

MUO 280 (0197-280-001)

Syllabus

Improvisation Ensemble

Dr. James Oshinsky

Instructor Cel : 516 698 3413

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Time: Monday & Wednesday 4:15-5:30 pm

Location: PAC 107 Concert Hall

Office Hours: M 3-4 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a course in musical improvisation without stylistic boundaries. Students will develop skills in free and structured improvisation in a variety of styles through performance (using their own instrument or voice), listening, and discussion, supplemented by reading and writing assignments and internet research. The ability to read music is not required.

COURSE GOALS Students will:

Learn a gamut of techniques for musical improvisation in a variety of styles.

Become familiar with concepts and terminology associated with musical improvisation.

Develop an understanding of improvisation and its role in music education and society at large.

Explore alternative ways of making music.

Inquire into their own creative process to see what supports it and what stifles it.

Explore the parallels between nonverbal musical interaction during improvisation and other social skills.

COURSE OBJECTIVES Students will:

Collaborate in group improvisations.

Participate in warm-ups and group facilitation exercises that foster improvisation skills.

Learn how to give useful and constructive feedback in supportive language.

Become familiar with internet-based samples and Apps that promote improvisational music making.

Individually design and develop a final improvisation project.

Perform and facilitate during a final public concert of improvisations.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS & REQUIREMENTS**TEXTS and MATERIALS**

There are two texts you are required to buy or lease for this course, one highly recommended text, and a variety of written and auditory materials that will be assigned from the Moodle page for the class. The Listening Book (recommended), The Music Lesson (required) and Drum Circle Facilitation (required) are available at the Adelphi bookstore. The Moodle page for the class has other texts and resources that you do not have to buy, but you will be required to listen to or read. Posted on Moodle is an additional text (Return to Child), music-minus-one audio files to practice with (Flight), websites promoting improvisation, and listening examples of improvisation techniques (the Darling Conversations). Other Moodle modules cover technical topics such as using loopers/digital samplers. You will need to have regular access to the Moodle page for class announcements and updates.

ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION

(Show up; Pay Attention to what has heart and meaning; Tell The Truth without judgment or blame; Be Open to outcome but Not Attached to outcome. – Angeles Arrien)

Attendance at each class session is mandatory. Being prepared for class means bringing your instrument and being ready to play, listen, and comment sensitively. During our meetings you will be expected to make spontaneous music in solo, ensemble and whole group settings, and share your honest reactions in constructive and supportive language. When you are not actively playing you are expected to be actively listening. Students are expected to participate in rehearsals of the warm-ups and improvisation techniques that comprise the course repertoire. Students will give in-class feedback to classmates and will receive an assessment from the instructor. It is a good idea to always bring a pencil and paper to class along with your instrument. Each student will be given credit for their compliance with these expectations at every course meeting.

ABSENCE POLICY

Students may have one absence without penalty. Any additional unexcused absence will lower your final grade by two (2) points. Students are expected to be in class on time and ready to play their instrument. Being late by more than five minutes or coming without an instrument will count as an unexcused absence if it happens two times. The use of cell phones, pagers, laptops, and other such devices is strictly prohibited during class. These devices must be turned off or switched to silent mode before the beginning of class.

ASSIGNMENTS

Play spontaneous music at each class meeting

Written and aural critiques of course activities

Log of improvisation practice and process

Listening assignments (in-class and assigned)

Improvisation exercises (group and solo)

Facilitation exercises

Compilation of improvisation materials from other media, such as Apps, YouTube and the internet

GRADING & EVALUATION

In-class participation, preparation, contribution, and involvement	40%
Assignments – logs, reaction papers	20%
Midterm group project and performance	15%
Final course requirements	25%
individual project	10%
public performance	15%

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students are expected to abide by the University's Honor Code: "The University is an academic community devoted to the pursuit of knowledge. Fundamental to this pursuit is academic integrity. In joining the Adelphi Community, I accept the University's Statement of Academic Integrity and pledge to uphold the principles of honesty and civility embodied in it. I will conduct myself in accordance with ideals of truth and honesty and I will forthrightly oppose actions which would violate these ideals."

DISABILITY SUPPORT

“Students with disabilities are encouraged to speak to the professor about accommodations they may need to produce an accessible learning environment.” (Adelphi University Faculty Handbook)

COMMUNICATION

Please make sure to check your ADELPHI email account regularly. Class announcements (such as reminders for quizzes and exams, revisions to assignments, and concert reminders) will be sent only to Adelphi email accounts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Wooten, Victor *The Music Lesson*. New York: Berkley Books, 2006. (required)
Mathieu, Allaudin *The Listening Book*. Boston:Shambala, 1991. (recommended)
Hull, Arthur *Drum Circle Facilitation* Santa Cruz: Village Music Circles, 2006. (required)
Green, Barry *Bringing Music to Life* Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009.
Oshinsky, James *Return to Child* Goshen: Music for People, 2008. (on Moodle)
Knysh, Mary and Bevan, Betsy *BoomDoPa* Bloomsburg: Rhythmic Connections, 2000.
Lieberman, Julie Lyonn *Planet Musician* Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1998.
Hale, Susan Elizabeth *Song and Silence*. Albuquerque: La Alameda Press, 1995.
Sobol, Elise *An Attitude and Approach for Teaching Music to Special Learners*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2008.

Audio files on Moodle:

Rhiannon *Flight (Interactive Guide to Vocal Improvisation)* Boulder: Sounds True, 2000.
Darling, David and Weber, Julie *The Darling Conversations Manifest Spirit Music*, 2007.
Wooten, Victor *The Music Lesson* (excerpts read by the author)

Annotated Bibliography

Wooten, Victor *The Music Lesson*. New York: Berkley Books, 2006.

This may be the best book on musicianship I have ever come across. In the style of Carlos Casteneda, the device of this book involves an ordinary working jazz/rock bass player is visited by characters with supernatural powers that they instruct him in. These abilities have to do with the fundamentals of music, from time and pace to tone and ensemble awareness. They are taught through experiences in nature and in honing mindfulness, which makes this a book about personal as well as musical development. It is a very engaging read.

Mathieu, Allaudin *The Listening Book*. Boston:Shambala, 1991.

Mathieu, a composer and author of *Harmonic Experience*, suggests a variety of activities and practices for refining one's listening as a path to deeper personal engagement in music. This is the kind of book where you can open to any page randomly and find a gem.

Hull, Arthur *Drum Circle Facilitation*. Santa Cruz: Village Music Circles, 2006.

No one has done more than Hull in the area of articulating the mindset needed to conduct large group rhythm experiences, from classrooms to arenas. His book is filled with personal anecdotes of his successes and train wrecks, and his codification of rhythm activities and leadership skills is comprehensive and clear.

Green, Barry *Bringing Music to Life*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009.

A classical bassist and author of *The Inner Game of Music*, in this book Green talks about his own path to improvisation through the teachings of cellist David Darling and the organization Music for People. The instructor's book, *Return to Child*, is referenced often in this volume.

Oshinsky, James *Return to Child*. Goshen: Music for People, 2008. *Music for People's Guide to Improvising Music and Authentic Group Leadership*.

Teaching improvisation can be approached as an improvisation. The skills for participating in solo, small ensemble and large group improvisations are presented in the first chapters, with specific mention of instrument categories (strings, piano, drums) and musical styles. The middle chapters address the mindset of the leader and the common challenges of teaching improvisation to mixed groups. The final section of the book covers ways of bringing improvisation into classrooms.

Knysh, Mary and Bevan, Betsy *BoomDoPa*. Bloomsburg: Rhythmic Connections, 2000.

A book of improvisation-based rhythm games for the school music classroom. It emphasizes hand drum techniques and the use of plastic Boomwhackers.

Lieberman, Julie Lyonn *Planet Musician*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1998.

Violinist Lieberman describes how to capture the essence of a variety of world music styles.

Hale, Susan Elizabeth *Song and Silence*. Albuquerque: La Alameda Press, 1995. A book about the various uses of the voice in music therapy, personal expression, and musical performance.

Sobol, Elise *An Attitude and Approach for Teaching Music to Special Learners*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2008. The title is very descriptive. The author is a strong advocate for addressing the needs of Special Education students in mainstream school settings and is an excellent trainer of teachers.

Rhiannon *Flight (Interactive Guide to Vocal Improvisation)*. Boulder: Sounds True, 2000.

Rhiannon (no last name) is a long time member of Bobby McFerrin's performing ensemble. This 2 CD set is a music-minus-one class in vocal improvisation that invites you to sing along and make up your own parts to the ensemble's vocal grooves.

Darling, David and Weber, Julie *The Darling Conversations*. Manifest Spirit Music, 2007.

Cellist David Darling and educator/composer Julie Weber discuss a humanistic approach to music improvisation that encourages the musical impulse in all people and expresses a philosophy that all combinations of people, instruments, and experience levels can make music together. The 3 CD set contains numerous examples of small ensemble improvisation techniques, based on Darling's work with the organization, Music for People.

(readings from last year's class, taught by Professor Boquiren)

Bailey, Derek. *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1993.

Nettl, Bruno and Gabriel Solis, eds. *Musical Improvisation: Art, Education, and Society*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

Oliveros, Pauline. *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*. New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2005.

Dates to Remember:

January 23 - Classes Begin – Spring 2012

February 6 - Late Registration Ends Last Day to Add a Course

February 7 - Final Date to Submit May 2012 Graduation Applications (to have name appear in commencement booklet); Final Date to Submit August 2012 Graduation Applications (to have name appear in commencement booklet)

February 21 - Last Day to: Drop a Class, Change Course Grading Option, Add an Independent Study, Process Course Section Change

March 5 - Open Planning for Summer and Fall 2012 Begins

March 12 – 18 Spring Break - No Classes

March 27 Last Day to Withdraw from a Class

April 5 – 6 Graduate Priority Registration for Summer and Fall 2012 Begins

April 9 – 13 Undergraduate Priority Registration for Summer and Fall 2012 Begins

April 16 Research Day - No Classes

May 8 Make-up Day (for faculty to schedule a 'makeup' for a missed classes) – No regular classes scheduled

May 9-10 Emergency Days Scheduled by the Registrar if necessary

May 11 Finals Begin

May 17 Finals End, Last Day of Spring 2012 Classes Doctoral Hooding Ceremony

May 18 Commencement