

The complex creative moment: Improvisation as a social art

Fundamental principles of dealing artistically and didactically with the “unheard”

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This paper introduces basic ideas about what is actually happening during group improvisation at the moment of inventory music-playing. Improvisation is being understood as largely unplanned, unforeseeable musical action. Both the interaction of musicians and the emergence/development/creation of musical structures in the process of musical improvisation are described on the basis of systems theory and affect logic, in particular with the help of the term “emergence”. The term emergence is generally used to specify systemic processes which, due to the interdependence and self-organization of various factors, result in unforeseeable creative processes and structures. With the help of terminology and its application to processes of musical improvisation the conditions leading to unforeseeable formations (*forms*) and quality become comprehensible/understandable.

Accordingly, an “operating system” of musical improvisation is being developed. With the help of this “system improvisation” the various factors (of effect) that come together in real time in a multilayered/complex process and produce unforeseeable sound structures are being reflected and analysed in regard to their relevance for artistic and artistic-educational quality. Thus, improvisation must always be understood as a process of combining musical-aesthetic and social-communicative elements. The actions of the players on all these levels – their interaction and their musical receptions and expressions – emerge within the situation of improvisation into a respectively coherent unforeseeable form. In order to make this happen physical and gestural acting, the selection of sound material, hearing and listening, presence and interaction as the fundamental elements of improvisation must consciously work together/must be consciously combined. The detailed description of the competences in improvisation derived from that – in the frame of reference of systems theory terminology – illustrates the creative moment.

Both, this understanding of musical improvisation and this terminology make the reflected guidance towards/instruction of improvisation processes possible and they facilitate teaching and learning them. Didactic criteria for ensemble teaching and teaching improvisation are being derived. Practically oriented examples/models of teaching, practising and playing in group rehearsals and classrooms demonstrate how acts of improvisation can be facilitated and increased (amplified, intensified) by adequate teaching. The adequate improvisational action/behaviour of all participants, including the leader of the ensemble and the teacher, requires a combination of social interaction and quality music making/playing. The structure of rehearsals, the warm-up, aural training and playing exercises must be organized/arranged/structured in such a way that the fragile “unheard” is made possible.