

Neoliberalism and the Musical Entrepreneur

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Abstract

In 2012, the flutist Claire Chase, founder of the International Contemporary Ensemble, received a MacArthur Award for her work as an “arts entrepreneur and flutist.” The award’s emphasis on Chase’s entrepreneurship reflects the growing demand among classical musicians, educators, and critics for self-driven musical projects, promoted as an engine of classical music’s concert culture and as crucial to its renewal in the United States. Entrepreneurship curricula are now in place at almost every music school in the country.

In this article, I offer a critique of the increasingly institutionalized push for musical entrepreneurship, demonstrating that it is rooted in the discourse and ideals of neoliberalism. Drawing on scholarship by economist Guy Standing and political theorist Wendy Brown, I analyze the discourse supporting musical entrepreneurship training, demonstrating the ways it advances neoliberal values through the association of “freedom” and “innovation” with the dismantling of collectivity and valorization of precarious labor structures. This discourse produces an expectation of radical self-sufficiency throughout U.S. society, across multiple economic sectors and including non-economic areas of life. I argue that musical entrepreneurship training serves not as a progressive alternative to other forms of musical career building, but instead habituates musicians to precariousness and insecurity through its rhetoric and institutional endorsement.

In the fall of 2012, the flutist Claire Chase, founder of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) received a MacArthur Award. Musicians are generally well represented among the recipients of these so-called “genius grants”—previous music Fellows include the composer and scholar George Lewis, the conductor Marin Alsop, and the pianist and composer Jason Moran—but Chase was described in official materials and subsequent reporting as an “arts entrepreneur and flutist.” That a musician received such a widely reported and well-funded award less for “opening new avenues of artistic expression for the twenty-first-century musician,” as Chase’s work was also described, but specifically for her entrepreneurship, reflects the rapidly growing emphasis among classically-trained or -oriented performers, composers, critics, and music educators on entrepreneurship as an engine of musical life.¹ The award also demonstrated the extent to which the discourse of musical entrepreneurship has extended into wider public understanding of classical music’s

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¹ The complete list of MacArthur Fellows is available at <http://www.macfound.org/programs/fellows/>.

concert culture² and served to justify the further development of existing ideas about musical entrepreneurship.³

The excitement around musical entrepreneurship has been reflected in the reception of ICE and other emergent musical ensembles or projects, which have been extolled in the arts press and arts blogs for contributing to a perceived or potential renewal of concert music culture in the United States.⁴ The enthusiasm for musical entrepreneurship predates Chase's MacArthur award by several years, but ICE—already highly regarded in contemporary music—has been especially visible in this area because of Chase's high profile in the wake of her MacArthur award. That award has also been a factor in spreading what has quickly become a gospel of entrepreneurship in the music world, disseminated online and via conservatory residencies and professional meetings around the United States.⁵ ICE and other new music projects that claim entrepreneurial origins are especially prized for their “innovation” and “flexibility,” attributes that resonate with the expectations of work in other sectors and are increasingly promoted in formal musical education.

In this article I explore the relationship between the increasingly institutionalized push for entrepreneurship in the arts and the neoliberal discourse and ideals that inform it. In examining this relationship (particularly in the years of entrepreneurship training's rapid ascendance, 2012–2015), I draw on labor economist Guy Standing for analysis of neoliberalism's economic configurations and outcomes, and geographer David Harvey for insight into what he calls the “manufacture of consent”: the rhetorical and discursive means by which individuals are persuaded to acquiesce to and embrace neoliberal policies and programs. I also draw extensively on political theorist Wendy Brown, whose scrutiny of neoliberalism as governmentality sheds further light on the means by which its ideals are transmitted. Additionally, I place the new entrepreneurial ensembles—which I will call “musician-driven” throughout—into music-historical context, demonstrating some of the ways in which they differ from their predecessors, especially in the economic and political conditions of their emergence. Ultimately, I argue that musical entrepreneurship training codifies and normalizes the radical growth of temporary or unstable

² I use “concert culture” throughout this article to refer to music, musicians, organizations, and practices that are part of the “classical” tradition and draw on its historical structures and practices.

³ See, among others, Anthony Tommasini, “Claire Chase Invites Young Musicians to Create New Paths,” *New York Times*, 26 December 2013; Allan Kozinn, “The Business of Music,” *Opera News* 78, no. 2 (August 2013); M. W., “Musicians as Entrepreneurs,” *Prospero* blog, 30 March 2012, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2012/03/classical-music#comments>, or one of the earliest, Kerry Miller, “Teaching Musicians to be Entrepreneurs,” *Bloomberg.com*, 28 March 2007, <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2007-03-28/teaching-musicians-to-be-entrepreneursbusinessweek-business-news-stock-market-and-financial-advice>.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, I am referring throughout this article to music that comes from the Western classical tradition, whose repertoire and techniques are transmitted through formal, often one-on-one training, and whose professionals largely come from formal university or conservatory programs. It is within those programs that entrepreneurship training is taking place most notably.

⁵ See, for example, Chase's keynote address at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music commencement, where she is in residence, in 2013: <http://www.pickstaiger.org/video/2013-bienen-school-music-convocation-address-claire-chase>, as well as her keynote for the League of American Orchestras in 2014: <http://www.clairechase.net/news/2014/6/7/claire-chase-delivers-league-of-american-orchestras-2014-national-conference-keynote>.

labor conditions in every sector of the American economy, and that despite being couched in rhetoric suggestive of progressive ideals, this training does not resist, but rather valorizes the particular precariousness of musical labor. Because much of the discussion around musical entrepreneurship takes place in journalism, and on blogs and personal websites, I draw extensively on online materials as primary sources.

Entrepreneurship has become a much-lauded model for twenty-first century work across multiple sectors and is generally defined as a mode of working based on organizing a venture on one's own initiative and at one's own risk. It is often presented as a welcome alternative to old-fashioned, hierarchical labor conditions—union shops in particular—and hailed for its ability to foster flexibility and innovation. In addition, it has historically been understood as a venture that creates material wealth. However, because entrepreneurship is so valorized in the contemporary U.S. economy, calling oneself an entrepreneur has also become a way of building personal and professional prestige. Its definition is increasingly elastic, and continues to expand to include labor and business practices formerly understood as occupying other categories of work such as sole proprietorships (in musical work, perhaps a piano repair business), or freelancing. This expanded definition is essential to the promotion of entrepreneurship in the arts, where everything from producing a concert to developing a personal website are considered entrepreneurial: in the case of concert production, it is self-generated musical work that fits the definition, while in case of website building, it is an effort to generate work on one's own behalf that qualifies.

This valorization of entrepreneurship is a corollary of neoliberalism. Given the extent to which this term is used both in scholarship and mainstream discourse, I will delimit its meaning and my use of it for the purposes of this article. Here, I use neoliberalism to mean a permutation of classical liberalism, one grounded in the assumption that the response of the free market is the most desirable, and neutral, arbiter of any undertaking. With its contemporary roots in the Chicago school of economics, one of neoliberalism's basic tenets is captured in Milton Friedman's 1962 book *Capitalism and Freedom*: that "competitive capitalism . . . [is] a system of economic freedom and a necessary condition for political freedom."⁶ It is this idea—that economic freedom is required for political freedom—that informs policy-making and discourse formation across multiple fields and sectors of American society in particular, and is a foundation for the spread of market-based values, often rhetorically conflated with "freedom" in both specialized and mainstream usage. Wendy Brown has argued against this conflation, particularly in neoliberal discourse; she writes that "neoliberal rationality reduces the meaning of freedom and autonomy to unimpeded market behavior," a reduction that has the potential to strip political, non-economic ideas of freedom out of the discussion altogether.⁷

⁶ Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 4.

⁷ Wendy Brown, "The End of Educated Democracy," *Representations* 116, no. 1, "The Humanities and the Crisis of the Public University" (Autumn 2011): 21.

In his recent books, *A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens* and *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, labor economist Guy Standing theorizes the emergence of a new class, precariously positioned in terms of security and political participation and characterized partly by its limited access to secure paying work. Standing links this emergent class, which he labels the “precariat,” to neoliberal economic policies and identifies four fundamental features of the neoliberal project: liberalization, or “opening up national economies to global competition;” individualization, which means “re-regulation to curb all forms of collective institution,” trade unions in particular; commodification, that is, “making as much as possible subject to market forces,” especially former public services; and fiscal retrenchment, the “lowering (of) taxes on high incomes and capital.”⁸ Of these four features, commodification and the curbing of collectivity are especially resonant with the financial problems facing classical music culture, whose primary “products”—performances and scores for performances—have never fared well on the open market, historically relying on subsidy, patronage, and other forms of largely voluntary largesse instead. Union orchestras in the United States have not been immune to widespread efforts to reduce the economic and political power of trade unions, whose economic protections of their members have been denigrated as standing in the way of economic progress, or as detrimental to workers’ “freedom.” Flexibility is especially prized in the neoliberal project; as anthropologist Carla Freeman has pointed out, “Few if any spheres of life appear exempt from the neoliberal demands for flexibility, from the structures of economic markets to the nuances of individuals’ subjectivities as citizens, producers, consumers, migrants, tourists, members of families, and so on.”⁹

Neoliberal economic programs and policies have a symbiotic relationship with the discursive processes by which their aims are “naturalized” in public rhetoric. David Harvey has demonstrated these processes, describing a “conceptual apparatus” that puts “compelling and greatly appealing concepts” of liberty and freedom into the service of promoting deregulation, individual “responsibility,” and unencumbered global trade.¹⁰ Wendy Brown identifies the rhetorical conflation of “freedom” with Standing’s four features as part of the governmentality by which neoliberalism functions and is perpetuated; that is, the naturalization that Harvey describes. Building on Foucault’s definition of the neoliberal subject as one who becomes “an entrepreneur of himself,”¹¹ Brown argues that “neoliberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life. It figures individuals as rational calculating creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for ‘self-care’—the ability to provide for

⁸ Guy Standing, *A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 34.

⁹ Carla Freeman, “The ‘Reputation’ of Neoliberalism,” *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 2 (2007): 253.

¹⁰ David Harvey, “Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610, “NAFTA and Beyond: Alternative Perspectives in the Study of Global Trade and Development” (March 2007): 22–24.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 226.

their own needs and service their own ambitions.”¹² The ability to “service one’s own ambitions” is particularly relevant here and is an underlying or explicit idea informing musical entrepreneurship training. Essential to the implementation of the neoliberal project are the imperatives to create new markets—often by commodifying non-market sectors, as Standing points out—and to habituate workers to instability. The widespread acceptance of neoliberal policies, then, has been partly facilitated by a rhetorical alignment between the market and its ostensible “freedoms,” and citizens’ ability, presented as a fundamentally moral calling, to fend for themselves. This alignment is crucial to the understanding of musical entrepreneurship.

The promise of efficiency and adaptability makes the neoliberal project especially appealing for foundering institutions or industries, of which contemporary concert culture is one. In concert culture, the entrepreneurial push draws on the “death of classical music” debate, a repeatedly renewed public discussion that takes place in journalism and blogs, arts councils and non-profit boardrooms, and that relies on polemics about classical music’s morbidity, or counterarguments about its robustness, for sustenance. This familiar discourse—in Charles Rosen’s words, “the death of classical music is perhaps its oldest living tradition”¹³—is not always well defined in terms of either the supposedly moribund object or its aggressors, but what is most often under discussion are the large institutions whose primary task is the preservation of classical music: symphony orchestras, and to a lesser extent, opera companies. While couched in broad terms as “classical music,” then, what is really perceived to be at risk is the financial health and sustainability of these institutions, which have in fact been financially precarious in the United States almost since their inception.¹⁴

On the other side of this argument is a counter-claim: that concert culture, and by extension classical music, is healthy and robust. This argument draws at least implicitly on the work of economist Joseph Schumpeter, who took Marx’s “creative destruction” and described it as a “process of industrial mutation . . . that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure *from within*, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism.”¹⁵ Creative destruction, with its valorization of newness and innovation, therefore underpins the implication that concert culture is thriving precisely *because* its existing institutions are being dismantled, with new structures rising in their place. It is also through Schumpeter that an expanded definition of entrepreneurship can be understood; he described capitalism as “an evolutionary process” that creates material wealth and argued, “The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers’ goods, the new methods of production or transportation,

¹² Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 42.

¹³ Charles Rosen, *Critical Entertainments: Music Old and New* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 295.

¹⁴ See, for example, John Erskine, *The Philharmonic Symphony—Society of New York: Its First Hundred Years* (New York: MacMillan, 1943).

¹⁵ Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1942), 83.

the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise creates.”¹⁶ In the Schumpeterian discourse that informs musical entrepreneurship, newness is a value in itself.

Entrepreneurs can therefore be understood not only as those who introduce wealth-creating products or technologies, but also those who propose new forms of organization, uncover or create new markets, or develop new ways of working. By this measure, a group like ICE, whose model of flexibility, roster-based membership, and cooperative leadership was new at the time of its founding, was indeed entrepreneurial—although its emulators are, by the same definition, less so. On the one hand, then, the “death of classical music” debate offers something to argue against—a useful foil for those claiming (implicitly or otherwise) that creative destruction, in the affirmative, Schumpeterian sense, is underway. On the other hand, if concert culture is genuinely threatened rather than in a process of renewal, then the “death of” discourse creates the perception of a need for solutions.

Musical entrepreneurship has become the most widely promoted, disseminated, and supported of these possible solutions. As a facet of musical higher education it has grown especially quickly since the global economic crash of 2008. More and more conservatories and music schools, concerned with the state of the concert music industry and the difficulties of obtaining musical employment therein, are developing entrepreneurship curricula in response. Representative of the entrepreneurship approach is James Undercofler, a former professor of arts administration at Drexel University and former president and CEO of the Philadelphia Orchestra, who is developing an M.A. in arts entrepreneurship at Purchase College (SUNY). Also the former director of the Eastman School of Music (itself an early adopter of this kind of career-building), Undercofler writes a blog on the widely read website [artsjournal.com](http://www.artsjournal.com), titled “State of the Art,” whose tagline is “ideas, innovations, and entrepreneurship in the arts and culture sector.” Undercofler describes the purpose of his blog as follows:

It’s time to stop whining about the current state of chaos, or decline in the arts and culture sector, and strive to find creative pathways to a healthier and stable place. Young people and young-at-heart people today are motivated to reinvigorate the creative process, and build new entities that enable artists to be free and productive. This blog site addresses these emerging creative entrepreneurs.¹⁷

This is David Harvey’s “naturalization” process in action, a series of rhetorical moves wherein the practices Undercofler will advocate in the blog (and on which, not incidentally, the Purchase project and others depend), are aligned with compelling ideas about “health,” “freedom,” and “vigor,” which are placed into stark contrast with “whining,” “chaos,” and “decline.”

In 2012, Undercofler wrote a post titled “Defining Entrepreneurship in the Arts,” whose purpose was to “clearly delineate different types of entrepreneurship, from individual empowerment to entity creation.” Undercofler lays out multiple

¹⁶ Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 82–83.

¹⁷ James Undercofler, “About ‘State of the Art,’” <http://www.artsjournal.com/state/stat-of-the-art/>.

entrepreneurship “zones,” one of which is titled “Making a Career for Oneself (and sometimes others);” based on interviews with Eastman School alumni, he describes the career in question as follows:

Here lies the ‘portfolio’ career, i.e., constructing a whole career in music with many parts, most of them created by the person, him or herself[,] . . . playing in a ROPA orchestra, teaching private students in a private studio or in a community school of music, and creating a concert series of chamber music. [Other possibilities range] from writing and arranging to instrument repair, piano tuning, church gigs, creating and conducting community music groups, and so forth.

I found that large numbers were happily engaged in these types of careers. These were true community members and leaders, making life better and richer on a daily basis.¹⁸

There are three things to consider here. First, the establishment of programs like the one at Purchase legitimates arts entrepreneurship, and not only through the practices and rhetoric of their curricula. By occupying institutional resources, they also preclude the development of alternative models or areas of inquiry and indeed make a search for alternatives seem unnecessary.¹⁹ Second, the career Undercofler describes is strenuous, requiring not only the development of multiple musical and non-musical skills, but an ongoing need for the musician to create and maintain his or her own opportunities, seek funding, manage shifting schedules and priorities among students and parents, and constantly juggle musical and financial priorities. Income in this portfolio career is not only not guaranteed, but is likely to fluctuate with little predictability. Again like freelancing, the “portfolio career” does not offer access to benefits such as health insurance, disability, pension, or vacation, and while such drawbacks are now a fact of life for many workers, they remain unaddressed in much of the institutional promotion of musical entrepreneurship. Finally, the reference to “community members and leaders” is telling. It suggests a link between an entrepreneurial approach to career building—again, to “servicing one’s own ambitions”—with a version of good citizenship, in which musicians are compensated for their labor not with reliable income, but with the intangible rewards of “making life better and richer [as community leaders].” Neoliberal rationality, too, links self-sufficiency to moral probity, which is meant to provide its own reward.²⁰

Undercofler’s project at Purchase joins a growing number of similar programs and centers, including those at Eastman, the Manhattan School of Music, the Meadows School of Music at Southern Methodist University, the University of Colorado, and more.²¹ This nascent field is developing quickly, and representative educators

¹⁸ James Undercofler, “Defining Entrepreneurship in the Arts,” <http://www.artsjournal.com/state/2012/07/defining-entrepreneurship-in-the-arts/>.

¹⁹ It is not only existing resources that go to such programs; they have also become fundraising opportunities in their own right. Two recent examples include the funding of eighth blackbird’s three-year residency at the Curtis Institute by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (2012–2015) and the fifteen million dollar gift to the DePauw University School of Music by DePauw alumni Judson and Joyce Green to launch the “21st Century Musician Initiative” in 2013.

²⁰ Brown, *Edgework*, 42.

²¹ The Eastman School offers the Institute for Music Leadership, which includes the Center for Music Innovation and Engagement (<http://www.esm.rochester.edu/iml/entrepreneurship/>).

are increasingly referring to arts entrepreneurship education as a “discipline.” As of September 2015, there are several recently launched projects supporting efforts to professionalize the process of teaching arts entrepreneurship, including three peer-reviewed journals; a professional organization, the Arts Entrepreneurship Educator’s Network (or AAEN); and at least one edited collection, titled *Disciplining the Arts: Teaching Entrepreneurship in Context*.²²

The idea of the “portfolio career,” which emerged in the late 1980s and is especially resonant with the ideal of flexibility, has quickly gained currency in this new field. In *Disciplining the Arts*, Angela Myles Beeching of the Center for Music Entrepreneurship at the Manhattan School, writes, “A majority of musicians create satisfying ‘portfolio’ or project-driven careers by combining various part-time jobs with entrepreneurial projects. . . . If musicians are flexible, creative, and can view their skills and options broadly, they have access to many more opportunities.”²³ The websites of music schools at Colorado, Syracuse, Johns Hopkins, and others, whether or not they refer to entrepreneurship, all explicitly promise to prepare music students to develop portfolio careers as well. For example, under the heading, “Why Choose Setnor [School of Music at Syracuse]?,” the website’s authors offer an explanation of how the school’s curriculum prepares students for twenty-first century musical work. Furthermore, it presents the portfolio career as a music-historical fact, historicizing and naturalizing it in the process:

Today’s musicians perform, compose, teach, and manage their own business affairs in what is called a portfolio career. . . . This is how famous musicians such as Johann Sebastian Bach also made a living in music. He had a church job where he conducted, played the organ, and composed and arranged music for each Sunday. . . . Whereas some institutions only offer a course or two in careers in music, we offer robust opportunities devoted precisely to preparing students for 21st Century portfolio careers in music.²⁴

The rhetoric used by these schools, and the curricula they have developed, attempt to counter both a narrative of aesthetic, social, or artistic decline—variations on the “death of classical music” theme—and the realities of a shrinking musical job market. Given those realities, it may also be intended to counter anxiety about making an investment in a music degree, and the schools’ interest in maintaining their programs in the face of that anxiety. Recent public debate over the purpose

The Manhattan School of Music has the Center for Music Entrepreneurship (<http://www.msmnyc.edu/Instruction-Faculty/Center-for-Music-Entrepreneurship/>). The Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University, which includes the university’s music programs, has a Division of Arts Management and Arts Entrepreneurship (<http://www.smu.edu/Meadows/TheMovement/ArtsEntrepreneurship>). The University of Colorado’s College of Music has established the Entrepreneurship Center for Music (<http://www.colorado.edu/music/ecm>).

²² *Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts* (<http://www.artivate.org>); *Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship Research* (<http://jaer.ncsu.edu>); *Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship Education* (<http://jaee.ncsu.edu/>) (this journal has not yet published its inaugural issue). The website of the Arts Entrepreneurship’s Educator’s Network is out of date but includes a useful bibliography available at <http://www.ae2n.net/>.

²³ Angela Myles Beeching, “Entrepreneurship and Career Services in Context: Issues, Challenges, and Strategies,” in *Disciplining the Arts: Teaching Entrepreneurship in Context*, ed. Gary D. Beckman (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2011), 140.

²⁴ Website of the Setnor School of Music, <http://goo.gl/NTNRlw>.

of higher education has made clear that a university degree is increasingly seen as a means to the end of “employability,” rather than an end in its own right. Parents and students who must fund the college degree may be especially anxious about employability. Language like the Setnor School’s has the potential to mitigate such anxiety, as it attempts to demonstrate that graduates will, “like Bach,” have multiple opportunities to use their musical and extra-musical training.

The portfolio career is also consistent with the growing normalization of self-management and non-hierarchical labor in other sectors. In their study of what they call the “new spirit of capitalism,” sociologists Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello found new values emerging in the corporate workplace in the early 1990s that emphasized “creativity” and “activity,” which overcome “the oppositions between work and no-work, steady and unsteady, paid and unpaid, profit-sharing and volunteer work.” The workplace emphasis on creativity, freedom, and worker self-governance—whether or not it is borne out in practice—has become widespread, with an increasingly blurred boundary between private and professional life and a “new form of meritocracy valuing mobility.”²⁵ These changes in values may suggest another reason music schools are emphasizing the portfolio career: an interest in demonstrating that there is far more to a musician’s working life than being a cog in the *tutti* machine.

Flexible, entrepreneurial ensembles like ICE, which has had significant success by almost any measure, are positioned as a viable alternative to concert culture’s most moribund institutions: its union orchestras. That orchestras have had trouble staying financially viable in the twenty-first century United States is well known. The last five years alone have seen labor trouble in Detroit, Louisville, and Honolulu; the first declared bankruptcy among the so-called “Big Five” orchestras (Philadelphia in 2011); both major orchestras in Minnesota locked out; and a 2014 lockout in Atlanta, its second in two years. The ongoing financial precariousness of union orchestras is often considered both symptom and cause of concert culture’s purported decline, again despite the fact that most orchestras have been financially unstable since their founding in this country. Nonetheless, the enthusiasm for musical entrepreneurship balances the grim monetary realities of institutionalized concert music with a possible counter-narrative that goes beyond mere survival to the idea of real renewal. Yet the economic realities of the entrepreneurial approach merely shift that existing financial precariousness from institution to individual—a shift that is precisely in keeping with neoliberal ideals.

I emphasize organized labor in reviewing orchestras’ standing because clashes between management and musicians are generally mediated by the American Federation of Musicians, and pertain to contracts that offer the kinds of benefits that originated in union workplaces: guaranteed minimums, generous health and vacation packages, and stable pension plans.²⁶ Robert Flanagan’s eighteen-year study

²⁵ Boltanski and Chiapello, “The New Spirit of Capitalism,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 18, nos. 3–4 (June 2005), 165–69. See also Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London: Verso Books, 2005).

²⁶ In another industry sector, film scoring, the American Federation of Musicians has attempted to protect its musicians from the growing threat of offshoring to places like Bratislava and Prague,

of domestic and international symphony orchestras demonstrates the difficulty of sustaining the financial expectations created by collective bargaining in an industry where “no orchestra in the world earns enough to cover its operating expenses; no orchestra is self-supporting.”²⁷ Given the association of self-sufficiency with worthiness in neoliberal discourse, it should be no surprise that such guarantees have fallen out of favor in the neoliberal workplace, where the emphasis has for years been on flexibility rather than stability, and profit-making rather than company building.²⁸ And symphony orchestras, with their resource-heavy core repertoire and union guarantees, have been anything but flexible.

In recent years, the aggressive stance toward organized labor that union orchestras face has played out in more visible sectors as well, notably in the 2008 government bailout of the American auto industry. During the 2008 presidential race, then-candidate Mitt Romney wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* titled “Let Detroit Go Bankrupt.” In it, Romney put forth some of neoliberalism’s basic tenets for the workplace: flexibility, competitiveness, unmediated market pressures. Among his prescriptions for Detroit were these:

their huge disadvantage in costs relative to foreign brands must be eliminated. That means new labor agreements to align pay and benefits to match those of workers at competitors. . . . Retiree benefits must be reduced so that the total burden per auto for domestic makers is not higher than that of foreign producers. . . . Companies in the 21st century cannot perpetuate the destructive labor relations of the 20th. . . . A managed bankruptcy may be the only path to the fundamental restructuring the industry needs.²⁹

This criticism was typical of the bailout and disregarded some of the larger issues that contributed to the industry’s crisis (such as high fuel prices from 2003–2008 and the commensurate decline in SUV sales), placing the blame instead on labor. What Romney suggested as part of a solution—cuts to worker pay and benefits, weakened unions, and a “fundamentally restructured” industry—all have corollaries in concert culture, where orchestral musicians have faced all three propositions repeatedly during contract negotiations and have repeatedly made concessions in the collective bargaining process. Musical entrepreneurship training, with its emphasis on flexibility, startups, and project-based work, suggests that the proper response to the decline of steady musical employment is for musicians to not only embrace precariousness, but also to further promote it.

Where organized labor has no influence, however, there can be no such labor disputes. Neither ICE, nor other musician-driven ensembles like Alarm Will Sound, Signal Ensemble, Ensemble Dal Niente, among others, is governed by a collective

where costs are lower. The AFM launched its “Listen Up!” campaign in 2014 to bring attention to this issue. <http://listenupnow.org/>.

²⁷ Robert J. Flanagan, *The Perilous Life of Symphony Orchestras: Artistic Triumphs and Economic Challenges* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 4. Flanagan carefully documents the effects of the Ford Foundation’s large stabilizing grants to orchestras in the 1960s and the tension that has resulted in the industry as a result of the subsequent increase in musician supply.

²⁸ See Pierre Bourdieu, “The Essence of Neoliberalism,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, English edition, December 1998, <http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>.

²⁹ Mitt Romney, “Let Detroit Go Bankrupt,” *New York Times*, 18 November 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/opinion/19romney.html>.

bargaining agreement, which is generally implemented only in an organization that has a discernible, codified distinction between labor and management. Most of these ensembles, by contrast, are organized cooperatively, with musicians undertaking both administrative and artistic tasks. Emily Wozniak and Paul Judy's useful "Alternative Ensembles" report documents eight ensembles in three different cities, with a goal of summarizing and reflecting on "the mission, leadership, programming, structure, and financial growth of the cooperating organizations."³⁰ But although the report demonstrates that these groups consider their performers to be "members," in most cases such membership has more to do with an artistic identity than a workplace guarantee, as members' tax and payroll status is in keeping with freelancing or contract work, not employment.

The reality of the portfolio career is that it resembles freelancing a great deal: both involve working multiple jobs; both require organizational and management skills and time (generally without additional compensation); and both often mean working many unpaid hours, or working for little money and no benefits. Freelancing and entrepreneurship, then, cannot be adequately differentiated structurally and in terms of income sources. But freelancing is first and foremost dependent on musical skills and the ability to be musically flexible and adept in multiple settings. Entrepreneurship, by contrast, is being codified as a set of non-musical skills whose mastery can provide the foundation for a *life*, rather than a living, in music, and one that (unlike freelancing, which is partly restricted to cities with existing musical opportunities) can lead to such a life in any location.

In the same way that entrepreneurship resembles freelancing reimagined for the neoliberal era, today's musician-driven ensembles have some antecedents in earlier new music groups. In the 1960s, for example, composers like Cornelius Cardew and Frederic Rzewski also founded ensembles that were flexible in roster and repertoire, emphasized new and experimental music, and rejected musical doctrine and institutional mediation. But there are crucial differences between those groups and today's ensembles, differences that are primarily political. Georgina Born writes that Cardew, Christian Wolff, Musica Elettronica Viva, and others "emphasized changes in the social relations of music production and performance in their attempts at a new interactive, collective, and nonhierarchical group practice. The social dimension of music was seen as a crucible for experiments in collective and democratic social relations."³¹ Such use of music as a site to produce a resistant politics, or for social and political experimentation, is also found in American ensembles that emerged in the 1980s, including the California E.A.R. Unit and Bang on a Can, which are otherwise often considered forerunners of today's scene. Yayoi Uno Everett writes that the founders of these American groups were influenced by their studies with composer Louis Andriessen, who, like Cardew, resisted the mediation of institutions and advocated a radical egalitarianism among composers,

³⁰ Emily S. Wozniak and Paul R. Judy, "Alternative Ensembles: A Study of Emerging Musical Arts Organizations," available at <http://www.polyphonic.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Alternative-Ensembles-Report.pdf>.

³¹ Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 58–59.

performers and audience members; in the case of Cardew's Scratch Orchestra, for example, musical training or ability were not requirements for participation.³² The collectivity that resulted in many of these cases was informed by politics, resisted commercial and media interventions and was in some cases, Born writes, "inspired in part by Marxist-Leninism and Maoism."³³

No inspiration could be further from the entrepreneurial path musicians are being taught to take now, urged to become the rational, calculating creatures Brown describes, with a capacity for self-care and a career-oriented drive. Given their surface similarities to earlier groups, particularly in their cooperative, extra-institutional structures, today's flexible, musician-driven ensembles are not without precedent. What does seem unprecedented is the level of institutional support accruing to a particular vision of concert music participation, and that vision's imbrication with dominant political formations.

These formations have come to dominate only gradually, but the changes over time are significant. Bang on a Can, for example, was founded in 1987, two years before both the fall of the Berlin Wall and the then-largest merger of media companies in history: that of Time and Warner. By stark contrast, ICE was launched in 2001, when corporate megamergers had become commonplace, and when U.S.-centric market ideology had been actively exported for over a decade through institutions like the World Bank and especially the International Monetary Fund. These institutions spent the 1990s pressuring emerging democracies to gear their economies toward free trade and free markets, tactics that were especially prevalent toward the former Soviet Union and East Bloc states during that decade.³⁴ Similarly, the terrorist attacks of September 2001 became a catalyst for American-led neoliberal market encroachment into the Middle East. Journalist Naomi Klein has documented pre-invasion Iraq and the Middle East as "territory that was one of the last remaining holdouts from the drive to build a global market based on Friedman's vision of unfettered capitalism[.] . . . The architects of the invasion had unleashed ferocious violence because they could not crack open the closed economies of the Middle East by peaceful means."³⁵ The far-reaching dominance of market ideals, often implemented by violent or coercive means, has gone hand-in-hand with their codification in the U.S. by discursive means such as the ones Harvey describes as naturalization.

That same dominance is inherent in the informal name of concert music's primary corporate model, the so-called "non-profit." Officially classified under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, non-profit suggests an organization that is not only geared toward ends other than profit making—the fundamental assumption about corporate structures—but also one that is not "self-sustaining," that is, whose programs do not cover its artistic, administrative, and other costs.

³² Yayoi Uno Everett, *The Music of Louis Andriessen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–9, 149–52.

³³ Born, *Rationalizing Culture*, 58.

³⁴ Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction."

³⁵ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2008), 413–14. See also Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction," 25–26.

Because it is unusual for non-profits to cover their costs through what is designated “earned income,” they must rely on individual donations, foundation grants, corporate largesse, and, occasionally, government support at the local, regional, or federal level. All such funds are designated “unearned income.” The money-raising requirement leaves many non-profits scrambling to cover even modest program costs. This ongoing process has been made even more difficult by the ascent of social ideals that posit self-sufficiency not only as a choice, but also as the most morally desirable choice. Costly organizations like orchestras and opera companies have fared especially badly in the court of public opinion when facing financial difficulties, their value to communities considered to be at least partly contingent on their ability to stay afloat without heroic measures—that is, to sustain themselves on the open market. In this context, the widespread emphasis on “innovation” among entrepreneurship’s promoters and claims of having developed “new models” for presenting concert music may be ways of distinguishing newer projects from the reputation of these larger organizations.

The irony of the “new model” model is that despite new approaches to presentation, new venues, and new organizational structures, the financial realities are often the same: concert music organizations (not just orchestras) cannot earn enough from ticket sales and other program activities to cover their costs. Consequently, many of the musician-driven ensembles either apply for 501(c)3 status on their own or find another non-profit organization to act as an “umbrella,” under which donations can be made tax-deductible for the donor. Despite the ongoing precariousness of musical non-profits, the lure of non-profit status, with the legal access it provides to philanthropic, corporate, and government funds, has not been displaced or replaced by any new organizational structure. Musician-driven ensembles may choose to participate in non-profit structures partly in an effort to shift the financial precariousness once again away from the individual and back to the institutional level. But if performers simply replicate existing models, it again raises the question of just how “innovative” their new approaches are.

It is true that outside the non-profit structure, musicians’ options for raising funds are limited, although since at least 2009, when the crowdfunding website Kickstarter was launched, they have had the option to make project-based appeals through social media. Sites like Kickstarter or IndieGoGo offer one possibility for securing funds, particularly on a project-to-project basis; the Kickstarter website reports that many concerts and recordings have been supported this way.³⁶ Although IndieGoGo and others function differently, Kickstarter works on a competitive, “tough love” basis whereby projects that don’t meet the monetary goal set at the beginning of the campaign lose all funds raised. These funding tools are well positioned in the neoliberal moment; not only do they place all the responsibility on the individual initiating a campaign, they also appeal to a powerful demand for consumer choice. By making it easy for potential donors to browse among their offerings (not much differently than shopping on Amazon or Zappos), the crowdfunding sites exemplify a process of commodification.

³⁶ [https://www.kickstarter.com/discover/categories/music?ref=home'featured](https://www.kickstarter.com/discover/categories/music?ref=home%27featured).

These approaches to funding artistic projects also operate at a far remove from staid, institutional organizations like the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). In 2012, the news that Kickstarter had facilitated the disbursement of more money than the NEA gave fuel to new arguments in favor of abolishing the NEA, a favorite scapegoat of American conservatives since Ronald Reagan's presidency. Ian David Moss of the non-profit service organization Fractured Atlas attempted to point out essential differences between Kickstarter and the NEA:

The NEA is a mission-centric public agency intentionally focusing its resources in certain directions to attain specific goals, whereas the strings-attached donations that take place on Kickstarter arguably have more in common with purchases of goods and services than with grants. . . . Indeed, to say that Kickstarter "funds" the arts at all seems an exaggeration; Kickstarter is a for-profit technology platform. . . . Saying that Kickstarter should replace the NEA is rather like saying we don't need libraries anymore because we have Amazon.com.³⁷

This analysis flew in the face of the exuberant reception Kickstarter enjoyed at its outset, when crowdfunding was perceived as a potential "disruption" of older funding styles. Once again, however, the rhetoric of disruption and innovation masked the reproduction and perpetuation of old structures and hierarchies. In the case of crowdfunding, it often becomes an agent of social reproduction, privileging the already socially connected, whose appeals are more likely to spread across social media and consequently get funding. Thus, despite the initial excitement about a new, "revolutionary" approach to arts funding, crowdfunding actually does very little to alleviate the financial difficulties involved in most musical labor.

Despite those difficulties, musical entrepreneurship has also been naturalized through a romanticization of its motivations and practices. Years before receiving her MacArthur Award, Claire Chase wrote about musical entrepreneurship on Polyphonic.org, a website of the Eastman School's Institute for Music Leadership:

Our generation of young musicians, despite the economic challenges we face . . . is experiencing an unprecedented freedom. . . . We can produce our own concerts, release our own albums, create our own communities and our own movements, and we don't need a lot of money to do this. We just need great ideas, we need a spirit of adventure, and we need each other. . . . It is my hope that this spirit of entrepreneurship in the arts will be one of the defining characteristics and contributions of my generation.³⁸

This is an appealing vision of a life in music, one that encourages finding precedent not only in Cardew and Bang on a Can, but with the DIY ethos of rock and especially punk, both of which are sometimes claimed as models and used to romanticize this type of labor. Chase sounds similar to bassist Mike Watt of punk band Minutemen, for example, who spread a philosophy of "jamming econo" in the early 1980s and said of Minutemen's beginnings: "It was about starting a label, it was about touring, it was about taking control. You want a record, you

³⁷ Ian David Moss, "Art and Democracy: The NEA, Kickstarter, and Creativity in America," 4 April 2012, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/art-and-democracy-the-nea-kickstarter-and-creativity-in-america/>.

³⁸ Claire Chase, "Entrepreneurs in Music—and Don't Forget About Mozart!" 24 March 2008, <http://www.polyphonic.org/discussion/panel/entrepreneurs-in-music-and-dont-forget-about-mozart-4/>.

pay the pressing plant.”³⁹ Similarly, composer-performers like Missy Mazzoli have formed bands and self-produced tours; the New Amsterdam record label is run by its three composer-founders; composer Mason Bates co-directs Mercury Soul, with programs of electronica and classical music in clubs and warehouses. These projects are promoted, and may well have been conceived, in ways that resonate with Michael Azerrad’s argument about punk: “doing an end run around the Powers That Be will always have an inherent ideological spin.”⁴⁰ And yet, while the entrepreneurial turn in concert music clearly started as an end run around the relative power of major musical institutions, the codification of entrepreneurship at the university level belies any claims to resistance. Such codification is precisely acquiescent to the “Powers That Be,” far beyond the negligible power of orchestras and opera houses. In addition, and despite any claims of affinity, concert music, with its roots in the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, is explicitly not punk. Azerrad documents the fact that Black Flag’s Southern California shows were repeatedly shut down by the police, the band and its followers perceived as embodying, and potentially releasing, anti-social forces that had to be repressed. No ensemble emerging from a conservatory’s entrepreneurship courses has yet engendered similar fears.

The quick and recent naturalizing of the so-called “sharing economy,” applied to companies like Uber and AirBnb, has also caught on in musical practice; a recent article on National Public Radio’s *Marketplace* profiled a Boston-based endeavor, Groupmuse, that refers to itself as “the AirBnb of classical music.”⁴¹ In February 2015, Groupmuse was one of four honorees in Fractured Atlas’s Arts Entrepreneurship Awards. Its financial model for paying artists was described as follows: “A donation bowl is passed around at every groupmuse and that money goes directly to the performers.” Performers are thus entirely dependent on the whim and financial capacity of listeners, a model that is difficult to reconcile with Fractured Atlas’s description of its awards: “By experimenting and challenging conventional wisdom, these four winners have developed new approaches to age-old challenges in the arts field that can serve as models and inspiration for artists everywhere.”⁴² An award to an ensemble whose financial “model” involves passing the hat once again raises the question of how new these “new approaches” are and certainly raises the question of whether such a structure should be emulated. But whether or not these new endeavors produce material wealth for their founders, performers, or both, Chase’s hope—that entrepreneurship would define a generation of arts practitioners—is being realized.

Historian William Weber has noted, “the history of musical life amounts to a series of successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurial efforts to make an impact on established tastes and institutions.” He describes the basic acts of musical entrepreneurship as “self-display—indeed, self-promotion[;] . . . an aspiring

³⁹ Michael Azerrad, *Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes From the American Indie Underground, 1981–1991* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2001), 6.

⁴⁰ Azerrad, *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, 6.

⁴¹ Tobin Low, “The AirBnb of Classical Music,” *Marketplace*, 25 September 2014, <http://www.marketplace.org/topics/tech/airbnb-classical-music>.

⁴² <https://www.fracturedatlas.org/site/blog/2015/02/23/2015-arts-entrepreneurship-awards-honorees/>.

musician had to make claims for him or herself in ways that went beyond conventional music-making.⁴³ This description is all familiar from the entrepreneurship advocacy of recent years. If musical entrepreneurship has been at the core of concert culture itself, as Weber argues, then its current incarnation is not, in fact, a process of creative destruction. Instead, it offers a contracted version of the institutional culture already in place: smaller concert series, temporary performance spaces, fewer administrators (thus reducing labor costs), but similar structures, without the sense of, or necessarily aspiration to, stability. Yet at the same time, some composers and performers who have been most visible in the entrepreneurial arena (that is, productive and high-profile while institutionally unaffiliated) are rewarded with the kind of stability, institutional recognition, or both that entrepreneurial training suggests is no longer a viable goal: positions on the faculties of major schools of music, publication and promotion by companies like Boosey & Hawkes and Schirmer, major commissions from institutions like the English National Opera or the Chicago Symphony.⁴⁴

Yet many musicians are working under conditions that resemble those of Guy Standing's "class-in-the-making," "the precariat," which has emerged globally as a consequence of the neoliberal priorities he defines. Standing argues that the precariat is not only defined in part by insecure labor, but by what he calls "precariatization—habituation to *expecting* a life of unstable labour and unstable living."⁴⁵ Precarious labor has become a way of life for countless (or as yet uncounted) people, and not only in the United States; Standing argues that it is "central to global capitalism."⁴⁶ How people make money in non-musical sectors under precarious conditions is resonant with precarious musical work, as captured in a 2014 article in the *New York Times* about the sharing economy:

In the promising parlance of the sharing economy, whose sites and apps connect people seeking services with sellers of those services, Ms. Guidry is a microentrepreneur. . . . In a climate of continuing high unemployment, however, people like Ms. Guidry are less microentrepreneurs than microearners. They often work seven-day weeks, trying to assemble a living wage from a series of one-off gigs. They have little recourse when the services for which they are on call change their business models or pay rates. To reduce the risks, many workers toggle among multiple services.⁴⁷

This description could easily apply to a musician's portfolio career. Although the applicability of Standing's class analysis has some limits with regard to trained

⁴³ William Weber, "The Musician as Entrepreneur and Opportunist, 1700–1914," in *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700–1914*, ed. William Weber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5.

⁴⁴ For example, eighth blackbird's Matt Albert to the faculty of Southern Methodist University; composers Ted Hearne and Andrew Norman, part of the robust "Brooklyn scene," to the University of Southern California; Mason Bates at the Chicago Symphony and now composer-in-residence at the Kennedy Center.

⁴⁵ Guy Standing, "Why the Precariat is Not a 'Bogus Concept,'" *Open Democracy*, 4 March 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/guy-standing/why-precariat-is-not-“bogus-concept”>; See also Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

⁴⁶ Standing, *A Precariat Charter*, 17.

⁴⁷ Natasha Singer, "In the Sharing Economy, Workers Find Both Freedom and Uncertainty," *New York Times*, 16 August 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/technology/in-the-sharing-economy-workers-find-both-freedom-and-uncertainty.html>.

musicians (among other things, musicians have a strong occupational identity), the process of precariatization is clearly underway in music training, music journalism, and widespread discourse about musical labor, all of which, in their emphasis on entrepreneurship, are geared toward the kind of habituation Standing describes.

In the past year, some of the original advocates of entrepreneurship have changed their language, as the term and its institutional codification have come under criticism from musicians, including those engaged in what would be described as entrepreneurial work. Composer Aaron Gervais has written about it on his blog,⁴⁸ and the pianist R. Andrew Lee wrote a series of columns on the popular new music website, *New Music Box*, including “You’re An Artist, Not an Entrepreneur” and “Claire Chase and the Winner-Take-All Economy,” which were widely disseminated.⁴⁹ Lee’s columns followed on Chase’s 2013 convocation address at Northwestern University, where she again used the term “entrepreneurship” to describe a set of practices and suggest them as a solution to the problems facing concert culture.⁵⁰ Music critic Anthony Tommasini noted Chase’s endorsement of entrepreneurship and her rhetoric of musical renewal:

Yes, she said, we read daily about the implosion of orchestras, the winnowing number of jobs for an expanding work force. But, far from dying, classical music is “just being born,” Ms. Chase said, with “new performance practices that put creators, interpreters, historians, educators, theorists in the same entrepreneurial spaces.”⁵¹

Yet within a year of this report, and within months of the mild backlash against entrepreneurship, Chase said the following in an interview with the *Boston Globe* in response to a question about that backlash:

I think there’s all sorts of misconceptions that there’s a model now of entrepreneurship. This thing that was precisely set up to be disruptive and can be quite radical is now a set of skills that you’re going to learn at an entrepreneurship institute: If you just follow these steps, you can be an entrepreneur! As if anything could be farther from the truth. This is where I actually prefer the word *activist* to the word entrepreneur.⁵²

Chase correctly points to the limitations of entrepreneurial training, as well as to the irony and likely futility of formalizing its practices. Yet the substitution of “activist,” another “compelling and greatly appealing” word, for entrepreneur, can do little toward undoing the processes by which musical entrepreneurship has emerged

⁴⁸ Aaron Gervais, “Why Musicians Aren’t Paid Fairly,” <http://aarongervais.com/blog/musicians-arent-paid/>.

⁴⁹ R. Andrew Lee, “You’re An Artist, Not An Entrepreneur,” *New Music Box*, 18 August 2014, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/youre-an-artist-not-an-entrepreneur/>.

⁵⁰ Claire Chase, Convocation Address, Northwestern University Bienen School of Music, June 2013, <http://www.pickstaiger.org/video/2013-bienen-school-music-convocation-address-claire-chase>.

⁵¹ Anthony Tommasini, “Claire Chase Invites Young Musicians to Create New Paths,” *New York Times*, 26 December 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/29/arts/music/claire-chase-invites-young-musicians-to-create-new-paths.html?_r=0.

⁵² David Weininger, “Flute Genius Claire Chase Brings Entrepreneurial Spirit to Boston,” *Boston Globe*, 19 November 2014, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/music/2014/11/19/flute-genius-claire-chase-brings-entrepreneurial-spirit-boston/Cc94cK9v4R42kE47LeaLN/story.html>.

and taken hold in musical institutions (and with which, to be clear—despite the widespread association of musical entrepreneurship with Chase—she and ICE have had almost no direct involvement). This process has progressed despite the fact that, as Dale Chapman has pointed out, many of today’s entrepreneurial musicians, including ICE, are personally “stalwart advocates of socially communitarian values.”⁵³

The changes being called for and implemented in the name of flexibility and innovation have had mixed outcomes. Some of the laudable results include an increasingly vibrant new music scene (and early music scene),⁵⁴ with new ensembles and concert series being formed annually in music schools and emerging regularly in cities of all sizes. With such abundance, audiences are more likely to find performances that suit their interests and budgets, access that could, in the long run, positively affect the wider concert culture. In addition, the collective aspect of many of these organizations is admirable. Wozniak and Judy describe the groups they studied as operating via a “democratic process, in which members choose to make both creative and organizational decisions together . . . and are given the opportunity to vote on major decisions, ranging from phrasing to programming.”⁵⁵ This suggests a mode of working that is genuinely non-hierarchical, a cooperative approach based on shared musical values.

Less cheerful results may include lower wages for more work, and self-exploitation, especially as musicians take on unpaid administrative work; as just one example, Wozniak and Judy report of Boston’s A Far Cry: “There are several [members] who put in about 20–30 hours a week of administrative work for which they are minimally compensated.”⁵⁶ The model of more gigs but fewer jobs will be familiar to most people working in an academic setting as well. In addition to short-term precariousness, there may be long-term economic differences between the portfolio career and unionized freelancing, as union jobs require a contribution to a pension fund and offer other benefits. Musicians not associated with a collective are often on their own with regard to long-term security. All of these challenges are intended to be offset by non-monetary rewards, including freedom, control, flexibility, and ownership, as well as the non-material rewards of making life “better and richer.”

Neoliberal rationality, Wendy Brown reminds us, is not only economic; it also “involves extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action,”⁵⁷ including concert culture. An ideology that calls for reorganization, lower worker costs, and an impermanent workforce clashes with the structures of traditional classical music organizations, which have relied on stable workforces with high labor costs for their artistic identity. The precariousness that results from this clash offers fertile ground for conversations about classical music’s demise and

⁵³ Dale Chapman, “The ‘One-Man Band’ and Entrepreneurial Selfhood in Neoliberal Culture,” *Popular Music* 32, no. 33 (October 2013): 467.

⁵⁴ Perhaps predictably, it is new music and early music that have thrived most in this model; that is, their repertoires lie outside of the large-force (and expensive-to-perform) orchestral canon.

⁵⁵ Wozniak and Judy, “Alternative Ensembles,” 31.

⁵⁶ Wozniak and Judy, “Alternative Ensembles,” 15.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Edgework*, p. 39–40.

an anxious scramble for solutions. In concert music, entrepreneurship has become the most visible and widespread of the possible solutions, and it has been rapidly and widely institutionalized in musical training, where it is often couched in a rhetoric of revival, renewal, and freedom, and without a great deal of institutional support for exploring other possibilities. This solution then becomes part of a feedback loop that is familiar from other industries: institutions and sectors are dismantled in the name of flexibility and innovation; those who wish to work in such a dismantled sector are consequently encouraged to innovate and be flexible. Ultimately, the changes being called for by the advocates of entrepreneurship, far from offering a progressive alternative to the musical status quo, instead reflect the very pressures that make those changes necessary.

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