

Reflection-based Artistic Professional Practice

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Methodology

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LAB 1 | OSLO

Developing Critical Reflection
in Artistic Research

March 2021 at Norges musikhøgskole,
NMH Oslo, Norway (Online)

Methodology

The Norwegian Academy of Music's online RAPP Lab program was shared between presentations and workshops, plenary discussions, themed breakout groups and break-out into individual time and institutional time.

Prof. Darla Crispin's presentation "A research architecture: explaining the theory behind the NMH RAPP Lab", was given as a presentation of the concepts and ideas behind the Lab. This was followed by presentations of two research projects by participating faculty that showed different methods for generating reflections:

- an online screening of the documentation movie "Performing Precarity: a search for qualities in unpredictable performance situations" (Ellen Ugelvik and Jennifer Torrence)
- "From PhDs to Goodbye Intuition: an introduction to open-to-public laboratories" (Ivar Grydeland and Morten Qvenild).

Ivar Grydeland also presented the Lab's open canvas in Research Catalogue – a space for documentation of the individual outcomes of the RAPP Lab week. See *documentation*¹ for detailed information.

The following 4 workshops were designed for the participants' individual work during the Lab. The workshops represented 4 different methods to generate reflection and to document reflection, both in words, and as music.

When it hurts – the qualities and potential of friction

- In this workshop, Ellen Ugelvik shared thoughts and experiences from the research project 'Extended Composition'.

Reflections in sound/reflections in public

- In this workshop, Ivar Grydeland presented his concept that reflection can be shown and experienced from the music-making itself, without relying solely – or even primarily – on words.

Coming to Terms: Mapping terminology, locating fruitful tensions, and applying models as lenses for reflection

¹<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/1733904>

- In this workshop, Jennifer Torrence presented a series of strategies for reflection using models (spectrums, graphs, spreadsheets, word splashes, etc.) which have been used in her own research projects. She shared how she used these models as lenses for reflection, and in what ways they have challenged, redirected, and/or clarified her research.

An iterative performing, watching and writing method. How to start building a poetic lexicon

- In this workshop, Morten Qvenild presented his concept of building a poetic lexicon as a tool for generating written reflection that is artistically attuned.

You can find all 4 workshops explained in *documentation*²

Themed breakout groups

Based on information from the questionnaire³ we send before NMH's RAPP Lab, break-out groups were organized in these themes:

- Virtuosity in Classical, folk and present-day performance practices
- Embodiment, flow, intersubjectivity
- Meta-level discourses in artistic research
- Improvised musics

Each breakout group was moderated by members of the NMH RAPP Lab team.

² <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/1733904>

³ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/1733904>



LAB 2 | GHENT

Developing Cognitive Skills for
Artistic Research in Music

September 2021 at Orpheus Instituut,
Ghent, Belgium

Methodology

Here we take an oblique approach to the situation. Not only does this project not address research students' individual topics directly, it intentionally frees them from the burden of their own work for its duration. Students know they will not be called upon to present, justify, develop or explicitly draw new relationships with their own work. They are returned to the liberating joy of learning, of being taught - an experience far back in the memory of most researchers at this advanced level. The intensity of teaching and learning is crucial to this process. There is no time or intellectual space for students to be continuing their regular research. On the other hand, the level of teaching needs to be judged very carefully in order for the whole group to remain both fully stimulated (simply put, difficult and interesting enough) without any becoming left behind or alienated (not unachievably ambitious). The experience is intended not only to impart useful and interesting knowledge, but to be cognitively transformational – and in that to open students to exploring and discovering new kinds of understanding and creativity. Students are liberated, inspired and empowered. In terms of the wider aims of RAPP Lab, this project encourages students to develop a new set of *tools* for reflection: tools that require instruction and practice (like music itself), that are both practical and far-reaching. This is not merely the transmission of knowledge; the process of learning is transformative.

Teaching is an undervalued resource at doctoral level, where students are naturally encouraged primarily to develop their own skills. This is particularly the case in artistic research, an area in which the student's individual set of skills, interests and questions is at the heart. As we know from earlier stages in education, direct, concentrated teaching is a powerful tool for rapid and sustained development, particularly in subject areas that are new to students. Its success is founded in pedagogical skill and experience, in readiness to learn, and in trust.

In broad outline, we create the following situation: a group of research students works intensively for a week with a faculty of three teachers – a 'bootcamp' situation. In this case the students were eleven PhD candidates, all working towards a doctorate in Artistic Research. The teachers were all experienced experts in their field, each with an established successful university-level pedagogical practice.

Teaching takes place in what is essentially a classroom environment. This is important; the students and teachers together form an intimate and supportive group that pursues its work in a secure, private and uninterrupted space. The timetable ensures a fully immersive experience:

each teacher gives a class of 1.5 hours every day for the entire week, and gives the students a further 1.5 hours of homework to complete. In addition, each teacher is available to students for a further period each day for tutorial sessions; this allows students to develop points of particular interest, and ensures that no student gets blocked at a point of non- or misunderstanding. Great care is taken to support all students in the progress of the subjects. It is important to note that there is no element of examination or assessment; it is the 'safety' of the space that allows such intensity of teaching and learning.

The selection of subjects is a crucial issue. They should involve learnable skills, require technical exercise and cognitive practice, and be relevant in some way to the broad range of contemporary musicians. While assessment as such is antitechnical to the ethos of this approach, the skills should be both practical and testable – the students know when and how they are applying such skills, and with what results and satisfaction. The aim is to encourage individual development through the acquisition of common material and identifiable skills. In this case we identified three complementary areas of study, each requiring active and sustained engagement with the teaching: *Critical Thinking*, *Sixteenth Century Counterpoint*, and *Programming in the Arts*. In requiring guidance, effort and training they become transformative; in their diversity they encourage students to observe new relationships across the subjects and in the context of their own work. Direct applicability to a particular research project is not the point. The broad relevance of these subjects to the contemporary understanding of music is clear; they are not abstract theoretical topics open to debate but rather areas of clear technique.

Critical thinking

Teacher: Prof. Marianne Talbot, University of Oxford

The evaluation of arguments and of evidence in general is fundamental to research – a foundational skill which especially in the humanities is often developed in a somewhat informal manner. We first considered Formal Logic as a candidate subject, as the basis of the analysis of arguments. However, Formal Logic as conventionally taught tends to address students who already have a particular mind-set, and can be perceived as over-abstract or even alienating by others. Critical Theory, another candidate subject in this area, brings an implied requirement for a philosophical foundation if it is to be taught in any depth, and would thus stretch beyond the timescale of this project. Prof. Talbot has developed a remarkable pedagogical strategy that is grounded in philosophy, incorporates the essential elements of formal logic, plots a clear technical trajectory and remains fully and pragmatically grounded in the concerns of student researchers. The techniques and materials imparted are both empowering and useful – in researchers' own work, in analysing material in general, but also in setting the tone for engaging with the other subjects of the week.

Sixteenth-century counterpoint

Teacher: Prof. Dr. Markus Roth, Folkwang University of the Arts, Essen

The great range of musical practices and languages involved in current Artistic Research makes it difficult to identify an expert musical-technical subject (beyond the rudiments of Western art music) that will be relevant across such a group. Polyphony, in its broadest sense, is a foundation of Western music and a major contribution to human knowledge and understanding. Indeed, we could see it as a musical analogue to other developments in thought through the early modern period. It reaches a peak of artistic achievement and technical codification in the sixteenth century. Prof. Roth has taught the techniques of complex counterpoint to music students of many interests and backgrounds. By grounding his teaching in treatises of the sixteenth century and showing how the concepts he introduces persist through contemporary music, the technical exercises and problems he presents to the students become live, practical musical questions. This highly technical area of study thus remains both musically alive and historically fascinating – in short, musicianly. Students feel that they are exercising and expanding their ‘musical brain’.

Programming in the arts

Teacher: Prof. Magno Caliman, Orpheus Institute, Ghent

We inhabit a common technological environment. Regardless of how explicitly the work of a particular researcher engages with this state, it all takes place within a knowledge and cultural economy enabled and governed by technology. More invisibly, contemporary modes of thought are infused with concepts and models that derive from our technological condition (just think of the instrumental but plastic functionality of terms such as ‘network’, ‘feedback’ or ‘algorithm’). Teaching computer science or a specific programming language from scratch is potentially alienating to those not disposed to such work, and may seem arbitrary to others. Prof. Caliman teaches a course that sets out from questions of creativity, materiality and organisation – issues relevant to music researchers in general. The domain of the ‘virtual’ is also ultimately a material world in which technical solutions have to be found. This course begins with the material challenge of making sound with an Arduino microprocessor (not its intended use); it sets out from an essentially sonic premise. The students require only their laptop, from which their work involves programming the Arduino using its simple open-access coding environment. In the course of the week, students discover that they have acquired, understood and assimilated the basic principles of computer science and coding. They have done so in ways that can apply across different contexts of computational technology.



LAB 3 | COLOGNE

Embodied Reflection
in Artistic Practice

May 2022 at Hochschule für Musik und
Tanz Köln, Germany

Methodology

How did we set up the Lab? What were the thoughts behind it?

The starting point for this Lab was deeply grounded in the transdisciplinary profile of our Hochschule for Music and Dance Cologne. Out of this intertwined perspective the teachers of the dance and music faculty involved in the Lab filled the term “reflection” with life: in exchanging expertise, experiences, and in discovering so-called ‘blind spots’.

The methodological framework for letting the phenomenon of reflection emerge as an embodied process is built on the following aspects:

- to discover reflection as embedded in corporeal processes and as something the “mindful body” does and not as something which arises solely from intellectual brain work,
- to become more aware of the diversity of bodily choices and perceptions,
- to think of the body as a source of impulses and a venue for reflection,
- and from this, to create ideas and pedagogical situations that allow this potential to be applied in teaching and learning spaces at Higher Education Institutions in the Arts.

Focusing the body as a medium for reflection, also means focusing on trained bodily codes and habits and critically re-thinking them.

Which assumptions do we carry with us?

Especially as dancers but also as musicians we want to train our body, to find a technique which enables us to perform virtuously and to express our artistry. We learn bodily strategies to regulate nervousness, to lose or to build up tension, to breathe and focus. We spend time to avoid bodily illnesses, pains and to stay healthy. We take the body as a source for prophylaxis.

Which bodily patterns are we familiar with?

Especially as performing artists in music we are familiar with a very strict repertoire of bodily patterns during a performance: We go on stage. We play while standing or sometimes sitting or sometimes changing in between. We bow after performing, go off the stage again. We move our hands, our whole body, we breathe, we touch our instrument or the music, we realize the

movements of the bodies around. But once it comes to the performance of sound, to the inner musical activities, what role does my body play? Is the body the place where I locate my artistic expertise? In hearing and evaluating and analyzing sound, which role does my body play? And how can these bodily patterns be enriched by states of dancing?

The Lab built on the strong believe in the entanglement of moving, sounding, and wording. Three core thematic phenomena were in the focus, which enabled us to realize these mentioned entanglements as part of our artistic practice.

These are the three core elements of “Embodied Reflection” that we offered:

1. Space as creator and medium of embodied reflection
2. Embodied reflection as multisensory inquiry
3. Explorative interconnections between moving, hearing, sounding

1. Space as creator and medium of embodied reflection

This thematic part was embedded in the workshop “Doing space – sensing space”, which was led by Lars Frers, Professor for Sociology of Space at the Universitet i Sorost-Norge in Norway.

The central question of this workshop part was: How do I perceive myself as intertwined with spatial relations and how does this effect my artistic practice? The aim was to discover embodied reflection as radical materialized inter-connections between actors, materials and spaces involved.

One part of this workshop was to move in small groups of 3-4 participants in urban spaces (also in trains) and to listen carefully to the acoustic environment through Zoom recorders. This sound recording fieldwork enabled a research atmosphere, in which the participants were actively involved in public affairs and conditions of the public scene. In the video documentation⁴ this intertwined set-up of bodily listening strategies, zoom recorders and the public sphere can be observed.

Here you will find the detailed workshop description.⁵

2. Embodied Reflection as Multisensory Inquiry

The second core element of our RAPP Lab week was multisensory perception and led to the workshop “No Conclusions: Multisensory Inquiry into Practice” under the direction of Nina Sun Eidsheim, professor for musicology and voice studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFqA7QNE5Es>

⁵ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/2130406>

Some questions that this workshop wanted to highlight include: How can we develop an awareness of the different senses, besides the central parameters we automatically rely on? Hearing sounds with our ears, seeing and reading the music on a score or in mind with our eyes, seeing bodies dancing or touching each other. The aim of this workshop was to let a “Criss-cross of the senses” make us aware about reflection as a holistic phenomenon: How does your sound taste? How does your gesture smell? Which sound, which movement inspires you after touching a stone? How can we overcome listening and sounding strategies that focus only on the aural mode? How does it affect my understanding of being an artist, while not trusting anymore only on what I acoustically hear, but also on what I smell, taste or touch?

In her research publications Nina Eidsheim develops an understanding of sound as a vibrational matter and unfolds the already connected entities of sounding/listening and bodily states of moving: “What connects singing, listening, and sound, then, is vibration. Indeed, what connects the physical, full-body activities and experiences that take place during both singing and listening is the transmission and transduction of vibration.” (Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound. Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*, 2015, 181)

Her terminology of sounding as a multisensory practice constitutes the basis for her workshop activities in our Lab. You can find the whole workshop description here.⁶

Further Material offered:

- Interview-format “1000 ways home” (see practical guide)⁷

3. Explorative Interconnections between moving, sounding and wording

The third thematic element of our Lab focused on the entanglements between moving, sounding/performing and wording/describing: How does the deep intertwining of movement and sound affect me in coming into flow? How does the entanglement of sound as movement, movement as sound enables me to find new ideas, to take risks, to show myself vulnerable?

For realizing these entangled experiences of movement, words and sounds we created a two-part workshop:

A. „Walk & Talk ? ... (or: feeding back, forward and around)” with Jan Burkhardt, Evelyn Buyken and Constanze Schellow.

This workshop part was implemented as a daily warm-up during the Lab.

Walking together was understood:

...as a practice of communication between the choreographic (dance) body and the musical (sounding) body.

⁶ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/2130406>

⁷ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/2130406>

...as an oscillation, negotiation, interweaving, resonance of motor movement, sound movement and word movement

...as an invitation to experience word, sound and movement as artistic presence material

... as a path and time in which the supposed, often decoupled poles of practice and reflection feed back into each other in a constant reciprocal relationship: in the simultaneous making and speaking about it.

... as an investigation of the in-between: between the making of practice and its explicit verbalisation.

... as a moment of performative and discursive sense-making: one of the partners practices and speaks about the making, the other perceives and feeds back through his/her sound, movement and word material.

You can find the whole workshop description here. And a detailed warm-up choreography here⁸.

B. Workshop „The art is already within us. Please stay - we'll change.“ with Corinna Vogel and Laurenz Gemmer

The idea of the workshop was to create in-the-moment pieces in guided improvisation, which means that the participants were working within a loose structure, but in a liberating and creative atmosphere. The aim was to offer different insights into the amalgamation of dance and music, to create artistic awareness and to see, feel and express daily routines from a different point of view. Participants were invited to present a fragment of music and a brief part of movement - both from their daily practice in order to reshape and transform it in an unexpected / extraordinary way. This could have been three random bars of a music piece or a movement such as making tea.

You can find a detailed description of the workshop here.⁹

⁸ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/2130406>

⁹ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/2130406>



LAB 4 | VIENNA

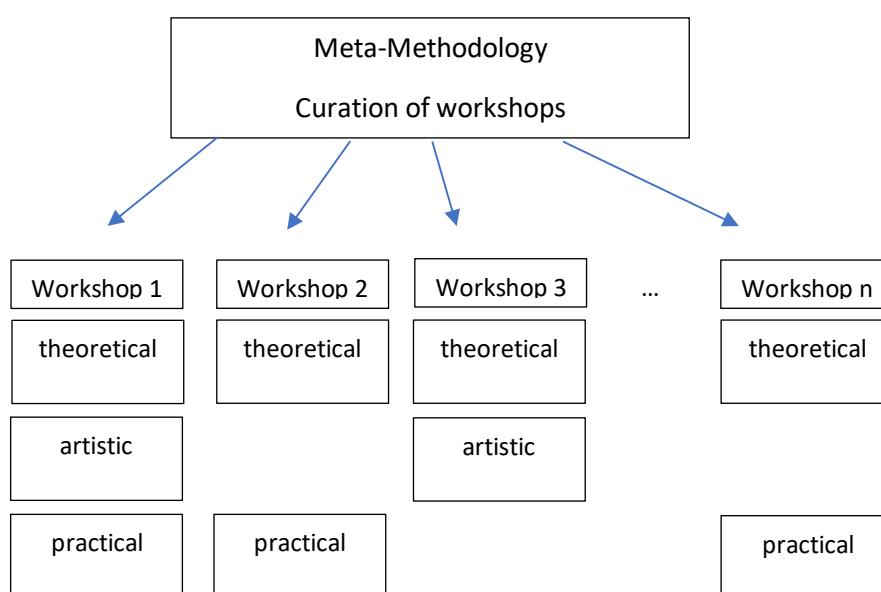
Transculturality
in Artistic Research

May 2022 at mdw - Universität für Musik und
darstellende Kunst Vienna, Austria

Methodology

The approach as described in the Introductory Text makes clear, that Lab 4 has two levels of Methodology:

- A **Meta-Methodology**, as applied by the board and organizers, and then numerous methodologies in the context of the different workshops. The intense clash of so many different perspectives and approaches, resulting in a kind of overflow situation for the participants, is crucial for the “Meta-Methodology”. The purpose is not to provide one homogenous approach of trans-cultural reflection but rather to slightly overburden the participants with the variety of approaches, challenging them to develop their own take on the topic and to reflect through agreeing and disagreeing on elements and approaches offered in the workshops.
- Furthermore, one of the common characteristics of most workshops – with their own **sub-methodologies** – were constituted by the combination of a) establishing some kind of **theoretical framework** for the proposed topic and – in some cases – b) the **presentation of examples** of artistic works and/or artistic research projects of the presenters themselves were used as illustration of concepts. Finally, in many cases exemplary situations of **practical activities** in the given context were created.



Examples of creating a theoretical base / defining key terms

“trans-traditional” instead of “transcultural” (Bhagwati)

The use of the term “tradition” helps to avoid the problems with the term “culture”, especially when it is geographized and thus localized, as it usually is. “Culture” may work for ways of life that are adapted to local climate and geography - but for music, especially for so-called presentation music (Turino), such a localized definition of music (music culture) is very problematic.

For in every highly interconnected place in this world - whether through social distinction or migration - there often exist multiple ways of making and receiving music, interwoven with and within each other. Every highly networked place is a place of practice for a multitude of musical traditions. So, unlike “culture”, “traditional music-making” is always a conscious choice - in any culture, most listeners do not become music-makers, especially not music-makers-for-others!

“eurological” (Bhagwati)

Music written anywhere in the world which draws on models of music making established in Europe over the last 700 years. Since the Ars Nova, the impulse to never look back, the call to break new ground, to expand the zone of aesthetic combat became one of the central hero narratives that the European music has been telling itself in millions of variations.

This is its main traditionality – it is a tradition that thinks itself to be socially and aesthetically marginal while being deeply wedded to the innovation and expansion-oriented (r)evolutionary orientation of European commerce and its military underpinnings. The concept of an “avant-garde” is Europe’s neurotic disavowal of its colonialist and expansionist traditionality.

“śabdagatitāra” (Bhagwati)

The crossing (tāra) of ways of making (gati) sounds (śabda). Interweavings of sound-making methods.

“rhizomatic traditions” (Bhagwati)

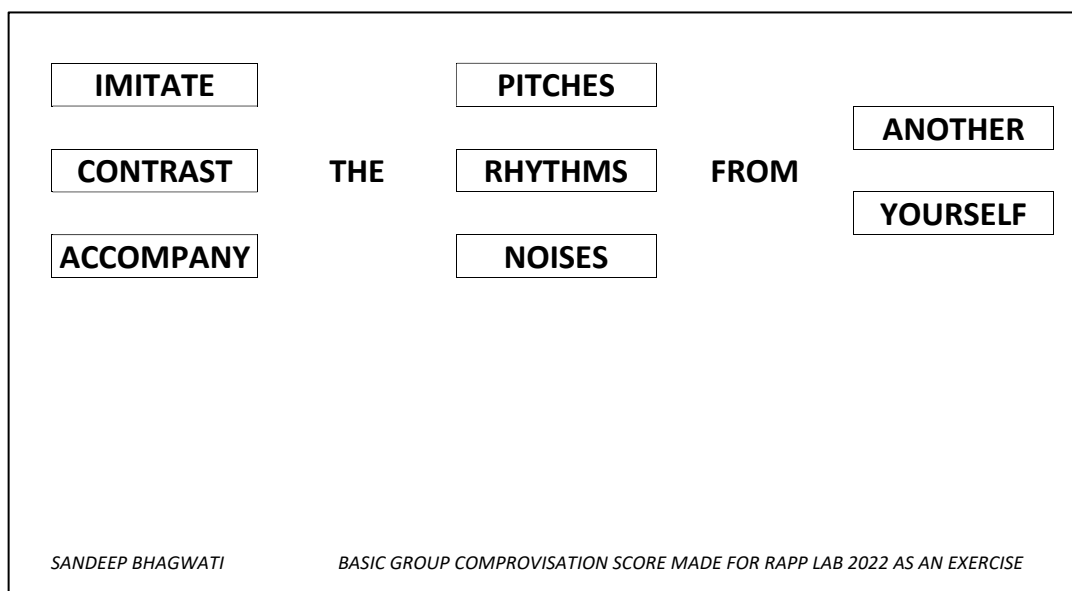
None of the musicians is musically one-dimensional: they are all musically poly-traditional at least as listeners, if not as practitioners. And almost every one of the participants has developed and contributed his/her musical multilingualism in these projects. Through this aesthetic openness to the individual musical complexity of each musician, it became clear in a practical musical way that and how traditions are rhizomatically interwoven.

Transculturality and Sound Art (Blume)

The topic of transculturality was the starting point to define the selection of projects for the workshop. More than transculturality, it's maybe the idea to be listening to the others, open to the other cultures. The listening act and the microphones are a way to be open to what is different, the things we don't know, trying to be as open as possible.

Examples of creating exemplary situations of practical activities

Bhagwati: Instructions for trans-traditional group improvisation



Blume: Listening Exercises (see section [Documentation](#) for details)

- 1) walking to a park (without talking), awareness of sounds, then making a list of perceived sounds, categorization of sounds in the list.
- 2) immobile (standing or sitting) in a chosen place in the park (5min), erasing the boundaries between music and sound, then describing each sonic material, to the group, one by one without mentioning the name of the thing/being producing the sound (nor describing it) but focusing on the sound itself, with their own words and references (high, bass, medium frequencies / loud or quiet / where in the space, immobile or moving / repetitive, constant,

Erdödi: From barter trades to collaborative village plays: Collaboration as conceptual, cross-cultural practice

When designing the workshop it was important for Erdödi that – after an initial impulse in which she introduced her thoughts on collaboration as a conceptual, cross-cultural practice – through different situations/exercises the participants themselves get a chance to experience and negotiate the following questions:

(1) How do we attend to different forms and articulations of knowledge based on a practice of listening? - Exercise #1 was based on Sarah Vanhee's BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE project and their tool, the LITTLE BOOK ON LEARNING.

(2) How do conceptualize “complicated cooperations” (Richard Sennett), how do we work with “painful differences” and bring together our artistic intentions/interests/practices with the (often unexpected/unpredictable) particularities of the places and people we collaborate with? Exercise #2 consisted of simulating real-life situations, in which an artistic team working collaboratively had to negotiate different local conditions and impulses with their desired/ intended artistic approaches. Participants worked in groups of 4-5 people, also practicing collaboration within their respective teams. Results were then shared in a final round with all participants.

Trans-culturality was a crucial element in this workshop, when discussing how collaboration needs to be conceptualized “across difference”: not only in terms of social difference (race, gender, class), but also across cultural difference. Erdödi insists on these differences as not only essential to “complicated cooperations”, but also perceives them as extremely enriching with regard to artistic experimentation. In her understanding of “trans-culturality”, she includes not only established cultural practices, such as folk singing and vernacular tradition, or pop music and culture, but also other practices not necessarily regarded as “cultural”, such as urban beekeeping, farming or amateur autocross racing. She advocates that considering these as cultural practices enriches the creation process conceptually as well as formally. It enables artistic experimentation, while acknowledging and giving value to the collaborators' everyday activities, passions and hobbies, as well as understanding, what relevance these hold for them (e.g. that with taking up autocross driving, her collaborators made new friendships and became part of a close-knit, supportive community). This broader understanding of “cultural practices” forms part of an profoundly anti-elitist approach to contemporary art and collaborative practices, which considers the banal, the everyday and the ordinary as essential to our way of thinking about aesthetics. Erdödi does not however advocate reproducing the given phenomena and the practices uncritically, but rather she suggests understanding them as “material” for the collaborative creation, in which these practices are transformed and re-contextualized (but not alienated, nor appropriated) within the artistic project.



LAB 5 | TALLINN

Exploring Musical Identities:
Autoethnography

September 2022 at Eesti Muusika-ja
Teatriakadeemia Tallinn, Estonia

Methodology

A common approach in the field of Artistic Research is to adopt a philosophical position from another field and apply new methods towards one's individual artistic practice. However, such an approach can lead to confusion as the researcher often lacks the context and knowledge of the secondary field to flexibly integrate the methods in a way which leads to fruitful productivity. The problem is exacerbated when we consider that artistic practices and methods are often disciplinary specific and may not be applicable towards employability in the wider cultural sphere. In the Tallinn Lab we focused on devising a bootcamp in which participants are invited to learn about a commonly adopted methodology for artistic research, Autoethnography, away from their own research topics. Autoethnography is a methodology which focuses on exposing the individual experience as a representation of its cultural backdrop. The skills of an Autoethnographer focus on the understanding of Self, the revealing of taboos, and the expression of cultural experiences through unique and often overlooked positions in society. Our approach was not to invest a great deal of time into the theoretical explanation and justification of Autoethnography, but to provide participants with a chance to literally practice the methods as it suits their own individual personalities. It was our intention to create a Lab where participants can build up the skills necessary for applying the method not only in their own research strategies, but in any other field of development where they may find themselves. In the case of Autoethnography, the applied methods could be transferred towards any goal concerning personal development and/or cultural agency.

Identity was chosen as the main focal point for all methods used in the Lab. The reasoning behind this relied on the purpose for taking an Autoethnographic approach. One of the main concerns for this methodology is how subjective experience can be seen as a representation or even a contradiction from the culture in which it is formed. In order for our participants to gain a deeper understanding of the intent of Autoethnography, it was necessary to make the act of revealing identity a main aim inside of our Lab. Furthermore the terminology used when referring to an artist's activities and their associated identities (composer, performer, improviser, and conductor) contain a degree of ambiguity in the current state of the arts, where interdisciplinary artistic practices are becoming standardized. If we consider that a great deal of implicit knowledge is communicated during the formative years regarding the roles, attitudes, behaviors, and ethics a particular artistic identity contains, then young researchers may require a degree of self reflection in order to transform some aspects of their identities into conscious

awareness. Applying Autoethnography inside of artistic practice may help young researchers clarify their own sense of artistic purpose as well as draw them closer towards the concepts, practices, ethics, and aesthetics which they seek to pursue inside of their careers.

Though reflective action is typically considered as a tool where the self looks back onto the self, we felt it was necessary to broaden this scope by devising themes which incorporate other viewpoints into self reflective processes. Each day focused on a different pathway of reflection consisting of: The Self, The Other, The Moment, and The Society. The reasoning for this was due to the intention of Autoethnographic research. Though subjective in nature, the researcher should still embrace the ethnographic side of the field, which is the intention that the subjective experience can be seen as a wider representation of the culture from which it originates. In this sense using one's surroundings, peers, friends, families, and communities as part of the reflective process can help strengthen the knowledge unpacked when investigating identity.

All methods used in the lab were orientated towards these different reflective pathways. The first day was for introducing the Lab's concept and the main tenets of Autoethnography. Day 2 focused on applying reflective methods towards the self through the use of memory tactics. Interviews and dialogue were used as reflective tools on Day 3. Day 4 looked into real time tactics where reflection is focused on the present moment in a group. The last day was dedicated to reflecting together as a group concerning artist roles in society. The whole week unfolded from working with the self towards working with reflection inside of larger groups.

A brief summary of the methods used in each day are described below. More thorough explanations of individual methods can be found in the documentation section for our Lab.

1. The Self: Using Memory as a Method

Memory methods are designed to reflect on the past and how we interpret its effects on our present. Such methods included storytelling, biographical timelines, and object/space symbolism. The researcher applies these methods to investigate and/or discover a reoccurring theme in their lives which has contributed to their sense of identity and practice.

2. The Other: Autoethnographic Interviews

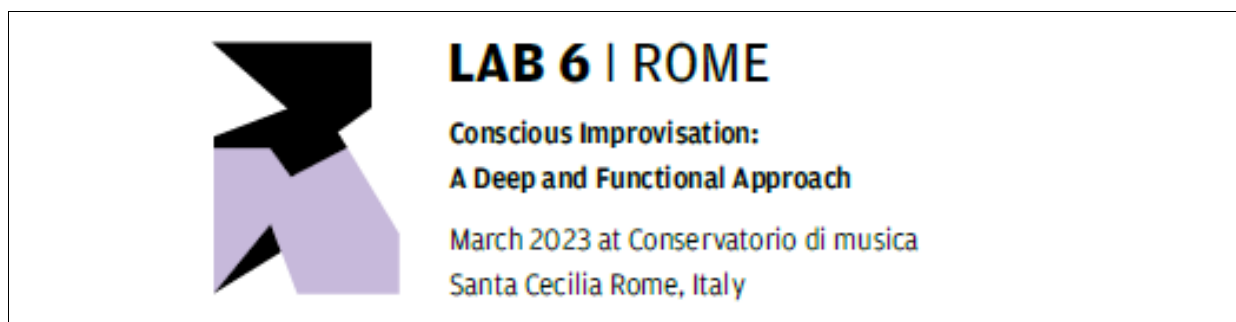
The Interview workshop introduced general interview practices and created a playful setting for the participants to experiment with an Autoethnographic approach to interviewing, having them discover new meanings to their own experiences through dialogue. Interview methods included focusing on the daily life, performing an interview, and reflecting on the self through listening to the other. Attentively self-listening was included as a practice.

3. The Moment: Methods for Real Time

The focus here was on realizing that during the real time our identities are integrally involved in the production of meaning formation. Artists learn by doing in the real time, but in this real time our own identities are shaping, moulding, filtering, and projecting the information we are receiving. Role playing was a method used for uncovering the influence of identity over the real time.

4. Society: Collaborative Methods

Here we used collaborative group work to clarify and map our own perspectives inside of the web of our cultural space. By collecting the perspectives and understandings of others as well as how such positions came into being, we can better place our own ambitions and desires inside of the broader socio-cultural sphere.



Methodology

“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 this inquiry, embodying its issues within new experimental forms of practice.”¹⁰

The Lab 6 assumed the multi-methods¹¹ framework to focus the complex phenomenon of improvisation, as an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints.

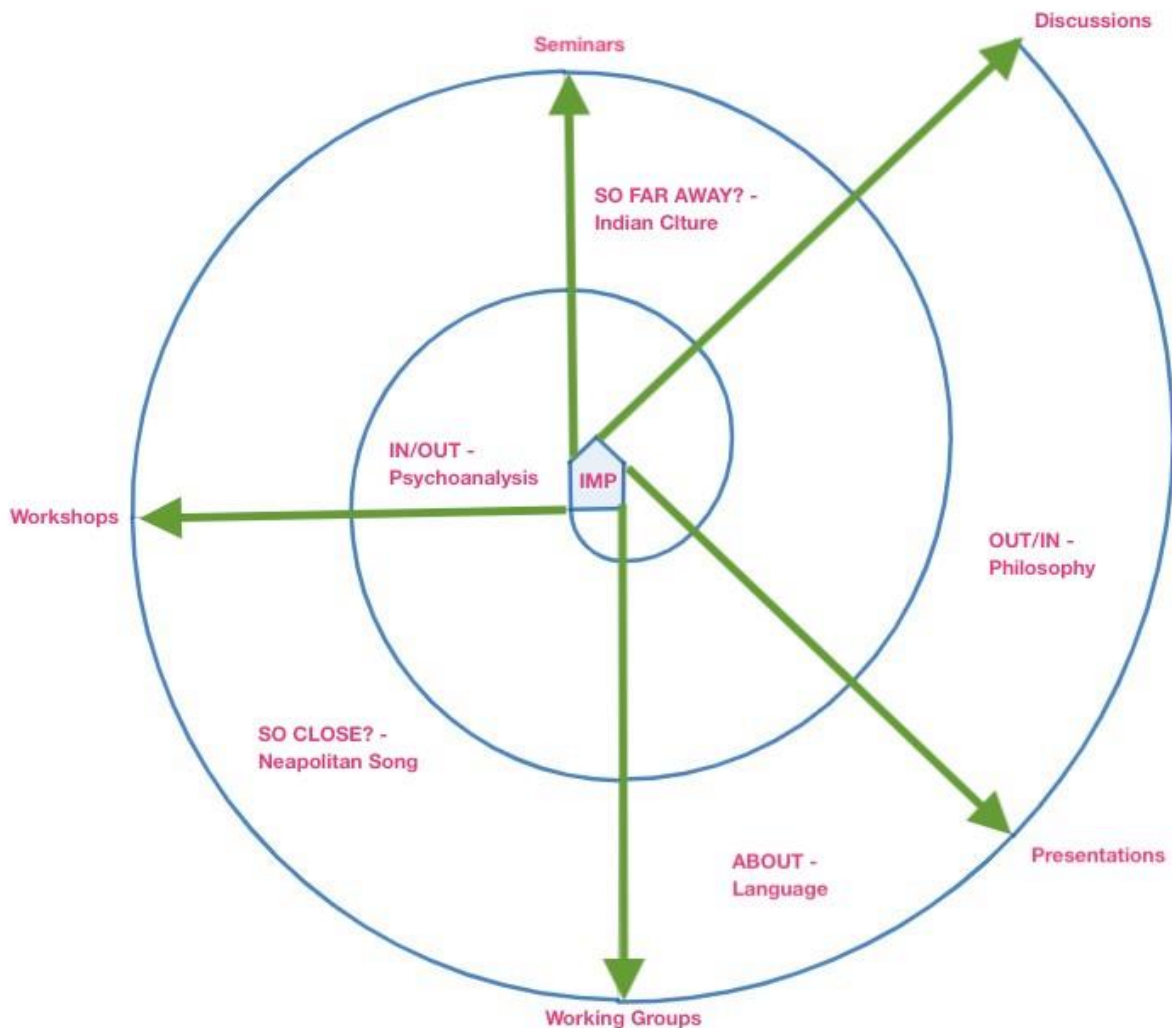
The Lab 6 covered a range of approaches – including both theoretical and applied ones – that vary from detailed lectures to personal approach driven workshops, so theoretical and applied perspectives traced some of the improvisation inquiry and its contexts; such framing meant reflecting on improvisation as a continuous process and positioning it as a research approach that cannot be separated from one’s relationship with the surrounding world and the desire to understand its workings.

The ‘lecture/workshop/working groups/presentation/discussion’ articulation developed by the Lab 6 contributed to the specific nature of the RAPPLAB project framework – it is not a stretch to imagine the activities structure conceived by this Lab as a reflecting space that features levels of varied complexity.

The idea is that of a process that moves along a vertical axis in a spiral way: every time students/researchers face their original path their view will be both lengthened (looking farther) and enlarged (including neighbouring fields or very distant ones). This is because the ‘spiral’ lets them explore a wider field being never in the same point even if their path, their aim remains the same.

¹⁰ Anne Douglas & Kathleen Coessens, *Improvisation and Embodied Knowledge – Three Artistic Projects between Life, Art and Research*. In Frisk, and Österjö, S. (eds.) (Re) thinking improvisation: artistic explorations and conceptual writing. Malmö: Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, 29-41, 2013.

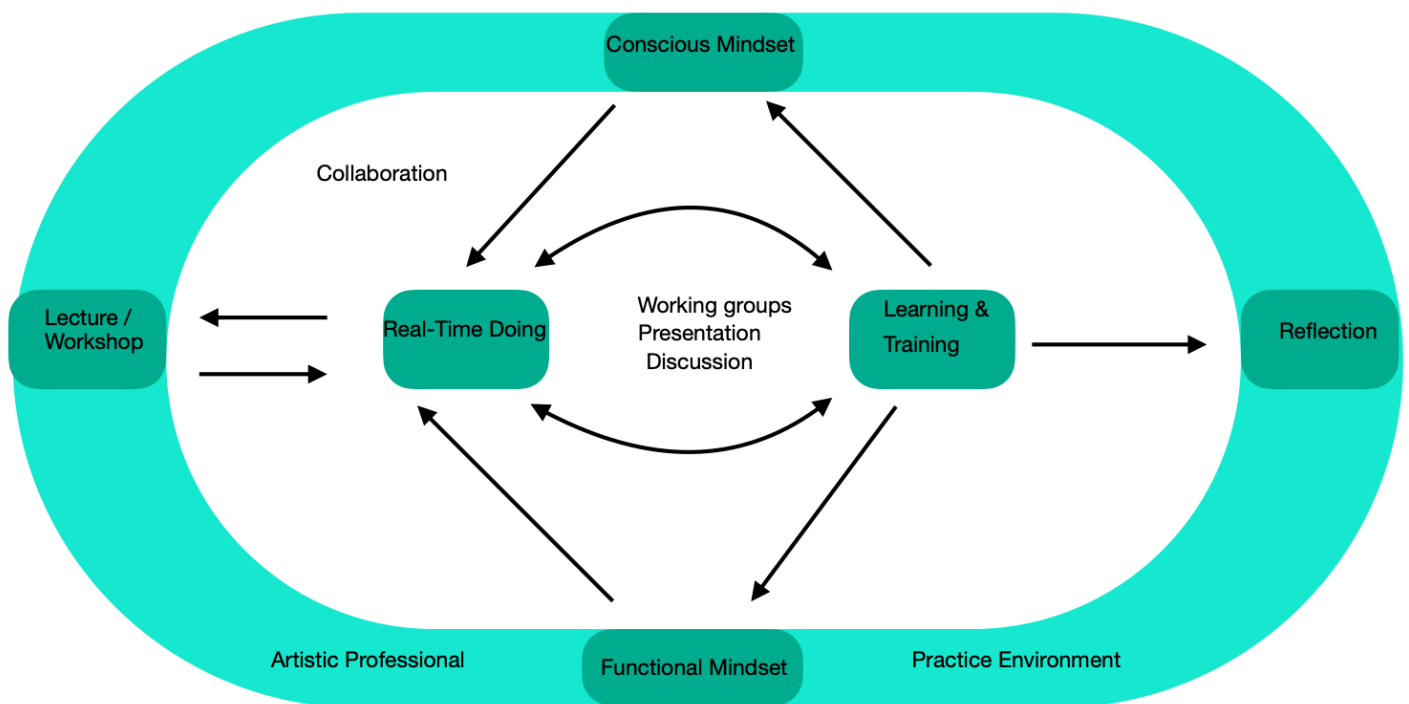
¹¹ John Brewer & Albert Hunter (2006). *Foundations of multimethod research: Synthesizing styles*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Improvisation as a ‘hybrid toolset’: in an *Artistic Professional Practice Environment* an experimental approach (concerning participants’ *functional mindset*) and reflexive approach (concerning participants’ *conscious mindset*); a hybrid toolset as it demarcates a process (*real-time doing*), in which improvisation takes place (*learning & training*) – in a cooperative learning environment (*collaboration*) which is experienced to produce, not only, immediate results, but which is then used to reflect and bringing specific time-oriented activities to create (*reflection*).

Improvisation as a tool concerning the process of creative/performative practice rather than objects, being part of the process of knowing our own attitudes toward the unknown and the unexpected.

In a kind of setting such as Lab 6, focusing on the group improvisation, participants can explore their subjective orientation in a spectrum of relationship (from competitive to collaborative



attitude and they may most depend upon one and upon one another) but they will face their intersubjective orientations/interests as well.

Once nature of improvisation (semi-structures referred to rhetoric, Indian music patters, Neapolitan verses/music, etc.) self-motivation/determination (using voice/usual/occasional instrument), and space for a group of 5/6 participants are assumed, nothing else need be; intersubjective interaction follows.

Some key passages from the Lab 6

Day-1 IN/OUT *Psychoanalysis*

Lecture / prof. Milena Cappabianca (psychoanalyst/scriptwriter) / *Streamflow*

"From William James to Victor Egger, Henry Bergson, Sigmund Freud the stream of consciousness is the key concept of improvisation... the idea of an unconscious area, existing as past memory and remaining active in the adult psychism... the idea of an unconscious area, existing as past memory and remaining active in the adult psychism ...Getting out of our comfort zone triggers knowledge. Even in the management field which is an arid world, a methodology has been found that has to do with improvisation. It is a way to find new solutions. The so-called "brainstorming" consists of holding a meeting in which each participant proposes solutions of all kinds without any censorship. The possibility to explore emerges, silencing inner judgments, without worrying about the outcome. This is a fundamental condition for being able to improvise. We express ourselves by reversing the course: from our *inside out*. Life itself, thinking about it, is improvising. Knowing how to sometimes make decisions without planning...I must say that in our contemporary times planning is now an integral part of our lives, meaning that control dominates in everything we do. We sometimes find ourselves unprepared to what we had not foreseen. Virtuality helps but sometimes predisposes poor freedom of choice...To be able to improvise, our toolbox must be well stocked....I will now leave space to a brief experiment we will do at the end of this presentation. Having shown the deep reasons for improvisation and the dichotomy in our being in the world, I will now list everything that can help us achieve our goal that spontaneity and confidence that enable us to improvise. The starting point is always the deep knowledge we deal with. One cannot improvise without a solid foundation:

1. Trust as first requirement.
2. Willingness to what is new.
3. Not worrying about mistakes.
4. Beginning no matter what, even with elements that seem trivial to us, so that we do not risk, so to speak, to freeze in front of a blank sheet of paper.
5. Remove judgment and the fear of having our reputation ruined.
6. Not planning in advance.
7. Follow the unexpected flow of emotions and images. ...
Now ... a little experiment. I will tell you the world's shortest story. These are words that convey a story but our imagination can make it expand. With the means at your disposal, try to improvise. Take note of what flows spontaneously, do not apply any censorship. Proceed

with the utmost freedom. Augusto Monterroso (1921-2003) is the author. Here is the story:
When he woke up, the dinosaur was still there".

Workshop / prof. Carla Conti (teacher/researcher) / *Rhetoric and Improvisation*

How can improvisers, in their individual and/or collective artistic practice, explore according to what they perceive as a resource to nurture and renew as well to grasp and exploit?

How can individuals who are skilled improvisers reflect on their approach to improvise effectively as a collective?

“According to my interest on how the relationship -between individual and group- acts in the artistic practice, this workshop context is concerning *Rhetoric* to experience a sort of Live Action Role-Playing (LARP) not formal/organizational setting.”

Research has emphasized the importance of minimal structures, or semi-structures, in fostering improvisation (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Barrett, 1998).

This workshop is based on three kind of semi-structures:

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

The first semi-structure is: *Quotes about art and artistic research*

We will use very short sentences, above all by artists/scholars, to improvise a discourser or a performance.

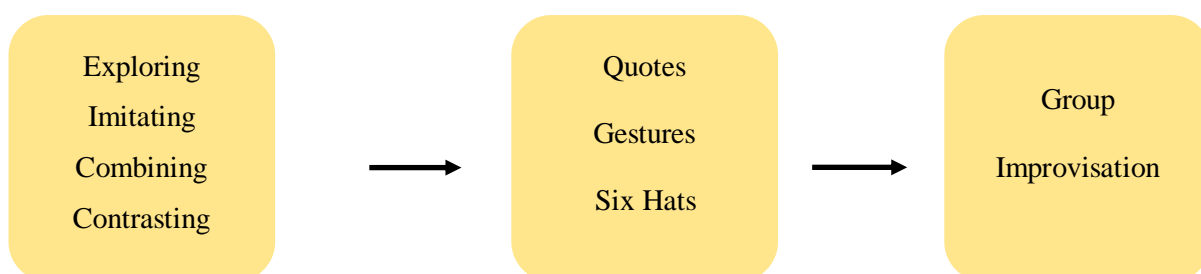
Because apart from the contents of our improvisation, we will pay attention to our gesture, as the embodiment of our performance, the second semi-structure is based on *actio/the classic rhetorical gesturing*. Greek rhetoric appeared in republican Rome in the middle of the second century B.C. Here we are interested in the *actio* as Greek and Latin rhetoricians defined the mastery in delivering speeches: a kind of performance. The pervasiveness of these rhetorical settings let us reflect on the discourse of the artistic research as a defence of our own artistic research for example.

How rhetoric can be part of the artistic professional practice influencing the performance and the communication and dissemination of the research?

Rhetoric provides a framework for logical organization and persuasion for focusing on an effective communication and for assuming different points of view as characters in a plot.

Even when we think, we suppose being deeply on task as improvisation requires, our unconscious thoughts and biases can create a barrier between ourselves and our creativity or between ourselves and others.

The third semi-structure we will use is based on the de Bono's *method of the six hats*. *Six Thinking Hats*¹² is a tool for groups who want to improve communication and be in touch in one activity. It functions as a framework for exploring logic, emotion, reason, advantages, and disadvantages in a kind of arena/field/topic.



In the working groups each can choose one or more semi-structures, combining them to improvise, experiencing that whatever the scenario, improvisation lets us stay in the present.

¹² <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/~assets/doc/hr/Six%20thinking%20hats.pdf>

Day-2 SO FAR AWAY? *Indian Culture*

Lecture / Adriano Ercolani (critic/journalist) / *Indian culture and Improvisation*

There is an old Sanskrit word, Lila (Leela), which means play. Richer than our word, it means divine play, the play of creation and destruction and re-creation, the folding and unfolding of the cosmos. Lila, free and deep, is both delight and enjoyment of this moment, and the play of God. It also means love. Lila may be the simplest thing there is—spontaneous, childish, disarming. But as we grow and experience the complexities of life, it may also be the most difficult and hard won achievement imaginable, and it's coming to fruition is a kind of homecoming to our true selves.”¹³

Here, 'improvisation' must be distinguished from 'spontaneity', and so the terms *tatklaspchoorta* and *usphoorta* respectively to stand for 'improvised' and 'spontaneous'. Secondly, about diverse approaches to musical materials, on one hand considering improvisation as a form of variation or, on the other hand as a composition previously created which is based on some characteristic patterns. This focus on some kind of improvisation such as *niraval* (on composed piece) or *alapana* (slow improvisation, without a defined rhythmic structure, as a kind of introduction on the *raga*) or *tanam* (improvisation, rendered as a rhythmic variation of *raga*) according to the Carnatic culture, the South of India. As improvisation is a real-time experience the Indian culture has many points of contact with Ancient Greek one, considering that how it approaches 'time': *Chronos* the sequential time and *Kairos* the opportunity for something to occur.

Another element from which to observe Indian culture in relation to improvisation is that music, dance and word in India (both in the culture of the North and in the South) are always linked and improvisation as 'solo' is conceived only within moments of group improvisation.

An interesting aspect in this context is that in Western culture the concept of artistic research is recent, as until a few decades ago research was always considered separate from the arts; on the contrary, in Indian culture, starting from mythology, the concept of science/knowledge and that of the arts (specially music) proceed together. Think of the deity Saraswati: this Hindu goddess of music, art, speech but also of wisdom and learning. In fact, in the iconography she is holding a book and a pen in one of her four hands, as the book represents knowledge, and in the other hand she holds a *vina*, a string musical instrument.

¹³ Stephen Nachmanovitch. *Free play. Improvisation in life and art*. Los Angeles, Jeremy P. Tarcher Inc. Introduction p.1, 1990

Workshop Manish Madankar *tablas*, Victor Vertunni *sitar*, Valeria Vespaziani *voice and dance* (teachers/performers) *Exploring Raga Charukeshi*

This workshop is based on the exploration of the raga Charukeshi, which is interesting as a modal structure that can be connected to the Lydian b7 and melodic minor western structure and also because originated into the Carnatic music (South of India tradition) it has been adopted by the Hindustani style of singing (North of India Tradition). As Madankar, Vertunni and Vespaziani used to perform as a trio as well as with other kind of music ensemble too, they articulated their workshop with elementary instructions that participants could explore and re-elaborate with their own voice, instrument, and body themselves. *All the materials are in the Internal Area of the RAPP Lab website.*

Day-3 SO CLOSE? *Neapolitan Song*

Lecture PhD prof. Raffaele Di Mauro (teacher/researcher) / *Popular and urban improvisation*

The lecture re-constructed the popular and urban musical context of Naples in the first half of the 19th century, populated by various figures of “itinerant musicians” gravitating particularly around a very specific area of the city: the pier.

This allowed the analysis of the phenomenon of improvisers in Naples during that period with an ethnomusicological approach. In this regard, through both literary and musical sources, Di Mauro talked about a double ‘level’ of improvisers. The first more typically “popular”, with forms of repertoire still present today in the music of the oral tradition of Campania (*fronne* and *canti a figliola*) through which real “competition”; were held on the Naples pier or every year in Nola on the way back from the feast of Montevergine¹⁴. The second level, on the other hand, is more “urban”; (subject to the influences of cultivated music), with real challenges organized in salons and theaters (particularly in the Teatro dei Fiorentini) with a pianist who improvised melodies on which the competitors, mostly more in the world of the arts and professions, they improvised texts starting from a theme extracted from an urn. Through the “cross”; comparison between versions that appeared on nineteenth-century broadsides and printed versions of the score, the genesis of the famous song *lo te voglio bene assaje* has been reconstructed, erroneously considered, by many historians of the song, the first “author’s” Neapolitan song and often improperly attributed to Gaetano Donizetti. So that it can be shown how the birth of this song is, on the other hand, attributable precisely to the phenomenon of the urban improvisation mentioned above and of which Raffaele Sacco, a renowned optician, was one of the main exponents. The lecture concluded with other subsequent examples in the context to Neapolitan song based on an “improvised” model with

¹⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montevergine>

a final *intercalare* - a sort of proto-refrain - also called in Neapolitan *riepeto obbreccato*: obligatory lament. *All the materials are in the Internal Area of the RAPP Lab website.*

Workshop prof. Nando Citarella (teacher/performer) *Voice and traditional drums in Neapolitan improvisational practice.*

This workshop conducted by Nando Citarella -musician, actor, singer and scholar of Mediterranean popular, theatrical and choreutic-musical traditions- explored the rhythms and musical-textual improvisations of Tamurrjate, Pizzichi and Tarantelle and to how these elements can be embodied for group improvisations.

An improvisational 'journey' that also draws on the mystical and devotional tradition of Neapolitan culture.

A sound stream of consciousness without any pretension of formal and philological rigour, but which by combining tradition and improvisation, shows a synthesis of past performative practices and their evolution in current practices.

Poetic, popular and suggestive introspection, in search of a new form of performance (between extemporaneous and creation) that combines a unique research and traditional improvisations.

Day-4 ABOUT *Language*

Lecture PhD prof. Duilio D'Alfonso (teacher/researcher) / *A journey into the territories of improvisation*

The lecture first pointed out that musical improvisation is the process of creating music spontaneously, in real time. It is the art of composing on the spot, where there is no temporal distance between the creative moment and listening to the sound result...Now, the strongly graphocentric Western art music has always looked at improvisation with ambiguity, almost showing a kind of *guilty feeling*. From a theoretical standpoint, improvisation is a strongly interdisciplinary issue, and it can be approached from different perspectives. This lecture deals with the historical perspective: improvisation in Western Music History. Improvisation in the Renaissance and the 15th century, Johannes Tinctoris's well-known between *res facta* and *counterpoint*....Then from Classicism onwards, there is an evident decline in the art of improvisation...relegated to specific domains, i. e. the technique of *diminutio* (in Latin) and the extemporaneous realization of the *continuo* (Bovicelli's diminutions expemples)....The performance is a particular and unrepeatable "instance" of the piece of music, and not the piece itself. It follows that it is the text that takes on the essential characters of the work, and not the performance –*the tyranny of the text*...In the Baroque period improvisation is still about embellishing, but it is the *basso continuo* the principal domain of improvisation

(Ludovico Viadana, C.P. E. Bach). Then the lecture reviewed the most significant experiences of the nineteenth up to the twentieth century's Avant-Garde, Improvisation in 20th century's radical music has several meanings: a) the deconstruction of the classical and romantic conception of the musical work: the open form is no longer a singularity in itself, but a cluster of possibilities; at the same time, the piece is no longer defined by the composer, but is determined by the performers; b) aleatory music implies the crisis of traditional musical notation. Hence the new importance of performance as the decisive moment of musical creation. The art of improvisation, which no longer seems to require lengthy training, is also deeply revised.

Workshop Marko Miladinovič (poet/performer) / *To sing of idleness and happiness*

Poet, visual artist, performer, mediator of cultural events Miladinovič shared his audio-video and live creative experiences, around the fact that «poetry is a magical formulation, which moves mountains» and defines it in the Platonic idea of an act of creation from nothing. «Poetic language is the only one that does not give orders», – he adds –, «but consists in the creation and definition of words, in their redefinition. So the poet's role is to recreate the world and redefine it», he adds that «poetry doesn't change society, it remakes its definitions and these can change it. «Sometimes I put off an 'ethical-aesthetic survival kit' for grabs, that is a leather case containing a comb and a pen, of which we don't know which are the aesthetics and which are the ethics».

«I have various methods to create my poems, in addition to the classic cut-up. I often jot down lines and then come back to rethink them; this process is quite slow. Many times, however, they come in an instant, they fall right out of the sky, like a stream. While some poems I wrote and rewrote, but not closed. In this case, memory intervenes, because I keep the verses that remain in my memory as good and I close the poem only with those, eliminating the others».

He involved the participants in some 'dynamics' of improvised poetry: the individual and the group, the speaker and the audience.

The workshop ended with a text by Miladinovič himself, which he gave to 4 participants, for a contemporary interpretation, a sort of simultaneous reading of the 'same' text translated into four different languages.

Day-5 OUT/IN *Philosophy*

Lecture PhD prof. Fiorella Battaglia (teacher/philosopher) / *The Challenge of Improvisation*

“Here, I will not primarily consider the domain of arts and aesthetics but speak of improvisation as subject of philosophical inquiry. “A spontaneous action where one acts in an unforeseen

way“. Improvisation is a kind of agency that is structured and, at the same time, capable of adapting to changes in its surroundings. Accordingly, it is sometimes conceived of as the model of human action as such“. The lecture has been divided into three parts: 1) I am going to explain what improvisation is. My approach will broadly consider it as a fundamental feature of human intelligence. 2) Improvisation and AI. I am going to raise the issue of improvisation and AI because it has given new impetus to the discussion above. For example, when discussing the potential of ChatGPT, people are again wondering how many combining and recombining elements can be found in both machine and human improvisation. 3) A series of questions to guide us in our final discussion. How to do this? (Methodology) The philosophical quest for clarification is informed by a constellation of various themes, which are closely linked and shape the central topic of improvisation. Clarification - Imagination and perception: the risk of deception; Imagination and emotions: when health and disease begin in the brain; Wandering mind, 'default mode', intrinsic activity; Cognitive science and the role of mental imagery; Imagination as a tool for the study of emotional neuroscience; Imagination is not a deceptive form of reality; on the contrary, it is itself a source of experience. It enhances our ability to act in the world and can be seen as a form of 'training'. Its performative quality has been recognised by neuro-rehabilitators and athletes, who base the recovery of performed motor skills and the execution of better performances on the exercise of imagined motor skills. Imagination is also a fundamental element of many cognitive processes, so much so that the theory of pictorialism considers 'mental imagery' to be the basic building block with which thoughts are constructed. To imagine in this sense is 'to generate from within' an emotional experience that we usually attribute to a response to an external stimulus.

Improvisation and AI: Creativity, considered as the ability to produce idea or artifacts that are new, surprising, and valuable – is the acme of the human intelligence, and necessary for human-level Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). But it's widely seen as mysterious. - 'It is not obvious how novel ideas could arise in people, never mind computers' (Margaret Boden 2016). Three main type of creativity (Combination, Exploratory, Transformational). 3. Some questions: Given that improvisation is, in general, a mode of action where success is not guaranteed, and given the mostly harmless character of failure in the arts – where they are usually not as disastrous as they might be in scientific, social, and political experiments – art remains the ground most conducive to the flourishing of improvisational practices. - This makes improvisation in the arts also the most fertile ground for philosophical reflection and analysis of related ontological, phenomenological, ethical, and aesthetic issues. - Do you agree with this claim by Bertinetto and Ruta?

Workshop prof. Daniele Roccato (teacher/performer) / *Improving in listening*

Based on the Roccato's 'The Tao of Improvisation' activity of improviser and teacher, this workshop has experimented an individual experience of listening the surrounding environment to favor and develop the free flow of creativity establishing a deep connection with one's centre.

In this way participants explored techniques of intuitive improvisation.

Three questionnaires¹⁵ have been provided to participants (stored in the Internal Area of the website) to encourage group discussions on improvisation and non-related to any data collection.

During Lab 6's working groups/presentations/discussions, participants experienced that improvising and interrelating with other beings-bodies are entangled practices and that 'traveling 'back and forth among cultures, practice, countries, from the one of their own background and the ones of the lecture/workshop, improvising and reflecting, they developed a positive result of accidental encounters resonating into meaningful artistic relations.

¹⁵ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1673421/2132502>