

Improvisation in Music

E | M | C | European Music Council | Conseil Européen de la Musique | Europäischer Musikrat

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Foreword

Recent research has proved that truly major decisions in life are taken half consciously and half unconsciously. If one chooses a profession, wants to buy a house, is considering to get married, the conscious part of the mind is working as hard as the unconscious part of it. I will not go so far as to say that the decision to put a musical phenomenon at the centre of the EMC Annual Conference 2004 can be compared to a major decision in one's life, such as the question whether to get married or not. However, there were unconscious powers at work when the board of the EMC decided to take 'Improvisation in Music' as the central point of focus for the EMC Annual Conference 2004. Never before a musical notion or phenomenon had been the central issue at annual meetings or even in board discussions. One can wonder why it should be this way and whether it is good or bad. But this discussion will have to take place at annual meetings following the one in The Hague in 2004. What counts for all major decisions, either big ones or small ones, is that you know whether it was a good one only after you have chosen. Looking back at the EMC Annual Conference 2004 in The Hague, I can say it was the right decision. All participants of the meeting had very different improvisation experience in music, and the attitudes towards music improvisation were very different as well. It ranged from people knowing nothing about it and having a vague interest in it, to people being professional improvisation musicians, unable to understand what a musician of this time and age can do without improvisation. Diversity, characteristic of music in Europe, was also apparent in the phenomenon of music improvisation. In the morning lectures, diversity was explained by experts of all kinds of European music, in the afternoon diversity could be experienced by all participants during practical workshops. One of the official goals of the EMC consists of "...supporting and implementing of expertise, expert assessment and surveys that deal with musical issues...". A brochure or a website can help to achieve this goal, but when it comes to the music itself, and especially if it comes to such a specific phenomenon as music improvisation, you have to experience it yourself. The participants of the EMC Annual Conference 2004 got that experience. It enriched their knowledge and understanding of music and also enriched their artistic view on music. It was a great pleasure for me to have the EMC Annual Conference 2004 taking place in the building where I work daily, the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. Once again, I want to thank Director Professor Frans de Ruiter for welcoming us. My gratitude also goes to the staff of the EMC office and the IASJ (International Association of Schools of Jazz) office for producing the event. I want to thank especially all lecturers and workshop leaders and all participants for their contribution.

Wouter Turkenburg
EMC Board Member
Head Jazz Department
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1. Introduction

The conference “Music and Improvisation” was organised by the European Music Council and took place from 22 to 23 October 2004 in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Improvisation is a theme that concerns everyone who is active in music – be it as a performer, a teacher, a musicologist or an administrator. Nevertheless, there are many musical fields and genres that still neglect improvisation considerably. Through this conference, the European Music Council provided information about different types and aspects of improvisation. The opportunity to make some practical experiences was provided. The positive effects of improvisation was demonstrated and ideas were developed, how the recognition of improvisation can be improved.

This documentation aims to give insight into the events of the conference by using excerpts of conference papers, PowerPoint presentations and summaries of the discussions. Lectures on improvisation in different musical genres (Jazz/ Folk/ Contemporary Classical Music) were given and complemented by workshops taking up the theoretical debate and approaching the subject in a practical way. Concerts showing different styles and ways of improvisation rounded up the exceptional programme.



from left to right: Ruth Jakobi, Wouter Turkenburg, Wolfram Knauer

2. Opening

Beata Schanda, chairperson of the EMC, welcomed the participants of the conference and thanked the “International Association of Schools of Jazz (IASJ)” for inviting the EMC to hold its annual conference in The Hague. She also expressed her thanks to Frans de Ruiter, head of the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, who provided the premises for this conference. Wouter Turkenburg (IASJ Executive Director) greeted the participants of the conference and wished an interesting and successful meeting, he introduced Wolfram Knauer (head of the Jazzinstitut Darmstadt) who gave a keynote speech on improvisation in the history of jazz.

3. Noodlin' and Doodlin' and Playin' Around...

How the concept of improvisation changed during the history of jazz

Introduction lecture by Wolfram Knauer

Any serious definition of jazz will highlight the importance of improvisation for this musical genre. Indeed, jazz is an improvised music. Its way of working with improvisation, though, and its own definition as improvised music have changed over the decades. Improvisation can be the highlight of a piece of music, it can be the *raison d'être* for jazz or it can be an aesthetic/ philosophical/ political attitude. The title of this paper, the phrase "*noodlin' and doodlin' and playin' around*" is an often heard phrase used for jazz improvisation. Tom Nicholas, the percussionist from Philadelphia living in Darmstadt, told me recently what he thought the different words actually meant. "*Noodlin'*" he said, is the preparatory thinking, the playing with ideas and developments in the head of the improvising musician. "*Doodlin'*" is the transmission of the "*noodlin'*" onto the instrument, the physical test whether the thoughts can be executed. And "*playin' around*" finally is the playful test whether what one invented in thought and then transferred to the instrument makes musical sense, fits together, holds interest and tension.

Jazz history and improvisation

In early jazz styles as well as in the predecessors of jazz it is easiest to see and analyse traditions of improvisation transferred from Africa and acculturated in America. Improvisation mostly concerns the melody, it is melodic paraphrase, ornamentation, it tries to repeat the melody in one's own tempo and interpretation. Even though improvisation in early jazz often was collective improvisation, some individual musicians such as trumpeter Buddy Bolden or clarinetist Lorenzo Tio have been praised for their ability to play, for an especially beautiful (or at least an especially loud) sound, sometimes for their melodic inventiveness.

In the 1920s jazz became dance music, a commercial music aimed at the dance market. At the same time jazz developed its own aesthetics which highlighted its characteristic elements, rhythm, a specific instrumentation and... improvisation. The most important development at this stage of jazz history is that the instrumental solo becomes the focal point of a jazz performance. Artists such as Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke and others changed jazz from a functional music to a music in which the players were praised for their artistic ability, for their virtuosity, for their inventiveness in improvisation, for an artistic competence, thus, which by now could be measured with the help of aesthetic criteria.

In the 1930s the aesthetic of the soloist becomes more and more an aesthetic of the virtuoso. In analogy to similar developments in European art music of recent centuries, jazz developed a public worship of stars. Jazz developed its own standards and a repertoire based on improvisational basics – basics that continue to live in today's real books. Within the commercial big bands of the 1930s, improvisation was not really the focal point of popularity. Within the music scene, though, improvisation remained an important issue and continued to develop methodically: within the peer groups of the big bands, in which musicians worked together with colleagues for a long period of time, playing the same arrangements all over again, musicians learned from each other, discussed musical possibilities, experimented. The transitional period between swing and bebop is full of stories of musicians who developed their more progressive approaches through their working conditions within the big band scene.

In the 1940s jazz again became a more solo oriented music. Composition and arrangement stepped into the background, most important was the solo – virtuoso and highly emotional. Recordings from Minton's Playhouse which symbolize the transition from swing to bebop give us a clear idea: long jam sessions using a simple harmonic basis, chains of solos filling up for musical content. Within bebop you can even hear examples in which pieces are begun without a clear statement of the melodic theme at all, but immediately start with improvisation.

Cool jazz of the 1950s is not necessarily a retreat within the concept of improvisation as it has often been interpreted in jazz history books. Cool jazz musicians such as Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz, or even musicians between stylistic chairs such as the members of the Modern Jazz Quartet actually experimented with the aesthetics of improvisation and form. The latter, form, was especially important within their experiments, they were looking for new ways to structure their music. Their solution was to fit improvisation into more complex arrangements, to use more melody oriented linear-polyphonic improvisations (even collective improvisations), to use a motivic way to improvise by consciously employing motivic cells and developments, to control the sound of their instrument or of whole instrumental sections. Musical form was at the centre of such experiments, compositional as well as improvisational.

In the 1960s improvisation seems to become more and more independent. Of course, it is a legend that free jazz has to really be free of all constraints of musical rules. This was the case only in very few instances; yet, compared to earlier styles of jazz, the free jazz as exemplified by American musicians certainly introduced new ways of improvising musical developments. Improvisation in this process becomes more and more an aesthetic policy: in a society in which Black values in jazz become stronger, improvisation can serve as a model opposing European cultural traditions. The understanding of jazz as "America's classical music" as it became commonplace in the 1970s, is rooted in this new self confidence improvised jazz found within the free jazz development. And jazz did not just pose a pointed opposition against European cultural traditions, it was in its very own traditions seen as an exemplary counter movement.

Viewing jazz history as a development of increasing complexity of all musical parameters – harmony, rhythm, form, collective play etc. – free jazz of the 1960s seems to be a culmination point within this development, and the new direction called "fusion" ... a step back. Since around 1970 jazz is faced with the problem that its aesthetic measures changed (had to change), that many of the self-appointed jazz experts could not or would not follow these changes. Fusion musicians often made use of modal improvisation because the rock oriented fusion of the 1970s worked mostly in larger formal relations, thought in broad harmonic spaces more than in complex harmonic developments. Musicians also became more and more influenced by ethnic genres of music in which improvisation traditionally played a big role.

If improvisation in jazz over the decades spoke of individuality, inventiveness, spontaneity, the creative power of the musicians, the neo-conservative movement of the 1980s and 1990s seemed like a counter movement to this development. Musicians such as Wynton Marsalis, spokespeople such as Stanley Crouch insisted on the established values of the African American music "jazz", on the achievement of the big names, on a canon of jazz history which consisted not only of big names but could also be identified musically through their reference and relationship towards the tradition(s). In Europe, some musicians, especially in Roman countries, discovered that improvisation in jazz and improvisation as handed down by their own folkloric traditions were actually compatible. But even if not all of such meetings of the traditions proved convincing, they taught musicians to understand jazz improvisation as a means to individualize and interpret other traditions, other types of music. During the last twenty or so years improvisation has more and more become a competence associated mostly with jazz but which worked exceedingly well even when one left the paths one came from and loved, those of African American jazz.

& now

Improvisation as illusion?

The great Duke Ellington himself hinted in this direction in an essay from 1962 for the *Music Journal*. His words are well phrased, as so often, and try to de-mystify: *"Another theory they hold is that there is such a thing as unadulterated improvisation without any preparation or anticipation. It is my firm belief that there has never been anybody who has blown even two bars worth listening to who didn't have some idea about what he was going to play, before he started. If you just ramble through the scales or play around the chords, that's nothing more than musical exercises. Improvisation really consists of picking out a device here and connecting it with a device there, changing the rhythm here and pausing there; there has to be some thought preceding each phrase that is played, otherwise it is meaningless. So, as I say, jazz today, as always in the past, is a matter of thoughtful creation, not mere unaided instinct (...)"* So, is improvisation a big illusion? Well, only if you see it as an achievable utopia, not if you know about its real essence, if you accept that creative improvisation does not mean a complete new invention but usually just a new order of an existing vocabulary. Let's face it: nobody suggests that a creative author/writer has to invent his own language. His task is to re-order existing words and sentences, to re-order thought and thinking. It's not so different in music: to re-order is more important than to invent anew.

Actually, the improvisational basis "tabula rasa" is quite impossible as musical improvisation always happens within a temporal space, refers to the memory of time, because it bases on memory and all the different experiences which sound memory can release in us.

In any case, jazz is the first musical genre in which improvisation was so strongly put into the foreground. In this sense jazz was really an alternative for a eurocentric cultural perspective in which the written word, repeatability, comprehensibility became essential parts of a work of art. Jazz's influence on other art forms, on painting, literature etc. has to do with this singularity of the aesthetics of improvisation in jazz which implies the possibility of expressing one's emotions, one's emotional experiences spontaneously. The problem of this jazz aesthetic as an aesthetic of an improvised art is that jazz survives in a world of the repeatable. How often do I as a concert promoter have people from the audience coming to me after a concert asking, *"Did you record the concert?"* – because they want to repeat the experience of listening for a better comprehension of the music. And indeed, each of us knows the feeling when we listen to music again and again, concentrate on it, perceive the originally improvised sounds as a work of art and then make ourselves aware again of their origin ... by saying ... with astonishment: *"... and all of this is improvised!"*

4. Are you game to play?

the art of improvisation
organisational learning and performance

Keynote and workshop by Marc van Roon and Joshua Samson

In this keynote speech the two jazz musicians Marc van Roon and Joshua Samson gave an insight on how improvisation can also be used as a tool in business/ corporate contexts. They are the founders of the organisation "Art in Rhythm" that provides workshops and seminars on the art of creativity and improvisation for musicians, organisations and companies.

The following quotations are experts from the PowerPoint presentation given during the conference.

im·prov·i·sa·tion

1. The act or art of improvising.
2. Something improvised, especially a musical passage.
3. That which is improvised; an impromptu.
4. A performance given without planning or preparation.

We are all improvisers; in ordinary speech we use existing vocabulary, applying certain rules for our own creations!

Every conversation is a form of jazz

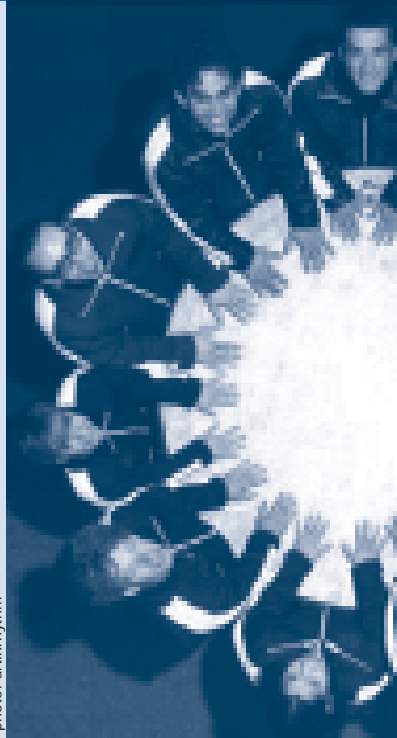
Allow maximum flexibility through minimal structures

Embrace errors as a source of learning

Creating something on the spur of the moment

Alternate between soloing and supporting

photo: artinrhythm

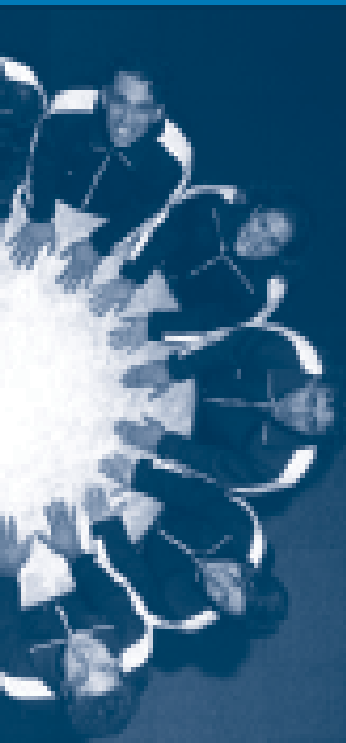


challenges of today

- discovery / invention a new language & concept
- higher degrees of uncertainty
- increasing pace of change
- new economy, new competition
- new rules for the game?
- new way of playing?

When the (jazz) players get together they *"do what managers find themselves doing: fabricating and inventing novel responses without a prescribed plan and without certainty of outcomes; discovering the future that their action creates as it unfolds."*

"Creativity and Improvisation in Jazz and Organizations: Implications for Organizational Learning," a 1998 Organization Science article by Frank Barrett



The differences between game and play were pointed out. Improvisation is rather corresponding with play.

Play	Game
free spirit of exploration	set of rules
focus on process	focus on result
only winners	winner + loser
rules invented by all players	referee
no fear	fear of losing
possibilities	agenda

Stephen Nachmanovitch - Free Play

play, free play, improvisation can help to create the new language and to find new ways of organisation & performance

John Kao 1997 suggests that contemporary organisations need a new kind of worker, one able and willing to improvise like a jazz musician, rather than a talented, but non-creative worker who, like a classical musician, submits to the close supervision and guidance of the conductor.

What can you do to bring 'play' to your organisation ?

- to create an environment that fosters change and innovation
- to create an inspiring learning environment (theatres of learning & performance)
- to put people at the centre of the change process
- to recognise improvisational moments (crisis, meetings)
- to create alliances, to start to play

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For further reading

"Free Play" Stephen Nachmanovitch, Penguin Putnam, 1990
"Jamming, the art and business of business creativity" by John Kao, HarperBusiness, 1996
"Flow" by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, Harper & Row, 1990
"Music and the Mind" by Anthony Storr, randomhouse, 1992
"Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedya" by Georgi Lozanov, Gordon Breach Publ, 1978
"Creativity and Improvisation in Jazz and Organizations: Implications for Organizational Learning," Organization Science article by Frank Barrett, 1998

Marc van Roon/ Joshua Samson

5. Lectures on Improvisation in different musical genres

Contemporary Classical Music - Ivo Medek

From children's creativity to contemporary improvised music

The topic *improvisation in contemporary serious music* is so wide that within a given time it is possible to embrace only a small section in this field, perhaps only to name the main streams and representatives, which can be done easily through literature or internet.

To narrow the topic I will pay attention to those aspects with which I have my own experience as a composer, teacher and performer.

Unlike other genres, improvisation in contemporary music is entirely free with no common schemes, shapes or conventional principles having a general usage. It does not require any preliminary preparation or experience. Special attention will be paid to a project with children that aims to evoke their musical creativity through free as well as directed improvisation.

Chosen instruments for this project with children from all types of basic schools were objects of everyday life - from PET bottles to little stones and children's toys. Intentionally, we did not use any instruments to avoid the difference between those children who can play and those who cannot play, which could lead to negative disappointment. Another reason was to create sounds that were only based on quality and not on tones. The musical experience of the children themselves does not play such a big role. With the choice of the instruments we excluded any connection to traditional music.

From the point of view of a listener - in this case also from the point of view of the young players themselves - the important factor of improvised music is a different

music expectation unlike the one in western concert music. Examples for this method can also be found in the professional scene: looking for other ways of musical expression is typical for improvised music - both in the experimental use of traditional instruments and in



photo: photocase

the use of different non-instruments, e.g. objects from the household of Hugh Davies, the instrument of Keith Row or John Cage, the historical electronic objects in Thomas Lehn's work or the destroyed computer of Hans Koch.

It was interesting to observe soloist production of the children: it revealed the personalities of the individuals. The main aspect of improvised music, however, lies in communication, which leads to include ensemble play in the project. To be successful, it was necessary to give at least some general rules. It is important, however, to define "success" in

improvised music: the art of improvisation according to Edie Prevost lies in the ability to make music on the spur of the moment without any given form beforehand - without any aim than the activity itself, without any expectation.

It is useless to speak about aspects like quality, progress, regress, contribution, innovation, communication between creator and listener without talking about an inner feeling of satisfaction - the success of improvisation from the point of view of a certain, as interpreters say, floating in which the musician himself appears in the middle of the creation of the work.

It is necessary to realize that we worked with complete amateurs, so it was important to give some basic information before the first group sessions started. Our basis was the seven virtues of an improviser - as they were defined by Cornelius Cardew. We chose the first five ones: simplicity, integration, modesty, tolerance and readiness. Translated into the language of children: not to try to assert oneself, to accept activities of others, to try to listen to them with concentration, to join the whole, to be ready to respond to impulses and create them by themselves.

A further step was the choice of a principal approach to improvisation - the choice between a free and a directed form. The discussion whether to influence improvisation beforehand goes through all its history. Directed improvisation was considered for a long time a doubtful compromise between improvised and composed music. During its development, some procedures appeared, which can be considered as directed improvisation. E.g. the controlled improvisation of Christian Wolff, Stockhausen's symbols of sound plays which should be played according to certain rules, Zorn's compositions where it is stated who, when and with whom an individual should play but not what, as well as the whole field of graphic scores when such a score has either the function of stenographic recording (Braxton, von Schlippenbach, Dauner) or a certain generator of music thoughts of the interpreters themselves (Brown, Cardew).

It is natural that in case of children we chose directed improvisation in two ways. The first one was the combination of the so-called conducted improvisation with graphics: on the board were instructions in the form of pictures, the time axis indicated when to play and with what dynamic. In the second approach a previously narrated story defined the global form of the music piece. The story was commemorated by simple graphic symbols in the course of time.

All improvisations were recorded and older children, able to understand basic principles of sampling and editing techniques were prepared for further processing in a simple mini studio for the final recording.

Thus, we enter again two areas which were considered as unacceptable in improvised music for a long time. The first one is mingling with composed music. It is clear that the above mentioned final arrangement of freely improvised areas bears the element of composition. In the 1990s elements of improvisation were used by composer; composed elements were no longer a taboo for improvisers. The most common approach is electronic processing of samples of improvised or differently gained fragments (recycling, montage, collage, and the like). We meet now with the term com-provisation and lately the term does not bear a devaluating feature. The second area which looked at as incompatible with improvised music was its recording on media. But also this is different, improvisations are not only recorded but the recordings are processed further, in the studio as well as in real time with various DJ techniques, processing, improvising to the recordings etc.

There are many editing, montaging, fragmenting, mingling attributes of composing and improvising – the problem of the *now and here* can be neglected. It concerns the whole line of improvisers including Evan Parker, Bob Ostertach and many others.

The project of the support of children's creativity with the element of improvisation is now being in the state of processing and the final versions will be at disposal.

Listening to similar recordings from our Austrian co-operator and well-known improviser, Seppo Grundler, the recordings were exceptionally interesting. If I had not known



photo: photocase

that amateurs are playing, I would have believed to listen to the CD of a professional ensemble.

The most important aspects of improvisation is the concentration on now, the emphasis on inconstancy of music as medium and the preference of the interactive aspect and the collective decision processes before the presentation of oneself. It is obvious that the work with sound areas is preferred to motivic work and from this results the choice of instruments. Variability and freedom, combined with a certain degree of openness and with play situations, enable various alternations in the choice of previously defined restrictions. It can be a formal skeleton, a given principle, a process, a story - as in our case, or a non musical idea. The more rigid the restrictions are the more detail-oriented improvisation is. Freedom in the macroworld is changing into freedom in the microworld.

Folk Music - Nigar Akhundova

Improvisation in Azerbaijani Music: from mugham to jazz

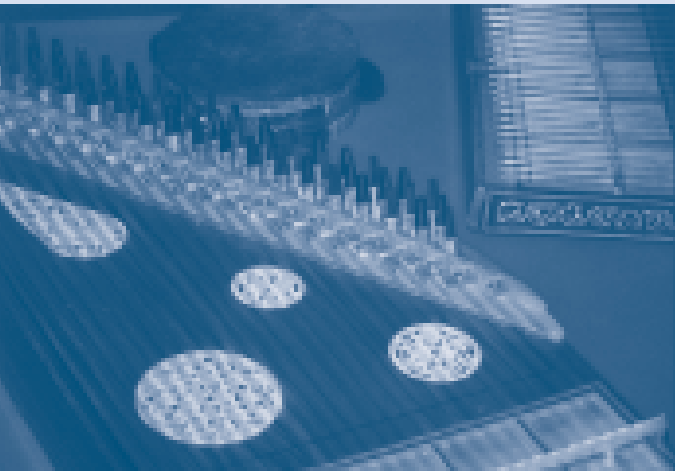


photo: spjm/ Berthild Lievenbrück

This report will deal with improvisation in Azerbaijani Mugham and its interpretation in various genres of contemporary Azerbaijani music. *Mugham* is a unique phenomenon of Azerbaijani folk music heritage that perfectly reflects the Azerbaijani way of thinking. Despite the archaic history of this genre, it is a lively and constantly developing form of art, which is inseparable from contemporary culture. The term *mugham* has a number of meanings among which may be distinguished the genre of *mugham* and the mode of *mugham*. The seven major modes of mugham are *rast*, *shur*, *segghyah*, *charghyah*, *bayaty-shiraz*, *humayug* and *shushter*; each of them has its own height focus called *maye*.

Mugham often gives its name to a genre of traditional professional Azerbaijani music which characteristic feature is free rhythm and improvisational development of music on the basis of a certain mode. A mughamic composition, *dastghyah*, is the alternation of changing and constant elements, of improvised and concentrated episodes where a mughamic dramaturgy takes place. This dramaturgy is characterized by a slow and strained progression towards the very culmination.

Vocal mugham is an organic harmony of music and poetry. Various classical writers of Azerbaijani literature wrote lyrics especially for *mugham*, such as Nizami, Fizuli, Vaghyf and others, whose works are mainly dedicated to love and philosophical reflections on life.

Mugham is an inexhaustible source of inspiration for numerous contemporary composers. Uzeyir Hajibayov, founder of the Azerbaijan Composers School, combined two different music traditions in his creative work – the Western and Eastern traditions. In his theoretical works he prepared the basis of this combination, in which he reformed the mood and the composing systems of Mugham. His earliest practical step was the creation of the first Mugham opera in the East called *Leyli and Majnun*. This opera doesn't have a completely fixed score; it has only a kind of direction, consisting of story lines, a few musical pieces, a poetic text and the name of the mood, in which the Mugham-singers should perform.

Thus, this opera achieves a compromise between improvised and composed traditions, and between oral and written musical traditions. It is interesting that many operas were composed later in Azerbaijan, but none of them achieved such popularity as *Leyli and Majnun*. It did not lose its esthetic value and is still granted full auditoriums today.

The next significant stage on the way of the integration of Eastern and Western musical traditions was the creation of a new genre called 'symphonic Mugham'. The outstanding Azerbaijani composer Fikret Amirov became a founder of this genre; in his first symphonic Mughams he established the genre's general characteristics. For example, following the outline of traditional performance, Amirov structured his two compositions as suites of rhapsodic pieces that paralleled *mugham* improvisations, dances, or songs. Preserving the exact sequences of the traditional *dastgahs*, Amirov gave titles to each-section, which also provided written programs for the compositions. The impact of Fikrat Amirov's mughams is such that, contrary to other Azerbaijani composers who used individual stylistic features of mugham in their works, Amirov created a new symphonic form and thus, reconciles it with the process of renovation of a symphonic genre, which was actively going on in the West simultaneously in the middle of last century.

Another sample from our recent history is the creativity of Frangiz Ali-zadeh, born in 1947 and belonging to the post-war generation of Azerbaijani composers. The student of the distinguished Azerbaijani composer Kara Karayev, whom she inherited an affinity with the Second Viennese School, Ali-zadeh was the first performer of the works of Schönberg, Webern, Berg, Stockhausen, Crumb, and Xenakis in the USSR. In her own earliest work it was difficult to find even ultimate signs of the national coloring. But comprehensive perception of the modern reality in such way led her to get interested in her native, traditional cradle: combination of stable and mobile elements, determination and freedom in mugham. In 1979 F. Ali-zadeh wrote *Gabil-Sayagi*. Written upon request of the cellist Iwan Manigetti, and composed for cello and prepared piano, this piece imitates the style of the kamancha player Gabil Aliyev. Ali-Zadeh employs modern composing and performing devices to make the two instruments sound like a *mugham* trio. Besides the *kamancha*, the *tar*, and the *gava*, instruments associated with *mugham* performance, the composer also alludes to other Eastern instruments such as the *sitar* and the *tambur*. In this piece, she draws on the emotional content of mugham, as well as on its modal, melodic, and structural features.

The last example is the creation of a new direction in jazz called Mugham-Jazz. Many of you know well the talented jazz pianist-vocalist Aziza Mustafazade. Her compositions distinguish themselves by fabulous colors and spirits. Western critics call her “Shekherizada of Jazz”. But it is not always known that she is daughter to the famous jazz-composer and pianist Vagif

Mustafazade who was a founder of mugham jazz. Vagif Mustafazade developed his creativity in the 1960-70s, at the time of the so-called Iron Curtain, and probably due to this fact his name is not very well-known in the West. However, all contemporary Azerbaijani jazz-performers as well as many jazz musicians of the former Soviet Union consider him as their master. The most intriguing aspect of Mustafazade’s performance was that he did not actually play traditional American jazz. What he introduced to the public was mugham jazz. Considering improvisation as a bridge between the two traditions, Mustafazade mingled the modal intricacy of mugham with the rich harmony of jazz, fused familiar motifs and swing, used both jazz and mugham types of melodic elaboration, thus integrating two basically differing ways of musical thinking. His music exposed a highly individual style; but his individuality was inseparable from *mugham*.



photo: spjm/ Berthild Lievenbrück

Jazz music - Rolf Delfos

Professional music education and teaching improvisation to non-jazz majors

Rolf Delfos is trained both in classical and jazz performance, as a saxophonist he has a clear understanding of the difference between classical and jazz musicians.

For over five years, he has been teaching an improvisation course at the Royal Conservatoire directed at classical musicians. The main goal of this course is to break through the wall separating improvising from non-improvising musicians. Rolf Delfos maintains that breaking down this wall is necessary, and represents the future direction of music. His opinion is in line with the idea that the musician of the 21st century should be able to improvise.

Rolf Delfos first explained that his course is not about the development of specific jazz vocabulary such as swing eighth notes. Rather, his goal is to find ways to work with improvisation using the existing vocabularies of the musicians. He uses a variety of interactive instructional exercises to help classical musicians to gain experience in improvisation and strengthen the creative process. His exercises are described in three main areas: modal music; music based upon functional harmony; free improvisation based on graphics. After overcoming the initial shyness and fear, all students of Rolf Delfos enjoy very much the freedom to play their own, spontaneous created music without being tied to written down, previously conceived music.

Over the five-year history of this program Rolf Delfos has had wonderful results. This has convinced him that the various concepts that are beneficial to strengthening the creativity of II-V-I trained bebop musicians are beneficial to the classical musician as well. Apparently the essence of improvisation as developed in jazz can be deducted from jazz and be implemented in the classical curriculum. During the lecture-demonstration two violinists and a pianist, students from the classical music department of the Royal Conservatoire, played a number of short pieces. The pieces were based upon children songs, on classical compositions, or on a simple upon modal or tonal groove. In all of the pieces improvisation played an important central role. The piano student stated that since she was able to improvise, her playing of classical music had improved considerably. She now understands the harmonic implications of the classical compositions. Also her results in the studying of theory improved. Before she knew how to improvise, she considered theory subjects such as harmony, analysis and solfeggio to be interesting but separate subjects with no relation at all to her main subject. Now that she can improvise she understands much better the coherence of the theory subjects and the relation to playing classical piano.

The next step in the development of the improvisation course for classical musicians at the Royal Conservatoire is the development of teaching methods for the beginning musician in which improvisation plays an essential role. Many of the existing classical methods are not appealing to young children because there is no room for playing with music, for spontaneous music making. Once new methods in which improvisation plays an essential role are developed and used, a new generation of musicians will come forward with a new and freer approach to the instrument. Classical musicians who can improvise are better professionals because they are better equipped for the ever changing, barrier breaking music practice of the 21st century.



photo: private

6. Concerts

Two concerts rounded up the programme of the conference:

One evening was designed by Francesco Turrisi, who was born in Turin (Italy) in 1977. He started classical piano lessons at the age of 11. In 2003, he completed his bachelor degree in jazz piano at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague. His teachers were Frans Elsen, Rob van Bavel and Rob van Kreeveld. He also studied classical piano with Albert Brussee. At the same time he developed a passion for early repertoire, especially 17th century Italian music. Attracted by the similarities between the world of jazz and early music, he started studying harpsichord and basso continuo with Patrick Ayrton.

He was invited to give a concert, presenting different styles of improvised music. He played together with a Jazz Combo and a Baroque-ensemble.

The other evening was dedicated to spontaneous improvisation. Some conference participants and experts joined for an improvisation session. This very practical experience of not prepared improvisation was a great enrichment to those playing as well as to those listening.



7. Practical Improvisation Workshops

VOCAL FOLK IMPROVISATION

Workshop leader: Marc Loopuyt, Oud player

The choice of content and method depends, in this case, on a 40-year practice of Eastern traditional music. The objective here won't consist of making anyone improvise at any rate by lowering as much as possible the level of aesthetic requirement, but of referring to criteria of oral, collective, melodic, natural and ecological practice that all civilisations on planet Earth still had only one hundred years ago. This kind of practice looks like an excellent basis for teaching, collective practice and infinitely perfectible creation. Here, our objective will rather be to open, at least partially, the door that opens onto improvisation, by using the principles you can find in Arabic, Greek, Turkish, Persian or Indian music practised at a high professional level. All this is about making fun seriously, which means making fun tremendously as well. I find these old principles quite contemporary; the applications they allow are always well-adapted to the period of time, both easy to handle and endowed with a strong social communication potential.

These principles are:

RHYTHM

Rhythm lies behind any musical existence (like a heartbeat); it carries **poetry** and **melody**. In this framework, rhythm is male in relation to melody, and as such bears the mark of the female (and vice-versa). Thus, in rhythm the female sound DUM (low, resonant and enveloping) is opposed to the male sound TAK (curt, sharp and aggressive); the androgynous sound ES completes the two others. This is the arabo-turkish system – even though my interpretation of it is not explicitly taught in the Middle-East today.

WORKSHOP

The participants and I seat in circle; I'm seated North. Everyone follows the instructor either by imitating directly his move, or (for those facing him) by mirroring the imitation. When the general move is started, your visual reference is your direct neighbour. The DUM sound is represented by putting right hand on right knee, the TAK sound by right hand on left knee, and the ES by left hand on left knee. The left-handed ones will rather face the instructor and seat South; therefore, they will avoid crossing hands with the instructor and will move hand to hand. The first rhythm I suggest is the Soufian, from Turkey: / DUM - TAK ES TAK - ES - / DUM - TAK ES TAK - ES - / (all of them eighths, except the letters followed by a hyphen (- D), that represent quarters.) The move is repeated quite a number of times, while repeating aloud the formula: the Dervishes Brotherhood. The point is to put aside the analytical mental reflex, and therefore not to count the repetitions and feel carried away by the collective flow. Once the cycle is settled, while keeping carefully this rhythmic movement going, the students listen to and then repeat a very simple melody belonging to the same repertoire (in this case, an Ilahi of whirling Dervishes). This is the first step of this approach: to become familiar to this simple melody while letting the rhythm continue with very relaxed arm movements. The phases of practice won't exceed 3 to 4 minutes and are interrupted by anecdotes relating to this practice of music in the countries it originates from: Morocco, Syria, Turkey, etc.



Then, during the second part of the workshop session, the participants are invited to get up and make the same move with their feet, which involves to deal with the weight of the body as well. Once the movements are mastered, these few steps are oriented and then allow the circle to move as in a collective dance on which the singing finds its place again. We sit down and get up alternately until the melody is mastered.

It is then the right moment to learn a short rhythmic-melodic pattern based on a fourth, to be sung by the whole group: /D G - G D - G -/, and still punctuated by the initial rhythmic move. Once this pattern is mastered, the instructor places himself in front of several players in turn and suggests them, by singing, musical fragments for them to imitate, inspired by the first melody and its melodic mode (in this case, Nahawand mode). We'll have then a succession of structured exercises leading progressively to free imitations, and **then to invention literally speaking. The achievement, however humble, of a decent improvisation has to be earned.** It would be often demagogic to claim the opposite.

Of course, this is only a summarised description; this method involves naturally several meetings, and it is normally in alternation with sessions of **invention on a free rhythm**, apparently easier to carry out. In any case, as far as I'm concerned, the most important in this atmosphere is to combine the **collective qualitative** (rhythmic and melodic mode) with individual invention which, session after session, will never be hampered: on the contrary, invention will be set free and guided by a double Ariadne's thread woven by these two modalities.

The most famous improvisers, such as Django Reinhardt, Paco de Lucia or Ravi Shankar, knew how to turn the inescapable elements of their traditions (chord charts, compás, tala and raga) into as many springboards to perform the most incredible rhythmic-melodic acrobatics. They were from start endowed with extraordinary possibilities, and were plunged into a dense environment of oral musical practice. Why should we, as humble as we are and generally lacking these powerful environments, look down on what made them such geniuses?

Welcome to improvisation lovers: this may be a modest way to the marvels of the East, but let's not wait too long since growing academicism and blind slavery to a dominant culture damage a bit more every day the musical landscapes of our legendary East.



photo: EMC

IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC THERAPY

Workshop leader: Patricia Sabbatella, music therapist

Definition

Music therapy is a systematic process of intervention wherein the music therapist helps the client to improve or maintain his/her health (to enhance an individual's social, emotional, educational, and behavioural development), using music.

Therapeutic musical experiences are used with the purpose of creating insight and finding new ways for life development in relation to the client's problem, handicap or mental suffering.

Two types of goals can be defined:

- Non musical goals from a therapeutical perspective
- Musical goals from a musical perspective

Both together lead to a therapeutical musical experience

Methods

A music therapy session involves the client in a MUSICAL EXPERIENCE
there are four basic types:

Recreation / performing

The client performs music: he/she sings or plays on an instrument a pre-composed song or piece of music according to his/her capabilities, either by memory or using notation.

Composing

The client creates music, i.e. melodies /lyrics to songs, music for instruments, musical plays, etc. The music therapists helps the client on technical aspects of the process.

Listening

The client listens to pre-recorded, live or improvised music in any type or style. Responses of the client may include: imaginary, free-association, relaxation or activation, discussion of lyrics, remembering, emotional catharsis, movement, etc.

Improvisation

The client makes/creates music spontaneously with voice, body or an instrument. The client may improvise freely, responding spontaneously to the sounds as they emerge, or the client may improvise according to the specific musical directions given by the therapist. The client may improvise with the therapist, with other clients, or alone, depending on the therapeutic objective.

Each type of music therapeutic method has its own therapeutic potentials and applications, and involves:

- A different set of sensorimotor behaviours
- Requirement of different kinds of perceptual and cognitive skills
- Evocation of different kinds of emotions
- Engagement of a different interpersonal process

Music can be improvised by anyone at different levels

Improvisation is used as a main methodological approach in music therapy in Europe and Latin-American countries, as a means to engage with different clients populations (multi-handicapped children, adolescents with emotional disorders, palliative care, AIDS, adult psychiatric, autistic children). Improvisation is a form of music therapy that is build up upon here-now interactions of unique individuals who have their own perspectives, backgrounds and values. The application of improvisation in clinical work can be understand as a process that involves different functions:

MOTIVATION

- Why should we go through this experience?
- Why should we make music together or individually?
- What does the client expect to get out of this experience of improvisation?

UNDERSTANDING

- What does this experience mean for us?
- What does the experience mean for the client?

SENSITIVITY

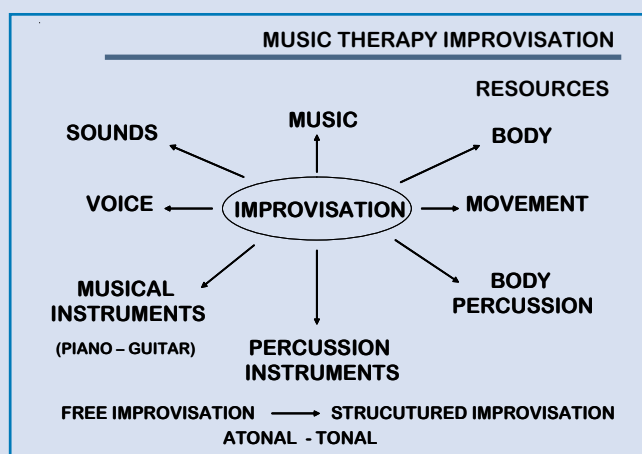
- How are we going to experience this together?
- How to be sensitive to the style and approach to music making of the client?

INTEGRATION

- In what way can we relate to, and integrate the experience?
- Connecting the music of the music therapist and the client.

CONTAINMENT

- What can I put into it – is it safe to enter this experience?
- Containing a client is part of the process: beginning and ending of music making.
- Reflection after improvisation is part of the process.



Conclusions

- Music as a collective experience: 'interactive' music making
- To experience a different way of 'relaxing' by active music making
- To develop spontaneity, creativity, freedom of expression, communication, and interpersonal skills, as these are the basic requirements of improvising music therapy exercises are useful
- To feel music making in a different way
- To express oneself in a different way using sound, music, movement, and voice
- To feel musical engagement with others
- To communicate and share feelings with others
- For personal growth and increasing self-esteem, music therapy exercises are not only oriented to people with diseases / disabilities

Theoretical background for improvisation in music therapy

Improvisation was introduced in music therapy nearly 40 years ago.

Some examples of literature:

Paul Nordoff & Clive Robbins (1960): *CREATIVE MUSIC THERAPY*

Juliette Alvin (1960): *FREE IMPROVISATION*

Mary Priestly (1970): *ANALITICAL MUSIC THERAPY*

8. Final discussion

chaired by Wouter Turkenburg

In the final discussion of the conference *"Improvisation in Music"*, many different aspects of improvisation were discussed, partly very controversial. Not all of the issues can be reproduced here, but only some of the main strands of the discussion:

1) *Improvisation as a basis for all music making*

Musical improvisation is often seen as specific to jazz or traditional folklore music. Many 'classical' musicians never came across improvisation during their professional training. Sometimes improvisation is considered as 'nonsense' and as loss of time. But in fact, it trains skills that are crucial for every musician, be it in western classical music, in jazz, pop or rock music or in any other musical style of the large range of 'world music'. Improvisation demands not only creativity, but also the knowledge and application of a given set of rules, carefully listening to other musicians and the ability to take over leadership at a given moment as well as to leave it to someone else. Musicians trained in western classical tradition often show a certain fear when they are asked to improvise. The absence of a fixed score, of a composition that has been written down beforehand, often creates a feeling of incertitude. However, improvisation played an important role also in classical music. The composed *œuvres* that, when being performed today, are pure reproductions, often had improvised parts when they were performed in the time of their composition. Therefore improvisation should be part of every curricula concerning musical professional training.

2) *Improvisation as a key to social competencies*

Improvisation demands a high attentiveness towards the musical partners. Even if the given rules are extremely liberal, they are still existent. Nevertheless, improvisation allows a playful application of these rules. Both, respecting while also breaking the rules, can be means for an interesting new creation. Mistakes are 'allowed', they will not be sanctioned, but can be integrated. Experience and experiment are crucial for improvisation. As important as comprehension and the application of rules, is the integration in the group of players. Each group has its own structure, each player its strengths and weaknesses. A careful observation of these characteristics is necessary to find the right moment to take the leadership or to step back in the *tutti*. Rather shy characters can playfully learn to take the role of the leader, when supported and encouraged by the group; rather extroverted characters can learn to integrate in the group. The definition of weakness and strength loses its clearness; peculiarities are colours on an equal footing illustrating the whole picture. Improvisation means communication and dialogue between the participating musicians, and – if performed – also with the public. This manifold dialogue between different parties can lead to the expression 'comprovisation', a term that is also used to denominate the crossing over between composition and improvisation. – These are only few examples for social skills that can be transported through improvisation. Musical improvisation can be of great help to improve social behaviour for extra-musical domains such as general education, business management or psychotherapy.

3) *Improvisation as an art form*

Improvisation is not only a tool to learn playing without sheet-music or to acquire social skills. It is also an art form of its own. Technical virtuosity of the instrument or voice, harmonical, rhythmical and melodical competence and emotional artistic expression make improvisation an art form that needs to be respected and acknowledged. However, the statement that the reproducing of composed works is purely repetitive and that improvisation is the only creative way of music making remains questionable.

Conclusion

Improvisation has many different aspects and can have positive impacts on the formation of the personality in many different ways – musical and non musical ones.

The conference *"Improvisation in Music"* showed only some examples of musical improvisation. It can clearly be stated that musical improvisation is both, a tool to improve musical and social skill and an art form in itself.

Improvisation needs more acknowledgement and acceptance; this conference has risen awareness and contributed to the current discussions.

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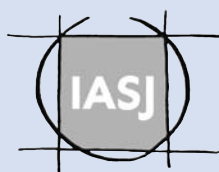
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