

Education with improvisation

Class Opener Notes

Start with a clapped beat - find instruments to add in

Soft → Loud → Soft → Speak

Imagine being able to **read**, but not being able to **speak**.

- If schools did this????
 - Not education
 - Not fully developed
 - Wouldn't set them up for the world
 - Remedial classes
- Improvisation = a voice.
 - Imagine the stories.adventures

The Basic Questions

Why

What

Who

Where

When

How

Don't merely learn music - learn to play music

My presentation notes will be available

Free gift: Booklet

Why

(0:05)

Guitar Loop - Bassline

To Build a Language

Play is the most **natural** way to learn a language.

Exploration

Imagining with sound gives you something reading cannot

Fluency

Improvisation builds instrumental confidence and understanding.

Confidence because you're creating music on your own

Understand music, not just memorize notes on a page

Reading VS. Speaking

Reading = decoding information

Speaking = synthesizing ideas.

Improv gives musicians **voices**.

Guitar Loop - Pause

Why?

To Build a Language:

(0:06)

Music is a language.

Letters = Notes

Words = Measures

Sentences = Phrases

Paragraphs = Sections

Chapters = Movements

Books = Opus

We learned language by speaking first, **not reading** first

Babies = mimic/explore/create

Musician = same

- Babies submerged in language
- Nonmusicians have been hearing music as long
- They know a lot about it - uncover this
- This way music comes from **inside** not **outside**

Children are given the entire English language to explore

- **Complete language = complex ideas**
- **Method books = small ideas**
 - Short
 - Limited Vocab
- If children only use words they could read = **stunted growth**

Why?

Exploration:

(0:08)

The elements of music are better **explored** than **explained**. Once explored then explanations make sense.

- A method book is a box. Improv opens the box
 - Explore. So much beyond the box
 - They will discover so many things naturally
 - Internalize these ideas
 - Improv speeds up learning

Areas of study - **Breeze through quickly**

- Techniques
 - Legato/Staccato
 - Intervals
 - Independence
 - Interdependence
- Notes
 - Notes they know
 - Scales*
 - Don't get me started
 - 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 not equal to music
 - Range - horns/violins/guitars
 - Placement on the instrument
 - Exploring the instrument
- Rhythms
 - Tempo
 - Metronome
 - Time Signatures
 - 4/4

- 6/8
- 3/4
- Subdivision motifs
 - 8th note based
 - triplets
 - 16th note based

This teaches elements of music.

MILK

“The mistake a lot of us music teachers make; is we teach kids how to play the instrument first before they understand music.

Teaching a kid to spell M-I-L-K before they’ve drunken a lot of it doesn’t make sense but for some reason we still think it does in music.”

This is why we let children speak before they learn to read.

Why?

Fluency:

(0:10)

Improvisation builds instrumental **confidence** and **understanding**.

Confidence because you're creating music on your own
Understand music, not just memorize notes on a page

For the Beginners:

- Begin by exploration
 - They can make **realistic music** early on
 - Improvisation = interesting music for beginners.
 - Some much more than method book.
 - Basis to **Kani Ka Pila**
- Doesn't feel like learning
 - Very engaging
- Fluency is created
 - Piece = 1 right way - 1,000,000 wrong ways
 - Books = **stopping/starting**
 - Improv = 1,000,000 right ways - 1 wrong way
 - **No mistakes**
- Trains your **ears**
 - **Hearing** music rather than **seeing**
 - Hearing concepts rather than seeing
 - Ears are better than eyes
- Musical concepts are introduced in the most natural of ways
- **Rhythm** - is felt rhythm more than explained
 - Clap this rhythm back. (Sport Song)
 - Now notate it

- **Instrument Geography** - know way around their instrument
 - The staff = barrier
 - Many notes are easier played than read.
 - Piano - **play** high notes. Now **read** them.

- **Scales** - improv is built off scales.
 - This is the **best** form of **scale practice**.
 - Don't get me started
 - 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 = Alphabet
 - **Alphabet Song**
 - Alphabet song spells only two words
 - NO - HI - AB
 - Name a song that uses the scale in order
 - Key Signatures are barriers.
 - These are easier to memorize
 - Gb = _ Notice how one of those notes are confusing
 - Teaches deep scale knowledge without teaching scales

For the Experienced:

Fluency on the instrument is felt

- **Off the Page:** play without sheet music = confidence.
- **Off the Cuff:** Not needing "something" to play = confidence.
- **Riffing Off:** Being able to riff off music = confidence.

Tonality - Music theory in practice

Out of book and into their hands

- Students use theory instead of learn about it
- Teaches scales inside and out
 - They can study scale variations
 - Pentatonic Scales
 - Blues Scales
 - They know the scale so well they have to varyate it

For the Advanced:

Even advanced classical students will benefit greatly.

- Playing **beyond** the page
 - Not just riffing but **creating**
 - **Music Theory:** Chords/Scales/Chord progressions/Tonality
 - Jazz musicians know chords in a way classical musicians don't.
 - Of course but lets even it out
 - Scales: Advanced scales with **alterations**
 - They can study scale alterations
 - Jazz Scales
 - Modes
 - Phygrian Dominant
 - Altered Scale
 - Know scales so well they alter it
- **Composition:** Reading ability is the key to success.
 - All music starts as an improvisation
 - We have our students **read** a lot but **writing** is just as important. Improv is the beginning of writing.

Why?

Reading Vs Speaking

(0:17)

- Imagine being able to read but not speak
 - Limiting development - Stunted growth
 - Take in information but not do anything with it
 - Couldn't form your own thoughts
 - Sounds like an early AI
- **Reading is decoding** information - **Speaking is synthesizing** it
 - Passive to active understanding.
 - **Passive** = seeing a concept
 - **Active** = using that concept
- Speaking
 - Forming your own thoughts is understanding
 - In today's music conversing with others is paramount
 - In today's music reading is not
 - Kids are listening to non-written music
- Pieces will be forgotten - Improv skill will last
 - Reading chops will atrophy
 - Reading takes a while to regain -
- **Reading is a barrier**
 - Takes a long time
 - Improv instant
 - **Limited vocab**
 - **Right vs Wrong**
 - **Students lost** at this stage
 - Not how language is learned
 - **Mary Had a Little Lamb Notation/Audio**

- <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHGqy2BFssC9WZlg1Pvkwph3K4qKwZIfh&si=FB8mlutN2QYe6xVN>

In music we have two dichotomies:

Classical v Jazz or Reading v Non-reading.

Which is better? You decide. I've made my decision: **both**

What (0:20) Play Guitar

Improvisation is: “The act of creating, performing, or speaking without prior preparation; making something up on the spot.”

We know what it is but **what is teaching it**

- How to **use** in lessons
- How to **organize** it in curriculum
- How to max **educ value**
- How to **assess**
- How to **add challenges**
- How to **help** students **progress**

The what is important

- Music has rules - you can't pluck a cactus
- The **rules = educational**
 - The **rules = boundaries**. This is what we study.
 - To **explore = narrow** down

Here are some of the “what’s” we can explore:

- Rhythm -
- Melody -
- Harmony - how the notes combine with each other
- Timbre - sound options

Stop Guitar

These are the “**What’s**” to improvise

- Rhythms - **clap**
 - Certain subdivisions
 - a motif

- Melody
 - Scale - a certain scale - **Piano - play through these ideas**
 - **Major**
 - **Minor**
 - Key of the piece
 - Next in their technical development
 - Chords
 - **A progression**
 - a certain type of inversion
 - A certain type of chord

- Feel
 - Mood
 - Sad -
 - Longing
 - Hopeful
 - Feel - **Cajon**
 - **6/8**
 - **Naningo**
 - **5/4**
 - **Swing**
 - **Shuffle**
 - **Style**
 - **Funk**
 - **Blues**

- Technique
 - Drummers - **Sticks**
 - Paradiddle
 - Rolls
 - Pianist - **Piano?**
 - Crush notes
 - Alberti Bass
 - Horns
 - Keys
 - Note cluster
 - Articulation

- Vocabulary
 - Licks - classical uses this but more so beyond
 - Scale run -
 - In countless sonatinas
 - Blues Licks - **Piano**
 - Runs -
 - Mozart
 - Motifs - from music they are learning
 - Fur Elise - **Piano**
 - Moonlight Sonata - **Piano**
 - Spinning Song - **Piano**
 - Rondo alla Turca - **Piano**

- Timbre
 - Register
 - Horns play high
 - Stringed instruments explore neck
 - Dynamics

- Crescendos
- Fp
- Articulation
 - Staccato
 - Marcato

- Harmony
 - Color
 - Using suspended chords
 - Using seventh chords
 - Adding tensions to a chord
 - Non-diatonic
 - Do my looper thing?

Using these elements are how students can:

- **Explore** over **explain**
 - Internalize
 - Use concept

What = **what** is teaching improv

What we are focusing on IS everything

Who

(0:25)

Everybody!
Done!

When learning to speak - children are presented with the entire language

- Complete language = complete ideas
 - Explore for a lifetime
 - So interesting they WANT to learn
 - So deep it will take a lifetime
 - Clouds/rain/water -
 - Stars/moons - **Piano**
- Method book = small ideas
 - Short
 - Limited vocab -
 - Free them to explore
 - Sky - Shape of Clouds -
 - Stars - Whole Tone
 - Moon - Clair de Lune
 - Sea - lowata - Db - D - Gb - G - B
 - The Breeze/Birds/Sun Db-Eb-E-Ab-A-Db
 - The Earth - Gb pentatonic

Kani Ka Pila

If children only used words they could read their growth would be stunted.
Same in music.

(0:27)

Who? Beginners

Most to gain.

- They only know a few concepts
 - Staying there = children only using a few words to speak

Notation is a **barrier**.

- They can create so much **more**
- They can create so much **quicker**
- They can create their **own music**

Mary Had a Little Lamb - Gb - Piano
Improvise - Gb - Backing Track

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHGqy2BFssC9WZlg1Pvkwph3K4qKwZlfh&si=FB8mlutN2QYe6xVN>

Educational benefits:

- Instrument geography → more notes
 - Explore and get comfortable
- Fluency → the freedom of expression
 - Sheet music = **right vs wrong**
 - Sheet music = **stops vs starts**
- Dexterity → Hand Muscles
 - Musical Muscles → longer duration

Who?

Intermediate: Ukulele Em-B

Explore the theoretical aspects of music.

- Tonality
 - Scales = variations
 - Next level scales - harmonic minor
 - Variations
 - Minor —> Pentatonic —> Blues
 - Chords
 - Harmony
- Instrument Voice
 - Command/confidence on their instrument
 - Speak freely
 - Develop character

Who?

Advanced Ukulele G - D

High level players = high level concepts

- Idiomatically - soloing within a style
 - Blues
 - Rock
 - Jazz
 - Tango
 - Classical
- Tonality
 - Scales = alterations
 - Harder Scales/Exotic Scales
 - Harmony
 - Further Harmonic Devices
 - Applying Harmonic Ideas

Where (0:34)

- Ukulele Em-B

Hawai'i
Jamaica
I guess

Well there are three basic locations for music students:

- **Private Lessons**
- **Group Lessons**
- **Class Rooms**

Ukulele Em-B end

Where?

Private Lessons

These students have the most autonomy. Most adventures.

- Most autonomy
 - Individualized assignments. Improv can be around their focus:
 - Playing legato/stacato
 - Intervals
 - Flats/Sharps
 - Quarters/Eights
 - Key
 - Explore the most adventures

- Improve their own creations
 - Where they go with it
 - How far they go
 - Explore sounds they like
 - Find backing tracks
 - Explore the style they like

Where?

Ensembles:

We have traditional bands, rock bands, jazz bands, orchestras, choirs, ensembles (percussion - wind - etc).

Why?

- This will create a musical cohesion within the group.
- Learn to listen deeper
- Natural performance chops

Where?

How?

Lead/Accompaniment

bass/middle/treble

Bass - Bass Lines - Roots of Chords

Middle - Harmony

Treble - Lead

Set the Scene - Piano

Rhythm - establish groove

Accompaniment -

Bass = Bass line - I'll start i

Tenor/Alto = harmony
Soprano = Lead
Lead - main idea built off scales or concepts

While they're playing:

Lead

Lead can flow around the ensemble.

- 16 bar trades.
- Free playing off each other.

Static Comps vs. Flowing Comping

Flowing is where students learn to vary motifs.

Where?

Class:

The trickiest one. But can be done. In fact we did it in the beginning.

Core elements of music can be explored this way.

- Rhythm
- Pitch

- Rhythm
 - Hand Percussion
 - Found sounds
 - Percussion Instruments
- Pitch
 - Vocally
 - Words

Apply:

Improvise vocally with the group based on this concept.??

Experiencing is better than over-**explanation**

When

(Skip if time only 15 mins left)

Intro:

All the time

When in the learning process. These whens have hidden benefits.

- Education is **what** and **when** - the hows are infinite

Lets explore! When? Right now!

When in Practice Sessions

- Warmup
- Preparation
- Freedom

When in the lessons:

- What is it paired with
 - Deeper comprehension

When in the curriculum:

- Pre-Learning
- Development
 - Chops
- Presenting
 - For new concepts

When in the practice session:

Warmup - to prepare for a daily practice session

- Scales are often warmups - add improv

Preparation - Develop skills, techniques and concepts.

- Before we begin learning the song
- Warmup on elements of song
 - Rain

Freedom/Expression -

- Reward at the end of practice
-

When in the lesson:

Lessons are establishing goals. Also inspiration.

Comprehension: Hard to learn French without hearing it

Engaging: Student playing with a professional can be life changing.

Inspiration: Without role models what are we striving for

When in the curriculum:

Information given is always at risk of being a waste of time unless it is designed into the curriculum

PreLearning: Prepare for new music by exploring elements of it

- Sneak Peak
- Learn before learning

Development: Further understanding - Reinforce Concepts

- Tonality
- Rhythm
- Instrument
- The language of music

Presenting: Explore before over explain

- Vic Quote
- Label ideas they have heard
 - Play with concepts > Taught them at first

How (0:42)(if Skipping When)

Guitar - CF

Scaffolding - Stacking concepts so they lead toward something

Shedding - Woodshedding a singular topic

Jammit - Improvise off a motif

Parametrically - The restrictions of focus

Stylistically - Exploring a genre that has certain characteristics

Pre-Learning - Exploring elements to a piece before learning it

How? Scaffolding: (0:43)

Stacking Concepts

- - A framework that puts everything into its place
 - Right things at the right time
 - Scaffold Improvisation
 - Use framework from last lessons to mixture with new
 - Kinda like a blender
 - Note Ranges
 - Techniques
 - Rhythms
 - Concepts
 - With a lesson book - mixing last chapter with the new
 -
 - Drumming Unit 10-11-12
 - **Cajon?**
 - Piano Unit 7
 - Db → Cm

Scaffold = building → growing toward something

- This way old chapters are constantly reviewed
 - Not learning something then forgetting old things

How? Shedding: (0:46)

Diving in to a singular topic

- Piano
 - Blues scale
 - Enclosures
 - Secondary Dominants
 - 2-5-1

- Drums
 - Ghost Notes
 - Flams
 - Moeller

- Horns
 - Slides
 - Grace Notes

- Implentation
 - Learn the device
 - Put it into exercises
 - Put it into your repertoire
 - Put it into your music
 - Make it a rule

How? Jammits (0:48)

Jammit is a word I invented. Patent Pending
Improvise off of a motif or play off an idea

- Scale/Key
- Riff
 - Melodic Motif
 - Rhythmic motifs
- Feel
 - Groove
 - Time signature
- A Harmonic Progression

Use drum Jammit - **Cajon** -
Ch.11 -

Piano Jammit - **Piano with looper**
Comping chords
1 + 2 + feel
Major Seventh
Left Hand 8vas

How?

Parametrically: Restrictions

(0:51)

- Pieces of music are built thematically.
 - Explore these themes
- Method books = concepts
 - Books introduce
 - Give examples
 - Augment this material
 - Book open a door but we can explore
- L1 U2
 - F-A-C-E
 - 3 songs that equal about 3 minutes of music

Parametric Examples:

- Rudiments
- Scales
- Notes
- Rhythms
- Chords
- Harmony
- Intervallically
- Register
- Tone
- Color
- Dynamics
- Articulation
- Mood
- Feel

- Focus - find a focus
- Fit - find fitting music
- Fix - fix the parameters
- Free - go free

Kani Ka Pila

Example Clapping Music

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

- Focus: Rhythm
- Fit: Video
- Fix: Fast n Slow
- Free: Clap away

How? Stylistically

(0:54)

The world has 1,000s of languages and types of music.

Entomology of a word helps you understand the meaning of it in your language.

Scales = Styles - explore the world

- Take a Major Scale 12345671
- Flatten the 7 = Mixolydian
 - Rock
- Sharp the 4 = Lydian Dominant
 - Jazz
- Take them both out = Pentatonic
 - Oriental Sound
- Flatten a 3rd = Major Blues
 - Country Sound
- Use this over Relative Minor
 - Blues

Alterations = Deep understanding

- Rhythmically
 - Swinging makes straight time better
- Tonality
 - Scales
- Harmonically
 - Chord Progressions

Explore the World of Music

Musicians are close to accessing the cultures of the world.

Explore the Entomology of scales

How? Pre-Learning (0:56)

To prepare for new music we can Pre-Learn elements of the piece

- Obvious first idea is to learn/review the scale
- Improv on all other elements

Make the learning process much smoother.

Pre-Learning by Name:

Use the name of the piece to inspire your sound.

For example:

- Forest song - level 1
- Moonlight Sontata - C#m - triplets Could even use the chords
- Joy to the World

Pre-Learning by Key

Improvise on the key of the next piece.

Better than scales

Pre-Learning by Jammit

Find a common lick in the piece.

For example:

- Mars - 5/4 lick

- Beethoven's 5th

Pre-Learning by harmony

Use the chords or the progression for your music.

- Canon in D

Pre-Learning Playalong

Playalong with the song before you learn it but improvising in key with it.

Pre-Learning Concepts

- Techniques
 - Trills - Mordents -
 - Dotted Quarters - Eighth Notes - Sixteenth passage
- Time signature
 - $\frac{3}{4}$
 - $\frac{9}{8}$
- Style
 - Waltz Bass
 - Nocture
 - Accompaniment Pattern

There are two main approaches to this Pre-Learning concept.

1: Deafly

2: Echo

1: Deafly - Improvise on a concept without ever hearing the music.

2: Echo - you can listen to the song then emulate the sound.

Strategically placed when the student is progressing from piece to piece smooths out this transition.

These are some of the millions of ways on **HOW to use improvisation for education**

Closer
(1:00)
Looper Off

Start with a clapped beat - find instruments to add in

Soft → Loud → Soft → Speak

Imagine being able to **read**, but not being able to **speak**.

Imagine the adventures missed

Think of what they could explore

The Clouds

The Sea

The sky

The world

Improvisation opens up our students world

Don't merely learn music - learn to play music with improvisation