

CALLING ALL BRANCHES TO IMPROVISE! IMPLEMENTING IMPROVISATION WITH YOUR STUDENTS!!!

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Improvisation Publicity Chair

The CM Council and the State Board have approved the proposal that Improvisation be included as an option in CM Evaluations starting in 2004 with the publication of the new CM Syllabus.

Step One: **ASSIGN A BRANCH IMPROVISATION CHAIR**, if you don't already have one. Very few branches have an Improvisation Chair listed in this year's State Directory. If you don't have a Branch Improvisation Chair, please assign one who can be a contact person to receive e-mail news for your branch. We would like to establish a link with each branch to provide information and answer questions, and this will provide a way for that to be accomplished. ALL BRANCHES: PLEASE EMAIL THE NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS OF YOUR CONTACT PERSON TO Alexandra Hawley, Improvisation Chair, at alidoremi@aol.com. (If the Composers Today chair is already fulfilling the position of Improvisation Chair as part of the CT area, please email that information to us.)

Step Two: **HAVE AN IMPROVISATION DEMONSTRATION IN A BRANCH MEETING**. Display the *Improvisation Syllabus and Guide (ISG)*, *Games and Activities for Improvisation (GAI)*, and other improvisation resources for your members to see.

Suggested demonstration assignments for a branch meeting:

GAI, page 114, *Jungle Animals*

GAI, page 138, *Composer Rhymes and Activities* – “Franz Joseph Haydn” (try it on the black keys)

ISG, page 10, Project D (top of page), or choose one project from Project A – G (bottom of page)

Your Branch Chair or one of your members can organize this demonstration of improvisation assignments, with some of your own members volunteering to prepare one of the improvisation projects, games, or activities listed above.

Step Three: **ENCOURAGE YOUR TEACHERS TO TRY IMPROVISATION WITH AT LEAST ONE STUDENT**. Improvisation can be introduced in the lesson in one minute. Your student can spend 5 seconds to a minute (or more, if the student likes!) improvising at home each day. Every day the student will experiment with sounds and probably play it differently than the day before. And that is good, because that is

IMPROVISING!!! When the student realizes that anything is fine and one can't make a "mistake," it frees the student up to try different things.

When the student returns to the next lesson, spend 5 to 45 seconds listening to the improvisation assignment, and remember to give a positive comment afterwards! At the very least, say "thank you" or "I enjoyed hearing you play." What your students play is a creative musical gift to you, and with your words of praise, you can be an inspiration to them to continue improvising.

If you don't know where to start, try this sample improvisation with any level student (from Prep through Advanced). Photocopy page 10 from ISG for the student. Circle the part they should practice for the week (there are several assignments on each page, so ask the student to bring it back from week to week).

ISG, page 10, Project D (top of page) – improvise using one note. Play it in as many different ways as you can...soft, loud, sfz, crescendo, decrescendo, staccato, legato, slow, fast, with rests, with pedal...making it as beautiful or exciting as possible.

The student will play this every day for a week, then play it for you at the next lesson. For the second week, circle the next project (Project A at the bottom of page 10). Then go on to project B for the third week, as so on.

GOALS OF IMPROVISATION

Many students find that improvisation is fun once they are encouraged to try it. Improvisation enables students to CREATE, using the skills they have *already* acquired. You will be amazed at what they can do! This is a skill that well-rounded musicians need and are able to learn.

NOW THAT YOUR STUDENTS HAVE TRIED IMPROVISATION...

Your students are now ready to try various improvisation assignments and venues. Here are some ideas that will help your students become more spontaneous in their Improvisation.

OPTIONAL IMPROVISATION IN CERTIFICATE OF MERIT™

For CM, improvisation is optional, but *why not let your students try it?* It **will not be rated** by the Evaluator, but will be noted on the evaluation form that the student did an improvisation.

Improvisation does not have to follow the student's CM level. Students may improvise on *any level* from Prep through Advanced. Because there are no longer "approved resources" for Improvisation in MTAC programs, the student may improvise using any resource.

THEME OF THE 2007-2008 YEAR: “THE FOUR SEASONS”

Another idea in presenting improvisation to your students is to use a theme in your studio throughout the year. Create your own theme, or use the over-arching State Improvisation Theme for the 2008 MTAC Convention: “The Four Seasons” inspired by Vivaldi’s violin concertos and four sonnets, one written about each season. If you do not have these concertos and sonnets readily available to you in your library, go to the following website -- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Seasons_\(Vivaldi\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Seasons_(Vivaldi)) -- to listen to the concertos and read the sonnets. You can also access the sonnets on the MTAC website: click on Improvisation, then Improvisation Sample Assignments, then The Four Seasons.

The State Themes from past years may be chosen, as well, as your studio theme. There are monthly assignments on the MTAC website for the following themes: 1) The Earth and Sky, 2) Holidays, and 3) California History. These may be printed and copied for your students.

IMPROVISATION EVALUATION and PERFORMING AT THE MTAC STATE CONVENTION

Students who discover they enjoy improvisation may want to send in a tape of any Improvisation to be evaluated in our **State MTAC Improvisation Evaluation Program**. The student will receive written comments so they can grow in their ability to improve as they continue improvising. The student can also apply to perform in one of the Improvisation Recitals at the MTAC State Convention, June 27 – July 1, 2008, in Riverside. Students who are selected may perform in the **Improvisation Celebration Recital**, or in the **Improvisation Showcase Recital** for the more advanced improvisers who submit two improvisations to be evaluated. All students selected will perform their prepared Improvisation, as well as participate in improvisation activities during the session. You can access and print the instructions and application form on the MTAC website: go to www.mtac.org, under Programs, click on Improvisation.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH MTAC

Though there are no required resources to use in Improvisation, MTAC has provided books and materials for your use. You can order the *Improvisation Syllabus and Guide* (ISG) and *Games and Activities for Improvisation* (GAI) from the MTAC State Office, 1-800-834-3340. These books were written specifically for MTAC by Marilynn Carstens, Founder of the MTAC Improvisation Program. The books include assignments for levels Prep through Advanced. You have permission through MTAC to copy pages appropriate for each of your students. Check the MTAC website to print additional resources which have been added since publication of these books.

For further questions about implementing improvisation into your studio or branch, you may contact Alexandra Hawley, Improvisation Chair, at alidoremi@aol.com, or Dorothy Burgess, Improvisation Publicity Chair, at doburgess@aol.com.

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