

# ***FREE IMPROVISATION AS A CONNECTION TOOL: SEARCHING FOR TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY, MUSICAL CREATIVITY AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION***

Dear reader,

Below you can find 13 questions that would help me very much in my research. But first, a breve introduction.

My name is Elisa and I am currently doing my second-year classical flute master at The Royal Conservatoire of The Hague. Last year, a difficult experience within my flute studies made me wonder if I could approach my practice from a different point of view, giving the most importance to creativity, imagination, exploration, experimentation and joy.

That is when I discovered free improvisation and dived into this research as the perfect opportunity to develop a new tool and find out its effects in my practice and playing.

During this questionnaire I will be referring to free improvisation as:

“music that has no general rules and instead is improvised according to the performer's intuition. The term may refer both to techniques used by any musician in any genre, and to recognizable genres of experimental music in their own right” (s/f).

I would like to end this introduction with a quote from the naturalist, geologist and biologist, Charles Darwin, who once said: “In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed”.

Thank you so much for taking the time to do this survey. If you have any questions you can contact me on email ([elisa.bartolome.gomez@gmail.com](mailto:elisa.bartolome.gomez@gmail.com)) or whatsapp (+34685572598).

Infinitively grateful,

Elisa

(S/f). Academic-accelerator.com. Recuperado el 29 de enero de 2024, de <https://academic-accelerator.com/encyclopedia/free-improvisation>

## **INTRODUCTION**

*ARE YOU A STUDENT OR A PROFESSIONAL? \**

☒ Professional

☐ Student

*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

I studied classical percussion and graduated at the Royal Conservatoire in 1984. I have been active as a percussionist in the field of contemporary music for 30 years.

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

Little. It was never part of my studies and my professional practice as percussionist. I applied it though in my teaching practice in different courses.

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

It's an important form of musicking in social settings and to connect with non-musicians.

## **FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

*WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?* \*

Various exercises from the collaborative practice courses.

*WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?* \*

I hardly improvise by myself. I only use improvisation in group or ensemble settings.

*WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?* \*

My eye/hand coordination for keyboard instruments was only trained in performing what was written in scores and not in what I can imagine musically.

*HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?* \*

It sometimes helped me in passages that I could not really perform according to what was in the score (I'm referring to very complex scores in contemporary music).

*WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE?* \*

The element of responding to what other musicians are doing.

## **STAGE FRIGHT**

*DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?* \*

I have had several moments of black-outs on stage, due to anxiety. Mostly when performing and playing by heart.

*HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE?* \*

I hardly do that. I only applied improv in workshop settings, like Music & Dementia projects. In those settings I experienced improv as a strong way to connect to others in music.

### **ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?* \*

The stronger sense of connection with the other musicians.

*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?* \*

I do not experience any difference if I hear repertoire for the first time. Only when I know the music to be performed, I may listen with expectations that I don't have when listening to improv.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

Good questions!

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

I did a bachelor in classical violin and now I am doing my master in NAIP, where I experience more freedom in creating my own music, improvising and playing contemporary music.

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

I always liked to improvise! Since a few years I started to do it more seriously, also in concert settings. It's also a big part of my research project.

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

jazz music

## **FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

### *WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?*

\*

exercises such as translating landscapes into improvisations or make music based on peoples stories

### *WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?*

\*

I rarely improvise by myself. I prefer to do it in a group. But it all depends on the group if the improvisation will work. Sometimes with the right people we have an amazing flow, but other times it doesn't work so well.

### *WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?*

\*

I wished I learned more weird and crazy sounds on my violin. During my classical study everything had to sound beautiful, which is still sometimes an obstacle during my contemporary or jazz improvisations. I really have to switch to a different mood and forget about classical violin.

### *HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?*

\*

I am less scared of making mistakes, because I can always improvise just in case ;)

### *WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE?*

\*

Focusing more on the music instead of the notes



## **STAGE FRIGHT**

*DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?* \*

I struggle with severe stage fright since I can remember, and it's still an ongoing problem, however I'm learning to deal with it.

*HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE?* \*

Much less stage fright! I really enjoy it.

## **ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?* \*

They are totally different, my experiences as an improvising musician are way more positive. I'm trying to incorporate that feeling into my classical performances.

*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?* \*

I find it a difficult question to answer. I think I should go to more improvised concerts to find out my answer.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

Good luck with the deadline! :)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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☒ Professional

☐ Student

*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

I am a cellist. I perform on stage with ensembles. I also produce and compose (electronic) music. I arrange music for different ensembles. I teach music in health care and person-centred improvisation at a Conservatoire.

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

I frequently use improvisation in health care contexts to connect with patients and health care staff. I have improvised on stage in different contexts since I was in conservatoire.

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

I was always fiddling around on my instrument when practicing as a child. The surprising sounds I could get out of a cello fascinated me and I kept exploring while studying classical cello.

## **FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

### *WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?*

\*

I had improvisation lessons with a great teacher at conservatoire, exploring different "game" settings in ensemble improvisation. We were trying out all these different textures, concepts or images, isolating specific elements in an improvisation. It was sort of like a laboratory where you could focus on one thing. For example we tried playing a "pointilistic painting" or "the slowest possible piece".

### *WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?*

\*

When I'm by myself I am responsible for everything that happens in the music so it puts quite some pressure on me to make sure the piece of improvised music develops nicely and that the musical idea is clear enough within the limitations of my instrument. In a group, I can take a bit more of a backseat and add to the piece of music when I feel like I have something to say. It's like a monologue versus a dialogue!

### *WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?*

\*

I didn't have too many obstacles. My cello teacher in conservatoire was supportive of my exploration of improvisation and there was classes offered at the school.

### *HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?*

\*

It gives me a tremendous amount of trust in my skills as a musician. Not only am I able to play music from a score and interpret in the moment, I am also able to create something from my own stream of consciousness and shape it in a way that you would shape a piece of written music. So it brings me confidence.

*WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE?* \*

I think improvisation has developed a sensitivity for musical parameters. When you explore improvisation you start to think about all these parameters like sound color, rhythmical nuances, counterpoint, etc. You become aware of these different things you can play with, and it makes your classical performance much more informed and nuanced.

**STAGE FRIGHT**

*DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?* \*

Of course, who doesn't. I have had performances or auditions where I was extremely nervous beforehand. Mostly when I had to play an important solo part or just by myself. I feel much more comfortable in ensemble settings where you have a shared responsibility, I feel like I perform better in that setting when I am relaxed.

*HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE?* \*

It's scary and free at the same time. Scary because you can go anywhere and there is no guarantee the place you end up will be great. But the beauty is also in the attempt and the concentration, and there are limitless musical possibilities to explore.

**ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?* \*

I feel they are strongly connected in my musical identity. They are both ways of expressing oneself musically, just using different means to get there.

*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?*

\*

It's a different listening experience I think! If you're listening to repertoire, especially if you know the piece already you can kind of sit back and let it come to you. When you're listening to good improvisers though, you are more on the edge of your seat and living the improvisation with them in the moment.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*ARE YOU A STUDENT OR A PROFESSIONAL? \**

☒ Professional

☐ Student

*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

Multi instrumentalist, improviser, music teacher, creative and collaborative work, interdisciplinary project

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

Very little in the common sense of "free improvisation". I feel the most free when creating/joining a framework for improvising with or without specific stylistic restriction. Creating/joining a framework can be done both planned or unplanned (made on the spot and spontaneously), but the skill of creating/joining a framework is itself subject of practice and discipline. I rarely partake or enjoy improvisations which are free in a random sense. Through the years I have discovered that the performers I love to listen to in "free" improvisation are the ones who have a high mastery and ownership of their musical materials, and are able to use them thanks to the level of internalization and understanding (possibly subconscious) of the materials they use.

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

See the answer above

**FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

**WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?** \*

Mainly: 1) rhythmical training, beyond with and without my instrument 2) ear training (functional and unfunctional) 3) connection between my inner music ideas and my instruments - transposition of anything I play with different motor skills

**WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?** \*

Very little, for me improvisation is structurally a collective activity, so even when improvising alone I am inner hearing/imagining relating with other lines, rhythms and accompaniments

**WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?** \*

None, I have been trained from the beginning into classical music and other styles

**HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?** \*

It didn't because I have left the classical music performing activity. Nevertheless, as a teacher of improvisation, over the year I have seen the practice of certain skills (for instance: 1) rhythmical training, beyond with and without my instrument 2) ear training (functional and unfunctional) 3) connection between my inner music ideas and my instruments - transposition of anything I play with different motor skills) has improved dramatically the quality of playing of my students also in a classical music context

*WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE? \**

See above - a different relation with the internalization of the music on a broader spectrum than exclusively the written lines you play

### **STAGE FRIGHT**

*DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT? \**

Not much

*HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE? \**

The same as I experience it privately, I have practice to not be bothered by the audience presence, I play always for myself and the musicians I play with

### **ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE? \**

I don't

*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?* \*

Not much, I like to listen to the creativity and ideas of the performer, this may emerge more easily in an improvised setting, but it is absolutely possible also with written repertoire.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

Improvisation is a very broad term, "free" increase even more its borders. The act of improvising may serve several purposes and be an end in itself. Randomly playing (or even venting) on one instrument can have a therapeutic and healing effect and it can be an amazing tool to discover new sounds, phrases and techniques. Nevertheless, if improvisation is a purpose itself, those discoveries and sensations need to be internalized, which requires discipline, practice, and intention - only once this work has been done, one is capable to 'turn off' the switch and freely and spontaneously improvise. The most wrong stereotype of improvisation is that there are no mistakes... Improvisation is the art of making mistakes (as such), and thanks to that we can learn to have a different and healthier relation with making mistakes in music.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*ARE YOU A STUDENT OR A PROFESSIONAL? \**

☐ Professional

☒ Student

*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

Started learning piano at 8 years old, graduated from bachelors in classical piano, now doing NAIP masters at The Hague royal conservatoire.

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

Became very passionate about free improvisation after having classes on the subject in high school, now trying to make it a bigger part of my life professionally.

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

The connection to the music feels greater, it feels both freeing and challenging, and like a very important skill for any musician/artist.

## **FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

### *WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?*

\*

Mostly random practice so far, or trying to imitate different styles of other improvisers or genres. Recently started to work more orderly using aural and rhythmic skills in relation to improvisation. Group exercises are very beneficial.

### *WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?*

\*

It depends very much on the specific individuals. It can be very hard to improvise in a group if your common language or styles don't match very well or if the level is very different. But if there's a good match it can be much nicer than solo, because you get easily more diverse ideas to play with, and you can take more time off playing, and it incentivizes you to listen to the music "from outside".

### *WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?*

\*

The main obstacles for me I felt were not being able to improvise in specific harmonic progressions or with stable meters. It limits the "genre" of the music and can make it hard to improvise with certain people.

### *HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?*

\*

I have realized more the importance of my individual voice and the validity of my intuition. I even try improvising on classical pieces to be more connected to them. I remind myself that most repertoire was written as a device for musicians to be inspired from and not for them to be afraid from.

*WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE? \**

Embracing mistakes, performativity and experience as priorities, passion and carefulness with every note.

### **STAGE FRIGHT**

*DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT? \**

I get relatively nervous when performing classical music, the quality of my playing goes down more than I wish.

*HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE? \**

I have much less stage fright when improvising, it feels much more natural.

### **ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE? \**

So far it feels very disconnected and unrelated, but I hope to have performances combining the two mediums and see.



*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?* \*

One is not necessarily better than the other, but an improvising musician has more chance of creating a unique one-time connection with the audience that is influenced by the specific place time and people.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

Thanks

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*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

I'm a classically trained cellist with a bachelor in cello. From age 17 I started to move more towards contemporary music and from that point it just spiralled into me now focusing exclusively on contemporary music and experimental music.

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

I joined a course in my first year of bachelor (2020) called free improvisation for orchestra musicians. After that I did not touch improvisation much until last year when I again felt like I had the time to do it. At this point I have been doing improvisation for a year and I'm working on it daily, both solo and in groups. I have both a duo, quintet and many other projects which all involve free improvisation.

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

The liberation of it, but also the soundworld. I have never fitted into the classical ideal sound, and have never really agreed with it as well so for me I feel like my playing style fits improvised music much more. You work with texture and sound quality in a whole another level when free improvising which I find very interesting.

## **FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

### ***WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?*** \*

Listening, exploring all kinds of improvised music, copying what I am hearing. Practicing solo just for my self in the practice room. Having fun and exploring. Be open do everything. From I was around 15 years old I have gone to free improvised concerts and I think that has been very important.

### ***WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?*** \*

You are in one way much freer when improvising solo but at the other hand when you play in a group you get so much inspiration from the others. I also feel like I listen in to different ways.

### ***WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?*** \*

I felt the need to do it right, and that I felt that I did not have the abilities to do it. In the beginning I was very hard and critical against my self. It was something about leaving the classical mindset behind and just go with the flow which I found challenging in the beginning.

### ***HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?*** \*

It has effected it a lot as the same time the repertoire I am playing is effecting my improvisation as well. I fell more confident in a way because I don't feel stuck to she score in the same way as before. Also I can use extended technique and explores sound world you are not "allowed" to play in the classical world.

*WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE? \**

The relaxation in my body in a different way when improvising, in addition to listening differently as well. I also try to take the exploration part with me when doing more standard repertoire.

## **STAGE FRIGHT**

*DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT? \**

Yes, but no. Like I am always a bit nervous but I also feel like I need it to be sharp. When I am nervous it means that it means something for me and I feel like I play with so much more meaning then.

*HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE? \**

I love it, but it can be challenging when the audience is not open to it. But in general I enjoy it very much. That being said I am often really critical when playing in front of an audience, which also ruins it a bit.

## **ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE? \**

It's all about playing music so in one way it should not be that different. I always try to play with the same passion for the music regardless of which genre I am playing.

*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?* \*

I experience it as to very different settings. You listen in to completely different ways. Time moves faster when playing then listening. I also go more in and out of it as an audience, like my thoughts may drift to another place. While playing I am usually in the moment the whole time.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

Great research topic!

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# ***FREE IMPROVISATION AS A CONNECTION TOOL: SEARCHING FOR TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY, MUSICAL CREATIVITY AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION***

Dear reader,

Below you can find 13 questions that would help me very much in my research. But first, a breve introduction.

My name is Elisa and I am currently doing my second-year classical flute master at The Royal Conservatoire of The Hague. Last year, a difficult experience within my flute studies made me wonder if I could approach my practice from a different point of view, giving the most importance to creativity, imagination, exploration, experimentation and joy.

That is when I discovered free improvisation and dived into this research as the perfect opportunity to develop a new tool and find out its effects in my practice and playing.

During this questionnaire I will be referring to free improvisation as:

“music that has no general rules and instead is improvised according to the performer's intuition. The term may refer both to techniques used by any musician in any genre, and to recognizable genres of experimental music in their own right” (s/f).

I would like to end this introduction with a quote from the naturalist, geologist and biologist, Charles Darwin, who once said: “In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed”.

Thank you so much for taking the time to do this survey. If you have any questions you can contact me on email ([elisa.bartolome.gomez@gmail.com](mailto:elisa.bartolome.gomez@gmail.com)) or whatsapp (+34685572598).

Infinitively grateful,

Elisa

(S/f). Academic-accelerator.com. Recuperado el 29 de enero de 2024, de <https://academic-accelerator.com/encyclopedia/free-improvisation>

## **INTRODUCTION**

*ARE YOU A STUDENT OR A PROFESSIONAL? \**

☐ Professional

☒ Student

*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

I have a bachelor in classical piano

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

I have always been attracted to improvisation since my very first starts with the piano, but never really worked on it because i had to study classical pieces. Now in my master studies I'm diving into it much more deeply. I have done a summer course in improvisation, followed a one week workshop on free impro with richard barret, and I'm developing an improvisation ensemble.

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

The openness and exploratory element in it. There is no wrong or right, you just have to focus intensely on listening carefully to others and trying to create and communicate in a collaborative practice.

## **FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**



## WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS? \*

In terms of free impro, the workshop I did with Richard Barret gave me a lot of tips. I will mention some exercises:

- using only one note, improvise with the shortest possible sound you can make
- using only one note, improvise with the longest possible sound you can make
- improvise trying to make a sound as contrasting as possible from the preceding sound

Some of the tips I also took were:

- an impro hasn't finished until everyone feels it has finished.
  - you have to be very careful with the material you introduce to the group, as it will affect strongly the rest of the group's interventions.
  - you have to treat every sound brought up by the rest as an opportunity to respond to it. Every sound should be considered, either to continue/develop it, or to react to it.
  - you have to let things "die". Maybe some material you introduce is not as relevant in the global impro and that is okay. Maybe you want to develop things further but the group takes the impro somewhere else and that is also okay.
- 

## WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP? \*

In a group you have the chance to "communicate", there's a dialogue. You have to learn when to leave space for others, whilst when on your own you have the responsibility to keep it going. The joy of playing with others and sharing thoughts is uncomparable. The differences are like trying to compare a monologue with a debate.

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## WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL? \*

My intolerance to failure. Stopping whenever something was "not good enough". A weak sense of ongoing pulse. Sensation of having a lack of ideas.

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### *HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?* \*

First of all, it created a strong rejection to the classical bubble, as it took me back to hard times and traumas. But as it contributed to a higher self-esteem and to so much joy playing, I actually approach classical repertoire more freely than before. My relationship oscillates from one place to the other but I guess it is part of the process.

### *WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE?* \*

The joy when playing, the extremely sharpened listening skills, the freedom you feel when you know you are doing cool things and you enjoy them (not only the things you are expected to do).

## **STAGE FRIGHT**

### *DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?* \*

Not much.

### *HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE?* \*

I sometimes wonder if it is interesting for the audience, as it is usually super different when playing than when listening to it, but I am less worried about the things that can go wrong and I'm more worried about connecting and having fun with the rest of the impro group.

## **ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?*

\*

I haven't had a lot of experiences as an improvising musician yet, but the ones I had were all positive. I had a different ambition when going on stage: my goal was not about how many things I do right or beautiful, it was not about collecting perfection pearls, it was more about trying to create something beautiful together with other people.

*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?*

\*

It depends on how good the musicians are in each of the cases, but I guess a big difference would be the curiosity I would feel to know where the improvising musician would take us next.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*ARE YOU A STUDENT OR A PROFESSIONAL? \**

☐ Professional

☒ Student

*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

Classical music. I collaborated in some pop-folk albums. I love contemporary music and free impro

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

I first did it as an exercise in my lesson with my teacher. Now i do it everyday after mi warm up. I also did it in ensembles as a way of connecting with each others

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

It made me connect with my instrument and find a new way of enjoying myself during playing. It make me remember why i love music that much

## **FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

### *WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?*

\*

I say to myself that there is no bad/good musical ideas, they are just ideas. I practice my active listening and choose a rhythm or a melodic idea and i develop it during the free impro session

### *WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?*

\*

The way of listening is different and of course the reaction between the others make the impro more wider

### *WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?*

\*

The every time judging mood was the most difficult part (i will work on it). Also, bc you don't have the music sheet, you need to be more aware about what are u playing to develop the structure of your impro by your own.

### *HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?*

\*

My way of listening has change so much, in a good way. Also my freedom when i am playing by heart, i have this confidence that if i forgot the music, i can improvise something and fixed on the spot. The most important thing that free impro has teaches me is to enjoy again the music as i did when i was a kid

*WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE? \**

Some artistic ideas. Also around which style/melodic elements i am always doing the impro (that teaches me which kind of music i really enjoy playing)

### **STAGE FRIGHT**

*DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT? \**

No i don't have. I had ones a bad period in my Erasmus that maybe is related but id not say that is stage fright. I was so focused on getting others to like me that it made me extremely nervous and made it worse. I went through it thinking that the audience is not gonna like me, but is gonna like the piece and i am there to show how cool the piece is

*HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE? \**

It is soooo cool. It makes you connect with the audience and your colleagues in a different way.

### **ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE? \**

im not sure if i understand the question correctly. But my approach in both performances is way different

*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?* \*

I think also the listening mood is different. Knowing that what you are gonna listen in a impro concert is gonna be only there and never is gonna happen again make me concentrate more in the performance. But I could say the same in a repertoire performance but not completely, it has different detail

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

I loved the questionnaire. It made me think so much about my way of improvisation. Maybe if i do it again i will answer differently to some questions , and for me that is a good sign. Congrats!

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# ***FREE IMPROVISATION AS A CONNECTION TOOL: SEARCHING FOR TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY, MUSICAL CREATIVITY AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*ARE YOU A STUDENT OR A PROFESSIONAL? \**

☒ Professional

☐ Student

*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

I have a Masters degree in flute performance and further studies in composer/performer theoretical studies. Just short of a PhD. I have been a professional flutist, improviser and composer for 40 years.

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

I am a professional improviser using electronics and acoustic flute. I play with musicians from both classical, electronic and jazz worldwide in performance. I also use free improvisation as a practice device to maintain my creativity and explore my various instruments.

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

I have always improvised, even as a child, and when I was in University I was part of free improvisation groups, a practice I have continued my entire career. I am drawn to the moments of individual and collective exploration with like minded artists.

I also value the challenges of discovery to find musical meaning in the moment.

## **FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

### ***WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?***

\*

I use extended techniques and exploring my own physicality and imagination with the simple acoustic principles of the instrument and my body. I use compositional techniques such as inversion, retrograde, counterpoint, extended time, speed, melodic and harmonic theory. In other words, I use the practical possibilities of the instrument and my body combined with the intellectual and conceptual backgrounds of musical and dance composition.

### ***WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?***

\*

When I improvise with a group I am able to pay attention to many more aspects of sound and time and social issues than when I am alone. When I am alone, my improvisations take on a more studious and technical quality. Both are very useful. I have more fun improvising in a group even though I continue to be inspired when improvising alone. I would like to note that I usually improvise alone with live processing and electronics. That way, I am also in a kind of duo with my electronic partner / my computer.

### ***WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?***

\*

I found that I had less classically trained colleagues who I could play with and I ended up playing with more colleagues from the jazz and free improv sectors who come primarily from jazz training. Therefore I often had to compromise some of my modern music compositional taste to be able to fit into a quasi jazz sounding environment. This has taken many years to resolve and to understand how to navigate within different style groups.

### *HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?* \*

Free improvisation gave me the depth of instrumental technique and expressive knowledge to play classical music more freely and with more personal fluidity. It also narrowed my conceptual gap between composer and performer and I could perform the music as if I had composed it on the spot myself. It freed me enormously.

### *WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE?* \*

Pleasure, inventiveness, the joy of taking risks, a kind of abandonment, deeper emotional understanding of the composition, deeper technical flexibility on my instrument.

## **STAGE FRIGHT**

### *DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?* \*

As I have aged, my ability to steer my adrenaline has become less agile. Therefore I experience a less controlled physicality than in my younger years and have to consider that when I am performing.

### *HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE?* \*

Utopia! Easy and one of my most joyous challenges.

## **ON STAGE**

### *HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?*

\*

My relationship to the audience is the biggest difference since classical audiences often know the repertoire and have expectations of virtuosity and perfection that come with the territory of “the composer as a superior creative being”. When I perform as an improviser I consider the audience part of my ensemble. They go through all the same ups and downs and ins and outs of the creative process with me. They need to be able to do that and I appreciate their focus, patience, loyalty and flexibility. The social and listening situation is different than an audience that simply receives a composition that has been played many times before or is expected to be played in a way where one could hear it the same way time after time.

### *WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?*

\*

When I listen to an improvisation, I listen to the level of invention in the moment and the compositional creativity of the musician. I also listen to the instrumental and sonic worlds that are created. And in many ways, I listen to the person. Their soul. In composed music, the balance between listening and considering the composition in relation to the performance is different. Somehow I give the performer less focus once I've figured out their style orientation and how they intend to present the work. That would mean that the performer is more anonymous in a way.

THANK YOU SO MUCH

### *IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

Free improvisation is an environment where one can explore how their own sound creation is directly associated with emotional content. Using free improvisation regularly in one's practice whether that is on or off stage, can potentially deepen one's musical and artistic maturity in complex and valuable ways.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*ARE YOU A STUDENT OR A PROFESSIONAL? \**

☒ Professional

☐ Student

*DESCRIBE YOUR MUSICAL BACKGROUND IN A FEW SENTENCES. \**

I am a classical flutist and completed my master's degree at the Amsterdam Conservatory. I then received a scholarship to continue my studies at the Royal Academy of Music with a postgraduate course with William Bennett.

After that, I started my freelance career in all Dutch orchestras with a place at the RPhO for 18 years. Nowadays I have a large practice with advanced students and I give Music & Dementia workshops in nursing homes.

*WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH FREE IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC? \**

During the Music & Dementia workshops we make music with residents who suffer from dementia. We improvise on what we hear; atmosphere, timbre and color

*WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN FREE IMPROVISATION? \**

The training we received for the workshops opened the door to improvisation for me

**FREE IMPROVISATION AND CLASSICAL MUSIC**

*WHAT EXERCISES OR TOOLS DID/DO YOU USE TO DEVELOP YOUR IMPROVISATIONAL SKILLS?* \*

practice with different scales, major, minor, dorian, frigian lydian etc

*WHAT DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND BETWEEN IMPROVISING BY YOURSELF AND IN A GROUP?* \*

in a group is easier because you respond to each other.

*WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FIND BECAUSE OF YOUR CLASSICAL FORMATION WHEN DIVING INTO THIS TOOL?* \*

I had to get out of my comfort zone, which is not easy after years of playing sheet music. I still find it difficult, but I do my best

*HOW HAS FREE IMPROVISATION AFFECTED HOW YOU PLAY OR APPROACH CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?* \*

Yes, I feel freer when I play from sheet music, and I learn pieces more easily because I understand the harmonies better

*WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS FROM FREE IMPROVISATION THAT YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR CLASSICAL MUSIC PRACTICE?* \*

scales



## **STAGE FRIGHT**

*DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE WITH STAGE FRIGHT AND IF SO, COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT?* \*

yes, I was always afraid of making mistakes, but by thinking and studying more broadly, I can deal with them much better and enjoy the music I make on stage.

*HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE FREE IMPROVISATION ON STAGE WHEN PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE?* \*

I only improvise during the workshops, which are not real concerts. The public are the residents and caretakers of the houses. That feels safe to me

## **ON STAGE**

*HOW DO YOU RELATE EXPERIENCES AS AN IMPROVISING MUSICIAN TO YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A MUSICIAN PERFORMING CLASSICAL REPERTOIRE?* \*

This is a difficult question, because my improvisation is quite limited, I still feel like a classical flutist

*WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU AS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO LISTEN TO A MUSICIAN THAT IS IMPROVISING OR A MUSICIAN THAT IS INTERPRETING REPERTOIRE?* \*

I can judge a classical musician better, that is my specialization. For me, judging how a musician improvises is (even) more based on feeling

THANK YOU SO MUCH

*IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?*

I hope this helped you.

I am not a jazz flutist, and my improvisation is limited, but I am still learning and developing it and enjoying the effect music does on people suffering from dementia and seeing how much joy it can bring.

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