Incorporating Improvisation into the Suzuki Violin Lesson

by James D. Van Reeth

Submitted to:

Dr. Patricia Holland
Prof. Patricia D’Ercole
Dr. Judith W. Bond
Dr. Charles Rochester Young

Department of Music
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

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Improvisation, Creativity, and the Creative Process

Improvisation is an important current issue in music education. The Music Educators National Conference (MENC) National Standards for Music Education outline what students should do in improvisation between Kindergarten and grade 4 (MENC, 2009).

- Content Standard: Improvising melodies, variations and accompaniments
- Achievement Standard: Students
  a. Improvise “answers” in the same style to given rhythmic and melodic phrases
  b. Improvise simple rhythmic variations and melodic ostinato accompaniments
  c. Improvise simple rhythmic variations and simple melodic embellishments on familiar melodies
  d. Improvise short songs and instrumental pieces using a variety of sound sources, including traditional sounds, nontraditional sounds available in the classroom, body sounds, and sounds produced by electronic means (MENC, 2009)

This curriculum area is not generally addressed in Suzuki teacher training courses. Many private lesson music teachers, Suzuki or otherwise, are uncomfortable with the mere idea of improvisation. Most do not understand it, and do not think it is possible for them to execute such an activity effectively in their teaching studios. But improvisation is a valuable teaching tool in music education. Therefore, understanding improvisation and how it can relate to and be integrated into the Suzuki Philosophy and Method could be a rewarding challenge.

Charles Rochester Young, Chair of Composition and Music Theory at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, supports the notion that improvisation is an essential element in music education. Young discusses improvisation in his music classes and speaks about the importance of creativity as an essential aspect of a well-rounded music education. Ideas found in the article, “Is Music a Dead Language,” (Young & Kase, 2004) illuminate the intriguing point that musicians are seldom encouraged to speak and write using their own musical language (via improvisation and composition) and are
missing out on important experiences in the creative process. The opening paragraph states:

Imagine a world where people could only speak in other people’s words to one another. Since people in this world could only communicate the ideas of other people, they would not be able to speak their own thoughts, feelings and attitudes with anyone else. We would call their language “dead” since it lacks a personal or cultural means of creative expression. Surprisingly the language of music is often taught exclusively through speaking and reading the ideas of others (composers), even though other languages teach listening, speaking, reading and writing (Young & Kase, 2004).

One of the main reasons many musicians fail to understand improvisation is due to its broad definition. Is it for jazz musicians only? How did it apply to classical music during the eras of Bach and Mozart? How does it apply to the Suzuki Method? The New Harvard Dictionary of Music defines improvisation as “the art of performing music spontaneously without the aid of manuscript, sketches, or memory.” It is largely extemporaneous, but there are ways to prepare. When improvising, a musician may recall existing ideas such as scales, arpeggios, melodies and rhythms. Usually these ideas are presented in new ways, or in new situations.

In its most basic designation, improvisation is composing in real time. And this definition brings the additional, potentially frightening term “composition” into the picture. Improvisation is the starting point for a large amount of music whether it is created on the concert stage, the recording studio, or a nightclub. Numerous pieces of Bach and Mozart were first improvised and then written down.

Presently, classical music has the least amount of improvisation because all parts are recorded in specific detail. And while there is room for interpretation in expression, musicians are expected to stick to the score. But it was not always this way. Sculptor and musician, Leonardo da Vinci, was a great improviser on his instrument, the viola da braccio. He and his friends mounted full operas in which all poetry and music were
improvised (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 7). Improvisation was more common within classical music until the Industrial Age, when trends shifted and society placed extreme importance on specialization and professionalism in all areas of life, including music.

While improvisation is less common in classical music today, musicians in non-classical styles of jazz, blues, bluegrass, funk, rock, and ethnic styles (including Arabian and Indian), regularly improvise (Music general considerations and music improvisation tips, 2005). There are multiple styles of improvisation, which can be broken down into a few basic categories. All improvisation is about creating music on the spot, incorporating individuality of the performer. One style, by way of figured bass realization, is associated with Baroque music. Another style emerged in the classical era when musicians improvised concerto cadenzas, connecting their own creative touch to the pre-composed sections of that piece. An additional style of improvisation is found with the jazz idiom.

Jazz musicians create music over chord changes, and many consider jazz to be “true jazz” only if it contains sections of improvised music. It was jazz that brought back the practice of improvisation, a tradition that died away when the formal concert hall came into vogue. Most styles of improvisation require an instrumental technique plus knowledge of musical elements and artistry to be implemented effectively. However, there is a style labeled “free” improvisation because it is free from any association with a specified musical style. Any musical instrument, traditional, alternative, or newly created, may be used in free improvisation. Free improvisation does not necessarily require musical training.
Today, most classical musicians and teachers leave composition to composers. Yet improvisation and composition were combined and a fundamental and popular element in music. The practice was championed by Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven and demonstrated on the concert stage. But musicians became less interested in improvisation, and focused more on printed music written by a small group of composers. Hence, performance and composition, once entangled, became separate practices. According to Stephen Nachmanovitch, when improvisation practices displayed on the concert stage died away, “We entered into a period in which concert goers came to believe that the only good composer was a dead composer” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 8).

This paper presents ways to incorporate improvisation and the creation of music into the Suzuki violin lesson. There are two ways music is created. It can be written out on paper in composition form, or demonstrated through improvisation, the spontaneous variety of composition that is not written down. In order to write out a composition, it is necessary to have knowledge of music theory, pen, paper, or a computer. Improvisation is a logical choice to explore the creation of music in the Suzuki violin lesson situation because it does not necessarily require knowledge of music theory, pen, paper, or a computer.

An additional factor contributing to the elusiveness of improvisation is that it is entangled with creativity, the creative process and creative ability, which are, individually, complex concepts. According to Judith Kurka Nagel, in its simplest definition, creativity means to bring something into existence that did not exist before: to make something out of nothing (Nagel, 1991). Nagel offers this deeper definition of creativity:
Creativity is a sensitivity and response to the need for personal expression of innate positive potential and individuality. It is the recognition and feeling of one’s uniqueness as a human being; it is the feeling of being significant; it is the conviction that one’s life is truly important – that one can make a difference in the world! Ultimately, it is the supreme awareness that one has unlimited capacity to learn, to grow, and to love. It is the capability to demonstrate compassion, to express love of life, to show the beauty of the inner self. It is the evolution of wisdom. In essence, creativity means greatness as a human being (Nagel, 1991, p. 45).

According to Nagel, many individuals do not recognize their own creativity and unique individuality. As a result, they are limited in their ability to make independent decisions, create new ideas, and fully direct their own lives. Nagel continues: “They are used to following in the wake of social mores, content to do ordinary things, satisfied by acceptable forms of recreation, and generally live life in the comfortable but unchallenging and uncreative way. I might go so far as to say those people don’t give a darn about their own potential nor the potential of the human race...” (Nagel, 1991, p. 95). Therefore, encouraging opportunities for creativity in teaching is essential.

Nagel writes of the concept of going beyond the norm with creativity. Wonderful things happen when one allows oneself to think broadly, imagine intuitively, and go beyond the limits of what is customary (Nagel, 1991, pp. 95 & 96). She lists positive results of exploring creativity and the negative results if creativity is not developed. Blocked creativity keeps people from going beyond the norm:
Positive Results/Attributes of Being Creative, Causing One to Go Beyond the Norm
1. Strengthened independence.
2. Increased confidence and self-worth.
3. Greater competence.
4. Trust in oneself.
5. Freedom to dream.
6. License to explore.
7. Willingness to experiment.
8. Flexible behavior.
10. Openness to new ideas.
11. Increased vitality and enthusiasm.
12. Enjoyment of new experiences.
13. Excitement in meeting a challenge.
15. Recognition of individuality, realization of potential, greatness as a human being.

Negative Blocks/Consequences of Ignoring One’s Creativity to Go Beyond the Norm
1. Loss of independence.
2. Low self-esteem, inadequacy, loss of confidence.
5. No hope for the future.
6. Fear of the unknown.
7. Fear of failure.
8. Rigid thinking.
11. Apathy and laziness.
12. Lack of variety.
15. Mediocrity.

Since creativity is a tool in the quest to reach beyond the norm, it should be nurtured in the educational process and in the Suzuki Method.

The creative process is about how we develop creative ability, and both are challenging to define. Nachmanovitch states, “…there are different personality types, and the creative processes of one are not the same as of those of another” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 10). He suggests the creative process is elusive because it is unique to the individual. The intangible nature leads to an additional reason the creative process may be difficult to define. Alice Kay Kanack (Kanack, 1996. p. 15) states, “Throughout history, the ability to be creative has been largely ignored in educational circles.” Teachers are not teaching how to be creative. She offers two reasons why, referring to them as the two mysteries of creative ability.

The first mystery has to do with the true nature and explanation of inspiration. Kanack states that inspiration is the product of the subconscious process. We can witness the result of this process but not the actual process. As a result, inspiration is often explained as a gift from a higher being rather than a process. Even when allowing for the
belief in a higher being, “…the evidence is strong to support the idea that inspiration comes from within the human brain, and can only be triggered by conscious repetitious work on a creative problem” (Kanack, 1996, p. 16). Kanack further proposes that inspiration as a gift leads to the attitude of hopelessness about one’s ability to achieve inspiration. This discourages work toward what she feels is the highest point in the creative process; inspiration.

The second mystery relates to the presumably contradictory roles freedom and discipline play in the creative process. One needs a great deal of freedom to be creative. If a teacher, parent or fellow student criticizes a creator’s choice too strongly, that person may unwittingly take over the role of creator through his criticism (Kanak, 1996, p. 15). Freedom of choice is necessary because creativity is essentially the art of making choices. The creator must be allowed to explore possibilities without experiencing a degree of criticism that could stop the flow of the creative process, and turn the creation over to another person.

Recognizing the necessity of freedom in creativity and in an attempt to encourage greater creativity, some educators have given students complete freedom, producing disastrous results. These people failed to realize that freedom and discipline must coexist in education. Kanack has developed a formula: *Freedom of Choice or Freedom from Criticism + Disciplined practice and repetition of making choices = Creative Ability* (Kanack, 1996, p. 15). Discipline is a necessary complement to freedom. Kanack believes that repeating conscious work on a problem is necessary to trigger the subconscious to come up with a better, more complete solution to that problem.
Because of the mysterious nature of the ability to create, many educators might feel that it is un-teachable. But Kanak has developed a creative process theory that brings insight to this complex procedure. This theory presents the creative thought process as a four-part series of events that occurs in the brain: conscious work, subconscious work, inspiration, and theory.

Part one, conscious work, relates to the conscious part of the brain in its attempts to find a solution to a given problem. Choices are endless and there is actually no wrong solution possible. Repetition of this creative search is the key to the entire creative process and development of creative ability (Kanack, 1996, pg. 5). For example, during an improvisation game, a student might be searching for a melody that fits the given harmony or accompaniment.

Part two, subconscious work, relates to the creative subconscious that is triggered by the conscious repetition of a creative exercise. It takes over the problem and attempts to solve it while the conscious part of the brain is resting. This part of the brain eventually works at an extremely heightened level, but only if triggered by the conscious repetition of the creative exercise (Kanack, 1996, p. 5). For example, during an improvisation game (the conscious repetition of a creative exercise) students will explore a variety of possibilities that the subconscious will process while the conscious part of the brain is at rest.

In part three, inspiration, the subconscious has devised a solution to a given problem. It then conveys the solution to the conscious in the form of inspiration. In its completed state, inspiration always occurs in the form of an answer to the problem. It
can occur during a creative exercise, or anytime (Kanack, 1996, p. 5). During an improvisation game, this is illustrated when one of the possibilities seems to “click.”

Part four, theory, is the analysis or theoretical explanation of a problem. A supposition is formed in order to understand the inspiration. Understanding the inspiration can lead to the entire creative process repeating at a higher level (Kanack, 1996, pp. 5 & 6). During an improvisation game, there is a reflection at the end about the process and the results.

According to Kanack, creative ability has come to be regarded as something one is either born with or without (Kanack, 1996, p. 15). This sentiment reflects the opinion that some children are born with talent while others are not. Kanack believes creative ability, like language or musical abilities, can be developed at a high level in all children given the proper training.
Why Improvisation is Not Used Widely in the Suzuki Violin Lesson Already

Improvisation is a great unknown to and especially threatening for teachers who do not have any improvisation experience. It is an intimidating topic largely because it is rarely taught. Sadly, it is possible to have quality musical training up through college level and never have a personal experience with improvisation. Violinist and teacher John Blasquez says, “There are many fine, well-schooled musicians who’ve developed thorough mastery of their instrument, yet who pale at the idea of improvisation. No doubt, their lack of confidence, skill, or interest exists only because they didn’t have a good introduction, or they had no need or motivation to develop the skills” (Blasquez, 2008).

Because of the lack of teaching, many music educators are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with improvisation. When the idea of exploring why and how it might be incorporated into the Suzuki approach became a possibility for this thesis, one of two responses were common: “Oh…uh huh,” or “That sounds interesting, but I don’t know anything about improvising so I don’t see how I can teach it.” At the same time, there have been a few colleagues who consider the idea very interesting, and they are curious to see what is possible.

It might be reasonable to presume improvisation does not have a place in the Suzuki violin lesson since the Suzuki Approach is not intended to teach all aspects of music. The Suzuki Philosophy emphasizes efforts toward creating an environment conducive to developing noble human beings. The Suzuki Method is geared to teach instrumental techniques, good posture, beautiful tone, and repertoire teaching points. The Suzuki violin lesson is further filled with note reading, vibrato, and other skill exercises.
Time for improvisation might seem impossible to find (see Appendix A for an overview of the Suzuki Philosophy and Method). However, Suzuki teachers are among the most creative teachers in music education. They just may not be aware of the benefits of involving students in improvisation.

While the Suzuki Method uses language as a model for teaching instrumental techniques, it lacks two important components of language learning. The missing components are writing on paper and writing in the imagination. Writing on paper is composition and writing in the imagination is improvisation. It is logical then that Suzuki teachers place a stronger emphasis on playing previously composed music rather than on making it up. Given that improvisation (spontaneous composition) is not a basic goal of the Suzuki Method, many teachers may never provide an opportunity for students to make their own music. The method is very successful without a great emphasis on improvisation, but improvisation would be a valuable addition.

Blasquez (Blasquez, 2008) provides hope that the mysteries of improvisation can be overcome:

From a distance, improvisation may seem magical and unattainable, but there are many paths that make improvisation easily accessible. Most people need some guidance in getting started with improvisation. A supportive environment is extremely helpful. It should be a place where techniques and goals are introduced intelligently, step-by-step, so success occurs at every level. A place where mistakes are welcome – partly because mistakes serve as improvisational fuel and inspiration, and because improvisation cannot be learned without mistakes. Kids are great at it because they’re uninhibited [sic]. But it’s never too late to learn (Blasquez, 2008)!
How Improvisation can be introduced into the Suzuki Violin Method

Improvisation can be taught in the Suzuki lesson by means of improvisation games (see Appendix B). The games present improvisation to Suzuki teachers and students in non-threatening ways so they may be more open to discovering, experiencing, and sharing its benefits. These games break the improvisation process into manageable chunks and will aid in developing well-rounded creative musicians in order to lay the foundation for additional experiences with improvisation at a later time.

Improvisation games can be an important tool providing opportunities for the enjoyment of creating and expressing musical ideas such as melody, harmony and rhythm. Additionally they can supply situations for exploring musical elements such as color, texture and dynamics. Teachers will find their experiences with improvisation might help them clarify a musical teaching point by encouraging their students to improvise a musical example or by designing an on-the-spot ear-training game. Students can discover new sounds or new ways of expressing old sounds to assist on their way down new pathways of musical expression. Teachers and students alike would gain experience in the process of creating.

Improvisation games can help students better understand, appreciate and demonstrate musical knowledge and will help them develop creative problem-solving skills. Since improvisation is self-created, the creator pays close attention to what is happening during the process, bringing knowledge and thinking together with the imagination. The creator is exploring the instrument and applying what is already known in new and different ways. These new experiences will benefit future musical endeavors
and will carry over into situations throughout daily life. Blasquez (Blasquez, 2008) states:

Good improvisation skills promote confidence in performance. A performer who knows improvisation is like a trapease [sic] artist with a net below. If the performer falls from the melody, they land in the net of improvisation, until they find their way back on track. It’s comforting to know that you can use improvisation [to] cover mistakes and memory lapses. And mistakes and memory are less likely to occur when artists are comfortable (Blasquez, 2008).

Improvisation games are an intriguing idea because they require person-to-person or “live” contact. Many students are faced with recreational choices of video games, television and computer programs in our technologically advanced world that require zero human-to-human contact and interaction. There are many educational tools that are driven by a microchip instead of a real live human being. There are fewer opportunities for human-to-human communication and it is of utmost importance for teachers to find educational tools that keep the human connection alive.

Suzuki teacher and improver, La Donna Smith, laments that technology is affecting student experience in music and this is a threat to musical and human creativity. Smith points out that we live in an information age where the massive accessibility of synthesized instrumental sounds, pre-set rhythmic structures as well as products and programs for computer generated music production, threaten to endanger the organic expression of the human soul through impulsive music making (Smith, 2003). It is too easy for students to cut and paste rather than imagine and create. Improvisation games will provide students an outlet to use their imaginations and to create music without the aid of technology. They support opportunities for human-to-human contact and communication.
Improvisation games offer experiences with the improvisation process that will provide dividends without requiring too much lesson time. The Suzuki approach is not the only method of teaching music that excludes creating music; it is a practice that is ignored generally in music education. “Children are expected to draw pictures and write stories when they are sent off to school. But when it comes to music education (and there isn’t much of it these days), the emphasis is on playing music rather than making it up” (Jourdain, 1998, p. 186).
How Improvisation Games will Enhance the Suzuki Method

Through their training, Suzuki teachers generally understand the importance of making learning fun. They believe that every child can learn. They know that every child does not learn in the same way. Most important to the idea of improvisation is that they are an imaginative group striving to find what will work for the individual child. Therefore, Suzuki teachers should be open to exploring the benefits of improvisation and how it will enhance their teaching and playing.

One goal of the Suzuki method is to render tremendous success in many different areas of students’ lives, including a high level of musicianship. The violin method places emphasis on listening, posture, tone, right and left hand technique, and imitation. From the beginning, students are exposed to many aspects of music through listening and playing. Eventually, they are taught the complexities of decoding music notation in order to enable them to interpret composed music. However, music notation is only the general representation of sounds the composer had in mind. It is a starting point to get into the music. Experiencing the process of creating music will give further understanding of the interpretive process and promote a deeper understanding of this art form.

Improvisation games will provide the opportunity for Suzuki students to experience the beginning stages of a composition experience. By following a path similar to that which a composer might take in the composition process, students are given first hand practice with melody, harmony, and rhythm. Additionally, students will encounter opportunities for exploring musical elements such as color, texture, and dynamics.
Improvisation games will encourage students to be creative in their practice. Testing a variety of creative ways to overcome improvisation obstacles should enhance a student’s ability to discover creative solutions to practice obstacles. Turning an assignment goal of 50 repetitions into a new practice game may make a potentially daunting experience suddenly more fun and more easily achievable.

Improvisation experience, when combined with the Suzuki components of listening and imitation, will help build new pathways to deeper musicianship. The processes will strengthen each other. Smith (Smith) feels very strongly about the importance of improvisation in music training.

Musical creativity should be the first and foremost priority in the teaching of music. In every music lesson, there should be a time for improvisation, for invention, and a time for technical training, and development of the tools, which would include improvisation skills based on free and theoretical styles. These could come from western or eastern classical music, specific indigenous cultural practices as chosen by the individual, based on their interest or heritage, from pop or jazz, or from free improvisation (Smith).

Suzuki teachers and students will benefit from exploring improvisation activities that nurture the creative side. Improvisation games will encourage the creation of something that did not exist before the student caused it to exist. Participation in these games will offer experiences that can lend a hand in unlocking the mysteries of musical expression and enhance technique. They will help students understand the concept that instruments do not create music; people create music.
How the Suzuki Method Supports Improvisation

Improvisation is not formally explored in the Suzuki Method. Yet, in spite of that, Suzuki training develops the skills of listening, imitation, and ensemble, which are essential to success in improvisation. Suzuki students repeatedly listen to recordings of the repertoire they are studying to provide a model of correct rhythm, pitch, intonation, tone quality, articulation, bowing, and an artist’s interpretation. Listening to Suzuki repertoire and other good music creates an aural model for the student, increases memorization skills, enables a student to self-correct, and expands sensitivity to style and interpretation (Suzuki Association of the Americas Inc., 2003).

The process of refining listening skills also contributes to the ability to audiate and imitate, strongly supporting abilities needed for an improviser to play the sounds she hears in her head. Listening also promotes knowledge of fingerboard geography, a process that is about knowing the location of pitches on the violin fingerboard, which is fundamental for audioflow. Audioflow occurs when a musician connects what he hears in his mind’s ear to locations on the fingerboard that produce these sounds (Hoecherl, 2002).

Improvisers must be comfortable playing in a group and interacting with the other musicians. The Suzuki group lesson is an excellent training ground for ensemble playing. Over time, students become comfortable while listening and reacting within a group of musicians. It is very useful in all musical interactions and it is especially helpful in improvisation.
Comparing Improvisation Teaching Techniques and Suzuki Teaching Techniques

There are teaching techniques found in the Suzuki approach that are shared with teaching creativity, the creative process, and improvisation. One major element shared by these processes is the use of language as a model. Dr. Suzuki based his approach on the Mother Tongue Method for learning language. Young believes that language is the model for teaching creativity: “Above all, language, like music, is designed to communicate. Since teachers, parents, and students ALL understand language already, it can be a solid foundation for teaching and learning the creative process” (Young & Kase, 2004).

Young has collected “Language Teaching Solutions” that function as guidelines when teaching creativity (Young & Kase, 2004). Many of these ideas are shared in the Suzuki teaching courses, support the foundation of the Suzuki Method, and are easily incorporated into the Suzuki violin lesson. These ideas include:

1. Giv[ing] clear responses (feedback)
2. Build[ing] on success
3. Meet[ing] students where they are, not where we wish they were
4. Observ[ing] rather than judg[ing]
5. Hav[ing] students creating, in the sense of playing real music, as opposed to exercises, as soon as possible

There are a few ideas tied to teaching creative language that can work into the Suzuki Method. However they work best only when basic instrument technique is in place. These ideas include:

1. Foster[ing] a risk-free environment where mistakes are encouraged
2. Encourag[ing] freedom of speech by letting students create in whatever style they choose
Young states, “Foster a risk-free environment where mistakes are encouraged” (Young & Kase, 2004). When children learn to speak they are not afraid or inhibited and they do not worry about making mistakes. Their actions show mistakes are a necessary part of the language learning process. Within the creative process, there are no wrong answers so “mistakes” can be encouraged. Suzuki teachers understand it is essential to foster an environment where mistakes are treated and addressed as part of the natural learning process. A number of repetitions with incorrect notes, rhythms, and phrasing are expected along the way. It is challenging, however, to allow too much freedom for a student when trying to establish basic violin posture and technique fundamentals for example. It becomes a delicate balance between freedom on one hand and redirecting actions that will program technical habits on the other.

Teachers must control the environment where mistakes are permitted. It is easier to foster a risk-free environment once solid posture and decent technical skills are in place. Only then can students be freer to make mistakes while creating. Beginning students, still in the process of setting necessary posture and technical habits, may have freer creative experiences during activities that do not involve their instrument.

Many of the teaching techniques used in teaching improvisation are compatible with Suzuki teaching providing that the Suzuki teacher is careful to choose improvisation games that are the appropriate level for the individual student or group class. As long as teachers keep this important issue in mind, Suzuki and improvisation will be great teaching partners.
Conclusion

Improvisation is an important teaching tool in music education yet few Suzuki violin teachers use it. Many teachers do not understand improvisation and are uncomfortable with the topic. One of the biggest reasons is lack of experience. Sadly, it is possible for a musician to have quality musical training and never encounter improvisation.

Many teachers associate improvisation with musicians like Bach and Mozart and know it is a central component in jazz music but they do not understand how or why it could be used in their teaching. It is additionally perplexing since it is tied to creativity and the creative process. But it is possible for Suzuki music educators to face their fear of spontaneously composed music by using improvisation games.

Improvisation games present improvisation to Suzuki teachers and students in non-threatening ways so they will be open to discovering, experiencing, and sharing its benefits. In Appendix B, the games are organized into a collection designed for use in the Suzuki violin individual and group class lessons. They break the improvisation process into manageable chunks and aid in developing well-rounded creative musicians. The game collection is not a “How To” method but playing these games will lay the foundation for additional experiences with classical, jazz, and free improvisation at a later time.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Suzuki Philosophy and Method Overview

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki (October 17, 1898 – January 26, 1998) was a violinist, educator, philosopher, and humanitarian from Japan whose career lasted over fifty years. His work affected children, families, and teachers all over the world. He believed in fostering the potential in every young person because he believed every child could be educated. Suzuki stated, “man is the son of his environment,” (Herman, 1981, p. 4) a declaration that offers profound meaning and importance, since all external factors and forces surrounding people shape who they become.

Suzuki was the son of Japan’s first violin manufacturer. He worked in the violin factory as a child before he began study of the violin at age seventeen. In 1920 Suzuki embarked on a world tour with his friend Marquis Tokugawa. They travelled extensively throughout Europe before Dr. Suzuki finally settled in Berlin where he continued his violin studies with the renowned German violinist, Karl Klingler. The musical culture in Berlin during the 1920’s was exceptionally rich and Suzuki moved in a circle of exceptional people, among them Dr. Albert Einstein, who became a good friend. After five years of close association, Suzuki married Waltraud Prange and the two of them returned to Japan in 1928. In Japan, Suzuki and his brothers formed a string quartet that toured extensively. Suzuki taught at the Imperial School of Music and the Kunitachi Conservatory in Tokyo.

While Suzuki struggled to learn German as an adult, he observed that all children learn to speak their native language fluently, relatively effortlessly, and at a high level of ability. This observation led to the development of his violin method which is based on
the way children learn their native language. He called it the Mother-Tongue Approach or Talent Education. Suzuki was convinced that all children had the potential to develop talent if they were immersed in a rich, stimulating environment.

World War II devastated Japanese life. By 1945 Dr. Suzuki moved from war-torn Tokyo to Matsumoto, the city gateway to the Japanese Alps, located three hours by train from Tokyo. There he founded the Talent Education Institute and continued the development of the Mother-Tongue Approach. Over the next thirty years Suzuki carefully assembled the repertoire of the Suzuki Violin Method. Other violin teachers studied with Dr. Suzuki and began to teach throughout Japan. The tremendous success of the Suzuki Method became well known outside Japan, and interested teachers came to Matsumoto to study and observe Dr. Suzuki first hand. Over the years this talent education program expanded to include cello, double bass, flute, harp, organ, piano, recorder, trombone, viola, and voice.

Dr. Suzuki believed pursuing the artist within would lead to the creation of a noble human being. Suzuki (Suzuki, 1983) said:

Our life is worth living only if we love one another and comfort one another. I searched for the meaning of art in music, and it was through music that I found my work and my purpose in life. Once art was something far off, unfathomable and unattainable…but I discovered that the real essence of art was not something high up and far off. It was right inside my ordinary daily self. The very way one greets people and expresses oneself is art. If a musician wants to become a fine artist, he must first become a fine person. If he does this, his worth will appear. It will appear in everything he does, even what he writes. Art is not in some far off place. A work of art is the expression of a person’s whole personality, sensibility and ability (Suzuki, 1983, p. 83).

Parent involvement, a positive and loving environment, repeated listening of Suzuki repertoire recordings and other music, instruction of new skills in small increments, repetition of activities that reinforce skills, and group lessons as well as
individual lessons are all part of the Suzuki Method. Some of the basic principles of the Suzuki approach are:

**Parent is the teacher and the example.** Parents are a child’s very first teacher when the child begins learning language. Likewise, the Suzuki practicing parent is the home teacher, each day guiding the child through the main practice points from the private lesson and reinforcing the concepts covered in the group class. The parent sets the example. The child is eager to imitate the parent.

**Advantages of beginning early (or as soon as possible).** The early years in the child’s life are critical for developing mental processes and muscle coordination. Children’s aural capacities are at their peak between ages 3-5 and are starting to decline by ages 7-8 (Sheil, 1985, p. 4). Dr. Suzuki suggests that listening to music should start in the womb and formal music training should begin around age 3 or 4. Children learn by imitation and they love to imitate, especially when they are young. The easiest time to develop musical sensitivity is in early childhood.

**Listening.** Listening to music is a very important aspect of the Suzuki Method because it is the means of creating a musical environment. Children learn the complexities of language easily when they are in an environment where it is spoken well. In the same way, Suzuki students listen to quality recordings of the pieces they will learn as well as other good music. These models set the standard of good tone and musicianship. Daily listening creates the aural model of the piece which helps students self-correct thereby learning pieces more easily and quickly.

**Review, Repetition, Refinement.** In language development children learn a word and continue to use it while adding new words to their vocabulary. Repetition is key to
the process of expanding the vocabulary. A Suzuki student does the same thing when learning to play her instrument. She learns notes and technical skills and continues to review them so that when they appear in new and more sophisticated ways in later pieces, earlier mastery makes the new skills easier to acquire. New skills and musical concepts are introduced in the context of familiar pieces thereby increasing one’s mastery. Dr. Suzuki believed that performing a skill 10,000 times leads to skill mastery.

Encouragement is key. Suzuki teachers and parents strive to maintain an encouraging environment within a process that works toward high standards of achievement. Suzuki educators make learning fun by using games, praise and laughter. The environment is rich with respect, support and openness. Each student works at her own pace. Skill learning is broken down into a step-by-step system. Ability is nurtured and success is experienced with the mastery of each step. The recognition of this ability leads to the student feeling successful. While students work to polish a newly acquired skill, segments of a new skill are introduced. This process mirrors learning new vocabulary in language.

Individual and group lessons. Students are given one-on-one instruction in a weekly private lesson. Students learn in a group setting too. The group lesson is very motivating for students because it is fun and challenging. Teachers and parents enjoy group class because a tremendous amount of review, repetition, and refinement takes place. Suzuki students benefit greatly from watching other kids working at all levels of development. They aspire to be like the more advanced students, while at the same time they are working alongside peers and appreciating the hard work of those following in their footsteps.
**Graded repertoire.** The Suzuki repertoire is comprised of folk songs, Dr. Suzuki’s original compositions, and other pieces written by well-known composers of western music. There is a greater emphasis on actual music and less emphasis on dry, technical exercises that sometimes dominate other learning methods. Dr. Suzuki and trusted colleagues selected the pieces in the repertoire because they offer exposure to important technical training points and musical concepts. The pieces are placed in a carefully graded order to act as building blocks that will create solid instrumental technique and encourage blossoming musicianship. Students all over the world learn to play the same pieces in the same sequence. This provides strong motivation for younger students, who want to play the repertoire they hear the more advanced students play, and provides a common language of music to be shared with classmates from the neighborhood or even with new friends across the globe.

**Students learn to read music when they are reading-ready.** Children first learn to speak before they learn to read. Suzuki students first learn to play music before they learn to read music. Suzuki teachers delay the reading of music until the student can focus and are physically and mentally ready. This approach allows the teacher, parent and student to center on playing posture, beautiful tone, accurate intonation, and musical phrasing.

The Suzuki approach is about nurturing the potential in every child. It promotes life skills of focus, perseverance, endurance, self-confidence, self-discipline, self-esteem, body coordination, and memory skills. Suzuki lessons offer opportunities to teach beauty, nurture self-expression, and advance problem solving skills (D’Ercole, 1989). There is the potential for the student to achieve all of these skills when imparted through
Suzuki’s concept of step-by-step instruction in music. When children are given the opportunity to learn from teachers and parents who understand Suzuki’s theory of ability development, then every child can learn.
Appendix B

Mr. Jim’s Improvisation Game Collection

To inspire creativity, offer experience in the creative process, provide tools for exploring skills that will promote comfort and success in improvisation, and encourage the developing musicianship in the Suzuki violin lesson

James D. Van Reeth
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Acknowledgements

I did not come up with all of the games in this manuscript on my own. This collection includes games and ideas borrowed from, or inspired by, Suzuki and non-Suzuki teachers, whom I have observed in action, spent time with in conversation about improvisation, or whose games or ideas I have read in other booklets or journals.

I wish to thank the following educators: Renata Bratt, Matthew Buchman, J. Timothy Caldwell, Regina Carter, Jeremy Cohen, Brian Crisp, Kaitlin Goody, David Hastings, Randy Hoecherl, Ching-chu Hu, Alice Joy Lewis, La Donna Smith and Charles Rochester Young.

I am very grateful to them for their creativity, and I am pleased to have their ideas to include in this booklet that is most helpful to me in my teaching, and that I hope will encourage others as well.
Preface

Music improvisation is the act of making music on the spot. It happens when a musician creates his own musical ideas rather than merely interpreting the musical thoughts of others. Improvisation was once a fundamental and popular element in classical music that eventually became a more specialized skill more commonly associated with jazz. Yet improvisation is not only meant for jazz musicians. It is a creative process that all students, teachers, and musicians should experience.

Improvisation was a very big mystery to me for many years. I shied away from the topic because I had no experience as an improviser and I found this area of music creation intimidating. But thankfully my eyes were opened to a whole new world of spontaneous composition when I faced my uneasiness and joined the improvisation ensemble at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point while I was a graduate student in the Suzuki teacher training program.

Improvisation is not typically associated with the Suzuki Method, but during my time in Stevens Point, I discovered that the Suzuki Method and improvisation are a great fit. Suzuki training produces students who listen at a very deep level, develop solid instrument technique and play with great expression. Therefore, Suzuki training nurtures skills and qualities that are important to improvising.

But while Suzuki supports improvisation, opportunities for spontaneous composing are not readily explored in the method. It is time for Suzuki teachers to have the opportunity to learn more about improvisation so they may enjoy the process and learn to use it as a teaching tool. Improvisation can be introduced to Suzuki educators and students through playing these improvisation games.
About Improvisation Games

This collection of games is designed for use in the Suzuki violin studio during individual lessons and during group class. Students who use these games will be led through opportunities to express their “creative side.” Teachers with no improvisation experience will gain valuable insight into the creative process and will build confidence, as they too become improvisers.

The games are skill level specific and are organized by Suzuki violin book level. The Pre-Twinkle games focus on listening, imitation, aural skills, and imagination-building improvisation activities and the games for more advanced levels offer experiences with spontaneous composition, re-composition and free improvisation. The way the games are organized is intended to provide a jumping off point for teachers but many of the games cross over to other levels.

While this booklet is an assortment of games to use to explore improvisation, it is not a “How To” method. Nevertheless, working with these games will provide experiences with spontaneous creation that will lay the groundwork for more in-depth experiences with jazz, classical and free improvisation in the future.

The games will help students explore the creative process and will foster musicianship. They will cultivate ear to hand abilities (audioflow) and music composition skills. They will create situations for students to explore the sounds students make and will give opportunities to experience the effect these sounds have on the listener. The games will foster interaction between and among people and will introduce or reinforce the concept that the instrument does not create music, musicians do. Most importantly, the games will help show students the limitless creative potential that is within them just waiting to be tapped and developed.

Many of the games are borrowed from Suzuki and non-Suzuki educators and performers. Some of the games use the Suzuki repertoire and other music, while other games are not associated with any preexisting repertoire, Suzuki or non-Suzuki. Many of the games use the violin but not all. Some of the game instructions are very specific while other instructions are more general or even vague. The explanations and instructions that are less defined are intentionally this way to allow for creativity and input from the teacher and the student and to nurture exploration, discovery, self-expression and creativity.

Playing these games will produce a range of results from the creation of a simple, short phrase, to making a more extended and developed section. The product may even be a full-blown composition or a free form improvisation. Then again, it may simply allow a student (or teacher) to come out of their shell and interact in a new way.

This collection includes games that do not necessarily require extensive music theory knowledge though basic knowledge does come in handy. No electronic playback equipment is needed. Have fun!
Coaching Manual: Points to Keep in Mind

Work to promote a comfortable judgment-free environment for creating. Nothing kills a creative spark faster than a judgmental comment so keep things light and positive to create a safe place to take risks and be self-expressive.

Be a good example by improvising in front of your students, and making mistakes in front of them too. Establish credibility with your students (and parents) by participating with the student and sharing your own creating experiences. Your efforts will, no doubt, contain mistakes. Learning is messy. Do not be afraid to let it all hang out!

Keep in mind that there is no single correct way to do these games. They can go in many different directions. It is impossible to know just how a student will respond when led through an improvisation activity. Remember to consider the individual needs and personalities of each student (i.e., age, confidence level, comfort and experience with “out of the box” games, learning styles, etc.) and be open to any necessary changes of plan that become apparent.

Use these games as a jumping off point to get through to different and better ideas. Trust and use your own imagination. You have permission to modify games as needed. You are encouraged to use your imagination to generate new activity ideas. Do not get stuck in the process if it is not working. Once into the activity, a new pathway may emerge. Please follow that new direction. If the game seems to have lost its way, go back to the original idea and start again. Have a plan, but be flexible. The ultimate goal is to work with the students where they are in the present moment. If necessary, go away and come back to it with a fresh approach. Let the idea fit the student. Do not make the student fit the idea.

Please do not become discouraged by blank stares or looks that seem to say, “You’re crazy!” Remember that the unfamiliar is often uncomfortable for students too. If it does not seem to be going over well at the moment, you can always try again later.

Allow time to reflect upon the experience. Make time for discussion. Think upon the experience by comparing the most recent encounter with what happened before. Keep in mind that you can come back to the activity later on and explore it at a deeper level if necessary.

Reward each student’s idea with a smile and encouragement. Praise every effort and keep your comments free of judgment.

HAVE FUN! Let the games begin. Enjoy!
Mr. Jim’s Improvisation Collection

Talk Like A Duck
Pre-Twinkle

To help students use their imagination and to encourage conversation in a different voice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horse</th>
<th>Lamb</th>
<th>Goat</th>
<th>Fly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cow</td>
<td>Pig</td>
<td>Goose</td>
<td>Bee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parrot</td>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>Frog</td>
<td>Kitten</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cat</td>
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<td>Snake</td>
<td>Duck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouse</td>
<td>Monkey</td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puppy dog</td>
<td>Bat</td>
<td>Owl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imitate animal sounds and movements with the body.

* After the group has had fun imitating the animals, ask for volunteers to share an animal sound with the class. This is a solo opportunity, but you do not have to call it a solo at first. Ask a few questions like:
  ⇒ Is this animal a baby or an adult?
  ⇒ How is the animal feeling? Happy, tired, angry?

* Divide into animal teams and create a class safari.

* Let your imagination run wild!

Imitate sounds and/or movements using the violin.

* The only rule is that the violin must be safely in play position.

* Praise whatever sound comes out and keep in mind that the sounds may be fairly plain depending on the age of the student and their level of playing skill. But do not be surprised when a student produces a rhythm or tone that seems to be above their ability.

* After the group has had fun imitating the animals, ask for volunteers to share their animal sound with the class. Again, this is a solo opportunity, although students might feel nervous if you call it that.

* If the class is a combination of less experienced and more experienced students, divide into “Team Body” and “Team Violin.” The teacher chooses an animal and the teams will imitate.

* Let your imagination run wild!

Idea from Randy Hoecherl
Falling for A (Finding A-440)
Pre-Twinkle

Helpful information:
Opportunities to help a student string player find the A-440 in the voice are valuable. Developing even a rudimentary command of the singing voice can be helpful to violinists and to improvisers. Though it is not necessary have singing ability to hear if music is in tune, it is very helpful for improvisers as they develop audiation ability.

The Game:
The teacher plays “A” via a pitch pipe or instrument, sings the “A” and then asks the student to sing it back.

Ways to find A: All of these activities approach A from an above pitch.

* Pretend you are falling into a pile of leaves or a vat of whipped cream. Sing a pitch that is above A and gradually descend until you land on A.

* Play the slide whistle. Pretend to hold a slide whistle. Sing a pitch that is above A and then lower the pitch (pulling the whistle piston down) until the pitch lands on A.

* Land a plane. Pretend to hold an airplane that is in flight. Start singing a high pitch then gradually lower the pitch (and the airplane) and land at A.

* What is your idea?

Try to stop singing as soon as they start so they can hear their pitch. If the A is sung back immediately move on to finding other pitches, or go to the “A Go Down to D” game.

Note:
Though it is not considered by experts to be the best vocal technique, I have had success in helping students find A-440 when approaching it from a lower pitch.

Additional ways to find A:

* Pretend you are riding a motorcycle. Rev up the engine by making a low-pitched sound and let the motor sound rest on A.

* Ascend and imitate a slide whistle swoop sound and land on A.

* Pretend to hold an airplane. Start singing a low pitch and swoop up with the voice (and airplane) and sing to higher pitches as the plane rises and lands at A.
“A” Go Down to “D”  
Pre-Twinkle

This game is for students who can find A-440 in their voice with little or no help. For ways to help them find A-440 see “Finding A-440” game.

To start, the teacher plays “A” via a pitch pipe or instrument. Next the teacher sings “A” and asks the student to sing it back. The teacher should try to stop singing as soon as the student starts so the student can hear their pitch. If “A” is sung back immediately, next begin the scale decent to the “D” below the “A”.

Now sing D Go Down to G.

And for more fun, A Go Up to E!
**Mimic**  
Pre-Twinkle

The teacher asks the student to imitate speech, expression and gestures. Switch roles and let the student create and the teacher mimic.

**Special note:**  
It is sometimes necessary to explain to the student that the mimic must stop when the teacher says the game is finished.

**Copy Cat**  
Pre-Twinkle

“I say something, then you say it back.”

**Pre-game:**  
Play the Mimic Game.

**The Game:**

* The teacher plays a rhythm, or one to three notes, and asks the student to be a copycat and play back what they just heard.

* Once the concept is understood the teacher can start adding more notes.

* Switch roles with the student so they become the leader.

* If the student plays a sequence that is too long for you or them to remember, simply ask them to limit the next group to three to five notes.

* This game is an excellent way to refocus a lesson that is getting out of control or a nice way to lighten things up when things are getting too intense.
**Sound & Gesture**  
***Pre-Twinkle***

“For every sound there is a gesture; for every gesture there is a sound.”

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze

**Pre-game:**
Demonstrate or explain the word “gesture” to the class.

The Game:

* The teacher organizes the class into a circle and then announces, “I will give you a gesture. Watch closely, then you make the gesture and a sound to go with it.”

* The teacher performs the gesture and the students repeat the gesture along with an improvised sound. Establish the rule early on that they must go right away after they are called upon. Students typically try to think about and plan their improvisation so select the students randomly to help elicit a spontaneous response. If a student hesitates, move immediately to another student.

* Change the game! “I will give you a sound. Listen closely, then make a gesture to go with the sound.”

*Idea from J. Timothy Caldwell*

**Direct Imitation**  
***Pre-Twinkle***

The Game:

* The teacher sings two pitches while drawing them in the air. Students imitate the singing and drawing one beat later.

* The teacher sings and draws three or more pitches. Students imitate one beat later. As the game continues, the teacher directs the students to follow as soon as they can.

*Idea from J. Timothy Caldwell*
Mary and Her Lamb
Pre-Twinkle

Pre-game:
This version of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” is played by Suzuki flute and piano students and may be different from the version you know best.

The teacher sings the words and rhythm while keeping a background beat and then invites the students to sing along.

Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb.
Mary had a little lamb. Fleece it was white as snow.

* The teacher claps the rhythm of the poem and asks the students if it fits the poem.

* Try altering the rhythm as you clap to make certain that students can identify departures from the rhythmic scheme.

* Ask the students to clap as you recite the poem together.

The Game:

* Invite the students to clap an improvised solo (but you do not have to call it that). The teacher keeps a background beat with his foot.

* Alternate the clapping solos with verses of the poem.

* Limit each solo to exactly the duration of one verse, ending the solo by bringing in the class with the poem.

* If there are rhythm sticks, or some other un-pitched instrument handy, have the students transfer their clapping solos to the instrument.

This game continues in a more advanced version on the next page.
Mary and Her Lamb - continued
Pre-Twinkle

Advanced Game:
* The teacher recites the poem again, but instead of clapping a background beat, have two or more students play the “D” and “A” strings to create a harmonic and rhythmic background.

* Lead the class in chanting the poem on “D”.

* Next invite a volunteer to insert a vocal solo using the notes A and D that is much like their clapping solos. They can use a word from the poem or any sound.

* If you have more time for the game, have students add in the pitches D, E and F♯ as they gain confidence. Allow for the same sort of rhythmic flexibility that students took in the previous game.

* Allow the students to solo again using nonsense syllables or jazz scat syllables such as “doo,” “bop,” and “baa” in place of the words of the poem.

Idea from The Charlie Horse Music Pizza Education Guide

Opera Class
Pre-Twinkle

Pre-game:
The teacher explains opera to the class.

The Game:
* The teacher and the students sing everything during a portion of a class time, or sing the entire class time.

* Singing for an extended period of time may take its toll on the teacher’s voice. If the voice is getting weak, it may be time to switch off the voice and use larger than life opera gestures only.
Move and Groove With Me
Pre-Twinkle

Traveling Words:
Walking  Hopping  Skipping
Jogging  Sliding  Galloping
Running  Tiptoeing  Slide Stepping
Marching  Leaping  Jumping

Stand and Groove Words:
Bend  Lift  Twitch
Twirl  Melt  Fall
Twist  Implode  Sway
Lean  Explode  Stretch

Explore these words with the body.

∗ Students love to see the teacher acting out these words. If you want students to move around, use the traveling words. If you want students to stay in one spot, use the stand and groove words.

∗ As a treat for the students, ask practice partners to act out the words while the students watch.

Explore these words with the instrument.

∗ Come up with sounds that go well with the words. Remember that there are no wrong answers.

∗ Have one student play one of the words and have the other students guess which word is being presented.

∗ Have one group show the word with their bodies while the other group makes up sounds/music inspired by the movement.

Idea from Brian Crisp
Find the Pulse
Pre-Twinkle

Help find the pulse and imitate it.

Pre-game:
* Teacher asks if the student knows what a pulse is and then goes on to explain that it is something we feel and hear.
* Have one or two of these tools on hand to help in the game: a loud ticking clock, a metronome, or a stethoscope.
* Let the student feel and hear the movement of the clock or metronome. Listen to the heartbeat with the stethoscope.
* Ask if the sound and feel reminds them of anything else.

The Game:
* Listen to the pulse of a loud ticking clock, a metronome, a stethoscope or whatever item you may choose.
* Ask the student to imitate the pulse and see what they do. If they attempt this, find something to praise about it no matter what they do. If they do nothing, or if they did show something, move to the next step.
* Bring the pulse in the feet through walking.
* Bring the pulse to the hands through clapping.
* Change the pulse and have fun!
Audiation: Do You Hear What I Hear?
Books I - III

Pre-game:
* The teacher sings or hums a Suzuki repertoire piece with the student.

* Once the student knows the piece very well, establish a signal (see ideas below) or sign (make a quarter-rest sign) so the student will know when to make sound or be silent.

Signal Suggestions:

Bow is vertical with the tip pointing up = sound/music is physically present
Bow is horizontal with the tip to the side = silence/no sound physically present

The Game:
* The student sings the piece while the bow is pointing up.

* The teacher signals for silence by moving the bow to the horizontal position.

* With this signal showing, the student must stop singing out loud and audiate the music.

* When the silence signal changes, the student must jump in and sing wherever they are in the piece. The music “plays on” in one’s mind, but it is not always heard out loud.

For a fun twist, add “volume control” by slowly moving the tip of the bow from pointing up (forte) to pointing to the side (piano).

Now, try it with instruments.

Finally, for an extreme challenge, improvise while you are audiating.
Re-Composing Lightly Row
Books I-III

Have fun changing rhythms and pitches of Line #3.

Pre-game:
* The teacher announces that it is time to re-compose Line #3 of Lightly Row.
* Explain that this means any note or rhythm can be changed.
* If the students are new to this kind of game, establish the rule that at least one note or rhythm must be changed.
* After you have played this game a few times, perhaps over several weeks, ask the students to go beyond what they did before by throwing in at least one rest, a body sound or a Twinkle rhythm.
* Depending on the experience level of the class, ask that the creation begin on B and end on E, or that the creation not start on B or end on E.
* Let the students know that you (and the accompanist, if you have one) will play 8 counts of E (the root of the V chord) and then 8 counts of A (the root of the I chord) while they are playing their creation.
  ⇒ To make this really fun, have everyone else hum the E and A.
  ⇒ Invite 2-3 students to play the E and A with you.
  ⇒ Ask the accompanist to start accenting beats 2 and 4.

The Game:
* Establish and announce the parameters and then get the game started.
* If no student volunteers to be first, you must go first.
* If the student does not change anything, say, “Okay, I am eager to see what you come up with next time.”
* Talk about what happened.
**Instant Twinkle Composer**
*Books I – III*

The teacher invites the student to become a Twinkle Composer and invent their very own Twinkle variation rhythm on the spot.

- The teacher asks the student to invent his or her own Twinkle variation rhythm. It can be based on their name, a favorite food, etc. Try not to coach too much and see what they come up with.

- Have the student play their newly created rhythm on the A-string and then ask them to give it a name, or a descriptive word title such as a color, feeling. If they do not have a name or title in mind, please do not make a big deal about this but do go on to next step and ask them for a label later on.

- Have the student play their new creation with the notes of Twinkle.

- Help the student keep a pulse by clapping on the beat. Play in unison, or harmonize with them.

- Praise their efforts!!!

**An experience with Instant Twinkle Composer:**

I asked student violinist, Craig age 6, to make up his very own Twinkle Variation. We had an extra five minutes at the end of his lesson and I chose to let him use the time to create. Craig immediately told me how he knew other names for the variations from when he went to Suzuki “at his old house” and he shared their “old” names (like Mississippi Alligator). I told him he can make up his very own Twinkle and it could be whatever he wanted. Craig had a look on his face that signaled he had an idea. I told him to try it out on open A and he did. Then I told him to use it when playing the notes of Twinkle Theme and he did.

Next I asked Craig if he had a name for his creation and he told me it was “Harry Potter.” I suggested he play a note using his rhythm and then say the name of the rhythm. I clapped the beat while he did this. Then I asked him to play it again and I harmonized with him. When the lesson was finished I congratulated him on a fine improvisation on Twinkle.
Twinkle Sandwich
Books I – III

Improvise a “sandwich” tune.

∗ Choose a twinkle rhythm to act as the bread slices.
∗ The sandwich filling is a different twinkle rhythm or a new rhythm the student makes up on the spot.
  ⇒ Make it a spicy sandwich by adding in rests and accents.
  ⇒ Make it a diet sandwich by playing it in a whisper voice.
  ⇒ Super-size it by playing extra loud.

Talking Violins
Books 1 – III

The cello shifting game “Talking Cellos” inspires this game.

Ask the students to create violin conversations in “violin shifting language” by sliding a finger up and down the string or strings.

∗ The second finger is a good finger to start with.
∗ Ask students to make the violin cry, laugh, sigh, scream, whisper and cough.

Idea from Kaitlin Goody

Get in a Different Skin (aka How My Dog Would Play This Piece)
Books I-III

The teacher asks the student to speak (and play) in a different voice.

Begin by saying one word or playing one note as many different ways as possible.

Next, graduate to playing a phrase.

Now, can you keep it going for the entire piece?

Inspired from an idea from Charles Rochester Young
What's My Sign?
Books I – III

Pre-game:
* Prepare a collection of small pieces of paper (approximately 2” x 2”) with adjectives written on them (suggestions below). Get a roll of painter's tape or any tape that sticks well for a short period of time and removes easily. Post-it notes will work, but they sometimes fall off before the game is completed.

* Explain that the students will walk around, find a partner, look at the adjective on their partner’s back and “act out” that adjective. Each student is guessing the word that is taped to their own back based on what their partner is acting out.

* The guesser gets one guess. If their guess is correct, she is finished with the game and can sit down. But before sitting down, she must act out the word on her partner’s back.

* If the student fails to guess their word, they will find someone else who is still in the game and try it with them.

* It is good to explain the game, but do not get too hung up on the explanation. Try to get into playing the game and let the rules become clearer through play.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hurried</th>
<th>Nervous</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Shocked</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Foolish</td>
<td>Sweet</td>
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<td>Tall</td>
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<td>Lonely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Delicious</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Game:
* The teacher sticks one piece of paper on student’s back and then releases them to walk around the room.

* Try a round without using facial expression.

* Play the game using instruments to express the adjective.

* When the game is finished, be sure to talk about which characteristics were in common in the clues. Are there certain common attributes that people used or played to depict an emotion?

_Idea from Ching-chu Hu_
Question and Answer: Hands First
Books I – III

Pre-game:
* The teacher begins by asking one student a question in a conversational manner. The teacher receives a reply and then asks a different question.
* The teacher points out that Western music is based on the idea of question and answer (antecedent/consequent phrases).
* Take a few additional minutes to discuss how we know a question is being asked and an answer is being given and how we know when someone has stopped talking and is waiting for a response.

The Game:
Using clapping only –
* The teacher approaches a student and asks a question. The student replies, using clapping.
* Now the teacher can ask students to carry on wordless clapping conversations with one another

Using the violin and sound only -
* The teacher approaches a student and asks a question. The student replies, using sound.
* Now the teacher can ask students to carry on wordless “sound” conversations with one another.

A very important rule: just as in normal conversation, we must wait for one person to stop talking before another person talks. No interrupting.

Idea from J. Timothy Caldwell
Twinkle Q & A
Books I – III

Pre-game:
Present Twinkle Star Theme with question and answer phase designations.
The first two measures of line 1 = the question phrase
Measures three and four of line 1 = the answer phrase.

The Game:
* The student plays the question phrase and the teacher invents a new answer phrase by changing the rhythm to a different twinkle rhythm or one that is made up on the spot.

* Switch roles.

Question and Answer
Books I - III

One person plays a short and simple phrase. A different person answers with a similar but different phrase.

* The teacher plays a phrase in a minor key, very legato and low notes. A student answers. Praise the student no matter what they play back.

* The teacher plays a happy phrase in a major key using faster notes. A student answers.

* Slide up and down the fingerboard, play pizzicato, play two strings together, play softly or play loudly. Anything goes!

* Switch roles.

In the words of Renata Bratt, Ph.D, “Your imagination is the only limit to this game. This game is really fun during group class, and is great at the end of class because students will beg for more when you say “time’s up.”

Idea from Renata Bratt
**Perpetual Answer**  
Books I – III

Suzuki’s Perpetual Motion is the perfect piece to use as an example of the question and answer format.

Pre-game: Use Perpetual Motion to explain question and answer phrases to students.

The Game:  
In a private lesson:  
* The teacher plays the first two measures of Perpetual Motion (the question phrase) and the student plays back measures three and four (the answer phrase).

* Next the student plays the question phrase and the teacher answers back with freshly composed notes that create the new answer.

* Next the teacher plays the first two measures and the student plays a new answer.

In a group class:  
* Every student but one plays the question phrase. The one student not playing the question improvises an answer.

* It may help to narrow the parameters the first time around to make the situation less intimidating. Start out by stating that any notes, rests and sounds are fine but the last note must be an open A.
Add-A-Note
Books I-III

Rests and Held Notes Version

Add a note to a polished piece during a rest or a held note. For example, try this during the half-note of Twinkle Star Theme, or during the dotted half-notes and rests of Chorus form Judas Maccabees.

* The added note can be any style or kind (pretty, ugly, sad, etc.) the student chooses.
* Try adding a percussive sound using the body of the instrument or an extended technique.

Extended technique suggestions: sul ponticello, sul tasto, col legno, tremolo, snap pizzicato (Bartok pizz.).

Idea from Renata Bratt

Ornament Version
Books I-III

Stay in the lines:
* The teacher asks the student to ornament a polished piece by adding a few more notes. Suggest an exact number at first if the idea seems overwhelming and then ask for a few more later on.

* Work with the student to stay within the metrical confines of the piece but be ready to guide student to “be free” if it seems like a better direction at the moment.

Be Free:
Ornament a polished piece with lots of notes. Let the time be free. The student may add measures of new notes. Anything goes.

Idea from Renata Bratt
Ostinato
Books I – III

The teacher asks the student to create a melody while the teacher plays an ostinato.

Pre-game:
The teacher explains an ostinato. The teacher plays the ostinato a few times. Have the student sing along!

The Game:
* The teacher plays the ostinato while the student creates a melody on the spot.
* Keep repeating the ostinato and encourage the student to continue exploring possibilities.
* Praise every effort. There are no wrong answers. Look for ways to give more specific praise. For example, “I like the way you end the melody on D,” or “That motive really catches my attention.”

If this is a group class game:
* Ask the other students to keep the pulse of the ostinato with their feet or with their hands.
* Ask one student or a group of students to take over playing the ostinato so the teacher is free to “conduct” the performance by selecting the soloists. After the soloist is finished they can take over playing the ostinato and then pass it to the next soloist when they finish.

Play this game using the voice and body sounds!

There are many more variations to this game. Remember to use your imagination to discover how much more truly lies within you and your students.

* * *

* Idea from J. Timothy Caldwell
Amusement Park
Books I-III

Create music that reminds you of the rides you love at the amusement park. This game has many possibilities.

Pre-game:
* Amusement Park as an improvisation (or composition)
  Ask the students to describe the experience of riding a roller coaster or other theme park ride. If they have not had this experience before, have them imagine what it must be like.

For example, a rollercoaster ride experience is fun and memorable, so it is easy to imitate and craft into the plan (or form) of a piece of music. The ride begins slowly; anticipation builds as the cars climb up the first big hill, etc. You know what it is like!

* Amusement Park as an inspiration for musical expression
  This game can easily branch off to a discussion of Suzuki repertoire pieces. Here is how it might start. Ask students if they can imagine the opening section of Book 1, Minuet 2 as an amusement park ride piece. Why or why not? Are there other Suzuki pieces that could accompany a ride? Which pieces? Which rides?

Suddenly, pieces might become more musical as students present them as music to accompany a ride.

The Game:

* The teacher asks the student to compose music to accompany a trip on the roller coaster or other carnival or theme park ride. First ask and then wait and see what students come up with. If they need a little coaching…
  => Set some parameters like the creation is “this long” and has “this many notes”, etc.
  => Ask for one musical gesture (or shape) like a falling sound or falling grouping of notes, or a spinning sound or a spinning grouping of notes.
  => Ask student to begin with a scale and change the direction or the line. Add in a few skips, etc.

* If individual students do not come up with their own tune this time, consider turning this into a group improvisation.

* How about a group composition where the gestures are written down and organized into a piece?...or....
**Cadenza Allegro**  
**Books I-III**

Improvise a cadenza for Suzuki’s Allegro.

**Pre-game:**
- First the teacher explains a cadenza and how the students will play cadenzas in Suzuki Books 9 and 10.
- Next, explain the A A B A song form of Allegro.
- Next, the teacher has the students play through the B line as written.
- Then, the teacher presents the B line without the last note (do not play the B). Identify this as the “B line with no B”. It is fun to be very dramatic and add a big ritardando and dramatic cut-off.
- Finally, everybody plays through to the C#, the final note of “B line with no B,” and the teacher explains this as the point in the line everybody plays up to before the improviser takes over.

**The Game:**
- Playing any collection of notes creates the improvised cadenza. The last note must be a B.
- Start out requiring three to five notes plus the final B. Once everybody gets comfortable, you can allow more notes in.
- The teacher asks for a volunteer to go first or improvises first if no one steps up.
- Be sure to praise something about each improvisation.
- To save time leave out the first two A lines playing only the B line with cadenza and the final A line.

When using in a group class, it works well to limit the number of improvisers to four or five and continue the game later in the class or at another time.

_Idea from Alice Joy Lewis_
**Bookends**  
Books I – III

Improvise a prelude and/or postlude for a Suzuki piece. These bookends could be the same music played twice.

During group class, ask the students to take a single idea, supplied by them or the teacher, and have each come up with a part that works well (in the student’s opinion) with the other students’ part. These should be simple melodic or rhythmic ostinato parts.

* Play the wind before and after Song of the Wind. (Renatta Bratt’s students created this game when she remarked that there should be more wind in Song of the Wind.)

* Play a sad goose song before and after Go Tell Aunt Rhody.

* Play a jaunty running rhythm with one or two notes before and after Suzuki’s Allegro.

* Let students come up with their own ideas.

*Idea from Renata Bratt*
Pizzicato Popcorn Popping
Books I – III

Improvise the experience of popping popcorn.

* Use only open strings.
* Add in the use of fingers.
* Limit to certain strings or positions.
* Try not to talk about it too much before giving it a try but it is sometimes helpful to ask them to recall a popcorn popping experience.
* This game can move quickly so do it over again after you have had a chance to talk about what happened the first time.
* For a special treat bring in a popcorn popper and, actually make some popcorn in class. Accompany the “music” of the corn popper!

An experience with Pizzicato Popcorn Popping:

I asked student violist, Carolyn, to come up with a musical representation of *Pizzicato Popcorn Popping*. Her first effort was great. She played scales up and down the fingerboard and when she felt she needed to end it, she looked at me as if to say, “Should I stop now?” Endings are always a challenge! I said, “O.K.,” signaling that she was at a good spot to end this first exploration. I said, “Good Job! You have just improvised.” Now it was time to help her tap into her life experience and/or her imagination. I asked if she had ever had the experience of being around popcorn popping in a metal pan. It turned out her experience was limited but she had enough to dream up how it might go.

I asked:

• Does the popping start up right away or gradually?
• Are there different pitches, tones and timbres created by the kernels hitting the pan?
• Is there a point where the corn is going hog wild? A climax?
• Is there always noise or are there silences?
• Do you imagine the corn exploding or gently expanding and popping open?

I asked Carolyn to try again with these ideas in mind. This time around she created a very different result. Her beginning was tentative and the spacing between notes was varied. There was a dramatic use of silence. She started experimenting with register and dynamics along with frequency of notes to affect density and to ultimately build to a fantastic climax. She ended with a few random pizzicatos. In six minutes, Carolyn improvised and worked with musical elements that are present in many pieces of music.
Twinkle-ize It!
Book I–III

Choose a Twinkle variation rhythm and apply it to an early Book I piece. Twinkle-ize it.

Create a new rhythm and apply it.

Idea from Renata Bratt

Accompany
Book I – III

Create an accompaniment.

* The teacher asks the student to create an accompaniment while the teacher is playing a piece.
* The teacher can demonstrate a simple rhythmic accompaniment on a single note.
* Have the student try.
* Remember that all the students’ additions are the right additions and must be praised.

Idea from Renata Bratt

Continue the Story
Book I – III

This game is just like the verbal form of “Continue the Story” where the next person takes over and continues the next portion of the story.

In this improvisation game, each player continues the music composition, or story, on the same note as the last player ended with the same rhythm or mood. The next person may play as long as she wishes, and may change the “feel” and then pass it along to the next player. The player will nod to cue that she is finished and is ready to hand it off.

It might be helpful to limit the note choices for students to keep them from feeling overwhelmed.

Remember to smile and praise every note.

Idea from Regina Carter
Super Power
Books I – III

Have paper and crayons (or markers) handy.

Part 1:
The teacher asks the students, “If you could have any super power, what would it be?” A few sample responses include:

- The ability to shoot juice out of one hand and milk out of the other.
- The ability to play any piece without making any mistakes.
- The ability to breathe fire.

Before the students announce their super power, they must draw themselves exhibiting their new power.

Next, the students share their picture and power.

Then, the teacher asks the students to use their instrument to create a musical representation (motive) or their super power.

Finally, the teacher holds up one picture at a time and the student with that super power steps forward and plays their super power motive.

Part 2:
The teacher asks the students to come up with a story that incorporates their super power motive. They can add details to their pictures as they form their story using their super power. The students then create a musical representation of their story using their motive and improvising a story around it.

The students take turns sharing their creation.

Teachers should support anything that comes out musically, whether it is using motives from their Suzuki repertoire or random extended technique sounds, simple melodies or complex question – answer phrases.

Idea from Ching-chu Hu
The Telephone
Books IV – V

Play what the person before you plays.

∗ Sit in a circle and decide which student will start the game and which way the music will be passed. Eyes must be closed and ears must be open before the game begins. There is no talking, tapping or prompting.

∗ The starting student plays the music or rhythm that will be passed around. They will play it one time only. The teacher may want to limit the number of notes to four or six the first time around.

∗ The next person has to listen closely to know when it is their turn. They get only two tries to get it right. All the students must be listening closely to the original lick so they can have a shot at playing it correctly in case the other students are not playing it right.

∗ If there are more than ten students, divide into more groups to make the game easier to manage and to make things more interesting.

∗ Do it with a whisper tone (flautando/pianissimo) to make it more challenging.

A more advanced version: Each student must alternate adding or taking away a note.
Mini Minuet
Books IV-V

Improvise the first phrase or line of a Minuet.

Pre-game:
* Teacher will explain about the musical characteristics that make a minuet a minuet.
* Play a recording and dance around the room while listening. Grab the student by the hand and have them dance with you. Go ahead and look ridiculous!

The Game:
* Consider borrowing from the first measure or two from a well-known minuet to get started.
* Try mapping out the rhythm first.
* Suggest starting on D and ending on G.
* Set the tempo by speaking “1 2 3, 1 2 3, 1 2 3,” etc.
* Suggest that the student try hearing the tune in their head (audiate) before they play.
* What happened?
* Try again!
* Do not be surprised if the piece turns into a full-blown composition.
**Got A Gavotte?**  
Books IV-V

Improvise the first phrase of a line of a Gavotte

Pre-game:
* Talk about the musical characteristics that make a Gavotte a Gavotte. One fun characteristic is that it is a jumping dance typically starting with two-quarter note up beats.

* Play a recording and dance around the room while listening. Go ahead and look ridiculous. Have lots of fun!

The Game:
* Consider borrowing from the first measure or two from a well-known Suzuki repertoire Gavotte to get started.

* Consider mapping out the rhythm first.

* Suggest that the student try hearing the tune in their head (audiate) before they begin to play.

* What happened?

* Try again!

**Accompany Me**  
Books IV-V

The teacher asks the student to create an accompaniment while the teacher plays a piece.

* Demonstrate a single rhythmic accompaniment or a single note first.

* When the student tries, remember that all of their additions are right and deserve praise.

* **Idea from Renata Bratt**
The Hat
Books IV-V

The student picks an emotion “out of the hat” and plays it. The teacher guides the students to explore the concepts of emotions and feelings as sounds.

Pre-game:
* The teacher may provide an actual hat filled with pieces of paper that have feelings and emotions written on them, or the teacher can ask the students to come up with the words.

* It is helpful to talk about the word and even have students articulate their understanding of that word. Sometimes some interesting notions are shared!

* Ask students to share what they think about and feel when they hear the word.

Sleepy  Jubilant
Bored    Triumphant
Sad      Excited

The game:
* Try using just one note, with or without rhythm.

* Try a version using extended techniques only (sul ponticello, Bartok pizz, col legno, etc.).

This game can easily transition into a Free Improvisation Game.

Discuss and explore how feelings and emotions can be plugged into a polished piece of music. It this really possible?

*Inspired by an idea from David Hastings*
**Language and Gibberish**
Books VI and up

Using Words:
* The teacher groups students into pairs and instructs them to talk with the person next to them about any topic.

* When the teacher gives the signal, the students should start speaking in unintelligible gibberish to one another until the teacher gives the signal to resume normal talking once again.

* Continue alternating between talking and gibberish with each signal.

Using Instruments (or voices):
* The teacher asks the students to begin playing a memorized piece.

* The piece should be played normally until the teacher gives the signal.

* At the signal, students begin to improvise until the teacher gives the signal to continue normal playing again.

* Continue alternating between normal and improvised playing with each signal.

* Students must be sure to keep track of where they are in the music at all times.

* Talk about what happened!

* *Idea from Charles Rochester Young*

**Janie (or Jonnie) One Note**
Books VI and up

* The teacher breaks group into groups of 3-4 students each.

* The teacher asks the students to agree on one note to use for a 30-45 second improvisation.

* Students may use any sound effect, rhythm, non-traditional element, etc. on that single note.

* Talk about what happened.

* *Idea from Charles Rochester Young*
Find Your Voice - *Training the Fingers to Respond to the Ear*
Books VI and up

Work to develop a direct connection between the internal singing voice and instant response with the instrument: Audioflow.

* The student starts with the violin in her lap and sings 2 to 4 notes.
* Next she should pick up the violin and play the notes exactly as they were sung.
* Start with 2 to 4 notes and work up to longer phrases.
* Work to be sure your ear is leading and not your fingers. The proper sequence is musical thought followed by played musical thought. The musical thought must be intentional, focused and driven by the ear, not random, rambling and driven by the fingers.

*Idea from Jeremy Cohen*

Go Write a Tune
Books VI and Up

Improvise a piece.

* Divide students into groups of four or five.
* Have students decide on a topic or a motive they come up with, or have ideas ready to suggest it they need a jumping off point.
* Establish that there will be a beginning, middle and end.
* Be ready to present the piece in fifteen to twenty minutes.

*Idea from Randy Hoecherl*
Sharpen Your Chops-Add to Your Toolbox
Books VI and Up

Considering that an improvisation is made up of melody, rhythm, as well as effects, it is important to practice effects.

Bowing Effects:

Ghosting:
* Ghosted notes are an effect championed by members of the Turtle Island String Quartet. They are achieved by bowing with such light weight that the tone of the pitch is obscured and only its rhythmic pulse remains.
* To accomplish this effect, experiment using changing amounts of bow weight and speeds.
* Increase bow weight until the instrument will not speak well. Reduce the amount of weight until it will barely speak, or not speak at all.
* Ghosted notes exist only for the rhythmic value of the bowed stroke, but not for the pitch value.
* This effect is often aided by lightened finger weight of the left hand to avoid the possibility of a solid pitch happening.

Fall-offs:
* Play each pitch of the scale. Articulate it so there is a slight accent to the very beginning of the note and release bow pressure while letting the bow drift along the string.
* As soon as the articulated pitch is present, and while the bow is drifting along the surface of the string, allow the left hand finger to slide down from the pitch. The bow is not bearing any weight on the string so the tone and volume of the fall-off is very light.

Jazz Martelé:
* Classically trained violinists can sound jazzier if they practice this exercise.
* Start with the “bite” used in the beginning of the martelé stoke but follow it with an immediate release of bow weight and a slowly drawn weightless bow. Eliminating the sustained quality after the “bite” is the secret to a classically trained violinist sounding more like a jazzer.
Sharpen Your Chops-Add to Your Toolbox - continued

Left Hand:

Smack Vibrato (Wide Vibrato):
* Begin with the second finger on any pitch in 3rd position.

* Slowly release the finger pressure and let the entire hand and wrist slide back from the pitch about one step. Keep the finger moving so as not to rest on a pitch but always return to the highest point of the wave.

* Remember to keep the left hand thumb loose.

* Now try this exercise on the 1st and 3rd fingers. The slide will have different characteristics on each finger. The differences can be used for different tone color shifts and as expressive devices at the ends of phrases.

* Imagine playing in a style other than Western music and allow the pitch to shift and bend. But always return to the pitch you start on to keep the ear centered.

Have fun applying these effects to your improvisations.

Idea from Jeremy Cohen
**Free Improvisation**  
Books VI and Up

**Solo:**  
Start playing.  
* Do it. Ready, set, go. Let it happen.

* Talk about what you just heard. Did patterns emerge?

* Do it again.

* Record it, and then listen to it.

**Duet:**  
* Partner up.

* Do it. Ready, set, go. Let it happen.

* Talk about what you just heard.  
  ⇒ Did patterns emerge?  
  ⇒ Was there imitation?  
  ⇒ Were there rests?  
  ⇒ Was there a melody or a texture?

* Do it again.

* Record it, and then listen to it.

**Group Piece:**  
* Form groups of three or more.

* Do it. Ready, set, go. Let it happen.

* Ask each player to find a time to become the soloist. The others will need to be open to the possibility and aware of how and when it will happen.

* Talk about what you just heard.  
  ⇒ Did patterns emerge?  
  ⇒ Was there imitation?  
  ⇒ Were there rests?  
  ⇒ Was there a melody or a texture?

* Do it again.

* Record it, and then listen to it.
Group Free Improvisation Fundamental Elements

Here is information to help in the quest for a more satisfying group “free” improvisation experience. Beginning free improvisation experiences are made easier with a few guidelines or a plan for getting the piece started. These fundamental elements will provide ground rules and parameters. Use them as a jumping off point. And use them to aid in discussions about improvisation production results.

Start with a plan, but prepare to deviate. Listen with full attention. Reflect upon what you hear.

Basics elements to consider before getting started:
1. **Intent**: Improvisations have a purpose or goal. What is it?
2. **Structure**: Beginning, Climax, Ending – will the improvisation have a beginning, and a climax and an ending? Will it be free form?
3. **Pulse or No Pulse**: Will there be a steady pulse driving the improvisation or will it have a freer, no pulse feel?
4. **Tonal or Atonal**: Will there be a major or minor mode or will it be non diatonic?

Additional elements to consider to take the creation to a more polished level:
To promote deeper exploration and understanding of an improvisation experience:
1. **Sound Density**: Thick or thin texture? Are sounds dense or transparent? Layered or single tones?
2. **Dynamics**: Is there a scheme emerging?
3. **Register and Range**: Will it be high, middle or low? Will it stay the same or vary?

Critique without judgments:
1. Describe what happened. How did it make you feel?
2. How did it begin, progress, and end?
3. Was it interactive? Did it evolve from a single source?
4. Was it framed by silence?
5. What was its shape? What was its texture?
6. Did a melody occur?
7. Was it spontaneous, reactive, or meditative?
8. How long was the event? Could it be captured?
9. Did soloists emerge?
10. Was it idea oriented?
11. Was it primarily created by a compositional technique or by abandon and creative spark? Which is more useful?
12. Is there anything else you noticed?

*Inspired by ideas from Matthew Buchman & La Donna Smith*
Glossary

**Audiation** - The process of mentally hearing and comprehending music even when no physical sound is present.

**Audioflow** – A process occurring when a musician connects what they hear in their mind’s ear to locations on the fingerboard that produce these sounds.

**Cadenza** - A passage in a concerto where the soloist plays an extended passage entirely alone, often improvising on themes previously heard.

**Concerto** - A musical composition written for an orchestra and a soloist.

**Extended Techniques** – identifies unconventional techniques for playing a musical instrument.

**Gavotte** - A Baroque era French dance in duple meter with a characteristic “hop” on beat two.

**Gesture** – Body actions using hands, face, or other body parts, that communicate a message in place of speech, or in conjunction with speech.

**Improvisation** - Composing music in real time.

**Martelé** - a French word meaning “hammered” - a bow stroke characterized by a “bite” at the beginning.

**Minuet** - A graceful French dance in a moderate ¾ tempo.

**Opera** - a drama set to music consisting of singing with orchestral accompaniment, and an orchestral overture and interludes. The performers are often very animated.

**Ostinato** - derived from the Italian word meaning stubborn, it is a motive, or phrase, that is persistently repeated, usually in the same voice.

**Question and Answer** – Musical phrases are usually interrelated. The question phrase is a musical idea, which the answer phrase usually resolves. These types of phrases often contain similar rhythms or harmonies.

**Free Improvisation** - A style of improvised music without any rules beyond the tastes, or preferences, of the musician creating it.