

Motivic Improvisation:

An approach to teaching improvisation in classical instrumental ensembles, solo performance, and studio teaching.

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Description: Recent guidelines by NASM have called for renewed emphasis on improvisation within the music curriculum. This clinic presents a new strategy for restoring the art of improvisation to the classical music idiom, and demonstrates how this strategy can be applied to solo and ensemble performance as well as to studio teaching.

Defining Motivic Improvisation: Improvisation based primarily on motives designated by the composer. The performer applies techniques of motivic development when structuring their improvisations. In addition to the motivic material, the composer can establish other parameters which the performer must adhere to while improvising. These parameters may include pitch material, articulation, primary intervals, dynamic level, etc.

Strategies for learning and applying motives

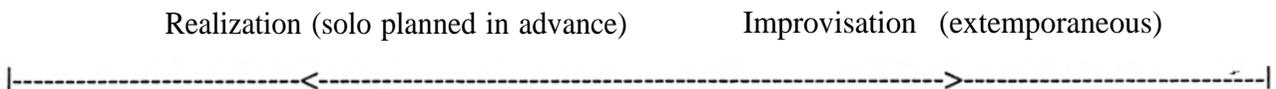
Criteria for evaluating improvisation: If you composed it, would you judge it as a quality composition? Soloists utilizing **Motivic Improvisation** should therefore think like a composer, and apply techniques of motivic development in structuring their improvisations.

Soloists should practice transposing, inverting, fragmenting, augmenting motives, and playing them in retrograde to become familiar with the motivic material designated by the composer. Next the soloist should find ways to connect so as to subtly move from one motive to another.

Creating an “improvisatory map”

An “improvisator-y map” is an “shorthand” example of a possible realization, usually diagrammed on staff paper, which serves as a guide and training tool the performer can refer to when practicing his or her realization. Ideally, the performer should create three or four different improvisatory maps of possible realizations for each improvised passage in order to accumulate a vocabulary of musical ideas which can be drawn upon later during performance.

Relationship between “Realization” and “Improvisation”



Clinic performance examples

1. Three Universes (movements 1 and 2).....Jody Nagel
for alto saxophone, narrator, and algorithmically generated electronic sounds

Improvisations by George Wolfe
2. Exercise #3 from Motivic Improvisation Instructional Method Book and CD George Wolfe
for piano and instrumentalist

Improvisation by Ryan Muncy

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3. Sometimes a Waltz* Carleton Macy
duet for alto and baritone saxophones

Improvisations by Holly Hubbs and Eddie Rich

4. Shir Avel (A Mourner's Song)..... Paul Andrews
for alto saxophone and electronic sounds

Improvisation by Ryan

5. Meditation on the Twin Towers*..... Harold Levin
for saxophone quartet

Improvisations by Eddie Rich and Kelly Jones

*Premiere Performance

George Wolfe is a clinician for Bamber Mouthpieces and Yamaha Musical Products.