences are white. One of the persistent problems of the European project is it imagines itself as homogeneously white. This negates the presence of brown and black Europeans, who are constantly made invisible by white supremacy.

Now to answer your question: Critical theory has allowed us to identify, name, and analyse the hegemonic systems of patriarchy, colonialism, and heteronormativity. However, being able to identify them doesn't mean we are not within these systems. And it also doesn't mean that we are free from acting within these hegemonic system's scripts or social dramaturgies. Through our education, cultural upbringing, and socialisation, racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and ableism are embedded within us. We are complicit to it even as queer people of colour. We are programmed to perform for the white gaze and ear. We are historically conditioned to address such expectations. Conservatories and art schools train bodies to serve the cultural industry structured for white spectatorship. The careers of many women, queer, or racialised artists are based and dependent on this. As an artist, I have to be self-critical in how these systems are manifested in my practice. As a curator, I need to be mindful that the artists I work with and their careers are intertwined with the dominant art and music institutions that enable precarity towards women, queer folks, and people of colour.

Entangled with cultural institutions are the academic institutions that might also frame and usurp the decolonial practices of the artists within the anthropological gaze of academia. The artists I collaborate with and their practices could easily be extracted by the self-serving decolonial industry of European academic institutions. Maybe we have to turn this around by framing Europe and asking how these institutions can lead us to change.

TB: Let's turn to your own research. You have worked with archival institutions such as the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv. Can you say something about your experience there?

MY: It took me 4 years to get access to the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv, despite having a prestigious research grant from the Dutch government. Institutional archives are very strict gatekeepers who decide who can enter and who is allowed to formulate a discourse around the archival objects. Thus, archives as institutions are complicit to the canon-making and gatekeeping of musical imperialism. I have to point out however that this is already shifting. Whether this is because of the conversation that emerged from the research project and the festival, or because of the change of leadership—or both, it is good to see small changes happening in institutional policies.

TB: Many of your research projects deal with archives, their exclusions and their entanglement in colonial politics. Can you tell us more about them?

MY: In my project Sonic Entanglements (funded by the Dutch Research Council 2017–2022), I built relationships with colonial sound archives in Europe with communities in Southeast Asia. Last year (2022), we made significant steps in arranging the repatriation of colonial sound recordings from the twentieth century back to the source community. My new EU-funded project, DeCoSEAS (Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives), is a consortium between partners

in the Netherlands, France, UK, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Laos that aims to reexamine the flows of knowledge productions and conversations on sonic heritage. In this project, three key points inform our decolonial intervention into sound and music archives: *Access* to the cultural materials is the first tiny step to decolonising the archives and the history of sound and music. The paradigmatic shift towards true decolonisation begins with the transfer of *Agency* in the access and use of these materials to the stakeholders of heritage and, therefore, towards the reshaping of *Discussion* on the topic from the community's perspective. DeCoSEAS facilitates the discussion between different stakeholders in the Global South, supports Southeast Asian stakeholders' agenda towards the claim and reframing of colonial archives, and opens the discussion between former colonial capitals in a transregional collaborative effort to decolonise.

TB: This change of perspectives and the active exposure and deconstruction of colonial power relations seems to be crucial to your performances as well as your research. Your PhD was about theatre and music in Southeast Asia in the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. What learnings from that research shape your work with archives today?

MY: During my doctoral research, I learned (in a painful way) how the archives work. I was looking for musicians in nineteenth-century colonial Southeast Asia, and I was consulting the colonial archives in Singapore, Hanoi, Manila, Jakarta, and Bangkok. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, international communication, intercontinental travel, and the global economic system were transforming. Touring opera, theatre, and music companies were crossing oceans with unprecedented ease. As early as 1867, travelling Italian companies advertised entire opera seasons staged in local theatres in colonial Manila and Jakarta (back then called Batavia). In the archives, I could find the names of the European musicians but not necessarily the locals. While exploring the different sections of the archives in Singapore, I eventually found local musicians and theatre performers recorded reports within the police and fire departments.

TB: Why there?

MY: Before the electrification of cities, the music halls were highly flammable because they used candles for lighting. Musicians, ensembles, and performing troupes were required to submit the names of performers and programmes to the police and fire departments to secure performance permits. During the performance, police officers and firefighters were deployed to concert halls and theatres in case of social disorder or fire. I realised that then, as now, to understand where the colonised are, one must learn how to think like the colonisers. This double consciousness helps me understand the system today.

TB: Your example shows how the West sets a frame about what goes into an archive, resulting in the subaltern remaining invisible.

MY: This colonial social order reflected in the archives left legacies in the organisation of our contemporary world. The twentieth century was preoccupied with stricter drawings of territorial borders, migration bureaucracies, and passport and visa systems—all in the name of the modern nation-state project. Consequentially, artistic, cultural, and humanistic disciplines were built in support of the nation-state. Histories are written from the national perspective: German history, Dutch history, Filipino history, and Indonesian history.

Archives, universities, concert halls, and opera houses are legitimising institutions of the nation-state. Historians, scholars, and programmers build a historiography and cultural ideology around what were included in the archives and canonised by institutions. When music and art histories were standardised in the twentieth century, the legacies of empire and modern states circumscribed the narrative. In my research on the nineteenth century, I found archival traces of 'Manila musicians' travelling all over the Asia Pacific before their Filipino identity was established. (The Philippine Republic would only be recognised internationally in 1946.) This means they were not recorded as 'Filipinos', so they disappeared in the archival system.

Non-European migrant artists have disappeared from history. Filipino historians cannot write about them because they are not in the national archives of the Philippines. Concomitantly, Singaporean, Indonesian, Chinese, or Japanese historians, who might come across their records in other national archives, will not write about them because they don't contribute to the national narrative.

TB: Is there such a thing as decolonial aesthetics?

MY: We must remind ourselves that colonialism is a project that has spanned at least four centuries. It was built with financial, political, and cultural capital sponsored by monarchs, churches, nations, and empires. These value systems are deeply embedded in cultural and social institutions that form intergenerational habitus. Our aesthetics—our habits of perceiving, thinking, and feeling—is the product of centuries of institutional investments. Our current (institutional) aesthetics is a product of centuries of failures and selectivity in the service of the status quo.

Decolonial positions never had institutional support. They never had the support of powerful institutions the way classical music always did. I invite us to think about practices that do not put the 'colonial' at the centre—whether as an imposed influence, agenda to collude with, or structure to be polemical to. How can we listen and hold the space for indigenous practices that are not legible to the cultural industry? Here, I am aware of the romanticising tendency of pre-colonial fantasies that urban decolonial thinkers, like me, tend to fabulate. To be mindful of practices outside of and purposefully concealed from the imperial matrix, think about how street or queer culture has hidden itself from oppressive regimes. And to consider emergent practices that are yet trying to articulate themselves outside the dominant canon, repertoire, and institutions.

TB: In that sense it seems impossible to clearly distinguish between politics and aesthetics.

MY: For me, there is no distinction between doing aesthetic work and doing political work. Aesthetics is the affective consolidation of politics, social relations, cultural symbols, and economics. This unity, whose parts are not easily identifiable by language or reason, forms our perception of what is beautiful. Those who make such distinctions hold systemic privileges to legitimise art that supports their ideology, and to delegitimise practices that are offensive or purposeless to the power structure.

Here lies the critical question: how can we open up new aesthetics? And by aesthetics, I don't mean this as the normative means of consuming affective experiences that cultural institutions have standardised. I refer to aesthetics as an individual but also a collective understanding and ordering of the world through feelings. How can we account for the struggle of the fabric maker from Vietnam who contributes to the costumes onstage? Or the pained experiences of the children cobalt-miners that make possible the use of battery-powered stage equipment in a concert? The legacy of colonial aesthetics is typically embodied by the proscenium stage, which hides the labour from the frame that displays the pleasurable elements. Thus, institutions are complicit in these concealing and erasures.

Institutional aesthetics begins with knowledge about how to write a grant application. And it goes all the way to the material realisation of a fictitious world onstage—through human labour, copyright, rentals, and ticket sales. In this sense, institutional aesthetics conventionally support the bourgeoisie, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and white values. Thus, in this framework, my intellectual and artistic labour of imagining a world outside such normative systems is never just aesthetic but patently political.

TB: *meLê yamomo*, I ask you my last question with the risk of hiring you as a hacker: Where should institutions start in order to really open up politically and aesthetically? Or, using the analogy from the beginning of our interview: How do we break the frame?

MY: I am not paid for this interview, Theresa. The knowledge situated in my intellectual work, artistic practice, and political struggle wasn't hired. I do not offer bite-size, easily digestible answers or solutions to century-old systemic problems. But opening up the conversation, like this one that we are having, is an important step towards better understanding.

Oppressive frames will always be replaced by another oppressive system, says a friend of mine. In replacing the framework, it is not the question of what. Decolonialisation, feminism, or queerness is not a question of what or who. Decolonisation is a method. It asks the question of how and why. The way that hegemonic systems and neo-liberal capitalism is entangled with academic, artistic, and cultural institutions, liberatory practices will not come from these institutions.

Utopias are imagined outside of institutions, and sometimes they are co-opted within the institutions.

From the decolonial perspective, the ordering of systems, institutions, relations, and emotional experiences confronts us with questions of reimagining futures. How do we re-assemble sounds, spaces, people, and feelings into a horizon of a world that brings together beauty, joy, disgust, and pain from the violent past, towards our aspired utopias? How can we consolidate aesthetics outside and beyond the European institutional formulation—towards a new hermeneutic logic that is truly egalitarian and democratic?