

**An Approach to**  
**Improvisation**  
**in Music Education**

*by Huw Lloyd*

## Introduction

Hello! My name is Huw Lloyd, I'm a clarinet, saxophone and improvisation teacher based in Tokyo. If you're reading this then you're probably also a music teacher of some kind. I'd like to invite you to be a part of a little experiment.

I'm developing a method of improvisation and jazz education, for beginners through to more advanced players, with which I hope to reach a wider audience, but it's still in its experimental stages. I'm wondering if you'd be gracious enough to try out some of the ideas contained in this pamphlet with your students, and let me know how it goes for you.

Perhaps you are already a skilled jazz or improvisation educator. If so, I'd be fascinated to know if you find anything new or not in my approach. Perhaps you're not an improviser yourself at all. Not to worry, many of the exercises here are designed for the teacher and student to explore together. Expand your skills alongside your student. I promise that, given your greater experience, you'll always have the advantage.

The key word here for me is "explore". I don't doubt that you're aware of how it can be possible to fall into a rut with teaching - the same pieces, the same exercises with child after child. Perhaps you'll agree with me that a sense of exploring together with students can be one of the remedies for this. Improvisation by its very nature is difficult to predict, different every time, so integrating it into lessons is ideal for keeping them interesting, and stimulating that sense of exploration.

If this sounds appealing, I also feel obliged to warn you that there is a price to pay for including improvisation in a teaching routine: having to actively relax your expectations of how the music should sound. Whether you use the exercises included here to warm up, cool off or fill an entire lesson, the point is to see how the music chooses to express itself through you and the student, at that moment. We are trained to judge and give effective feedback, but with improvisation there is no right or wrong. In my opinion, judgement is better replaced with discussion and opinion. What did you like and dislike about a particular improvisation? What could be done to improve the next try? These are not questions for you, but rather to pose to the student. Not for a correct or incorrect answer, but to stimulate discussion and a desire to explore deeper.

Not having a single right answer puts us as teachers at a disadvantage, so perhaps it's whether you're willing to explore this more vulnerable position that is the most important consideration, before trying the exercises included here. In my experience, students respond with nothing short of full enthusiasm to a teacher who's willing to treat their opinions as they would those of an equal.

Many thanks in advance for any time you decide to put into this experiment, and any feedback you can offer. I look forward to hearing whatever you might care to share. You can find out more about me at: [huwlloydmusic.com](http://huwlloydmusic.com)  
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## First Things First

There's one point that we have to agree upon for this particular method to be at all effective in the classroom, and that's how important it is for beginner musicians to start developing their own way of approaching music - their own style. I don't believe that style is something added to a perfect technique as a finishing touch, in the way that varnish is applied to freshly tooled wood. Technical skill and personal stylistic exploration feed off each other in an organic way.

In jazz particularly, the importance of developing a personal approach, or "voice" as it's known in the vernacular, is self-evident given the countless number of statements to that effect made by the greats of the genre: "It's better to be a number one yourself than a number two somebody else" (Duke Ellington); "A genius is someone most like himself" (Thelonious Monk). Yet this is not limited to jazz. A truly great interpreter of any tradition has their own way of looking at it, and is actively involved in exploring their relationship to it. This is what I mean by style

### Intelligence

There is a correlation here with some of the theories popular in modern education. Sir Ken Robinson, among others, has advocated the theory of multiple intelligences. In his words, "We think about the world in all the ways we experience it." This has led to the idea of an intelligence fingerprint, that each of us has a unique pattern of strengths and weaknesses woven into the skills we possess for relating to and interacting with the world.

The idea that each student has specialised needs in order to best exploit their intelligence fingerprint is hardly new, but it is one that our current education system, modelled on industrial ideals, has been slow to embrace. As mostly one-to-one teachers, and teachers of an art, our situation is different - both easier and more complex.

On the one hand, we are able to devote all of our attention to the student. We can get to know the strengths and weaknesses of their particular intelligence, and exploit both in the learning process. On the other hand, as individuals ourselves we naturally have our own intelligence biases which, if we are not aware of them, lead us to favouring particular methods which may not bring out the best in every one of our students.

The other factor is that in art, unlike in the sciences and mathematics, we are not just concerned with the assimilation of information to produce an independently verifiable answer. As artists, how we re-communicate what we have understood is as important to us as how we understood it in the first place. In other words, how information comes out is as important as how it goes in. Both of these are functions of the intelligence fingerprint, and both necessarily included in a rounded musical education.

Which brings us back to the idea of having a personal musical style - how music

comes out of you as an individual. I define developing this unique voice as putting one's own intelligence fingerprint to the task of handling the requirements of making music, in the most efficient way possible. I say efficiently because those who are masters of music, regardless of genre, always have the qualities of individual style and apparent effortless. I believe these two go hand in hand.

### The Grey Area

In even the most rigidly notated music, there is still no single correct way for it to be played. In fact, this grey area gets bigger and bigger the more interpretation and improvisation there is in the music. Some people's intelligence fingerprint is less suited to grey area, others can thrive on only that. But the more grey area a genre has, the more important personal style becomes.

Jazz having possibly the largest grey area of all, developing one's voice should be its teachers' highest priority. But given that every music contains some room for interpretation, developing style is something that is useful for every student regardless of interest in jazz per se.

Now, I'm not suggesting by any stretch of the imagination that technique is unimportant. The point I want to make is that from the very beginning of music education, students should be exposed to the personal contribution that they can and must make to become good musicians. And improvisation is one of the best ways to explore this. Knowing three, two, or even one note on an instrument is enough for a child to play around with the sound, see which combinations, lengths or even mistakes are pleasing to them. In other words, exploring the preferences of their intelligence fingerprint, as it manifests through sound.

To elaborate on a point made earlier, technique and aesthetic (style) also feed off one another, they are symbiotic. Learning a difficult new scale opens up previously unknown creative possibilities, just as much as desiring to sound a particular way forces one to master new practical skills. But it is the aesthetic which should lead, from the very beginning, if we wish to produce students who are balanced, expressive and genuinely involved in the creative process.

### Summary

How many adults - parents of students, perhaps - tell you how they wish they'd kept up with an instrument from their childhood? It borders on the ridiculous, don't you find? I can't help but feel that these are the individuals whose intelligence fingerprint would have been better suited to an aesthetic-rich rather than technical approach to music. If their teacher had encouraged improvisation, they might still, from time to time, pull out that dusty old violin from the cupboard and coax out a few pentatonic melodies. Or lift up the lid of a piano and use it to express their joy or frustration. Or developing their personal voice first might have eventually encouraged them to go deeper into technique, and they'd be classical virtuosos by now! It's impossible to say for sure.

So on the one hand, I'm saying that music (especially jazz) education should focus

on developing the individual voice through exploring the intelligence fingerprint, and that improvisation is a powerful tool to this end. But it's also up to us as teachers of music as a whole to see beyond our own intelligence biases, whatever they may be, and deliver an education which is about more than just technique and emulation. My method is offered as one possible step in that direction.

## Origins

There are two influences that I believe make my approach to jazz and improvisation education different. These are my involvement with improvised theatre (impro), a genre which has spawned an entire world of exercises and games, and my study of the music of Steve Lacy, a performer and composer whose contribution is sadly neglected within the international jazz community. I'd like to take a brief look at each of these areas to fill in the background to my own ideas.

### Impro

One of the origins of improvised theatre was as games and exercises for stage actors to use in order to make their performances more authentic, to bring them out of their heads and into the present moment of their natural reactions. But it didn't stop there. Figures such as Keith Johnstone, Del Close and Charla Halpern saw the potential in and skill needed for spontaneously creating scenes, and filled entire evenings with them. A wide spectrum of impro has arisen, from the long-form "Harold" which is a play or musical filling a whole hour sometimes, to the quick-fire short-form typified by "Who's Line Is It Anyway?"

At its best, impro is about relationships. The basic rules taught to beginner improvisors are solely concerned with developing trust between players so that every idea expressed can take root and contribute to building the scene. By staying positive and accepting whatever your partners say, whether it's about you, themselves or the surroundings, entire realities can be brought into existence through the imagination. What it really boils down to is making the people you play with look good.

To bring this into the musical realm, it is important to note that one of the advantages that composed music has over improvised music is that it allows for complex interactions between parts. And this interplay is a sizeable chunk of what listening to and enjoying music is all about. If jazz and improvising musicians want to approach the level of interaction achieved by composed music, it's important to both practice the skill and have strong relationships with one's fellow performers. In this age of quickly-assembled groups for one-off gigs, the necessity is even more pressing. Yet is the conscious study of interaction included in any contemporary jazz syllabus?

The other big contribution that a study of impro can make to jazz education is in the treatment of ideas. Very often, musical improvisation is seen as a constant search for new ideas. But the greatest improvisers are also master recyclers. Every good

idea is pondered over and reincorporated somehow (even if it's in the next tune or the following night's gig). What's more, the rhythm section takes ideas from the soloist, and vice versa, allowing for a spontaneity and subtlety of interaction that borders on the composed. This also lessens the pressure on each performer to constantly be producing new material, allowing for more attention to be put into swing or groove. A group that uses ideas wisely is invariably a funky one.

That making the people you're performing with look good is at least as important as what you choose to play personally, is a fundamental principal of the best improvised music and jazz. Just listen to anything from Bechet's "Summertime" to Coltrane's "Interstellar Space" and it's obvious that it's a huge part of their conception of the music. Granted, interaction can happen naturally in harmonic structures - it's part of their charm - but this is a far cry from the intention to be consciously present with and make the most of your fellow performers, rather than separated in some private world of harmonic theory. This is the difference that impro exercises adapted for musicians can make.

Appendix I shows a list of impro games, stolen directly with no modification on my part, which are useful for improving listening skill in adults and children alike. They give a good idea about the kind of creativity that improv can give us access to.

### Steve Lacy (1934-2004)

Steven Lackritz, as he was known before Rex Stewart re-christened him, passed through the whole of jazz history in his lifetime. He began playing New Orleans style in New York in the 40s, was discovered by Cecil Taylor and went on to study and perform with "The High Priest of Bebop" himself, Thelonious Monk. He is one of the few musicians to dedicate himself entirely to free improvisation - for 3 years he played no other way - and come out of the other side with an entirely revitalised understanding of the fundamentals of music.

Lacy termed his fresh way of looking at things first post-free, then poly-free, borne from the observation that complete freedom itself becomes restrictive after a while and "one became free to be not free, if one chose." He began placing restrictions on free improvisation, composing a melody to be played at the beginning and end, for example, or limiting the musicians to a certain selection of notes. But the basic criterion was always the same: keep the music lively, alive, interesting. Through restrictions, find freedom.

Add to this that Lacy founded his own sub-genre of jazz, based around the setting of poetry in an art-song style, and that he reinvented the soprano saxophone for modern music, and you'd think that you'd have a perfectly packaged success story. Yet Lacy's uncompromising dedication to improvisation both in music and as a lifestyle set a course for him that was difficult to define, and not predictable. Large record companies shied away, though thankfully smaller ones with lesser means of publicity saw their chance and Lacy's output is nothing short of prolific.

I had the opportunity to meet Steve Lacy in 2001 in Paris, where he lived for over 20 years. He said that he and his wife, vocalist Irene Aebi, expected to have to wait

another ten years before real recognition came their way. He received a MacArthur Fellowship in 1992 and was invited to teach at Boston's New England Conservatory, but never received wide public appreciation before his death in 2004.

I don't see the point in beating around the bush. After studying Lacy's concept and compositions for the last 15 years, I'm convinced that they are perfect for a new wave of jazz and improvisation education. His emphasis on alive-ness as the only real criterion in a piece of music is ideal for the post-Cage musical world, where students are exposed to everything from Bach to Bartok to Charlie Parker and beyond. The balancing of freedom and restriction that he proposes not only cuts to the heart of what music is about, but also allows us to approach the topic of improvisation - which young people especially do quite naturally - without needing detailed and discouraging discussion of music theory. The game-like quality of his concept also melds well with ideas from improv theatre, and can hold an appeal to a generation raised on gaming as a popular pastime.

Lacy said of Monk's music, which he studied in more depth than perhaps anyone else, that it forces one to discover one's own style. I believe that this is also true of his own approach to creativity, but with the added advantage that it doesn't always require the technical expertise that Monk's does (though it does have the potential to be taken that far). This makes it ideal for developing the musical voice of young musicians.

### Summary

One of John Coltrane's goals towards the end of his life was to create a "universal music", which led to his involvement in free improvisation. It seems to me that, if by universal one means accessible to every human being on some level, then this is what Steve Lacy has given us, and what I'm interested in developing. I imagine a world where everybody with even a casual interest in music learns to create it for themselves on their instrument, without needing notation, from the very beginning of their education. Picasso said "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up." As educators, it is our job to help people retain their creativity, despite the other demands made of them. Lacy always emphasised that music is something that we *play*, and hopefully the following exercises will aid in helping your students feel that way too. Please, have fun with them.

# Improvisation Exercises

## Getting Started

It can be difficult to know where to begin when teaching improvisation. There are a lot of factors to consider, most notably the technical level of the student and their preconceptions about improvisation. Assuming that you already know how well a student is in control of their instrument, it's often useful to probe a little to see what their opinion is of making up their own music (with young children, I wouldn't even use the word improvisation until after they've actually done it). Usually, the older they get the more likely they are to tell you that it's difficult to do. I tend to counter this by pointing out how much improvisation there is in nature, it's actually a very natural thing to do. Also, for the more philosophical student, mention that it's a process-oriented rather than product-oriented activity, so one can't judge it by how one thought it should turn out.

Once one has opened the door for a student to consider that they might actually be able to improvise, one of these three exercises will convince them of it! I have placed them in order of technical difficulty, so that even a skilful young musician need not feel patronised. But also factor in their level of confidence when choosing which one to use.

### **One Note**

Choose a note on your instruments (or if you're both sitting at the same piano then play an octave apart). It can be an easy note or a less familiar one, but you're only allowed to play that one note. Begin improvising by just playing the note, however and whenever you both please.

There is a saying in Zen Buddhism, summarised here by John Cage, that "If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all." That is certainly the case here, though hopefully it won't take you thirty-two minutes to find it out! The one thing to watch out for is "the wall", when the music seems to be dying after a couple of minutes and the student will turn to look at you for confirmation to end. Watch out, because the freedom you're looking for is on the other side of that wall. Do something to change the music and break through - slower and heavier like a jack hammer, or short and fast machine-gun bursts, perhaps - but don't give in to the pressure to stop and analyse. More than anything, learning to improvise is about creating experiences rather than analysing, and after a while it'll seem like nothing can stop you.

With younger students, this game can actually be initiated without any explanation whatsoever. After introducing a new note, play it at them on your instrument with that look that tells them that you expect them to copy. When they do, do it again with a few notes and a different rhythm. As your pattern changes, start playing over them as they try to copy. Before long you'll both be doing whatever you like, probably

ending with a good healthy laugh at how crazy it all sounded.

Other than its simplicity, the great advantage of this exercise is that it brings into focus the real expressive diversity of music. I'm sure you've all taught students a difficult rhythm by having them play it on one note only, but here dynamics, attack and timbre are also all fair game. The pressure to "get the notes right" is so strong in our conception of music that even professional musicians will benefit from exploration of a single note in this way (more on that later).

### **Musical Conversation**

If you haven't already, please take a look at the "Gibberish" listening game in Appendix I. Gibberish is similar to music in that it is organised sound, without a specific meaning but rich in gestural implication. It's also essentially improvised.

Begin by familiarising your student with a particular range of notes on the instrument. Three notes, a pentatonic, major or diminished scale - anything within or towards the edge of their comfort zone will do. Run through some simple patterns to increase their fluency with the chosen material if necessary.

Now do the gibberish listening game with them, actually talk some gibberish together. Introduce the rule of using the other person's ideas in your own, though this often happens naturally and might just need to be made conscious.

Now back to the instruments and tell the student that you're going to have a musical conversation using only the notes that you practiced earlier. The introduction of a limitation like this makes the task seem less daunting, it distracts the conscious mind. Play one phrase at a time each, trying out different ideas. There is a strong potential to lead the student into more challenging material and recent areas of study (ornamentation, for example, if you've been looking at Baroque music together), but don't forget to let the student lead you too. In fact, in the same way you can tell a lot about a person by how they talk to others, this exercise will reveal a lot about both of your musical personalities. Don't be a conversation hog, and remember the KISS rule: Keep It Simple, Stupid!

As with the gibberish, you might already be listening carefully to and using the other person's ideas, but point it out to make it conscious and try again. When we say "use the other person's ideas" it's usually interpreted as try to use the same notes. Make sure that it's understood that rhythm, dynamics, attack, mood and many other things can also be imitated. After this has been made clear I guarantee that you'll notice a big difference in the next improvisation.

### **Secret Note**

This one works well with large groups as well as small ones and duos, and comes courtesy of Richard Ormrod, a British musician with a lot of improvisation workshop experience.

Tell the student(s) to choose a note, but not say which one. It can be useful to

review the chromatic scale beforehand to have every note fresh in mind. Choose a "secret note" yourself and, on a downbeat, play your notes together as long tones. All well and good, so do it again with a different note. Simple enough. The idea now is to give a constant stream of downbeats, in rhythm or not, the different notes creating constantly shifting harmony. Let students have a go at providing the downbeats, or take it in turns to do so.

Smart students will most likely ask "Can I play the same note each time?" A lot of the time, they're looking for an easy way out, so that they can switch off and think about something else. This is the perfect chance to point out that the whole reason for improvising is to keep yourself interested. If you can stay engaged just by playing one note, that's fine to do. But why not challenge yourself with big interval leaps or difficult fingerings too? Improvisation can only give back what you're willing to put in.

### **Warm-up improvisation**

In conclusion to this section of exercises to facilitate first experiences with improvisation, I'd also like to encourage you to try the same process of mixing limitations and improvisation demonstrated here with the basic technical warm-ups of the instrument you teach. For example, I start every lesson with some sound production exercises on the saxophone or clarinet mouthpiece. With younger students, I try to get them to fade in and out like a ghost, and we have a ghost conversation. If we're working on tonguing then we'll improvise the rhythm or attack used. Pitch-bending on the mouthpiece is useful for tone development, so we'll improvise like a slide whistle. Or, I'll ask them to improvise using all of the above, but try to make it musical by balancing or "rhyming" the phrases.

Now this is all well and good for saxophone and clarinet, but how to adapt it to other instruments? Remember that the point is not to be making the right sound, but to be experimenting with the basic method of sound production specific to the instrument. So for a violin, perhaps trying the bow in all different directions relative to a single open string. Or a piano, one note but with fingers arched in all different ways, including flat.

Good technique by definition is essentially the most efficient way of making a sound. So by allowing students to experiment with all different methods of sound production, including the most efficient, not only are we showing them why good technique is what it is, but exposing them to the real creative depth and potential of their instrument.

### Sound Cloud

One of the main challenges of improvisation is balancing the technical demands of one's instrument with the creative impulse. A great musical idea causes the finger to unintentionally slip, or our fear of technical error stops the natural creative flow. Sound Cloud helps address this problem by providing a simple improvisation situation not entirely devoid of pressure. It was originally designed for wind

instruments, so the pressure was originally provided by the limitation of one's out-breath. But it is adaptable for other instruments - the length of one's bow stroke on violin, or a held-down key on the piano, for example.

The basic rule of Sound Cloud is that the sound is not allowed to stop. So while I'm playing, that's your chance to take a breath (or reposition your bow, etc.), and vice versa. This also encourages paying attention to the other musicians, and gets easier the more people are involved.

It's best to start by having just one note per breath (or bow-stroke, etc.), but once you've gotten the hang of it, increase to two or three. It's worth pointing out that the rhythm of notes within the breath is not specified, so they don't have to be equally spaced. Here are a couple of fun variations once you've got the hang of it:

### **Harmonic Sound Cloud**

Like Secret Note, Sound Cloud suits a chromatic approach well. But setting a harmonic restriction of some kind can also be very pleasing to the ear. A scale, arpeggio or random selection of notes, pulled out of a bag perhaps, can provide an interesting challenge but also good ear training.

### **Rising Sound Cloud**

Have students start at the bottom end of their instruments and gradually work to the top. This is especially pleasing with different instruments playing together, to experience the timbre shift that happens when registers change. Movement doesn't have to be always upward, it's more interesting and challenging if it's not. The real trick is to not rush too much, try and stay together relative to one another, even if instruments are in different clefs.

Other possibilities are, of course, Descending Sound Cloud and, given enough musicians, One Cloud Rising, One Descending.

### **Rising Sound Cloud with Rain**

This is one of my favourites, as it introduces students to the incredible descriptive power that music can have. Do a Rising Sound Cloud but, when the cloud reaches the top of the mountain (the highest notes), gradually jettison the restrictions imposed by the game in favour of short, staccato notes. By making them gradually faster, you can create an image of a rain storm which will hopefully make students forget that they're even improvising at all! When the aesthetic overpower the technical considerations, you can be sure that you're on to something. Think of your own descriptive or narrative ways of using music, whether it's using Sound Cloud or not. Nature scenes can be particularly effective.

### **Sound Cloud Passing Overhead**

This one focusses on dynamics. Start quiet, gradually get loud, go quiet and fade out. Pitch is not so important here but if you have a large group and the space for it,

it would be fun to try walking around together very slowly while playing. Or set up a recording device and take turns moving closer to and further away from it, while maintaining the overall group dynamic. Spatial awareness is a useful skill to develop.

### **Melodic Sound Cloud**

This one works best with two or three players, depending on the maximum note duration of your instrument. Basically, all of the same rules of a basic Sound Cloud apply, but before settling on a long note, one plays a brief improvised phrase of as many notes as one cares. The phrase ends on a long note, so there's no break in the phrase. This held note enables the next player to breathe (or reposition the bow, etc.), improvise a short phrase ending on a held note, and so on. This means that there is a constantly changing harmonic reference point for the person improvising the phrase, so for a student's first few tries you might want to consider a harmonic restriction as well. Melodic Sound Cloud also helps those of us needing work on the social side of music become more considerate of others by remembering to keep improvised phrases within their own and others' long note limitations.

### Recording

Before moving on to some more involved exercises, it's worth mentioning the value of recording the experiments in improvisation that you do with your students. With the ubiquity of recording technology nowadays, it's a simple addition that makes a huge difference. While I recommend discussing individual improvisations before listening back, in order to explore the subjective experience first, being able to hear things as an audience would is very instructional. The idea is to create a feedback loop for the student, where internal experiences are correlated with recordings. Then, solutions to music problems deemed successful by the student can be retained for future improvisations (which can then be recorded, etc.). This sounds rather complicated, but happens more on a subconscious level than deliberately.

It's not entirely unfair to say that no-one can actually teach improvisation. But it is possible for us as teachers to create situations that allow students to explore and learn from their experiences in the most efficient way possible. Allowing them to make their own judgements about what works and doesn't, from the more objective standpoint of a recording, is a powerful way to help them find their own musical voice.

### Harmonic Exercises

In this section we're going to look at ways of familiarising students with harmonic limitations, so that they can begin improvising over chords and chord progressions. This brings us into an area which is comfortably within the commonly accepted definition of the jazz genre, though of course jazz hardly has the monopoly on chordal improvisation. That said, a student with a specific interest in a musical

tradition that doesn't include improvisation at all can still benefit from these exercises, as a method of practical ear training and technical flexibility.

I feel that I need to preface any harmonic exercise with the comment that even in a field as dominated by music theory as standard jazz is now, a fluency with harmony must always be only a means to an end. There are too many cases of musicians who practice patterns and licks extensively, then, through the miracle of muscle memory, rest back on only the harmonic material they've practiced while onstage. Onstage is where we're meant to be pushing ourselves into areas that we haven't been before. That's why the definition of jazz as "the sound of surprise" is so apt - because the musician should be surprised with themselves too!

I'm not saying that patterns are useless, they can be wonderful to help us improve our technique and familiarity with harmonic material. And even if one wants to explore one's own musical voice rather than sounding exactly like one's hero, licks can still play an important part in the learning process. But there comes a time when the theory has to be put to one side in favour of pushing and exploring oneself, and it is how harmony can be used in this creative rather than regurgitative way that I wish to develop here.

I'll begin by tackling two common areas, arpeggios - rather than chords, seen as we're dealing with melodic improvisation - and scales, then move on to a couple of more unusual topics. But it cannot be stressed enough that fluency with harmonic material does not equal interesting solos. For this reason, be sure to give students time to play completely freely over chord progressions too, using only their ear. Perhaps the exercises you've been working on together will appear in their playing, perhaps not, but remember that rhythm, tone, timbre and a whole host of other things are equally important. The only real criterion in this situation is: Is it interesting? Be sure not to judge students based on your own preconceptions of how things "should" sound.

## **Arpeggios**

The easiest way to get students started with arpeggiated improvisation is to use the Musical Conversation exercise from earlier, making the note restriction an arpeggio of some kind. This also helps keep the emphasis away from purely harmonic considerations.

In the wider context though, this conversation would count as more of a familiarisation exercise. Other things that fall into this category would be pattern work (1 5, 3 8,... or 1 3 5, 3 5 8,...) and permutations (1 3 5, 1 5 3, 3 1 5,...). What really separates these from actual harmonic improvisation is the introduction of rhythmic restrictions and freedoms.

So up the ante by doing a similar arpeggiated conversation where you only have four beats each, and note duration must be a multiple of 1 (in other words, no subdivision). Even though this seems like a lot of restriction, it's the perfect example of how simplicity can still yield music which is both challenging and interesting.

Thus far it's been implied that only one arpeggio should be used, but this can be expanded in multiple ways. Use a simple progression such as C C F F G G C C, with two bars for each chord so that you each get to take a turn on every one, then shorten it to C F G C so that you're each dealing with different chords. This is just an example. Be creative, and choose something suitable for the level of your student.

## The March

There is a wonderful moment in the Trumpet Kings jazz documentary where Lester Bowie, after talking about the importance of the march in jazz history, demonstrates improvising one. After showing that he clearly could, Bowie finishes up by saying something along the lines of "Hell, I could sit here making up marches all day!"

Teaching your students to improvise marches is good because it starts from a real-world genre, of which you can play them multiple examples. And this particular genre is easy to reproduce using three simple restrictions (see if the best listeners can work them out for themselves from recordings). Marches are (mostly) made from arpeggios, they use a combination of quarter and eighth notes, and they are in strict tempo. This exercise really only differs from the previous one in the rhythmic complexity allowed and the fact that its solo, but its connection to an actual musical tradition lends it a certain legitimacy and allows the student to feel a part of that.

As a quick aside, the influence of the march on New Orleans style jazz is very apparent, but this kind of music is not fashionable to teach as part of modern jazz education, despite its influence on every hero of the genre. The playful, interactive nature of early jazz techniques makes them especially useful for teaching improvisation.

Your student now has good control over the limitations necessary to improvise a march over one or two chords. This is all well and good, but it won't be complete without a sense of phrasing and musical rhyme too. See if the student can play phrases of different lengths that balance one another (Dr. Seuss is the perfect role model here), and use repetition wisely. Again, I have to stress that interest is the most important factor.

The final step here is to introduce the student to an entire chord progression, familiarise them with each of the chords, and have them play a march over the structure, or parts of the structure to begin with, ideally with chordal accompaniment. If they can do that, improvising a cogent solo in their own voice is just a matter of experience.

Perhaps the ideal starting point for applying all of these ideas on arpeggio improvisation to actual playing situations are the kind of calypsos popularised by Harry Belafonte. As well as having catchy, syncopated melodies with simple themes behind them, their chord structure is basic and repetitive enough for positive results with both restriction exercises and more free, ear-based improvisations. Appendix II is an example of one of these.

Finally, the method of extrapolating the restrictions, harmonic or otherwise, that

define a musical practice and then applying them with students, as we did here with the march, also works well with walking bass lines. And other things too, I'm sure!

## **Scales**

The most basic reason for studying scales in a harmonic context is to familiarise students with how to connect chord tones to one another, commonly called passing notes. This can be practiced most easily by using an app such as Tonal Drone for Mac devices. I'm sure that we're all familiar with chord/scale relationships, so simply choose a mode you'd like to work on, have the app produce its chord and begin improvisation. As well as being great ear training for students, this simple context also leaves room for experimenting with social restrictions. For example, it could be a duo, or a duo that turns into a conversation. Or one person could be accompanist (chord tones only) while the other solos, then switch. The only limit here is your imagination - or your students'! Don't forget to ask them what limitations they'd like to experiment with as well.

The big problem with the way that chord/scale theory is taught in modern jazz education is that it emphasises the chord half of the equation: When you see a C major chord, think Ionian; if it's followed by an A minor 7, think aeolian. For me, this doesn't match the actual experience of playing over chord changes, where all chords belonging to the same scale seem grouped together as a single tonality, with changing bass notes. Through work on arpeggios, my ear is capable of working within such a tonality, especially if the chord structure within it is a common one (ii V7 I or I vi ii V7, perhaps). It's only when secondary dominants and modulation occur that the kind of intellectualisation implied by the modern jazz approach mentioned just above is necessary for me. It is this comparison of theory with experiential reality, which is different for different people and an important part of the journey to discovering one's voice, that is missing.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg. In the 1930s and 40s, a revolution took place in the approach of jazz musicians to harmony. Inspired by Debussy and Stravinsky, they moved away from a consonance- and dissonance-based way of thinking into something that more resembles the way a painter uses colour. The degree of contrast between accompaniment and melody note was considered for every possible combination, producing a chromatic palette that soon became the status quo for jazz. This was, of course, what became termed the Bebop Revolution, which extended into many other areas besides harmony.

What I find difficult to understand is why the education of this chromatic colour-based conception is only done through the use of licks and pattern. The phrases of Charlie Parker and Bud Powell (for example) are recommended to be learned in all twelve keys from memory, and there are scores of books out there with complex chromatic patterns showing how to incorporate "outside" playing. But these are both, quite rightly, considered high-level pursuits. I believe that a colour approach is fundamental enough to all harmonic music to deserve attention from early on in music education. Here are two ways of making it more accessible to beginner improvisors.

## Metascales

Metascales or Archetype Scales are terms that I use for a scale that includes all possible modal definitions of a particular chord. For example, over a pure minor chord (A C E), one can use the Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian, harmonic and melodic minor and blues scales. By combining all of these, this scale results:

A Bb B C D Eb E F F# G G#

While this looks complicated (the only chromatic note not included is C#), the sound is surprisingly tonal when based around a chord. And by allowing students to play within such a free context over a drone of the chord, both the ear and a sense of colour (over purely theoretical) harmony is developed. Non-chordal chromatic movement, or voice-leading in the upper partials (B to Bb or F to F# in this case), so important to modern jazz, is also broached by this approach.

Of course the more complex the chord, the less notes available. By making it an A minor 7 chord, the G# is omitted. A minor 9 would see the Bb disappear. So there are plenty of combinations to introduce students to, acclimatising them to situations that they can expect to encounter when soloing over changes.

## Colour-based Harmony

This exercise also takes place over a drone of the chord being focussed on. Start with chromatic improvisation of some kind, a conversation or Sound Cloud perhaps. Then introduce students to the idea of colour in harmony, presenting them with four categories of contrast: Definitive (chord tones); Complementary; Disruptive; Destructive. Go through each of the twelve chromatic tones as a long note over the drone, placing it in one of the categories. Definitive is easy enough, and Complementary is usually recognisable, but for students still developing their ear Disruptive and Destructive can be confused. For example, B over a C7 chord might be mistaken as strongly colouring the dominant rather than fundamentally changing the feeling from dominant to major. But allow students to make mistakes in this regard, and correct them with audible examples. By leading with the ear and understanding what we hear through theory, a less abstract approach to harmony is achieved.

To my mind, the biggest advantage of this way of approaching theory is that it teaches students that there is no such thing as a wrong note. There are some that need to be handled with care in certain situations, but these situations themselves are fluid and other factors, such as rhythm, can also act as mitigating circumstances (See the story about major 7ths over dominant chords in Miles Davis' autobiography). The idea perpetuated by the Aebersold playalong series of "avoid notes" is an unhealthy one, especially when applied as it frequently is to notes which work perfectly well as passing tones (F over C major, for example). There is also the fact that in practical application, one finds hundreds of examples of all kinds and calibre of jazz musician freely using these "avoid notes" to great effect.

Once your student has satisfactorily grouped the chromatic scale into the four categories (other than the aforementioned Disruptive/Destructive confusion, try not to influence their choice too much - there is room for flexibility and this is one of the places where individuality occurs), the fun begins. Challenge students to play four phrases, each one increasing or decreasing in contrast to the accompaniment. Or one phrase that gets more and more "outside". Introduce the idea of strongly contrasting harmony as a powerful spice, and have them play a solo which uses it just enough, during exactly the right course. Or come up with your own challenges.

Jazz tunes that use one chord only abound (Mingus' "Haitian Fight Song", or Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance" for more technical difficulty), and are ideal situations to experiment with metascales and colour harmony. Don't forget to point out how the composer of the tune uses contrast in their melody, it can serve as an important lesson and inspiration during improvisation.

### **Chord "Sames" Approach**

In modern jazz harmony, we are so obsessed with what changes that we often miss what stays the same. And yet one or two repeated notes over a moving progression can be the most beautiful part of a solo. So to balance the emphasis on chord changes, here's an exercise on chord sames.

Choose any simple progression, a I vi7 ii7 V7 in C is used here, and work out what definitive and complementary notes of each chord are consistent throughout the entire progression. Over C Am7 Dm7 G7, these would be D E G & A. These four notes will work satisfactorily over any of the chords.

After doing some kind of warmup improvisation with the student, limiting them to only these four, have them do a solo over the progression with the same limitation. They can't play a wrong note! Everything they do will sound good! What a positive introduction to playing over chord changes.

As well as teaching them the value of using a limited amount of notes over a handful of chords, it also develops their ear to the sound of the harmony moving around them, both the voice leading and the way a note changes "meaning" over different chords. Lessons that even professional players are never beyond studying.

I'd like to conclude this section on harmony by highly recommending the iReal b app for Mac devices. The flexibility it offers in choice of chord, tempo and feel far outweigh the predictability of the rhythm section (which is really no different from traditional playalongs once you've become used to the recording). It's a method of accompaniment free from the theory biases of its creator and thus has a great deal to offer the beginner improviser and their teacher. That said, nothing beats the interaction between musicians, it's the lifeblood of what we do, so if you're able to play piano, guitar, ukulele or whatever chordal instrument, give your students a taste of what it's really all about. Or better still, get them playing in groups together!

## Melodic Exercises

The most basic form of melodic exercise I have ever come across is the following of voice-leading through a harmonic progression, and this is a very useful and enjoyable experience especially if approached with some rhythmic freedom. However, this doesn't count as a melodic exercise in the truest sense of the term as it doesn't address melodic thinking. It is based around music theory.

In early jazz, the melody underpinned everything. Chords hung off of it, rhythm complimented it and improvisation was based around it. Its lyrics defined the mood of the performance. The Bebop Revolution (beginning perhaps with Coleman Hawkins' "Body and Soul") offered something else: flights of fancy based around the possible chord progressions, substitutions and reharmonisation of a given tune. And yet the best of the bebop musicians never forgot the power of the melody that gave birth to the chords. What I mean by a true melodic exercise is one that puts us in touch with that power, and helps us deepen our appreciation of it.

From that perspective, the most basic and best exercise I have found comes from Lennie Tristano (via Warne Marsh, via John Klopokowski), the first person ever to formally teach jazz. Put a metronome on 60 b.p.m. (or 40 or 50 for a ballad) and play your melody of choice over and over again, one beat per click, without losing your place. Improvise if you care to, whether it's chordally or otherwise, but don't lose hold of that melody. This is far from easy, but the effort it takes to keep it together creates a deeper relationship with the melody that is retained when a more normal tempo is returned to. Also, other considerations such as lyrics and timbre also come to the fore, giving a richer approach to melodicism in general.

The following exercises are melodic in the truest sense of the term - they allow us to deepen our own and students' understanding of melody and its many facets - and are useful for musicians of any kind.

### **Over, Under, With, Off...**

Choose a snippet of strong melody from a piece that they're studying, or a previous improvisation, and play it over and over together with your student. Once the snippet has started ringing in your head, take a short break and explain that you're about to do the same thing again, but individually take turns improvising while the other person continues to play the melody. The form will be: melody together - A improvises while B holds the melody down - melody together - B improvises while A holds the melody down - melody together - A improvises while B...etc.

As the teacher, you might recognise that the melodic fragment that you've chosen has certain harmonic implication, a key or chord perhaps. Don't talk about this with the student, even if they ask. This is a chance for them to develop their ear and tastes, with the safety of the support and escape mechanism of returning to the melody being played behind them. After a first try it may be necessary to mention reducing volume when playing behind the improviser, a valuable social lesson.

I would label this exercise playing over a melody, and a simple variation can be to take turns improvising accompaniment behind the same melody, aiming to make it sound as good as possible. This is playing under it.

Isometric variation is a term that has been coined for melodic variation on a fixed rhythm, and this is another fun exercise using a snippet of melody from whatever source interests your student. Retain the rhythm but improvise whatever notes you like, especially fun when done as a duo or trio for the interesting harmony generated. Alternatively, retain the pitch order and vary the note length. This can be done either in unison, listening very closely to each other to be sure to change at the same time, or allowing harmony to develop by changing at will. This type of exercise I would call playing with a melody.

Finally, and this is a stepping stone to the Lennie Tristano exercise above, is improvising off of a melody. The elements that make for melodic interest - notes, rhythm, mood, etc. - are all contained within the melody. So by allowing a fragment to sit in the back of one's mind, even a short motif can serve as endless inspiration for improvisation. Use the standard jazz format with your student: play the melody around a few times together, then improvise freely, perhaps pausing if one feels one has lost hold of the melody providing inspiration, then end with a reprise. Theme and variation is one of the oldest techniques of music all around the world, and to improvise variations a basic skill of many traditions. My personal feeling is that erosion of the relationship between melodic material and improvisation is one of the main reasons that jazz is not appreciated by a wider audience nowadays.

### **The Word**

To invoke the relationship between language and music has become something of a cliché, yet with good reason. Simply by taking a short sentence and accenting different words within it, a strong sense of musicality can be achieved.

Try this with a student, a sentence like "Do your homework!" that they're probably very familiar with. See how many different variations of emotion and meaning you can find within it together. Now take the sentence to your instruments. Don't specify any notes, but what you play has to correspond to the words. Elision ("Do-o-o [on 3 different notes] your homework!") is perfectly acceptable.

As a variation, choose two sentences that work together ("Have some pizza"/"I don't like pizza") and take one of them each. Build variations on them, and see what moods they take you through. Anger or frustration in this case, maybe? Try different two-sentence duets out, and be sure to include songs with words in your students' repertoires to capitalise on this study.

### **From Inside to Out**

This exercise from the clowning world came to me through international clown Moshe Cohen. The emotional palette of clowns is very subtle, but they also consider the intensity of expression very carefully too. Moshe uses a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 would simply be the performer experiencing the emotion internally. 2 to

5 are increasingly intense levels of external expression, and 6 is such an intense level that the emotion is unrecognisable (for example, when fear comes to the point where it involves running around the stage backwards, pulling out hair and laughing like a hyena).

In the same way that particular situations suggest particular emotions to clowns, melodies suggest emotions to musicians. Have students take a phrase from a piece that they're studying, play it over and encourage them to describe what emotions or images it conjures up for them. This will be very specific to and a good indication of the nature of their intelligence fingerprint as discussed earlier.

Now the fun part starts. Have the student play the phrase technically perfectly, but with the emotions they described in mind. Gradually increase the degree to which the emotion influences the phrase. Rhythm and tone will gradually become more and more distorted (this is why Albert Ayler's improvisations vary rarely have a measurable tempo), and eventually notes will begin to be affected too. At its most intense expression, the melody may not be recognisable at all, and yet the sounds that come out wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the melody and the emotion it elicited in the student.

Now rein everything in and have the student play the phrase however it comes out. Not only will the experimentation with these different levels have changed their approach to it, but during performance they will be better able to add individual expressive nuance.

As an example of this, the first phrase of Tadd Dameron's Hot House has always sounded to me like happy fairground music. Technical challenges aside, playing it with this emotion in mind only (level 1) is not easy. The main challenge with the increasing emotional expression is in the fine-tuning of the levels of happiness. And as an improviser, level 6 is like breaking through the roof and finding complete freedom at the fairground, but with the added bonus of having the freedom based on something that I can return to and reuse repeatedly. It's possible to spend extended periods, producing a lot of unique music, exploring a single phrase in this way. I'm sure that others will have different experiences with this exercise, but there is a lot here for anyone.

### Advanced Games

Finally, here are some exercises for experienced musicians in the same vein as those presented previously for beginners.

### **Soloing, walking, comping**

Perhaps you're familiar with the television show "Who's Line Is It Anyway?", many people's reference point for impro comedy. Among their most popular games is Sit, Stand, Bend. One of the three actors must always be in one of the titular positions, even as the story progresses and movement to different positions becomes necessary. Most importantly, changes of position must be justified by the actors,

requiring a high level of stage awareness as well as excellent storytelling skills.

A similar idea can be used for a trio of musicians, to develop group awareness as well as soloing capability. By requiring all musicians to be familiar with the skills involved in soloing, walking and comping (including horn players being able to comp, or drummers walk, for example), already a new level of skill is demanded. But then to have them play together and require that one of each of the three skills is always in use is a different level entirely. Musical personality (belligerent, communicative,...) and group dynamics come into play in a big way.

A mode can be set to create a particular mood, a tempo added for greater difficulty, or a fourth player/position (pedal-ing, not playing) to include another friend.

### **Poetry chord**

A circle of three or four musicians each says a word in turn (restricted to verbs, adjectives and adverbs only works best) to create an abstract little description. Then, on cue, they all play a single note each to create a chord. As the routine gets more comfortable, a short improvisation can replace the chord (this makes it easier for drummers!).

As well as stimulating visual and kinaesthetic thinking, this also helps us deal with others not being on exactly the same wavelength as us and yet still be able to use and adapt our own ideas.

### **Wordplay**

Steve Lacy often recommended trying to see one's own instrument through a different "optic". For example, trying to play bass or trombone on the sax. He extended this into other arts too by trying to dance or orate like a politician in his music. The list of his collaborators reflects this open-mindedness, and is a valuable lesson to creative musicians today to search out interesting partners outside our comfort zone.

Appendix III is an original composition written for instrument and voice actor, both of whom are required to improvise after the composed section. A great storyteller is capable of creating a narrative one word or phrase at a time, although it can be quite abstract, and it is this skill that Wordplay exploits.

If you're interested in exploring how storytelling can enrich your understanding of music, I recommend trying Wordplay with someone you can trust to build together with you. Some improvising actors only want to get a quick laugh from the audience at the expense of narrative - they say "quack", you quack on your instrument. This is not to say that quacking can't be part of it, but the emphasis should be on the story not the novelty factor.

## Conclusion

In the realm of technique, there is length but also breadth; Swimmers work on their form in the pool, but also do cross-training; Einstein studied mathematical patterns intensely, but also randomness on the violin. Without both of these aspects, technique becomes hollow.

In music education, we usually focus on the length of a student's technique, for example the speed and smoothness of their scales or how difficult the songs are that they can play. Very often this length is dependant on the swiftness of the student's mind, or how quickly they can absorb new information. But there is another quality of the human mind which this neglects - its ability to focus and dwell on single areas.

This ability is the territory of meditation and is developed by exploring altered states of consciousness (one of the reasons drug use is common among creative musicians). In this vein, Steve Lacy recommends going backwards and forward between two notes a semitone apart, for as long as possible: "Stay on it, until you can't anymore. Your ear has changed. Small has become large. Now when you go back to the rest of the horn, everything has changed, and your perceptions have altered." This is how Heifetz can hold us with a single note, or Billie Holiday with a touch of vibrato. The sensitivities that we develop by spending time on one element is what gives breadth to musical technique.

Some people are better at absorbing new information, others at spending time on one bit. And although both need to be developed for skilful musicianship, how one's natural bias is treated by one's teacher is vital for continued interest in music. The exercises that I've proposed here are by and large about focussing on one or two areas in order to develop sensitivity. They and exercises like them are useful for students who absorb information quickly but, I believe, vital for students more inclined to dwell on single areas if we want them to feel as though music has something to offer them.

I see music as so great, with so much potential to effect positive change, that I want to live in a world where everyone has an appreciation for it, ideally as a participant, even if only a casual one. Perhaps you share a similar view. But in order for that to happen, we, the people who teach it, must have an expanded conception of what qualities we can bring out in our students. Including improvisation among the skills that we develop in ourselves and others moves us closer to that vision.

# Appendix 1

(originally published on the internet at [juliantreasure.blogspot.com](http://juliantreasure.blogspot.com))

## Listening Games from Improv Comedy

by Huw Lloyd

As a jazz musician and music teacher developing an interest in improv comedy, I was very happy to discover the following games, which can be used both to get brains into a creative mood and to encourage a more conscious approach to listening in daily life. I've been using them to start individual and band classes for a while now, with positive results and reactions from students. I suspect that daily exposure to these games in a classroom atmosphere would not only increase camaraderie but also help children develop listening skills that would serve them well for the rest of their lives (though I haven't had a chance to prove this yet!).

The games themselves come from various sources within the Tokyo improv comedy scene, which is small but gradually coming into it's own. Like most games from this genre, it's impossible to say where they come from, though it is safe to say that improv guru Keith Johnston has probably had something to do with them somewhere down the line.

So, without further ado:

### Sound Ball

In a circle, student A holds an imaginary ball, makes a sound with their voice, and throws the ball to student B. B mimes catching it, repeats A's sound as accurately as possible, then makes their own sound before throwing the ball to C. C catches the ball, repeats B's sound, and so on. The challenge comes from the fact that one can throw the ball to whoever one wants to in the circle (A, B and C don't have to be next to each other). So unless everyone is listening all the time, the game can't continue. It's also a lot of fun to explore the possibilities of your own voice and hear your sound repeated back to you.

With young children, it's better to use a real ball as they lose track of who has the imaginary one in all the excitement. It can also be easier to start them off by just going around the circle in order, or down a line. With teenagers it's best to make it clear that abstract sounds are most effective, unless you're feeling adventurous.

### Imaginary Word

Also in a circle, a student says a syllable, "Chi" for example. The student next to them says another, "Tog" perhaps. Then everyone in the group says the new word that has been created together - "Chitog!" As in sound ball, prolonged listening by everyone involved is a vital skill. Either continue around the circle or, in smaller groups, have the student that gave the second syllable give the first one next.

Once everyone is used to that idea, have them start a slow rhythm by clapping or slapping their knees. Aim to have the first syllable on the first clap, the second on the second, the resulting word on the third, then give yourselves one clap's rest before continuing. Trust me, you'll need it!

## What's This?

In pairs, students walk hurriedly around the room, the first pointing to objects asking "What's this?" The second student must quickly answer with anything that the object is not. If it's a doorknob, reply that it's The Hubble Telescope or a vampire. This is surprisingly difficult for our pattern-based brains, and it's the questioner's job to make sure that the answerer is not making it easier by simply going through a list (if they are, a friendly and high-pitched "No!" from the questioner can signal that the answer is not good enough). This continues until brain-freeze occurs in the answering student, which it will, then they switch roles and continue.

A more advanced version can be done by not allowing for any association at all between succeeding answers ("What's this?" "A telescope" "What's this?" "A magnifying glass" - this answer receiving a little "No!" from the questioner in this case).

## Gibberish

This is a game we all know, but not everyone is privy to the secret of making a truly realistic imaginary language. It's done by listening carefully to the other person, and reincorporating things that you hear them say into your own sentences:

A: "Dalby cloobot"

B: "Cloobot cala chimichanto"

A: "Calamat?! Talamanto chimi..." etc.

This also takes up less energy than always having to come up with "new" words.

Have students practice in pairs, then try a conversation going around a circle (you'll be amazed at how words get retained through different conversations) or a competition for the most realistic-sounding language.

## The One Word Story

This is the mother of all listening-based games. One slip, and everybody's on a different page. In pairs or small groups (the larger the group, the harder it becomes) try to tell a story by contributing one word at a time, in order (no "pushing in"). All kinds of other skill come into play here, for example imagination to predict where the story might go, or dealing with strong emotions when others "block" our ideas. To balance these with careful listening is truly challenging for even the most astute among us.

Keeping the story in the present tense ("Jim is walking down a crowded street") and actually physicalising the actions described can be very helpful.

All of these games contain a strong element of improvisation. Being both an improviser and an educator, I am convinced that improvisation as a skill applicable to any area of human endeavour can address many of the problems (such as rote learning and fear of making mistakes) engendered by aspects of our current education system. Yet to improvise effectively, it's first necessary to have a clear, conscious understanding of our surroundings. To this end, conscious listening is an invaluable skill no human being should be without.

# Appendix II

## Jamaican Farewell / Iron Bar

Traditional

**A** C F G (or G7 throughout) C

Musical notation for section A, measures 1-4. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Chords: C, F, G (or G7 throughout), C.

5 C F G C

Musical notation for section A, measures 5-8. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Chords: C, F, G, C.

**B** C F G C

Musical notation for section B, measures 9-12. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Chords: C, F, G, C.

13 C F G C

Musical notation for section B, measures 13-16. Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Chords: C, F, G, C.

# Appendix III

## Wordplay

A composition for improvising voice actor and instrumentalist

Huw Lloyd

**A** all sections are open repeats behind the text



[Gameshow Host]: Hello and welcome to Wordplay. Wordplay is a composition by Huw Lloyd, performed for you today by [instrumentalist] on [instrument] and [voice actor] using words. Yes, that's right, nothing but words.

3 **B** can also be played as a walking bassline, retaining the same notes in each bar



[Gameshow Host]: Wordplay is a composition that uses improvisation. The words and music that you're hearing now have been composed as an introduction, but soon we'll both start making up our own parts as we go along. Sounds challenging? It certainly is, especially when there're people watching. But what's life without the occasional challenge? (last time)



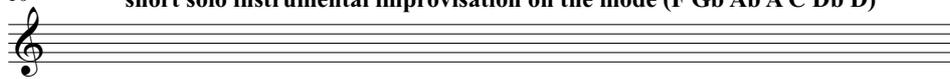
[Hippie]: Improvisation is wonderful because it always turns out differently. We respond to our environment as we improvise, so you're all making a contribution to this version of Wordplay just by being here. Thanks so much for dropping by [venue] today, [day] the [date] of [month], [year].

13 **D** can also be played as a walking bassline, retaining the same notes in each bar

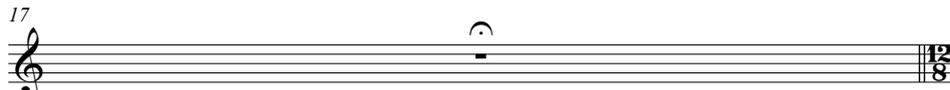


[Gameshow Host]: You'll be able to tell when we start improvising because there'll be far less talking on my part. In fact, I'll only be saying one word or phrase at a time. A shame, I know, but it's very important to listen when improvising. Listening is a skill that we would like to take this opportunity to greatly encourage you to develop in your day-to-day life. Why not start practicing now?

16 **short solo instrumental improvisation on the mode (F Gb Ab A C Db D)**



17



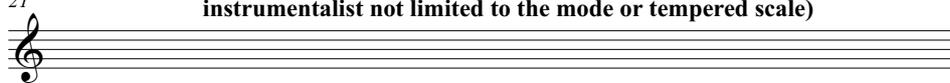
Thank you! [to instrumentalist]

18 **E**



[Mad Scientist]: The human brain is a very complex pattern recognition machine.  
We invite you to relax and enjoy the experience of observing your brain  
finding patterns in and between the words and music we are about to improvise.

21 **"Wordplay" improvisation (as described above,  
instrumentalist not limited to the mode or tempered scale)**



22



[Mad Scientist]: The human brain is a very complex pattern recognition machine.  
We hope that you have enjoyed the experience of observing your brain  
finding patterns in and between the words and music we just improvised.

(last time)

24 **F**



[Gameshow Host]: Thank you for joining us for Wordplay, performed for you today  
by [instrumentalist] on [instrument] and [voice actor] using words.  
Yes, that's right, nothing but words.

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