

PROLOGUE

Everyone has hummed or sung a tune in their lifetime no matter how simple or complex the music. Ever since one of my earlier piano teachers used to say, ‘play like you’re speaking to someone’ have I long grappled with the idea of intertwining speech and music. Many of my teachers would often mention that a jazz improvisation or ‘solo’ is and must be a form of communication. They implied that without communication in music there would be no intention.

Is music in fact like a conversation? Can an ordinary conversation or speech be explored in a musical, namely improvisational context?

Pianist Jason Moran states, “every person who speaks with their throat is singing a melody in their intonations¹”. Thus, each sentence spoken is a transcribable melody. Humans can change and adapt our voice with a level of complexity not matched by any other animal on our planet²; such is the power of words and the ‘miracle’ of talking in general.

Pianist Keith Jarrett³ grunts while he plays, quite often in the spaces between phrases and he sings along with the melody as he plays an improvised solo, particularly in a trio setting⁴. This is another ‘code’ language of the music through a form of communication that Keith uniquely understands^{5 6}.

Music is constantly around us, that is, the music of speech. In the last 2 years I have, as a rather interesting experiment, not listened to any recorded music, only to live music, to try and ‘ready’ my ears to receive this speech stimuli as music.

¹ Moran, 2018

² Humans possess a low larynx that enables a ‘high degree of sound modification’. Gregg 431

³ ‘A transcendent artist in communion with higher powers’, Schachter, 2013

⁴ For further reading on the reception of Jarrett’s performances of mystical acts see Elsdon, 2013, pp 40-43

⁵ He explores this concept briefly in the DVD, ‘The Art of Improvisation’, 2010

⁶ “Autumn Leaves” as recorded on the 1995 live album *Keith Jarrett at the Blue Note*, represents one of the trio’s most expansive standard tune interpretations, clocking in at over twenty-six minutes in length, Schachter, 2013