

HUM-273

Musical improvisation, invention and creativity

Rohrmeier Martin Alois

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Humanities and Social Sciences	BA4	Opt.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	2
Session	Summer
Semester	Spring
Exam	During the semester
Workload	60h
Weeks	14
Hours	2 weekly
Courses	2 weekly
Number of positions	60

Summary

This course provides an introduction into the topics of improvisation, invention and creativity in music and covers core theories and practical exercises.

Content

The art of improvisation lies at the root of many musical traditions around the world from ancient origins up to musical cultures of the present day, such as in Indian music or Jazz. The purpose of this class is to introduce core techniques, and reflect concepts and problems around the notions of musical improvisation, invention and creativity. The course will combine practical and theoretical parts.

In the theoretical part, positions from musicological, philosophical, cross-cultural, cognitive and computational sciences will be covered. Students will learn to discuss and critically reflect core approaches to the topic and to integrate different or opposing viewpoints. Furthermore, relations between creativity and discovery in arts and science will be discussed.

In the practical part, students will learn and try different techniques of musical improvisation, spontaneity and performance in different individual and joint interaction exercises.

A practical musical background will be beneficial for the practical parts of this class (if you are unsure, contact the teacher).

Keywords

Music, improvisation, creativity, performance, intuition, invention, music theory and analysis

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Describe and critically reflect theoretical research in the field
- Differentiate core techniques of improvisation and performance
- Integrate practical and theoretical approaches
- Analyze musical materials, interactions and performances

Transversal skills

- Summarize an article or a technical report.
- Make an oral presentation.
- Demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking
- Demonstrate a capacity for creativity.
- Access and evaluate appropriate sources of information.

Teaching methods

The class will combine introductory lectures on the key topics in musical improvisation and creativity literature with interactive reflection and discussion. The class will contain different practical and theoretical exercises. Students will try different methods of improvisation in small groups, read the literature requirements and do short presentations and discussions of key texts in the field, and analyze musical examples and improvisations.

Expected student activities

1. Completing readings and assigned presentations, active participation and discussion in the class
2. Engage in practical parts, improvisation exercises and critical musical analysis
3. Final essay / class work with an optional practical component

Assessment methods

1. Presentation and discussion of a specific topic
2. Final essay / class work with an optional practical component

Supervision

Office hours	No
Assistants	Yes
Forum	No

Resources

Bibliography

Key literature

- Berkowitz, A. (2010). *The improvising mind: Cognition and creativity in the musical moment*. Oxford University Press.
- Boden, M. (2004). *The Creative Mind: Myths And Mechanisms*. Routledge.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. Harper Collins.
- Dreyfus, L. (1996). *Bach and the Patterns of Invention*. Harvard University Press.
- Nachmanovitch, S. (1990). *Free play: Improvisation in life and art*. Penguin.
- Nettl, B., & Russell, M. (Eds.). (1998). *In the course of performance: Studies in the world of musical improvisation*. University of Chicago Press.
- Sudnow, D. (1978). *Ways of the hand: The organization of improvised conduct*. MIT Press.

Ressources en bibliothèque

- [The improvising mind : cognition and creativity in the musical moment / Aaron L. Berkowitz](#)
- [The creative mind : myths and mechanisms / Margaret A. Boden](#)
- [Creativity : flow and the psychology of discovery and invention / Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#)
- [Bach and the patterns of invention / Laurence Dreyfus](#)
- [Free play : improvisation in life and art / Stephen Nachmanovitch](#)
- [In the course of performance : studies in the world of musical improvisation / ed. by Bruno Nettl with Melinda Russell](#)
- [Ways of the hand : the organization of improvised conduct / David Sudnow](#)