

STANISŁAW MONIUSZKO ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN GDAŃSK

Emil Misk

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

(Artistic Work with its description)

Prepared as part of the doctoral education at the Doctoral School
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Supervisors:

Prof. dr Włodzimierz Nahorny /Artistic Work/

Prof. dr hab. Monika Karwaszewska /Description of Artistic Work/

Gdańsk 2024

ARTISTIC WORK

Title of the Work:

Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio

Performer:

Emil Miszczak & The Sonic Syndicate

Band Members:

Emil Miszczak – trumpet

Piotr Chęcki – tenor saxophone

Jakub Klemensiewicz – baritone saxophone

Paweł Niewiadomski – trombone

Michał Zienkowski – guitar

Mikołaj Basiukiewicz – piano

Konrad Żołnierczyk – double bass

Sławek Koryzno – drums

Program:

Emil Miszczak – *Scratches for Eight Musicians*

Duration: 40'

Recording Location:

Witold Lutosławski Concert Studio of Polish Radio S1 in Warsaw

Recording Date:

April 27, 2021

Recording Engineers:

Leszek Kamiński and Michał Bereza

Mixing and Mastering:

Piotr Taraszkiewicz

Cover Design:

Mary Zaleska

Release Date:

June 24, 2022

Label:

Alpaka Records

DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTISTIC WORK

**The Process and the Final Effect. Paradigm
Shift in Shaping the Narrative of
Improvisation Based on the Composition
*Scratches for Eight Musicians***

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Preliminary Issues

1. Concept, Methods, and General Assumptions of the Study

The secret to being a good scientist, in my opinion, doesn't lie in some extraordinary mental power. We have a fully sufficient mental capacity. We simply need to look at reality and think logically and precisely about what we observe. The key ingredient is to have the courage to face the inconsistencies between what we see and deduce, and how reality appears. This questioning of basic assumptions is essential for breakthroughs. [...] Progress in understanding requires us to challenge the fundamental assumptions about what the world is like and why it is that way. If we can better understand the world around us and the principles that govern it, I believe that life will improve for all of us.¹

The quoted words of Dr. Eliyahu M. Goldratt, the author of the Theory of Constraints (TOC), seem to correspond most appropriately with the issues addressed in this dissertation. Goldratt's theory provides a basis for unconventional thinking, changing the existing paradigm, allowing for the continuous improvement of current practices, and investigating the true causes of phenomena. Through case analysis, the author of this dissertation aims to illustrate the advantages of the new concept in shaping improvisation narratives and its influence on the final product of an artistic work by applying it to the artistic field. Examples and case studies will be given to demonstrate the benefits of this theory, along with an authorial methodology for working with a band.

In this dissertation, the main premise for addressing the issue of improvisation narratives is to change the way of thinking about jazz improvisation, its paradigm, shift the focus from the final effect to the process, and create a space for discussion on the topic. Furthermore, to develop the current perception of improvisation, especially in institutions such as first- and second-level music schools, applying classical analysis practices to discussing an improvised work is insufficient. There is a need to focus on the process, the flow, and the causality rather than the tools. It is worthwhile to go beyond "classical, substantive analyses." Additionally, the motivation to address the topic of free improvisation stemmed from the conclusions of the analyses and the interpretation of improvisation previously used in jazz music, with the aim of shaping one's understanding of the stylistic artistic expression, which

¹ Introduction by Dr. Eliyahu M. Goldratt, *Theory of Constraints Handbook*, 1st Edition, ed. by James Cox and John Schleier, 2010.

is the narrative of improvisation. The author's composition *Scratches for Eight Musicians* serves as an example of how to develop one's improvisational (narration) style and apply it in a large instrumental ensemble. Discussing the individual understanding of the improvisation process itself and proposing a new way of shaping it with consideration for ensemble playing constitute the main pillars of the entire endeavor. This artistic project provides the opportunity to show how the composition process can support the flow of free improvisation in a large improvising ensemble and vice versa.

The collection of publications (artistic and scientific) that include broadly understood solo improvisation, both jazz and classical, is impressive. Polish scientific publications, studies, and doctoral dissertations² that have been created so far mainly present concepts of the improvisation process itself, dealing with the author's creation of one's musical language based on specific original ideas. These works primarily discuss the issue of solo improvisation based on jazz, classical, or contemporary music idioms. This issue was addressed in their publications by, among others, Derek Bailey, Gary Peters, and Nicolas Slonimsky, as well as Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner³, who, in their collective work, gathered the most interesting statements from the most important creators of the 20th century (John Cage, George Russell, Brian

² Cf. H. Gembalski, *Improwizacja forma otwarta-między wolnością, a koniecznością*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem prof. dr. hab. Rolanda Orlika, Akademia Muzyczna im. Karola Szymanowskiego w Katowicach, 2015; M. Zdunik, *Improwizacja jako środek poszerzenia ekspresji w muzyce*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem dr. hab. Tadeusza Samerka, Akademia Muzyczna im. Stanisława Moniuszki w Gdańsku, 2015; S. Jaskułke, *Improwizacja harmoniczna jako metoda kształtowania i rozwijania współczesnego języka improwizacji jazzowej na podstawie autorskich kompozycji*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem prof. dr. Włodzimierza Nahornego, Akademia Muzyczna im. Stanisława Moniuszki w Gdańsku, 2016; M. Obara, *Kreowanie indywidualnego języka muzycznego w grze na saksofonie. Koncepcja interwałowo-harmoniczna improwizacji oraz jej wpływ na kompozycję*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem dr. hab. Macieja Grzywacza, Akademia Muzyczna im. Stanisława Moniuszki w Gdańsku, 2016; P. Schmidt, *Możliwości wykonawczo-interpretacyjne na trąbce w muzyce jazzowej w kontekście pracy zespołowej na podstawie twórczości własnej*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem dr. hab. Grzegorza Nagórskiego, Akademia Muzyczna im. Karola Szymanowskiego w Katowicach, 2016; M. Gregorius, *Między kompozycją a improwizacją. Francuska szkoła improwizacji organowej w świetle twórczości wybranych przedstawicieli*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem prof. dr. hab. Elżbiety Karolak, Akademia Muzyczna im. I.J. Paderewskiego w Poznaniu, 2017; M. Kądziela, *Kształtowanie indywidualnego języka improwizacji i kompozycji w kontekście głównych nurtów nowoczesnego jazzu*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem dr. hab. Piotra Wojtasika, Akademia Muzyczna im. Grażyny i Kiejstuta Bacewiczów w Łodzi, 2018; R. Jędrzejewski, *Improwizacja jako kompozycja w czasie rzeczywistym na podstawie autorskich kreacji na wiolonczelę solo*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem prof. dr. hab. Andrzeja Bauera, UMFC w Warszawie, 2020; P. Orzechowski, *24 Preludia i Improwizacje jako egzemplifikacja autorskiej koncepcji „twórczej gry”. Od improwizacji do interpretacji dzieła*, praca doktorska napisana pod kierunkiem prof. dr. hab. Andrzeja Pikula, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2020.

³ Chr. Cox, D. Warner (eds.), *Kultura dźwięku. Teksty o muzyce nowoczesnej*, Publisher. słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2010.

Eno, and John Zorn). However, there is a lack of sources regarding the creation of improvisational narratives in the context of a large instrumental ensemble.

The analysis of available literature was not limited only to scientific dissertations. The author also reviewed educational materials, including textbooks touching on the issue of improvisation.⁴ As it turns out, in educational materials, we find ready-made solutions on how we can play a given harmonic or rhythmic scheme. They are merely signposts, the result of the process accompanying the clarification of the author's individual musical language. However, they cannot be taken literally. We gain the most by analyzing and imagining how a given artist came to these considerations, asking ourselves "why?", getting to know the biography of the creator, perhaps by reading a few interviews they gave. According to the author of this dissertation, the task of improvisation textbooks is to inspire the creation of one's own language of musical expression. After all, the principles for organising musical material we use during improvisation (e.g., rhythm, harmony, the connection of individual sounds and scales) serve to convey what we want to share with a potential audience. The performance of a work is not an end in itself. Likewise, improvisation, which is a part of it. Improvisation textbooks can serve as supplementary knowledge for artist-performers, as proper improvisation cannot be learned from books, YouTube videos, or methodical guides. At this point, it is worth quoting the words of the American composer Earl Brown:

I can't understand why classical musicians can't improvise and why so many disregard it. The entire series [pieces] October, November, and December [1952] was an attempt to gradually free them from the obligation to follow every detailed instruction, which tracking was supposed to guarantee them the certainty of playing.⁵

For many years, this issue has also intrigued the author of this dissertation. During the creation of the artistic work and conducting research, the author was drawn to the artistic research project by Per Zanussi, a Norwegian double bassist and improviser, titled "Natural Patterns – Music Making With an Ensemble of Improvisers," conducted from 2012 to 2017 at the University of Stavanger with the support of the Norwegian Artistic Research Program. Zanussi described in the project

⁴ N. Slonimsky, *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, Scribners, Uniwersytet Michigan 1947; J. Bergonzi, *Inside Improvisation 6 - Developing a Jazz Language (+ CD) – nauka improwizacji jazzowej na wszystkie instrumenty*, Advance Music; L. Wise, *The Bebop Bible. The Musicians Dictionary of Melodic Lines*, REH Publications (Columbia Pictures Publications), 1983.

⁵ Booklet accompanying the pianist's CD Davida Ardena *Earle Brown: Works for piano(s) 1951-1955*, New Albion NA082. Cf. Chr. Cox, D. Warner (red.), *Kultura dźwięku...*, op. cit., p. 215.

a method for creating music with a large ensemble (11 musicians). The result of this project was the album "Evolving Patterns" and a concert with the Per Zanussi Ensemble, held on January 28, 2017, during the Earwaves Festival. The essence of the project was:

to try to find a common ground for these two sides of my musical personality, and possibly reconcile them: The pre-planning, more intellectual, slow moving and solitary composer side, and my other, more intuitive, social side as an improviser. I was curious if my music making could feel more like one whole approach, my methods of composition and improvisation more unified. To be able to achieve this, I felt like I needed to start from scratch, so to speak, by introducing elements into my music that felt new to me. I wanted to break up my established ways of composing and mix or replace them with new ones, and also allow myself to change in the process.⁶

The author of this dissertation completed his second-cycle studies at the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk, specializing in jazz trumpet at the Faculty of Choral Conducting, Music Education, Church Music, Rhythmics, and Jazz (2017), and trumpet at the Faculty of Instrumental Studies (2014), as well as at the Feliks Nowowiejski Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz, specializing in natural trumpet at the Faculty of Instrumental Studies (2016). He has performed numerous times at festivals related to contemporary music, including the Festival of Tradition and Avant-garde Music KODY in Lublin, the International Festival of Contemporary Music "Nowe Fale" in Gdańsk, and NeoArte Synthesizer of Arts in Gdańsk. The author also completed a composition course under the guidance of Helge Sunde and Prof. Geir Lysne at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, which enhanced his competencies in the subject matter. The synthesis of acquired experiences and confronting them through multiple recording sessions and concerts allows for a unique and innovative perspective on the performance of improvised music and a new way of thinking about improvisation, moving beyond the jazz idiom.

It is important to note that research or the creative process is not just a description of the resulting album. Due to the performative nature of the subject, these activities were supplemented with observations from conducted classes and improvisation workshops with students of primary and secondary music schools in

⁶ Per Zanussi, *Natural Patterns – Music Making With an Ensemble of Improvisers*, artistic research fellowship project, conducted at the University of Stavanger with support from the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme. 18.05.2017. <http://www.naturalpatterns.no/1-introduction/>. [accessed March 12, 2023].

the Pomeranian Voivodeship, students of the Music Academies in Gdańsk and Bydgoszcz, and students from the Taipei Music Center (Taiwan) and Xi'an University (China).

Throughout his professional career, the author has served as an instructor and lecturer at renowned educational institutions, including the Academy of Music in Gdańsk, where he taught instrumentalists at the Faculty of Instrumental Studies and the Experimental Jazz Combo at the Jazz and Stage Music Faculty. Additionally, he served as a jazz improvisation teacher for one year at the Feliks Nowowiejski 1st and 2nd degree Music School in Gdańsk. His extensive experience in educational and artistic work has resulted in the ability to draw significant conclusions and formulate reflections on the processes of teaching and learning in the context of jazz improvisation, the creative process, and human creativity in general.

The creation of the work was inspired by the author's need to encompass various forms of artistic expression in a single composition. It is rare to find a situation where one person embodies the role of composer, performer, and leader, a characteristic of jazz music. Initially, jazz pieces (now referred to as jazz standards) were small forms where relationships between co-performers were strictly defined and divided into the rhythm section and the soloist. This division persists to this day. In this context, the absolute virtuosity of the soloist, as well as the individual members of the rhythm section, is highly desirable, as it forms the basis of the ensemble's functioning model. Over the years, more artists questioned this state of affairs and emphasized egalitarianism and collective improvisation, where there is no single soloist showcasing their virtuosity against an accompaniment, but rather everyone participates equally in the course of the piece. Broadly speaking, individual stance and creative invention of the ensemble members and asserting the autonomy of each of them come to the forefront. It is worth remembering that the identity of an ensemble cannot exist by itself. It is the collection of individual characteristics of its members that directs its development.

Jazz artists sometimes learned their whole craft in jam sessions or via working with more experienced musicians; they rarely attended music schools or academies. The world has accelerated due to technological improvements, giving us additional chances to learn composition, arrangement, and music production techniques in addition to mastering exceptional instrumental or vocal skills. Along with the development of jazz education, the genre's perception has also changed. Larger forms

are becoming more common in this music, and it makes sense that they would be heard in symphony halls. Jazz has evolved beyond brief forms centered on the "theme-solo-theme" paradigm. It features lengthy pieces that follow centuries-old classical music conventions. We, as organizations and the next generation of educators, need to adapt to these shifts by redefining what a jazz musician and improviser looks like in the modern period.

Including many sections in "Scratches for Eight Musicians"⁷ where improvisation is the main component is an invitation for other artists to express themselves artistically. This, in turn, gives the work deeper value. On one stage, the ideas and reactions of the performers collide, creating an image that is a resultant of these factors. Experiencing such a performance is a unique experience for the listener.

The work includes the following elements: the score of the piece, the Sound Map and Performance Parameters "Language of Improvisation," and verbal instructions for performing indeterminate sections. This is an attempt to synthesize two phenomena: Stockhausen's Intuitive Music and the tradition of jazz music, particularly big band. The author of the project, as a composer and improviser (performer), assumes the role of a leader engaging in artistic and expressive dialogue with the ensemble of improvisers during the realization.

The musical material of the album "Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio" contains elements of genres such as American free jazz, European improvised music, Polish and American avant-garde. As a result, the material gains originality and presents a broad palette of the author's inspirations derived from his rich performance experiences. The author's accomplishments in the performance of classical and jazz music serve as evidence that inspiration can be derived from any musical genre, with the goal of identifying a unique aspect of each and endeavoring to develop a unique style. There are two distinct methodologies that can be identified when improvising in relation to the source material. In the initial scenario, we employ idiomatic elements of a specific style within a specific composition to reinforce it. In the second scenario, the entire structure is constructed on the spot. This solution is indicative of spontaneous improvisation, which is also referred to as non-idiomatic. This album, the artistic work that is being discussed, is about the two worlds of

⁷ In the course of this work, the title of the piece is presented in two forms: *Scratches for Eight Musicians* refers to the composition itself, whereas *Scratches for 8 Musicians* is used in reference to the recorded album.

improvised music. In these worlds, we endeavor to establish our own style, despite the fact that we are operating under distinct assumptions and parameters. We possess an infinite selection of techniques, tones, and noises. Rather than relying on pre-existing and well-known solutions, it is advisable to immerse ourselves in the maelstrom of experiments and explore as many potential solutions as possible.

The research conducted within the framework of this doctoral dissertation is conducted through the author's art, rather than about art. The author of this dissertation will propose the term "improvisation sessions" later in the work to describe the artistic considerations/investigations, which can be described as a process of artistic exploration. These activities included the composition of the work, the development of the score with a legend (for indeterminate sections), "rehearsals" with the ensemble to evaluate the coordination of musicians during the realization of free improvisation, and the artistic performance of the work. It is important to bear in mind that the human brain is not capable of simultaneously monitoring more than three distinct musical expressions. Consequently, the planning of free improvisation for a large ensemble entails certain "defects" in the narrative of sound and expression.

Improvised music is particularly challenging to perform in a large instrumental ensemble, as the narrative is influenced by a multitude of individuals and factors. The author, drawing inspiration from 20th-century European composers, incorporated dedicated indeterminate performance sections into the work. In order to prevent disorder in their execution, the author developed verbal instructions for performing these sections, as well as a Sound Map and Performance Parameters. The fundamental ideas, processes, and methods of working with the ensemble that are conspicuous in the author's artistic practice are reflected in the artistic explorations within the work "Scratches for Eight Musicians."

In order to create this description, the musical work was analyzed using the descriptive method (interpretation), which "turns towards the historical contexts of its subject."⁸ According to the descriptive theory of analysis, a musical work is "a vehicle of values and an expression of multilayered meanings, both socio-artistic and individual, that constitute it as a unique phenomenon in the cultural world."⁹ The process of analyzing the artifact (a purely technological analysis of the musical work)

⁸ Cf. M. Gołąb, *Spór o granice poznania dzieła muzycznego*, Toruń 2012, p. 163.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 164.

based on the symbolic notation of the score (the significant area) and its internal interpretation (endogenic to the analysis) would be insufficient for describing the subject of this work. This is ensured by interpretation, which is the basis for describing the expressive qualities of the work. This involves external interpretation (partially exogenic to the analysis), which "breaks ties with systematic analytical discourse,"¹⁰ as advocated by Mieczysław Tomaszewski in his original concept of the so-called "integral interpretation of a musical work."¹¹

Working with the ensemble of improvisers on the piece made the author realize that, to achieve measurable artistic results, it is worth proposing his own terminology to describe the discussed musical phenomena, adapting it to contemporary reality and to the modern performer and audience of this music. Using the existing nomenclature, which served its purpose in traditional music, makes some phenomena difficult to convey and interpret.

To precisely describe his composition and work on it, and to express and convey to the reader the individual emotions that accompanied the author during the process of interpreting the work, the author will use the first-person singular in the narrative in the subsequent part of the dissertation. This form of expression, especially in the empirical part of the work, will also help the reader understand the personal engagement in the research and experiments related to the work's subject matter.

2. Structure of the Study

This work consists of four distinct chapters preceded by an introduction. The first chapter, titled *Creative Process and Creativity*, serves as a contextual chapter outlining the theoretical background based on available literature and online sources. In this section, the author, explaining the issue of his own creative process, refers to Graham Wallas's theory and model, which lists four stages of creativity: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. The reader learns how this model influenced the creative process of the artistic work "Scratches for Eight Musicians." Later in the chapter, the author introduces and characterizes Mihály

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 224.

¹¹ Cf. M. Tomaszewski, *Interpretacja integralna dzieła muzycznego. Rekonesans*, Kraków 2000, p. 9–17.

Csikszentmihályi's "Flow" model, which he explored with Jacob Getzels in the 1960s while studying the creative processes of various artists (e.g., painter, chess player, dancer).

The second chapter, titled *Improvisation as a Process – Authorial Shaping of Improvisation Narratives*, discusses the idiomatic and non-idiomatic features of improvisation in a large ensemble based on personal experiences. The reader learns how the main representatives of this music genre perceive free improvised music, what terms are popular to describe this music, and importantly, what own terms the author proposes to describe the discussed musical phenomena. This section compares the key features of free jazz and improvised music. Additionally, the author explains the inspirations behind creating "Scratches for Eight Musicians." The chapter is divided into three subsections. In the first subsection, *Precision of Thought Expression in Improvisation*, the author divides improvisation into idiomatic and non-idiomatic, referring to Derek Bailey's theory. The next subsection, titled *Narrative of Improvisation and Appropriate Terminology for Its Description*, explains the term "improvisation narrative" and proposes original definitions introduced by the author to describe the improvisation process. Among such terms, the author lists and characterizes decision, paradox of choice, indeterminacy, morphology of continuity, tonal gravity, field of possibilities, dominance, and dependence relations. The third subsection, *Sound Map and Performance Parameters*, discusses the author's sound map prepared for the performance of the third part of "Scratches for 8 Musicians," which served as a source material helpful in developing the improvisation language of the given artist. The subsection discusses the author's proposed instrument preparations, including non-standard ones, and the unconventional use of everyday objects, such as a hole saw (a tool for woodworking).

The third chapter, *Performance Apparatus – Large Instrumental Ensemble in the Context of Collective Improvisation*, addresses the specifics of performing music in a large instrumental ensemble. Based on the performance recorded on the album "Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio," the author specifies the role of the leader who organizes the entire musical course, the other ensemble members, and introduces the concept of an improvisation session instead of a traditionally understood rehearsal. This chapter explains the basic assumptions of the author's subject, Experimental Jazz Combo, and presents the conclusions from the author's research on observing students and music school pupils and how they cope with

improvisation attempts. The research results provided extensive knowledge about the challenges faced by young performers participating in large ensemble improvisation. Critical areas that emerged during the observed improvisation sessions were identified.

The last chapter, *Scratches for Eight Musicians*, is dedicated to the author's composition and discussion of the artistic work. In addition to presenting the circumstances of the work's creation, the subsections present the formal and aesthetic assumptions of the piece and the analysis of the improvisation narrative and the morphology of the work's continuity. After a detailed discussion of the composition, the author presents the collected reviews and opinions from the artistic community about the author's project disseminated in the form of an album.

The dissertation's considerations are concluded by formulating the primary conclusions from the empirical research results and the conducted studies of the available literature. The conclusion addresses the research hypothesis: how to develop the narrative of improvisation so that it emphasizes the process rather than the specific end result of the task.

The work ends with a cited bibliography and lists of photographs, illustrations, examples, and tables.

I. Creative Process and Creativity

When it comes to my compositions, I like the ones I haven't written yet the most. I've been playing music for decades—the notes I use remain the same, only the ideas change. It's hard to have consistent ideas if there's no connection between what you believe in and what you want to achieve. I think creativity is the greatest gift humanity has received. Everyone has ideas—sometimes they can bring satisfaction to others. For example, music or philosophy.¹²

Creativity is a concept that conjures the dynamic expression of words on paper, the emotions that accompany music, and the images of colorful paintings. The final two sentences of the statement by jazz legend Ornette Coleman vividly encapsulate my creative process and the creativity that is associated with it.

This enigmatic quality of human nature is not limited to what is referred to as art; it is a ubiquitous aspect of human existence. The creative process is fundamentally characterized by creativity, which is applied in a variety of human endeavors, including technology and daily life. In the present day, it is regarded as a catalyst for innovation and development, in addition to being an expression of artistic ingenuity. It is evident in the methods by which individuals manage obstacles, ranging from straightforward daily issues such as sink unclogging or vehicle repairs to more intricate project assignments. It extends beyond the realm of art to incorporate a diverse array of intellectual and practical pursuits that necessitate inventiveness and adaptability of thought.

1.1. Critical Analysis of G. Wallas's *The Art of Thought*

The creative process can be described as a sequence of steps or stages that lead to the creation of a new idea, solving a problem, producing a work of art, or inventing something. There are many theories explaining the creative process, one of the most well-known being the four-phase theory proposed by Graham Wallas, a British social psychologist, presented in his 1926 book, *The Art of Thought*.

¹² J. Jabłoński, T. Gregorczyk, *Słowa mądrości. Wywiad z Ornettem Colemanem*, online, „Fragile. Pismo kulturalne”, <https://fragile.net.pl/slowa-madrosi-wywiad-z-ornettem-colemanem/>. [accessed 24 March 2024].

At this point, it is worth referring to the definition of creativity proposed by Arthur Cropley¹³, who, while referring to the classical understanding of the creative process by Władysław Stróżewski, specifies that creativity involves bringing something new that is rooted in something already existing. Stróżewski believes that

[...] we talk about creativity when we want to emphasize that we are dealing with actions leading to the creation of something new, something different from what already exists, something that did not exist before.¹⁴

Following Wallas's theory, one can state that the analysis of the creative process often includes a four-stage model comprising the preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification phases. Each of these stages is universal and occurs regardless of the duration of the entire process. This model helps understand the dynamics of the creative process and enables its effective application in practice (see Illustration 1).



Illustration 1. Four Stages of the Creative Process according to G. Wallas
[Original Illustration]

Wallas's theory provides a macro-perspective on my own creativity. Initially, it appears to be more relevant to composition than to improvisation. Nevertheless, the primary distinction between composition and improvisation is the duration of the work's creation. Certainly, this theory can be applied to improvisation, as all four phases occur regardless of the duration of the activity.

Each artist has their own way of working on their repertoire, instrument, or voice and developing their own language. There are many areas to consider in the creative process: working on original compositions, developing one's style and skills (composition and arrangement, instrumentation), expanding knowledge of musical culture, such as the music scene of a particular region or country, and actively participating in culture, not just within one's discipline. Wallas's division of the

¹³ A. Cropley, *Definitions of creativity*, in: *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, t. 1, p. 511–524.

¹⁴ W. Stróżewski, *Dialektyka twórczości*, Kraków 1983, p. 13.

creative process into four stages seems to be a very useful tool for this purpose. As rightly noted by Aleksandra Tokarz in her article:

The creator and their work at a specific point in time [...] or a person placed in an experimental situation, requiring, for example, performing unusual tasks, are equally valid subjects for studying the creative process.¹⁵

Preparation

This stage may include sketching an idea, deepening knowledge on a related topic, such as a composer's biography, compositional technique, instrumentation, as well as individual practice on an instrument. At this stage, the individual consciously delves into the topic, explores various perspectives, and acquires the appropriate knowledge and skills to properly prepare for practice. The time spent on preparation depends on the project, role, given parameters, and experience. For example, performing a solo part in a band you join will take less time than creating your own project and writing music for it, especially when dealing with a large ensemble.

Composing one's own work is not a commissioned piece with a predetermined completion date. It originates from within and is not subject to strict deadlines. I have a high degree of confidence in self-discipline when it comes to original endeavors, as there are no external motivating factors. If your publication is released in 2025 rather than 2024, there will be minimal impact. It does not have the repercussions of a breached contract or the erosion of someone's trust. You are solely responsible for your actions. Self-discipline is essential and deserving of cultivation in order to accomplish these objectives.

In the case of Emil Misk & The Sonic Syndicate¹⁶, the primary motivation for composing music for this ensemble is the desire to integrate a variety of genres that I enjoy performing. These consist of classical music, free improvisation, big band music (large ensembles), meticulously arranged compositions, and influences from early music. I am able to collect all the things that pique my interest and bring me pleasure when I play with this ensemble. I accommodate my expressive and stylistic

¹⁵ A. Tokarz, *Blask i ciemność. Antynomie emocjonalne w procesie twórczym*, in: *Persefona, czyli dwie strony rzeczywistości*, M. Cieśla-Korytowska i M. Sokalska (eds.), Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2010, p. 480.

¹⁶ The band was formed in 2017. It has released three albums: "Don't Hesitate!" (2018), "Artificial Stupidity" (2020), and "Scratches for Eight Musicians – Live at Polish Radio" (2022). The album "Don't Hesitate!" received the FRYDERYK award in the category of Jazz Phonographic Debut in 2019.

requirements. Motivation is not a spontaneous occurrence. It is worth dispelling the notion of "waiting for creative inspiration." We develop the desire to continue the activity when we begin to realize our plans and concentrate on them for an extended period. The work is spontaneous, lacking specific assumptions and the ability to envision the ultimate outcome. It is motivated by the act of doing, regardless of the outcome or the destination, and is undertaken because I am aware of its significance. Only at a later time do I contemplate the potential applications. The composition's image becomes increasingly evident as I perform more actions, and the album or project as a whole gradually takes shape.

I divide music composition into two fundamental activities: the creation of new content and the processing of it in a variety of ways during the arrangement process. I must establish the appropriate conditions for each of these. I enjoy being alone in the room and working at the piano. In these circumstances, it is considerably simpler for me to generate novel items. In this process, I employ a voice recorder, for instance. I frequently record myself and subsequently transcribe the more captivating segments. I proceed to the second phase of the project, which is processing, after I have selected a direction (e.g., melody line, cadence, form, etc.). Mobility is indispensable in my creative endeavors. I frequently compose music while traveling by train, aircraft, or automobile. I endeavor to convert all of the ideas in my mind into auditory stimuli.

Solo improvisation is a crucial component of my style development. This is a critical addition to the existence of an improvising musician in the context of the development of improvisational skills. I have reached the same conclusion as the great improvisers (Derek Bailey): in order to be a successful collective improviser, one must also be at ease with individual improvisation. The experience of being alone on stage is entirely distinct. The sound space is solely determined by your actions, and if you cease to produce sounds, only silence will remain. Accepting and embracing the fact that silence is an essential component of a musician's existence is incredibly liberating and enhances your confidence in improvisation, which in turn affects your attitude in larger ensembles. Moreover, silence may be incorporated into your personal style. The primary emphasis of improvisation education is typically on the selection of appropriate tools and performing actions. Reverse this perspective and focus on the tools and actions that should be avoided.

Incubation/Conscious Meditation

As Wallas suggests, the mind requires time to comprehend and assimilate the information that has been gathered after the preparation stage. This process may require days, weeks, or even years. You possess a concept and the necessary tools to execute it. The problem is momentarily set aside by our brain during incubation, which allows the unconscious mind to address it. But how will this concept evolve? To what destination will it lead you? During this phase, it is common to allow the issue to "mature" in the background while engaging in unrelated activities. Asking yourself a series of questions to assist in the development of your idea can occur while walking, washing dishes, or performing routine daily duties. These inquiries necessitate no immediate responses; they are solely incorporated into the incubation process. This is the time to exchange concepts in order to determine which ones are most suitable when working with a group.

Attending concerts as a spectator and observing other artists are significant components of my existence. This direct inspiration has a beneficial effect on me. I frequently engage in a thought process during concerts that elicits solutions to issues I am currently addressing and contemplates the potential consequences of applying the information I have heard to my work. It is crucial to engage in cultural activities that extend beyond one's immediate surroundings. It is advisable to maintain a high degree of separation from the project at hand, as this allows for the development of incubation. Another critical inquiry is: How frequently do we permit ourselves to remain idle? In a literal sense. For the sake of contemplating reality. At times, I engage in meditation, while at other times, I travel by train without listening to podcasts or reading literature. I merely gaze out the window.

We require solitude and tranquility to facilitate introspection. Reflecting on our experiences is the most critical aspect of my creative process, as it involves contemplating the sources of nourishment that sustain me. I frequently endeavor to comprehend the motivations of a creator and investigate their "why." This enables me to comprehend their perspective, even if only to a limited extent, as objects may appear wholly different from our own. Additionally, comprehending the artist's imperative can reveal alternative avenues of comprehension for the work. In the present day, there is a significant emphasis on the continuous production of goods. This is a consequence of the rapidity with which we experience and conduct our lives.

We require immediate assessment, rarely allowing an item to be digested, comprehended, or a position taken on a particular subject to develop. We are responsible for the amount of time we allocate to reflecting on our experiences. This time for myself is my favorite, as it allows me to contemplate all that I have observed and heard without any distractions.

I am frequently positively impacted by conversations with others. I am able to discuss my thoughts at that point, and it functions exceptionally well. Completely distinct processes transpire in your mind when you articulate an idea or record it in writing. It is challenging to provide a clear definition of inspiration. Certainly, being aware of the events that are occurring in my immediate environment is a substantial component of it. I derive pleasure from observing a variety of phenomena; the world inspires me to take action.

I would also like to emphasize that we have the ability to determine our responses to the information we encounter. It is never a simple case of action-reaction. Statements such as, "I was at an exhibition and it inspired me, and then I went and created something," are frequently encountered in interviews with other creators. This is an immense simplification. Something transpired in the interim, a thought process transpired, and a reflection on the subject happened. It is imperative that we engage in introspection regarding our experiences. This results in the development of experience, which enriches us and enables us to more consciously reflect on the experiences we have encountered.

Illumination

The first "Aha!" moment, also known as "Eureka!" This is the moment when you know what to do and start doing it, sometimes at the expense of other commitments. The incubation period is over, and you are ready to implement your idea. This is what people often refer to as creative inspiration. The illumination stage is characterized by a sudden breakthrough. After a period of subconscious processing during incubation, the solution to a problem can suddenly emerge into consciousness. This moment of enlightenment can seem spontaneous and may occur when least expected.

Occasionally, I have a very specific notion for a project that I wish to pursue; however, it is frequently a small concept that blossoms into a complete piece. I believe it is crucial to refrain from restricting one's creativity. This germ has the

potential to be anything. For instance, you may derive inspiration from the content of a text; however, you may also read, record, and utilize the reader's intonation as a foundation for developing a new work. Suddenly, it becomes apparent that you do not need to create something from the ground up; rather, you can apply your own individualized perspective to an existing item. Additionally, this "litmus test" of our creativity should emphasize our active engagement in the cultural life of not only our country or environment, but also the world, travel, and collaboration with other artists, including those from abroad. Your perspective is enriched by the unique perspectives of each individual, their upbringing, and their culture. It is worthwhile to cultivate this aspect of our creativity. We frequently encounter creative obstructions when we are unable to generate an idea or when we wish to create something that has never been seen before. By employing conventional content in an unconventional and innovative manner, this stress can be alleviated.

I much prefer it when an individual inadvertently performs a diminished scale due to hearing it, rather than anticipating that it will be appropriate for a particular circumstance. This is more persuasive to me. The subsequent inquiries are warranted: In the event that music is analogous to a language, why is it necessary to possess a high level of grammar proficiency if one is uncertain about the content of their intended message before taking the stage? What is the purpose of possessing a comprehensive understanding of a language if you are unable to express yourself because, for instance, you have no interest in it? After experiencing the Polish education system in its totality, I have observed numerous absurdities. For example, we are not instructed to express our own opinions or to have something of value to contribute. In contrast, there is a significant emphasis on technical skills (tools). I believe that this is the reason why "patents" are so prevalent. I am of the opinion that it is impossible to instantaneously create something that has not been done before. Alternatively, you may utilize an existing entity, refine it, and subsequently generate a novel entity. Fortunately, our brains are naturally creative. In their book, *The Runaway Species: How Human Creativity Remakes the World*, composer Anthony Brandt and neuroscientist David Eagleman propose a new perspective focused on possibilities¹⁷.

¹⁷ A. Brandt, D. Eagleman *The Runaway Species: How Human Creativity Remakes The World*, e-book, Publisher Catapult New York.

Many assume that so-called "creative minds" use very sophisticated methods to process or transform the world around them. However, Brandt and Eagleman propose a much simpler thesis. They divide the aspect of cognitive functions related to creativity into three basic strategies: bending, breaking, and blending. Bending involves creating variations, using shape, size, material, and other aspects to create new solutions. In our case, these can be principles of organizing musical material such as melody, harmony, rhythm, etc. You transform the chosen source in this way to create a new possibility. Breaking involves breaking down an element into smaller parts, from which a new thing is later created. Blending involves implementing things from different fields; where you have something designed in one field and consider how it can be placed in a new context. This approach allows you to achieve something radically different.

Verification/Corrections

Our work is not yet complete, despite the fact that the initial version is prepared. This is the time to revise or rectify any inadequacies in your work. You evaluate the work you have completed to ascertain whether it is satisfactory or requires revision. You have the ability to modify your text, make minor adjustments to an image, rectify an incorrectly written formula, and evaluate the durability of your creation. The solution must be tested and verified to guarantee its accuracy and efficacy after it has been developed. The individual evaluates and refines the solution during this stage by conducting experiments, conducting analyses, or consulting with others. This procedure serves to verify that the solution is viable and aligns with the problem's specifications.

It is crucial to bear in mind that the creative process is comprised of four distinct stages. In order to optimize our creativity, it is imperative that we do not neglect any of them. The most significant challenges are likely to occur when an individual has an idea and attempts to bypass the incubation period. We are then confronted with a creative block, and despite dedicating several hours to the endeavor each day, we are unable to produce anything.

In the event that an individual is not fully cognizant of the preparation and incubation phases, they may indeed confuse creative inspiration with the aforementioned "muse" that we all anticipate. G. Wallas's research demonstrates that

we are accountable for this state of creative elevation and that we can foster it by being cognizant of the processes that occur during the first and second phases. After the outline of concepts is completed, the matter of orchestration and score writing remains. The entire process is explicitly divided into technical activities, which are notation and invention, in my work.

It is also important to take into account the entire emotional spectrum. For example, I am pleased with the work I have produced today because I awoke this morning feeling well-rested and enjoying a pleasant day. Everything is proceeding smoothly. Tomorrow may present a completely different scenario; I may experience a poor mood, someone may criticize my work, and the same piece may cease to captivate me. Additionally, I may lose confidence in my abilities. These are emotions; however, they are transient. In the context of one's work, it is particularly challenging to objectively evaluate what is considered to be excellent. In my experience, I derive greater gratification from the act of taking action, which is advantageous for me. We require time to cultivate a perspective and distance toward our work. I believe that the term "awareness" of these processes is absent, and in some cases, these processes can be reversed. For instance, allowing an individual to exercise creative license during a semester or final exam. It is possible that an individual will discover a space to investigate their own inner self and artistic needs by not rigorously adhering to the rules of passing in the form of top-down program requirements related to the acquisition of specific technical skills. Then, this process has the potential to be enhanced. The likelihood of the individual voluntarily engaging in the search for specific solutions and selecting the instruments is high (learning/following).

It is intriguing that G. Wallas recommends that it is more advantageous to work on multiple projects and transition between them in his book. Rather than engaging in daily activities or taking a walk as a method of incubation, you can initiate a new endeavor and complete the entire process from the outset. This results in the initial endeavor being relegated to the recesses of your mind, where it can continue to develop "in the background." Begin working on a third endeavor when you feel the need. The "Aha!" moment will eventually arrive for one of the initiatives. Wallas even suggests that this "Aha!" moment may occur for all of your endeavors in succession.

However, the verification or correction phase is another instance in which these stages may fail. You experienced the "Aha!" moment and subsequently

dedicated countless hours to the practice of an instrument or the composition of music. Currently, you possess an item that is prepared. Rather than revisiting the content to amend or verify it, you consider the project to be finished and attempt to present it in its current state. However, it is impossible to bypass the verification/correction phase.

We take action when the "Aha!" moment occurs. We create the composition and devise novel concepts to integrate into our language. Upon completion of the assignment, it is advisable to allocate some time for oneself. Our evaluation is distorted as a result of the euphoria that ensues upon the completion of the task. It is then advisable to divert one's attention and allow the newly developed piece to slumber for a few days. Only when you are emotionally detached can you resume the verification or correction phase.

Wallas underscored that creativity is not a linear process and that individuals may need to go through these stages multiple times before achieving a satisfactory solution¹⁸. Additionally, the creative process can be influenced by external factors, including motivation, environment, and social context. Although Wallas's model has been influential in the study of creativity, it is important to recognize that creativity is a multifaceted phenomenon that can differ substantially among individuals and contexts. Wallas's model has been expanded and supplemented by subsequent research; however, his framework continues to offer valuable insights into the nature of creative thinking and problem-solving.

1.2. Mihály Csíkszentmihályi – FLOW

One of the later studies expanding on Wallas's theory is the "Flow Model" by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi. The Quality of Life Research Center, a nonprofit organization that conducts research in positive psychology, was founded by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1934–2021), a Hungarian-American professor of psychology and a respected lecturer. The practical implementation of Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory has significantly enhanced the quality of life for numerous individuals, and his

¹⁸ Cf. *A Guide To The 4 Stages Of Creativity* *Creative Inspiration, Creativity*, online. <https://unfoldandbegin.com/a-guide-to-the-4-stages-of-creativity/>. [accessed 24 April 2024].

exceptional scientific accomplishments have established him as one of the foremost figures in this field.

Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's Flow Model is a psychological theory that delineates a state of optimal experience in which an individual is completely immersed in an activity, resulting in complete focus and maximum satisfaction. This state of flow is distinguished by a profound sense of engagement with the task, a sense of control over one's actions, a lack of awareness of time, and a profound sense of pleasure and satisfaction from the activity (see Illustration 2).

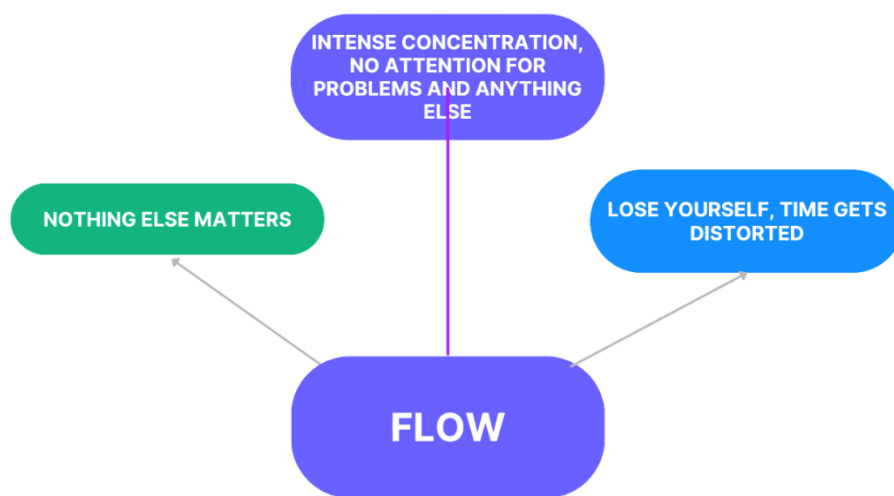


Illustration 2. Three Key Elements of the Flow State [Original Graphic]

The Flow Model consists of several key elements¹⁹:

Clear Goals and Challenges: A person in a flow state sets clear goals or takes on challenges that match their skills. Tasks are challenging enough to stimulate interest but not so difficult as to cause frustration.

Focus and Engagement: During flow, the individual is fully absorbed in the task, leading to complete focus and increased efficiency and productivity.

Lack of Time Awareness: In a flow state, time seems to blend, and the person loses track of its passage. This can lead to a "relative time" experience where minutes may feel like hours and hours may pass in an instant.

¹⁹ M. Csíkszentmihályi, *Flow. Stan przepływu*, JK Wydawnictwo, Łódź 2023, p. 84–89.

Sense of Control: The person feels a deep sense of control over their actions and environment. Despite possible difficulties or challenges, they feel competent and confident.

Intense Satisfaction: Flow leads to strong positive emotions such as satisfaction, joy, and fulfillment from the activity. Those experiencing flow often describe this feeling as "being in the zone" or "finding their passion."

The Flow Model is significant for positive psychology and motivation theory because it helps understand what drives people to engage in activities and what factors influence their subjective experiences of satisfaction and happiness²⁰ (see Illustration 3).

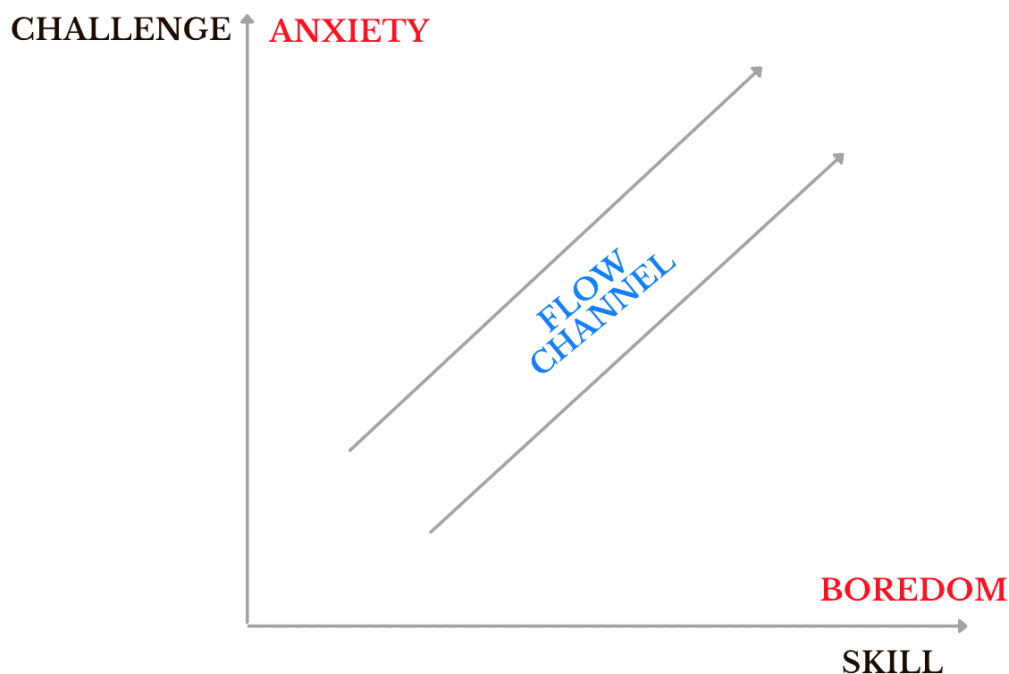


Illustration 3. The Flow Channel. Graph [Original Graphic]

The aforementioned illustration demonstrates that in the context of improvised music, the attainment of a state of flow necessitates the equilibrium of two primary factors: the challenge posed by the performance and one's own or colleagues' abilities. This graph is applicable to both solitary and collective improvisation.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 84-89.

Improvised music frequently necessitates specific frameworks within which the improvisation takes place. In order to achieve a state of complete immersion and being present, these frameworks should not be excessively complex or unduly simplistic. In either scenario, it is possible that you may lose focus and deviate from the desirable flow state. This rhythm can be disrupted by distractions and immediate self-evaluation.

The challenge level must correspond with your level of expertise. This includes mental preparation and a familiarity with free improvisation, in addition to technical abilities. Stress can result from encountering obstacles that exceed one's mental or technical capabilities. We do not desire tasks that are excessively demanding, as this can induce anxiety, nor do we desire tasks that are excessively simple, as this can result in boredom.

Navigating this graph can be described as follows:

Low skill level required + low challenge = **apathy**

Low challenge + medium skill level = **boredom**

Low challenge + high skill level = **relaxation**

Low skill level required + medium challenge = **worry**

Low skill level required + high challenge = **anxiety**

High skill level + medium challenge = **sense of control**

Medium skill level + high challenge = **arousal**

High skill level + high challenge = **FLOW**

II. Improvisation as a Process – Authorial Shaping of Improvisation Narratives

The transition between two technological eras—the age of print (19th century) and the age of recordings (20th century) – accounted for the prominence of improvised music in the 20th century. The former favored confined, immutable works, whereas the latter favored open, variable ones. Rhythm, pitch, meter, and formal shape are elements that are determined by traditional scores, which represent confined works and provide performers with limited interpretive freedom. Throughout the 20th century, there were numerous cultural transformations, and the advancement of technology encouraged creators to conduct more daring experiments.

Improvised music has consistently fostered a high degree of personal expression and creativity, allowing musicians to experiment with new styles, techniques, and sounds. Globalization and cultural exchange have further enabled musicians to explore a wide range of musical traditions and genres from around the world.

The multitude of concepts used to describe this kind of music and playing style is both a blessing and a challenge for theorists and performers alike. As Bailey rightly notes, freely improvised music

[...] improvised music suffers from – and enjoys – the confused identity which its resistance to labelling indicates. It is a logical situation; freely improvised music is an activity which encompasses too many different kinds of players, too many different attitudes to music, too many different concepts of what improvisation is, even, for it all to be subsumed under one name.²¹

The 20th century in music is a period in which the musical material fragmented into numerous new genres. New instruments were invented, new sounds began to be utilized, such as noises, new types of notation emerged, and new directions in music were established. The world sped up significantly, resulting in a plethora of styles and concepts. This was also linked to socio-economic changes, technological development, and wars. The nature of improvised music is defined by the sound and musical identity of the person or ensemble performing it. But one thing is certain: variability is the main feature of this music.

²¹ Cf. D. Bailey, *Improvisations – Its Nature and Practice in Music*, Da Capo Press, United States of America 1993, p. 83.

Once played and recorded, improvisation becomes an element of composition, a melody that exists in space. It can be transcribed, memorized, assimilated, and implemented into one's musical language. Performing such transcriptions is a common element in jazz education, and there's nothing wrong with it. However, for this practice to be fully effective, we must ask ourselves, "Why?" did someone play this way or "How?" did they arrive at this point, and on how many levels does the improvisation occur, or what parameters are given. New and original things inherently have their assumptions, imperatives, for example, the emergence of bebop as a protest against playing dance music and elevating jazz to a higher level of perception, positioning this genre in the light of concert music, music for listening and contemplation. The same is true for *free jazz*. It is a negation of the previous achievements of American creators, a break with the universally accepted tradition, a desire for change. It also has significance in the socio-political field, related to racial segregation.

In a similar vein, when we look at improvised music that originated in continental Europe and Great Britain. Its chilly, frequently emotionally "faded," nature is linked to rejecting jazz as a starting point and building instead on the music of avant-garde American composers from the second half of the 20th century (the post-war era and the Cold War), as well as European composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen and Arnold Schönberg. The fundamental idea was to do away with the rigid structures of jazz and classical music (tonality, chord progression, traditional compositional forms), do away with the hierarchy and particular instrument roles, and create an environment in which all players engage in improvisation on an equal footing. Above the worship of the individual, the community is of utmost importance (see Table 1). The secret to the highly sought-after "personal style" is unquestionably a wider perspective on an artist's improvisation technique and creative process, which is undoubtedly made possible by knowing the historical background, the primary inspiration, the urgency, and the motivation.

At this point, it is worth quoting Peter Brötzmann's words, which emphasize the importance of circumstances and external motivations for creating jazz and improvised music, and seem fundamental to these considerations:

J: Can we talk about music and art detached from the socio-political situation in which it is created?

P.B.: I don't think that's possible. I have never been able to look at art as a formal problem. Of course, aesthetics can be useful, but for me, the formal, technical, and aesthetic aspects of this issue are not interesting. I chose to play jazz music because jazz has always been socially engaged. When we look at history, going back to gospel music, slave songs, and blues – which is the foundation—music described the hardships of everyday life; it was not just a formal puzzle. It addressed unpleasant topics—lack of money, poverty, and how to get out of it. Music is quite a decent way to achieve that.²²

Table 1. Comparison of Free Jazz and Improvised Music

	<i>free jazz</i>	Improvised music
Time	the 1950s	the 1960s
Location	United States of America	United Kingdom and Europe
Characteristic features	• driven by expressive explorations ("hot") • inextricably linked to racial politics in the United States • questions the typical division between soloist and rhythm section • breaks away from the strict formulas previously present in jazz music (tonality, chord progressions, conventional forms of compositions)	• appears dry, amorphous, and cold ("cool") • more European and modernist, where jazz influences blend with classical avant-garde influences • draws from the musical tradition of free jazz but is structurally (genetically) distinct • driven more by sonic explorations, • less formally tied to Marxist-anarchist political concepts • breaks away from the strict forms of classical music (tonality, chord progression, conventional forms of compositions)
Representatives	• Cecil Taylor, • Ornette Coleman, • Albert Ayler	• Derek Bailey, • Cornelius Cardew

²² Cf. P. Jagielski, *Co możemy zrobić, by zmienić świat? Rozmowa z Peterem Brötzmannem*, online. <https://www.jazzarium.pl/przeczytaj/wywiady/co-mo%C5%BCemy-zrobi%C4%87-zmieni%C4%87-%C5%9Bwiat-rozmowa-z-peterem-br%C3%B6tzmannem>. [accessed 24 April 2024].

There are many publications regarding the history of jazz, the emergence of individual genres, containing insightful descriptions and observations about the development of jazz music, both in Polish and in foreign literature.²³

Regarding the inspiration for creating the musical material "Scratches for Eight Musicians," particular attention should be given to Markus Stockhausen, who in his work utilizes the legacy of his father, Karlheinz Stockhausen, by cultivating the concept associated with Intuitive Music.

Around the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, Karlheinz Stockhausen focused on this area of his work, drawing inspiration from Far Eastern religious and musical traditions²⁴. The explication of a spiritual, irrational, and spontaneous development of a work with an open, unpredictable performance scenario and an apparent contemplative and meditative character forms the basis of this notion. Unquestionably, among the composer's most audacious and original solutions is intuitive music. It is really a collaborative, impromptu composition, with a text written by the composer acting as a sort of performance guide. According to Stockhausen, one might be freed from musical preconceptions through intuition and a specific condition of consciousness. For instance, the piece that follows was used in this work and was examined by Ed Chang before being posted on the K. Stockhausen website:²⁵

²³ This is not the subject of this doctoral dissertation, so I refer interested parties to the following publications: Andrzej Schmidt, *Historia Jazzu*, Polihymnia, Lublin 2011; Piotr Jagielski, *Święta tradycja, własny głos. Opowieści o amerykańskim jazzie*, Seria Amerykańska, Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2021; Jacek Niedziela, *Historia Jazzu. 100 wykładów*, Dobrowydawnictwo; 2009; Joachim Ernst Berendt, *Wszystko o jazzie. Mały leksykon*, PWM, Kraków 1963.

²⁴ Z. Skowron, *Teoria i estetyka awangardy muzycznej drugiej połowy XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016, p. 184.

²⁵ E. Changa, *Stockhausen: Sounds in Space. Analysis, explanation and personal impressions of the works of the avant-garde composer Karlheinz Stockhausen*, online. <https://stockhausenspace.blogspot.com/2015/03/aus-den-sieben-tagen.html#Anchor%204>. [accessed 16 April 2024].

„AUS DEN SIEBEN TAGEN (From the Seven Days) (1968)

15 "intuitive music" text compositions

for electroacoustic ensemble (unless otherwise specified)

Example: Treffpunkt / “Meeting Point”

everyone plays the same tone

lead the tone wherever your thoughts

lead you

do not leave it, stay with it

always return

to the same place”

In this spirit, we worked for two days during the Jazz Juniors festival in Krakow, together with the Markus Stockhausen Intuitive Music Orchestra. The rehearsals (I prefer the term improvisation sessions) were meant to help us synchronize with each other. It was not about practicing something to later repeat it as effectively as possible in the concert. The main goal of these meetings was to become familiar with this method of performing music within a large vocal-instrumental ensemble. Here is an excerpt from the review of our concert, which appeared in "JazzPRESS," written by Mery Zimny:

The Markus Stockhausen Intuitive Music Orchestra was one of the enigmas. A large group of remarkable personalities – alongside the leader, the orchestra included: Anna Gadt, Yumi Ito, Will Vinson, Emil Misk, Szymon Mika, Robert Kubiszyn, and Patryk Dobosz – could have resulted in fireworks or, on the contrary, could have been a failure. Although they had little time together before the performance, their concert became one of the strongest and most interesting points of the program. Markus Stockhausen – son of the great composer Karlheinz, a versatile musician endowed with charisma and humility – after an introduction explaining the essence of his music, directed the entire ensemble in such a way that it was hard to tear oneself away from the engaging, dynamic, and eventful group narrative. Much of this success is owed to the excellent musicians, but the greatest credit goes to the trumpeter and conductor Stockhausen, whose intuition and guidance the whole group trusted. An incredible concert!²⁶

The phrase “could have resulted in fireworks or, on the contrary, could have been a failure” wonderfully describes the nature of improvised performances. It takes

²⁶ M. Zimny, Festiwal Jazz Juniors 2019 – Kraków, Cricoteka, „JazzPRESS”, styczeń 2020 (ISSN 2084-3143). An online monthly magazine dedicated to jazz and improvised music.

a lot of courage to undertake the effort and risk associated with performing this kind of music in a large instrumental ensemble.

"Some Playing Advices for Intuitive Music Performance" is the instruction we received from Markus Stockhausen for the fully improvised concert in Krakow during the Jazz Juniors festival. The scope of the instructions is presented in Illustration 4 below.

Some playing advices for Intuitive Music Performance

by Markus Stockhausen, November 2019

Set up: Create the acoustic situation on stage as ideal as possible, regarding the distance to the other musicians, the miking, use of monitors etc.

Warm up exercise: All play together, but just a few notes or sounds, leaving space, eyes closed, and you see if you can really hear / perceive everyone well.

Performance: Let us begin with silence. Empty your mind, the body is relaxed, calm breathing. After a while someone starts, the story begins. The music naturally evolves, one tone leads to the next.

Be aware of:

- Your function in the music, accompanying, supporting, leading, colouring, harmonising someones melody, creating an atmosphere etc.
- The register: quickly notice which frequencies are „occupied“ and choose your register consciously - might be that you intentionally want to play in the same register as someone else, more often it is better to complement each other registerwise.
- The overall form: from solos, duos, trios to full orchestration, co-compose the overall shape, the dramaturgy of the music in an intelligent way.
- Help creating an interesting mix of tonal, atonal, abstract, noisy, harmonious and exciting, energetic music.
- In the course of a concert many different tonal keys may appear, not always the common ones like d-minor etc., ideally all keys have an equal place.

- Give room when necessary. Don't play too much, help that everyone get's an equal share in the performance, exercise social and musical empathy, mindfulness.
- Play from your inner feelings. The mind is but an instrument of knowledge, a tool. Intuition is much stronger, transcending the mind. When you have something to say (play), say it. When the idea is finished, stop playing. Don't prolongue your playing unnecessarily, don't play just to play. This keeps the music transparent.
- Playing and not playing should ideally feel the same. All the time you are focussed, part of the music. ON - you play, OFF - you listen and wait for your next moment. It is a No-Ego state of mind, serving THE MUSIC to its best, highly conscious, aware. Be present all the time.
- When a natural ending happens, let's respect it and end.

Illustration 4. Some Playing Advices for Intuitive Music Performance – Instructions provided by Markus Stockhausen

It was an international project where each of us represented different levels, both in terms of performance and experience. It was an incredibly inspiring experience that showed me that sheet music is not always necessary to perform music in a large instrumental ensemble. However, when not all co-performers are seasoned improvisers, ensemble sessions are needed for the musicians to harmonize with each other. Additionally, having instructions and thoroughly discussing them in pre-concert meetings leveled the playing field and gave our performance a unified direction. The presence of a leader like Markus Stockhausen ensured that the execution of the piece would be outstanding, allowing each performer a moment to shine, and that the segments of collective improvisation would take place in an atmosphere of respect and attentiveness. I transferred this approach to my own band while working on the album "Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio."

At this point, it is worth quoting Markus Stockhausen himself on improvisation and intuition, who stated that:

For me, improvisation is playing with known languages and forms. Intuition begins when nothing is predetermined, when everything is created in the moment. The boundary between these two concepts is, of course, fluid. There is no good improvisation without the use of intuition, and there is no good playing with intuition without using improvisational techniques and experience. [...] But fundamental to intuitive playing is the ability to listen to oneself, to express what one feels within in the here and now AND—when

performed with others—to perceive everything that is happening around oneself.²⁷

Moreover, an interesting perspective is positioning intuitive music as a new genre, which is clearly reflected in the following words of Markus Stockhausen:

Nowadays, I understand Intuitive Music as a completely new genre, alongside early music, classical, contemporary music, jazz, pop, rock, world music... whatever: this entirely free way of making music is truly new. It represents a different approach, where the musician becomes a co-composer in the moment and can bring in all his knowledge and skills.

It is becoming increasingly clear how much playing Intuitive Music is also a social and spiritual exercise. It is a tightrope walk between free self-expression and empathetic, sensitive interaction. In this sense, we naturally practice improvisation in various ways, but we also train our perceptual abilities and general awareness. Intuitive then means a comprehensive, spontaneous recognition of the whole, which one brings to sound together.²⁸

2.1. Precision of Thought Expression in Improvisation

I have always been torn between jazz and classical music. There are distinct specialties even within these two macro-genres: swing, free jazz, improvised music, romantic music, early music, and current music. With so many components, *Scratches for Eight Musicians* is a tremendously appealing and one-of-a-kind piece of music.

Throughout my career, I have worked to eliminate boundaries between performers and genres. I think that every kind of art may serve as a source of inspiration; one can find something that speaks to them personally in each, and then work from there to develop their own unique style. That, too, is the theme of this album: the pursuit of own style.

After taking part in innumerable projects involving a wide range of musical genres, I have concluded that, from the standpoint of the performer, the most crucial thing is to establish our own boundaries within which we will operate while creating or performing music in a particular style. It is not necessary for us to be experts in a genre's performance to describe its framework. Only a few of the components that will define a particular performance setting for us can be used. This background

²⁷ List M. Stockhausena do E. Sintoni, in: *Intuitive Music and More*, <https://www.intuitive-music-and-more.com/de/improvisationvsintuitivemusic>. [accessed 29 April 2024].

²⁸ *Intuitive Music and More*, <https://www.intuitive-music-and-more.com/de/improvisationvsintuitivemusic>. [accessed 29 April 2024]. [own translation].

might act as a presumption in improvisation as well as the structure that will guide our actions.

From a historical perspective, free improvisation is the oldest musical practice. The first forms of human music-making, by definition, could not have had any other shape. There is no compositional technique, area, or form in music that has not been marked by improvisation.²⁹

In my work, I will use the division of improvisation proposed by Derek Bailey in his publication "Improvisation – Its Nature and Practice in Music." He believes that regarding improvisation, we can distinguish two basic types: idiomatic improvisation and non-idiomatic improvisation.

Idiomatic Improvisation

It is predominantly intended to convey an idiom, such as a jazz idiom, and derives its identity and motivation from it. Naturally, the term "jazz" is a vast and multifaceted concept that elicits a variety of associations in the present day. In reality, free jazz is an idiom that already exists and possesses numerous characteristics of its sound and form, such as the absence of a harmonic instrument in the ensemble, which allows the improvisers to operate with complete harmonic freedom. In the same vein, improvised music. Nevertheless, this does not alter the fact that there is a significant degree of uncertainty in the context of performing these two genres in comparison to other forms of music performance.

The term "idiomatic" denotes the natural, native, or characteristic manner of articulating ideas or concepts in a particular language, dialect, or musical genre. It includes phrases, expressions, and constructions that are frequently employed and comprehended by native speakers of that language. The term "idiomatic" denotes that an object or phrase adheres to the linguistic norms and conventions of a specific language or culture. For instance, idiomatic expressions such as "break a leg" are distinctive to English and would not necessarily be comprehensible if translated literally into another language. The conventions and best practices of a specific language are reflected in the idiomatic nature of improvisation, which facilitates the

²⁹ Cf. D. Bailey, *Swobodna improwizacja*, in: *Kultura dźwięku. Teksty o muzyce nowoczesnej* . Selection and editing Ch. Cox, D. Warner, Gdańsk 2010, p. 327.

comprehension and reading of the material for audiences who are already familiar with the language.

Improvisation is an exceptional component that enables one to explore a specific approach. In real time, we employ the distinctive components of a specific style to reinforce it (elements of the work, idiom) while simultaneously creating a personal contribution. We are responsible for selecting the performance framework. We are able to work with one framework inside another, like as when we perform a jazz classic in the vein of a Bach suite. Anything within anything could be it. The arrangement of the improvisation in "Scratches for Eight Musicians" Part IV (trumpet solo at section T) is as follows.

Improvisation is an exceptional component that enables one to explore a specific approach. In real time, we employ the distinctive components of a specific style to reinforce it (elements of the work, idiom) while simultaneously creating a personal contribution. We are responsible for selecting the performance framework. For instance, we can employ one structure within another structure, such as playing in the manner of a Bach suite within a jazz standard. Anything may be contained within anything. The arrangement of the improvisation in Part IV of "Scratches for Eight Musicians" is as follows (trumpet solo at section T).

Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

Its objectives are wholly distinct, which is characteristic of free improvisation. Although it may possess a stylized appearance, it seldom serves as an indicator of any idiomatic identity. In essence, the term "non-idiomatic" denotes a language or code that deviates from the conventional or anticipated norms of expression in a specific context. Non-idiomatic improvisation exists somewhat in isolation from the work of which it is a part due to the unpredictable shape of the structure that results from this type of improvisation and the potential for the composition to progress in entirely new directions.

T. Carl Whitmer, in his 1934 publication titled "The Art of Improvisation,"³⁰ proposed a thesis on two attitudes towards shaping the narrative of improvisation, asserting that "[...] there are two ways to improvise. The first is based on expansion,

³⁰ T.C. Whitmer, *The Art of Improvisation*, M. Witmark & Sons, New York 1934.

and the second on the use of a predetermined form.”³¹. Regarding improvising within a predetermined form, he states:

It is not necessary to remember all details, but it is necessary to recall plan, method, and general character. Whenever in doubt use some set form, but experiment with expansion until you get this one thought deep down: “In expansion the form is generated. It makes itself.”³²

This is a superb complement to Derek Bailey's philosophy, which is based on the dualism of having a specific starting point for improvisation (e.g., the number of bars in a chorus, a harmonic scheme) and having no initiating information and constructing a musical structure in real-time. These two attitudes can be an ideal complement.

I frequently encounter the attitude that an artist forgets the diverse world of sounds, both definite and indeterminate in pitch, upon entering the stage, and reverts to their well-worn, effective personal patterns, as we continue the discussion on the precision of expressing thoughts in improvisation. This is an entirely natural and comprehensible position. The inquiry is: What are you currently engaged in during an individual session with your instrument? The more intriguing and diverse experiences we encounter on our artistic journey or explore in the solitude of our studios, the more original works we will be able to produce in the future. On stage, we are a composite of everything we experience. Eventually, it is imperative to contemplate the message we wish to convey through improvisation, the values we hold dear in our music, or the things that bring us pleasure and contentment. Then, we can select the most suitable tools, techniques, and elements to convey our message in the most effective manner. We frequently attempt to predict the outcome by employing solutions that are guaranteed and dependable. The purpose of "patterns" is to guarantee that improvisation is effective on the canvas of jazz standards. Consequently, they maintain an enduring presence and are highly regarded by academics. This is a highly personalized issue, and the process of establishing a characteristic style for an individual would be significantly streamlined if the process were reversed from the initial learning of the tools to the subsequent consideration of whether they are necessary.

³¹ Ibidem. Za: D. Bailey, *Improvisations...*, op. cit., p. 32.

³² Ibidem,

In order to articulate oneself accurately, it is essential to have a message to convey. I am of the opinion that each of us possesses a unique voice. By default, each of us has something to say. Whether or not we are capable and willing to explore our inner selves is the query. The capacity to “connect the dots” is as critical as the act of practicing on an instrument. The purpose of scales and harmonic patterns is to facilitate the expression of oneself, rather than the reverse. I frequently encounter an improvisational approach that regards it as a task that must be completed: “playing through the harmony” without any personal reflection, without contemplating what “I” actually have to say. Music is frequently likened to language, and improvisers are often discussed as having their own unique musical language. The artist presents something or conveys something through their playing during a performance. However, they also communicate something more substantial; they participate in self-presentation, which reveals their interests, priorities, temperament, biases, and disposition to a certain extent. Therefore, a musical statement encompasses both a self-presentational function and a referential function, which is the capacity to generate language messages that symbolically represent the sender's intended message to the receiver.

The relative independence of language from the specific material in which it is embodied is undoubtedly related to its referentiality. Spoken and written words refer to concepts. If we understand the language, we know what a sentence refers to, regardless of whether the sentence is embodied in sound or ink. Conversely, the lack of reference means that in music, independence from specific material is impossible (similarly to visual media). The sound material of music and the visual material in painting do not usually refer to concepts. Of course, these imagined objects they represent can be assigned certain concepts, just as any real object can, but this does not mean the same as “referring to a concept.” [...] When a word refers to a general concept, these specific objects are not defined, and we receive only the concept (which we can concretize in our imagination in many ways, assigning it to numerous images). When, however, we assign a concept to a specific object, real or imagined, we receive both the concept and the object.³³

The instruments necessary to develop into a great improviser are technical preparation, active participation in the world of culture, and listening to a variety of musical genres. The key to “preparing for the unwary” is to collect information and

³³ K. Berger, *Potęga smaku* (Polish translation of the original *A Theory of Art.*), Publisher: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2008, p. 90–91.

inspiration from a variety of sources. This is particularly apparent in the context of improvised music, where an individual may not feel wholly at ease in the role. Nevertheless, the performer is able to become accustomed to the emotions that accompanied the performance of this music by concentrating on the process rather than the end result. Our creativity can be impeded and stifled by uncertainty, which is the inability to foresee the final outcome and, as a result, the final effect. However, what if we invested more time in the process of learning improvisation by practicing and placing ourselves in undefined situations, rather than concentrating on the final effect and perfecting various scales and chord progressions by attempting to play specific chord patterns as well as possible? It is about prioritizing the development of one's identity and self-identity over the mere demonstration of proficiency by an exceptionally well-trained musician who lacks the ability to utilize all of their technical skills in a manner that is engaging. This is applicable to both solitary and collective improvisation. It pertains to the equitable distribution of theory and practice. By emphasizing the process over the final product, we can more rapidly develop our own unique musical style. Nevertheless, in order to utilize a variety of sources, it is necessary to familiarize ourselves with them. The abundance of material that music history and the accomplishments of individual composers and creators currently provide inspire us to investigate and investigate novel concepts.

We frequently and for an excessively extended period of time continue to operate within the domain of theory, neglecting to apply the knowledge we have acquired in practical situations. We intend to directly apply the information without contemplating how to apply the newly acquired knowledge to convey our intended message. The manner in which we communicate our message is inextricably linked to its content. Furthermore, both components are contingent upon the audience's response. Consequently, it is imperative to adopt a pragmatic approach to the subject matter. This pertains to the methods by which an artist can work and refine the precision of articulating thoughts during improvisation. This necessitates continuous contemplation of the content and the manner in which it is intended to be communicated.

Mastering the technical aspects of an instrument, such as practicing scales, chords, and passages to develop the ability to articulate one's thoughts with precision, is not an objective in itself. It serves as an instrument for the creative process. How can we guarantee that we are cognizant of the fact that the purpose of playing a

specific piece, such as an etude or piece, is not solely to enhance our performance? It is effortless to assume that the sole objective of practicing a particular scale or composition is to acquire that particular piece. However, this is not the situation. When engaging with an instrument individually, numerous events transpire in the background.

For instance, fragments of sonatas or concertos are constructed according to a specific harmonic scheme, which, upon its discovery, provides an explanation for the composer's selection of these particular notes. Their decisions are likely to be related to the historical context, the creative center from which they originated, or the trends that were prevalent at the time. This is the reason we honor the artists who pioneered a unique, original style that was even ahead of its time. In essence, the quantity of notes that have been accessible to creators has remained constant for centuries. Certainly, novel sound production techniques and instruments have been developed. However, they all began from the same point. Nevertheless, some are recollected, while others have been lost to the ebb and flow of daily life and the passage of time. These are matters that necessitate ongoing contemplation.

It is important to recognize that improvisation is a form of tacit knowledge. In numerous discussions regarding the performance of music, particularly improvised music, it is frequently compared to language. I am of the opinion that this is an appropriate comparison, and I incorporate it into my own statements. The concept of language is also classified as tacit knowledge, as it cannot be acquired solely through the assimilation of grammar rules. A native speaker acquires it at a young age, almost entirely unaware of formal grammar, which can be acquired at a later time. They simultaneously develop their language through imitation, whether from their parents, caregivers, or peers during their early school years.

Tacit knowledge, in contrast to formalized, codified, or expressly expressed knowledge, is challenging to materialize or extract. Consequently, it is more challenging to communicate to others through written or verbal communication. This may encompass intuition, personal wisdom, experience, insight, and motor abilities. For instance, the fact that Warsaw is the capital of Poland is an example of explicitly expressed knowledge; it can be recorded, communicated, and comprehended by the recipient. Conversely, the ability to speak a specific language, ride a bicycle, knead dough, play a musical instrument, or design and operate intricate equipment necessitates distinct types of knowledge that are not always explicitly known, even

by seasoned professionals, and that are challenging to communicate explicitly to others.

Complete liberation from external factors and intrusive thoughts throughout the entire act is a critical component of precise thought expression. Nevertheless, there is an additional element to this equation that is quite apparent but occasionally disregarded: the audience.

Improvised music, as an open work, establishes a new type of relationship between the performer and the audience, becoming a new stage in culture. It introduces a new type of interaction between the contemplation and the utilization of the artwork. This work gains a new position in society, thereby opening a new chapter not only in aesthetics but also in pedagogy, sociology, and art history.³⁴

During improvised performances, the audience acts as an additional factor that can influence the shape of the improvisation and the entire concert. Bailey cited significant words from Alain Daniélou in his monograph "Improvisation – Its Practice and Nature in Music," who stated that "when musicians notice a positive reaction from the audience, they have the desire to repeat that effect."³⁵ Undoubtedly, the audience for improvised music holds a power that no other audience has. It can influence the creative process it witnesses. This influence works both ways. The possibility of achieving intimacy and a bond between the creator and the audience is also the greatest. Moreover, just as the audience can interpret a given fragment in various ways, the same applies to the performers on stage.

The context and direct juxtaposition of objects are crucial for the comprehension of art. The manner in which we prepare to receive art is influenced by the activities and sights we have experienced prior to a concert or exhibition. The same principle applies to the performance of music. It is imperative to actively engage in cultural activities in order to generate content within oneself. It is impossible to consistently generate content, particularly when we desire a unique outcome during our improvisation.

³⁴ U. Eco, *Dzieło otwarte. Forma i nieokreśloność w poetykach współczesnych*, Publisher: W.A.B., Warszawa 2011, p. 43–56.

³⁵ D. Bailey, *Improvisation – Its Nature and Practice in Music*, p. 61.

Joëlle Léandre, a double bassist and performer, writes about her approach to improvised acts:

I feel very responsible because you're nothing without the listeners. You can play at home for your cats, if you want, but if you come on stage, there's a sense of love and beauty, frustration, fear and life and death. It's all of what we are. When we go on stage, artists touch the audience. You can change a person in public because they are so touched, they are full of questions. I am sure they can receive something new, something different. They can also be shocked, they can receive something else through their senses and emotions. You can change their life, and we are responsible for that. It's not just 'Oh, she plays well the bass,' and to make good money, when we go on stage, we are totally responsible.³⁶

2.2. Narration in Improvisation and Appropriate Terminology

Open works or works in motion reveal certain constitutive features that ensure they are always true "works" and not random and chaotic sets of elements ready to arrange themselves into any form. A dictionary, for example, provides us with thousands of words from which we can create poems, philosophical treatises, anonymous letters, and grocery lists. It is very "open" because it allows us to freely manipulate its contents. However, it is not a work of art. In fact, the openness and dynamism of a work lie in its ability to undergo various integrations, engaging in this process with all the structural vitality it retains in all its diverse forms.³⁷

In improvised music, we can distinguish two approaches. The first is where the proposed ideas are already predetermined and can be developed as a whole (e.g., a rhythmic or harmonic pattern). In this case, during improvisation, we try to execute a closed whole. This phenomenon is known as "comprovising," a concept that is becoming increasingly popular and is entering the canon. It largely relates to composition and is an example of more structural thinking about improvisation. The second approach pertains to more open structures, which, in terms of material, are abstract and unordered. Within these frameworks, there is more room for the development of events, and the whole is much more variable and amorphous.

Another issue is the complexity of the proposed idea and its interpretation by others. Sometimes, our proposal may be too complicated for the rest of the ensemble

³⁶ Cf. K. Weiss, *"You Cannot Imagine". Interview with Joëlle Léandre*, „Cadence Magazine”, October 21, 2020, online. <https://www.freejazzblog.org/2020/10/you-cannot-imagine-interview-with.html>. [accessed 1 May 2024].

³⁷ U. Eco, op. cit., p. 95.

to develop our idea. In a large group, each musician represents a different level of perception and needs varying amounts of time to implement the thoughts they encounter in collective improvisation, both their own and others'.

It is a challenging task to intentionally avoid establishing a common direction (rhythm, harmony, or even fragments of melody). From my numerous participations in improvisation sessions, I have found that naturally finding a common denominator in the form of one of the aforementioned elements becomes a kind of "holy grail," a goal in itself. As a result, performers miss out on an entire world they could enter by not opting for common features in the material created through collective improvisation.

But can mere presence on stage, in the same place and at the same time, be a common denominator (a common material for improvisation)? The answer is YES. During joint sessions with the band Emil Misk & The Sonic Syndicate, I tried to implement this approach. I believe that allowing oneself to be surprised on stage and intentionally avoiding common fragments leads to innovation. Let the musical moments caught together be a byproduct of our efforts, and let us strive to discover new worlds, new practices, and unconventional solutions. This approach develops and inspires us, increases our confidence, makes the band play more interestingly, and benefits individual performers.

This is what differentiates performing jazz standards from free improvisation. Performers agree on a specific harmonic structure, rhythm, aesthetics, etc., and within these, they try to create their own world. But when capturing all these elements becomes more important than freely expressing what we want to express, we easily revert to repetitive patterns we know very well. We simply cannot generate everything simultaneously. We need a form of support, because in its absence, we experience stress, lack of focus, and the risk of not finding ourselves "in the zone." Joëlle Léandre perfectly captures the spirit of openness and individuality in music:

I think people are born to create something else by themselves. If you go into the track that society decides where you have to be, you become institutional. I could be an institutional musician, receive a grant every year, but I'm not. They probably look at me as an anarchist or an outlaw. The political society doesn't want people to think too much because they don't want individualism, they want the masses controlled. They want us to go the same speed, on the same track, and to shut up. If you want to wear pink pants and a yellow hat, why not? But if you have pink pants and a yellow hat, the

people around you will say, “Wow! Well, he’s bizarre. Who is he?” Society is built for the masses, not for the individual. If your track is a little different, the people don’t like it too much. The people will be afraid. That’s why we eat the same, we dress the same, we have to think the same... It’s terrible! It’s not liked if you give your own ideas, your own point of view but to be different is a path of freedom, and when you’re attracted by freedom, it’s a long process.³⁸

I would now like to propose a few concepts that will allow us to describe and analyze the course of improvisation more adequately. The main assumption is to identify terms that will help us describe the process, rather than analyzing the improvisation in terms of sound material (pitch relationships and their placement within the measure).

Narrative of Improvisation

In the realm of improvised music, the performers' decision-making is fundamental. I am of the opinion that the decision-making process must be included in addition to an accurate account of the aural material that was used on stage, particularly when discussing improvisation in a large ensemble. The narrative of improvisation analysis provides a comprehensive perspective on the issue of improvisation within the work and its relationship to the performers' attitudes (both reactive and proactive). The structure of the work is established in real-time by the performers' individual decisions, and the instruments employed (rhythm, sound material, and general elements of the work) serve to validate these decisions. This concept can be employed to delineate the chain of cause-and-effect within the work and the course of improvisation.

One of the most significant and distinctive characteristics of improvisation is that, in certain instances, it can elevate a performance to a level of intrigue and grandeur that was not initially anticipated. Music can achieve great heights as a result of unforeseen developments that occur during the improvisation process, irrespective of the musical material and the performers' lineup. New tools are required to describe a musical situation in which the functions of individual instruments interchange and there is no traditional division into a rhythm section and soloist within the composition.

³⁸ Cf. K. Weiss, op. cit.

Additionally, the narrative of improvisation is a more appropriate term for characterizing the utilization of extended sound production techniques that are not typically included in the analysis of musical material. Classical analysis frequently fails to comprehend the abstract overlay of color that is generated by non-traditional sound production methods. In addition, the majority of the descriptions emphasize the activities that were executed. Speaking of the narrative of improvisation, we can also confidently refer to silence, which was not played. Silence is a critical component of collective improvisation, particularly in a large ensemble. In the context of analyzing improvised works, the narrative of improvisation is related to a macro perspective. It is crucial to integrate it with a few additional concepts that have been proposed in order to formulate the most comprehensive reflection on improvisation.

Decision³⁹: from the Latin *decisio* – settlement, resolution, determination. The word itself indicates that it is a process of distinguishing and liberating oneself from all possible scenarios in favor of the one we engage in. In making decisions, the sound material and its execution are less important than the speed and certainty of the reaction. Each decision made during the performance of a work involves reinforcing and justifying that decision through music, choices of sound production techniques, and so on. An absolute condition to be met is being fully present during the performance (even in moments when you are not playing) and being "here and now" (the state of flow).

³⁹ G. Peters, *Improvising Improvisation. From Out of Philosophy, Music, Dance, and Literature*, The University of Chicago Press, (Chicago Scholarship Online, 18 Jan. 2018), p. 33, <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226452760.001.0001>, [accessed 19 April 2024].

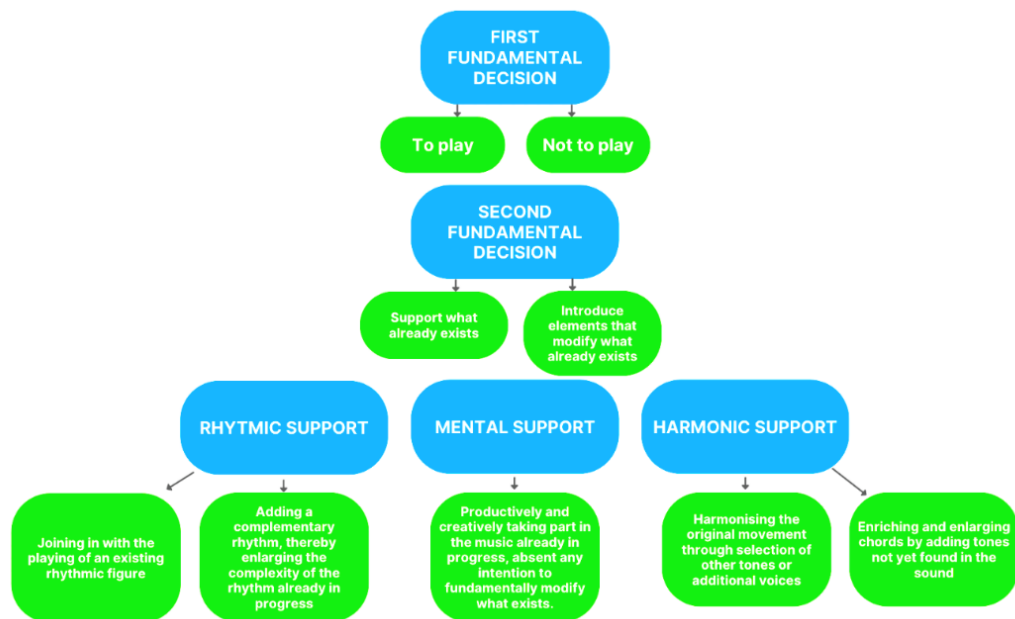


Illustration 5. Norbert Stein Decisions in Improvisations – Example of a Decision Loop⁴⁰

The above example (see Illustration 5) illustrates a basic scenario of a decision loop that can accompany us in the performance of a work whose formative fabric is improvisation. However, in such cases, we often encounter much more complex decision-making processes that are spread out over a longer time horizon within the piece. The multitude of choices can be overwhelming, which in turn can lead to a moment known as the paradox of choice.

The paradox of choice, according to Barry Schwartz's theory⁴¹, refers to the idea that while having more choices might seem like a good solution, it can actually lead to negative consequences and decreased satisfaction. Schwartz argues that as the number of choices increases, individuals may experience decision paralysis, dissatisfaction, and a sense of regret. Let's take a closer look at the key points of this concept.

- **Decision Overload:** In the face of an abundance of options, individuals may feel an overwhelming difficulty in evaluating and comparing each choice. This can lead to decision paralysis, where people struggle to make a decision or may avoid making one altogether.

⁴⁰ Cf. N. Stein, *Decision in Improvisation*, in: *Norbert Stein Pata Music*, online. <https://patamusic.de/en/decisions-in-improvisation/>. [accessed 1 May 2024].

⁴¹ B. Schwartz, *The paradox of choice*, Wykład Barry'ego Schwartz'a zaprezentowany na oficjalnej konferencji TED, 2005. [online]. https://www.ted.com/talks/barry_schwartz_the_paradox_of_choice. [accessed 5 May 2024].

- **Increased Expectations:** With more options, people tend to set higher expectations for the outcome of their choices. They may believe that there is a "perfect" choice among the available options, leading to disappointment and dissatisfaction if their choice does not meet these high standards.
- **Regret:** When individuals have many options to choose from, and their decision does not meet their expectations, they may feel regret and guilt. They may wonder if they could have made a better decision had they chosen differently.
- **Increased Expectations (Maximizing):** The abundance of choices can also lead to the constant search for better options, known as "maximizing." People may feel compelled to exhaustively research and evaluate all possible alternatives, fearing that they might miss the best option. This continuous search can be exhausting and ultimately unsatisfying.⁴²

Schwartz suggests that limiting choices or employing strategies that simplify decision-making can help mitigate the negative effects of the paradox of choice. These strategies may include setting clear priorities, establishing personal decision-making criteria, and adopting the concept of "good enough" instead of striving for the perfect choice.⁴³ To counteract these negative effects and streamline the process of free improvisation, in addition to the score, I created a set of instructions for performing undetermined sections, which significantly facilitates participation in such endeavors (see Subchapter 4.1 of this dissertation).

Indeterminacy

This concept is already present in music history when discussing contemporary music, where composers employ sections that are the creative conception of the performer. Aleatoric music is one of the more prevalent methods that represents a less severe variety of indeterminacy. I would like to see the term "indeterminacy" become more prevalent in the context of characterizing the improvisation narrative process, as it enables a shared denominator in both free jazz and improvised music. It can also be beneficial in the definition of new categories,

⁴² Cf. Ibidem.

⁴³ Ibidem.

and I can envision a scenario in which the term "undetermined music" is used to describe creativity that is inspired by both free jazz and improvised music.

Morphology of Continuity

Morphology pertains to the direct relationships between individual layers and performers, much like the narrative of improvisation, which pertains to the macro scale and can be discussed within the context of the entire production. In a large ensemble, the mutual relationships between performers are fluid in undetermined music. Musicians perpetually exchange roles, inspire one another, and motivate one another to perform.

Tonal Gravity

In improvised pieces, a common tonal point often emerges. However, this is insufficient to determine the key of a given fragment. I believe that the term "tonal gravity" can be very useful, where even with a single note, not just as a bass foundation, we can orbit around it, being influenced by this tonal gravity. A force field is created that attracts co-performers, for example, leading tones striving for resolution or being pulled up or down by a half step.

Field of Possibilities

Another term for an improvised fragment. In my opinion, it better captures the spirit of performing improvised music, where, having an unlimited number of possibilities, we must make decisions and bear their consequences. And all this happens within the formal frameworks generated in real-time.

[...] the concept of the field, borrowed from physics, contains a new perspective on the relationship between cause and effect, previously understood unambiguously and unidirectionally, now perceived as the mutual interaction of opposing forces, thus representing the dynamism of structure. The concept of possibility, taken from philosophy, reflects the general tendency of contemporary science to abandon the static and syllogistic concept of order, as well as the awareness of the plasticity of human behavior and the historical relativity of values inherent in this science.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ U. Eco, op. cit., p. 87–88.

Dominance and Dependency Relationship

Music is unique among the arts in that it directly affects our muscles, especially rhythmic music with its repeating pulse. In the context of the same improvisation, segments with a steady rhythm will have an advantage over less determined ones. It is very difficult to resist an established rhythm created through collective improvisation. It requires a lot of determination to not become dependent on this force and to continue with a different, contrasting idea in parallel.

The concepts that have been suggested appear to be highly beneficial for the facilitation of communication among a large ensemble of performers in the development of contemporary improvisation narratives. Not only do they function as terms associated with the performance of the work, but they can also be employed for the analysis and interpretation of this music. I am of the opinion that the descriptive layer of improvised music and, more importantly, the attitude that accompanies its performance are equally critical as the performance of improvised music continues to develop. The significance of the decisions and the repercussions they have on the piece and the performer must be reflected in the description of a situation in which an artist on stage makes a decision that influences the course of the piece. It is not merely a matter of "performing" a motif that inspires the other performers. It is intended that the proposed concepts describe this "something more," and there is something more behind it.

2.3. Sound Map and Performance Parameters

One of the objectives of the ensemble's work was to broaden the range of colors, the potential for musical expression, and to produce more intricate and captivating sounds. I aimed to provide all ensemble members with guidance throughout this process in order to facilitate our collective involvement in the development of our ensemble's musical language.

For the performance of Part III of "Scratches for Eight Musicians," I prepared a Sound and Performance Parameters Map, which I have referred to as the Language of Improvisation for the purpose of the following illustration (see Illustration 6).

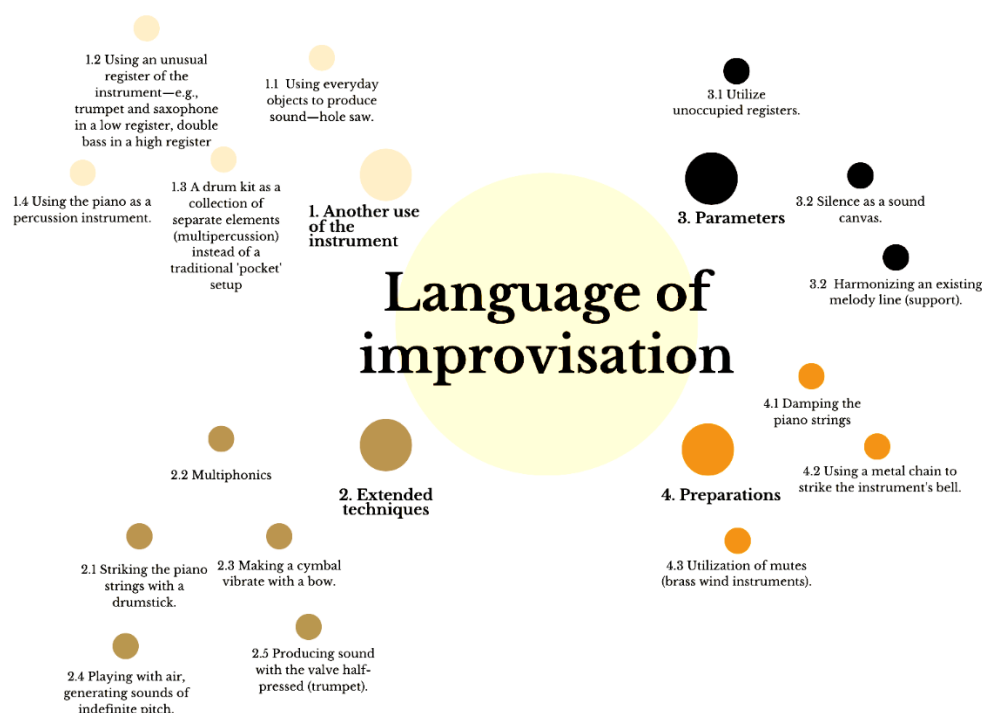


Illustration 6. E. Miszk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians*, Part III, Sound and Performance Parameters Map – Language of Improvisation

As time went on, I began to ponder the issue of generating various sounds that are not traditionally understood as notes (correct intonation, a specific pitch) using melodic acoustic instruments (e.g., wind, string instruments). In terms of improvisation narrative, this opens up completely different possibilities for the performer. An instrument, which traditionally occupies a certain position (themes, melodies), can become an instrument responsible for rhythm or an abstract background layer, serving as mental support for an existing plan.

I believe that in the context of the improvisation narrative, as well as the morphology of the continuity of this improvisation, it is worth thinking multi-dimensionally, not limiting ourselves to traditional solutions that we know well. Preparations are an excellent tool to achieve such a state. How often do we think in these performance categories, using our instrument differently? The potential for these explorations is enormous. Even if you use traditional notation, you can still

discover a new world of sound. It is also important in the creative process to dare to take certain solutions and not be afraid of them.

Alternative Uses of Instruments:

1. A drum set as a collection of separate elements, without using it in a pocket (specific groove) manner, but more like multi-percussion, with individual sound events.
2. Using an instrument in a different way than its nominal position.
3. Using unusual registers, e.g., high for bass, or low for trumpet or saxophone.
4. New instruments (hole saw), using everyday objects for sound production.

Very often, even in European improvised music, everyday objects were used to perform pieces to achieve a specific sound, different from traditional instruments. A hole saw is a tool for drilling holes in wooden surfaces. Depending on its size, we can achieve different pitches. The larger its diameter, the lower the sound. This happens because, with larger objects, the speed of vibrations that occur as a result of striking the instrument is slower, producing a lower sound. Conversely, the smaller the diameter, the higher the pitch. During the concert, a hole saw with a diameter of 60 mm was used, which corresponds to the pitch D (see Photograph 1).

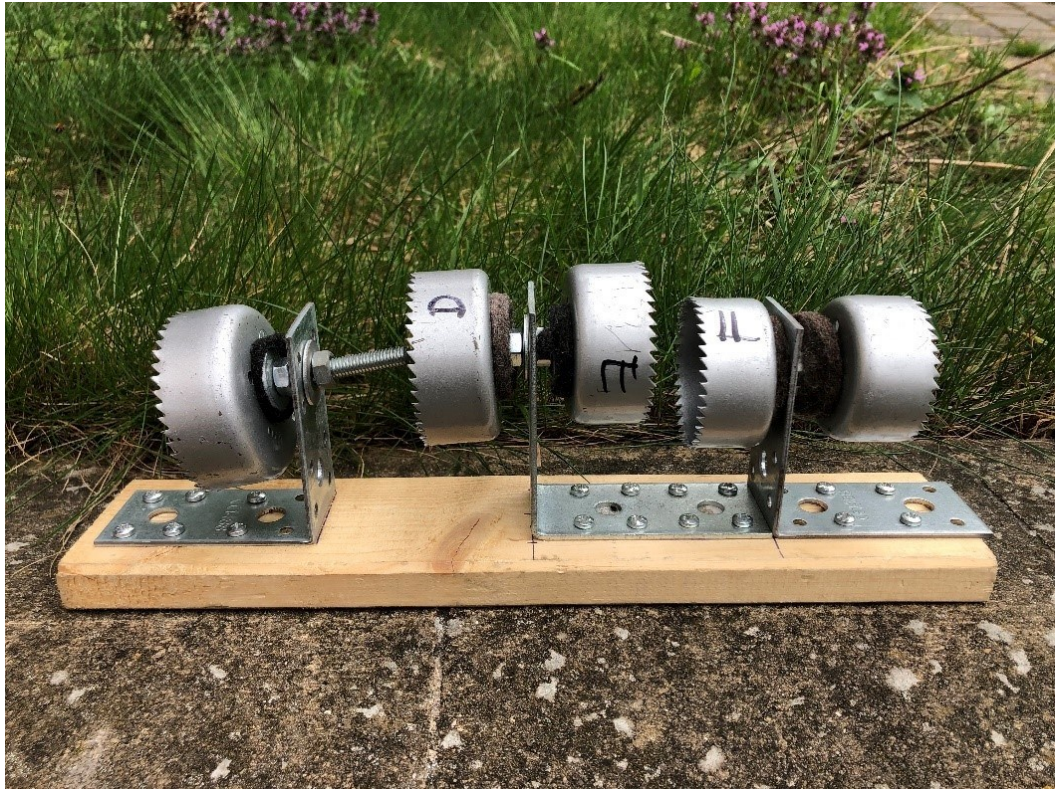


Photo 1. Hole Saw (own photo)

Extended Sound Production Techniques:

1. Bowing a cymbal, causing it to vibrate in a unique way and generate unusual sounds.
2. Striking the piano strings with a drumstick.
3. Playing with only air on wind instruments, generating sounds of indeterminate pitch.
4. Producing sound with the valve pressed halfway down. This position of the valve mechanism disrupts the natural airflow, distorting it (slightly muting) and altering the pitch and intonation.

Preparations:

1. Using the piano in a more percussive manner by muting the strings, e.g., with a hand.
2. Playing the piano while bypassing the keyboard mechanism (only the strings).
3. Using a metal chain and striking it against the bell of the instrument (in the recording, it was a baritone saxophone).
4. For brass instruments, the use of various mutes is significant. In "Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio," a plunger mute was used for the

trombone part. Its operation involves alternately covering and uncovering the bell of the instrument, creating a natural acoustic filter.

Elements of the Musical Work / Parameters

We examine the components of a musical composition within the framework of music theory and its detailed description. In terms of performance, I prefer to refer to them as parameters. Improvisatory opportunities are generated by the parameters that are specified. Many parameters are predetermined in a conventional and traditional sense, including meter, form (number of bars, harmony, and even the preferred language of improvisation, such as Bebop). In the presence of numerous predetermined frameworks, what domain does improvisation apply to? Does not it ultimately come down to the arrangement of individual building elements in a manner that is compatible with one another? In order to produce the most harmonious and seamless image, our creativity is restricted to the efficient selection and combination of elements. Of course, I am intentionally simplifying this text; however, my objective is to prompt the reader to contemplate the existence of improvisational learning in our educational system, which is typically preoccupied with the pursuit of perfection. I also want to underscore that the approach described above is not inherently flawed; however, the purity I was referring to must be precisely defined. It is possible that in improvised music, perfection is achieved by attempting to make an error, which in turn enables the performance of an unprecedented and unexpected piece.

III. Performance Apparatus – Large Instrumental Ensemble in the Context of Collective Improvisation

The seminars, classes, and performance of the piece were all conducted with large ensembles, including occasionally several dozen participants. This is an entirely distinct type of activity from the individual approach to improvisation.

I am delighted that we established a spirit in the Emil Misk & The Sonic Syndicate ensemble during the joint sessions, in which each performer was at liberty to suggest their own ideas for the implementation of various segments. Another instance of success is this. I am of the opinion that it is crucial to elevate the self-esteem of co-performers and to convey to them that their experience, knowledge, and creativity are invaluable assets that warrant acknowledgment from a leadership perspective. This ensures an extraordinary level of fortitude during the composition's actual performance. This situation is similar to a double-edged sword. The leader is ultimately accountable for the ensemble's management and judgments, while the individual performers are accountable for their performance in the improvisation sections. This aspect necessitates mutual trust.

In the context of identifying oneself within a large ensemble of improvisers, there are numerous topics that warrant discussion, including the following: the ability to communicate the essence of the composition, the preservation of one's identity, the ability to confidently establish the musical environment, the ability to respond to others, the ability to be understood and clearly communicated, and the awareness of the various applications and roles of instruments. The presence of a leader in a large instrumental ensemble is essential for the management of all of these aspects. For the performance of *Scratches for Eight Musicians*, it was necessary for an individual to oversee the duration of the piece and orchestrate the entire narrative. The improvisation narrative undergoes a complete transformation as a result of the instantaneous alteration in the morphology of continuity during the concert. At present, the most critical aspect is for the complete ensemble to share a common belief in the transformation of structure (being prepared for the unexpected).

It is imperative to underscore that the term "improvisation session" should be employed in place of the term "rehearsal." No one was attempting anything during our meetings. We commenced collective improvisation efforts immediately,

primarily through practical application. The process of integrating the composer's instructions into one's playing technique and investigating the opportunities that arise during these meetings was the focus of these sessions. The primary objective of improvised music performance is to thoroughly engage with the music and the artistic layer, rather than to contend with the piece's structure or instructions. It is about establishing a sense of self-awareness and comfort with the piece, allowing one to concentrate solely on the music, engage with other members, and be confident in their ability to continue to press their own boundaries during the actual performance (concert). The purpose of the improvisation sessions was to become acquainted with the material and to adjust to the collective creative environment.

Being receptive to both moments that appear to be the correct choice and a good idea, as well as moments that do not suit, deviate from the norm, or even represent a mistake, is a critical component of improvisation, particularly in larger instrumental constellations. In the context of performance, this is irrelevant, as it is these moments that imbue the music with vitality. Remaining spontaneous is paramount in the art of improvisation. This brings us back to the topic of education, as numerous publications are designed to instruct individuals in the art of improvisation. Signposts and aides are all they are. They should be regarded as the commencement of an improvisational adventure, rather than as the definitive material that will be employed in the future. It is entirely legitimate to believe that one has the capacity to develop their own structures. It is not a matter of them surpassing the inventions of a great master, who serves as an inspiration to us. They will be distinctive; they will be genuine because they will be ours.

Furthermore, it is imperative to establish one's identity among peers. These elements are not capable of being completely implemented during joint sessions; rather, they can be acquired through individual experience over time. This is an additional aspect of the performance of music in a large instrumental ensemble. Each musician possesses a distinct level of emotional intelligence, awareness, and proficiency. The ensemble's complexity increases as the number of members increases. I observed that comprehending the thoughts and emotions of each musician regarding the composition and their role during the performance is an effective method for reconciling discrepancies while collaborating with Emil Misk & The Sonic Syndicate on the material. It can also be extremely liberating to discuss concerns regarding the performance with others. For instance, for certain individuals,

it is more crucial to execute their role flawlessly than to engage with others, or vice versa. I will elaborate on this matter in the subchapter "Conclusions from Conducted Research."

3.1. Experimental Jazz Combo

Experimental Jazz Combo is a subject that has been part of the Jazz and Popular Music curriculum at the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk since October 2019. This is my original educational project, an absolute novelty in the context of jazz education in Poland.

The main premise of this course is to perform compositions where improvisation is the formative element. We explore the possibilities of creating form based on pre-discussed assumptions or freely improvising without prior arrangements. We do not work with musical notation. We explore the performance capabilities of individual instrumentalists, learn new sound production techniques, and use preparations. We become sensitive to new solutions and harmonies, which are rarely discussed during musical education in Poland.

Introducing the Experimental Jazz Combo course into the curriculum of the Academy of Music in Gdańsk is undoubtedly an innovative move, and it was one of the first courses of its kind in Poland, where the entire course is dedicated to collective improvisation and non-idiomatic improvisation, where stylistic freedom prevails, and the main goal is to enhance students' self-esteem and decision-making process. Another aspect often accompanying the classes is providing constructive criticism among students and having a collective discussion to summarize each performance. This helps musicians (students) become more aware of how to talk about music, how to evaluate it constructively, and how to give feedback on what they hear in others' performances.

The Experimental Jazz Combo is an elective course for all students. The group usually consists of 10 to 20 people. The instrumentation we have is diverse. Vocalists also participate in the classes, enriching the spectrum of used planes with text. It is an incredibly opening experience that significantly influences the later performance of written music. This way, we delve deeper into the structure of the piece, start to notice what is happening around us, and do not just focus on our part.

Principles we adhere to when performing compositions in class:

1. The most important element is communication – the part being performed must be clear to be understood. The vision must be clear and unambiguously presented.
2. Even when you are not playing at the moment, you still create one of the sound planes. According to this principle, remember that silence can also be a sound plane.
3. Awareness of the role: accompaniment, lead voice, counterpointing voice, harmonization of another instrumentalist's melody, coloring. This is very important in the context of the shape of the piece. Many choices.
4. Ensuring that each performer can equally participate in creating the composition.
5. Awareness of the register choice based on where other performers are.

The course is empirical in nature, and by participating in these classes, students have the chance to develop various areas of their creative path, such as:

- Development of abstract thinking, both musically and verbally.
- Reducing focus on their part (instrumental or vocal) in favor of listening to others' parts and interacting with them.
- Deepening the awareness of the role within the composition: accompaniment, lead voice, counterpointing voice, harmonization of another instrumentalist's melody, coloring.
- Treating silence as one of the sound planes.
- Making decisions and taking responsibility for them.
- Learning new sound production techniques (instrument preparations, achieving new sounds) and new means of expression.
- Working on individual musical expression style.

The multitude of possibilities can paralyze less experienced performers, so narrowing the field of action and being consistent in choosing a role during the performance is important. Additionally, the social aspect is significant during classes for both the instructor and the student, as we work with a large group of people, each of whom is an individual. During the classes, within collective improvisation, students must abandon their musical convictions and the patterns they mastered

during their education to collectively perform a composition that no one has heard before.

3.2. Conclusions from Conducted Research

The words of pianist Erroll Garner are significant as they convey the idea of what improvisation can mean for an artist:

"When you pick up an instrument, it doesn't matter how much you admire someone and want to emulate them. Give yourself a chance to discover what you have to say and try to express it."⁴⁵

Improvisation is frequently associated with the ability to proficiently navigate various scales, utilize them to effectively emphasize the tensions between various chords within a harmonic structure, and perform jazz standards. This is undoubtedly accurate; however, it conveys an incomplete understanding of improvisation. It is crucial to bear in mind that jazz standards are often composed of predetermined parameters, including tempo, style, meter, harmony, characteristic rhythmic divisions, and form (number of bars). Improvisation is limited to a restricted area due to the numerous parameters that are established at the outset.

Our improvisation skills and our capacity to navigate the musical reality are influenced by the culture of music education, which emphasizes flawlessness, adherence to instructions, and the perfect execution of sheet music. One of the fundamental findings is that younger students are less apprehensive due to the fact that they are subjected to a shorter period of time under the influence of institutions and are less likely to have their creativity stifled.

It is important to first define two fundamental attitudes that both novice and seasoned musicians may exhibit: reactive and proactive attitudes.

Reactive Attitude

This involves shifting the responsibility onto other musicians who are improvising together. This can be exhausting for others, as they must continuously propose new

⁴⁵ Erroll Garner, in: Arthur Taylor, *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-Musician Interviews*, New York 1993. Cf. Chr. Cox, D. Warner (eds.), *Kultura dźwięku...*, op. cit., p. 357.

ideas and decide on the direction of the improvisation and its narrative for anything to happen musically. The consequence of adopting only this attitude is entirely relinquishing the field of proposing new things to other performers. Key characteristics of the reactive attitude include:

- An approach that involves responding to events or situations after they occur, rather than anticipating and preparing for them in advance.
- Reactive individuals engage in actions in response to specific external or internal stimuli that require intervention or resolution.
- The reactive attitude is characterized by a tendency to passively adapt to changes rather than actively shape situations.

It is important to note that there is nothing wrong with choosing either attitude. Everything is permissible, you cannot make a mistake, and every sound is acceptable. I want this concept to be associated with an awareness of the decisions made and the attitudes adopted during collective improvisation. This can significantly enhance an artist's competencies in the context of improvisation.

Proactive Attitude

This may entail the introduction of an excessive number of concepts into the overall structure. This presents a significant challenge for other performers to monitor, as it is important to bear in mind that each individual perceives minor changes in the improvisation narrative to a varying extent. Occasionally, the distinction between emergent motifs is too subtle, necessitating additional time to identify the change. The dominance of one musician over others is another characteristic element. This is linked to a desire to demonstrate one's abilities or justify oneself on stage, as well as a lack of empathy. Certainly, there is nothing inherently wrong with showcasing one's aptitude and abilities to the audience and other musicians. However, in my view, it is crucial to establish the conditions that will facilitate such an occurrence. Participating in improvised music is a substantial challenge that requires one to venture outside of their comfort zone. Therefore, it is imperative to establish favorable conditions for each performer. It is also possible for the improvisation narrative and the overall direction of the piece to be misunderstood as a result of the excessive proposal of ideas, as there may be multiple ideas that serve as turning points in the composition.

Developing a scenario that includes multiple thematic planes is highly intriguing in terms of the morphology of continuity. It is unquestionably important to ensure that these concepts are distinguished and opposed to one another. Then, the proposers' intention can be swiftly understood and responded to by both the listener and the other performers, who can select one of the options to support these ideas.

Key characteristics of the proactive attitude include:

- An approach focused on taking preventive actions and initiatives to shape the future according to one's goals and values.
- Proactive individuals act based on their vision of the future and make conscious decisions and steps to achieve the intended results.
- The proactive attitude is characterized by an active approach to life, seeking opportunities for growth, and acting according to one's values and goals.

In the context of management, psychology, or life strategy, the proactive attitude is often considered more desirable because it allows individuals to better cope in a changing environment and achieve goals more effectively. The moment we find ourselves on stage in a larger group and have to perform a fully improvised piece is precisely such an environment. However, it is worth noting that both the reactive and proactive attitudes can have their applications in different life situations. Also, during collective improvisation, we are not obliged to constantly propose new solutions and ideas; the burden of setting direction does not always rest on the same people. The most desirable thing is a balance between proactivity and reactivity. We propose but also respond to a specific musical situation. Constant desire for change and defiance of others' ideas result in excessive presence of new ideas and chaos.

Conclusions Based on Observations of Music School Students and Pupils

After numerous conversations with students and pupils of music schools, I believe that focusing on the elements of a piece and its structure can relieve the improviser from directly associating improvisation with the selection of notes and scales, thus preventing the performer from being paralyzed by the multitude of options. Shifting attention away from the selection of notes during improvisation significantly facilitates the shaping of the improvisation narrative, especially for the youngest musicians. This allows us to focus more on the process rather than the final result.

Additionally, we have the opportunity to change our approach. Every attempt at improvisation should leave us with satisfaction, and under no circumstances should we strive for perfect improvisation. It is much easier to enter this world without any expectations, simply enjoying the "here and now," the moment when we play with the entire ensemble (the state of flow).

After conducting many improvisation sessions with students and music school pupils of various ages and skill levels, several critical areas have emerged:

- Interaction with others;
- Execution of given assumptions;
- Intense avoidance of mistakes (fear of making mistakes);
- Waiting to catch the tempo, accents, harmony, groove, or resolve tension together;
- Proposing new ideas;
- Different understanding of time during a given section (someone wants to move forward, while someone else still wants to develop the current idea);
- Sometimes someone proposes an idea but does so without enough confidence or is not heard;
- Too little participation in the performance;
- Too much participation in the performance (lack of space for others);
- Playing just to play, to simply exist;
- Ending collective improvisation.

Interaction with others may be disrupted if we concentrate excessively on our own performance and actions. Consequently, it is crucial to establish the notion of "greatest" in the context of collective improvisation. This term is defined differently by each member of the ensemble. We endeavored to establish a shared understanding among all participants during the improvisation sessions. The music and the realization of the performance were always the starting point, regardless of the individual showcases. Solo sections were predetermined in "Scratches for Eight Musicians," allowing individual performers to express their creativity.

We approach sheet music that is intended for improvisation (instructions, scores) with a high degree of literality, striving to execute the part with the utmost precision. The transition between these two sections is highly audible if it is directly

related to the improvisation that follows. In improvised music, there is no "one and only" method to which every improvisation will aspire, which enables us to assert that it was successful. It is the act of improvisation itself, the endeavors, that are of paramount importance. Our confidence is bolstered by the acceptance of all sounds, which renders our contributions more persuasive.

It is not uncommon for musicians to attempt to establish a shared rhythm, cadence, harmonic progression, or even a form during collective improvisation. Additionally, this is frequently accomplished during the collective inquiry. Each participant has a unique perspective, desires distinct items, or is unable to make a decision due to the abundance of options available. The process of identifying this shared element is unique to each individual, and the time spent acquiring it fluctuates. Due to our aspiration to capture this state, we neglect the present moment in favor of our desired outcome.

We desire for an event to transpire when we introduce a novel concept during collective improvisation. Occasionally, despite this, nothing occurs as a result of the decision to pursue a different course of action. This is an intriguing sensation that must be personally experienced in order to comprehend this state. There is no issue with these minor misunderstandings, as there was never a precise rendition of this performance. The same principle applies to the utilization of specific motifs and the duration of time on stage. The present idea is still being developed, while someone believes it is sufficient and suggests moving on. The listener and the performer both derive immense benefit from this collision of two realms. Typically, at this juncture, tension is present, and the ensemble gradually realizes that we are at a juncture of various possibilities, resulting in a change. Naturally, the decision does not have to be made simultaneously by all individuals; it can be made in a gradual manner. This is the allure of improvised music. It suffices for us to be present on the same stage simultaneously. This is our presence form.

Another aspect that can be effectively employed to introduce new ideas is silence. The human ear rapidly adapts to particular frequencies. This results in a new proposal that is ambiguous and misunderstood, as it is preceded by a consistent presence in the piece. It is more effective to introduce a new concept with silence or a stark contrast to the previous one.

Naturally, the fewer the ensemble, the more straightforward it is to identify nuances. The abundance of these phenomena in a large ensemble creates the illusion

of disorder. Occasionally, individual performers are unable to fully engage in a particular performance. This may be due to a variety of factors, including a lack of comprehension of the concept of such playing (particularly among younger players), dread, a lack of experience, a lack of knowledge regarding what can be done, and a lack of sheet music accustomed to the individual. I have always been captivated by the phenomenon of how, despite the fact that we practice a variety of compositions daily and study the works of numerous composers, we frequently fail to utilize the resources that are available to us and conceal ourselves behind a lack of understanding of scales and chords. I believe that improvisation has significant potential to serve as a conduit between the knowledge we acquire during practice and the applications we can apply it to in the future. It is also possible for individual performers to occupy an excessive amount of space, thereby denying others the opportunity to perform. This is also associated with the mindset of "performing for the sake of playing." That is, there is a lack of conscious engagement in the development of collective improvisation, which results in the creation of meaningless fragments that are an undefined musical texture (a combination of solo, accompaniment, background, and foreground). Tōru Takemitsu's words are noteworthy in this context: *The fear of silence is nothing new.*⁴⁶

The eternal dilemma of improvisers is the ending. The conclusion of an improvised work appears to be exceedingly challenging due to the fact that we can consistently incorporate additional elements and extend the thought process. Of course, it is possible to designate an individual to indicate the conclusion. However, in the absence of such an individual, the collective responsibility for the conclusion ignites a chain reaction. If an individual continues to play, another individual will also participate, and if the majority of players cease to play, everyone will eventually cease to play. It is crucial that we verify that we are engaged in a successful endeavor and that we are working collaboratively. It is challenging to persist in a cause that is opposed to the majority when the majority has already departed. We can extract a lesson from every circumstance and transform even a misinterpretation into a means of expression, as in "to defy the current with the entire ensemble."

⁴⁶ T. Takemitsu, *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*, Wydanie 1 z Fallen Leaf monographs on contemporary composers G – Reference, Information and Interdisciplinary Subjects Series, Fallen Leaf Press, 1995, p. 34.

It is amazing that as early as 1926, Graham Wallas, whom I mentioned in the previous section, proposed the humanization of contemporary life and referred to the need to focus on human individuals and their needs, emotions, and experiences, rather than only on institutions, social structures, or organizational systems. The essence of this approach is to include humanistic aspects in social analysis and actions taken, which can lead to a more holistic and balanced approach to solving social problems and shaping public policy⁴⁷. In education, the humanistic approach assumes an individual approach to students, considering their unique skills, needs, and learning styles. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes the active role of the student in the learning process and the importance of creating meaningful, personal educational experiences.

After a year of conducting classes, I discovered that during open improvisation, students use previously mastered melo-rhythmic patterns. It is hard to leave one's comfort zone and free oneself from these patterns. However, it is worth remembering that such behavior is the most creative, and although it brings stress in the short term, it yields amazing results in the long run, not only in terms of performing improvised music. Even if someone does not become an improviser (it is everyone's choice), performing improvised music is an exercise in creativity and innovation.

Particular attention should be given to the activities of ensembles such as the GDYNIA IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA.

(GIO) is both an ensemble and a progressive project that brings together musicians open to free improvisation without stylistic limitations, initiated and led by Marcin Bożek. It unites musicians from various backgrounds—improvised music, jazz, classical, alternative, rock, and even pop. The inspiration for the project comes from the activities of the Krakow Improvisers Orchestra and the Vienna Improvisers Orchestra, led by Paulina Owczarek and Michael Fischer, with whom Marcin Bożek has worked.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ G. Wallas, *op. cit.*, p. 149–162.

⁴⁸ Gdynia Improvisers Orchestra, in: *Swingujące 3-miasto*, online.
<https://swingujace3miasto.pl/gdynia-improvisers-orchestra/>. [accessed 5 May 2024].

However, the activities of such ensembles in Poland take place outside the academic mainstream, and within music education itself, little happens in the realm of performing improvised music in large instrumental ensembles.

IV. Scratches for Eight Musicians

The piece was created in uncertain times, during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. When most concerts were canceled, an opportunity arose to perform at Polish Radio in Warsaw. The condition for performing was to prepare new material specifically for this occasion. I decided to take on this venture and, taking the opportunity, record it for my doctoral dissertation. It was a risky endeavor, but taking risks is one of the central themes of my doctoral dissertation, so I thought it would align well with the content of my work.

The performer of the piece is the ensemble Emil Misk & The Sonic Syndicate, consisting of:

Emil Misk – trumpet

Piotr Chęcki – tenor saxophone

Jakub Klemensiewicz – baritone saxophone

Paweł Niewiadomski – trombone

Michał Zienkowski – guitar

Mikołaj Basiukiewicz – piano

Konrad Żołnerek – double bass

Sławek Koryzno – drums

The concert took place at the invitation of Program 2 of Polish Radio as part of the International Jazz Day celebrations on April 27, 2021. It was held on the stage of S1, the Concert Studio of Polish Radio named after Witold Lutosławski. This historic venue, where renowned artists such as Krzysztof Komeda, Tomasz Stańko, and Andrzej Trzaskowski recorded their works, currently serves as the headquarters of the Polish Radio Orchestra. It is a space with excellent acoustics and a wonderful atmosphere for work, though the size of the hall can sometimes be overwhelming. In improvised music, creating the right atmosphere and intimacy is very important. I mention this because the location of the concert is one of the factors influencing the way improvisation is performed and the shape of the work.

As I mentioned earlier, the performance and recording of the piece took place during the pandemic, which meant that the presence of an audience during the concert was prohibited. This created a completely new situation, previously unknown to anyone. The advancement of technology allowed us to be in every home in real time,

and anyone with Internet access could watch the live broadcast of the concert on the YouTube channel of Program 2 of Polish Radio. This silence, which would certainly not have been present during a performance with an audience, was significant. In such a situation, the confidence, which is a key factor during the performance of improvised music, was shaken. Over the years, we have become accustomed to the immediate reaction of the audience, who reward or punish, depending on whether the performance met with approval or disapproval from those present. Experiencing this process is another factor that gives the work an "experimental" character. Additionally, instrumental music, and especially improvised music, has a universal character. Its reception can be very varied. Indeterminacy and ambiguity are domains of this way of performing music. To a large extent, during a concert, what amazes is not the final result of the improvised section, but the struggle with the material and the decision-making process that occurs during improvisation.

Choosing a live concert to record an album was fully justified, as the emotions accompanying a live performance are completely different from those during a traditional recording session. Additionally, having only one chance to record the material greatly impacts its performance and the artists' feelings during the performance. In a recording studio, we have an unlimited number of takes, and we can stop any "take" at any time and start over. In the case of improvised music, every performance will be different, so it is worth defining needs and expectations before entering the studio, as improvised music has no reference point to which we can compare when choosing the one version that will appear on our album.

This is the difference between a one-time concert performance and a recording session, the content of which will be played back repeatedly (unlike a concert). It is a stressful circumstance, causing conservatism during the performance, where the emphasis is on perfection. According to Karlheinz Stockhausen, intuition and a particular state of consciousness allow one to break free from musical stereotypes. This was my main goal – to make the musicians step out of their well-worn patterns and start acting unconventionally. This was certainly achieved.

4.1. Formal and Aesthetic Assumptions of the Work

Scratches for Eight Musicians is a highly complex piece in terms of musical content. The composition utilizes traditional notation with verbal elements, a Sound

Map and performance parameters, and instructions for performing indeterminate sections. This diversity allows for great freedom during performance. On the other hand, it provides a structured system that performers refer to, following the principle "imposed limits lead to innovation."

General assumptions of the composition:

- Use of means that break the limitations of traditional elements of the jazz improvisation language and finding a fresh perspective on the sound material;
- All participants improvise under the same conditions, moving away from characteristic roles of individual instruments unless specified in the score;
- In designated moments in the piece, musicians rely on spontaneous action, using their skills and mutual interaction;
- New sound production techniques, preparations, and the use of new instruments;
- Creating a democratic work environment;
- The final effect depends on the musicality, emotionality, and taste of the performers;
- Free collective improvisation;
- Team egalitarianism based on the principle of equality among performers;
- Real-time generated structures as a formal component of the composition.

Work on the piece took place during sessions, with the main assumption being the realization of the free improvisation concept. Key ideas include:

- Compositions resulting from collective improvisation are the result of experimenting with sound. The starting point for improvisation is organizing the musical space using elements such as rhythm, melody, harmony, color, and tempo;
- Ensemble members are co-creators of the composition;
- Using the possibilities offered by the disassembled elements of a musical piece;
- Working on musical intuition;
- Developing sound production techniques;
- Exploring musical space without using any notation;

- Performing pieces whose formative factor is improvisation and using previously composed fragments, to which improvisations will strive.

Scratches for Eight Musicians is a piece consisting of four smaller sections following each other attacca: Scratch I, Scratch II, Scratch III, Scratch IV. It is a very diverse piece in terms of composition and arrangement. For naming the individual sections, I was inspired by the division proposed by Derek Bailey in his book *Improvisation – Its Nature and Practice in Music*, which divides improvisation into idiomatic and non-idiomatic.

Besides the traditional score and the Sound Map and performance parameters, I created a verbal instruction inspired by *Some Playing Advices for Intuitive Music Performance* by Markus Stockhausen:

- Introducing a new idea preceded by silence, as the human ear gets used to the presence of an instrument in a given register;
- Observing fellow performers and choosing a register not occupied by another instrumentalist;
- Ensuring that every performer can equally participate in creating the composition;
- Awareness of the role played: leading voice, accompaniment, harmonization of another instrumentalist's voice;
- Silence is one of the sound planes (even if you are not playing at the moment, you are still creating the piece); silence is the opposite of sound, thus its essential partner;
- Communication – the performed part must be clear to be understood, the vision must be clear and unambiguously presented;
- The realization of the concept (process) is more important than the final effect – experiment;
- The use of instruments does not have to be limited by tradition – using preparations and various sound production techniques;
- Every sound produced by the instrument must be completely and unconditionally accepted, without any corrections;
- There is no error in the context of improvisation narration and the performance of the piece;

- Discovering one's instrument – using different sound production techniques;
- Improvisation using previously discussed assumptions – elements of a musical piece as means of expression;
- Learning new music;
- Exchange of thoughts and experiences – discussion after each performance.

A substantial challenge for the improviser is the preservation of their artistic expression and distinctive identity within the performance, particularly in the presence of a large group of instrumentalists. At this level, I am certain that this experiment was fruitful. By allowing for free improvisation, each performer was able to express themselves independently and develop their roles in accordance with their respective intentions. Despite the fact that their improvisations were in response to the suggestions or initiatives of other musicians, they maintained their own interpretation. This element was essential in both the creative and performative phases of my artistic practice and was one of the primary assumptions.

The composition's première performance scenario is detailed in this work. The objective of each musician was to properly execute the instructions that were assigned to them. Additional materials that were affixed to the score were a substantial component of our improvisational sessions and were found to be extremely beneficial. This was accompanied by a variety of factors, including the concert hall, the first performance, the concert hall's dimensions, the excitement of the performance, the new circumstances (such as the absence of an audience), and the timing of the execution.

Duration is the fundamental presumption for the piece's performance, which is 40 minutes. This marked my initial decision to implement such a drastic restriction. As the concert's conductor, I was responsible for ensuring that the entire performance was completed within the allotted time, in addition to performing my own piece. It is undeniable that my decisions had the most significant influence on the narrative of the improvisation and the morphology of the continuity of individual fragments, particularly those that were indeterminate for material reasons. It was essential to maintain the tempo of the composed fragments in a manner that was consistent with the tempo we achieved during the ensemble sessions. Any deviation from the tempo

we collectively established during those sessions would result in the gain or loss of time focused on a specific field of possibilities.

Although *Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio* is an album that is played exclusively attacca, the piece is divided into four parts on the CD: Scratch I, Scratch II, Scratch III, and Scratch IV. In the context of a release, this division is driven by the desire to condense the audience's attention span and to present the musical material in radio transmissions where it is not feasible to present forty-minute pieces. Impromptu moments are indicated in the score by a graphic symbol, as demonstrated in the example below. This symbol is a standard that is frequently employed in jazz compositions.

Example 1. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Designation of Improvised Sections



Real-time generated structures with detailed instrumental breakdown:

1. Letter A – trumpet and trombone duet
2. Letter B – tenor and baritone saxophone duet with rhythm section accompaniment (divided into two layers, each instrument realizing its own sound plan)
3. Letter D – piano solo
4. Letter F – tenor saxophone solo with rhythm section accompaniment, as a development of the previously written section
5. Letter G – collective improvisation by all ensemble members
6. Letter J – guitar solo on a repeating motif
7. Letter K – collective improvisation by the entire ensemble using the verbal instructions attached to the score
8. Letter L – collective improvisation by the entire ensemble using the verbal instructions attached to the score
9. Letter M – collective improvisation by the entire ensemble using the verbal instructions attached to the score

10. Letter N – collective improvisation by the entire ensemble using the verbal instructions attached to the score
11. Letter P – trombone solo trio with drums and bass
12. Letter R – baritone saxophone solo with additional piano accompaniment
13. Letter T – trumpet solo with rhythm section accompaniment
14. Letter W – drum solo on a riff
15. Letter X – piano solo with rhythm section accompaniment

Structures written in the score using specific notes and traditional notation:

1. Letter C – Arranged section for all instrumentalists, with alternating fills by guitar, drums, and double bass
2. Letter E – Section featuring a theme
3. Letter H – Short interlude built on two phrases, ending with collective improvisation
4. Letter I – The core of this section is a rhythmic figure on four notes in the guitar part, with strictly arranged triads
5. Letter O – Exposition of a motif that will be developed in a later phase of the piece
6. Letter Q – Variation of the motif from Letter O in the form of a background for the trombone solo
7. Letter S – Exposition of the second motif, which concludes the baritone saxophone solo
8. Letter U – Tutti section where motifs from Letters O, Q, and S appear, arranged in polyphony
9. Letter Y – The final fragment of the piece, with material derived from the double bass part in Letter X

Participation of letters in individual sections:

- Scratch I: A / B / C / D / E / F / G / H
- Scratch II: I / J
- Scratch III: K / L / M / N
- Scratch IV: O / P / Q / R / S / T / U / V / W / X

4.2. Analysis of Improvisation and Morphology of Continuity in the Work

Improvisation, by nature, is a one-time event. It should be performed and then forgotten, without any value judgment. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the musicians' behavior, the decisions they made, and their impact on the shape of the improvisation and the structure of the piece, rather than solely on the musical material that emerged during the performance. This approach provides a fuller picture of what happened on stage, which can be referred to as the narrative of improvisation.

The composition begins with a motif based on ascending movement. The notation does not specify the starting and ending pitches of the passage. However, the duration is known – one measure. The motif ends with a cluster of indeterminate duration. This is a deliberate technique aimed at capturing the listener's attention. From this point, the actual composition begins (**Letter A**).

Example 2. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter A

Trumpet in Bb

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

Trombone

Jazz Guitar

Piano

Upright Bass

Drum Set

The next micro-section is a duet between the trombone and trumpet, where the musical material is entirely based on improvisation. This improvisation follows specific guidelines listed as an appendix to the score. The most crucial principle is to reject the distinction between consonance and dissonance and to fully accept the played notes. This approach allows both performers to avoid listening and reacting to each other (a reactive stance) and instead simultaneously create two layers that alternately intertwine (a proactive stance). The entry of the next section occurs when the trombone and trumpet sustain a long note. The timing of this transition is not

predetermined; however, by creating space through the use of long note values, the subsequent performers can join in.

In terms of morphology of continuity, in this segment, the musicians use two elements: imitation and the autonomy of each voice. Imitation is based on rhythm and the direction of the phrase. While trying to maintain autonomy in their expression, it occasionally happens that both instruments inadvertently create various harmonies at the same moment, unintentionally outlining a harmonic context. I refer to this as the "reward" for the effort put into constructing free improvisation. To execute this segment, the musicians use imitation, mutually mimicking each other, and towards the end of this segment, they play random harmonies, which, when slowed down, are perceived by the rest of the ensemble as a cue to transition to the next letter. The trumpet and trombone decided to remain in the next section (Letter B), playing long notes that provide a harmonic context while leaving space for the next performers.

Duration: 0:04 – 1:16

Letter B

In Letter B, the following instruments join in sequence: piano, drums, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, and double bass.

Example 3. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter B

B BARITONE & TENOR

WATERFALLS
black and white keys

WATERFALLS
(arco)

B

The baritone saxophone corresponds with the trumpet and trombone lines, building a more complex harmonic context, sometimes even forming simple major chords with a distinctive sound. The percussion part is limited to cymbals, but they are used in a very colorful way: striking with different parts of the sticks, muting the cymbals by hand to prevent them from naturally resonating. These self-imposed limitations lead to innovation, forcing the musician to create musical space through other means. In the piano and bass parts, there is a single word: "waterfalls." The piano interprets this as upward or downward runs across the entire range of the instrument, using varying tempos. The double bass abandons the typical low pizzicato playing in favor of a fast tremolo in the upper register. This is an excellent example of non-standard instrument

usage and fulfilling the composer's intentions. The term "waterfalls" presents a limitation that stimulates imagination, effectively shaping the instrument's part. The double bass corresponds with the piano, illustrating how one performer's creativity can influence another.

The tenor saxophone maintains its own narrative throughout this segment, detached from the rest of the ensemble. By using notes of varying lengths in different registers, it creates an abstract layer superimposed on the consistent material of the other performers. This is a clear example of maintaining autonomy as a performer and standing in opposition to the rest of the musicians. This is extremely challenging in the context of dominance and dependency relationships, requiring great confidence and conviction in one's voice. The section concludes with a mirrored motif from the beginning of the composition. The entire ensemble performs a descending movement (melos), ending with a cluster.

Duration: 1:16 – 3:04

Letter C

Example 4. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter C

The musical score for "Letter C" from "Scratches for 8 Musicians" by E. Misk is presented for 8 musicians. The score is in 4/4 time and features a descending melos ending with a cluster. The score includes a "Letter C" section starting at measure 12. The Tenor Saxophone part is marked *p* and features a descending melos. The other instruments follow a similar pattern, with optional fill-in sections. The Drums part is marked *p* and features a descending melos.

The above Example 4 illustrates the composed section. Wind instruments appear alternately, with the guitar becoming active in between (improvisation). Despite the opportunity to take a more prominent role, the guitarist remains rather reserved, complementing the entire structure with coloristic additions. An important aspect is the dynamics, as the first two entries are piano, and the next two are forte. The tonal gravity is determined by the note C, and the voicings are built in fourths. Rejecting the tertian construction gives it a modal character.

Duration: 3:04 – 4:19

Letter D

Example 5. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter D



The next section is a piano solo (see Example 5). This fragment is a direct continuation of the previously arranged structure, with tonal gravity serving as the factor ensuring a smooth transition between the two sections. Despite the freedom of expression available, the performer chooses to orbit around the tonal center of C, which was established in the earlier section (the relationship of dominance and dependence). This also demonstrates that, despite complete expressive freedom, it is the performer's responsibility to maintain the improvisational narrative in relation to the composed sections of the piece.

Duration: 4:19 – 5:11

Letter E

Example 6. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter E



The inspiration for the creation of the melodic line of the theme is a scale consisting of half step – perfect fourth – half step – perfect fourth – half step. This pattern represents an even division of the octave into two parts and was proposed by Nicolas Slonimsky in his *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*. In the following section, this scale is transposed up a major second and then returns to its original position. An *accelerando* introduces the improvised segment, collaboratively created by the percussion, double bass, tenor saxophone, and piano (see Example 6).

Duration: 5:11 – 6:08

Letter F

Example 7. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter F

The musical score for 'Letter F' is written for 8 musicians: Tpt., Ten. Sax., Bari. Sax., Tbn., J. Gtr., Pno., U. Bass, and Dr. The score is in 4/4 time and features a 'TENOR SOLO' section for the Tenor Saxophone and a 'CUE' section for the rest of the ensemble. The score is marked with a dynamic level of 'f' (forte). The 'TENOR SOLO' section is marked with a box containing the letter 'F' and the text 'TENOR SOLO'. The 'CUE' section is marked with a box containing the text 'CUE'. The score is marked with a dynamic level of 'f' (forte) at the beginning of the 'CUE' section.

Example 7 illustrates an improvised section where the lead role is assigned to the tenor saxophone. Originally, the improvisation was intended to follow a rhythmic pattern of 2 bars of 4/4 and 1 bar of 6/4. The structure is borrowed from an earlier section of the piece (Letter E). The only constant in this fragment is the pulse. The meter and tonal center are undefined. All participants in this section are simultaneously proactive and reactive. In the case of collective improvisation, the key issue is finding a balance between responding to what other performers offer and proposing one's own ideas, which may lead to changes in the narrative of the improvisation within the given section. Adopting only one approach carries specific consequences (see Chapter III, Section 2.3.). The culmination of this fragment is a tutti (CUE), where the rest of the instruments join in and present the theme. At the final chord, everyone improvises at a dynamic level of *ff* (Letter G) (see Example 8).

Duration: 6:08 – 10:01

Letter G

Example 8. E. Miskz, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter G

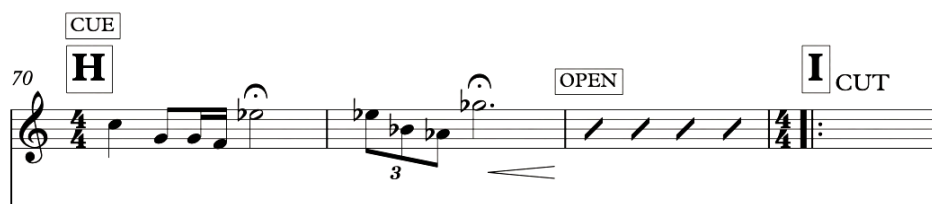


The discussed fragment is a collective improvisation by all members of the ensemble, reaching the climax of the entire Scratch I section. The stop occurs based on the leader's movement. The decision to stop this fragment is made intuitively, driven by emotion. The decision to close the fermata is influenced by the fragment's placement in the piece and the relentless presence of timekeeping by the stopwatch. It is very rare for one person to simultaneously take on the roles of composer, performer, and conductor. The stressful circumstance of the passage of time also affects the direction of the improvisation's narrative, and consequently, the duration of individual fragments.

Duration: 10:01 – 10:17

Letter H

Example 9. E. Miskz, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter H



Fragment H consists of two motifs played in unison by the wind instruments (see Example 9). At the same time, the rhythm section provides a dynamic accompaniment. The second of the motifs ends with a fermata, during which collective improvisation takes place. The word CUT in the score indicates an abrupt stop and simultaneously introduces the second section – Scratch II.

Duration: 10:17 – 10:45

Letter I

Example 10. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter I



Letter I marks the beginning of the second part of the composition (see Example 10). This entire section is based on an eighth-note, constant motif of F#-G#-C#-D#, initially presented solely by the guitar. The section maintains a trance-like character, supported by an improvised percussion part that uses only the hi-hat. The piano joins the duo, introducing a theme. This refers to the style of minimal music and the compositional idiom of Morton Feldman and Steve Reich. The repetitiveness in the music is very pronounced. Although the morphology of continuity is determined in this fragment, the sonic material is introduced at any time. According to these principles, the improvisation narrative is shaped during the introduction of individual motifs. This fragment can last for any amount of time. The leader gives a cue to move to the next section, but the final decision rests with the performer.

Example 11. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* (b. 80-85)

Next, the theme appears in the wind instruments. The C major chord, layered over the F#-G#-C#-D# structure, which later appears in the bass part, becomes the starting point for the guitar improvisation (see Example 11). The percussion and bass enhance this process by fully utilizing the motif from the beginning of the section.

This fragment clearly demonstrates how the structure is used to shape the improvisation narrative. Total improvisation is an excellent tool for expanding sensitivity to chordal sounds.

In classical jazz education, we focus on matching notes to the harmonic structure present in a jazz standard. We use scales that correspond to specific chords. Of course, multiple scales can be applied to a single chord, but we still aim for the best possible match of notes to that chord. Thus, we concentrate on the final effect. In improvised music, everything is created in real-time, and predicting the next moves is challenging. As a result, we focus on the process, and the choice of notes becomes secondary. Reversing this approach and viewing scale elements, harmonic patterns, or specific rhythms (e.g., swing, bossa nova) as means of expression rather than absolutes or final stages of the process can lead to openness to other genres, the use of their elements, and ultimately innovation. This path leads to the development of one's original style, which is often the concern of artists and what we aim to inspire in young jazz students.

Duration: 10:45 – 15:20

Letter J

The soloist, in this case the guitar, in no way refers to the four-note motif that forms the core of the percussion and bass parts. Additionally, the baritone saxophone and piano also reinforce the leading motif of this section by occasionally adding loose interjections based on this four-note concept. The guitarist creates an entirely different world, which gives this section a unique character and makes it impossible to predict the next move. This fragment concludes with a densification of the rhythmic texture across all instruments. The entire section ends with a hit on a hole saw, an instrument made from materials used in construction. Its piercing sound perfectly separates the individual fragments of the next part of the composition.

Duration: 15:20 – 18:28

Letter K

Example 12. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter K

91 otwornica **K** MINIMAL IMPRO I otwornica

Tpt. *ppp*

Ten. Sax. *ppp*

Bari. Sax. *ppp*

Tbn. *ppp*

J. Gtr. *ppp*

Pno. *ppp*

U. Bass *ppp*

Dr. *ppp*

The fragment presented here illustrates fully improvised sections, which are among the greatest challenges in large instrumental ensembles. Part 3 of *Scratches for 8 Musicians* represents such a fragment. It is nearly 8 minutes and 30 seconds of improvisation, with the aim, in the context of the morphology of continuity, of remaining within minimalism using a piano dynamic. This entire section is divided into four smaller segments, separated by the sound of a hole saw, which symbolizes the transition to the next fragment and serves as a natural organizer of the space. In this part, the performers utilize a Sound Map and performance parameters (see Chapter II, Section 2.3.), which includes, among other things, the preparation of instruments that significantly contribute to a different sound compared to the other sections of the composition.

The performance of this fragment is arbitrary, based on one's own ego, guided by personal taste and stylistic preference, aligning the structure of one's mind with sensory and emotional perception. The performer follows their feelings, automatism,

sense of universality, and taste, aiming to create unforeseen situations. Several premises were provided for performing this fragment. Specifically, each of the sections should differ from one another. In written music, the score assigns roles to instruments equally. Even if parts differ significantly, everyone has assigned duties and fulfills them. In improvised music, besides what emerges from the artist, there is the issue of dividing the sound space. Musicians naturally divide responsibility and their role in the performance of the fragment among themselves. Nothing can be assumed in advance. At any moment, everything might change.

This is where the chapter begins, shifting the focus from specific pitch heights to color and reactivity. This fragment highlights the division between artists who are inclined to initiate a section and propose something, and those who follow, enriching earlier musical statements (narratives) by adding counterpoint and emphasizing only specific phrases—mental support. In this fragment, instrument preparations and extended techniques of sound production dominate. Often, melodic instruments such as wind instruments use a reversal of role from melodic to rhythmic to expand the range of sounds. The trombone part consists solely of sounds produced by blowing air, combined with the use of a “plunger” mute, which, by closing or opening the instrument's bell, naturally becomes an acoustic filter, effectively altering the pitch of the blown air. This is a meticulous way of producing sound, where even the smallest movement causes a noticeable change. The piano is played using a percussion mallet, which changes the instrument's timbre to a more percussive one by striking the strings. The trumpet uses a half-valve, which alters its sound towards a more ethnic quality, realizing indeterminate pitch heights.

Another example is the use of a bow on the cymbals of the drum kit, where rubbing the cymbals with the bow causes them to vibrate in a specific way, producing a sound quite different from what is commonly known. Instruments are divided into those with single entrances and those playing longer fragments. This is a natural division in a large instrumental ensemble.

The lack of any pre-composed structure opens a wide range of possibilities for the performer, which also affects the listener. All musicians faithfully adhered to the premise, placing each musician in an unnatural, unusual situation. This created conditions for innovation both individually and collectively. The entire section is atonal, amorphous, and composed of many individual musical events that overlap rhythmically.

Another premise for each fragment within Scratch III was the immediate change of sound material or absence from the section (silence) when transitioning to the next fragment. Some chose radical changes, while others made only slight adjustments in their playing. An interesting aspect is the contrast between the character of the musician and the material they create. Those who were bolder, with greater confidence and experience in performing this type of music, allowed for more radical differences and bolder explorations in experimenting with sound material and themselves.

Duration: 18:28 – 21:23

The fragment concludes with a hit on a hole saw.

Letter L

In this range of possibilities, the guitar part is clearly noticeable, offering a contrasting plan to the rest of the ensemble by utilizing extended episodes, while the rest of the group sticks to brief, isolated entries (piano, double bass). The percussion part features animal hooves and other uses of the hole saw (tremolo), as well as bowing the cymbal to make it vibrate, achieving a highly distinctive sound. The trombone and baritone saxophone share the same sound space, alternately producing high-register sounds and extracting only air from their instruments. The trumpet entirely abstains from participating in this fragment.

Duration: 21:23 – 24:16

The fragment concludes with a hit on a hole saw.

Letter M

This fragment begins with the tenor saxophone's single, yet aggressive, entry. It is worth noting that this is a radical shift, as the tenor saxophone was only present in a minimal capacity in the previous section. The saxophone will continue to carry out its part throughout the remainder of this section. This is another example of a practice typical of this style of music performance. The instrumentalist remains true to their initial, spontaneous idea and consistently follows it to the end. After a while, the rest

of the ensemble can interpret the instrumentalist's intentions and respond accordingly. In improvised music, the timing and intent with which a fragment is performed are crucial. Discovering the intent allows for an immediate understanding of the other performers and a quick response through one's own playing. This ongoing balancing between one's own ideas, interaction with others, layering of different concepts, and often a dose of chaos and unpredictability, eventually leads to a broader perspective in the later phase. The double bass refers to the individual entries of the baritone saxophone, which produces microtonal sounds. The guitar, percussion, piano, and trombone completely abstain from participating in this fragment.

Duration: 24:16 – 27:20

The fragment concludes with a hit on a hole saw.

Letter N

Originally, the score included four such fragments (fields of possibility), but due to insufficient time, the leader decided to move on to Section Scratch IV. The duration of the piece (40 minutes) is a primary consideration, and everything has been subordinated to this constraint.

Letter O

Example 13. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter O

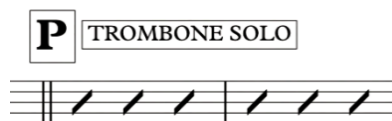


Beginning of Scratch IV. A short section in which the motif is introduced, serving as the basis for the rest of the composition. The final section begins with a contrasting motif played unison by all the musicians (musical notation). This motif will reappear later in the composition, being transformed in various ways (see Example 13). The motif serves as an introduction to the section where the leading roles are taken by the trombone and percussion.

Duration: 27:20 – 27:33

Letter P

Example 14. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter P



An interesting phenomenon occurs here, as the trombone and percussion begin, but the double bass also starts playing along, only to retreat after playing three notes (see Example 14). Similarly, the guitar plays only one note before also withdrawing. This is a superb example of how we can alter our stage behavior according to the circumstances at any moment. Silence is also a sonic plan that can be a crucial factor preceding the entrance of a given player and building tension. Although the improvisation narrative in this section is non-idiomatic, it can definitely be described as "hot" and references American free jazz, which today is effectively an idiom. As the percussion uses increasingly longer pauses, the double bass joins the duo. The end of this section is marked by the entrance of the remaining musicians with the transformed leading motif used at the beginning of this part in *ad libitum*.

Duration: 27:33 – 29:25

Letter Q

Example 15. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter Q



Example 15 illustrates a segment that serves as a connector, providing a background for the trombone solo. Its introduction occurs at the leader's signal. It is important to remember that the countdown is constantly present, aiming to control the performance and duration of the piece.

Duration: 29:25 – 29:48

Letter R

Example 16. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter R



This, in turn, leads to a moment in the piece where the baritone saxophone and piano come to the forefront. In terms of improvisational narrative, we continue to remain within the influences of free jazz (see Example 16).

Duration: 29:48 – 31:43

Letter S

After Fragment R, there is a transition section that introduces the next motif. In this section, composed moments are introduced gradually, alternating with improvised segments (see Example 17).

Example 17. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter S



Duration: 31:43 – 31:52

Letter T

A specific structure only emerges during the trumpet solo, where the starting point for improvisation is a recurring melodic pattern in the bass line. In this fragment, improvisation is treated quite differently, with the accompanying musicians in a secondary role, supporting the improvisational process. The use of this compositional approach aims to present an alternative method of improvisation, where the improviser operates within a pre-determined structure. The section is concluded with

an orchestral fragment, where the previously presented motifs are harmonized and arranged – Letter U (see Examples 18 and 19).

Example 18. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter T

TRUMPET SOLO

Upright Bass

3

130

T

134

139

Duration: 31:52 – 35:44

Example 19. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter U

U

142

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Bari. Sax.

Tbn.

J. Gtr.

Pno.

U. Bass

Dr.

ff

Duration: 35:44 - 36:36

Letter V

The next fragment is a section where the formative element is a rhythmic pattern, with no fixed pitches for the notes. However, the starting point is defined. The piano executes figurations that are not predetermined, allowing for free interpretation of the segment. One of the performance requirements is the freedom to choose the sounds and leave this aspect to chance, which creates very interesting harmonic structures. Example 20 illustrates how the composer's identity manifests in rhythm, and how the composition is realized during performance through the selection of sounds by the performers.

Duration: 36:36 – 38:35

Example 20. E. Misk, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter V

V DRUMS SOLO

The musical score for 'Letter V' is composed of seven staves. The first six staves are in 6/4 time and feature rhythmic notation using 'x' marks to represent drum hits. These hits are often beamed in groups of three, indicating triplets. The seventh staff is in 4/4 time and contains a continuous rhythmic pattern represented by diagonal slashes. All staves are marked with the dynamic 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The score is titled 'V DRUMS SOLO'.

Letter W

Example 21. E. Miszczak, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter W



Piano Solo on a Bass Groove. The piano solo is set against a bass groove. On cue, the wind instruments join in as a background to the piano solo (see Example 22). This is a very classic jazz fragment. Slowly, the contours of the inspiration for the piece become apparent, revealing influences from big band music. The sound evokes the large orchestras of bandleaders such as Duke Ellington and Count Basie but with a more contemporary groove (see Example 21).

Example 22. E. Miszczak, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter W

The image shows four staves of musical notation for wind instruments: Tpt. (Trumpet), Ten. Sax. (Tenor Saxophone), Bari. Sax. (Baritone Saxophone), and Tbn. (Trombone). Above the first staff is a box labeled "W" and "PIANO SOLO" with the instruction "play as CUE after piano solo". Each staff has a similar instruction. The notation is in treble clef and includes various notes, rests, and accidentals. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

Duration: 38:35 – 39:40

Letter X

Fragment That Resembles Big Band Playing. This fragment aims to evoke the sound of big bands (see Example 23). It features high dynamics and is the only moment in the piece where swing appears. Here, swing is used as a means of expression and a way to achieve articulation. Often, too much emphasis is placed on "swinging," making it a goal in itself. This is exceptionally challenging given the culture and art from our geographical region. Swing holds a prominent place in the history of jazz. I consider it a mistaken assumption during the performance of swing music to treat this style as an end in itself. Sometimes, reviews or evaluations of performances,

particularly in European contexts, comment on whether something "swings" or "doesn't swing." My intention was to use this phenomenon as a way to express my artistic vision.

Example 23. E. Miskz, *Scratches for 8 Musicians* – Letter X

Duration: 39:40 – 40:24

The piece contains completely arranged moments that need to be performed with the utmost respect and precision, as well as moments where only the participating instruments are specified. In these moments, the composer takes a risk, trusting the performers' intuition. The described moments include:

- Fully composed and arranged moments (idiomatic);
- Moments where the form-building substance is improvisation (non-idiomatic), divided into different instrumentations and ensembles: duos, trios, etc., and sections where the entire ensemble improvises using extended sound production techniques (composer's identity in action);
- Solos with a division between rhythm section and soloist (idiomatic);
- Sections where a specific rhythm is notated, but the pitch of the sound is left to the performer's discretion (composer's identity in action).

During subsequent performances, the ensemble will aim to approach the improvisational fragments differently. We focus on the process rather than the final outcome, which increases the likelihood of creating something novel, innovative, or even experimental.

4.3. Reception of the Work – Reviews and Opinions from the Artistic Community

The album was released on June 24, 2022, by Alpaka Records, of which I am a co-founder. Alpaka Records is an independent label closely associated with the Tri-City music scene. It was established in 2017 by a "new wave" of artists who decided to seek their own path and independence.

The catalog currently features 32 albums. Initially, the primary focus was on jazz music, but over time we have expanded the range of genres while maintaining coherence and quality. We are not restricted by style, following our own intuition. Initially, the label released albums from the local scene. As time has passed, Alpaka's interest has spread throughout Poland, leading us to present the most intriguing phenomena in the Polish alt-impro scene.

The album has received numerous positive reviews and has gained recognition within the community. Here are a few of them:

Polska Plyta / Polska Muzyka⁴⁹

Łukasz Dębowski

"Scratches For 8 Musicians. Live At Polish Radio" is the third solo album by Emil Miszczak, a trumpeter and creator of soundscapes associated with the Tri-City improvised music scene. Today, we present our review of this event.

Review of the album "Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio" – Emil Miszczak & The Sonic Syndicate (2022).

Without a doubt, trumpeter Emil Miszczak is one of the most open artists, easily navigating the vast expanse of jazz music. This is best exemplified by the album *"Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio"*, recorded with the band The Sonic Syndicate. Considering that Miszczak views artistic space as a basis for his explorations and approaches music in a completely unconventional, even experimental way, the result is something incredibly intriguing.

Moreover, the compositions feature sounds with symbolic and deeply emotional resonance, ultimately forming images that fit into more mundane—read human—situations. The album was recorded during a concert at the Witold Lutosławski Polish Radio Studio as part of several days of International Jazz Day celebrations in 2021. This timing is significant as it occurred in the post-pandemic era, adding an additional layer of context (each track title uses "Scratch," "from scratch," implying a fresh start).

However, more importantly, the focus is on the completely vibrant energy, unconstrained by technical polish, though the precision of the performance is inherent to the professionalism

⁴⁹ Cf. Ł. Dębowski, *Emil Miszczak & The Sonic Syndicate – "Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio"* [RECENZJA]. <https://polskaplyta-polskamuzyka.pl/2022/07/24/emil-miszczak-the-sonic-syndicate-scratches-for-8-musicians-live-at-polish-radio-recenzja/>. [accessed 17 May 2024].

of the musicians. This precision seems to come as a side effect of the overall concept. The ensemble involved in this project is impressive: Emil Misk – trumpet, Piotr Chęcki – tenor sax, Jakub Klemensiewicz – baritone sax, Paweł Niewiadomski – trombone, Michał Zienkowski – guitar, Mikołaj Basiukiewicz – piano, Konrad Żołnerek – double bass, Sławek Koryzno – drums. Through their artistic awareness and ability to listen to each other, they created a kind of imaginative theater in each composition, highlighting the project leader—Emil Misk. Hence, the trumpet motifs are naturally fitting, born from creativity and the desire to communicate a message to the audience.

It's worth emphasizing that the music on this album is communicative for all who can find meaning in such presented insignia, hidden within these four compositions. Some abstraction, as one of the elements, may not always be clear, but it allows for personal interpretation of selected fragments of the whole. Additionally, the ability to communicate among the musicians removes any impression of chaos and disorder in concluding the narratives (the dynamic character of "Scratch IV").

Regarding influences, the album incorporates elements of avant-garde music, derived from free jazz, a touch of classical sounds, but primarily improvisational motifs that infuse each part of the album with temperament (even palpable in the calmer, unsettling piece "Scratch II"). This is music consisting of impulses drawn from reality and transformed on one's own terms into new material, leaning towards spontaneity and experimentation rather than conventional melody. Therefore, "*Scratches for 8 Musicians – Live at Polish Radio*" should be approached in a highly individual manner, seeking out personally intriguing elements. It is undeniably a proposal for those looking for music beyond the scope of typical forms, especially since the sounds in this case take on an almost poetic quality.

Jazz Press⁵⁰

Jakub Krukowski

Emil Misk's latest album represents a completely different situation from those described above. The musician returns to the well-known (this is the third in a row) and esteemed (to mention the Fryderyk Award for the debut) formation, The Sonic Syndicate. Opting for his own collective did not, however, mean a less challenging endeavor. For an artist with such potential, the bar is set much higher each time, and his ambition does not allow him to remain stagnant.

The album's title already underscores the leader's desire to explore new solutions. "From scratch" is an English phrase meaning "from zero," so it's easy to infer that the new material aims to offer a completely different approach to the octet format. This is evident, for instance, in the personnel changes. Joining the original members—Emil Misk (trumpet), Piotr Chęcki (tenor saxophone), Paweł Niewiadomski (trombone), Michał Zienkowski (guitar), Konrad Żołnerek (double bass), and Sławek Koryzno (drums)—are Jakub Klemensiewicz (baritone saxophone) and Mikołaj Basiukiewicz (piano). The album also has a distinctly different form—it is a cohesive suite, and its division into four parts seems to be merely a consequence of release needs.

However, what stands out most is the energy that the collective emanates. Of course, previous albums also featured more aggressive moments, but with the new lineup, where the alto saxophone was replaced by the baritone saxophone, it was hard not to use it for an even

⁵⁰ Cf. J. Krukowski, *Emil Misk: Z dala od stagnacji*, in: <https://www.jazzpress.pl>. <https://www.jazzpress.pl/plyty/emil-misk-z-dala-od-stagnacji>. [accessed 17 May 2024].

stronger impact. This did not, of course, prevent the introduction of quieter segments, such as the few minutes of guitar looping accompanied by subtle intrusions from the piano and drums. It seems that the leader, while perfectly managing the band, allowed more space for improvisation, resulting in a more unpredictable sound. All of this makes *Scratches for 8 Musicians* a compelling experience that pins the listener to their seat, not allowing them to detach from the flow of sounds that are hard to categorize into a specific genre. We have plenty of free jazz storms, catchy solos, minimalism close to contemporary classical music, all while respecting the tradition of jazz big bands.

Immediately after the album's release, Misk wrote on his social media that the invited performers wonderfully utilized their "superpowers." Observing their career development, we've probably become accustomed to these absolutely "supernatural" abilities—each one simply displays their renowned high level. What is extraordinary is the way the leader uses these talents to achieve his goal. And once again!

Hisvoice.cz / Czechy⁵¹

Jan Hocek

[...] Essentially, it is a forty-minute, four-part suite, with strong motifs from contemporary classical music, free jazz, and free improvisation. Although there are eight performers, the recording often brims with big band energy. A blend of free jazz eruptions and rich textures, tense dramas, and sonic dives, all of this literally explodes in the opening *Scratch I*. In the next two parts, minimalism merges with the breathy textures and the shredding of guitar or rhythmic patterns. The third part features a dominant internal trumpet, evoking almost natural sounds, microtonal expressions, and slowly creeping minimalism. The whole piece resembles more of a prelude to the thirteen-minute finale, *Scratch IV*. Here, the octet roars like a truly wild entity, with solos from the trombonist and baritone saxophonist also emerging. Only then does the band slow down, and the trumpet enters in a solo refrain. The compositions evoke the orchestral sound of Charles Mingus, with hard-bop influences enhanced by drum and piano solos. A treat!

Donos Kulturalny⁵²

Krzysztof Komorek

[...] The album features four pieces, or rather, four sections of the titular work. Emil Misk's composition, as the composer himself mentions, serves merely as a pretext for the development of ensemble improvisations. "It's material constructed to be played differently each time," the composer noted in a radio interview. The album contains echoes of contemporary classical music, free jazz, improvised music, and big band traditions. Emil Misk engages artistically in various stylistic activities, and "Scratches" clearly reflects this diversity.

⁵¹ Cf. J. Hocek, *Tři tváře polského trumpetisty Emila Misky*, 25.08.2022, „His Voice. Hudby Je Vic”, ČASOPIS O JINÉ HUDBĚ, vydává Hudební informační středisko, online.

<https://www.hisvoice.cz/tri-tvare-polskeho-trumpetisty-emila-miska/>. [accessed 17 May 2024].

⁵² Cf. K. Komorek, *Emil Misk & The Sonic Syndicate „Scratches for 8 Musicians”*, Alpaka Records, 2022, "Donos kulturalny. Jazz – Literatura – Teatr", 1 sierpnia 2022, online. <https://donos.home.blog/2022/08/01/emil-misk-the-sonic-syndicate-scratches-for-8-musicians/>. [accessed 17 May 2024].

The music is based on the strength of the entire octet's presentation, but within the individual, well-developed sections of the suite, there is room for a special spotlight on certain instruments. For example, the guitar resonates brilliantly in "Scratch II." It is brilliantly countered by the minimalist "Scratch III," where the wind instruments take the lead. Sonic Syndicate fills every second of this exceptional album with its musical erudition. Therefore, it is worth focusing your attention throughout the full forty minutes of this outstanding album to not miss a single moment.

Polish Jazz blogspot⁵³

Piotr Ban

The third album from the Syndicate led by Mr. Misk. A recording of a concert at the Witold Lutosławski Polish Radio Studio that took place in the spring of 2021, and which was released at lightning speed – by the summer of 2022. So, I'll adjust as well – I'll describe my impression at the end of 2023. At least it's an opportunity to remind fans of improvised music about this album. A rather unusual album for many reasons. [...]

There's no need to introduce Mr. Emil and his companions as they are well-known: creative ADHD, Stakhanovite activity, and ant-like diligence of artists from the Gdańsk Bay area. Artists like Mr. Emil – playing in 50 projects at once and already thinking about 50 more. The Sonic Syndicate, with their debut "Don't Hesitate!" and its follow-up "Artificial Stupidity," gained recognition among fans of brilliant, modern-jazz eclecticism with classical influences. Nonetheless, the ambitious leader of the project decided that it was time for a change, time to reinvent himself. And he did.

The first change is evident right from the start – I hold in my hands an album with a very intriguing cover. The covers of previous albums perfectly fit the popular trend in Polish jazz of "discouraging one from exploring the content." This time, however, I'm greeted by a monochromatic human head sliced like fresh bread. Just add some butter. First plus. The second change is the approach to form and structure. Instead of the rather compact and clearly composed pieces, the Syndicate presents us with a 40-minute behemoth—a suite divided into 4 long, though significantly different, sections. It's immediately clear that this is an open work, allowing room for free improvisational excursions. According to the official explanation, the album's title comes from the term "from scratch" – from zero, anew. However, I focus on the word "scratch" – sketch, or – why not! – doodles. Especially noticeable in part "III," which is a score composed of several symbols on the staff—and off we go, gentlemen, into the unknown.

The third change is also quickly audible. The ethereal and "bright" alto sax of Mr. Kuba Więcek has been replaced by the growling tenor sax of Mr. Klemensiewicz, giving the sounds greater impact, especially in the so-called big band sections. Another plus.

So, the suite—a 40-minute sound fresco. The opening "I" is a slowly developing opus from nothing, where we hear the influence of contemporary music, with frequent progressive elements, especially in the climaxes, where the brass (oh, that trombone with the baritone

⁵³ Cf. P. Ban, *Emil Misk & The Sonic Syndicate - "Scratches For 8 Musicians"*, in: Polish-Jazz.blogspot.com. 17 stycznia 2024, online. https://polish-jazz.blogspot.com/2024/01/emil-misk-sonic-syndicate-scratches.html?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR1GbeCx4ezyd4SR-Ck--cr29QgHS7213zHy1nUWCLqBFpUhNY5RyBOvXQU_aem_AYJiT9AhAIjIWJ-ZLNa2HoDRWrvxGSsd4vH1owK0VmnZy0ayIvGyLCsIBuv3zZvjKWvM-2bWEtMHaa-NJmkobkEW. [accessed 17 May 2024].

sax) delivers heavy, Crimson-like riffs. The next piece, full of air and space, "II," rests on Mr. Zienkowski's shoulders. First, his guitar's persistent ostinato builds a disturbing atmosphere and a foundation for the other musicians. When the ostinato is taken over by the double bass, the guitar begins its solo—also a disturbing poem. If "I" can be described with progressive terminology, then "II" evokes a bit of krautrock motorik. The fragment "III" is a very intuitive sonoristic expedition into territories that I don't often explore but have gained a specific charm and allure for me thanks to albums by Ms. Kamila Owczarek. The finale, "IV," begins with the free jazz madness of Mr. Chęcki and his colleagues, gradually taking on a more ordered form, with particular attention to the very colorful and varied drumming of Mr. Koryzno.

An interesting and non-boring album, though requiring attention and focus. The reward is discovering details, treats, and evidence of the musicians' inventiveness and imagination, especially in the improvisations. Mr. Misk has certainly proposed something new in the musical language of the Sonic Syndicate—something that can be developed in concerts [...].

Conclusion

Signposts are essential for improvisers, particularly during the initial phases of their journey. Nevertheless, we have the ability to be creative in the establishment of the premise upon which we will proceed during a performance, just as we can be creative in improvisation. In addition to the conventional score, which accurately reflects the composer's identity, a Sound Map, performance parameters, and instructions for performing indeterminate fragments were developed to facilitate the creation of an original work. The objective of all of these components is to motivate performers, occasionally providing them with encouragement during periods of uncertainty and doubt, and absolving them of responsibility for the ultimate outcome. The implementation of novel methodologies, such as sound maps, enables each individual to generate their own map, which can assist them in identifying their unique style and the areas in which they are most at ease. This solution appears to be highly beneficial. This is the point at which the primary message of the work is revealed, as it redirects attention from the ultimate outcome to the process of executing an improvised work. Every artist's primary objective is to achieve originality and authenticity. Improvisation is an exceptional method for articulating one's artistic vision and establishing a musical environment on one's own terms.

Daily, each improviser refines their language of expression, which they then employ during their performances. In addition, musicians enhance their abilities on a daily basis by continuously studying their instruments. The same principle applies to music theorists and composers. In order to accurately interpret and analyze a musical work, each individual refines their craft and the corresponding vocabulary, and subsequently describes it using the most precise terminology (often new and personal). We make numerous discoveries that bring us closer to developing our unique manner of expression. Consequently, the author in this work suggests a novel terminology that will be applicable in a variety of future contexts. The proposed new concepts of improvisation narrative, continuity morphology, and tonal gravity will contribute to the advancement of the analysis of improvisation, particularly free and collective improvisation in large ensembles. Additionally, they will impact the Experimental Jazz Combo course, which has been a component of the Jazz and Stage Music department's curriculum at the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk since 2019.

By conducting research within the context of the doctoral dissertation, numerous noteworthy outcomes were accomplished. One of the primary results is a change in perspective regarding education, which enables us to not only improve our musical abilities by playing specific chords more proficiently, but also to delve deeper into the structure and meaning of a work, fostering a sense of self-worth and confidence in taking further steps.

The results that have been presented indicate that the anxiety associated with a dissonant note, which may ultimately prove to be an error, is a significant contributor to the increased stress and uncertainty associated with the performance of improvised music. We have a completed and confined version of the work to compare our performance to when performing composed music. A flawless performance is feasible given the shape of the work at our disposal. Throughout the entire educational process, we endeavor to achieve perfection. There is no issue with this. Nevertheless, in the context of improvised music, each performance is unique, and there is no single version to which to refer. If this is the case, it is necessary to establish a definition of "perfection" in performance, as the pursuit of novel solutions and intentional errors may be regarded as components of "perfection" in the context of performance.

It is important to acknowledge that the aforementioned attitude is not inherently flawed. The author is interested in the coexistence of both attitudes in the public sphere, particularly in institutions. This necessitates a profound examination of our accomplishments as educators and, most importantly, as artists.

The research also yielded the identification of two significant attitudes in the context of spontaneous improvisation: proactive and reactive. The presence of two types of creators is indicative of this: those who propose new solutions and ideas, and those who, despite their reluctance to propose something new, offer mental support for existing ideas. The author aspires for the artistic community to benefit from the findings of the observations.

This work has its limitations, despite the numerous reflections. It is an interpretation of the research and observations that have been conducted. However, surveys with open-ended questions could be a valuable addition, allowing workshop or class participants to submit their own experiences. This knowledge has the potential to be more precisely classified and described, which serves as a foundation for future research in this field.

The author aspires to have this work read by a wide audience and to initiate a more comprehensive conversation about human creativity and improvisation. One's creative imagination can be effectively articulated through the use of music. The author is also of the firm conviction that each of us possesses an individual voice, and the primary responsibility of educators is to stimulate our creative potential. It is also acknowledged that technical proficiency and an understanding of one's instrument are essential. Nevertheless, we are unable to concentrate exclusively on them, as this would result in the attainment of exceptional proficiency without the effective direction necessary to demonstrate our vision.

The author aspires to participate in or coordinate performances of improvised music in much larger ensembles, such as symphony or string orchestras, in the future. A significant addition to the research would be the development of initiatives that involve musicians from a variety of genres, including electronic, hip-hop, and rock. The development of musical events could be positively influenced by the energy from each of these areas.

The dissertation author's objective is to motivate readers to contemplate the inclusion of improvisation studies in our educational system, regardless of their level of education. The concept of jazz is one of the most expansive terms in the history of music, and it is in the process of evolving.

Therefore, this is not merely a description of an artistic work; rather, it offers a comprehensive viewpoint on the topic of free improvisation within the framework of a large instrumental ensemble. This dissertation stands out from the current body of literature in Poland.

It is worth analyzing all unifying approaches to shape the norms prescribed for a given style. And here, one should ask: Why limit oneself in this way? We should undertake all actions to develop our creativity. An interview with Peter Brötzmann, the German saxophonist and painter, precisely reflects these assumptions:

Only the work matters. Only the music matters. Everything else is nonsense. And if I have my own style, if I play differently? Well, I am a bit different. But there were plenty of 'different' musicians back then: Bennink, Schlippenbach, Van Howe. This is actually something I miss the most in young musicians today. They have excellent technique but lack personality. Almost every young musician today has gone through conservatory, so jazz has become very academic. Anthony Braxton is my old friend; I really like the guy, but his students represent nothing. It's the same for the past twenty years: rich white kids who have more skills than I do but have no idea what

they want to say. Everyone focuses on technique, no one on content. As a result, jazz has become very reactionary. I am waiting for young people who will finally slam their fists on the table and make a breakthrough in this mess. However, I don't think that will happen.

Why?

Because schools and all the media very early on direct musicians. They offer them a narrow perspective. They tell them what and how to do in order to achieve a specific goal. In music schools today, students are taught how to market their music. I never asked myself such questions. An artist who starts calculating is a dead artist. Another thing, our music was so distinctive because it was directed against the establishment. In that, it found its purpose and strength.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ A conversation between Jan Błaszczyk and Peter Brötzmann "Ten wstyd wciąż tam jest", Dwutygodnik.com 353, 02/2023. <https://www.dwutygodnik.com/artykul/10544-ten-wstyd-wciaz-tam-jest.html>. [accessed 30 May 2024].

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