

IMPROVISATION: IT REALLY IS FOR EVERYONE

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The creative process--what can it do for ME?

1. It's FUN! (Don't you need more fun in your life?)
2. It allows me to express myself musically--I am the composer.
3. It can make me a more sensitive ensemble player because:
 - A. I understand how musical composition works because I improvise--that is, I am personally familiar with the tools.
 - B. I hear sounds with "new ears."
4. It can help my intonation
5. It can make me a better reader!!!
 - A. Figures that I play as a creative musician, I "own." They are much easier to recognize. Besides, I now see how they fit and understand how they are used.
 - B. Time & rhythm vs. hoping to play some right notes.
6. It can increase my technique, flexibility, range and use of extremes of the instrument.
7. It can literally improve every aspect of my musicianship.

PLAYING BY EAR---WIRING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Vocally improvise using one or two syllables. Sing to pop tunes, church hymns, play-a-long albums, your own chords, or anything else.
2. Vocalize a short pattern--then play it back on your instrument. Assign the appropriate numbers to the pitches. (C-D-C = 1-2-1)
3. Start a short phrase with your voice and finish it on your instrument. Then begin a phrase on the instrument and finish it vocally.
4. Do the same exercise (3) but think the phrase with your mind--not out loud. Hear the melody in your mind and play it.
5. Begin to relate all music to your instrument. When you hear a melody imagine how you would play it on our instrument. Even start to name notes and fingerings. Imagine how it would feel to play that melody on your instrument.

6. Mentally analyze EVERYTHING you hear--church, radio, orchestra, ensembles, choir, concerts, shower--EVERYTHING. Describe in some manner what you hear. It doesn't have to be a textbook description, just put a label on sound in order to incorporate it into your mind and musical vocabulary.

OTHER THINKABLE THINGS

1. LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN! Garbage in--garbage out--Nothing in--nothing out. Find the very best models available and listen to them. Do not write off the older players. Listen to instruments other than your own.

2. ANALYZE EVERYTHING. Names, labels, descriptions, colors, numbers--all are important for you to understand and to keep and process musical data.

3. SING! SING! SING! It is through the use of the voice that you will eventually be able to play what you hear. Just think, how long have you been using your voice? How many hours have you used it this very day? Compare that with how many hours you have played your instrument this day!!!

PEDAGOGICAL SUGGESTIONS UTILIZING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

1. Begin each lesson, ensemble, or band rehearsal with some ear training. Play the game "I play, you play." Begin by singing a figure (diatonic) and requiring the group or student to sing it back. Use metered time and repeat the same figure several times. Then play a figure on YOUR horn and have the students play it back to you. Use simple diatonic figures at first, then increase the complexity. Over a period of time you'll be amazed at how much YOU and your students get from this "game."

2. Encourage (and help) your students to write their own exercises. For instance, if a student is having trouble tonguing, ask him to come up with some type of exercise that might benefit him. You may need to suggest a scale study of some kind but let him pick the key and the style. First, the student will recognize that he HAS this problem and then will be more likely to stay after it if the exercise is his own.

3. Encourage students to bring in anything they have written and to play it for the group. Then help (or do it yourself) the student score it for a larger group and play it with the band or ensemble.

4. Write a blues tune (or any other type of music) by committee. Have the trumpets write four measures, the trombones, the saxes, the flutes, etc., and put the whole thing together and listen. Then, encourage them to write some words (monitor this carefully!). This is a great way to teach form, etc.

5. When a student says that he has written something, please listen to it and be kind. One of the most intimate and delicate elements that man deals with is his own music. It is related to his very soul. Instruct, encourage and cherish those teachable moments.