

From the Publishers: News and Views
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Creative activities are increasingly an integral part of the K-12 music curriculum—from song composition to movement, improvisation to technology-based arrangements. The development of improvisation skills is central to creative expression. In this issue, Michael Palmer shares resources focused on improvisation. They include K-12 curriculum resources as well as books and web links.

- Marie McCarthy

K-12 Curriculum Resources

Agrell, Jeffrey. *Improv Games for One Player*. GIA Publications, 2009.

Improv Games for One Player is a book of musical games designed to help the student be more expressive and musical in music-making. About half of the material is drawn from the original *Improvisational Games for Classical Musicians*, and half from new, previously unpublished material collected and invented by the author.

Agrell, Jeffrey. *Improvisation Games for Classical Musicians: A Collection of Musical Games with Suggestions for Use*. GIA Publications, 2008.

This book gives classical players the means to learn to create their own music and find their own voice. They can begin right away with what they know now - any instrument, any level. The 500+ games are categorized into nearly three dozen general areas: melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, etc. The book can be used by solo individuals, groups from two to sixteen or more, and in classroom settings.

Berg, Shelly, Margaret Fitzgerald and Kimberly McCord. *Chop-Monster Jr*. Alfred Publishing Co., 2003.

Chop-Monster Jr. is a teacher's handbook that outlines how to teach jazz to elementary classroom music students. No prior jazz experience is necessary for teachers or students. Imaginative call-and-response activities, movement, and circle games teach students how to sing and play jazz.

Brockman, Nicole M. *From Sight to Sound: Improvisational Games for Classical Musicians*. Indiana University Press, 2009.

From Sight to Sound provides practical and creative techniques for classical improvisation for musicians of all levels and instruments, solo or in ensembles. The exercises build aural and communicative skills, instrumental technique, and musical understanding that allow students to unite performance with music theory, ear-training, historical style and context, chamber music skills, and listening skills.

Higgins, Lee, and Patricia Shehan Campbell. *Free to Be Musical: Group Improvisation in Music*. Rowman & Littlefield Education, co-published with MENC: The National Association for Music Education, 2010.

The book is designed for those who lead musical experiences in the lives of children, youth, and adults. The authors present ways to encourage music that is expressive and inventive, spontaneous yet thoughtful, communal and collaborative, and unlimited in its potential to bring fulfillment to those who make it.

Madura, Patrice D. *Getting Started with Vocal Improvisation*. Rowman & Littlefield Education, co-published with the Music Educators National Conference, 1999.

Designed to help introduce vocal improvisation into choral teaching. Shows how improvisation can be used in both the general music classroom and the choral classroom.

Steinel, Mike. *Building a Jazz Vocabulary: A Resource for Learning Jazz Improvisation*. Hal Leonard, 1995.

A valuable resource for learning the basics of jazz from Mike Steinel of the University of North Texas. It covers the basics of jazz, how to build effective solos, a comprehensive practice routine, and a jazz vocabulary of the masters.

Books

Berkowitz, Aaron. *The Improvising Mind: Cognition and Creativity in the Musical Moment*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

This new book is a fascinating exploration of how a person develops improvisational ability by looking at the cognitive processes involved. Berkowitz, a musician and medical expert, examines the literature on the psychological processes of improvisation and 18th century improvisation treatises and pairs his findings with interviews of professional improvisers in the classical music tradition. In addition, he explores the linkages between learning music and language and discusses current neuroscience discoveries in improvisation. Those interested in psychology of improvisation are encouraged to read this well-written and timely book.

Berliner, Paul. F. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.

This tour-de-force is one of the richest and well-documented studies of jazz improvisation by ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner. Over the course of 15 years, Berliner immersed himself in the world of jazz by interviewing, studying with, and transcribing several jazz recordings (included in the text) in the effort of decoding and explaining the process of jazz improvisation. Filled with fascinating anecdotes from the greatest names in jazz history, the reader is easily immersed in the jazz musician's world. This is a must-read for those interested in jazz and its essential characteristic, the art of improvisation.

Sarath, Edward. *Music Theory through Improvisation: A New Approach to Musicianship Training*. Taylor & Francis, 2010.

This new text by Ed Sarath, one of the foremost thinkers in improvisation and contemplative studies at the University of Michigan, is a hands-on, creativity based approach to music theory that incorporates improvisation. For novice improvisers and experienced improvisers, this book provides foundational skills and the theoretical knowledge base for learning how to improvise in a variety of styles. The book comes complete with a sample syllabus and CD with audio and web tracks.

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

In a series of essays written by some of the world's most respected ethnomusicologists, musicologists, music educators, music theorists, and music performance professors, the practice of improvisation is explored in a variety of cultures and contexts. Music educators interested in understanding the implications of teaching and learning improvisation in school music are encouraged to read Patricia Shehan Campbell's chapter titles, "Learning to Improvise Music, Improvising to Learn Music."

Nachmanovitch, Stephen. *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art*. Penguin, 1990.

Why should we improvise? What are the reasons that humans have used the process of spontaneously creating works of art? Drawing upon Eastern spirituality, Greek mythology, and other inspirational works of literature and art, Nachmanovitch's book explores these questions and several more, providing a convincing and significant rationale for improvisation in life and art. "The focus is on process, not product. A creature that plays is more readily adaptable to changing contexts and conditions. Play as free improvisation sharpens our capacity to deal with a changing world" (p. 45).

Web Links

International Society for Improvised Music
<http://www.isimprov.org/>

Improvisation, Community and Social Practice
<http://www.improvcommunity.ca/>

Jamey Aebersold Jazz
<http://www.jazzbooks.com/>

Free Improvisation Journal
<http://www.the-improviser.com/>

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