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REVIEW

# Coolness, Critique, and the Neoliberal Classical

## *A Roundtable Review of Composing Capital: Classical Music in the Neoliberal Era* by Marianna Ritchey (Chicago, 2019)

Patrick Valiquet, Anna Bull and Simone Kruger Bridge

**Patrick Valiquet (PV):** My name is Patrick Valiquet. I am a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in Music at the University of Edinburgh and I would like to welcome you to this roundtable discussion of the book *Composing Capital: Classical Music in the Neoliberal Era*, published by University of Chicago Press in 2019.

I am very pleased to have had two guests with me to discuss the book. The first voice you will hear is that of Dr Anna Bull, who is a senior lecturer in the School of Education and Sociology at the University of Portsmouth. Anna is cofounder of The 1752 Group, a campaign and research group addressing staff/faculty sexual harassment in higher education, and was lead author of their report 'Silencing Students' in 2018. Her first monograph is entitled *Class, Control, and Classical Music* and was published by Oxford University Press in 2019. The second voice you will hear is that of Simone Krüger Bridge, who is Reader in Music in the Department of Sociology at Liverpool John Moores University. Simone has authored and edited several books, including the most recent *Trajectories and Themes in World Popular Music: Globalization, Capitalism, Identity*, published by Equinox in 2018.

The conversation you will hear is edited from a Zoom call that I conducted with Anna and Simone at the beginning of October 2020. First, you will hear ten-minute commentaries from each of us in turn. Then you will hear roughly 15 minutes of questions and answers, where we discuss some key themes that we identified in the book. After that, you will hear a response to our conversation that was recorded at the end of November 2020 by Marianna Richey herself. Marianna is Associate Professor of music history at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and I am very, very grateful for her generosity in agreeing to respond to us.

Before we begin, then, I would like to thank all of my co-contributors again, and I would like to thank the reviews editor of *RMA Research Chronicle*, Dr Sarah Collins, who invited me to convene this conversation.

**Anna Bull (AB):** I really enjoyed reading this book, and I was really fascinated by the case studies that Richey discusses, as well as the wider arguments that she draws from them. It's wonderful to see such an ambitious argument being made. There was a lot of intersection with some of the things I've been thinking about over recent years, and I'm going to focus on two of the key concepts from the book—genre and autonomy—as these concepts jumped out at me as being interesting contributions that she makes.

I'll start with genre. I find it really interesting that Ritchey names classical music as a category, that she uses that label. Until fairly recently, of course, it was normal to talk about Western art music, but more people are now using the term classical music, including sociologists such as Christina Scharff and I. I use this term as it's the vernacular term that the musicians in my study used when they were talking about the music that they were making. But aside from this common sense meaning, I think it's really important that Ritchey names the genre in this way. This naming does important work in relocating classical music in the cultures that produce and consume it, and in doing this moving beyond universalizing discourses, and recognizing that this is a genre that is located in particular cultures, times and spaces. For Ritchey, this is the US context specifically.

But although she names the genre, she doesn't actually define classical music. That's clearly a move that she makes on purpose, as she states that the book examines classical music 'as an idea and a conveyer



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of certain values that may help shape contemporary capitalism' (Ritchey 2019, 16). As this quote suggests, she is primarily examining the discourses around classical music. However, alongside this, she does also discuss the musical qualities of some of the works she's talking about, as well as musical practices such as labour market practices. But, in fact, many of her chapters discuss *contemporary* classical music rather than the mainstream classical music canon and its associated pedagogies, socialities, and institutional contexts. Therefore, one question I have, that we might return to later, is whether her argument is primarily about contemporary classical music, rather than classical music more broadly speaking. Certainly, as she points out, the discourses of classical music as universal and timeless are doing a lot of work to legitimize late capitalism or neoliberalism, but the actual music she's writing about is new music.

An interesting example to demonstrate these discussions about genre and the contemporary classical music scene is in Chapter two, where she discusses the so-called 'indie' classical scene in the US. This scene grew up in Brooklyn, New York from 2007 onwards, and it describes a group of classical musicians who have championed a particular kind of entrepreneurial DIY ethos. Ritchey points out various contradictions within the ways these musicians describe themselves. For example, they argue that they're doing something radical, but they rely on grants, institutional fellowships or prestigious connections with institutions to carry out their work. In addition, they draw on a neoliberal rhetoric of competition and disruption, but they reject the idea that music can or should do anything socially or politically.

Before I move on to linking this example with genre theory, I just want to point out the ways in which these contradictions sit in dialogue in interesting ways with Christina Scharff's (2017) book on early-career, female, freelance classical musicians in London and Berlin. Christina argues that classical musicians, particularly female classical musicians, epitomize neoliberal workers. Indeed, as she and others have actually pointed out, the 'gig economy' takes, not only its language, but also its employment model from musical labour, historically and today, where freelance-gigging musicians have been the norm for much longer than neoliberalism has been around. Christina's book focuses on musicians' subjectivities and argues that classical musicians exemplify the subjectivity of neoliberalism, in that they themselves are the product, they have to hide any injuries they might get through their work for fear of being seen as a 'faulty' product, and they have to disavow inequalities to pretend they live in a world of perfect competition. These ideas from Christina's work help to position Ritchey's case study within wider debates from the sociology of creative labour.

However, the point I want to make here is to link Ritchey's case study with ideas from genre theory, to show why it's important that she is talking about classical music as a genre. Ritchey rightly points out the fact that these musicians are coming primarily from privileged backgrounds. She also describes how this group of artists argue that they are working *outside* of genre or beyond genre. This, for me, is a really crucial point that I think situates this scene within classical music even more strongly. I've suggested in my book (Bull 2019) that we can theorize musical genres as forming what you might call an 'articulation' or a contingent connection with social groups, drawing on work from Georgina Born (2010), Stuart Hall (1985) and David Hesmondhalgh (2007, 47). I argue that classical music in the UK has an 'articulation' with the middle classes, historically and today, and if we make genre visible by naming it and describing it, then we can make visible its links with social groups. This makes it harder to make these 'beyond genre' arguments. Therefore, when the contemporary classical musicians that Ritchey is talking about argue that they are beyond genre, they're also arguing that they're somehow outside of the social, and in this way, they are disavowing their privilege. As a result, I'm really curious to hear more about their background and how they have got to their privileged positions as cultural labourers. To say you are outside genre is to say that you're outside of social identity categories, and it's not a great leap from there to discourses of being a genius whose music is a universal language that exists outside of time and space. Indeed, as Ritchey points out, this 'outside genre' argument also disavows the institutional structures of classical music education and funding that has supported these musicians in establishing their careers.

Overall, there is a lot to be explored around the concept of genre in Ritchey's work. A linked idea that I want to discuss is autonomy. This is one of the main concepts that Ritchey explores throughout her book,

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as well as discussing it at length in the conclusion. She defines autonomy in classical music as autonomy from the market and from market forces, building on earlier arguments of classical music as a space of resistance to capitalism. This definition of autonomy is different to the one that sociologists such as Georgina Born (2010) and I (2019) have used, which is that classical music disavows social significations entirely—not just positioning itself as autonomous from the market and from capitalism but from the social more generally. This distinction between the two definitions is important. For Ritchey, autonomy for the market means that classical music (potentially) opens up a space for critique. However, if we see autonomy as being disavowal of *any* social significations or social location, then it works against progressive social change. In my book I've documented how, for young people playing in classical music ensembles in the south of England, the idea that classical music transcends the social and the bodily, or is autonomous from the social or the bodily, means that it reproduces class, race and gender inequalities, both through its texts and through its social relations.

There is a middle ground between these two definitions of autonomy, as articulated by Lucy Green (2005). Green suggests that critical capacities can be made available by music (2005, 91) but cautions against making any assumption about how music is understood by others. This means we can't read autonomy onto musical texts, but instead we have to look at how texts become social practices. Ritchey does look at the social practices around music making as well as looking at text itself, and I think a real strength is that she combines these two approaches. Through this method, she explores the ways in which contemporary classical music, in the case studies in her book, is complicit with and entangled with late capitalist markets in various ways. She concludes by being quite positive about the idea of autonomy as creating, or as having the possibility of creating, a non-commodified space and therefore a space for critique. I do agree that it can create a non-commodified space, but where I would perhaps differ from Ritchey is by suggesting that non-commodified spaces in classical music are not necessarily going to be spaces for progressive change. In the research for my book, I found that, even though there certainly was some level of autonomy from capitalism, it was not necessarily a space for critique. I'd suggest, therefore, that classical music's autonomy may just as often create an apolitical space that looks to the past, to heritage and preservation discourses, rather than a space that is actively autonomous from capitalism. Whether these two spaces can ever overlap is an interesting question.

Overall, I'd ask whether this denial of the social—not just denial of the market but the denial of the social more widely—serves capitalism by, for example, obscuring the material conditions of production of music and obscuring the social relations of music making. I wonder, therefore, whether classical music's idea that it is autonomous in fact makes it less able to resist being co-opted by capital and by capitalism.

There's a lot more I could say. I loved Ritchey's arguments on innovation, and I was also really fascinated by the discussions of flexibility and specialism, but I will wrap up there and pass over to Simone.

**Simone Krüger Bridge (SKB):** Thank you, Patrick, for the invitation to review this very important book. Overall, Marianna Ritchey presents a richly nuanced critique, or in fact, two types of critique of the neoliberalization of classical music—the artistic critique and the social critique—on the one hand revealing neoliberal values of multiculturalism and urban renewal, entrepreneurialism and competitive individualism, technological innovation and human creativity, and on the other, highlighting social injustices and inequalities, violence, mass displacement and gentrification, labour precarity, commodification, and labour intensification, surveillance dystopia and drone warfare. Ritchey positions herself as a stern critic of the neoliberalization of the autonomous ideal (that is, autonomous from the market), or of neoliberal radical individualism. She argues that the autonomous ideal itself has been co-opted by neoliberal capitalism to ultimately serve capital. She exemplifies her argument through four extended case studies on contemporary male classical artists whose institutional successes and widespread critical acclaim is the very result of their non-anticapitalist ideas.

Yet in my review here, I would like to focus more on the social critique of capitalism. The social critique, essentially, has something to do with identity, inequality and difference in capitalism, which is constructed on the basis that 'capitalism is not only founded on but actively requires some degree of systematised inequality to function successfully as a system' (Ritchey 2019, 120). Ritchey refers to the feminist Marxist Silvia Federici, who has argued throughout her whole career that 'race-, class-, and

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gender-based inequalities are ongoing *requirements* of capitalism' (121). Ritchey particularly talks about new musicology, which somewhat ignored the social critique and often affirmed difference as empowering, which 'inadvertently reaffirmed the universal character of capitalism' (13), rather than actually challenging it. Difference is never opposing to capitalism itself and is used to 'propagate the *fiction* that capitalism generates equality and justice' (14). Consequently, the book analyses classical music, or some examples of contemporary classical music, within capitalism to consider how difference works in terms of race and class (whereby it is worth noting that there is less focus on gender and sexuality in her book).

Such discussions of identity, inequality and difference in capitalism resonate, for example, with Robin James' (2015) book about patriarchy and resilience in neoliberalism. James argues that, given that neoliberal ideology conceives of everything in economic terms, this has changed how gender and race work. In neoliberalism, the old binary divisions that were used to regulate, objectify and exclude have gradually been replaced by the apparent acceptance of all sorts of differences, at least at the surface, in what she describes as 'the new, supposedly more diverse, tolerant and progressive post-racial, post-feminist mainstream' (James 2015, 168). Yet postracialism, postfeminism, postclassism, etc., are neoliberal myths. James coins the concept of 'multiracial white supremacist patriarchy' to replace bell hooks' 'white supremacist capitalist patriarchy', and to describe twenty-first century globalized Western race, gender and sexuality under capitalist hegemony. I similarly show in my own book (2018), through numerous examples of global popular music, the way that masculinity and femininity, or particular forms of these, are co-opted and commodified by the neoliberal creative and music industries.

So, an example, then, of the commodification of difference that promotes these fictions of equality and justice is presented in Chapter one, on the work of contemporary American composer Mason Bates, whom she describes as a heroic figure, and who is said to be saving classical music's perceptions as outdated, elitist, sexist and racist by fusing it with neoliberal values like technical innovation, ethnic diversity and corporate-driven social connectivity, which the chapter explores in quasi-chronological order. Ritchey talks about the way in which people like Bates, or art music composers and performers more generally, are nowadays patronized by wealthy corporations, such as the Cisco-funded performance of *The Rise of Exotic Computing* in 2014, and that this corporate power over art deliberately aligns itself with liberating, democratic, innovative, inclusive and communal values. So, on one hand, it could be argued indeed that the use of innovative technology opens the age gap by drawing in younger audiences. Yet the typical rhetoric of bringing people together, while promoting, at least on the surface, the, what she calls, 'superiority of democratic collectivity to elitist isolation' (24), is more than just about identities marked by age alone, but also by race and gender, and so on. Ritchey concludes that since Bates' version of collectivity is wholly mediated by the market, it is merely a hollow one.

In this context, Ritchey also refers to class. Technological change has been a feature of capitalism since modernity, with the current buzzword of course being technological innovation, and this has consequences for equality and justice in terms of class. Technological innovation in neoliberal capitalism reinforces deskilling, labour mobility and free labour among the working classes (in other words, deregulation), which are desirable working conditions for the accumulation of capital. And, of course, the emergent gig economy means that 'workers must be flexible in leaping from job to job and adapting new skillsets so as to compete in a variety of labour markets' (67). The culture and creative industries are prime examples of this. In the British context, Angela McRobbie made an important contribution with her 2015 book, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*, which shows how the encouragement to foster one's creativity as a set of capacities or skills necessary for professional success is entwined with the rise in freelance, temporary and low-paid labour, and thereby advocates an understanding of creative labour as precarious work. So, essentially, home working, part-time and temporary work, job sharing, subcontracting, etc. all serve the power-holding classes to unload social security payments while reinforcing racial and gendered inequalities via the ethnicization of global capitalism, given that CEOs, owners, directors, etc. are predominantly male and white. Ritchey shows that these neoliberal values, enabled by technological innovation, are evident, for example, in the YouTube Symphony Orchestra project initiated by Google in 2006, in whose inaugural concert Mason Bates performed as an invited guest soloist. She notes in particular that the project relied entirely on unpaid internships and subcontracting.

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Another example of class-based and racial inequality and injustice is discussed in Chapter 3, which presents the example of a mobile opera in twenty-four cars in Los Angeles' Boyle Heights, and highlights the opera's neoliberal contradictions through the lens of gentrification and LA's car culture. These have reinforced racial segregation and the disenfranchisement of working-class African American and Latinx areas. So, to Ritchey, the opera represents the class and race divide prevalent in LA. She describes how audience members were invited to look at neighbourhoods and locations to appreciate their diversity and art. (By the way, she doesn't talk about Urry's tourist gaze, which could have been quite interesting in this context.) Yet in doing so, the project, in her words, 'inadvertently aestheticized and glorified the processes of gentrification that are currently displacing many working-class and minority communities from some of the areas the opera was meant to celebrate' (111). Ritchey suggests that not engaging critically with the ambivalence of gentrification, the opera project 'simply foregrounded inequality by aestheticizing the artist's colonization of blighted areas' (111).

PV: Simone spoke quite a lot about inequality and immobility, in contrast with neoliberal discourses of equality and mobility, but what was interesting for me was how projects that are nominally about deregulation and fragmentation have this undercurrent of state and institutional support, and really a broad network of institutions that play a huge role in making sure that these things continue in the way that they're continuing. So, in spite of the neoliberal idea that everyone can act as an individual, the way that things play out in real life puts the lie to that constantly.

I was going through the chapter on *Hopscotch*, and just made a list of all of the institutions that I found mentioned in that chapter. There was everything from neighbourhood organizations to art galleries, museums, the state of California, the city of Los Angeles, various authorities for traffic and housing, the MacArthur Foundation, and also various grassroots activist collectives, and then also all of the organizations that the musicians were involved in. So, all of these organizations—all of these, sort of, *non-individuals*—are working together to make sure that people appear maximally individualized. It really contrasts with the technological personalization that is in the foreground of neoliberal reform, things like iPods and Google glasses in the museum, and this normalization of fragmentation and polarization and worker displacement that we see, whether in things like the opera *Hopscotch,* or in the experience that has forced us all to be remote from each other today, this lock down configuration—all of this individual freedom of choice that is supposed to be afforded by a neoliberal personalization technology. So, it's interesting to see the contrast between the ideal of individualization and the way these institutions work, these actually really complex and hugely powerful formations that are beyond individuality and are making this possible.

Another thing that struck me about the chapter on *Hopscotch* is the close relationship, historically, between neoliberalism and deindustrialization. Beginning in the 1960s and '70s, when countries like France and Belgium and the UK are supposedly bringing their armies out of Africa, you get the image in the former colonizing countries that deindustrialization is a process of industrial capital fleeing in search of cheaper labour, when in fact what's going on is also more like industrial capital being newly deployed to do the job that armies used to do (cf. Bush 2007; Hanieh 2011; Goldstein 2012). And then gradually factories are filled with artists, art replaces industry in our cities, and the working classes are gradually fragmented and individualized. That process is really what, for example, Richard Florida's 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class* is sort of trying to turn on its head and make into something that managers can then get a grip on (cf. Krims 2007). And then there are also various ways that this has implications for people today, I mean it plays out in all these different ambivalent forms of urbanism, and ambivalent forms of engagement with the urban for artists. I was reminded of the scenes I saw when I lived in the Netherlands just over a decade ago. To replace the widespread squatting by artists and activists in the 1970s and '80s, the Dutch invented a scheme they called *antikraak*, in which real estate companies and municipal governments recruit artists and students to move officially into vacant buildings on temporary contracts, so that artwork and art institutions become a form of insurance *against* squatters moving in. For me, coming from Canada, where you have artists in industrial spaces but no official forms of recognition, it was interesting because it led to this culture of informal underground events happening in these vacant spaces but not building towards anything, accepting the possibility that any day they could

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be sent away, and that they were actually under contract to go away when they were told. So, for one thing, this is not a uniquely American phenomenon, and it plays out in different ways in different places, and it plays out in ways that are contradictory and have different implications, depending on the perspective that you look at them from.

I also was interested in how many precedents there were for the kinds of industry-sponsored collaborative participatory art that Ritchey wrote about, specifically in the chapter on the use of Beethoven in the Intel advertising event and also in the chapter on *Hopscotch.* I was constantly reminded of Robert Rauschenberg's work with Bell Labs and Pepsi and BMW in the '60s and '70s. These were massive projects, projects like *9 Evenings*, which brought together experimental music and happenings and conceptual art in the service of commerce. When it comes down to it, I would question how much the avant-garde and the neoliberal instrumentalization of the avant-garde are really separable from each other. The idea of 'knowledge transfer' being a product of art also comes out of this time in the '60s. And even there in the team of composers behind *Hopscotch,* I noticed names like that of David Rosenboom, too, who would have been involved in these first-generation tech-transfer projects, and clearly has had a career that spans the 'real' and neoliberal avant-gardes. It didn't always seem to me that I could make a clear break between the moment when these practises were authentic and politically critical, and the moment when they become co-opted. It seems to me that, if you look at the history, it actually runs together. While there were a lot of mentions of the privatization of the public sphere, and there were also mentions of the aesthetic concept of *immersion*, I was surprised that those two things didn't really get pushed together very much.

Boltanski's idea that we are seeing a transformation of the 'spirit of capitalism' really folds in a more shifting idea of justifications returning to recuperate things that capitalism had lost to criticism over time. In that regard, it would have been really interesting to see more attention to May '68, the appropriation of radical Marxist concepts by more moderate parties, and the factions whose work in France leads to the first sort of neoliberal wave of cultural policy, which comes with Mitterrand in 1981—and that, interestingly, is a nominally socialist government (Zamora and Behrent 2016; Drott 2015; Starr 1995). A lot of this theory has a much older history, and links back to nineteenth-century liberalism. Neoliberalism as a sort of 'school' of economics is linked back to economic theory at the University of Vienna, particularly the students of Carl Menger. We should talk, I think, more about Friedrich Hayek, whose work has been particularly important in the British context, particularly through the Institute of Economic Affairs, of which Margaret Thatcher was a prominent supporter, and whose supporters today include people like Michael Gove, Liz Truss, Priti Patel, Dominic Raab—and, of course, the late Roger Scruton was also a prominent supporter. (The Thatcherites, it seems to me, may be neoliberal in economic terms, but they are certainly not neoliberal in the aesthetic or social terms that Ritchey is highlighting.)

But the interesting thing is that this Austrian school of economics was also important in the theorization of the 'knowledge economy', which has become a central notion in neoliberal urbanization policies. It was Fritz Machlup, who was a student of economics at the University of Vienna and then moved to the States in the '50s, who first theorized knowledge production as an economic activity. His work influenced the more famous work of Daniel Bell, and Daniel Bell then also theorized sort of ends of ideology and racism and class around the same time. But the final point I want to make is that it is primarily Daniel Bell's work that Jean-François Lyotard is responding to in *The Postmodern Condition*, which was written as a report for the Quebec government's education ministry in 1979 on the impact of computer networks on the university system. What Lyotard is trying to do is theorize what can we do with the concepts of truth and equality, and what do we do with morality when everything is levelled, and everything is accessible.

PV: I thought it was interesting, in the fourth chapter, there was the musician whose work is used in the Intel ad, Kawehi, who is a Hawaiian woman working on a digital audio workstation, and who figures as the sort of ideal neoliberal individual. It struck me that she was not, as far as I could tell, making classical music. So, what is going on here? What do you think the classical doing for Richie?

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AB: I think she rightly identifies the fact that classical music's discourses of timelessness and universality are helpful for large corporations under neoliberalism; they give them a kind of a history, a legitimation historically and, most importantly, morally, that they would otherwise lack. But in terms of the music itself, she is not talking about classical music as I would identify the genre. She has a focus on innovation throughout, rightly identifying innovation as an imperative of neoliberalism. She finds that there is a symbiosis between that imperative towards innovation and critiques of classical music, in which all kinds of people have argued that classical music needs to change, it needs to innovate. I see the discussion as being about musicians and music that are rooted in classical music institutions, but the music they're making is characterized by particular kinds of innovation (and she identifies musical characteristics as these types of innovation as well). But I didn't see any of the continuity of classical music as a genre. For example, there wasn't much discussion of the canonical repertoire, which I would suggest is one of the conventions or characteristics of the genre. Where canonical repertoire was discussed, such as in the Intel ad, which uses Beethoven, it was not played as we would recognize classical music. Overall, therefore, the label of classical music is used for its legitimizing and historicizing discourses, but I think the music she is talking more about is contemporary classical music.

SKB: Yeah, I agree. I'd also suggest that the musical examples she chose for the book have been updated to reflect the current neoliberal structure of feeling or market zeitgeist, and I would perhaps describe them as *neoliberal classical music*. For me, the examples are classical in the context of contemporary classical music. What sprung to mind was that they could possibly be part of the avant-garde or experimental music or electronic music, as they share similarities and are all innovative in terms of the technologies that these artists are using. So, in that respect, the examples are contemporary classical music; however, they are just one type. What I found missing was a more representative palette of musical examples, to acknowledge other types of neoliberalized contemporary classical music. What springs to mind, for instance, is the hugely commercially successful violinist and conductor André Rieu, who could be thoroughly described as neoliberal, while performing a sort of 'soft' or pop classical music. He turned classical and waltz music into a worldwide concert touring act and is as successful as some of the biggest global pop and rock music acts. Yet Rieu is neoliberal in a different way than the artists presented in the book. He's uncool even, by presenting a sort of historically rooted, glossy, or kitsch version of classical music. Ritchey's artists are cool, similar to current hip hop or postfeminist artists in popular music, or the Saachi brothers or Damien Hirst in art culture. Yet even so, Rieu similarly reflects neoliberal values of individuality, entrepreneurialism, technological innovation, human creativity and elite-centred multiculturalism.

PV: There's a realm of coolness that she's dealing with that she's very careful not to let overlap too much with what she obviously sees as sort of 'authentic' avant-garde. I guess that I tried to get at this a little bit: the idea that there was once authenticity and we've lost that. She uses the term 'perverted', which I think is suggestive of how difficult it is to imagine doing without the myth of a purely progressive origin.

SKB: I agree, and what makes the contemporary classical artist neoliberal is probably the key question to be asked. I found an answer in a passage that she actually wrote very early on in the book, on page 3, where she says that these are clearly classical artists whose institutional successes and widespread critical acclaim are a result of their non-anticapitalist ideas. She actually describes them as being against the modernist spirit of critique.

PV: It seems to me that modernism is always at the front of her definition, the critical power of modernism.

It was clear to me that there's also a blurry definition of composing being used by these musicians, but in what ways is it blurred? Why does that matter? Are we using composing in the same way we're using classical music as a signifier of history and authority?

SKB: Yeah, that's an interesting one. I certainly think that it varies from chapter to chapter, although to my mind the emphasis of Ritchey's analysis is more on performing and experiencing, so audience perception. There are, of course, Susan McClary-esque music-theoretical analyses interspersed throughout, where she is trying to read neoliberalism or neoliberal features in the actual music itself, which shed light into compositional aspects, on the one hand, as well as semiotic meanings constructed through

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those compositional techniques. Even so, I'd say her main focus is on the live or recorded performances of the projects presented in the book.

AB: Just to add to that, the distinction between the performer and the composer is at the heart of the genre of classical music, according Christopher Small's and Lydia Goehr's work. A wider problem is that people don't define classical music. Whenever the term genre is used in relation to classical music, it's used in relation to subgenres such as the sonata or the symphony. So, if Ritchey is blurring the distinction between performer and composer, I would suggest that that's shifting the boundaries of classical music as a genre towards contemporary classical music.

PV: I was really interested in the frequent use of the term 'experience' as a site of reception. So, in the project *Hopscotch* I think there were six composers in the end, and also the way that it was performed was meant to include sort of unintentional performers, and so it seemed to me that they were trying to shift the focus there from production to experience. For the musicians themselves, at the level of production, the piece itself was supposed to be just a collage of experiences. That shift to experiences as commodities seems to me maybe paradigmatically neoliberal, and a certain privileging of personal experience has always been central to the way liberalisms are theorized.

If we move to the reading of capital, she's using the term cultural capital, and I believe social capital once or twice, but not referencing Bourdieu.

SKB: Yes indeed, Bourdieu doesn't feature much in the book, even though I read the title *Composing Capital* in a 'Bourdieusian' sense. Cultural capital has, of course, shifted since Bourdieu's famous study. So, while cultural capital in the 1960s and '70s was expressed through knowledge of the fine arts and conferred prestige upon the knower, today's cultural capital confers, and I'm quoting Tim Taylor, 'knowledge of the hip and the cool' (Taylor 2014). Knowledge of the hip and the cool is the source of cultural capital today, and what drives the cultural industries is the production of the hip and the cool. In terms of cultural production, workers frequently use the term 'edgy' to describe the sort of work that they want to produce, which, it is hoped, will be thought of as hip or cool by consumers. And in this context, Jim McGuigan makes an important argument that neoliberal capitalism is 'cool capitalism' (McGuigan 2009). So, the hip, cool and edgy is the new cultural logic of neoliberal capitalism, and the examples in the book clearly demonstrate this. So, it strikes me that Ritchey is clearly drawing on those ideas without making these connections.

AB: Yes. In the title, I assumed that she was using capital in the Marxist sense rather than the Bourdieusian sense, but the critique that you draw on around cultural capital does bring out some of the contradictions in this. Tim Taylor of course was writing in the American context, but more recent work internationally has looked at emerging cultural capital, and empirically it does seem that classical music and high culture still have value as forms of cultural capital (Bennett et al. 2008). As others have described it, there is still 'hierarchy among the omnivores', with high culture, including classical music, still retaining a form of value (Tampubolon 2010). But I think this question that you brought up of to what extent does classical music still carry cultural capital, and in what circumstances, and what does it do as a form of capital, is an interesting one to pose in relation to this book, because despite the fact that Ritchey's arguing that the hip and the cool are part of how classical music is being composed as a form of capital, she's then still arguing that classical music has these legitimizing discourses that neoliberalism needs. So, there is a bit of a contradiction there, and I don't think she comes down necessarily on one side or the other.

PV: We talked earlier about reinstating the value of classical music as a form of modernist critique. Anna, you talked about autonomy from the social as such as the source of classical music's power, or that this ideology is behind the way modernist classical music frames itself. What I found would have been really interesting, and where personally I think a kind of modernist critique is today valuable and relevant, is in relation to academic work specifically, and the work of musicologists and academic music departments in disseminating economic discourses amongst students, in modelling certain kinds of economic behaviour to students. As people who work in some of the most highly neoliberalized institutions, at least in the countries where we live, we, I think, have a responsibility to look at neoliberalism reflexively, particularly in the one of the most central classical music professions, the profession of the musicologist. As always, I would encourage a more situated critique.

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AB: Yes, absolutely. And just briefly, I appreciate her exploring the options for what an alternative would look like. I think that's a brave thing to do as a scholar. She didn't need to do that in the book, and even just attempting to do that I think is a helpful exploration, in recognizing that we are all always complicit to a greater or lesser extent with neoliberal capitalism, asking where there might be a little more space for expression outside of that, and thinking about musical practices, interactions and spaces of collectivity that might be different. So, having made my critique of her definition of autonomy, I still think that endeavour is a worthwhile one and opens up thinking about what we can do as well as critiquing.

SKB: Oh yes, I agree with Anna. It is an interesting conclusion, and a very brave one, that essentially addresses issues around social and democratic citizenship. Citizenship was historically linked to the welfare state during the mid-twentieth century and stood at the opposite end of market competition and profit, the inequalities of the capitalist component of society. Of course, we are living in the neoliberal or, what Colin Crouch (2004) describes as a 'post-democratic' world. Democracy has been thoroughly undermined by corporations to the point of politics itself. We're living in a world where democratic rights of citizenship have been lost. One could look at this reality in a very negative and defeating way, so in that respect I applaud Marianna Ritchey for suggesting alternatives and saying, 'Listen, we need the critique of capitalism!', and I absolutely agree. I mean, that's what we do in academia, don't we? We're revealing balanced perspectives on the ongoings in the music world, and that includes the classical music business. So, in that respect, I applaud her for concluding a book in this way.

Marianna Ritchey: Well, thank you to all three of you for engaging so deeply with my book. I love this format for a review, and I really also appreciate the generosity you're showing in giving me some space to reflect on the fascinating conversation that you all had. There're so many ideas that arose and that you touched on, and I'll try to just speak to a few of them that resonated most strongly with me and with my own continued thinking on these topics.

So, both Patrick and Anna raised some questions about the way that I treat and engage with history that I found instructive. Anna spoke about my use of the term classical music and shared some thoughts about why it's important to define it as a genre, and it's true that I chose not to define it specifically in that way in the book because, as Anna noted, I was actually interested in the idea of classical music, the vague kinds of associations and images and values that congeal within it. And since my book is mostly a work of discourse analysis and culture critique, I wanted to pull apart how the idea of classical music functions both explicitly and implicitly within particular contemporary discourses. And so, I agree that this creates a certain—to some degree intentional—'blobbiness' with regard to history. And classical music has a weird relationship with history, as I addressed a little bit in the book, because today it maintains some of the same specific attributes and values that also adhered to it two centuries ago, like the idea that it's more serious because it's more formally complex, or like the general ideas of abstractness and autonomy that still adhere to it. And yet, also as it has moved through history, it has collected additional values, such that now history itself, the idea of history, has also become entangled with the idea of classical music. Simply the fact of its being old is now part of the idea, the sense meaning or even the ideology, surrounding classical music, as I discussed probably most explicitly in the final chapter on the Intel Corporation and its use of Beethoven. So, the contemporary music I write about is entangled with, and has to negotiate with, the concept of history itself in a way that actual 200-year-old classical music wasn't and didn't. So yeah, I think my argument is particularly about contemporary classical music, although I'm interested in what this music meant in the past as well. Like Anna, I'm very interested in the ways this genre is an expression of class, and if my argument has a broader historical resonance, it has to do with the way this music has helped shape and make legible ruling class values in so many different historical and geographical contexts.

On a somewhat related note, I think Simone brought up coolness and uncoolness and kitsch, and I really love these ideas and I would like to pursue them further at some point. Simone notes that the contemporary artists I talk about are cool, and I would say, I know what you mean, and I agree, I think that's a part of what is happening, but I'd also qualify it a bit. First of all, I'd say some of them are cooler than others, but then I'd also say that what they're able to do is to make appeals to a certain mode of

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coolness that's regulated by whiteness and class privilege and being kind of 'niche'. Their lack of any really broad popularity is, I think, one of the ways they are distinguished from someone like André Rieu, who's so popular but also so uncool. Some of their detractors call them hipsters for this reason, and while I don't think that's a perfect fit, I do think that it's an instructive frame. In this sense, the mode of coolness —that, for example, the indie classical people that I write about—the mode of coolness they are able to tap into is actually quite similar to the mode of appeal that classical music itself functions within. So, despite their claims about leaving that world behind and embracing cool pop culture and democratizing the art form, etc., they actually still operate within a milieu that's demographically similar to that of classical music in general in terms of race class and prestige, and they still operate within a notion of legitimacy that I would argue is based on being pretty exclusive with regard to actual pop culture. And I think that kind of resonates with Anna's point about how proclaiming that they're beyond genre actually situates them even more strongly within classical music, the very genre they're trying to heroically transcend by refusing the autonomous ideal and all that. So, this is something I'm extremely interested in pursuing, and the observation about needing to use Bourdieu is probably correct. I mean, I know it's correct. I'm just really into Marx and Adorno right now. That's the frame I've been working with, as you correctly noted.

Probably the biggest issue you all kept returning to was autonomy, and I keep returning to it myself. I've gotten more and more invested in the paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the attempt to create autonomous art, or any kind of autonomous space in life or production or whatever. The great paradox of the autonomous ideal is the irreconcilable contradiction between individual autonomy and collectivity, between individual freedom and social freedom. I do realize that there are formulations of autonomy within the classical music tradition that reject the social outright, but part of my project as it's developing now, and as is already sort of gestured to in my book, is to investigate other ways the autonomous ideal has been constructed both in music and in political discourses. The understanding of autonomy that I'm trying to think about art and music through derives from Adorno as well as from classical anarchism and contemporary Black radical thought. Lately I've been deeply inspired, for example, by Fumi Okiji's (2018) recent book on Adorno and jazz, where, among other things, she engages with the idea that music is, or maybe can be, a way of being together in the world that is at odds with the social system we're currently trapped within, and that that very tension is what is potentially revelatory or liberating about music. And I think this tension is one of the things the artists in my book turn away from and reject, and it's a tension I find myself thinking of in many contexts, musical and otherwise. How to embrace the irreconcilable contradiction between individual freedom and collectivity, and what that looks like musically as well as in every other facet of life.

Patrick concluded, for example, by saying he'd like to see my critique turn towards myself a bit more, and take on the academy and musicology itself, and this paradoxical difficulty is productive here as well. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013) have written and spoken a lot about collective freedom as refusal within academia—how we should find ways to do the work of the job without doing the job part of the job. Basically, how to create spaces within the job of academia, within which we collectively refuse to do our individual jobs as they are configured by the technocratic neoliberalized university that has its own particular mode of knowledge production that supports and upholds status quo ideologies. So, basically, they are interested in how we can find ways to create spaces within the job where we refuse to do our jobs, but without quitting our jobs. It's impossible, but the insistence on doing it anyway and on expanding the spaces where others can participate in doing it as well is where freedom lives. And so yeah. That's kind of a woo-woo place to end upon I guess, but that's the way that I have been continuing to think through autonomy in the years since finishing that book. And I really benefited from the conversation that you all had, and I have many more thoughts but I'm already going on for too long. So, thank you all again for such a stimulating and generous conversation. It was such a pleasure to participate.

**Supplementary Materials.** To view supplementary material for this article, please visit http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/rrc.2021.1.

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