

Improvisation for Classical Musicians

Composition Assignments

Spring 2012

All art is improvisation. [compositions] are 'doctored improvisations' that have been revised and restructured over a period of time before the public gets to enjoy the work. A composer who writes on paper is still improvising to begin with (if only mentally), then taking the products of the improvisation and refining and applying technique and theory to them. – Stephen Nachmanovitch

Bricolage Composition

Due Date: February 2

There is no written work to hand in here. You will compose four short rhythmic ostinatos at home, then teach them aurally to a quartet of players in class on the 'found' percussion that the players have brought from home (e.g. items from the kitchen, shop, household, etc.). Then you will conduct the performance by pointing to each to bring in the players one by one. When all are playing, point to one player to indicate who is to take a rhythmic solo on her 'instrument.' At some point, give the 'finish your idea' Soundpainting gesture, and cue the next soloist. When all have soloed, go back to the original ostinatos, then cue a big unison 'hit' to end the piece.

Body Percussion Composition

Due Date: February 14

Using no more than one sheet of paper, compose a [written] duet using only body percussion (mouth noises, fingersnaps, stomps, etc.). You as composer will perform the first part of the duet; be sure to include a short section for a solo. Another player will perform the other part of the duet; make this part easy to sight-read (this part may consist largely of ostinato rhythms).