



LAB 6

06 – 10 March 2023

**Conscious Improvisation:
a Deep and Functional Approach**

Conservatorio di Musica
'Santa Cecilia' Roma

 **SANTA CECILIA**
CONSERVATORIO STATALE DI MUSICA DI ROMA



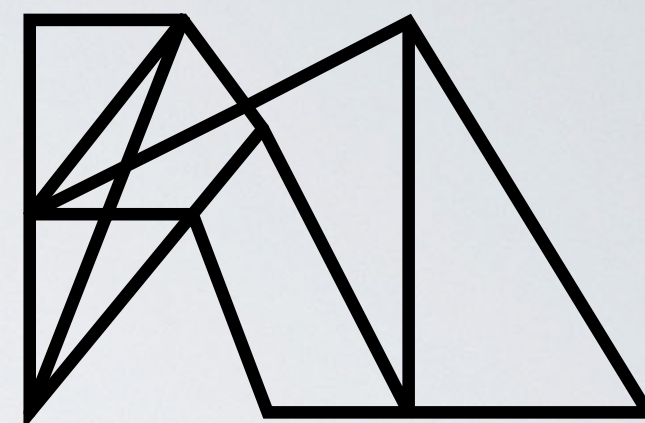
**Reflection-Based
Artistic Professional Practice**



La ricerca artistica:

percorsi trans-disciplinari

Dipartimento di Didattica della Musica e dello Strumento



RAPP Lab

Rhetoric and Improvisation

Carla Conti

Conservatorio di musica 'Santa Cecilia' - Roma

Rhetoric and Improvisation

“In life there exists no script, no modus operandi. The primacy of experience is a form of ‘trying out’ or improvisation, a moving from an indefinable and undifferentiated state to feeling our way by creating a direction.”

“In artistic research, the artist/researcher places him/herself at the sharp point of the inquiry, embodying its issues within new experimental forms of practice.”

[*Improvisational Attitudes: Reflections from Art and Life on Certitude, Failure, and Doubt*. Vol 8, N° 2 (2012) editors Amanda Ravetz, Anne Douglas, and Kathleen Coessens]

Rhetoric and Improvisation

- to explore how improvisers, in their individual and/or collective artistic practice, shape according to what they perceive as a resource to nurture and renew as well to grasp and exploit;
- to reflect how individuals who are skilled improvisers approach to improvise effectively as a collective.

Rhetoric and Improvisation

Improvisation as...

- a convergence of planning *and* execution (Crossan et al., 2005), such that “the more proximate the design and implementation of an activity in time, the more that activity is improvisational” (Moorman and Miner, 1998a: 698);
 - a reactive, spontaneous action in response to unanticipated occurrences, in which individuals find a way to manage the unexpected problem/situation (Weick, 1993; Moorman and Miner, 1998a, 1998b; Miner, Bassof, and Moorman, 2001) and/or create something novel in response to the unknown (Barrett, 1998; Vera and Crossan, 2005).
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Rhetoric and Improvisation

Many researchers and practitioners recommend musical improvisation as part of a comprehensive music education (Swanwick, 1988; Mc Pherson, 1994; Hickey, 2009, 2015; Higgins and Campbell, 2010; Kratus, 1991, 1996; MENC, 1994; Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995).

“From a very young age, children can engage in improvisation without the need of extensive technical training. Such improvisation can also be structured, with task created that require the shaping of sounds in ways that come close to compositional thinking. Evaluation of these performances by experts is possible, using musical criteria in sensitive ways.” (Peter Webster - 1989, p. 53)

Rhetoric and Improvisation

The Lab6, between the theory and the field, as well as between the known and unknown, the individual and the collective, lets us reflect on *improvisation* as an aware action, in response to unanticipated occurrences, that is characterized by the convergence of planning and execution.

Rhetoric and Improvisation

It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new.

But there is no real security in what is no longer meaningful.

There is more security in the adventurous and exciting, for in movement there is life,
and in change there is power.

Alan Cohen

Rhetoric and Improvisation

- minimal structures, or semi-structures, in fostering improvisation (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Barrett, 1998) and providing “frameworks for understanding” (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 2005);
 - the relationship between structures and improvisation is not unidirectional;
 - the actions of one individual become a structural resource for another individual to build on (Barrett, 1998; Zack, 2000; Vera and Crossan, 2004; Bechky and Okhuysen, 2011).
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Rhetoric and Improvisation

Live Action Role-Playing (LARP) not formal/organizational setting. LARP is a performative game “that take[s] place between imagination and embodied reality” (Seregina, 2014: 19), so that participants play a specific character role (role-playing) while moving, singing, dancing and acting (live action) as their character would in a verisimilar physical space appropriate to the setting (Tychsen et al., 2006).

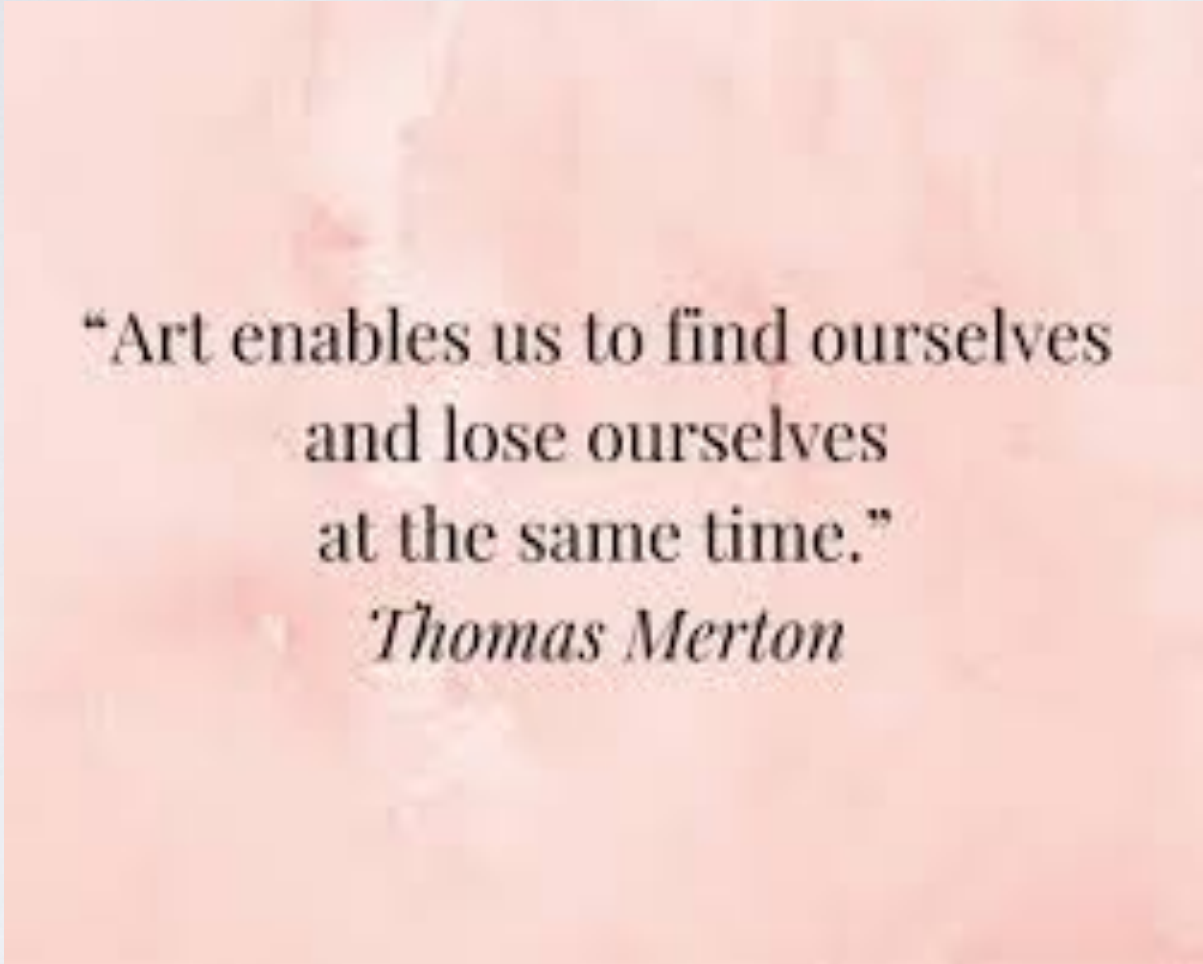

Rhetoric and Improvisation

Three kind of semi-structures:

- quotes about art and artistic research;
- elements of classic rhetorical gestures;
- six hats method.

Individually and/or in a group each of us can choose one or more semi-structure/s combining them to improvise.

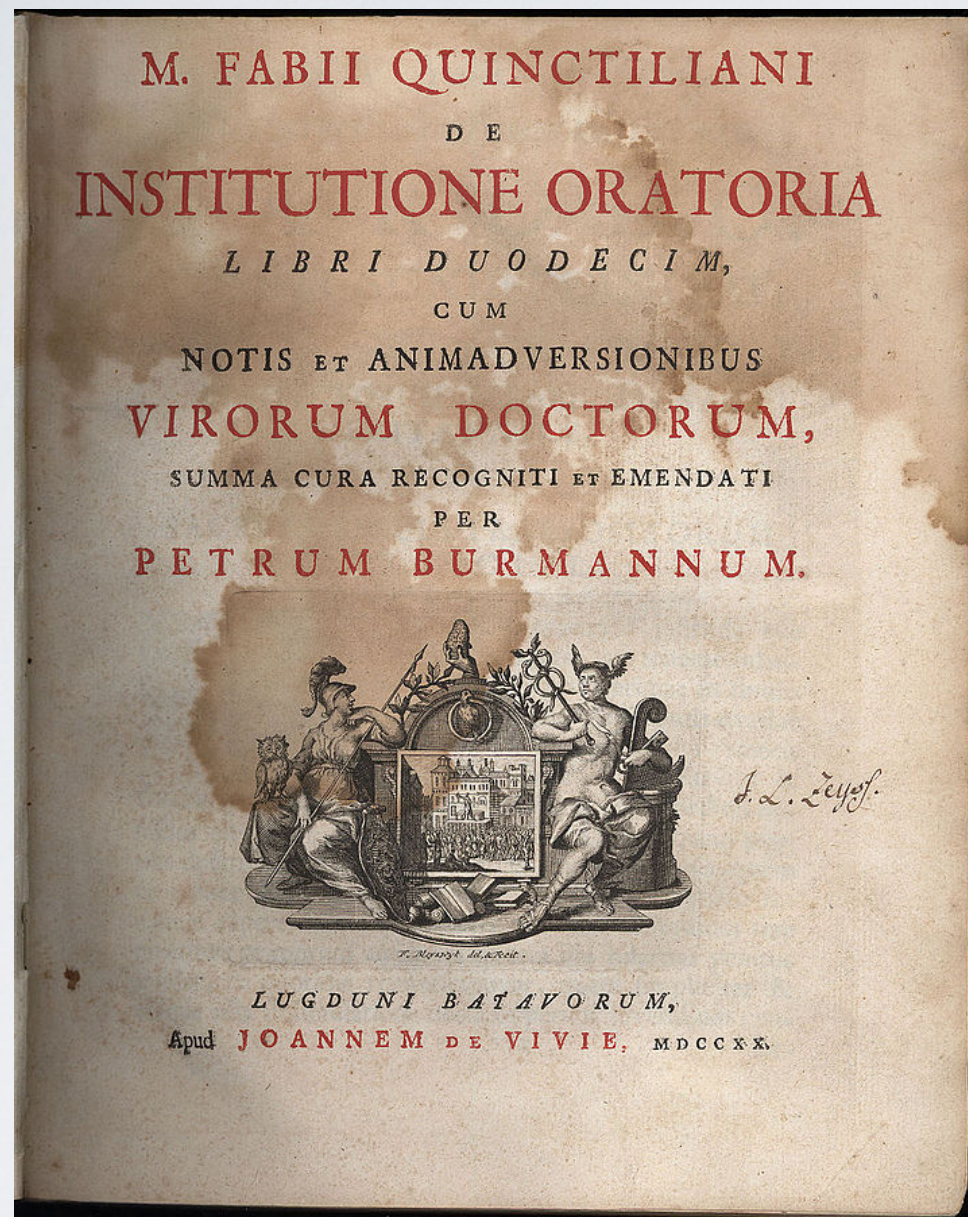
Rhetoric and Improvisation



“Art enables us to find ourselves
and lose ourselves
at the same time.”
Thomas Merton

The first semi-structure is quotes about art and about artistic research

Rhetoric and Improvisation



The second semi-structure is the actio / the classic rhetorical gestures

Rhetoric and Improvisation

Two Romans stand out as quintessential figures of Roman rhetoric, Cicero and Quintilian.

Marcus Tullius Cicero - *De Inventione*

Marcus Fabius Quintilianus - *Institutio Oratoria*

‘ex tempore dicendi facultas’

Rhetoric and Improvisation

Main Gesturing:

Opening gesture

Accompanying gesture

Final gesture

Some Expedients of Gesturing:

apostrophe,

refutatio,

indignatio,

supplicatio.

Rhetoric and Improvisation

The first collection of gestures was made by Canon Andrea de Jorio and published in 1832 by the Fibreno Printing and Paper House in Naples: the volume was composed of 380 pages of text and 19 of illustrations.

The title of the book was *The Ancients' mimic through the Neapolitan gestures* and was dedicated to His Royal Highness Frederick William Crown Prince of Prussia - Naples 15th October 1832.

In this book, the author examines many different ways of talking without a single word being spoken, by using only our hands or by the expression of our face or the posture as attitude of our body.

Rhetoric and Improvisation

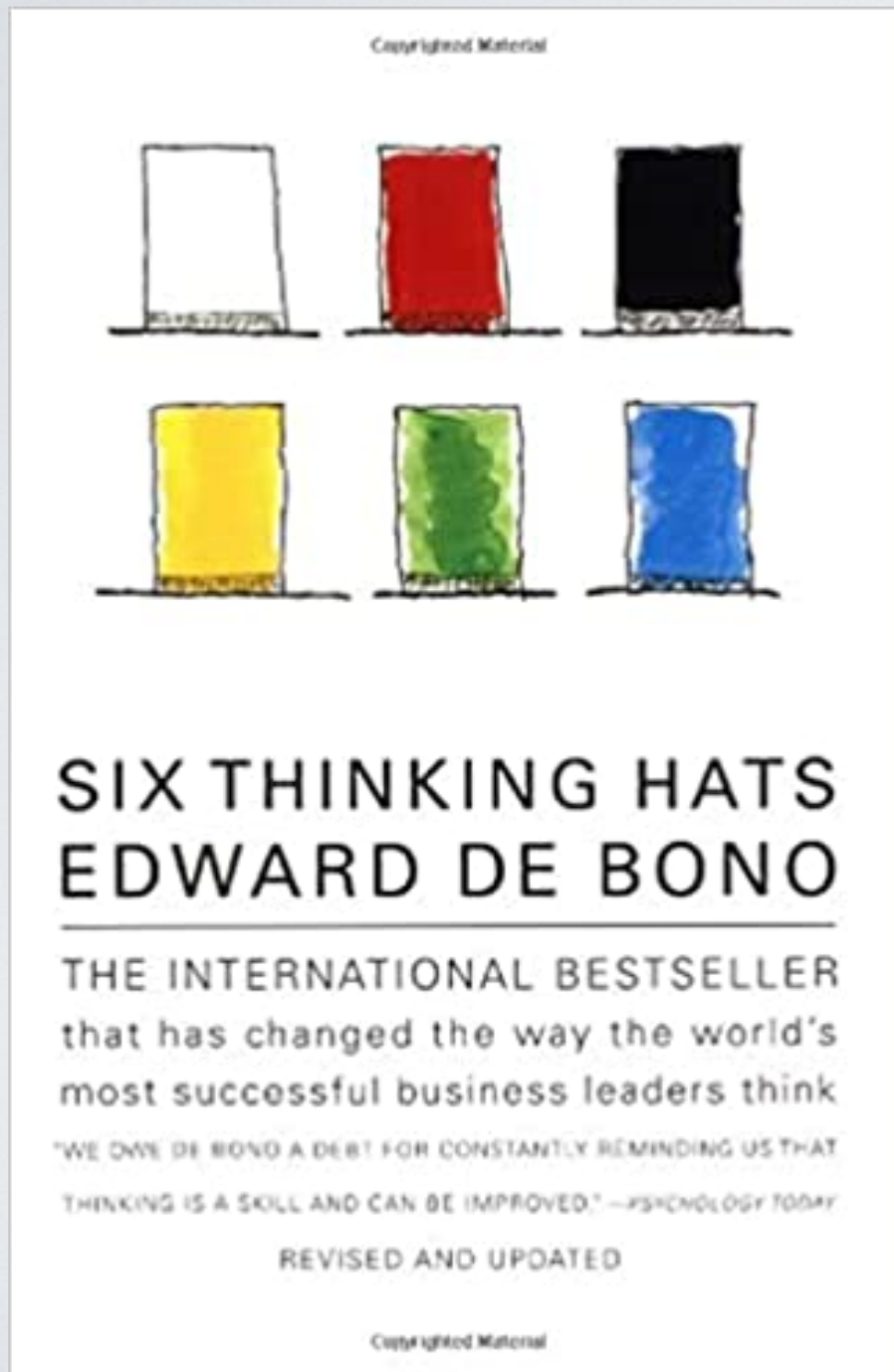
*It is not by muscle, speed, or physical dexterity that great things are achieved,
but by reflection, force of character, and judgment.*

Marcus Tullius Cicero

Rhetoric and Improvisation

Extemporaneity is further highlighted and developed also during the Middle Ages (see: *A Cultural History of Gesture*, edited by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg - Cornell University Press, 1992) and in the work of major Renaissance authors like Erasmus, Castiglione, and Rabelais and along the following centuries.

Rhetoric and Improvisation



The third semi-structure
is based on
the method of the six hats.

Rhetoric and Improvisation

The Blue Hat (Planning)

This is usually the person chairing the meeting or heading up a team. They set the ground rules. A session will most often start and end with this person. The blue hat is used to control the process.

The White Hat (Facts)

This is the person who collects data, sifts through information, and questions ideas that the others have given. It is important to avoid your own feelings in this role and look objectively at everything that is put forward. The focus of this hat is on the facts.

The Green Hat (Ideas)

The Green Hat emphasizes originality, including options, choices, and fresh concepts. It's a chance for everyone involved to communicate new ideas and viewpoints. Here innovation is stimulated!

Rhetoric and Improvisation

The Yellow Hat (Benefit)

Optimism is what the yellow hat is all about. All the best-case scenarios are brought up, the benefits, the opportunities. All the possible advantages brought up by the green hat are looked at. Brightness is the focus of this hat.

The Red Hat (Emotion)

This hat is all about emotions. How you feel about the subject of the discussion can be brought up using this hat. How others might react is also a factor. The red hat allows emotions to be a part of an otherwise rational process. An intuitive approach.

The Black Hat (Judgement)

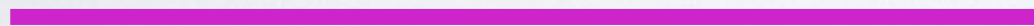
This hat is about caution. It's sometimes known as the risk management hat and may be the most potent hat. It identifies challenges where things might go wrong and why something might not work. It's fundamentally a tool for taking action to highlight risks.

Rhetoric and Improvisation

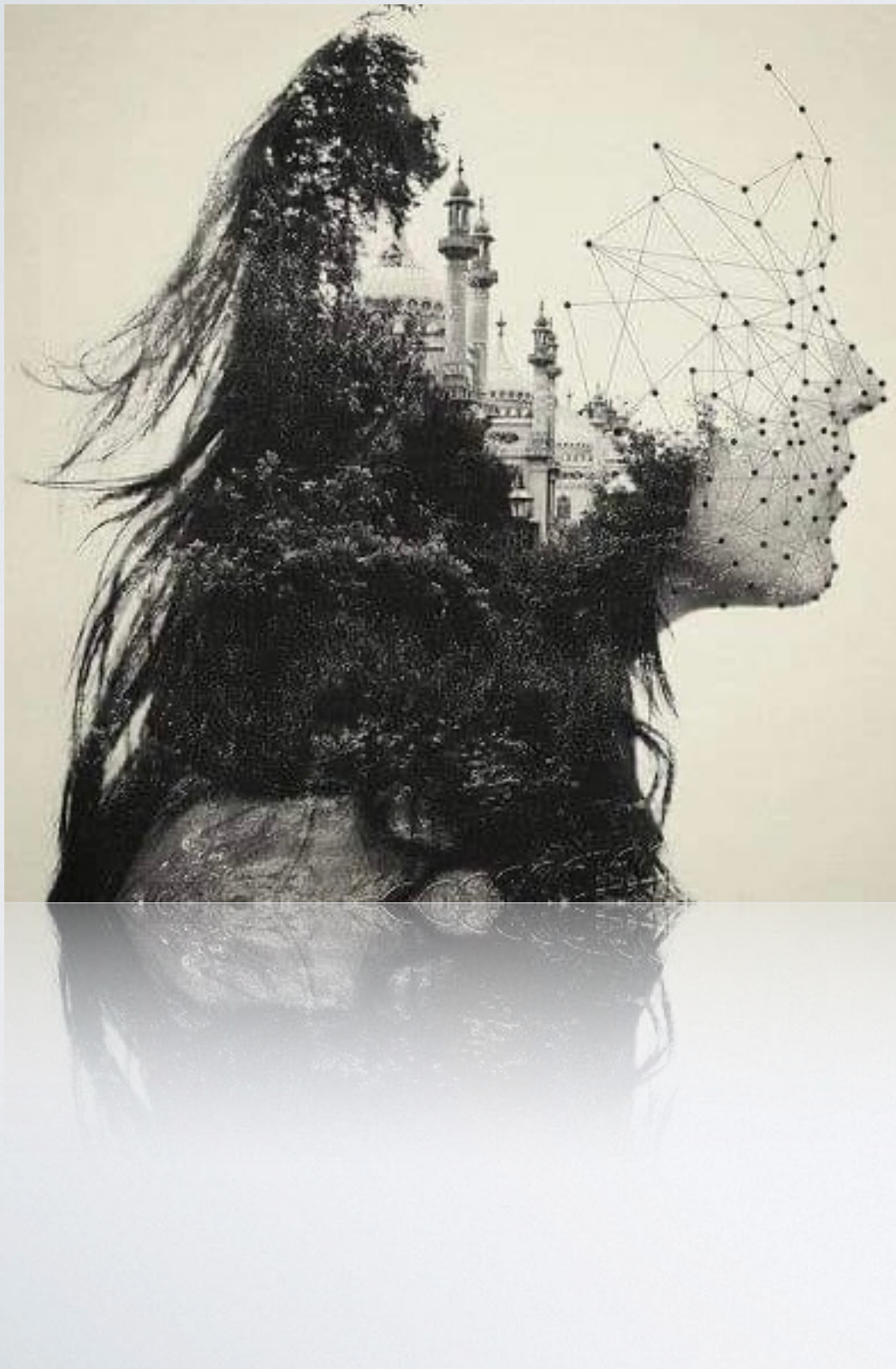
Improvisation lets us stay in the present.

Improvisation asks us to open up, to allow unexpected to happen, to be flexible, and to forge ahead.

Improvisation is a great place to work on that inner critic we all have.



Rhetoric and Improvisation



*You [We] will do foolish things,
but do them with enthusiasm.*

Colette

Thanks for your attention.



Carla Conti

c.conti@conservatoriosantacecilia.it