

Creative Music Making: Improvisation and Composition MUSED 341, fall 2015

“In my own life, music taught me to listen, not just to sound but to who I am”
(Nachmanovitch, *Free Play*, 1990, p. 11).

“... the work of creativity is not a matter of making the material come, but of unblocking the obstacles to its natural flow” (p. 10).

“The creative process is a spiritual path. This adventure is about us, about the deep self, the composer in all of us, about originality, meaning not that which is all new, but that which is fully and originally ourselves” (p. 13).

Activities

Ideas were gathered from a number of sources: workshop by Mary Cohen, ISIM Conference at UM, December 2010; workshop by Maud Hickey and Betty Anne Younker in a workshop: “Just Compose! A Structure for Teaching Music Composition to Teachers and Students,” Michigan State University, October 2011; *Getting Started with Vocal Improvisation* by Patrice Madura, *The Rhinoceros in the Classroom*, R. Murray Shafer (1975); Pauline Oliveros’ book *Deep Listening*

Rhythmic

1. Counting Game (if two people say the next number together, the group starts again). Close eyes.
2. Pass the clap (and its energy).
3. Say as dramatically as possible the name of the person to your right.
4. Create an ostinato with your name (rhythmic or melodic with body motion) and add it to group sound. Build up and then drop out until one person is left.
5. Students are organized in A/B pairs in a circle. Student A sings a phrase (or plays a rhythm) and B finishes it, continuing on to the next pair in the circle etc.

Vocal

1. From *Deep Listening*, by P. Oliveros, ‘Sonic Tonic’ (1992), p. 47
(what sound(s) and color or combination “is most beneficial for a particular person. Beneficial means that which produces a feeling of well-being in the person.”)

2. Throw/bounce ball back and forth with sound effects; match the sound with the motion. Receiver can be dramatic.
3. Vocalize with the name of the person on your right.
4. The Telephone Game: Students stand in circle. One student creates either a spoken or sung phrase; Moving around the circle in clockwise motion, have each student manipulate one musical element of the previous phrase; At the end of the circle, compare the original phrase with the resulting phrase. Identify changes that occurred and discuss them.
5. Using only your voice and non-speech sounds tell a classmate where you have hidden a certain object.

Sound effects

A. Recall some moment that occurred yesterday. Imagine the place - What sound(s) did you hear? Choose one sound and find something in the room to make that sound. Do it as a group together, then in smaller groups.

Improvise on the sound of rain. Then improvise on the feeling of rain.

B. With your voice (solo or group), describe the sound a shovel makes (a) in clay (b) in gravel (c) in sand (d) in snow

C. Give a card with a theme on it, e.g. rainstorm. Have students improvise around it. The same activity can be done using an art work or a poem.

D. Create a musical soundscape around a story. Teacher analyzes the story and imagines how music can enhance the telling of the story or tell the story through sound.