

A collage of musical instruments including a violin, a mandolin, and a drum, set against a background of green grass and a person's hand.

IMPROVISATION

a challenge
for music
education

















Improvisation – a challenge for music education

European Union Lifelong Learning Program „Leonardo da Vinci” partnership project
„Improvisation – a challenge for professional music education”
articles

2011 – 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	7	
S. Bārdiņš. Improvisation – a challenge for professional music education	8	
D. Pasalska. Intuitive singing and ways to it	17	
H. Wilk Bergerné. Music, instruments and singing - the view of a naturotherapist	20	
H. Wilk Bergerné. About healing chakras with sound and singing	22	
S. Drličková. Searching for my voice	24	
Z. Melichar. Playing and singing in the process of music therapy	25	
M. Gonda. Teenager`s intuitive way to music	26	
S. Bārdiņš. We got the rhythm!	27	
E. Umbleja. Elementary improvisation	28	
M. Žagars. Improvisation master class in piano play	29	
S. Bārdiņš. Learning of improvisation skills during instrument play lessons	31	
Z. Žukovskis. Basics of jazz improvisation	32	
Aknowledgments	34	

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EU Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning programme funded partnership project „Improvisation – a challenge for professional music education“ was implemented in cooperation with music pedagogues and enthusiasts from three European countries – Latvia, Poland and Hungary. From August 2011 to July 2013 various project activities were carried out –common workshops, demonstrations, jam sessions and concerts took place in each of the partner countries. Participants experience on music teaching, music making and opportunities of using music for different social, psychological and therapeutical purposes was collected and shared.

Each project partner organization had different profile and varying musical experience, which gave mutual, enriching experience and expanded each partner’s opinion on music and its role in our lives. Latvia was represented by the Foundation “Mūzikas darbnīca“(„Music Workshop“), where the main active participants are teachers and students of Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy Instrument play department – present and future academic music pedagogy specialists. Polish partner organization – association „In the Key of Heart“ - unites these musicians, which learn and use music in a non-academic way – with the help of archaic instruments and intuitive singing. Hungarian company’s „Ansa Bt“ profile is retail of alternative medicine commodities and at the same time they offer therapeutic programmes with movement and music therapy. When sharing experience about different understanding of music and its use in each of the organizations, in parallel everybody was working towards the aim of the project – to develop ideas about improvisation as an opportunity for improvement of professional music education.



This collection of articles reflect the experience gained during the project and insights about improvisation and its opportunities to use it in professional music education, as well as about encountered diversity in music understanding and application.

Sandis Bārdiņš
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Improvisation – a challenge for professional music education

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ABSTRACT

„Improvisation – a challenge for professional music education“ is the theme of EU Leonardo da Vinci partnership project aiming to develop ideas for improvement of vocational education in music through improvisation. Skills which are being taught in mainstream music schools in Latvia, Poland and Hungary mainly date back to epoch of classicism and romanticism and cannot cover the present-day demands of playing jazz, rock, pop, folk and contemporary classical music. Therefore, we suggest that improvisation could be the key for substantial improvements in vocational education in music. Free or intuitive improvisation allows student to be aware of the basics of music through action – rhythm, role of movement in producing sounds (e.g. motoric skills), melodic and harmonic structures, timbres (cognitive skills), communicating contents with the audience as well as collaborating with other musicians (communicative as well as emotional skills). In parallel with improvement of professional musical skills, improvisation can also help to start the activity of the right hemisphere of student's brain. Contemporary education emphasizes the development of the left hemisphere. However, balanced development of both brain hemispheres is the issue for future education and development of higher order thinking skills (critical, logical, reflective, metacognitive, and creative thinking). Since music improvisation is highly related with development of the right brain hemisphere, it could just as well be used as an easy-to-access tool for development of right hemisphere features like emotionality, intuition and creativity.

THE AIM, OBJECTIVE, WORKING METHOD AND PARTNERS OF THE PROJECT

The aim of our partnership was to develop ideas for improving the professional music education through improvisation.

The main objective of partnership was to get acquainted with every partner's improvisation method and bring to light the best features we can use in music education. We predicated that improvisation could be a universal tool in music education to awake learners creative sources and understand music with its deeper relevances intuitively.

Working method - mobility of teachers and trainees, workshops on improvisation and thus observations, seminars and discussions. We did also many different additional activities, like concerts, jam sessions, instrument shows etc.

Partners:

Foundation „Mūzikas darbnica“, Latvija (www.muzikasdarbnica.lv)

Association „W tonacji serca“, Polija (www.inthekeyofheart.com)

Enterprise „Ansa Bt“, Ungārija (www.halinaansa.hu)

The collaboration of three different kind of organisations - foundation (LV), association (PL) and business enterprise (HU) - let us to have a different point of view about the aim and objectives of the project.

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

The great German composer Richard Wagner and philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer believed that music is the origin of God's emanation in the physical world. Music's spiritual language comes from some very deep source and is understandable for everybody. Keeping track of discourse among German linguists and Ferdinand Nietzsche in the second half of 19th century, we could pronounce that music embodies

the principle of vitality in human life having its roots in ancient Greeks Dionysian bacchanals. As dialectical antithesis, Dionysus is opposed to the noble, but static image of Apollon. These both opposites – Dionysus and Apollon - form the harmonious unity of Nietzsche's music understanding. When comparing this with contemporary music education one can observe, that noble figure of Apollon (classical music) lacks his creative contrary Dionysos, who could be represented in principles of improvisation. We can paraphrase this in our own words saying that improvisation is the creative, spontaneous origin of music.

Traditionally, music education system in Europe is based on classical music. It means that skills taught in music schools mainly come from and refer to epoch of classicism and romanticism. Evidently this is good foundation for solid music education, because these styles are still the foundation stone of European musical culture. However, nowadays we have met tremendous diversity of music styles and development in different branches, main of them to be noticed - jazz, rock, pop and contemporary classical music. Today there is a great diversity of harmonic, melodic, rhythmic patterns, sounds standards and means of expression. It is evident, that traditional classical approach to music education cannot cover all the present-day demands of performing music. Therefore, we need to seek the new ways how to acquire basic music abilities, skills and knowledge, which allows to express oneself in different genres and styles of music. If we distinguish between two approaches of learning music - „from knowledge towards action“, which is used in traditional education system and „from practical actions towards knowledge“, then with practical approach it is much faster to test and acquire the diversity of music styles, genres and elements. Therefore we suppose that the improvisation lessons is the way in music education „through practical actions towards knowledge“ to keep up to date to the modernity of music.

In musical praxis of classical genre there is just a limited number of musicians among professionals with ability to improvise. That's a good reason to call into question the quality and the completeness of musicians' professional education system. It is obviously that music education system produces good classical music performers with ability to play every written music correctly. However, this educational approach does not stimulate creative processes and musicians needs for self-expression. When every professional musician would be able to improvise, we would expect from them much higher creative outcomes, that could result in much higher developed musical skills, musical compositions and artistically inspired social environment.

NEW PERSPECTIVES OF MUSIC EDUCATION

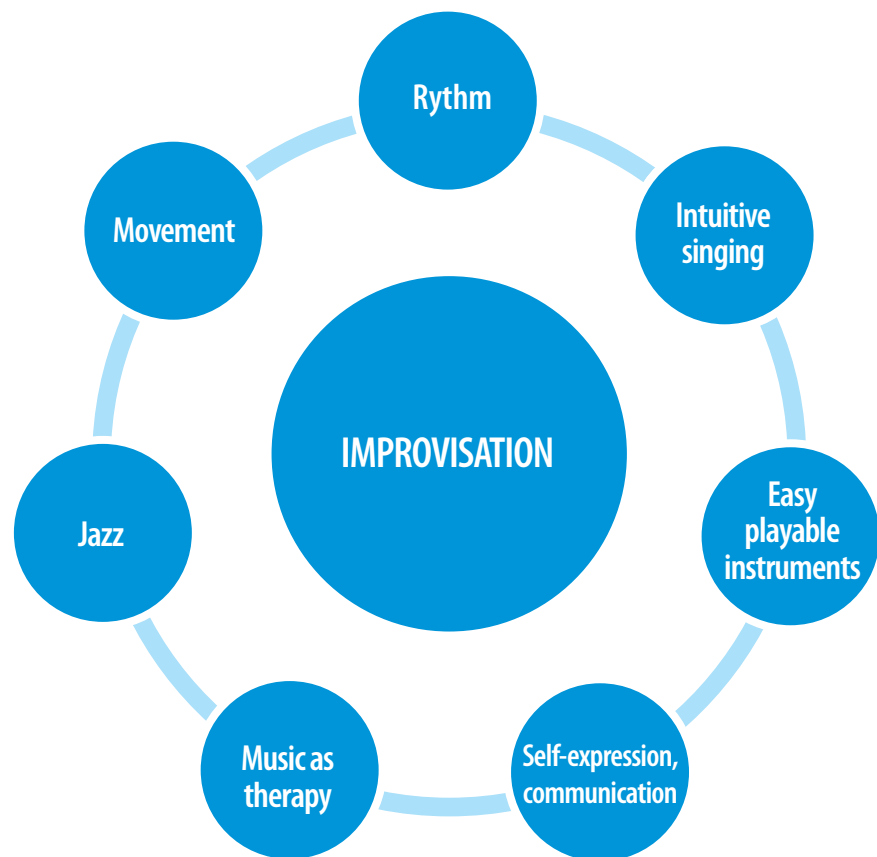
In professional music education we have to develop harmonic and broad – minded personalities, who can set in use their own creativity, feel free in every stage circumstances, understand the deepest sense of music and bring it to their audiences.

Today there is a big diversity of harmonic, melodic, rhythmic patterns, sounds standards and means of expression in the music. So the challenge now is to educate a professional musician, who would be able to handle creative with given musical impulses and not only perform written scores. It is evident, that traditional classical approach to music education cannot cover the present-day demands. It is clear, that due the increasing amount of music styles it is not possible to cover all of them in the framework of professional music education as well. The problem is how to handle with this dilemma and get the possible best solution. In our opinion there is necessary to replace the current approach from teaching and learning of certain music (what actually is very good) to the understanding of music and it's source, rules and structure in general, what can be achieved by means of improvisation.

We believe that improvisation is the key to improve professional music education noticeably. Improvisation can unfold ones creative sources. Free improvisation can help to quit the rules and discover the one's own soul – the deep emotional and divine part of human, which often has been covered by cognitive view of the world and endless desires of ego. In that way improvisation can be considered as an unused potential in music education.

DIVERSITY OF APPROACHES TO THE IMPROVISATION

The problem and fortune coincidentally is, that there are many approaches and beliefs, what the improvisation is and how it should be used. There are different ways to improvise. Playing rhythms, singing intuitively, using easy playable or archaic instruments as well as expressing musical energy through movements. Playing jazz or improvising freely to express ones own feelings and thoughts through music. Using of



special sounds and instruments to improve one's state of health. When improvising, there is often a difficulty to define the boundaries between aesthetical perception of music and the use of music for therapy.

Rhythm is the base of any music making. It is that foundation, which organizes sounds in some structure or system, which we can call music. Rhythm is everywhere – in universe, nature, in us, it creates the sense of stability and security.

As world acclaimed trumpet player A.Sandoval thinks, that „every musician must indulge in some percussion instrument – not to become a percussionist, but to learn to sense the rhythm as percussionist – energetically and precisely“. In our opinion, the percussion instruments must be used much more in professional music education, because they mean movement, coordination and practical action, which is so necessary for children as opposed to the sitting and theoretical learning. It is possible that it is more efficient to replace theory lessons with rhythmic and practical drumming. In addition, this creates fun and positive emotions for children, in parallel with developed motorics, timbre sense and playing together!

Method of **intuitive singing** works out the ability to use one's own voice and intonational colors of voice more consciously, what has a direct impact on spoken communication as well. There is no secret, that voice reflects one's health statement. Even more - by conscious use of voice there is possible to improve human's state of health. Besides that, music, though non-verbal, is a way of communication and self-expression.

Easy – playable music instruments like keyboard instruments and Orff instruments are suitable for ex-

pressing one's inner feelings, telling musical stories and communicating different contents to other people instantly. Creating a sound on these instruments is easy accessible for every beginner and doesn't require prolonged preparation of technical or theoretical issues.

Music therapy. Sound, intuitive singing and improvisation can be used for healing and therapeutic purposes – by putting in order the operation of energetic centres or chakras, as well as when therapist cooperates with patient. Improvisation is one of most important aspects in communication of patient and therapist through music.

It is a big deal and challenge to go into the deep of a person's inner world and touch the strings of soul. It is a large responsibility for psychologists and psychotherapists because they never can be sure about sources and subconscious contents they will meet there. From that point of view touching human's soul by means of music therapy and improvisation probably is one of the most human way of facing a man with his own soul.

Jazz improvisation can be assessed like highly cognitive approach to the creative process, demanding well developed technical skills and knowledge of musical structure, melody, and harmony. There are many rules and determinants while playing jazz improvisation usually. Nevertheless, it is possible to step into the basics of jazz for non – educated musicians under well shaped guidance of the teacher, too.

OUR FINDINGS

While «Searching for the roots of the music» (the theme of the project's first workshop in Ligatne (LV)), we discovered that **rhythm** is of large importance for understanding the musical spirit. **Movement** is necessary to implement every sound. **Body** and its movements has strong connectivity with the musical process, emotions and self-expression. During «Intuitive Singing – the Gate to Your Inner Music» (workshop in Borowa (PL)) we studied the possibilities of our own **voice** to sound, to use our bodies musically and express our **emotions** and souls through music. We learned, that there is big potential to use improvised music for **relaxation** and **cure** purposes, too. During workshop «Peace, Love, Together» (Szeged, HU) we enjoyed the power of **being together** with other people. **Sharing** our love, **communicate** deepest thoughts and feelings of our souls with each other and offer space to others for **self – expression** is the deepest meaning of music.

During the project we found out that in the beginning phase of the music education, an intuitive music making can be easily available and understandable. Intuitive singing, as well as use of different percussions, including melodic ones, makes music process available for everybody without special preparation. Intuitive music making is suitable for the education principle „from action to knowledge“ – with practical exercises the experience and understanding of music making process is acquired. Operation with various easily sound making instruments – percussions, jamba drums, Orff instruments, melodic percussions, singing bowls, various flutes and pipes - creates intuitive understanding about rhythm, sound pitch, about principles of creating the sound on various instruments. Operation with various instruments develops movement coordination skills and timbre resolution. Percussion play encourages to look for rhythm and various rhythm patterns, helps to understand the importance of rhythm. Various keyboard instruments, for example, xylophone and metallophone, as well as piano helps to intuitively grasp terms „higher“ and „lower“ as well as their gradual transition on the keyboard.

THE CHALLENGES

We realize that the improvisation in music schools is a great challenge, and at a larger extent for teachers rather than children. At the moment, there are a lot of ways and approaches of understanding and teaching the improvisation, however, there is still lack of common understanding about working methods, objectives and targets, as well as lack of skilled teachers, who could lead the improvisation lessons. Many music teachers think that they do not know how to improvise because they have never done it. To give the fun and understanding of music as creative process, the teacher himself must enjoy , improvise and communicate through the sounds and the music.

CAN EVERYBODY IMPROVISE?

Does our live unfold according to a scenario, in which we, as conscious actors, are playing it out word by word? How many of us know how this scenario must be played, and at what extent we are ready to improvise in our lives – to act in intuitive or spontaneous way, and ignore the rules and limitations that are put on us by the society?

Musical improvisation is the most natural way to express ourselves in sounds, or to make music. Certainly, as experience grows, we make requirements for the quality of music, thus creating conditions, rules and limitations that come from the mind. It is wrong if the experience and the mind create barriers to spontaneity, creativity and ability to improvise.

In our view, if children are encouraged to do so, it is much easier for children to start improvise musically or express themselves in sounds intuitively. To find in self that primordial source, through which the life-giving energy flows, is much easier when there are no mental and social constraints, which prevent person from expressing himself naturally and freely. It is important that the understanding about music making quality would grow hand in hand with the ability to express oneself musically by improvisation. Basic rules in music are internal - they arise from rhythm, physics of sound creation, consonance-dissonance principle or overtone interaction. Ideally, that these are realized intuitively and do not have to be specially taught in theory lessons.

From this aspect, for music teachers, who never had improvised, it would be much more difficult to start to improvise - the difficulties may arise to express themselves intuitively in music due to theoretical knowledge, high and unreachable quality standards, fear from the others' judgment and facing himself with his/her own deeper essence. Knowing these disturbing factors and trying to avoid them, also music teachers by use of practical actions, could set free their improvisation abilities.

BENEFITS OF IMPROVISATION

Improvisation helps to understand better music structure and meaning. When one is improvising already in expert level (especially in jazz improvisation), he actually have to analyze in mind the musical harmonics, structure and deconstruct that to the „atomic“ level, and compose together from the new - it helps to understand the value of good music and good composers work. In the case of approaching improvisation's process in terms of musical science, we can get more insight into the musical movements, intervallic relations, melody and harmonic structure of music. Except for fact, that improvisation has different features and tasks in different music styles like jazz, pop, folk, baroque, classicism or aleatorics in contemporary music, improvisation beyond the stylistic frameworks is a great tool of expanding and developing ones creativity.

Two learning approaches can be distinguished in music education: „From practical actions towards knowledge“ (improvisation) and „from knowledge towards action“ (the traditional approach). As experiments by Altenmüller et al. show, the end result by practicing both approaches is similar. However, it must be noted that practical way of activity is much more interesting for pupils, and in addition it develops their creativity and the work of the right brain hemisphere.

Potentially improvisation is very powerful agent of expression, because it happens at the very present or LIVE just in certain moment of time and in certain circumstances. In principle, the essence of improvisation is to perceive and to raise at the same time the energetic potential of a moment, space, atmosphere and

living beings, and to condense it in the sound.

The main benefits of improvisation for a personality development are:

- Improvisation can unfold ones creative sources;
- Improvisation can find the path to one's inner self;
- Improvisation can help to quit the rules and discover the one's own soul;
- Improvisation can help to develop the ability to listen to other people and to communicate with them musically as well as verbally;



Besides the psychological development of the improviser, the improvisation can contribute to the process of music education:

- 1) as an action that helps to go into the deep of music to feel and understand music structure, meaning, patterns, melodic line, scales and other musical elements;
- 2) as a tool to unfold learners creative potential;
- 3) as a tool to develop learners instrumental and vocal skills and abilities intuitively.

In that way improvisation can be considered as an unused potential in music education yet.

SOCIAL OUTCOMES

Besides of improving music education's quality improvisation addresses some social outcomes, too. From one hand the increased creativity and communication skills are values which are in demand for contemporary society. From other hand, musicians with these skills are much more ready for labor market in various musical projects.

Improvisation can rise ones self-esteem and solve different psychological problems, too. It can improve communication skills for socially excluded and work like therapy for autism etc. Improvisation can have an impact to everyday life – it makes one more open and free to act in everyday life, to 'go with the flow'; to make appropriate re-actions to the impulses from environment.

Even between musicians there is an opinion, that ability to improvise is a special talent and God's gift. Professional music education does not pay a big attention to learn improvisation. It means, that just a few happy learners, who get a job in a very scarce vacancies of professional orchestras, were well prepared for labor market by professional music education institutions. Due to the lack of improvisation studies in professional educational institutions many people are unable to continue their career as musicians and they have to invest additional time and resources to change their suitability for labor market.

We know from our project experience, that it is possible to acquire the skills of improvisation. If all the alumni of music education institutions could be able to improvise, among such social benefits as increased self-esteem, awareness, communication skills and creativity, they would be able to work in the field of music, too. That would beneficially affect all social environment - as we know, creativity and communicability are the values of future that will assure sustainable intellectual and emotional development of European society.

MUSIC TEACHING: INTUITIVE VERSUS CLASSICAL APPROACH

During the project we came to the idea about two different pedagogical approaches in music teaching:

- 1) Classical approach, where notes and solfège, some of professional music instruments, music theory and literature are taught;
- 2) Intuitive approach, where wide range of percussion instruments, folk instruments, Orff instruments are used and where music making happens intuitively, spontaneously in a creative process or, by improvisation.

Description of traditional professional music education

Classical approach represents the way of traditional music teaching/learning, where a great significance is given to the traditions and their continuation, authority, ability to play precisely and adequately music created by a composer. Traditionally, music education realizes some academically accepted principles of instrument play in the framework of the classical music tradition. Teaching form and play in its principles have remained the same as 100 years ago - ability to read notes and solfège, improvements of technique with gammas and etudes, and composition's play. Harmony of classicism and romanticism eras, typical musical form structures, and most famous composers and compositions are acquired during theoretical lessons. The final result of classical approach is a musician, who is able to play flawlessly in public composer's compositions.

In Latvia, according to the professional music education guidelines of instrument play, pupils learn gamma play, play of musical etudes from notes and composition's play by memory. These elements to a large extent ensure the development of three foundation stones of music education - motorics, cognitive abilities and emotionality. However, this teaching model foresees a great relative share of cognitive abilities. In fact, musical abilities are learned by the principle "first knowledge, then action". In this way, the left hemisphere of brain is stimulated and developed, which is an all-together characteristic of the general education as well as all Western culture and way of thinking.

DESCRIPTION OF INTUITIVE OR IMPROVISATION MUSIC

Intuitive approach allows for a creative process to take place which is free from limitations and rules. It stimulates the creative self-expression of an individual, develops creativity. Teaching principle "through action towards knowledge", with practical action allows to get an experience and understanding about music making process, to intuitively grasp the physical regularities of music, rhythm, significance of melody and harmony in music, as well as about cooperation and communication chances with other musicians and listeners. There is an opinion that these human qualities at large are connected to the right brain hemisphere. The objective of intuitive approach is to unfold the creative potential of the musician, and to develop ability to freely engage into musical process regardless of the knowledge and level of preparedness. During the project it came clear that during the early stage of music education, for every student the intuitive music making could be easily understandable and available. Intuitive singing, as well as the use of various percussions makes music process available for everybody without special prior preparedness. Using easy sound making instruments - percussions, jambas, Orff's instruments, melodic percussions, singing bowls, various flutes and pipes - creates intuitive understanding about rhythm, about sound pitch and sound creating principles on various instruments. Operation with diverse type of instruments develops movement coordination skills and timbre resolution. Various keyboard instruments, for example, xylophone and metallophone, as well as piano helps to intuitively grasp terms „higher" and „lower" as well as their gradual transition on the keyboard.

HOW TO INCLUDE IMPROVISATION AND INTUITIVE MUSIC MAKING INTO PROFESSIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION CURRICULA?

Our aim is not to note the shortcomings in traditional music teaching approach and to criticize it, but to complement it with the important elements of music education and to look for solutions to improve the quality of professional music education. We do not want to highlight or deny one of these approaches, because both are suitable for teaching young musicians, and both can greatly complement each other. However, as the intuitive or improvisation approach in professional music learning process is not widely

used, then we should stress its benefits. In our view, intuitive and improvisational approach is very suitable especially for early stages of learning - for children as well as for adults - because:

- 1) it gives an opportunity to make music and to be part of the creative process from the first lessons, bringing joy and motivating students to music making;
- 2) the student has a chance to move around and do things (movements are still very important for children attending primary school), experiment intensively and to practically learn various music instruments;
- 3) in practice, there is much more music being played rather than learning few compositions in one semester on a difficult-to-learn classical instrument. This gives much larger option for a student to intuitively grasp and understand music and music making regularities;
- 4) it allows for a student to get aware of different instrument functions, timbres and applications, and therefore gives a more sound basis for choosing that professional instrument, which he wants to learn in depth;
- 5) using diverse instruments (especially - percussions) expands the so called repertoire of the movements and develops in a diverse range the small motorics and movement coordination skills.

Classical approach, in our view, would be a logical continuation of intuitive approach in music learning. When certain musical experiences have been gained and the regularities of music have been intuitively understood, it is much easier to understand them cognitively during theory lessons. When the body has understood the value of the rhythm in the musical movements, and when playing various instruments have made and stabilized a diverse range of movement models or programs, it is much easier to transfer it to any classical instrument play rather than to learn it in complicated, difficult-to-play instruments and music starting from the scratch. When the student has already understood, which instrument is that he really wants to play and which music styles and directions are interesting to him, he is much more motivated towards learning process.

Use of both approaches in music pedagogy is also important for balancing the brain activity. It is a general opinion that the left hemisphere is at large responsible for logic and rationality, but the right hemisphere ensures creative and intuitive processes. However, the research shows that for development of harmonic human personality and higher order thinking skills, there is a necessity that both hemispheres have balanced development and mutual cooperation. H. Schachl notes that, from a viewpoint of general pedagogy, objective of learning art and music (parallel to the art activity) is to develop the right brain hemisphere. Also, Latvian music pedagogue J.I. Birzkops stresses the point that development of the right brain hemisphere has enormous value in a modern education and in development of higher order thinking skills (see Bloom's taxonomy!), and music is one of simplest, most available tools for its development. As music improvisation is highly related with the development of the right brain hemisphere, it can be used - parallel to improvement of professional skills - as an easy accessible tool for development of right hemisphere features like emotionality, creativity and intuition, too. To a large extent, music making - its intuitive, imaginary aspect, as well as hearing and notion of sound - develops the right brain hemisphere. Left hemisphere in music is being developed by motorical expressions, notes reading, and analysis of music. It is evident that from a view of harmonic development of musical personality, it is necessary to develop both pedagogical approaches - both improvisational and intuitive for the development of right brain hemisphere, and the traditional, classical approach for development of left brain hemisphere.

TRAINING OF HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS

«In the future, brain activation studies may help to develop educational strategies that foster a stronger connectivity among different brain areas by exploiting cross – modal representations" (Altemüller & Gruhn, 2002).

Contemporary education emphasizes the development of the features of the left hemisphere. Nevertheless balanced development of both brain hemispheres is the matter of future education and development of the higher order thinking skills - critical, logical, reflective, metacognitive, and creative thinking. There is a view that the development of ability of higher order thinking skills is possible only with successful cooperation of right and left brain hemispheres. It means that the objective of education is to develop

good activity in both hemispheres. In music making, taking into account its complexity (motorics, hearing, memory, cognitive processes etc.), large and diverse brain areas are involved in both hemispheres. Research of G. Schlaug et al. in 1995 has shown that the corpus callosum, which connects left and right brain hemispheres, is larger for these people, who have been doing music since the age of 6-7.

It is assumed that the left brain hemisphere is verbal, successive in time, analytical, rational, and associated with the Western way of thinking. Right brain hemisphere is non-verbal, visually-spacious, simultaneous, concrete, holistically-synthesizing, intuitive and is associated with Eastern way of perception and thinking. According to J.I. Birzkops opinion, the left hemisphere operates in a successive or in a gradual way, while right hemisphere - simultaneously, by taking all details at once. According to H.Schachl, the right hemisphere is responsible for emotionality, creativity and artistic elements. Left hemisphere is logically rational area. As H. Schachl suggests, the emotionality plays a great role for memory functions as well as in connecting both brain hemispheres. It is no secret that emotionality is also used and developed to a large extent in the music making process.



As J.I. Birzkops suggests, the music learning is very efficient, comparatively cheap and easily available tool for development of higher order thinking skills - instrument play develops such brain activity qualities like anticipation or forecasting (in music making it expresses itself at several levels - senso-motoric, hearing notions and thinking level), ability to be simultaneously at two different times or situations, simultaneous perception (ability to perceive and analyze several parallel processes or tasks at time), and short term memory. An important factor for the efficiency of brain activity and learning is also an ability of time -space resolution.

Research has shown that the children who at the preschool age have participated in the music lessons, later in life show much better results in the learning of language and mathematics, which is supposed to be a prerogative of the left hemisphere. This confirms the idea about the mutual connection of both brain hemispheres and necessary cooperation for development of higher order thinking skills. It is clear that at the preschool and primary school age, the most efficient way of involving children in the music making is collective singing and improvisation on easily-played instruments (percussions, Orff's instruments, folk instruments, instruments made from nature materials), and not the tiring training hours with the classical instrument.

Research by Altenmüller, Gruhn and Parlitz proves that the improvisation as a practical activity is the intuitive music knowledge quest and activates the right hemisphere, while the music learning in a cognitive way - by verbal explanations - basically takes place in left hemisphere. It is very interesting that during the research, by applying both methods, in six weeks similar pedagogical results were acquired. Looking at music learning as an opportunity for a balanced development of personality, it must be admitted that especially the improvisation is an efficient instrument of development of intuitive and creative abilities as well as for the right brain hemisphere.

From this point of view we would like to encourage to use in pedagogy these music teaching approaches and methods which, on a brain map, activate creativity, intuitive understanding and wider connectivity of brain areas.

Intuitive singing and ways to it

Dorota Pasalska (PL)

„In the Key of Heart“ president

We live in a time of great global change. Many people can't find themselves in contemporary reality: our bodies are ill, our emotions rarely show feeling of happiness and delight, our minds are often possessed by a sense of meaninglessness – in spite of continuous technological and scientific progress. Many of us ask the question: what is happening to our world? We get wiser, we possess more and more things, but why doesn't it make us happier? Sometimes to improve some aspect in one's life, a person should change everything in her/his life. This sentence fits well with the phenomenon of 'intuitive singing'. 'Intuitive singing' cannot be just apprehended to a specific music style, it cannot be 'learned' and adapted to our previous skills. The solution is - forget every skill and the return to the roots, to the source. However, if you are not ready to change your life, better do not try!



COMPARISON OF THE IMPACTS TO THE LEARNER IN THE STANDARD MUSIC EDUCATION AND INTUITIVE SINGING APPROACH

Standard education through learning, understood as the acquisition of knowledge and practice, is widely used in music schools, workshops and trainings. However, being a professional musician doesn't lead to the skill of improvisation on the stage or in intuitive singing. The main differences between learning to be a professional musician and opening for intuitive singing can be seen in the comparison table.

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING – PROFESSIONAL SINGING

The goal is to achieve perfection; public performance on the stage.

Musical exercises are a chore; even if you are comfortable at the beginning, later they become generally tedious and tiring.

We learn according to the particular style, particular school. The closer we are to this style, the better we feel we are doing in learning.

The result is the ability to perfectly perform more difficult and more complex musical works of other composers.

Ability to improvise is the last rung on the ladder of achievements. Only greatest masters can freely improvise on stage.

If you like to sing - it gives you a great pleasure and improves mood.

Mainly we sing someone else's songs, usually masters' songs or well-known hits.

THE PROCESS OF SELF-OPENING-INTUITIVE SINGING

The goal is usually to find 'something' lost during childhood which in turn leads to a change in individual's life or at least a change in music-making.

Exercises initially seem quite meaningless but later they are very pleasant.

The fact we can sing is ideally suited to us, because it is a part of us, it comes from within us.

The result is a creative self-expression: sometimes simple, sometimes more complicated, depending on the inspiration.

Improvisation is there from the very beginning, this ability comes quickly and naturally, but you may have problems with an exact repetition of songs and memorizing.

Singing is an integral part of our life, which affects all areas.

Mainly we sing what we feel at the moment. Then we create our own songs.

INTUITIVE SINGING = IMPROVISATION

Improvisation means freedom. Improvisation means consciousness of sound and music. Improvisation is a feeling, a state - you must find it inside you, and if you find it, your life will change automatically. If you have the courage and you go with it - then something magic will happen.

Intuitive singing cannot be learned but one can be open to intuitive singing. We suggest three different ways of leading the learner to intuitive singing:

- 1) movement;
- 2) instruments;
- 3) meditation.

Movement

During the Latvian Seminar in August 2011, we became familiar with the basis of the Karl Orff approach for working with children. We've got a concise, interesting theoretical introduction and we've become familiar with several basic exercises. We found it interesting, that the movement is a primary generator of sound. Starting from atomic level - where electrons spinning around the core, make vibrations - to the macro world - movement always generates sound. Many artists are aware that by the conscious work with one's body (dance, body movements) they open the space for singing possibilities.

During the concert in Wroclaw, we had a chance to see what can be achieved through working with the body, using improvised movement as a basis. There were also two dancing female participants of the workshop; both of them confirmed that during the workshop they acquired the will to sing. Probably, they acquired this will before and were then attracted to enrolled for a workshop on improvised singing. Many people who practice improvised dance sooner or later start to sing, too.

Similarly, the workshop conducted by Svatava Drlickova from Czech Republic proved to us that the utilisation of simple body exercises can help the individual to be open to intuitive singing.

Instruments

Tibetan bowls, gongs, didgeridoo, shaman's drums, Indian's flutes, conchas - these are the relevant musical instruments. They have been known for thousands of years. They treated people, harmonized them, connected with NATURE, UNIVERSE, GOD. Nowadays, in rational, commercial, scientific times, they are often forgotten - but when they are rediscovered, they astonish with not only their beauty but also with their power and influence.

The most ancient and also most mysterious of them is the gong. The power of resonance it sets up in the physical body as well as in the human emotions and thoughts still remains mysterious for contemporary science. During the Seminar in Borowa, Tomek from Polish team threw some light on this mystery when he presented the results of scientific research conducted by Institute of Acoustics, Technical University of Wroclaw, Poland. Researchers used the same apparatus that earlier was utilized for examination of bats and dolphins. The research was targeted on so called 'magic' musical instruments, mentioned earlier. One of the discoveries was that these instruments emit infra-sounds and ultra-sounds, i.e. sounds that can't be heard, but still have an impact on the human's brain. The discovery explains the phenomenon that remains beyond the area of interest of the science, but actually impacts all practitioners of ancient musical instruments: they open up the human mind, extend consciousness, improve mood and liberate creative inspirations. Their influence, which can be found in intuitive singing or more generally, in improvisation in music, elevates self-esteem, and as a consequence, brings about improvement in many areas of human life. Ancient instruments can also be effectively used in supporting the treatment of patients. As the cause of many contemporary diseases is stress, good effects can be achieved not only in a fast but also in a pleasant way.

Meditation

This is the most direct, fastest and simplest way for everyone to access intuitive singing. Unfortunately, it can be confusing, as there are many kinds of meditation and techniques connected with meditation. We have to choose the most effective one for us. Everything that helps to open our minds, will be also helpful with accessing intuitive singing: yoga, tai-chi, breathing techniques etc. Beginners are most likely to benefit from sound techniques, which:

- develop the right hemisphere of human brain, which is irrational, artistic, symbolic, intuitive, mystical;
- help to harmonize body, emotions, mind and spirit and extend consciousness;
- change all aspects of one's life following the rule: 'change yourself, and reality around you will change';
- strongly elevate self-esteem;
- liberate creative inspiration as manifested by voice.

Most of the participants of our intuitive singing workshops report about the great importance of this singing method and express their willingness to continue with intuitive singing in the future.

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Related video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eS1W6g5_rlk



Music, instruments and singing - the view of a naturotherapist

Halina Wilk Bergerné (HU)
Ansa Bt president

For many years, I have been professionally engaged in nature therapy. Particularly I'm interested in fields that help people to find balance between the physical body, the soul and the mind. The times that we are living right now proceed at a particularly fast pace. Our bodies which are encoded by old patterns are simply not able to follow. ...

About 6 years ago I came across a gong – which is the supreme instrument. I felt its vibration in my body very strongly. The same happened with Tibetan singing bowls. Both of them gave me the impression of time disappearing and a feeling of particular lightness of the body. This state lasts long after the treatment, massage and so called „bath of sound“. Achieving this state makes it much easier to bring out our own voice. In the sound of these instruments, there is a kind of encouragement to sing together. All the pre-existing boundaries disappear. Many people are unwilling to sing. When you close down the voice inside of you, you close down your own feelings. Staying among the sounds and vibrations of these instruments helps to achieve a state of relaxation. It is a great opportunity to emerge reborn with a new quality of voice or singing. Many people can't sing. I can see that their voices, according to aesthetic standards, are judged low by the listeners. But I know that for the person performing it's a deep experience. In many cases, it can mean entering the new way of life.



To sing in front of a group you need to find courage. You need to learn how to get the strength and how to gain control over your breath. You need to learn how to keep your body at ease. You need to find immediately and spontaneously the concept of what sound you want to sing and find its suitable power and pureness. Practise helps.



It's worth practising. As a result of practice, the practitioners achieve higher levels of satisfaction. They are able to get back on their feet faster- I would call this time, a time of growth and development of the voice. I notice that singing people make changes in their lives much faster.

Apart from gongs and singing bowls there are many other different instruments that can help you to get your inner voice out.

The Shruti box, which is Indian origin, gives you the basic tone and creates a kind of wave that you can easily sit with. Its sound reminds us of something ancient and earthy-natural - singing with it, we get the feeling that we actually are this sound. We also feel safe.. The participants of this exercise very often say that they heard and felt the voice of the Earth.

Another very interesting intuitive instrument is Kalimba. This beautiful, angelic sound has an impact on our feelings. It opens the path to getting out our feeling. Singing together with this instrument we sense that we are singing out our feelings which give a special sense of lightness and pureness.

Completely different feelings wake up inside of us while listening to the shamanic drum. We get the impression that we are returning to our ancestors. Rhythm given by a player can easily take us to the world of the elements.

I'm sure that each of us can find the most suitable instrument for ourselves. It is worth playing those instruments just for your own pleasure. It is worth creating your own intimate contact with them. A few years ago, I came across a zither. Listening to the sound of its strings I realised that I would like to play that instrument in my own way. I found some beautiful poems and then the music for them came into being. A year later a CD with my improvised songs was released. I have been giving concerts for many years. The listeners who share their impressions say that those songs get deep inside them.

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About healing chakras with sound and singing

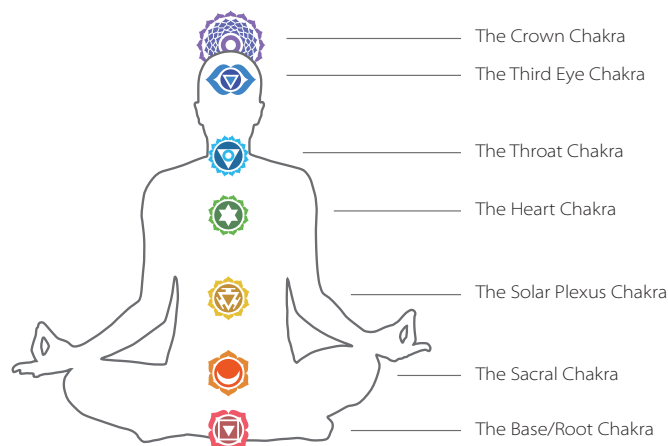
Halina Wilk Bergerné (HU)
Naturopath

Traditional Chinese medicine maintains that when the subtle energies in your body are in a state of balance and flowing freely, you will be vital, healthy, balanced, both physically, emotionally and mentally. When the flow of vital energies is unbalanced or blocked in some way, you will be more vulnerable to disease or negative states of mind. The energy we are talking about here is the energy that makes plants grow, the sun rise at dawn and a child bloom into an adult. It is called Chi in the East or Life force energy in the West.

According to traditional Eastern healing, Chi or the Life force energy interfaces with our organs and bodily systems at seven major points. These connection points resemble spinning vortexes, and each of them resonate with the others to enable the body to maintain optimum health. They are called chakras. Most people do not see chakras spinning but they feel the effects on their health and lives.

There are several variations of the number and appearances of the chakras; however, the most well known refers to seven major chakras located in a line running from just above the crown of your head to the base of your spine. Each chakra is associated with particular colours, sounds, organs, emotions and mental attitudes. Chakra is a Sanskrit word, meaning, "the wheel". The human chakras are "wheel-like" vortices, or saucer-shaped depressions that exist on the surface of the etheric human body.

The seven primary chakras are located along a central vertical axis of our spine and open toward the front of the body like a flower. These circular energy centers are in constant motion, rotating, attracting energy - receiving or radiating. At the center of each chakra, in its deepest point, is a stem-like channel that extends



to the spine and merges with it, thus connecting the individual chakra with the sushumna (the most important energy channel) which ascends within the spine to the top of the head.

Name of chakra	Music tone	Sound
The Crown Chakra	B	"AOM"
The Third Eye Chakra	A, A#	"EE"
The Throat Chakra	G, G#	"AE"
The Heart Chakra	F, F#	"A"
The Solar Plexus Chakra	E	Open "A"
The Sacral Chakra	D, D#	"O"
The Base/Root Chakra	C, C#	"UU"

The table above describes the relationships between chakras, musical frequency and the vowels we can use, to stabilize certain problems in our body or in life. As sound is vibration, it can influence the vibrations of our chakras. By using corresponding pitch and vowel what resonates with certain chakra, it is possible to improve and stabilize the flow of energy through chakras.

Counscious singing of appropriate sounds and vowels can be used for therapy purposes. However, it works as well as when singing intuitive. Singing is very natural state of human body, and probably singing is the Good's gift to human being to keep their body and subtle energy flows fit.

Unability to sing can be assessed as an indicator to restricted energy flow in some of the chakras.

As a rule, every healthy person can sing freely and sonorous, while unhealthy person has a constraints to express himself through his voice. To sing nice, everybody has to be healthy and energetically well balanced. So, beautiful voice can be considered as a sign of good health, too.

Searching for my voice

Svatava Drlíčková (CZ)

Participant of the workshop „Intuitive singing – gate to your inner music“

As a small child, I stood in the corner of a large porch, I slowly turned my head to one side and then the other and I listened with interest as my voice changed. How my voice sounded different and even. I often stood and listened to voice crashing into the wall and bouncing back. I felt like I was talking with someone and that someone answered to me. I also realized that when I felt I was singing inside of myself it is as if my voice rose from the centre of my body and went up to the lips, which when opened allowed my voice to venture out.

In retrospect, I realize how nice it felt and that it soothed me. Overtime it became less and less possible to sing a song in this way and then one day I could not remember how I did it. I could not find my voice, or the place where it had always been. I sang on, but it was not like before, something was missing.

My life was still accompanied by music and singing, and so it happened that I came to know in adulthood holistic music therapy. I studied it, and then began to practice it. At the beginning I had the opportunity to meet Gendos, master of throat singing, and Siberian musician and shaman. In his work he used the specific technique of preparing voice before singing. After several years of collaboration together, we slightly modified this system, whereby a person finds the place which is the source of his voice and shows him a way to project it out into the world. It made me realize again the same feeling I experienced in childhood. I leave it to my voice to respond to what was happening in me, to how the environment affects me, to how I feel. All of this is reflected in the singing. I cannot tell you what I will sing going forward and I do not understand words or understand the statement contained in the singing. However, with this way of singing is also possible to communicate and transmit emotions.

I believe that every person can find his voice. Maybe he will have to do like me and find a simple system to help uncover the voice that Gendos gave me.

EXERCISE OF TUVA

The exercise is performed in pairs.

- in a pair one stands, his eyes are closed, breathing regularly, the other stands behind him;
- other puts his hands on the shoulders and takes off the weight of his shoulders and releases;
- begins gently patting the upper back and gradually increase the intensity;
- crosses at the side of the body- shoulders, arms, hips, thighs, calves and ankles and back again;
- repeats it several times.

Then continuously:

- holds the arm and makes circular motions on the spine;
- makes upper back massages;
- puts moderate and strong pressure moving down to the ankles, hands delay, and will perform once again;
- the pair exchanges.

Starting position – fingers at the breastbone; turn one hand on the front and then move it on the side, singing out the sound “E”; repeat it several times;

- second hand the same with message “O”;
- both hands “A” and then individually “E”, “O”, “A”;
- relax the facial muscles, head by circular motions;
- slight stride, toe pointed forward, move pelvis forward, crouch backwards, one hand palm faces to the sky, the other to the ground, hold 5 sec. in the rearmost position and repeat with exchanging hands;
- diaphragm loud vocal repetition of syllables “re”, “ro”, “ra”;
- relax neck muscles by stretching and circular motions.

System of releasing the body, voice and breathing training and warming up the body induces a state of meditation, inner peace, concentration and an increased sense of self. He is so ready for the birth of the voice. Sometimes the path is long and difficult but sometimes such gift fall directly from heaven.

Everyone can find their system, a ritual that helps him find his inner voice, he then managed to chime and let it penetrate into our world. The simpler the system, the more natural it is, and gives more support and shows the way.

Intuitive voice is not influenced by reason, not a predetermined melody and words. It originates and terminates freely; it is projected into the mood, the influence of environment, responds to the expression of another person engaged in dialogue. It is full of emotion and comes from the heart. It strongly supports the internal state of meditation.

I love working with music professionals and laymen too. Both have their charms and have something to offer. Always in the first place all depends on the personality of person, then on what it characterizes.

The European music sometimes struggles with the question of whether we have something to offer to the world that will ensure that all traditions are not forgotten. Many were actually forgotten and perhaps even lost, but thanks to intuitive music and singing we can return back to their primordial roots go back a way in which our ancestors came. You may not find all the treasures, but you may find those hidden from previous generations.

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Related video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoakWP73qdU>



Playing and singing in the process of music therapy

Zdeněk Melichar (CZ)

Participant of the workshop „Intuitive singing – the gate to your inner music“

„I first came across intuitive music and intuitive singing, when I watched my little children as toddlers and how they played with their hands and made some sounds. I had a idea that they were singing their first intuitive songs. How they put the tongue in the mouth was really the beginning of aliquot singing.

After that, I started to be interested in music therapy. Most interesting for me was the technique of Dr. Lubomír Holzer, from University of Olomouc I started using the principles of this method working with students and clients at schools for children with special needs.

In this method, we use musical instruments that can open our hearts and souls. Playing in this way connects us with the universe and with each other. One of the most important instruments is the human voice. We build on our own experience of playing and singing and we learn how to act on our own. The instruments are mostly folk, ethnic and natural instruments with natural tuning.

When we create an intuitive song, the first impulse is the tone and then the rhythm. Next we connect with the universe and the participants. In this process, we create and experience a fluctuating flow of energy which in turn creates a positive mood.

This influenced my work in music therapy with students in our school. It is a joy to feel the connection and the flow of energy in our performances.

I'm not technically a great musician, but intuitive music works well when playing with professional Musicians. It is important to break free and become more open. One of the exercises that we use in music therapy is the orchestra, where participants are asked to add their instruments, their voices and energy to common intuitive playing.

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Teenager's intuitive way to music

Marek Gonda (SK)

Participant of the workshop „Intuitive singing – the gate to your inner music“

My path and search for inner music was rather strange. There were no musicians in our family and I was already fifteen, when I decided, that I would start to play a musical instrument. It was just a rational decision. I found an old recorder at home, borrowed a training book at library and started to make music... However, I found out very soon that this did not give me the satisfaction I was looking for. So I gave it up. However, at that time I was given a six-finger-hole bamboo flute from India. I had no idea how to play it, but there was an occasion, when I was really relaxed. I just started to play it and I happened to experience a state, when I had a feeling that I had become an instrument through which music is playing. From outside the music had to be a terrible mass of sound - it was just a set of false notes played by an unskilled teenager with very little music awareness.



However, for me it was a breakthrough and from that time, I had always had a desire to experience it again.

Accordingly, I started to play other different simple instruments such as drums, traditional Slovakian flutes or the didgeridoo. These enabled me to express my inner worlds and at the same time did not require any special skills, which would have needed a lot of practice.

Later, I started to make these instruments as well. This was an important step forward, because when you play instrument, you make the sound. But when you make instrument, you decide about the possibilities and quality of the sound. This enabled me also to make sets of instruments which I then used to make workshops with people. I was able to show them how easy it can be to experience oneself to be able to make music.

Singing was a skill which I started to develop simultaneously with practising playing instruments. First, I was trying to learn how to play and sing traditional songs. It was very good for me to learn some rules. But then I realized, that there is much more to

explore with your voice. I see it now as the most powerful instrument you can use, because it has almost endless possibilities.

Let your body sing. This is very powerful. Not just your voice, not just your mind. Try to find a feeling in your body and give it a voice. Sometimes it can be very strange. It will show you the way to the next sound, it will open a mystery or make you feel what is really inside you. It can get you very close to people, who are singing with you. This kind of intuitive singing does not follow any preset rules, but has an inner feeling which moves everybody and everything which is open to it. And therefore very surprising things can happen, sometimes difficult to believe, sometimes very funny, sometimes abit painful... It is most important not to hide anything, not to be ashamed of failure and not to be afraid to risk doing crazy things.

Music really changed my perception of everyday life. I found out, that the inner system of intuitive music, which I experience when I am playing or singing, can be seen all around me. It is similar to the way as leaves are growing on the trees or clouds moving in the sky. It is the whisper of the wind. It can be seen in the relationship between people, in the way they move. Simply, it brings me closer to the understanding, how world was created, how does it moves and works.

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGKv4PIUPDE>



We got the rhythm!

SandisBārdiņš (LV)

Swinging in the rhythm of the music, clapping, clapping with legs, and drumming are the simplest way to express you bodily. The magic sounding of drums draws you into it. The wide range of drum sound waves can put into motion both the cells and organs of the body, as well as the consciousness and soul frequencies. By drumming, a human being can express its natural necessity to express in motion and in sound with the rhythm, tempo and emotional mood that is characteristic only to him. By drumming, rhythm is searched and found quite unconsciously. As an elementary time division principle, rhythm can simply and efficiently become not only the main process of music, but also that of perception, thinking and becoming memory's focal point.



What is the rhythm? Is it not the one of the main basic principles of our world? An archetypical mode which is a foundation to everything? We see the rhythm in the change of seasons (summer – winter), day and night cycle, and in the murmur of the sea waves. Entirely organically, we perceive the rhythm of our steps. The movements of our bodies are rhythmic, and even the task of the vitally important heart muscle is to pump the blood in the vessels in a certain rhythm. In a physical world, practically all the processes can be measured in rhythmical frequencies, and we understand them as the lesser or smaller here – there movement. Also, the sound – regardless of how musical or non-musical it is – physically is the unit of rhythmic fluctuations, which in an amazing way spreads in the air, water and also in more solid environments, including human body. It may be true that the sound can influence also our soul structure, although we still find difficult to understand what it is. As we can see, rhythm is omnipresent, and it is possible that Somebody has created it as primary necessary principle for existence of the time dimension. While in music, rhythm is that element which implements some order in the chaos of diverse sounds and it makes them more recognizable for our perception, or easier structured. What we generally call music, actually are sounds which are organized in a rhythm that our consciousness perceives and understands.

In life, we often observe the differences in what every one of us is ready to call „music“. It is explained by differences in our internal rhythms and the alignment of the outer rhythm with each individual's internal rhythm. What makes these differences? Are these emotions, feelings, health condition, age, gender, time of the day? It all is possible – scientists have observed, that the different emotional conditions correlate with the relevant biochemical reactions in the nervous system and organism. (However, we still don't know who was first – the hen or the egg – are the emotions creating biochemical reaction, or biochemical reactions make the emotional reaction. It is difficult to define the primary cause for this process, too).

In any case, glucose, potassium and calcium ions, cortisol, adrenalin, and many hormones and chemical reactions define the biological constitution of our body, blood circulation, muscle activity level and pulse. Every person has its individual pulsation, the internal rhythm of the body and processes. It is possible that this explains individual attitudes towards various rhythms, pulses in music and an ability to perceive them. So, pulse and pulsation is also a rhythm. As it was explained before, pulsation or rhythm is very important element of world's structure. Also, different music has its own individual pulsation. It is possible, that the pulsation is one of these very important aspects which can unite humans and music in one resonating system. The rhythmic pulsation of music is that element which can synchronize both the music makers and the listeners in a single rhythm.

Elementary improvisation

Ella Umbleja (LV)

The term „elementary” mostly is used, meaning simple, understandable for everybody, but composer and pedagogue, founder of elementary music making Carl Orff has introduced another meaning to this term – primordial, primary, something that relates to the foundations. Then, what are these foundations in music – the art of sounds, which translate reality in sound images, and which expresses and influences human thoughts and feelings in sounds?

The sound starts with a movement. As every sound is a vibration, physically there is a need for the movement, which puts this vibration into motion. Can melody exist without a rhythm? No way! But the rhythm without melody surrounds as everywhere – pulse, breathing, day and night, and seasons. For music to arise, it is enough to have movement, sound and rhythm. If there is a human being in any place, or better – two of them, musical improvisation can start immediately!

How to start to improvise? Elementary – it means, from the very foundations! Let us experiment with noises, timbres, surrounding things, with possibilities of our bodies and voice. Let us play echoes, rain, cat, factory, weeds and other funny things. By repeating any noise several times, it becomes rhythmical. In this way we can make ostinato – a base for the next improvisation. It is possible to play different timbre impressions, diverse dynamics, and various emotions with rhythm instruments; therefore it is good to start improvisation with these instruments, so that with the clapper it is possible to play a splendid *Freezing Earthworm* in the background of ostinato of plastic bags!

We can continue with adding the timbres in freely chosen rhythmical structures, which we group and thus create a larger form. The rondo form, where the solo and group timbre play interchanges, is exciting, dynamic and democratic musical form. To get the pulse feeling stable and organic, we permanently engage the whole body and move around the room. It is also important to remember, what is that we are playing, so that the music making would create associations of images.

Melodic improvisation in a group sometimes can create problems – harmonic progressions must be memorized, tonal key characters must be known, and one must know how to modulate. A certain base can help – a song, a poem, melody, play, dance, where just a short period is allocated for improvisation – a motive, a phrase, a sentence in a certain place in the base. At the beginning, improvisation is recommended only where tonality is not changing, playing with registers, rhythms, dynamics and texture, while the rhythm instruments can improvise accompaniment during the whole performance. Later, we can go to two or three chord progression with regular change of ostinato type. However, the most importantly in improvisation is to keep in mind the general aesthetic aim – the story!

Certainly, the quality of improvisation will depend on the skill of the participants to listen to and to be brave enough to involve in joint performance, and on the ability to realize their imagination scenes in sounds. However, there will be so much joy that it will not be possible to measure!

Improvisation master class in piano play

Ligatne Culture House, 24 August 2011

Māris Žagars (LV)

Lecturer at Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy

Improvisation starts from silence. Improvisation preferences belong to these people, who can listen to silence and enjoy it. True improvisation does not need a lot of notes. As well as loudness – in our times, the over-density of acoustic space numbs down the human's perception and weakens the creative skills.

Beauty and diversity of improvisation are to be found in exactly piano and pianissimo dynamic gradations.

Improvisation is language. We tell a story naturally and non-artificially with the help of improvisation. If several people are involved, they talk to each other with sounds – they raise questions, respond, object, quarrel, agree...

Improvisation is also a game – every participant during the game comes up with new and interesting rules of the game, and offers them to others. Improvisation is simple. To create an experience in listeners (it is most important!), it is enough with few, sometimes – one sound. However, the sound must be played with enormous:

- Will - to make the world more beautiful through this sound;
- Faith and confidence – it will turn up right. And why should it not? Everyone among us can play one or few sounds!

It is impossible to play wrong during improvisation! Only ..if we believe so. Even if we play „wrong” sound (however, in improvisation there are no wrong sounds, only the attitude towards them can be wrong), next to it there are always the „right” sounds to be found, which are never too late to play!

It is similar to GPS navigation system. No matter where we drive to, system always will show the new way of getting around – so all roads are correct! And we trust this system and follow it calmly, confidently and with certainty.

Can a person, who plays fast (virtuously), improvise? It is similar to the art of academic piano play – is that performer the best, who plays fast, loudly and technically precisely? No. The best player is the one, who plays who this only sound in a perfect timing, with internal peace, confidence and with aim to expand around beauty, kindness and harmony through this particular sound.

One of the risks of improvisation is showing off. This negative tendency is better to be replaced with delight of being able to create music, the enthusiasm about many and different ways of musical expression.



It is possible that one of the greatest improvisation difficulties is to start it – i.e., to play the first sound...

The main aim of improvisation – joy! Working with children, this is one of the main aims to be reached. With the time, the child will strengthen his emotional experience and feeling – I can make it!

Improvisation is imaginative. Technical play can hold the attention for a short time, however, a play which is meaningful and full with images, creates experience and stimulates imagination. However, for a listener to be able to experience music, the musician must also live through the contents of music!

Reflecting nature phenomena in music has a lot of benefits, because most of them every person has felt and experienced personally. Here are some inspirational and imagination-stimulating natural processes:

sunrise, morning, dew, sun rays through tree leaves, rain (light – sieving, strong – chopping), hail, snow (Christmas snow, snowstorm), frost (stiff, cracking), snow ball falling from hill, avalanche, wind (little wind blows, medium strong, storm), whirlpool of leaves, thunder (threatening from a distance, growing, till shaking and lumbering), fog, stream (rippling), sea (calm, troubled), lake (as mirror), ocean (wide and noble or full of force – mighty, billowy), rainbow, earth quake (light, raising in force, strong), volcano (dormant, fuming, erupting); leaves falling in autumn, icicles dripping in spring, flower blossoming and smell, stars in sky, Polar star, moon in a silent, dark night (full moon – threatening/light bringing), sunset, shadows (moving slowly – threatening, strange, or intriguing – as the silhouettes of the sunny summer day).

Two kinds of improvisation: spontaneous and prepared. Spontaneous play by musicians is rather conditional, because the playing techniques have been acquired before hand - gamut, triads, accords etc. There is a certain notion of means of musical expression (harmony, rhythm, melody etc). However, a combination, in which the music elements are grouped, is innovative (and thus – improvising), and a person himself chooses his own individual discovery of musical image.

It must be noted, that the adults in improvisation have more stereotypes, while children are freer from assumptions. So, after a request to play a bear, adult most often will use the lower piano registers and slow tempo. However, a child may picture bear with the higher piano sounds, very subtle and with rippling motion. When asked – is this a bear? – the child will say – yes, a bear-girl is dreaming...

In prepared improvisation, the structure of composition – form, harmonies, melody motives etc. – are known, however, in every play the composition will be played differently.

Interaction of classical music playing and improvisation. All great classical music composers firstly were great improvisators. They focused on some music material (motive) and then started to „play with it“. Later it was written down in notes, because, in their view, it is the best and most precise way of recording the concrete musical material (and composer's idea).

Is that the great musician who masters the academic classical music repertoire and can play it? Or the one, who can create the musical impression in an instant; unusually and witty change a known composition and to play by hearing? My belief – a true musician combines both of these spheres.

Learning of improvisation skills during instrument play lessons

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pedagogue of trombone play



Improvisation is indeed simple! When playing an instrument, you just have to be able to play the music which sounds in your head – this is the task of a real musician. Is it possible that nothing sounds in your head? You just need to start!

While in music schools separate improvisation lessons are not offered, the time for improvisation can be found during instrument play lessons. Playing by hearing (which is the essence of improvisation) is much recommended for development of musical abilities and their transfer to instrument play.

How to realize it practically in individual lessons? In practice, a great importance is allocated to teacher's ability to encourage student and to stimulate his musical thinking according to student's development level.

I DO IT LIKE THIS!

In the beginning, it is possible to use *repetition or imitation* technique – teacher plays a simple motive (2-3 notes), and student repeats it. Step by step, the

motives can become longer and more complex in intervallic relations (certainly, pedagogue can organize and adjust this work during lessons to improve skills of instrument play and to experiment with new techniques, too). From these, the musical thoughts, sentences and even paragraphs can be created (8 and 16 bar structures). More complex rhythms can be introduced. At the same time pedagogue should take into account, that at one point the student's limit to remember and repeat given motifs will be exceeded. What to do? Simply allow deviations from theme to happen and encourage student to continue to play and finish phrase following his musical notion!

The next step for improvisation learning is *musical conversation*. As before, the musical motives and phrases are played interchangeably. The task is to continue, add on to the previously played motive, to develop musical thought, and to create melody. In this way it is possible to get closer to understanding about the importance of musical rhythm and harmony in music. Music's inclination to organize itself in square structures can crystallize, making 4-8-12-16 bar phrases, sentences and periods. After this has happened intuitively, it would be good to explain this to student theoretically.

When student feels enough stable in these improvising elements, the next step in process development is to change the roles – student takes the role of the leader and pedagogue is the one who *repeats, imitates, and continues the conversation*.

When the principles of intuitive improvisation are understood, one can suggest to improvise about some imaginary object, as well as to use various frames or structures – for example, play within a concrete scale, in rhythmical pattern, and genre. Quick to grasp is the basics of the jazz foundations – classical 12-bar blues progression; it is often found in rock and pop music.

♩ = 80 C F

When pedagogue is playing on the piano blues harmony and rhythmical pattern, it creates stable and foreseeable musical environment. In this way, student is motivated to be involved in ensemble's play and to express his musical ideas in a more structured and thoughtful way.

When improvising, the student involves more hearing in the playing process, rather than playing by notes. In this way, the neuronal connection network involved in music making is expanded. The hearing is being developed. In addition, the feedback loop of the hearing perceptions is a very important element in motorics of the play or in coordination and management of musical movements.

Certainly, the most evident benefit of improvisation during instrument play lessons is the ability of the student to create its own musical ideas, and a developed connection between musician's musical ideas and the instrument, or, in other words, ability to realize these musical ideas by using the instrument.

Related video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boDj1jzdwOI>



Basics of jazz improvisation

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Improvisation is an expression of a musician's individuality in music; it is the story of his views and emotions, being told in sounds. Improvisation or story has its own contents and form, and, most importantly, it has its own language. It is the language of sounds. Putting the sounds in a string that is characteristic only to himself, musician makes his own improvisation, his own story. The story must be understandable, therefore, the language that is used for telling the story must be logical. It means that we can not toss with the words as we want, but the necessary words must be chosen and put in a required succession. It is similar to how we speak in our native language. But how to do it in the language of music?

In jazz, music making happens, using so called jazz tunes. Tune is a melody with chord accompaniment, transcribed in the form of letters - C_{major}, A₇, D_{minor}, G₉, etc. In jazz music process, a melody is played first, and then musicians follow with their improvisation, using the succession of chords of the played tune as a basis for their play. This is already the mentioned story, expressed in the music language.

As in every language, also music language has words - these are the sounds, which are labeled as notes. There are vowels - these are the sounds of chords; and there are consonants - sounds of non-chords. In order that the musical story would be logical and well-sounding, it must be based on vowels - chord sounds. In practice it means, that the chord sounds - vowels are placed on the strong beats, but non-chords on the weak beats. In composition, it is called the alignment of melody and harmony. However, in difference from the composition, where composer is not limited in time, improvisation takes place in the process of playing. It is created and played at the same time. It means following: if music is an conscious organisa-

tion of sounds, then music making is the conscious organisation of these sounds with the help of voice or instruments. While, if improvisation is a creation of a sound composition during playing, it means, we have to be able to organize these sounds consciously during the music play. We have to be able to make these actions in the head, at the level of internal hearing. It is similar to how we organize the words during a conversation. Words are formed from the letters and sentences are formed from the words. Whereas in music, by combining two or three notes, motive is formed, and from a combination of several motifs, a phrase is formed. Similar to language, as we put the thought into sentences, in music the main carrier of thought is a phrase. How can we practically learn this conscious organizing of sounds?

As in any other sphere, also improvisation learning should take a path from simple to complex. This can be done in several steps.

First step. First, some chord must be chosen, for example, C_{major7} (do, mi, sol, si) and then you must try to think, sing and then play on instrument a musical phrase, first only **with the sounds of the chord!** Why chord sounds, and why one must sing? First, chord sounds will develop a stable sense of harmony, which is very important in the improvisation process; and second, a condition that concrete notes must be chosen, will organise our thinking. Thus, with the time, we will be able to play what we want to play, and not the "one which will come out". While, at the early stage, singing is necessary to better realize and test your musical thought. Already in 18th century, brilliant Italian violinist Giuseppe Tartini said: "To play well on violin, one must sing well!" In the note transcription it may look as follows:

This note example is only illustrative. Notes can be placed in a completely different order and rhythm, according to your views and wishes. Remember also, that everything you want to improvise, must be first thought through in the head rather than written on the note paper.

Second step. When we are feeling comfortable with the making of single chord phrases, we add the other chord to the existing chord, for example, G₇. We get the progression G₇-C_{major7}. The task is the same - to think, sing and play on the instrument musical phrase. However, now it is made from sounds of two chords. It means to us that we have to think through one phrase which connects chords, but not two phrases separately on each chord. For example, it can be like this:

Third step. We add chords to the existing progression of chords - one, two, three, four, etc., until we can finally try to play the whole tune. How to do if the line is, for example, in the length of 32 bars? To sing such a long phrase? Of course not! We are also not talking without punctuation marks! Take a pause. At the beginning, the phrases must be made in the two bar length. With the time, they can get longer.

In addition. To learn some language, you must not try to speak it only - you must listen to it a lot. Therefore, listen to a lot of jazz music - in records and in live performances!

How to follow on with the singing? Is it that always, before anything is played on an instrument, first it must be sung? No! It is recommended to sing in the rehearsal lessons. If it is done regularly, the ability will develop with time which will allow you everything, that you hear in your head, to be played perfectly on the instrument. Because, as the jazz music pedagogue Jamey Aebersold says: "Improvisation is when you play what you hear in your head!"

And remember, that everybody can improvise! Good luck for you!

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