

# Outline for Improvisation Session

## One Perfect Sound

What is Music? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Some people say music is “pitch in time.”

Some say “sounds sung by voices or played on musical instruments.”

Some people say music is “architectural time.”

Some say “music is the language of the emotions.”

I believe that music is a language, a code that conveys emotional meaning.

Can you make one perfect sound?

## What is the Origin of Music

Music originated at about the same time as language.

It was used to show who was together and who was apart from the group.

It was used to signal a warning.

It was used to signal that someone was approaching from a distance.

It was used to remember and document stories.

It was used for dance.

It was used to entertain.

It was used to express sadness, joy, anger, and to relieve fear.

It was used for healing

The Eskimo definition of a song is “what happens when words will no longer suffice”

## Every Conversation is an Improvisation

Two people are going to have a very important meeting. There will be much to discuss and issues to settle. They both get up in the morning and make a plan regarding the meeting. They know what they are going to say and what they hope to accomplish. They know what points they want to make and how they hope the meeting will go. They meet in the afternoon to say what each one wants to say. In the course of the meeting they react to the points made by the other person. They answer questions, debate issues and make each other aware of new information. Even though they both planned what they would be saying, their meeting involves give and take, instant comments and expression of ideas and feelings. Compromises, agreements, unspoken thoughts and unsolved issues take the meeting in a different direction and they both find themselves in a

different place than they thought they would be. Isn't that the nature of every conversation? Every conversation is an improvisation. When people meet, collaborate, or interact in any way there is change that each of them cannot completely foresee or predict. Hopefully it was a good meeting! Both people contributed and something was accomplished. Maybe they both had different pieces of a puzzle and together they solved a problem or created something new. Maybe the whole was greater than the sum of the parts. Maybe they both came away from the meeting excited about what happened and wanting to meet again at some point to move the work even further ahead! Maybe they both learned something. **Try having a musical conversation.**

## The Purpose of Music

The purpose of music is to inspire.

We can use music to heal. We can use music to express emotion. We can use music to dance. We can use music to entertain. We can use music to remember. We can use music to advance ideas. We can use music to show a new way of looking at things. We can use music to tell a story. We can use music to grow. But the purpose of music is to inspire.

## The Elements of Music

Pitch, rhythm, dynamics and timbre are the basic elements of music. They could also be called: frequency, duration, amplitude and waveform. Melody and harmony are where the meaning begins. The next most important element is listening. After that there are other elements: time, tempo, technique, intuition, instrumentation, space, motif, motive, gesture, phrase, form, groove, silence, intention, gesture, collaboration, emotion, feeling, motion, prayer, motivation, mystery, curiosity, articulation, sequence, pattern, repetition, spirit, possibility. Are there more?

Talking about music is like dancing about architecture.

## Every Piece of Music is Many Pieces of Music

Someone might wake up with music in their head or play their instrument and have something appear. You could walk on the beach and make up a song. These are examples of the first piece of music. Then, you could expand that piece into a finished form. That is the second piece. The maker of the music might write the piece down and save it in some way. That is the third piece. Then you might play it for another person and what they hear is the fourth version. Then the piece might be played by others for a group of people and what they hear is the next version. The piece might be recorded and that is yet another version. Then the recording could sit on a shelf for years and be heard by a new generation of people through different ears in a different time and it would

become still another understood version. Each day is another piece. It is impossible to have the same performance twice.

## The Rules of Improvisation

1. Be present in the now.
2. Listen.
3. Play.
4. Be willing to take a risk or make a fool of yourself.
5. Try to make sense.
6. Take into account what others may be playing.
7. Realize that you already have what you need.
8. Vary what you do within all of the elements of music.
9. Understand that there are no mistakes.
10. Establish a system as it emerges.
11. Be open to changes in the system.
12. Feel what you are doing.
13. Serve the meaning in the music
14. Don't feed the audience more than they can eat.
15. Let the music tell you where to go. When we improvise, we walk the line between everything we have ever heard and chaos. We take meaning from what we have heard in the past and we add new creative patterns that we borrow from nature's chaos.

## Musical Systems That We Can Use to Improvise

Tonal Music

Polytonality

Chromaticism

Serialism

Musique Concrete

Ancient Modes