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CONTEMPORARY IMPROVISATION FOR CLASSICAL MUSICIANS

Abstract: Improvisation is a topic of increasing concern among scholars and performers from a variety of disciplines. This paper reports on an improvisation ensemble for classical performers and composers that the author directs at the New England Conservatory in Boston, Massachusetts. An account of the author's approach to the pedagogy of improvisation is situated within historical and theoretical contexts, as well as a narrative account of the author's path from training in classical music to a career as an improvising violist.

Key words: improvisation, pedagogy, jazz, classical music, collaboration, conservatory, crossover

Introduction

In recent years the concept of improvisation has been subject to intensified interest in a variety of disciplines related and unrelated to musical performance. As a performer, pedagogue and academic whose work deals closely with musical improvisation, I have welcomed these developments and followed them with interest. The markedly multi-disciplinary quality of current discussions about improvisations mirrors my own experience as a scholar and performer. When the experiences of performers are joined by new perspectives opened by a variety of academic discourses, new insights and opportunities for dialogue emerge. The ubiquity of the term 'multi-disciplinary', however, can mask its significant challenges. My own struggles to reconcile the divergent concerns of performer, pedagogue and scholar have shown me that multi-disciplinarity requires the willingness to inhabit uncomfortable margins and intersections in order to glean the unique perspectives such places can offer. Similarly, the ubiquity of the term 'improvisation' can mask the diversity of knowledge goals, lived experiences, and claims to authority that coexist rightfully, if sometimes awkwardly, beneath the single label. 'Improvisation' is a broad concept upon which a great many things can be projected without particular coherence. A fruitful discussion of improvisation needs to situate this term with respect to time, place, and community.

In academia, new journals such as *Critical Studies of Improvisation*, dedicated issues of journals such as the one in which this paper appears, and edited collections of essays such as Ajay Heble and Daniel Fishchlin's *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue* address the topic of improvisation. New communities of inquiry have formed around organizations such as the International Society for Improvised Music, and the multi-sited research project Improvisation, Community and Social Practice. Researchers from a variety of disciplinary perspectives – including performance studies, literary studies, gender studies, and studies of ethnicity and identity – consider improvisation not simply to be a

musical practice, but 'a complex social phenomenon that mediates transcultural inter-artistic exchanges that produce new conceptions of identity, community, history, and the body'.[1]

The phrase 'improvised music' (or 'improv') has also recently emerged as a label for a sphere of eclectic musical activity encompassing a broad spectrum of musical genres, formats and instrumentation. Here, 'improvisation' involves the real or imagined dissolution of boundaries between musical performers, between musical genres and the world's musical traditions, and between performers and audiences. Improvisation, in this context, stands for the best potentials of contemporary globalized society. As the mission statement of the International Association for Improvised Music claims, 'improvisation is at the heart of a new musical paradigm that is uniquely reflective of contemporary life.'[2]

In pedagogy, improvisation is increasingly seen as an important component of musical training. In 2001, the United States' Music Educators National Conference amended its National Standards for Music Education to include improvisation as a part of the music curriculum at every level of public schooling. Since the American String Teachers Association established an *Alternate Styles* section in 2003, workshops on jazz, improvisation and non-Western classical and traditional music have become among the most popular offerings at the organization's national conference. In Europe, the Association Européenne des Conservatoires, the International Association of Schools of Jazz, and the European Music Union have presented sessions advancing improvisation as an essential component of professional training for musicians in all genres.[3] In the classical music academy an interest in improvisation is manifest in the emergence of historically-informed performance practice, which seeks to reconstruct stylistic practices largely lost in the mid-18th century, and in the inception of a forward-looking practice which seeks to enhance the relevance of classical music training by preparing emerging professionals for careers in a rapidly changing musical world.[4]

This paper concerns the emergence of a concept of improvisation in a new musical space, the classical music conservatory. In this zone, the questions of who should improvise (and what, and why) emerge with particular clarity. Improvisation is increasingly, if unevenly, acknowledged as important, but there is little consensus as to the nature of improvisation, how it should be taught, or its relevance to the training of professional classical performers. Improvisation raises questions about the role of the classical music conservatory in the 21st century. Should classical musicians be trained to revive historical improvisation practices in classical music, or to embrace emerging practices that can seem, at times, to threaten tradition? Is the purpose of improvisation training to uphold tradition by producing better classical performers, or to better equip these performers for the vagaries of a professional career in an uncertain marketplace?

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[1] *Improvisation, Community and Social Practice*, <http://www.improvcommunity.ca/research>, 12 September 2008.
[2] *International Society for Improvised Music*, <http://isim.edsarath.com/about.htm>, 12 September 2008.
[3] Wouter Turkenburg, 'Presentation to the General Assembly of the European Music Union', *31st Annual Meeting and Conference of the European Music Union*, 14 November 2006, Kuopio, Finland.
[4] George Caird and Richard Shrewsbury, *Music Education in a Multi-cultural European Society: Final Project Publication*, Utrecht, NL, Association of European Conservatories, 2001.

These questions are made yet more problematic by the absence of viable models for training classical performers to improvise. The rise of jazz pedagogy in the United States beginning in the 1970s, and subsequently in Europe in the 1980s, gave rise to a proliferation of jazz programs that frequently exist side-by-side with classical departments. In the conservatory, jazz often claims to have exclusive knowledge about improvisation, and the institutionalization of jazz education lends jazz the authority to 'speak for' improvisation. The industry of jazz education offers no shortage of pedagogical materials that claim to de-mystify the process of improvisation. Mark Levine begins his best-selling text *The Jazz Theory Book* with the claim: 'A great jazz solo consists of: 1% magic, 99% stuff that is Explainable, Analyzable, Categorizable, Do-able.'[5] And as Jamey Aebersold, the owner of the largest-selling jazz education publishing company frequently exhorts, 'Anyone Can Improvise!'

In its relatively recent canonization, jazz's deeply oral musical tradition has been reduced to a relatively discrete and highly text-dependent pedagogical model. In his book *Jazz Cultures*, David Ake stressed the transformation that jazz pedagogy has brought about in the jazz tradition. Heavily structured and thickly notated, comprising a narrow repertoire and a standard set of performance practices, the standard jazz curriculum has virtually erased those aspects of jazz that cannot be subsumed into the social, aesthetic, and administrative features of the conservatory model.[6] Confronted with an array of specialized rules and practices, and without the benefit of the oral tradition that provides substantial information about the melodic, rhythmic, and expressive features that are necessary to jazz performance, classical musicians often find jazz to be a bewildering and unsatisfactory introduction to the practice of improvisation. Disentangling concepts of 'improvisation' and 'jazz' is thus especially useful in this pedagogical concept.

Pathways to Improvisation

As a violist and violinist whose career has spanned both classical and contemporary jazz performance, I have confronted these problems both in my development as a performer and as a teacher specializing in improvisation. As a student of classical music in a major American conservatory I was drawn specifically to jazz but often felt frustrated by my efforts to learn about it. The books I bought presented rules and techniques, but I could not connect these texts to musical performance. Jazz musicians advised me to 'just listen,' but I didn't know what to listen for. Gender and instrument posed additional obstacles: as a young female violist I was hard pressed to find improvisers who looked, or sounded like me. My classical teachers, meanwhile, viewed my interest in improvisation as a distraction, at best, from the real business of becoming a performer.

[5] Mark Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book*, Petaluma, CA, Sher Music Company, 1995, vii.
[6] David Ake, *Jazz Cultures*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002, 121-127.

Ironically, establishing myself as a jazz performer ultimately depended on my abandoning – if only for a time – any notion of representing the jazz tradition. I gradually awakened to the idea that classical music was a rich and untapped source of vocabulary for improvisation, and began to explore its potentials in developing my own voice. I found a way into jazz through performers outside the mainstream of the jazz canon, such as members of New York's 'Downtown' scene, who incorporate diverse stylistic influences into jazz. As I developed a stronger sense of my own aesthetics, I was better able to build meaningful musical connections with jazz practices. I also discovered communities of performers for whom 'improvisation' did not necessarily mean 'jazz'.

Today, some 20 years after my first steps as an improviser, my students face substantially fewer obstacles. In the United States, jazz and classical modernisms have always borne the signs of reciprocal – if unequal – influence, but the references between them have never been as obvious or as broadly celebrated as they are today.[7] Jazz groups like the Bad Plus celebrate American classical modernism in covers of compositions by Babbitt and Ligeti, while composers and performers of the classical avant-garde are apt to identify themselves as improvisers.[8] Jazz and classical ensembles alike feature non-standard instrumentations. Students' musical vernacular is vastly expanded through new technologies and the transnational globalized music industry. (Gender, however, proves stubborn: jazz today remains an exceptionally male domain.) Young classical performers accept not only that improvisation is possible, but that it can no longer be entirely ignored. All the same, few well-established pathways exist for classical performers who wish to develop as improvisers.

In this paper, I seek to address this by setting out some of the pedagogical techniques I have developed in my work with classical musicians as a faculty member in the Department of Contemporary Improvisation at New England Conservatory in Boston, Massachusetts. As the director of the Contemporary Improvisation Non-Majors Ensemble, I guide groups of classical performers and composers in preparing programs of improvised music drawn from a broad range of traditions. Meeting weekly since 2006, the ensemble has been successful in producing highly developed improvised performances from its members, and creating a community of like-minded performers who seek to think critically and creatively about the problems that arise when the desire for free self-expression meets the limits of musical language and musical

[7] For a nuanced account of the unequal relationship of 'Afrological' and 'Eurological' perspectives in jazz and classical modernisms, read George E. Lewis, 'Improvised Music After 1950: The Changing Same', in: Ajay Heble and Daniel Fischlin (eds), *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue,* Middletown CT, Wesleyan UP, 2004.

[8] Such 'borrowings' reflect not just the continuity of reciprocal influence, but also the continuity of structured inequities between African-American and European-American 'art music' discourses.

authority. In writing directly from my practice as a performer and teacher, I hope to stimulate awareness of basic practical and aesthetic concerns inherent to the task of building connections between classical performance and improvisation.

***The Forge*: The Contemporary Improvisation Non-Majors Ensemble**

New England Conservatory

The New England Conservatory of Music is the oldest independent music conservatory in the United States. It is considered to be among the world's leading musical institutions, with a student population of 750 graduate and undergraduate performers in the school's classical, jazz and contemporary improvisation programs. Among New England Conservatory's classical music faculty are a number of eminent teachers who are unusually open to non-classical music. Students in the classical department are able to enroll in courses and performance ensembles that address a broad range of the world's musical traditions. This is made possible, in large part, by the presence of the Contemporary Improvisation department, which presents a third space for music that exists between and outside the genres of classical music and jazz.

Gunther Schuller, who served as the conservatory's president from 1967-1977, founded the department of Contemporary Improvisation in 1973. It was originally known as the Third Stream Department after a term Schuller coined in 1957 to designate a synthesis between Western classical music and jazz. The department's name was changed to Creative Improvisation in 1992, in response to a perceived need to update the department's identity.[9] Pianist/composer Ran Blake, who served as the department's chair for over 30 years has guided the program. The term Third Stream refers indirectly to classical music and jazz, but today the department accommodates a broad range of the world's musical cultures and musical practices through a curriculum that stresses foundational skills in ear training and the development of personal musical style.

The Non-Majors Contemporary Improvisation Ensemble

As its name suggests, the Non-Majors Contemporary Improvisation Ensemble is open to all students outside the contemporary improvisation department. Over three years the ensemble has mainly attracted senior undergraduate and graduate students from the classical music department. The instrumentation varies widely by the semester, and has included vocalists, brass players, string players, pianists, bassists, harpists, and composers performing on piano, trumpet, electric guitar and electronics. The ensemble meets weekly for two hours, for a total of 28 sessions per academic year. Participation is voluntary, though members are strongly encouraged to enroll so that their participation is noted on their transcripts. As is the case with all New England Conservatory ensembles, students are graded on a Pass/Fail system, based on attendance and participation.

[9] Hankus Netsky, email to author, 8 September 2008.

Assumptions

I approach my work with classical musicians by making three basic assumptions about the nature, aesthetics and practice of improvisation. First, I consider composition and improvisation to reflect the same fundamental process: the organization of sound into musical expression. Performance is the embodiment of this process. Second, I maintain a conceptual separation between the process of composition/improvisation, and the musical vocabularies that composers and improvisers use. A musician can improvise in – and out of – any musical language. I assume that professional training in western classical music provides the performers and composers in my ensemble with a compelling vocabulary. I also assume the transparency and permeability of concepts such as genre, style and conventional instrumentation, both with respect to aesthetics and to the social organization of communities of performers. Third, I assume that the development of an individual creative voice is of paramount importance: for me, the essential nature and purpose of improvisation is self-actualization.

I continually reinforce my belief that the students in my ensemble are already complete creative artists. Mastery of style is a secondary project to the fundamental task of self-expression through the organization of musical sound. The students have resonated with this sentiment: in the ensemble's first semester the students requested that we re-name the ensemble. They did not wish to be identified by what they were not ('non-majors' and implicitly, 'non-improvisers'). Together, they agreed to call the ensemble *The Forge*, a name that symbolized both crossing boundaries, and deliberate acts of creation.

Goals

I design curriculum for the ensemble with three practical goals in mind. First, I seek to prepare students to enter into professional collaborations with performers outside the classical music tradition. This involves helping them to develop independent control of basic musical parameters such as space, time, feel, groove, rhythm, melodic line, harmony, texture, and the relationships between performers. Since most students wish to collaborate with musicians from genres marked by African-American music (such as jazz, popular music, and world music), I seek to provide them with awareness of related skills such as the structure of 4 bar phrases, cueing techniques, interaction with a rhythm section, and basic literacy in non-classical notation.

Second, I seek to provide students with an awareness of the many musical paths open to improvising musicians, to help them to situate themselves with respect to the many conversations taking place in contemporary music. An awareness of their existing strengths and limitations as performers and improvisers allows them to realistically assess their ability to perform in various contexts, and to better develop the skills needed to achieve new creative goals.

Third, I seek to provide the students with tools for ongoing artistic and professional growth. I strive to stimulate students' creativity to the point where they are inspired to teach themselves. I help them to

develop professional skills that are useful in assuming creative control over their careers: composing, arranging, band-leading, booking and promoting their own performances. In regular on- and off-campus performances, current and past students have developed into a community of like-minded performers with ongoing collaborations.

Curriculum

Given the constraints of a single weekly meeting, I choose to ground our work in preparing for performance. Since the students have extensive commitments related to their classical training, I build skill development exercises into regular instrumental practice and group rehearsals. Exercises designed to extend students' creative reach also generate repertoire for public performance. Regular on- and off-campus performances reinforce the importance and legitimacy of the ensemble's work and ground the students' efforts in practical experience.

What follows are brief descriptions of some exercises that the students have found especially fruitful. Despite my use of the heading 'Curriculum', this material is not intended to be prescriptive, nor is it a comprehensive account of our activities. The diverse instruments, personal histories, and musical interests of the ensemble members demand an intensely learner-focused teaching style that requires constant invention. Much of my teaching is itself improvisational in nature. Here, I describe several of the approaches I have used to stimulate students' creativity, to encourage students to think independently from the convention of their professional training about the music they wish to make, and to help them develop the skills they need to perform their music with others.

Free Improvisation

I begin each year with an introduction to free improvisation. Most of my students have had some experience with free improvisation, whether alone or with others, but fail to pursue this practice because they are unsure of how to improve the quality of their performances. For those musicians with limited experience, free improvisation cultivates a willingness to make music away from the directions of notation. For all students, free improvisation cultivates an awareness of the basic materials of music and the interaction among performers. I choose to work mainly in solo, duo and trio settings because the transparency of the small group format makes the interaction of ideas more easily perceptible.

I use a variety of parameters to structure brief, focused free improvisations. Brevity releases students from the responsibility for extended development. The parameters can be endlessly reconfigured, and students can easily generate their own. Some of the parameters we have used are listed below:

- the development of a single melodic or rhythmic motif
- duo improvisations where each performer attempts to contrast the other
- small group improvisations where only one performer can play at any given moment

- 'sonic' improvisation focusing on extended techniques
- improvising while thinking of a single concept, such as tension and release
- improvisation as a 'conversation'
- the expression of a single contour of intensity
- the use of long tones to generate spontaneous harmonic structures

We extend this practice in an ensemble performance that has become a staple of our concerts. Sitting in a semi-circle in no particular order, we perform a series of brief duo improvisations between adjacent musicians. The only restrictions placed upon the performance are that each duo be brief, make a single succinct statement, and contrast the preceding performance.

Scale Practice

Scale practice introduces the students to the concept of treating a scale as a unique harmonic sound world: a pool of notes with specific harmonic qualities that can be drawn upon in sculpting melodic lines. For most students, this is their introduction to the concept of note choice and melodic construction. Classical musicians are well acquainted with scale practice as a means of building instrumental technique. Most are able to play major, harmonic and melodic minor scales and arpeggios in all keys over the full range of their instruments, and can improvise to a limited extent within these scales. However, their improvisations tend to be limited to stepwise motion, use lengthy, un-focused melodic constructions, and falter in less familiar keys.

I use scale practice exercises to introduce students to the practice of improvising within harmonic parameters, and to develop improvisations with greater sense of line, direction and narrative potential. This allows students to better control harmonic tension and release as an expressive tool, and provides them with a point of entry into jazz theory and performance practice. I also introduce performers to unfamiliar scales that carry different harmonic potentials, and I show them how these scales correlate to the harmonic notation in jazz. Through scale practice, students develop skills that can be extended to unfamiliar scales, and to the process of internalizing sequences of harmonic changes. Throughout, I show how the skills developed in scale practice become vocabulary to be used in improvisation.

I begin by focusing on a single scale, typically a mode with one alteration to the major scale such as Lydian or Mixolydian. While I maintain an accompanying drone on the piano, the students play the ascending and descending scale. I then guide them in patterns of broken intervals (typically thirds, fourths and sixths) and arpeggiated triads, seventh chords, and quartals. I gradually make the scale more ambiguous by introducing increasing levels of abstraction. We then explore the harmonic tensions of single notes, intervals, and combinations of scale tones against a drone. Throughout I ask students to describe the impact of each change.

Finally, I guide students in a sequence of short improvisations based on the scale tones. While the others maintain a drone on the tonic, each musician takes a turn performing a short improvisation using scale tones. I provide suggestions to help extend their range of expression. For example, to a student who tends to begin each melodic phrase on a chord tone, I might suggest the deliberate use of non-chord tones. To one whose improvisations tend to move diatonically, I might suggest the use of wider intervals. To another who tends towards unfocussed melodic constructions, I might suggest randomized phrase lengths with well-defined contours.

I encourage students to incorporate these practices into their daily routine. I provide a number of suggestions for ongoing development, encouraging them to think critically about their areas of weakness (for example, unfamiliar key centres or difficult registers) and ways to strengthen them through their choices of scales and patterns to practice. I recommend that all scale practice be done with a metronome to help them internalize the pulse and better identify areas of instability.[10] I suggest that improvisation be practiced both out of time, and in time with a metronome or a simple bass line accompaniment. This forms the basis for later work in jazz repertoire.

Using Classical Music as a Source of Inspiration

The ensemble members' aesthetic concerns have tended to diverge sharply: students have been interested in such diverse genres as renaissance music, various of the world's traditional musics, 20th century modernism and various formulations of 21st century 'postist' genres. This presents a considerable pedagogical challenge that is not usually encountered in jazz and classical ensembles organized around a specific repertoire. I use this diversity to encourage students to participate actively in 'scripting' the sounds they wish to hear for the musical actors in the ensemble. I encourage students to transform the vocabulary of classical music through several assignments, each of which is briefly described below. Each of these exercises generates repertoire for our performances.

1. Melodic analysis. I ask students to bring in favorite melodies from classical music, with no restriction as to style or era. We analyze these excerpts from a variety of standpoints (for example, intervallic structure, motivic development, use of tension and release) then try to use these techniques first while improvising freely, and then while improvising within a given tonality or pitch set. By continually asking the question 'what makes this sound good to me?' I encourage students to think critically about their own

[10] Both standard classical and jazz pedagogy maintain a general silence on the topic of rhythm. Although the ability to maintain a consistent, independent rhythmic pulse varies greatly from student to student, in my experience all musicians benefit greatly from rhythmic training. I consider the metronome to be a versatile and highly practical practice tool, largely untapped in its creative potential. For an overview of metronome exercises written from the perspective of jazz improvisation, but generally applicable to all improvising musicians, see Chapter 6 of David Berkman, *The Jazz Musician's Guide to Creative Practicing*, Petaluma, CA, Sher Music Publishing, 2007.

aesthetics, to describe the musical techniques that create these sounds, and to translate these structures into their improvised performance.

2. Duo and trio improvisations. I ask students to form duos and trios, and select a work from Béla Bartók's children's repertoire to develop as an improvisation.[11] I favor selections from these works because they lucidly explore a limited range of compositional material in short form. I ask students to think about the relationship of the voices, and to find ways to extend these relationships during improvisation. For example, I might suggest that one performer plays the music as written, while another retains the rhythm but improvises the pitches; or that both performers retain the rhythm and shape of the composed material while improvising pitches. In another case, I might suggest that the mood of the piece serves as a departure point for collective free improvisation, or that specific fragments be used as motifs to be developed in improvisation.

3. Re-compositions of existing classical works. Working in small groups, the students select a work to develop through improvisation. Since the stylistic parameters are potentially very broad, I provide little restriction as to what kinds of arranging or improvisation techniques will be used: the only condition I impose is that the work must in some way be substantially transformed through improvisation. We develop these pieces over a number of weeks. Students rehearse outside of class, and perform them in class for input from the ensemble. We analyze the source material, discuss the relationship between composition and improvisation, and develop structures for improvisation. We then address the specific skills that are needed to improvise within these parameters. Working in this fashion, the ensemble members have re-composed works by composers such as Arnold Schoenberg, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Béla Bartók, Giancinto Scelsi, and Phillip Glass.

4. **Original compositions inspired by existing works**. Through the preceding assignments, the students are provided with a wide range of models for structuring the relationship between composition and improvisation. I encourage students to use these models as departure points for original compositions. Ensemble members have drawn upon a wide range of compositional techniques, including textual instructions, aleatoric techniques, motivic cells, and graphic scores. We develop these compositions during our weekly meetings, discussing freely the success of various strategies, and which musical features are better accomplished through composition and which are better accomplished through improvisation. Direct feedback from student performers is particularly effective in helping musicians to learn to better direct their creative efforts.

[11] For example, works from *44 Duos for Violins, For Children, Mikrokosmos,* and *Ten Easy Pieces.*

Compositions by Jazz Performers

Towards the end of each semester, I invite a student rhythm section from the jazz department to join us in rehearsals and performances of works by living jazz composers. To be clear, I do not expect my students to be responsible to the jazz tradition. Rather, I guide them in performing jazz repertoire that deals specifically with free improvisation, world music, and classical music from the specific perspective of the interactive small ensemble in jazz. The repertoire is carefully selected so that students are able to improvise within their existing strengths. For example, solo forms do not require students to improvise over complex harmonic or metric forms; do not require students to master the swinging eighth note characteristic of jazz; and the compositions lend themselves well to improvisations based either on individual and collective free improvisation, or soloing based on compositional material. This allows students to focus on self-expression, interaction with the rhythm section, and mastering specific performance practices such as cueing in and out of sections, comping, and collective improvisation. The ensemble has performed works by living jazz composers such as John Zorn, Dave Douglas, and Benoit Delbecq, as well as works by student composers in the jazz department. Ultimately, this allows the students to experience what it feels like to be an integral member of the jazz ensemble, embodying the connections between contemporary classical and jazz performance.

Performance and Community

In addition to an on-campus performance each semester, I have hosted a number of off-campus gatherings for the ensemble members. Meeting outside the context of the school – be it for a casual dinner at a student's home, a performance at a local club, or an off-campus performance – has played an important role in consolidating the social relationships among the members of the ensemble, resulting in lasting friendships and professional collaborations. Off-campus performances in Boston and New York have been especially important in giving the students a broader public forum for their creative efforts. The ensemble members share responsibility for programming, promoting, production and staffing of off-campus performances, providing them with the tools needed to define and create the context in which they wish their music to be heard. Recently, two alumni of the ensemble spearheaded a festival dedicated to music that falls between the spaces of classical music and jazz. The festival's first New York performance had the air of a celebration and reunion, bringing together current and former students from the jazz, classical and contemporary improvisation departments in a night of entirely original music.

Concluding Notes

Presenting a talk on this ensemble at the 2007 conference of the International Association of Schools of Jazz, I was asked to comment on how this curriculum can be implemented in other schools. I was caught without a ready answer. The methods I describe here have certainly proven useful, but much of their success depends on features that resist description and replication. My firsthand knowledge of the aesthetics, pedagogy, and professional development concerns of both classical and jazz musicians has been indispensable in my work with classical musicians, but few performers possess this knowledge in equal depth. My status as a woman and as a classical violist – once felt keenly as liabilities – have proven to be especially reliable assets in building connections among communities of performers in the conservatory.[12] The ensemble's unusual instrumentation, broad range of aesthetic concerns, and uneven experience levels requires a continual investment of time and creative inquiry that is incomparable to the standard pedagogical model of ensemble coaching in jazz and classical music. Finally, while the faculty and administration of New England Conservatory support our work, the ensemble is considered to be peripheral to the core concerns of the classical department. Our marginal status brings a host of minor, but all the same considerable, administrative and logistical concerns rarely encountered by directors of standard ensembles. I mention these things both to provide a realistic portrait of the complexity of this work, and to hint at the persistent, structured inequities that are concealed by optimistic discourses of 'crossover', 'globality' and postmodern plurality.

Ultimately, teaching improvisation is not a simple matter of teaching skills, however useful and necessary such skills may be. Rather, it is a process of stimulating students' creative imagination and nurturing them towards self-actualization. Such a process will inevitably lead students along different musical paths, and towards different musical problems that require different solutions. I believe that the only worthwhile measure of my work is the degree to which students are inspired and enabled to continue on a never-ending path of self-discovery. A quote attributed to jazz pianist Herbie Hancock summarizes this value neatly: 'A great teacher is one who realizes that he himself is also a student and whose goal is not to dictate the answers, but to stimulate his students' creativity enough so that they go out and find the answers themselves.'[13]

[12] All the same, there are lamentably few female improvisers, and fewer still faculty positions open to improvisers on non-standard instruments.
[13] Quoted in David Berkman, op. cit., 6.

САЖЕТАК

Тања Калманович

САВРЕМЕНА ИМПРОВИЗАЦИЈА ЗА ИЗВОЂАЧЕ КЛАСИЧНЕ МУЗИКЕ

Концепт импровизације је последњих година предмет појачаног интересовања научника и извођача из различитих дисциплина. У педагогији класичне музике, импровизација је све више, можда и необјективно, призната као важна компонента у учењу музике. Међутим, нема једностраног мишљења о самој природи импровизације, начину на који она треба да се учи, или схвтању њене важности у оквиру професионалне едукације извођача класичне музике.

У овом раду се разматра појављивање ширег концепта импровизације у новом простору – конзерваторијуму за учење класичне музике. Ауторка текста описује педагошке технике које је развила током рада на Одсеку за савремену импровизацију на Конзерваторијуму Нова Енглеска (New England Conservatory) у Бостону. Објашњења у раду смештена су у друштвени, историјски и теоријски контекст, са циљем да се покаже како се тренутно интересовање за импровизацију истовремено наставља и на традицију употребе импровизације у класичној музици и на модернистичку културу 20. века у којој су очигледни међусобни утицаји џеза и класичне музике.

У не тако давним процесима канонизације и институционализације, о импровизацији се најчешће говорило у контексту учења џез музике. Међутим, ауторка текста је препознала ограничења џез педагогије, што јој је послужило као модел за увођење студената класичне музике у област импровизације, којима је представила серије техника у којима су садржани аспекти учења џеза, а са циљем да подстакне студенте да истраже могућности импровизације у оквиру сопствених искустава и идиома. Међу вежбама су се нашле: слободна импровизација за солисте или мање групе извођача, технике вежбања скала са проширеним оквиром тоналитета и мелодијских образаца; мелодијска анализа одломака композиција класичне музике и њихова примена у праксама слободне и ограничене импровизације; импровизација заснована на делима из „класичног“ репертоара; рекомпоновање дела уметничке музике са циљем стварања модела за импровизацију; компоновање засновано на техникама уоченим у делима класичне музике; извођење дела савремених џез композитора са „џез ритам секцијом“.

У закључном делу рада разматрају се естетички, педагошки и практични изазови са којима се суочавају предавачи који настоје да успоставе везу између музичких одсека на Конзерваторијуму. Најзад, учење импровизације почива на мањем наставном програму него што је потребно за стимулисање студената који теже самооткривању, а то их онемогућује да наставе пут креативног развоја изван конзерваторијума.