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A Lucid Exploration of a Terrain: Music Education Against Capitalist-Realist Cybertime

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Abstract

Mark Fisher argues late capitalism has become so globally dominant that it now claims to constitute reality. This article takes up Fisher's call to identify untenable or unsustainable elements of capitalism, exposing its claim of realism as ideological. Focusing on late capitalism's anxiety-inducing, panicked temporal malaise, the article explores the question: what can music education do to disrupt capitalist-realist temporality? Examining both inbuilt temporal components of jazz study—such as space, time, feel, and tempo—and deliberate pedagogical exercises in free improvisation, this article argues that small-ensemble jazz education holds a strong potential to cultivate temporal consciousness in resistance to our frantic, accelerated time-state.

Keywords

Late capitalism, temporality, jazz, social media, music education

The frantic temporality of cyberspatial capitalism instills a compulsion to productivity, centering the economically generative over all else. The consequences of intensifying pressures to accelerate productive capacity are many and far-reaching, and affect the lives of everyone, young and old. This compulsion to produce is a product of late capitalism's ontological framing. As Mark Fisher theorized in *Capitalist Realism* (2009), global attitudes towards living and being have progressively shifted towards a *business ontology* where "it is simply obvious that everything in society, including healthcare and education, should be run as a business" (17), and where the value of anything is measured solely on its entrepreneurial merit. From this ontological pressure comes the nightmarish sense that we will need to work constantly, and seemingly, forever. The all-encompassing drive towards work feels like a rhythmic trap. It is paced by phone calls, endless emails, app notifications, and a 24-hour news cycle, delivered to us through internet-connected devices designed to consume our time and attention. As rhythm is a crucial component of capitalist-realist temporality, and music education is intimately concerned with the subject of rhythm, I pose a question here that informs my thinking in the following pages: what can music education do to disrupt the compulsive rhythmic immediacy of capitalist realism?

I begin this article by detailing the worrisome effects of Fisher's capitalist realism on the arts and music education. I then provide framing for subsequent thinking through a section outlining my position as a musician and educator. Next, I explore Fisher's proposed method for combating capitalist realism: demonstrating ways in which capitalism is unrealistic and untenable, and thus exposing the capitalist-realist narrative as fictional and ideological. One unsustainable quality of capitalism is its accelerative cyberspatial temporality, which engenders an anxiety-ridden existential malaise and degrades the capability of humans to attend to the world. This article contests that music education's study of temporal elements—such as *rest*, *time feel*, and *tempo*—positions it as an important educational site for addressing our current crisis in time. Demonstrating this in a specific pedagogical context, the article details my experience working with free-playing exercises in the jazz ensemble classroom, which I found engendered an attentive temporal affect. The article closes by laying out my broader argument: carefully

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cultivated music study within specific contexts can build a resistant temporal consciousness, which breaks the immediacy of work-manic temporality and engenders an ability to detect and push back against capitalist time.

Capitalist Realism, the Arts, and Music Education

As Fisher explains in *Capitalist Realism* (2009), capitalism has come to dominate most every element of society, marketizing sectors—such as healthcare and education—previously viewed as integral parts of a functional social support system. The marketization process is a gradually intensifying creep, which follows an ideological imperative that the market slowly swallows all yet-unconquered areas. The marketization of public sectors reinforces and intensifies class distinctions, as the lower classes lose affordable access to services that were set up as basic human rights. Fisher does not romanticize past forms of social democracy, which were fraught with a plethora of social issues, but rather longs for a "lost future" in which the innovations of modern technology and social progress could be coupled with an increased sense of social security and solidarity. As Fisher writes in *Ghosts of My Life* (2014b),

> what haunts is the specter of a world in which all the marvels of communicative technology could be combined with a sense of solidarity much stronger than anything social democracy could muster.... In the 1970s, certainly, culture was opened up to working-class inventiveness in a way that is now scarcely imaginable to us; but this was also a time when casual racism, sexism and homophobia were routine features of the mainstream. Needless to say, the struggles against racism and (hetero)sexism have not in the meantime been won, but they have made significant hegemonic advances, even as neoliberalism has corroded the social democratic infrastructure which allowed increased working class participation in cultural production. (33)

Though the current situation under capitalism is undesirable for those that it exploits, capitalism has essentially eliminated any existing political alternative elsewhere on the planet (Fisher 2009, 7–9), leaving the perception that there is no alternative to capitalism. This makes resistance or reform against capitalism feel unrealistic or even unthinkable; Fisher points out that it is now "easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" (1). Capitalist realism extends beyond the prominence of neoliberal ideology centering competition, free-

marketism, and atomized enterprise, instead creating the perception that this ideology has come to constitute reality. Beyond influencing policy and reform, capitalist realism forecloses the ontological borders of what is valuable or worthy of attention, and the ends towards which any endeavor is focused.

Capitalist realism's foreclosure of entities outside of the exchange system has had a significant impact on arts and culture. In *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Fredric Jameson notes that art—which has traditionally functioned as a critical tool for helping individuals locate themselves within oppressive structures—has now been integrated into the capitalist market system. This transforms the purpose of art: instead of being a means of mapping the conditions of the present and helping the individual locate themselves within oppressive systems, art now functions as a commodity, built to generate capital. As a result, postmodern art takes on reiterative and nostalgic forms, mimicking past creations in hopes of generating profit. Though one might assume that countercultural art still performs a different, revolutionary function, "anti-capitalist" art has become a lucrative commodity, which typically sells quite well. Fisher (2009) argues that this sort of countercultural art holds a second function: it "performs our anti-capitalism for us, allowing us to continue to consume with impunity" (12), neutralizing the revolutionary libido in the process.

Capitalist realism's impact on arts education has been similarly devastating. As evidenced by the prominent defunding and destruction of public music programs within the Ontario context, where I perform and teach, arts education is being progressively marginalized in favor of subjects that prepare students to be effective entrepreneurs, following a new mandate to facilitate "capital accumulation over all other values" (Brown 2011, 24). In neoliberal thinking, the standing value of music education is its utility for increasing proficiency in subjects more relevant to capitalist enterprise, as we notice in the prevalent "music is math" discourses. Scott Goble (2021) advances this line, noting that "under the current 'neoliberalized' circumstances, music education is becoming weakened, except perhaps in places where it serves to support—or at least not contravene—neoliberal ideals" (10). Beyond its ability to generate cultural capital, the business ontology views music education as non-essential. As explored by Vincent Bates (2021),

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musical pursuits are dismissed as not being real work, instead being "ancillary to more important matters" (88).

Music education has also integrated and intertwined itself within the systems of capitalism, mirroring or adhering to broader trends of neoliberalism and entrepreneurship. Stephen Ball's (2003) formative critique of neoliberal education argues that its management structures shift teaching focus from simply educating to fabricating and demonstrating metrics of teacher effectiveness. This has become prominent in music education. Attempting to "legitimize" music education through adopting metric-focused approaches (Mullen 2019; Young 2023) unwittingly redirects the focus of music education towards satisfying standardized criteria. In the music classroom, adopting neoliberal emphases on performance metrics, competition, and standardization (McPhail and McNeill 2021) occupies and co-opts classroom time and direction, eroding possibilities for lingering, winding, or otherwise exploratory education within the music classroom. Sean Robert Powell (2021), who mobilizes Fisher's thinking, discusses the prominence of music competitions within the broader culture of music education. Results from these competitions serve to provide a measurable performative metric for music education valuation, satisfying the neoliberal compulsion to metricize. At the post-secondary level, music program curricula increasingly emphasize the importance of career preparedness, prioritizing the entrepreneurial over the creative, essentially foreclosing any sort of musical study that does not ultimately lead to a neoliberal end (Sadler 2021). As Gareth Dylan Smith (2015) notes, this "music entrepreneurship" education is complicit in perpetuating consumer capitalism, and postsecondary music education lacks criticality around the impacts and implications of an increased focus on entrepreneurship.

At the core, capitalist realism's disruption of arts, culture, and education stems from its business ontology foreclosing what makes these entities powerful and important. Much of what guides and powers music education is altogether ignored by market logics, as many of art's most redeeming qualities operate outside of capitalism's exchange system. Searching beyond the bleakness of these considerations, this article skews towards a more hopeful argument: though capitalist realism threatens the destruction of social welfare, arts, culture, music, and music

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education, and has already to a certain extent infiltrated and co-opted music education towards its own ends, music education itself holds a profound potential to engender consciousness around our present condition, opening avenues for resistance and struggle.

Positionality, Context, and Scope

Before moving into the body of the article's argument, this section outlines my positionality as an educator and musician and details the scope of my thinking. The aim here is to situate the theorization below within my specific educational context. I do so to avoid making universalizing claims surrounding music education/study, instead reflecting on rich and generative personal experiences.

From a young age, I was privileged to study in a unique community music program focused on small-ensemble jazz improvisation. More recently, I have had the full-circle privilege of returning to this program as a teacher. Early years of the program, which begin around age three, focus on intensive, methodical, and slow aural music training, drawing heavily on Orff and Kodaly methods. This training teaches students to recognize musical elements instinctively and engage with music on an intuitive, organic level. Training prepares students for later years of the program, which are jazz-oriented. Starting around age eight or nine, students choose instruments suitable for playing jazz and are grouped into small ensembles of between three and seven students. In these ensembles, students learn to play and improvise over jazz standards, study jazz theory, and experiment with free jazz and open improvisation. Students also learn to play their instruments in independent private lessons.

Program teachers, who are practicing jazz musicians, are given significant pedagogical autonomy, and so students are exposed to a variety of different teaching styles and ensemble sensibilities. Though the program could certainly be considered an "institution," it does not bear the typical markers of overcoding and standardization (Lines 2017), extreme competition, and quantitative evaluation typical of institutionalized jazz, instead valuing alterity, openness, and fostering the unfolding of the young musician as they develop. Though many program graduates have subsequently pursued careers in music performance, the program itself is not

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focused on building professionals, instead centering the intensive study of jazz performance and improvisation.

My early training engendered a profound closeness with small-ensemble, improvised music performance. This article, which engages primarily with the concept of temporality as it relates to capitalism, plays with time by drawing deeply upon my lived experience as a musician studying rhythm. I bring this rhythm work into dialogue with my chosen theorists, including primarily Mark Fisher, Franco "Bifo" Berardi, and Byung-Chul Han, as I see fruitful connections between their thinking and my own experiences.

My pedagogical style has been deeply influenced by my early training. My work teaching small ensembles of elementary and secondary level students is focused on a deep exploration of/immersion in improvised music, mirroring the sensibility of my childhood program. Rather than preparing students for standardized measurements of musical achievement or future professionalization, my goal is to support the development of students' individual musicianship through an emergent and holistic process of shared creative music-making.

As theorized by Paul Louth (2020), small ensembles provide a setting that more naturally challenges typical neoliberal organizational structures. I acknowledge that this sort of pedagogical experience is not the norm. As I discussed earlier, it is well-documented that music education has in many instances intertwined itself with capitalism. In an interventive move, this article looks to mine my own training and experience for more positive potentials within music education. Hopefully, explorations situated within my context will provoke additional thinking about how this sort of pedagogy might apply in other places.

Reality and the Real

The perception of capitalism-as-fact is what gives capitalism its power (Fisher 2009). Philosopher Franco "Bifo" Berardi (2012) conceptualizes finance as a perverse sort of godless, fanatic capitalist religion, arguing that capitalism's authority over the world's material conditions is sustained by its ability to maintain faith that its abstract financial systems accurately represent an objective and universal reality. Fisher (2009) contests that capitalist realism "can only be threatened if it is

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shown to be in some way inconsistent or untenable; if, that is to say, capitalism's ostensible 'realism' turns out to be nothing of the sort" (16). He lays out this potential line of attack through the Lacanian concepts of "The Real" and "reality." By his thinking, any claimed reality should be met with skepticism, as it presents a mediated perspective on what is natural based on an ideological position. Maintaining the illusion of this perceived realism necessitates repressing "fractures and inconsistencies in the field of apparent reality" (Fisher 2009, 18). These inconsistencies, referred to by Lacan as "Reals," are irreducible excesses that interrupt the construction of a reality; witnessing their existence exposes a reality as ideologically mediated. Foregrounding these excesses undermines the apparent realism of capitalism, as it is shown to be ideological. In *Capitalist Realism* (2009), Fisher uses climate catastrophe, declining mental health, and capitalist bureaucracy as his prime examples of such fractures in capitalism's claimed realism.

This article focuses on another such "Real": the all-encompassing, anxiety-inducing, accelerated temporal state of late capitalism, which has intensified since the publication of *Capitalist Realism* through the rapid expansion and foregrounding of cyberspatial connection. I argue that the modern human's continuous tether to the digital has overwhelmed its cognitive capacity, inducing a cognitive mutation (Berardi 2009a) which degrades the ability to pause and attend to the world. This overload is not only unpleasant, but actively and unsustainably undermining the human's needed capacity to practice contemplation, compassionate relationality, and basic modicums of self-care and rest. In response to this hyperactive state, I gesture towards music education, which possesses a unique potential to cultivate an anti-accelerative, temporally-resistant consciousness.

Cyberspace and Cybertime, Burnout and Boredom, Pausing

Among other modern technological entities, the internet, smartphones, and social media have transformed the human cognitive experience. In a lecture, Fisher (2013) explains:

> I think smartphones take us onto another threshold really, where you have to opt out of cyberspace. You see, you think about in the 90's, for some of you that's probably a fairly distant memory, when one had to dial up the internet.... But that

> was when the internet was good, when you could contain it, when it was a resource, when you went to the internet for things, and you could take them away. Now, as soon as you've got a handheld, internet connected device, then you have to opt out of being in cyberspace at all times, that changes our perception of everything, that changes our perception of time … it induces, particularly via social media … you've got this panicked temporality. (8:20–9:44)

Over a decade removed from this lecture, the "panicked temporality" (9:44) of the digital space is too ubiquitous to require an explanation; it is now the water we swim in. Cognitive labor (Berardi 2009b) taking place on computers and cell phones involves paying constant attention to emails, text messages, group chats, online meetings, and other data delivered through digital interfaces. Leisure is similarly integrated with digitality through social media, which increasingly emphasizes the consumption of rapid-fire audio/visual content, curated algorithmically on a user-to-user basis to foster addictive attachment to various applications. Disturbingly, the lines between these two worlds blur, as the access point for labor and leisure is now the same: we go to cyberspace to work and to play. Oftentimes, we flip between digital labour and leisure modalities from minute-to-minute. This engagement with cyberspace is oddly unifying and isolating, as explored by music education scholars Vincent Bates and Daniel Shevock (2020): "On our devices, a variety of experiences are unified—dancing to a new band becomes looking at the device; attending a favorite sporting event becomes looking at a device; and even gardening can become looking at a device. As such, we can find ourselves in isolation booths, where a pseudo-world is at our fingertips, but we are increasingly distant from other types of experience with other people" (640). As touched on by numerous music and music education scholars, technology and social media have directly impacted music-making and music education, increasingly serving as mediating filters.[1]

Modern cyberspace is not a neutral entity, but rather an environment constructed and driven by massive for-profit corporations. Similarly, social media technologies are not passive, but are instead overwhelmingly "technologies [that] serve the ends of neoliberal capitalism" (Bates and Shevock 2020, 627). None of the prominent platforms or applications we use are detached from the market system. Decisions made when designing sites and applications used for work focus on

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increasing productive capacity, while leisure applications such as social media platforms are designed to increase screen time and sell advertisements, deliberately occupying users' time and attention. Applications that manipulate workers into being constantly productive and connected, reinforce—or in the case of surveillance technologies even police—labor compulsion. In the leisure field, engendered social media addiction leaves users compulsively connected to cyberspace even when "off the clock."

Franco "Bifo" Berardi, whom Fisher draws on for his work relating to cyberspace and attention, provides a useful framework for considering the cognitive effects of sustained connection to cyberspace. In *Precarious Rhapsody*, Berardi (2009a) contemplates difficulties caused by the imbalance between rapidly expanding cyberspace and finite human cognitive ability. Human cognition is bounded by its organic limitations, as the human can only process so much information at a time. In contrast, the cyberspatial repository of total human information and relationality, located mostly on the internet, expands at a seemingly infinite pace. The trouble is that humans are by necessity constantly connected to cyberspace, as previously analog processes in work, sociality, and leisure are increasingly migrated to cyberspatial locations. Cyberspace outpacing organic capacities to elaborate information forces the plugged-in human to progressively accelerate the pace of cognitive processing, resulting in a fundamental change in human cognition where experiences of living and being are reduced and simplified. Accelerating cognition also induces panic, as the pressure to accomplish more and more cognitive processing in the same amount of time is inherently stressful and overwhelming.

Before the onset of digital acceleration, humans engaged with the world primarily with what Berardi (2009a) calls a "conjunctive" (130) relational mode. Conjunctive relations are messy, consisting of imperfect interactions between different, incompatible entities. Conjunction is also inefficient, demanding a lingering, mindful negotiation between disparate entities. Significant time needs to be reserved for grappling and making sense of disparity and incompatibility. Cognitive acceleration required to keep pace with cyberspatial information surplus leaves no time for conjunction.

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Instead, Berardi (2009a) argues, conjunctive processes are rendered down into "connective" (130), pre-compatible methods of interfacing; the emoji replaces the nuanced smile, the AI-generated email replaces the phone call, or, as Lesley White (1993) argues in the context of the synthesizers, the piano is imitated by its digital equivalent, "with the technological hardware 'magically' allowing the player to produce music s/he would otherwise be incapable of" (5). As Cathy Benedict and Jared O'Leary (2019) explore, music technologies are built through the logics of their creators (mostly tech companies), which are generally profit-motivated and follow neoliberal sequencing. The alterity of interacting entities being reduced into pre-compatible forms makes cognitive processing *faster*, but not *richer*. The accelerating human processes information at a faster pace, but their experience is impoverished, and they are eventually exhausted by the frantic pace of their cognitive gyration.

Korean-German philosopher Byung-Chul Han further develops this thinking in *The Burnout Society* (2015). Han argues that we have moved beyond Foucault's disciplinary society, governed by the directives *may not* and *should*, to an "achievement society" (8) with a dominant modal verb of *can*. The achievement society champions the infinite potential of individual entrepreneurial success, instilling a self-policed practice of maximizing productivity. Entrepreneurial achievement productivity, characterized by "an excess of stimuli, information, and impulses" (12), fosters the attentive mode of hyperactivity, which involves "a rash change of focus between different tasks, sources of information, and processes" (13). Hyperactive individuals exploit themselves, constantly and increasingly striving for maximal labour, which eventually leads to lonely, atomized burnout. The burned-out subject loses the capacity to act, and in their exhaustion, becomes impotent.

Since Han's (2015) time of writing, cyberspace has cemented its position as the central site of this burnout-causing and isolation-inducing hyperactivity. Through capitalist cyberspace's growing dominance of our cognitive energies, the pronounced symptoms of the hyperactive achievement society have intensified, leading to the normalization of "excessive tiredness and exhaustion" (31). In this state, capitalist realism's dominance becomes even more entrenched, leaving genuine political change to appear altogether impossible.

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Music education is no stranger to burnout; as has been documented extensively through music education scholarship, burnout is prevalent for those studying both to teach and perform music. Nápoles et al. (2023) reported high amounts of burnout among undergraduate music students, while Kertz-Welzel (2009) notes that music educators themselves (and particularly female music educators) suffer from extensive burnout in their teaching work. Scheib (2003, 2004) notes that being overworked, lacking pedagogical autonomy, and needing to maintain program metrics leads to burnout for music educators. Gordon (2000) similarly finds that public music teacher stress and burnout are caused, among other things, by a lack of time; music class is hampered by temporal demands, including needs to set up, tear down, and prepare for music-making, leading to uniform scheduling with other subjects being inadequate for music classes to accomplish core objectives. Numerous studies by Bernhard examining burnout in postsecondary music students (2007a, 2010), postsecondary music faculty (2007b), and grade-school music teachers (2016), find levels of burnout in music education similar to those in other education fields, with burnout being particularly pronounced in theoretical classes or instances of overworking. Studies by Payne et al. (2020) and Payne (2023) find that music education students prominently experience depression/anxiety and exhibit high stress levels compared to peers in other subjects.

As discussed in this article's introduction, music education has in many instances become intimately wrapped up in neoliberal and capitalist temporality. Based on the above literature, music education clearly has a place in Han's "burnout society." As burnout is a symptom of the temporal acceleration induced by capitalism, it permeates all elements of society, couched in neoliberal doctrines of competition, entrepreneurship, and enterprise. This is likely why literature around burnout in music education appears mostly when education is tied together with professionalization, both with teachers—whose relationships with music education are professional and thus tied directly into capitalism—and postsecondary students—who are striving to make their relationship with music professional.

"Soul work," as it is referred to by Berardi (2009b), weaponizes human passions to subjugate the soul to labor. Instead of being mundane or rote, modern work is instead conceptualized as an expression of the self, integrated into the

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machine of capital. As touched on above, this article focuses on music education at the grade-school level because it is—at least for the student—more isolated from couplings with capitalism than this so-called "soul work." The pedagogy outlined below also pushes for a further sort of deliberate insulation against the temporal elements of capitalism, acknowledging that even in education settings where students are seemingly very distant from professionalization—such as elementary school—achievement pressures continue to instill capitalist temporalities.

Core to the temporal problematic, for Fisher, Berardi, and Han alike, is the human's decreased ability to make pause while in a hyperactive, panicked, overstimulated state. Pausing is an important part of the ability to contemplate, a distinct point of difference between the human and the machine. Han (2015) explains, "Only by the negative means of making-pause can the subject of action thoroughly measure the sphere of contingency (which is unavailable when one is simply active). Although delaying does not represent a positive deed, it proves necessary if action is not to sink to the level of laboring. Today we live in a world that is very poor in interruption; 'betweens' and 'between-times' are lacking. Acceleration is abolishing all intervals.... Activity that follows an unthinking, mechanical course is poor in interruption" (22).

Part of why we struggle so deeply with pausing, Han argues, is that achievement hyperactivity induces a pronounced intolerance of boredom. In his lecture "The Slow Cancellation of the Future," Fisher (2014a) connects our inability to pause and be bored directly to the pressures of digital connection, applying a slogan to the condition: "no one is bored, but everything is boring" (36:10). Fisher expands, "Since there's no reprieve from the urgencies of cyberspace—that's what I mean by 'no one is bored'—we don't have the freedom to be bored anymore. Because at another level we're tethered in, we're fascinated even as we are bored, we're distracted from our own boredom, we're distracted from the boring nature of things, by the fact that we're always subject to this kind of idiotic compulsion" (37:08–37:35). Later in the lecture, Fisher further argues that the new hyper-connected cyberactive state almost wholly nullifies and replaces the experience of boredom with a latent compulsive anxiety to interface with cyberspace; now that you always have something to do, you should always be doing something.

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Interestingly, Han and Berardi attribute an unexpected quality to boredom, viewing it as a generative condition. When insufficiently stimulated, the human is motivated to do something to alleviate the tension of boredom. Fisher calls this the "existential challenge" (2014a, 35:44) of boredom.

Digital overstimulation enforces impotence against capitalism, as it eliminates "between-times" (Han 2015, 22), disappearing lingering moments that challenge the subject to create the new. Work on overstimulation often focuses on the visual, but the aural also has its place in attention capture, as noted by Waltham-Smith (2017) in her exploration of the sonic attention capture in Las Vegas casinos. As the capture of attention through excessive stimuli significantly impedes the interventive libido, resistance to capitalism needs to also resist overstimulation, making room for pause, boredom, and contemplation. Resisting attention capture involves building an awareness around the cognitive effects of temporal states, as the accelerative temporal influence of capitalism must be recognized to be resisted. As I argue in the following sections, if the study of music is recognized for its deep attention to time, music education becomes a significant educational site for engendering awareness of and resistance against capitalist-realist cyberspatial temporality.

Musical Temporality: The Rest, Time Feel, Tempo

This section unpacks temporality in music by exploring my personal experiences studying and teaching rhythmic elements in the jazz context. As both this section and the next are highly autoethnographic, they do not represent a universalized experience of music study, but rather reflect my own conception of music, constructed through study under prominent jazz musicians in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

I begin here by examining music's focus on pause, or in the parlance of my musical tradition, the *rest*. Perhaps no other subject so clearly ascribes meaning to reserving time for pause, as written music holds an equivalent symbol of rest for every note. Learning to feel durations of pause is as important as feeling durations of action. Space between notes is what keeps music grounded in a solid temporal fabric. The temporal makeup of any musical action is determined in part by its

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attack, or the moment that the note begins, but is equally determined by the more overlooked *sustain*, or how long it is held, and *release*, or when the note is stopped. The note's attack is also coupled with space, with its onset coming from a place of pause, prompted by the space after the release of the previous note. Even legato playing is characterized by the absence of absence between notes. In other words, any action in music is constituted in relation to absence or pause; the act of music-making is as much about "making-pause" (Han 2015, 22) as playing.

Looking beyond the rest, the more abstract *space* is also musically significant. The jazz discipline reveres players for their use of restraint. Immature players tend to play busily, leaving little space, and focusing on technical proficiency. In contrast, more mature and musical players remain patient amid improvisation, often pausing to let Fisher's "existential challenge" (2014a, 35:44) take hold, and continuing when they have something substantial to play—a deliberate sort of self-induced micro-boredom. Musical space is hospitable, as it recognizes the listener's need for cognition time to absorb what is being played. It also provides an opening for responses from bandmates. Paul Berliner (1994) writes, "In effect, rests introduce soft accents into the solo line as its sound subsides and the rhythm section temporarily moves to the foreground of the music. Suspended over the passing beats, a rest also invites listeners to reflect upon the soloist's most recent figure, challenging them to anticipate the entrances of subsequent figures" (157). For both the player and the listener, the pause generates a hunger for newness and action; musical space is not redeeming only for its lingering meditative qualities, but also (and perhaps more importantly) for its power to encourage the emergence of *something* out of the tension of *nothing*. With any instrument involving the respiratory system, a further pause is necessary and inbuilt: the breath. The organic need to breathe, an embodied form of pause, forces the musician to suspend their action; it is evidence that the human body needs to pause, "take time," and "take in," counter to pressures of constant output.

Practicing musical *rest* and *space* can reawaken the critical capacity for interruption, generating "between-times" (Han 2015, 22) where the human capacity to contemplate can resurface. Pausing fosters the emergence of boredom, reflection, and a broader rejuvenation of the conjunctive, time-rich relation which

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cyberspatial overstimulation functions to deprive (Berardi 2009a). This focus on in-betweens renders concrete the importance of lingering, in opposition to the capitalist-realist assertion that there is no time to waste.

More generally, musicians develop a broad temporal sense, oftentimes referred to as *time feel*, which requires holding a consistent, culturally situated temporality. Though time can be measured as passing at a constant rate, it is more emotional when playing music; musical time fluctuates based on how we feel. The student working on time consistency reckons with their temporal tendencies, resisting urges to rush or drag. I have spent years working on my tendency to speed up, endeavoring to play with a more relaxed feel. When practicing with a metronome, or listening to recordings of myself, I perceive an accelerative tendency that I am less aware of in the immediacy of playing. My accelerative tendency is not only musical but also a reflection of broader emotional and affective tendencies; it reflects a certain degree of latent existential panicked impatience that I must identify and resist to avoid rushing. When teaching time, I find myself helping students avoid their own accelerative tendencies, as they also tend to rush.

Notably, time feel is not as simple as a musician's isolated temporal sense. In ensemble settings, time feel is not atomized, but relationally constructed. Group time feel is the responsibility of each group member, and group members can influence each other. Working on feel in a group setting, the student learns that temporal states are constructed in relation; acceleration from one student "pushes" other players forward, while dragging "pulls" other players back. Groove is often built upon both the tension between individual time tendencies and more deliberate manipulations of the beat. Berliner (1994) explains, "Most musicians talk about playing on three different parts of the beat without making any difference in the overall tempo. Imagining the beat as an 'elliptical figure,' the drummer or bass player can play either 'ahead of the beat' (that is, on the front part of the elliptical figure), 'behind the beat' (that is, on the very end of the elliptical figure or in varying degrees toward the center of the figure), or 'on the beat' (that is, the center of the figure)" (151). However, when rushing or dragging tendencies are extreme and go unchecked, ensembles can find music devolving into temporal chaos, rushing or dragging out of control. Berliner (1994) notes, "Some rhythm section players

can represent the beat consistently, maintaining a particular interpretation of it or varying it with great control. Others cannot. 'Rhythm sections are very fluid,' George Duvivier says. 'Some musicians rush, others pull back, and some do both.' These tendencies create various dilemmas for other members. Accommodating a [rhythmically] weaker player might further destabilize the group. 'Sometimes, the tempo doesn't stay where it should,' Art Farmer points out. 'If it gets too slow, the life goes out of the music. If it gets too fast, it just sounds amateurish'" (395). In moments of musical time conflict, temporal resilience becomes important. To avoid being pushed or pulled, the student needs to sense and resist adjacent temporal tendencies, counterbalancing and stabilizing imbalances in temporal sensibility. This attunes the musical subject to dangers associated with the relational nature of time states, as the temporal influence of external factors can induce for the subject unpleasant or unsustainable temporal affects. This is equally true in late capitalism, as the rushing imperative of Han's achievement society engenders a groupthink of productive fervor, which pulls those nearby into an accelerating work rhythm.

Personally, working to stabilize and control my temporal tendencies has engendered a similar regulating ability in my day-to-day life. Against pressures to accelerate cognitive processes to their most efficient, connective versions (Berardi 2009a), cultivating consistent *time feel* through temporal practice necessitates practicing temporal grounding. The study of time feels antithetical to the accelerative effects of capitalist-realist temporality, and I believe, stands to reawaken a more attentive and patient sense of time.

This is not to say that musical acceleration is a symptom of capitalist-realist temporality; musicians and students sped up before digitality, and still drag in modern times, and I have no evidence that musical acceleration has intensified alongside the acceleration of capitalism. I also do not idealize steadiness, which is reminiscent of the industrial phase of capitalism. Instead, I surmise that refining temporal sense in music strengthens attunement with time affects, and that this strengthened consciousness of temporality makes the subject more sensitive and resistant to accelerated cognition and productive impulse engendered by capitalism.

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Moving on from atomized and group *time feel*, the more absolute measure of *tempo* also bears examination. Though tempo can be reduced to a quantifiable "beats per minute", it is also an affective experience. Different tempos carry a host of emotions, energies, and tendencies, and require different sorts of temporal attitudes to play. Consider, for example, the ballad. Ballad playing can be languid, sentimental, romantic, or somber, but always holds an inbuilt element of *slowness*. Berliner (1994) writes of ballad drumming: "Each genre deserves special consideration. 'There is a big difference between playing an up-tempo piece and playing a ballad,' Akira Tana says. 'You have to play with more space in a ballad. Since a ballad is slow and is one of the most expressive kinds of songs, you would probably play with brushes instead of sticks. It requires the development of a special touch, producing a unique texture and a color that differs from playing with sticks or mallets'" (343). The ballad requires temporal attention to maintain its slowness, as the tendency when playing a ballad is to accelerate; impatience, excitement, or anxiety cause the player to progressively shorten the length of a beat. Strong ballad players, who have studied the slow temporal character of the ballad, learn to embrace slowness, luxuriating in space. There is an intimately patient, contemplative quality to playing a ballad.

In contrast, fast tempos can be frantic, excited, exuberant, or joyful, but carry an inbuilt element of *speed*. Attention and technique must remain razor-sharp to maintain a fast tempo. Playing fast stretches the limits of the player's technical and cognitive capacities, and, if overwhelmed, up-tempo playing leads to onsets of clumsiness and fatigue, causing the player to burn out and slow down. The tension between pace and technical or cognitive capacities during up-tempo playing mirrors tensions noted by Berardi between cyberspace and cognition time (2009a). Though tempo can theoretically be made infinitely faster, playing speed is bounded by the technical and cognitive limitations of the musician, forcing players to simplify their playing past a certain point. Uptempo playing is also an allegorical demonstration of Han's burnout (2015); as the body tires from pushing against the challenge to maintain a blistering pace, it flags, losing momentum, burning out.

The process of learning a challenging musical passage illuminates cognitive characteristics and limits surrounding different tempos. Usually, learning a

passage at the technical limits of a player's ability necessitates slowing it down, as technical problems are easier to resolve at slow tempos. This is because humans lose cognitive or technical capacities to intentionally execute actions beyond a certain cognitive speed. Impatient musicians often try to learn passages at "full speed," leading to frustration when they falsely determine that the passage of study is beyond their technical ability. Learning to learn slowly teaches a lesson about the limitations of accelerated temporal-cognitive states: sense-making needs to be done at a pace where the mind is still capable of rich, messy, conjunctive (Berardi 2009a) cognition. Learning temporal-cognitive limitations can also engender a sort of refusal, where the musician recognizes when a pace exceeds their technical or cognitive capacities.

My aim here is not to deride fast music, as speed is not inherently negative, and can represent excitement, exuberance, and positive energy just as it can represent anxiety, overwhelmedness, and time scarcity. Furthermore, even the musical representation of more negative, stressful, or anxious energies can be cathartic or therapeutic. Instead, the process of slow sense-making in a musical context mirrors similar sense-making elsewhere, engendering a respect that slow and lingering rumination helps to clarify and deepen understanding in ways inaccessible to the frantic forcing of cognitive processes. The subsequent acceleration of a now sense-made passage does not render it nonsensical again, but instead carries an embedded intuitive understanding of the fast passage *because* it was drawn together at a slower pace.

Though *rest*, *space*, *time feel*, and *tempo* are far from an exhaustive list of music's temporal elements, they serve to illustrate that musical study fosters the development of temporal consciousness. Inbuilt in the study of music is an attunement to space and time. Studying the elements discussed above attunes the music student to the feelings of lingering pause, anxious oversaturation, fastness, slowness, acceleration, and deceleration. These lessons are not necessarily confined to the borders of music study, but hopefully foster a capability for temporal awareness beyond music-making. As I will discuss in my conclusion, musical temporality relates to and depicts human temporality as a broader subject, in that it provides the human with an embodied and tangible manner of attending to and

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contemplating the feel of time. By attending to time, and honing temporal perspective, the musician familiarizes themselves with their cognitive and physical abilities to elaborate information. The musically attuned subject may also build a capacity for critical awareness: they can sense that something is speeding up, or is too fast, or needs more space. Developing a critical capacity to recognize unsustainable or ruinous temporal states will be necessary to resist or overcome the current capitalist-realist condition.

Temporal Free-Play in the Jazz Ensemble Class

This section explores a free-playing exercise designed to accentuate temporality and foster Fisher's generative boredom within the jazz ensemble class. Fisher (2013) once lectured about Christopher Priest's science-fiction imaginings in *A Dream of Wessex* (1977). In Priest's book, set in 1977 Britain, a government-run collective dreaming simulation depicts a future where Britain has been absorbed by the Soviet Union, adopting a less frantic way of life. Fisher (2013) explains that people within the simulation become 'hooked' on this future world, because "the actual temporality of the world, the feel of the world, is a kind of Mediterranean counter-cultural idyll, where people have time, where time unfolds very slowly and languidly.... So of course, people don't want to go back to dismal, rainy Britain of 1977.... There's lots of things that interest me about that book, one of which is this sense of a lucid exploration of a terrain, the sense of an unhurried time, a time not where people do nothing but where people are capable of pursuing their own projects where those projects will lead them" (31:40–33:05).

Purposeful education experiences can create similar temporal textures, which temporarily insulate from or negate the difficulty of the present. In the time of capitalist realism, where the temporal fabric of life revolves around productive labour and the capture of attention, education remains a strong site for fostering different temporal experiences. Musical time study can help the student to build an outside perspective from beyond the rhythm of rushed life, hopefully allowing them to look at the world without being fully distracted by the immediacy of capitalist "reality."

As discussed above, the development of temporal awareness is inbuilt to certain components of music study, but music education can further address and

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enrich temporality through intentional pedagogy. Conceptualizing boredom as generative is provocative because it runs against educational pressures of engagement and productivity, which consider classroom boredom as a negative.[2] In line with Han's (2015) view that the achievement society strives to maximize the possible productive capacity of the individual, achievement-focused neoliberal education believes that all moments of class time should be used productively, fostering an imperative to avoid boredom. Powell (2023) expands, "Not only does capitalist/competitive realism demand continual growth, it demands continual activity. If teachers and students are not constantly busy, constantly working to obtain or maintain a competitive edge, they are seen as lazy or even uncaring about success" (27). As a young teacher, I viewed dead air and silence as moments of wasted time, as they did not contribute to the learning goals of the class. Fisher's contrasting view of boredom as generative, or even creatively necessary, surprised me, and pushed me to try experimenting with bringing boredom back into the classroom.

This free-playing experiment diverged from the routine typical to our ensemble classes, which usually focused on learning jazz melodies and forms, improvising over chord changes, and exploring theoretical concepts. Classes consisted of 3–6 students, with a traditional jazz rhythm section and an assortment of various horns.[3] Upon introduction of the exercise, none of my classes had explored free-playing, where improvisations follow a group-led spontaneous direction. David Lines (2017) discusses the opportunities for departure offered by free-play, writing: "Free jazz is the embodiment of a certain way of life; an open and experimental way of approaching, playing, listening and thinking…. It is a pedagogy that is pregnant with possibilities; a type of movement that stimulates other movements, or departures to outside possibilities" (53). As such, I suspected that free-playing would be generative in resisting the foreclosure of capitalist-realist education. The experimental nature of free-playing opens possibilities otherwise foreclosed in more operationalized educational configurations.

To introduce the exercise, I described free-playing to my students; instead of following a traditional song structure, we would improvise a musical performance based on listening and collaboration, shelving preconceived notions of form. Prior to the improvisations, I asked students to sit in silence, waiting to play until they

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felt a strong compulsion, and until they held a musical idea that excited them. At the onset of silence, classroom atmospheres were generally tense, awkward, and uneasy. Students had difficulty staying quiet, and fidgeted, laughed, or gestured to others in the room. Students soon relaxed into a more contemplative state, where they began to enjoy the feeling of pause. From this contemplative period emerged boredom, as the novelty of the pause subsided. I felt Fisher's moment of "existential challenge" (2014a, 35:44) arise as students began to anticipate the start of the improvisation. A student would usually begin with a basic, tentative idea, and others in the class would seek something appropriate to play in response. Students eventually gravitated towards an intersubjectively formed key center and groove. As Lines (2017) writes, "the choice of note selection, melody formation, harmony, rhythm, articulation and intensity [became] a transpersonal experience between the performers and their acoustic, material spaces as they [entered] in and out of the improvisation" (55). In our experience, when the playing situation became too static, the "existential challenge" (Fisher 2014a, 35:44) of boredom returned, provoking a deviation from the established texture to something new. Disagreements or misinterpretations of motifs often led to dissonant moments, where a messy, conjunctive (Berardi 2009a) negotiation of form, tempo, or tonality took place. During conclusions of improvisations, students became hesitant, conveying an eagerness to keep going. Oftentimes, the improvisation would fade to silence only to be restarted in a new direction.

Without speaking to the experiences of individual students, as a collective they seemed to find it a provocative experience. All classes who undertook the activity returned to it frequently throughout the school year, and improvisations became more focused and interesting upon each iteration. Conversations following the activities demonstrated that students felt present and attuned to time and relation, enjoyed freedom from more typically foreclosed methods of improvisation, and relished in the space between improvisations.

I observed that free-play allowed students to eschew musical tendencies from more deliberately bounded settings, leading to the emergence of moments of significant creativity, alterity, and surprise. As explored by Ruth Wright and Panagiotis Kanellopoulos (2010), improvisation in the music education context "leads to

the immersion in a form of musical experience that moves beyond the conception of musical knowledge as an object to be mastered" (78). The connective deployment of, for example, "chord-scale relationships"—where scales used for improvisation are derived from their "matching" chord—falls apart when there is no clearly defined harmony, as members experiment with unconventional, playful, coy, or unintentional harmonic looseness. The free-play broke apart prescriptive, mastered tendencies of conventional playing, and without a connective, prescribed mode of interaction, the students instead took up a practice of presence and attention.

Pausing prior to improvisations was particularly instrumental in breaking apart noisy neoliberal modalities of productivity. Silence helps to engender an attitude of attention, emphasized by a scarcity of sensory inputs. Murray Schafer (1993) writes, "Noise is often a commodity, manufactured and sold with a purpose. Whether it is a siren, a motorcycle or a radio makes little difference; behind every item is an institution seeking profit from dissonance. These are the Voices of Tyranny. Against them are ranked the Temples of Silence, the quiet environments where sounds are more conspicuous by their scarcity. There is exuberance here but there is no waste. We think of a temple, but it is really an attitude of mind, and it is one we need to recover in the modern world" (9). Music education often takes the form of rehearsal, where groups prepare for performance opportunities to be evaluated and recorded as a metric of performative competence, an issue well-explored by Bates (2021) and Powell (2021, 2023). As previously discussed, focus on performance evaluation reflects the performative norm of neoliberal audit education (Ball 2003), where programs are structured around demonstrating value through fabricating "evidence" of progress. Pause has no place in a productive rehearsal, as the time used to pause could be spent towards further refining the product for upcoming performances.

The silent portions of our exercises allowed the usual buzz of productive itineraries to retreat, leaving students to linger with the stillness of their thoughts and recover an open, attentive mental state. This sort of pedagogy, which invokes a presence and focus on the moment, serves as a method of pushing back against the typical imperative of performative, competitive, auditable competence criticized

by both Bates and Powell, instead engendering the "attitude of mind" (9) called for by Schafer (1993). Silent pause signals a departure from the labour affect of product refinement, giving students permission to attend to a different sort of temporal texture.

Though drawing a literal or deliberate throughline between the temporal components of the improvisation experiments and late capitalism would be too literal, the setting was certainly an excellent terrain for students to explore and experiment with the temporal elements of music. Elements discussed in the previous section factored heavily into the free-playing exercise. Tempo, for example, receives significant attention in free-playing, particularly because free-play allows students to set their own tempo. Tempo was established at the onset of improvisations by whoever chose to start the improvisation, and students had the freedom to alter tempo as the improvisations developed when improvisational texture became too static. At times, students also experimented with "free time," opting not to follow a metered or consistent pace, unbounding improvisations from rhythmic conventions and leaving them alternatively "driven by rhythmic goals that are elastic" (Berliner 1994, 158). Musical space also factored into the free-playing exercise, as failing to leave space locked improvisations into static states. Through experimentation and discussions after improvisations, students gained insights into how to leave space and learned that leaving increased space better allowed improvisations to develop and grow, as group members used space to push improvisations in new directions.

Finally, the "play" in our free-playing was significant, as the playful affect of the exercise opened students to a different sort of temporal education experience. Bates (2021) theorizes that musical play may have a role in disrupting the neoliberal capture of music education, arguing that play offers a contrast to the "alienated and exploited labor" (96) of neoliberally focused music education, which undermines "music's fulfilling potential as leisure" (89). Drawing on Stephen Brown and Christopher Vaughan (2009), he posits musical play's potential to disrupt productive temporal constraints. Brown and Vaughan (2009) include a temporal component in their analysis of the fundamental characteristics of play, stating: "*play*

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provides freedom from time. When we are fully engaged in play, we lose a sense of the passage of time" (96).

Though I would contend that we do not exactly lose a sense of the passage of time during musical play, I would agree that our sense of the passage of time changes; the sort of "productive time" that is so familiar in neoliberal education is replaced with a lingering, present time, where the texture of time is weightier, and time is savoured rather than spent. This was most pronounced when we reached the end of class time during an improvisation. I had difficulty mustering the will to stop the students in their play and let them know that they had lost track of their productive schedules. The explorative, attentive temporal energy of play superseded any institutional, productive pressure. I often let them finish their improvisations.

Temporal Consciousness: Seeing and Resisting Acceleration

As this article is for a special issue on Mark Fisher, I felt it fitting to conclude my thinking by exploring one of the ideas detailed in his final book. In *Postcapitalist Desire* (2021), Fisher explores György Lukács' concepts of *immediacy* and *totality*, and the role that they might play in developing a critical consciousness regarding oppressive conditions. Immediacy, or the situation directly apparent to the individual, obscures the broader structural causes for difficult conditions, while totality constitutes an awareness of the broader structure of these difficult situations. Fisher (2021) explains:

> The problem of immediacy is that it is reifying.... The very purpose of ideology is to close off the possibility that anything could be different. That's the A-Z of ideology, in fact. But, of course, the second step of ideology is to make itself disappear. Ideology doesn't arrive and say, "I am ideology". Ideology says: "I am nature, and this is how things are".... "Totality" just means the whole system. You can't understand any bit of a system without understanding the whole system, and the whole system is not *a thing*—it's a set of relations. This is why immediacy is such a problem. Immediacy is inherently ideological, and ideologically mystifying. Because the totality is not given in immediacy! (116–17)

For Fisher, the individual is not inherently or necessarily aware of the totality of their oppressive condition. For an individual to become aware of the totality of

their condition, a process of consciousness raising is necessary. Without consciousness raising, the immediacy of the subject's situation overwhelms their capacity to see totality, and the subject internalizes their condition as being reflective of a broader realism, possibly even assuming personal responsibility for the difficulty they experience (Fisher 2021). Consciousness raising brings attention to the incomplete nature of an ideology posturing as "reality," which shatters the illusion of immediacy through a revelation of totality. This thinking holds significant resonance with Fisher's earlier *Capitalist Realism* (2009), which advocated for the exposure of inconsistencies and fractures within capitalist ideology as a way of revealing its ideological nature.

This article has highlighted the problematic of accelerated capitalist-realist temporality, which, through encouraging maximal achievement, positions a manic drive to work as the core function of the human. I have focused on two related *immediacies* given by this context: 1) the inundation and constant manipulation of human cognition by the demands of cyberspace both in the contexts of work and leisure, and 2) the ever-present pressure to be productive. Both immediacies assault the human's ability to pause and attend to the world, obscuring the totality of the capitalist system. As a result, the troubles of overstimulation and productive pressure are not understood as systemic to the immediacy-overwhelmed subject. From this standpoint, it is difficult to see the totality of the situation. The totalized relational structure responsible for this system is only visible after the subject gains the perspective to resist their immediacy and see beyond.

To regain the capacity to recognize temporal acceleration as a crisis caused by the totalized system of capitalist realism, an individual must gain temporal awareness. In the same way that a music student cannot learn to play steadily if they cannot recognize that they are *speeding up*, the subject cannot resist capitalism's temporal crisis if they are not aware of it. To push back against acceleration, the subject needs to be able to sense that the world is accelerating beyond the limits of their cognitive abilities and be temporally strong enough to resist matching pace. Learning to play music, from a time perspective, is often about learning to resist tendencies of acceleration, or learning how to play steadily, or learning how and why to *pause*. It is about learning to sense latent temporal pressures and push

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back, instead maintaining a deliberate temporal state. It is also about feeling momentary rhythm and attuning oneself to the effects and sensations of pace, whether that be blistering speed or tender slowness.

My article's core contestation is that the study of musical temporality carries potentials to engender an increased awareness of temporality more broadly. This is particularly relevant in the context of unsustainable acceleration caused by late cyber-capitalism, which tries to hide itself as inevitable through capitalism's claim of constituting reality. As Lines (2017) asserts, musical "concepts can be investigated as concepts that have a broader significance with things" (59), and the temporal elements of music "infiltrate our relational lives in many ways, such as physical movements, heartbeats, shifts in daily practices, and the natural motions of sun, moon and planets" (59). This is strong grounds to contemplate rhythm study and classroom pedagogy as means capable of engendering a temporal awareness that rises beyond the immediacy of everyday, ideologically imposed time-passage.

Temporal awareness—which emerges from working with concepts such as tempo, acceleration, deceleration, pause, and rest—engenders temporal grounding. The temporally grounded subject becomes aware that modern time has splintered, accelerated, and is now "whizzing without a direction" (Han 2017, vi). Mark Fisher (2009) argues that to dispel the "realism" of capitalism, the things capitalism presents as inevitable must be shown to be fictional or avoidable. Musical temporality shows the subject that different temporal states are possible, and that the rush of life under capitalism is not inevitable, but instead ideologically imposed. This opens the way for questioning, resistance, and change.

There is a valid skeptic's question to ask about this article, surrounding whether musical temporal sense is actually broadly transferrable, or simply theoretically interesting. There is also the question of whether it is generally feasible to implement this sort of pedagogy within high-accountability, precarious teaching settings beholden to neoliberal standards. Though these questions bear examination, they are beyond the scope of my writing here. From personal experience, I would attest that musical tendencies towards rushing and overplaying connect to broader tendencies involving accelerated labour drive, mania, and anxiety. Like Lines (2017), I firmly believe music is reflective of the broader experiences and

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tendencies of the human, and can teach the human lessons about the world, while also being informed by our broader growth as humans. I hope that this article is considered as a gesture towards thinking about the broader potential of music education to, in the terminology of Jameson (1991), map the societal conditions of the present, helping the human to locate themselves within our troubled world. Though my thinking here is situated in my position as a jazz educator, I am sure that similar thinking in different musical contexts would yield interesting and generative fruit. The temporal experience of musicality is so very rich, and its lessons are valuable.

About the Author

Holt Stuart-Hitchcox is a music educator, musician, and doctoral student from Toronto, Canada. He holds a bachelor's degree in music performance from Humber College, an MA in music education from the University of Toronto and is currently pursuing a PhD in education at York University. His scholarship focuses on potentials for music and music education to address the relational, temporal, and cognitive malaises of the modern day, particularly in response to the damaging effects of late capitalism. An active member of the Canadian music performance community, Holt was nominated Bassist of the Year at the Canadian Country Music Awards in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

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Notes

[1] See White 1993, Shevock 2018, and many chapters from *The Oxford Handbook of Social Media and Music Learning* (Waldron et al. 2020) for examples of scholarship on digitality's influence in music and music education.

[2] See Sobe 2015, 2021 for historical examinations of educational boredom and Feuchter and Preckel 2022 and Tze et al. 2015 for examples of studies seeking to mitigate educational boredom.

[3] A traditional rhythm section in my context refers to a drummer, bassist, and a pianist and/or guitarist, while "horns" refers to various woodwind/brass instruments, including saxophone, clarinet, flute, trumpet, and trombone.

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