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Teaching improvisation and the pedagogical history of the Jimmy Giuffre 3

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Abstract
Improvisation pedagogy has presented a challenge to music educators since jazz courses began being offered in North American universities in the 1950s, a development which has raised important pedagogical questions ranging from 'Can improvisation be taught?' to 'Should it be taught?' Following on the increase in academic writing on improvisation over the past decade, in this article I draw on practice-based and ethnographic research on the under-documented yet influential American jazz ensemble the Jimmy Giuffre 3 to propose alternative approaches to teaching improvisation at the post-secondary level. The remembrances of these master improvisers offer an accessible entryway into free improvisation for educators and students who have been either resistant to this part of the jazz tradition, or simply unsure of where to start exploring collectively improvised music-making. I argue that if properly presented, improvisation pedagogy can aid students in developing a disposition for creative thinking, potentially enabling them to become critical, engaged citizens and productive participants in the cultural field.

Keywords
creativity, improvisation, jazz, Jimmy Giuffre, musicianship

Introduction

> Speaking about improvisation is counterproductive, because if I explain it to you, I'm presumptuously assuming that I know best how it should be done, and then you don't have to come up with your own solutions. (Paul Bley, personal communication, 25 March 2006)

The role of improvisation in the music education system has been a subject of much debate since jazz courses began being offered at universities, conservatories, and high schools in the mid-20th century. The growth of interest in jazz improvisation in university music departments has required instructors to develop teaching strategies that are distinct from the text-based methodologies that

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dominate Eurocentric music pedagogy. As the jazz curriculum at universities has mirrored that of the European music tradition in becoming classicized around particular histories, repertories, and performance practices, it is necessary to continually revisit our approaches to music pedagogy to account for changes in the cultural field that students enter when they leave academic institutions. The issues raised in recent scholarly writing about improvisation point to the potential benefits of music schools moving away from a trade school model of education towards encouraging students to become critical, creative citizens. Such an ideological shift is crucial in a cultural context where the institutions that support the musical trades – such as symphony orchestras and jazz clubs – are disappearing at an accelerating rate. If students are encouraged to develop their 'own musical material and lexicon', we can begin to connect music education to deeper social issues by helping them to self-identify as producers of culture, rather than as consumers and copyists of existing art forms (Lewis, 2000, p. 83). In this article I will examine the rehearsal practices of the Jimmy Giuffre 3 – an under-documented yet influential American jazz ensemble – as an example of a collaborative, heuristic learning situation that can serve as a model for educators and students who are interested in searching for creative responses to the perpetual changes in our musical environment.

Hickey (2009) offers an insightful argument for reevaluating the role of improvisation in the music education system in an article titled 'Can Improvisation Be "Taught"?: A Call for Free Improvisation in Our Schools'. She argues that 'the music education community's current drive to include improvisation in school music is limited in its approach', and that currently dominant teaching strategies inhibit students' 'creative musical growth' (p. 286). She goes on to assert that improvisation cannot be taught; rather, it is 'a disposition to be enabled and nurtured' (p. 286). Scholar and improviser George Lewis (2000) echoes these observations, noting the emergence of a critical discourse around improvisation pedagogy:

> As the study of improvisative modes of musicality, regardless of tradition, has begun to assume a greater role in the music departments of a number of major institutions of higher learning, it is to be expected that the nature, necessity and eventual function of such pedagogy would be scrutinized – and eventually contested – from a variety of standpoints, both inside and outside the academy. (p. 79)

The rising academic interest in improvisation is represented in part by the multidisciplinary Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice (ICASP) project, based at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, and the International Society for Improvised Music (ISIM), which was founded in 2006. Along with the increase in academic work on improvisation, in my work as a freelance music teacher I have observed that enrollment in university jazz programs seems to be steadily growing, so it seems increasingly urgent to scrutinize the currently dominant teaching strategies if educators are interested in fostering students' 'creative musical growth'. Hickey's article is based on research into improvisation pedagogy at the level of early childhood education, but many of her observations are relevant to a critique of the institutions of higher learning to which Lewis refers. The purpose of this article is to offer suggestions for developing alternative pedagogical strategies at the university level.

The study of improvisation in university music programs has generally been confined to jazz departments, where teaching practices have coalesced around instructing students in how to navigate a repertoire of standard tunes using patterns and melodic phrases derived from the pitches contained in a harmonic sequence. Although this skill is crucial for improvising in a jazz context, few musicians would argue that the 'rote regurgitation of prepared patterns' (Lewis, 2000, p. 83) will lead one to the kinds of 'self-expression and collective experimentation' (Borgo, 2007, p. 65) that are perpetually evoked by improvisers – jazz or otherwise – as the goal of improvised musical performance.

Borgo (2007) attributes the difficulty institutions experience with nurturing and evaluating student creativity to how the 'music academy' operates under the notion that 'the process of learning "what" and "how" to improvise' occurs 'prior to, and separate from, actually "doing" it' (p. 65). Trombonist and writer Scott Thomson (2007) echoes this description of the systemic impediments to effective improvisation pedagogy:

> Most students learn to play music in a particular style or genre, often starting as children, and the goals of their education correspond with the established aesthetic criteria of the style in question. … In contrast, collective improvisation … does not proscribe sounds, sound sources, or instrumental techniques and, though the priorities of each performer will inform the aesthetic goals of any performance, strict notions of technical excellence are difficult to assess. (pp. 2–3)

Thomson and Borgo argue that a meaningful engagement with improvisation requires music educators to nurture situations in which students are free to collectively experiment, and that institutions need to develop evaluation strategies that attend more closely to students' individual creative growth, as opposed to measuring skill acquisition against a standardized curriculum.

Rather than directly answering the question in her title, Hickey (2009) concludes her article with a recommendation for further research to address gaps in the school music curriculum: '[We] need to collect pedagogical histories of the masters in the field in order to learn more about how they learned. … Information gleaned from these studies should be made useable by current school music teachers' (p. 295). Throughout her article Hickey references formative ethnographic works by Lewis (2000) and Berliner (1994) as examples of how improvisation is taught and learned. These texts, along with others by Prévost (1995, 2011), Bailey (1993), Monson (1996), Thomson (2007) and Borgo (2007), offer important 'pedagogical histories', as they all deal with improvisation as both a skill that is learned and refined over time and a disposition for creativity that translates these skills into meaningful musical experiences. Building on these and other works, I will present my research into the rehearsal methods of the Jimmy Giuffre 3 as a specific example of masters in the field whose pedagogical histories offer a model that educators can use to develop fresh strategies for teaching improvisation. The Giuffre 3's rehearsal techniques – which I will describe in detail in the following section – are compelling for how they deconstruct the basic building blocks of Western music towards the goal of finding new ways for an ensemble to improvise together.

Although in their time the Giuffre 3's innovations were primarily contained in the jazz field, when transplanted into the contemporary musical context their ideas represent what Sarath (2010) calls a 'trans-stylistic' approach to improvisation. By questioning the musical conventions they had internalized, the trio opened themselves to sounds and modes of musical organization that were different from the dominant jazz performance practices of their time. Sarath argues that to foster creativity educators need to develop teaching strategies that offer a '"user-friendly" entryway' for musicians to learn to improvise together:

> The very thought of making music apart from the printed page can be intimidating for many musicians, and this challenge may be exacerbated when style-specific constraints are imposed at the outset. By contrast, the trans-stylistic approach seeks first to elicit a creative flow that extends from each musician's unique … [musical background] and life experience. (2010, p. 1)

If approached with a willingness to experiment, the musical exercises that can be extrapolated from the recollections of the Jimmy Giuffre 3 can aid in the development of new approaches to improvisation pedagogy that allow space for and nurture the musical diversity of the contemporary classroom.

Jimmy Giuffre and the practice of free improvisation

Jimmy Giuffre led several different drummer-less trios under the name The Jimmy Giuffre 3 throughout his career, the best known of which featured guitarist Jim Hall and either trombonist Bob Brookmeyer or bassist Ralph Peña. This version of the Giuffre 3 had a jazz hit in the late 1950s with a tune called 'The Train and the River'. My focus is on Giuffre's subsequent trio with pianist Paul Bley and bassist Steve Swallow, which was his primary musical project from 1960 to 1962. Giuffre, Bley, and Swallow – in direct response to the pioneering work of Ornette Coleman – participated in the avant-garde jazz scene in New York City in the early 1960s that included musicians such as Cecil Taylor, Don Ellis, Carla Bley, George Russell, and Bill Dixon, among others. These musicians were concerned with finding ways to structure improvised performances that avoided the compositional forms, harmonic progressions, rhythmic schemes, and melodic structures that typified jazz of the late 1950s.

In their brief time together the Jimmy Giuffre 3 recorded three studio albums: *Fusion* (1961) and *Thesis* (1961) on Verve Records, and *Free Fall* (1962) on Columbia. The music on these albums is an important link between the song and pulse-based free jazz of Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler, and the less-structured music of the European free improvisers who emerged in the late 1960s, such as Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Peter Brötzmann, and Eddie Prévost. Giuffre, Bley, and Swallow disbanded their trio in 1962, reuniting briefly in the early 1990s before Giuffre became too ill to perform; my investigation will focus on the trio's initial period of activity. I hope that this brief pedagogical history will aid in the re-evaluation of Jimmy Giuffre's contribution to improvised music in North America and Europe.

My academic interest in the Jimmy Giuffre 3 began with reading Swallow's (1998) liner notes for the CD reissue of *Free Fall*, which suggested to me that this trio would be a compelling case study for researching how improvisers learn:

> From the moment we came together, the trio rehearsed several times a week, long and hard. … We set about to subject all the unconscious, given assumptions in the music we played to stern scrutiny and reevaluation. … We spent as much time talking as playing at our rehearsals, asking such questions as: How can we play at a given rate of speed, but without a fixed tempo? For how long is it possible to improvise without reference to a tonic pitch? What's the longest unbroken melody we can play?

The revelation that this ensemble developed a systematic method of practicing ensemble improvisation was intriguing, given the dominant conception of free improvisation as spontaneous, 'personalized, creative expression' (Sarath, 2010, p. 2). In addition, much recent scholarly work on improvisation revolves around the political and social implications of improvised music, largely due to the important connections between free jazz and the civil rights movement in the US in the 1950s and 1960s. Understanding the political context for free jazz is crucial, yet the academic discourse tends to obscure the particular musical materials that early free improvisers used and developed in their search for alternative methods of music-making. Swallow's comments point towards the possibility of a material analysis of free improvisation; such an analysis could begin to address the significant gaps in jazz education around post-bebop improvisatory practices.

To follow up on Swallow's brief description of the band's working methods in his liner notes, I arranged telephone interviews with Swallow and Bley. Jimmy Giuffre had unfortunately lost the ability to speak due to Parkinson's disease in the decade preceding this research project, so I did not have the opportunity to interview him before his death in 2008. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from Bley and Swallow are from these personal interviews, which were conducted on 25 March 2006 and 16 February 2006, respectively. Bley's and Swallow's detailed answers to my

questions provided significant insight into the music documented on their recordings, and into the avant-garde jazz scene in New York in the early 1960s. Their recollections are presented here as just one example of the myriad developments that took place in jazz in the early 1960s. There were many other ensembles engaged in similar work, but the Giuffre 3 are significant in that they were able to document their efforts on recordings, and in how they became an important touchstone for many European musicians who were also seeking new ways to improvise. The trio's recordings, though heard by a limited audience, contributed to the formation of a distinct improvised music field in the late 1960s that was contemporaneous with the jazz field in which Giuffre, Bley, and Swallow were situated.

Following these conversations with the surviving members of the trio, I worked to integrate Bley's and Swallow's ideas about ensemble rehearsing into my creative practice and teaching. I began incorporating the Giuffre 3's concepts into rehearsals with my own trio, a process that resulted in transformative experiences for each of us, and the development of a coherent group approach to ensemble interaction. The teaching exercises I have derived from Bley's and Swallow's recollections have proven to be just as effective and inspiring to beginning improvisers, offering students an accessible entryway into free improvisation.

Agency, creativity, and disposition

The notion that it is not possible to teach creativity is a common theme in discussions about fine arts education, and Hickey (2009) reiterates this dictum in the firm assertion that '*True* improvisation cannot be taught – it is a disposition to be enabled and nurtured' (p. 286). Leaving aside the problematic notion that there is such a thing as 'true' improvisation, Hickey's comments point to the difficulties in encouraging and evaluating creative thinking in an institutional context. To respond to this challenge, it is necessary to establish an environment where students are encouraged to think critically about the sounds they absorb in the course of their lives, rather than treating music as a set of rules and stylistic ideals to be learned and reproduced. Hickey addresses this point directly when she suggests that creativity emerges through 'teaching thinking as a disposition rather than any one skill or set of skills to be learned. That is to think of teaching in terms of enculturation through exposure to cultural exemplars and the subsequent development of a disposition to understand' (p. 286). The way forward, she proposes, involves creating situations where students will develop their critical and creative thinking capacities through 'learner-directed activity', a process that will require teachers to develop alternative documentary forms and evaluative strategies to judge students' independent experimental work (p. 292). The notion of developing a disposition to improvise – which English percussionist Eddie Prévost (1995) refers to as an 'investigative ethos' (p. 3) – is crucial to the productive use of the examples I will give of the Jimmy Giuffre 3's rehearsal methods. Once students understand the basic parameters of these methods, the learning process becomes entirely self-directed. By internalizing a disposition to work creatively with the materials and knowledge they have on hand, students might begin to move beyond reproducing the music of others towards developing personal musical responses to their specific social and cultural situations.

This goal of fostering an interest in critical social engagement through music education has a meaningful parallel in Angus's (2009) writings on the state of the humanities in the education system. Angus argues that the humanities offer the intellectual tools to resist the increasingly entrenched conception of a university education 'as simply an aid to the individual confronting the job market' (p. 14). He goes on to assert that the humanities nurture '[the] ability to think meaningfully about one's experience, [which] allows a deeper judgment of the current situation' (p. 19) and

that 'genuine searching requires criticism of received truth and constituted powers' (p. 22). Angus's views have particular relevance to the ongoing debate about the role of music departments within the university system, as the 'job market' for which music students are preparing has been steadily shrinking over the last few decades. As Angus notes, creativity is contingent on criticism of the inherited materials (received truths) and genre conventions (constituted powers) that characterize a particular art field. This ethos clearly informs Steve Swallow's comments above. Teaching creativity – or, in Hickey's words, teaching thinking as a disposition – requires establishing a learning environment that allows students to experiment with generating new (to them at least) musical forms and ensemble relationships. If creatively presented, improvisation pedagogy can mirror Angus's vision of the humanities, as studying improvisation can foster in students a critical attitude towards art and their role as producers of culture.

To clarify further, I am not suggesting that improvisation is an 'ideologically correct' way of making music that we are ethically obligated to encourage our students to pursue (Stanbridge, 2008, p. 8). I accept Stanbridge's (2008) critique of the tendency towards utopianism in recent improvisation scholarship, and wish to be clear that improvisation, like any art practice, has its limits for generating social change. However, the study of improvisation can potentially lead students towards an expansion of their understanding of what it means to be a musician in contemporary society. I also recognize the danger in presenting a singular ensemble as a 'cultural exemplar' in an educational context, for such an example might influence students to simply recreate a particular set of sounds to please those evaluating them. We must therefore be conscious of how we use these exemplars to not inhibit students from making creative discoveries and crafting their own judgments about their experiences. We must also be wary of making improvised music a discrete stream within the academy in the way that jazz and classical music currently coexist, for the productive value of improvisation lies in the friction it generates when cross-pollinated with other performance practices.

Although I will present the Giuffre 3's innovations in terms of how they departed from the standard jazz practices of their day, I do not propose that free improvisation is somehow more meaningful than jazz improvisation, or that true creativity demands a comprehensive rejection of the music of the past. As Steve Swallow explained it, the trio saw what they were doing as an extension rather than rejection of the jazz tradition:

> I think we moved on purpose and deliberately away from references to the Tin Pan Alley tradition, away from the usual piano-bass-lead voice structure of the music, and away from tonal references and fixed pulse. Very often we would stop a piece if any of us felt that we were lapsing into vernacular, or into roles that had been played out many times before. I don't think that that meant that we disapproved of *Sonny Rollins at the Village Vanguard*; on the contrary, we revered that stuff. In a way that's the most sincere praise of Sonny Rollins – not to even dare to venture into what he had done so well.

Despite their decision to consciously avoid the conventional roles of their instruments, Bley and Swallow, and to the best of my knowledge Giuffre himself, continued to call themselves jazz musicians, as opposed to the group of English improvisers that emerged after the Giuffre 3's initial recordings – such as Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, and Eddie Prévost – who consciously distanced themselves from jazz. The political and racial dynamics of the jazz and improvised music fields are far more complex than I can deal with here – for an important account of these issues, see Lewis (2004, 2008), who has written persuasively on the implications of imagining improvisation as a dehistoricized musical practice. The exercises I describe in the next section will likely lead students towards the kinds of sounds that are historically identified with free improvisation, but this approach is not intended as a rejection or dismissal of established jazz practices. As Sarath (2010)

notes, 'The trans-stylistic approach is not to replace style-specific engagement but to lay groundwork that enables musicians to move freely between both worlds' (p. 2). The Giuffre 3's rehearsal techniques offer a supplemental process that can aid students in making the necessary connections between the skills they acquire through conventional methods and the next step of creating art that reflects the aesthetic and political ideals of the people making it.

The practice

The pedagogical strategies that may be extrapolated from the Jimmy Giuffre 3's rehearsal techniques hinge critically on the understanding that the trio intended them as experiments for refining their 'musical ears' and ability to interact with each other (Borgo, 2007, p. 66). Their rehearsal techniques were therefore not expected to generate coherent musical performances in the manner of indeterminate compositions, conducted improvisations, or theatre improv games; instead, their playing in rehearsal was intentionally removed from the frame of performance to allow them to focus on solving particular musical problems that, in Steve Swallow's words, 'were there and demanding solutions'. It is important to note that the trio's performances on their recordings are based on compositions that Giuffre wrote in response to their playing in rehearsal. Swallow described their creative process: 'We'd discuss something, Jimmy would hear something in our playing on Tuesday, and on Wednesday there would be a new piece that expanded on what had happened on Tuesday.' Their rehearsal techniques were therefore designed to broaden the trio's conceptions of what was possible musically when they played together, and they realized these possibilities through the improvised sections of compositions, most of which were written by Giuffre. Following the Giuffre 3's innovations, and those of other improvisers and composers such as Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, John Cage, and Cornelius Cardew, many musicians in Europe and North America began improvising entire performances without any predetermined compositional frameworks. The first recording of an entirely improvised performance in the jazz field was led by Lennie Tristano in 1949, so there was historical precedent for the Jimmy Giuffre 3's approach to ensemble improvisation; however, other musicians did not follow Tristano's prescient example in a sustained way until over a decade later, when the idea of free improvisation began to gain traction among adventurous musicians.

Paul Bley described the trio's rehearsal techniques as being based on 'premises for improvising'. This phrase refers to the treatment of 'high-level aspects of musical gesture, interaction, and form' as materials for manipulation, as opposed to restricting oneself to fixed systems of sonic organization, such as predetermined compositional forms, the Western tonal system, or a steady rhythmic pulse (Borgo, 2007, p. 76). Bley provided details on this concept:

> If you sense the band has roots all the way to the beginning of early jazz, when the band plays you can use these indications as premises for improvising. For example, the blues can be a premise. You don't need a particular piece, a key, or even to have twelve bars – you just need agreement on the premise, which leads the band to a certain feeling. The liberties you take with the basic premise are up to you.

An equally important idea that determined their approach was Giuffre's notion – which he traced to his interest in chamber music – that the instruments in the trio should be 'equal voiced, where everybody has exactly one-third of the responsibility', rather than being limited to the conventional soloist and accompaniment roles of traditional jazz (Bley). With these ideas as an operational framework, the Giuffre 3 examined basic musical elements and constructed exercises to search, in Swallow's words, for 'musical possibilities that we didn't know existed before'. I have chosen three particular musical exercises based on the premises of tonality, pulse, and counterpoint to

illustrate the Giuffre 3's approach to learning to improvise together. The brief descriptions to follow demonstrate a particular way of thinking about music that can be productively applied to a wide range of other premises and musical contexts.

For the first example, Steve Swallow recalled that tonality was a recurring topic of debate, and described how exploring this premise presented him with specific challenges:

> We spent a lot of time talking about whether or not reference to a root note, to tonality, was inevitable – was it possible and/or desirable to play without reference to tonality at all? As a bass player I had a strong vested interest in roots, but Jimmy would throw down the gauntlet and say something like: 'Stop seeing that thing you're playing as a bass. Now, let's play for ten minutes, and you're not the bass at any time during those ten minutes.' So we'd do it, and I would get frustrated and say something like, 'I can't help it, I'm the lowest guy. When I play a note I hear what's going on on top of it, and if I sense that if I moved a half step down I would cause a V-I resolution to happen then it's virtually impossible for me not to do it.' And Jimmy would simply say, 'Well, don't do it next time and see what happens.'

Swallow's efforts to resist his tendency to resolve notes according to tonal conventions ultimately led to the tonally ambiguous performances featured on the trio's recordings, and, perhaps just as importantly, to the bass assuming a more interactive role in their music than it does in standard jazz ensembles. Bley encountered similar instrumental challenges in the trio's explorations of tonality and harmony, and modified his playing accordingly:

> A pianist has two hands, so why would you limit your role to outlining the harmony by playing a set of rhythmic chords? In a sense harmony is really simultaneous vertical melody, so in Giuffre's music you could play fewer chords and treat the piano more like a horn [traditionally the lead voice in a jazz ensemble, assigned primarily to voicing horizontal, melodic material].

These examples demonstrate how addressing one premise leads to other questions; in this case, exploring the structures and limits of tonality revealed the need for the individuals in the group to question and modify their approaches to playing their instruments.

The trio had similar ideas about manipulating musical time, and conducted a purposeful deconstruction of the regular pulse that characterizes most jazz. Bley described their intentions with this premise:

> The three of us had all played a lot of music with a steady pulse. When we started to work together we played a lot of free music without any pulse at all, and also a lot of music that went from pulse to no pulse and back. … One was not better than the other. The trick is to have the flexibility to do what you want, when you want.

Building on this ideal of rhythmic flexibility, Swallow provided detail on how they worked towards expanding their understanding of musical time:

> We'd spend hours talking about how if you're not going to play with a fixed pulse, how many gradations of tempo can we conceive of and execute? Is there a tempo that exists between medium and fast, or medium and slow? Then can you split those in half? In addition to the question of whether or not we can play without reference to a fixed pulse, the question arose: can we each play a distinct pulse so that there are three clear pulses going on at the same time, without stumbling as we listen to each others' pulse? That would be several days' worth of work.

In treating time in this way the Giuffre 3 elevated pulse to the level of the primary elements of variation in jazz improvisation – melody, harmony, and rhythm – and thus opened up a range of new musical possibilities.

One further example demonstrates how the Giuffre 3 worked towards developing the kind of collective, shared knowledge that might be called 'ensemble musicianship'. Swallow described an exercise they developed to explore how the registers of their three instruments influenced their interactions:

> As an exercise we would very consciously play in the same register, all of us clustered around middle C for ten or fifteen minutes. Then we would stop and do the opposite – Paul would play as far above Jimmy as he could and I would play as far below Jimmy as I could, and we would observe the effect of the three voices being separated by as much air as possible. That indicated to us that it was a lot easier to hear the music as counterpoint when there was separation between the voices. When we played right on top of each other it tended to sound like clusters and it was more difficult to distinguish the individual voices. Each musical approach would have its place, and we now had a better understanding of how our instruments could work together.

This exercise demonstrates how even a physically fixed premise, such as the ranges of the instruments in an ensemble, can be unpacked to reveal internalized musical conventions that are analogous to Angus's 'received truths'. Once opened up for close analysis, these conventions can be deconstructed towards developing, in Lewis's (2000) words, an individual and collective 'lexicon' based on the participants' experiences as they experiment with various premises (p. 83).

Swallow's and Bley's accounts of playing with Jimmy Giuffre indicate that their basic goal in rehearsal was to develop a collective well of sonic resources that could be drawn from to suit the demands of particular musical situations. This development of musical knowledge involved a combination of playing and talking about music, and was dependent on a shared 'commitment to [an] investigative ethos' (Prévost, 1995, p. 3). The ensemble-based pedagogical exercises that may be derived from these examples can begin to address Borgo's (2007) concerns about contemporary music education:

> By conceiving of musical 'knowledge' as individual, abstract, relatively fixed, and unaffected by the activity through which it is acquired and used, music programs have devalued the experimental, exploratory, and collective qualities that … inform the development of musical ears, memory, instincts, sensitivity, and, ultimately, creativity. (p. 66)

Borgo goes on to stress the importance of experiential learning in music, arguing that it is not enough to simply foster an interest in improvisation. Creativity requires refining the kinds of skills that can only be developed through collective experimentation: 'Far from a simple matter of disposition, if one learns to play music through the predominant use of inscribed forms of knowledge, making the necessary connections between ear, mind, and hand to become a fluent creative improviser may always remain difficult' (p. 67). Although there are significant challenges to teaching and evaluating improvisation, teachers and administrators can begin the process of critically examining their current approaches by creating situations where students can conduct the kinds of collective experiments pursued by the Jimmy Giuffre 3. Increasing students' opportunities for collaborative, self-directed learning will give them both the musical skills and creative dispositions to respond to the shifting demands of the cultural field.

Conclusion

The Jimmy Giuffre 3's recordings are over five decades old, so the musical innovations they contain have long since been incorporated into the general set of practices that characterize the improvised music field. Rather than pointing towards a new approach to free improvisation,

this research on the Jimmy Giuffre 3's rehearsal methods illuminates the need for an epistemological shift in the discourse of improvisation pedagogy to account for persistent gaps in currently dominant teaching methods. Two key points emerge from this analysis: the importance of collective experimentation to developing musical knowledge, and the need to recognize that free improvisation, which is discursively reduced to being about emotional and political expression, is also a rigorous, thoughtful, and material-based musical practice. As such it merits the same kind of disciplined engagement that is applied to the more easily codified harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic elements of bebop jazz. By stripping away the tonal structures and rhythmic schema that characterize Western music, Giuffre, Bley, and Swallow were able to focus on the interactive elements of ensemble music-making, elements that cannot be easily reduced to, or communicated through, conventional musical notation. Bley's and Swallow's descriptions of the Giuffre 3's rehearsal methods thus offer an important historical link between the harmony- and composition-based learning strategies comprehensively documented by Berliner (1994) and Monson (1996), and the practice of free improvisation as described by Bailey (1993) and Prévost (2011).

The insights gained from analyzing the rehearsal practices of the Jimmy Giuffre 3 will not be new to experienced improvisers, for they already know that free improvisation requires discipline, practice, and critical thinking, and will likely be familiar with the substantial recorded history of the music. But it is hoped that Bley's and Swallow's descriptions of this formative time in their musical lives will offer an entryway into free improvisation for educators and students who have been either resistant to this part of the jazz tradition, or simply unsure of where to start exploring collectively improvised music-making. Based on my own practical experience with this material, the Giuffre 3's approach has just as much to offer experienced improvisers as it does to beginners, for as bassist Mark Dresser notes: 'The more we … develop [our] ears and skills, the better equipped [we] will be to work in an ever-changing situation' (Borgo, 2007, p. 82). Students who explore the ideas documented here will not necessarily create new musical forms and practices in a global sense, but they are likely to make important personal creative breakthroughs, particularly if they have limited experience with improvising outside of the normative harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic forms of Western music. The rehearsal practices that might be generated through working with Bley's and Swallow's accounts of playing with Jimmy Giuffre should not be expected to produce interesting music on their own, but if treated with curiosity and an appropriate level of rigor these exercises can enhance students' musicianship in meaningful ways.

To conclude, a music education that includes improvisation can go only a small way towards generating a more critical, creative citizenry. As Stanbridge (2008) argues, imposing a 'socially transformative role' on improvisation reflects unrealistic expectations on the ability of musical practices to enact 'an extra-musical agenda' (p. 8). Although the potential for music to generate large-scale social change is minimal, nurturing in students a disposition that recognizes that our situations – both musical and social – are mutable rather than fixed offers the possibility of local, gradual change. If we can foster situations where students are compelled to find their own solutions to musical problems, then they might begin to mobilize the resulting sense of agency in other parts of their lives to deal with the inequalities and injustices of contemporary society that artistic activity alone cannot adequately address.

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Pete Johnston studied composition and double bass at Dalhousie University. Following several years of creative unemployment, he completed a Master's degree in composition at York University, followed by a PhD in Ethnomusicology, in which he wrote about the free improvisation scene in London, England. Since graduating he has resumed his post behind the bass, and performs in numerous groups in Toronto including Muskox and See Through Trio. He has released three CDs of his own music and has published in the journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation.*