

Music 32

Improvisation

Prof. Kui Dong

Course Description

“Improvisation” describes a wide variety of musical practices around the world through which musicians at least partially extemporize a musical performance. This course aims to develop skills in improvisatory music-making both through practical experimentation and exercises, and by analyzing approaches to improvisation in selected musical styles, traditions, and works, with a focus on pieces by contemporary composers and avant-garde free improvisation. For a final project, students will prepare and present a concert of improvised works. *Dist: ART*

Prerequisite: Music 1, or exemption from Music 1.

Syllabus

<u>Week 1:</u>	Basic study of gestures, sounds and idea development
Listening:	Classic Northern Indian Music
	1. Raga: Suha-Kanara
	2. Tala: Tintal
Reading:	Stephen Slawek, (1998). "Keeping it Going: Terms, Practices, and Processes of Improvisation in Hindustani Instrumental Music." <i>In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Music Improvisation</i> , edited by Bruno Nettl with Melinda Russell, 335-368. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
<u>Week 2:</u>	Guest lecture: Don Glasgow on Jazz improvisation
Listening:	Lab study: Barbara Coast rehearsals
Reading:	Octavio Paz, "The Poem: Rhythm" 46-55
	John Cage, "Silence" (1961) 41-56

Week 3: Study of short session- Free Improvisation

Practicing: Solo/duet/trios and larger ensemble
Listening: Pauline Oliveros (20 March 2001). "Deep Listening."

A Program of the Pauline Oliveros Foundation.

<http://www.deeplisting.org>

Reading: Wassily Kandinsky (1977 edition; first published 1914)
Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Trans. M.T.H. Sadler. New York: Dover Publications.

Project (Solo vs. Ensemble)

Students are encouraged to use non-musical media such as silent film, poetry, or painting as a starting point for the improvisation project. Each student also develops a set of ideas that shape the solo part of the improvisation.

Week 4: Christian Wolff: Indeterminacy

Analysis: "Exercise" by Christian Wolff

Guest Lecture: Christian Wolff

Listening: Christian Wolff, "Exercises" (1973-1975)

Week 5: Workshop with Christian Wolff

Listening: Derek Bailey: Free Improvisation

Reading: Christopher Hatzis, (1998). "Ritual Versus Performance: The Future of Concert Music." *Harmony*, Forum of the Symphony Orchestra Institute, no. 7:80-90.

Week 6: John Zorn's Early Composition: Game Pieces

Listening: John Zorn: "Cobra" for group of improvisers and a promoter (conductor)

Reading: Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990), *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.

Week 7: Work Study: "Cobra"

Practicing: Cobra

Reading: Karlheinz Stockhausen (1968). *Aus den sieben tagen (from the seven days) 15 text compositions for intuitive music*. Vienna: Universal Edition.

Week 8: Work Study: “15 Text Compositions for Intuitive Music,”
Karlheinz Stockhausen

Week 9-10: Concert Preparation
List of work: Exercise I, V, and X, Christian Wolff
Cobra, John Zorn
Group improvisation
Solo or smaller ensemble improvisation w/o image

Evaluation:

50% Class participation, musical preparation and discussion
30% Performance and presentations in Recital Hall
15% Solo project
5% 2-page Report on your approach to improvisation

CONCERT PRESENTATION: class members produce and perform the concert. You provide playbill with titles, program notes, text and the performance, plus all publicity, setup and breakdown, front-of-house, reception, etc.