

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. This class will 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 music theoretical, philosophical, cross-cultural, and cognitive sciences will be covered. 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 professor).

Keywords

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

Learning Outcomes

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

- Describe and critically reflect music theoretical concepts
- 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.
- Demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking
- Demonstrate a capacity for creativity.
- Evaluate one's own performance in the team, receive and respond appropriately to feedback.
- Communicate effectively, being understood, including across different languages and cultures.

Teaching methods

The class will combine introductory lectures on the key topics in music theory, improvisation and creativity 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 analyze musical examples and improvisations.

Expected student activities

1. Completing readings and assigned presentations, active participation and discussion in the class
2. Practice the music theoretical and analytical concepts
3. Engage in practical parts and exercises

Assessment methods

1. Presentation and discussion of a specific topic
2. Final exam on core music theory and analysis and concepts covered in the class

Supervision

Office hours	No
Assistants	Yes
Forum	No

Resources

Bibliography

Key literature

Aldwell, E., & Cadwallader, A. (2018). *Harmony and voice leading*. Cengage Learning.

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.

Gauldin, R. (1997). *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music*. New York: Norton.

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

- [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](#)