IMPROVISATION IN THE GUITAR CLASSROOM: TEACHING BEYOND THE BLUES SCALE

By

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Abstract

As music education has continued to develop in the early years of the twenty-first century, the concept of improvisation has become increasingly prominent in general music, band, choir, and even some orchestra classrooms. This thesis serves two purposes. First, it serves as a defense of classroom improvisation by focusing on how it affects students' confidence and creativity. Second, it serves to suggest methods based on those already in use in other classrooms that guitar teachers may use in order to incorporate finer aspects of improvisation into their lesson plans.

To defend the benefits of improvisation on student confidence and creativity, it is important to define these terms to be measurable. For the purpose of this thesis, confidence will be defined by Nathan Buonviri as the students' level of comfort with creating music, both on the spot and with time. Creativity will be defined by Andrea Coulson and Brigid Burke as having musical variety (notes, instrumentation, rhythmic patterns, etc.), originality in the context of similar genres, and personal appeal. The theoretical approaches are adapted from scholarly reviewed models that cover beginning and advanced methods of improvisation to find ways to fit classical guitar pedagogy.

Dedication

For my mentors who have guided my thoughts on guitar and improvisational pedagogy:

Dr. Robert Trent

Dr. David Stringham

Prof. Keith Stevens

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Chapter 1.

The Current Climate of Classroom Improvisation

Throughout the years of music education that many students receive, they may learn any number of musical elements. They may learn to sing standard folk tunes, how to read written notation, and some may go on to become virtuoso players, playing the great works of Beethoven, Mozart, Brahms, Sor, Giuliani, and others. What about improvisation? How many students learn to communicate musically, with their original work? In the dawning years of the twenty-first century, there has been a subtle increase in classroom improvisation. Although small steps, music educators are beginning to explore various possibilities for their students to have fun, be expressive, and become engaged in the material they are learning. However, for most music teachers, these steps are hesitant, even nonexistent in some cases. Why is this? Why are so many students not able to access this activity in their classes? Could it be that we, the educators, do not generally see the benefits of improvisation on musicality? Is it too difficult to learn? The current climate of teaching improvisation seems to be mixed. The interest of teaching it varies, as do the ideas of how it applies to creativity.

In an effort to gauge the confidence of undergraduate music education majors in teaching improvisation, H. Christian Bernhard II (2013) surveyed a sample of 196 students using Madura's "Survey of Confidence in Teaching Improvisation," of which the reliability of the measurement was shown to be .95. With this survey, Bernhard sought to answer five questions:

1. To what degree are music education majors confident in implementing the 11 improvisation achievement standards for Grades K-12?

2. To what degree are they confident in their own improvisation ability?
3. To what degree are they interested or motivated in learning more about how to teach improvisation?
4. Are there differences in confidence among music education majors by year in school?
5. Are there differences in confidence among music education majors by primary instrument?

When all four classes were combined (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior), the subjects reported "moderate" confidence in teaching improvisation to grades K-4, "slight to moderate" confidence for grades 5-8, and only slight confidence for grades 9-12. When the four classes were separated, the confidence for teaching improvisation increased by year, but the freshman through junior classes still averaged at only "slight" confidence, while the senior class averaged closer to "moderate" confidence. In terms of confidence by instrument area, those who play instruments more associated with jazz were more likely to be comfortable with teaching improvisation (Bernhard II, 2013).

Although the subjects' overall confidence in teaching improvisation was low, interest in learning how to teach improvisation was high. Since the survey revealed higher confidence in teaching younger students to improvise, a post-survey discussion showed time constraint to be a large part of the hesitance to teach improvisation at higher grade levels. This suggests that, instead of having improvisation as a direct part of the curriculum, it is more effective to mix aspects of improvisation into the pre-existing curriculum. This way, teachers can explore more creative ways to lead lessons and rehearsals, and students could benefit from engaging in critical thinking as a result.

If the possibilities and benefits exist for creativity on the teachers' part, do they exist for students' creativity as well? Does improvisation blend with general conceptions of creativity? Dimitra Kokotsaki (2011) sought to find an answer. Kokotsaki offers a picture of general conceptions of creativity provided by student teachers who were just finishing their training. His sample size included 17 students, aged 21 to 28 years old, with 13 of the 17 coming from a classical music background. After interviewing these students, Kokotsaki found that various aspects of creativity included composing, improvising, listening, and performing. Composing trains the structural concept of creativity, in that it takes a great deal of premeditation and critical thought to achieve. All of the students interviewed saw composition as an important aspect of creativity. Improvisation employs the ability to think on the spot. However, only two of the students interviewed even mentioned improvisation, and they did not go into much detail. Listening utilizes the mind's capacity for all the possibilities of musical sounds. While the students noted it is a less creative aspect than the other aspects, any musical product cannot be conceived without listening to other products and sounds first. Performing applies the emotive and critical thinking aspects of creativity, somewhat like composing. The primary differences involve the analysis and emotion displayed through a non-original work. The students had varied opinions about when performing in the music classroom would be more creative than composing. Nonetheless, the students agreed it was an important aspect. All student teachers seemed eager to teach creativity in their future classrooms, but how to approach creativity varied across persons. With so many researchers and authors citing the importance of improvisation, surprisingly few of the students Kokotsaki interviewed related it to creativity.

What are the effects of improvisation on student confidence and creativity? If improvisation is woven into various aspects of musical learning (warm-ups, technique practice, rehearsals, etc.), then students will communicate musically with more confidence, and more creatively. It is this writer's hope that through factual evidence of the benefits, recommendations for practical use, and a call for future research on similar subjects, that more music educators (guitar teachers, in particular) will see the need to incorporate improvisation into their own classrooms, in all levels, so that students will have a safe outlet to be expressive and have fun with practical, cognitive purposes for doing so.

Prior to discussing the benefits of improvisation on creativity, it must be noted that "confidence" and "creativity" are, in themselves, rather broad terms. They can be defined in many ways. For the purpose of this thesis, "confidence" will be defined by Nathan Buonviri (2013) as the student's comfort creating music, both on the spot and with time. This literature will be reviewed further in Chapter 3. Andrea Coulson and Brigid Burke's article "Creativity in the elementary music classroom: A study of students' perceptions" (2013) should be reviewed in-depth in order to define creativity in this context.

Coulson and Burke (2013) undertook a study to find a student-based definition for creativity. Prior to the study, Coulson and Burke review some of the literature from previous studies that help define creativity. In citing "Creative Thinking in Music" (2001) by Maud Hickey and Peter Webster, creativity has been explained in four different perspectives: the creative person, process, product, and place. Creative people are open-minded, but may be rebellious. Coulson and Burke then cited Hickey and Webster's

definition of the creative process as "the thinking that takes place as a person is planning to produce a creative product" (Coulson & Burke, 2013, p. 436). The creative product is the musical work that is both unique and pleasing to the listener. The creative place is where an environment is fostered for personal musical growth, including few parameters, no right or wrong answer, and encouragement of reflection during revision phases. In "Teaching creatively and teaching for creativity," David Brinkman (2010) argued that the teachers themselves must be creative and model that for their students. Through the actual study, Coulson and Burke (2013) revealed students' answers to how they defined creativity. According to the students, creativity involved variety in music (such as instrumentation, notes, and patterns), originality (in the context of similar genres), and personal appeal. In the context of this thesis, the students' definition of "creativity" will be used for study. Musical variety, contextual originality, and personal appeal will be the three main factors to be examined.

The methods of approach used in this thesis are designed for a wide variety of situations, including (a) teaching with time constraints, (b) teaching students with classically trained backgrounds, (c) further developing improvisational skills, and (d) using improvisation as a teaching strategy. These methods will be thoroughly examined, and adapted to fit a guitar class setting. Sample lesson plans are provided in the appendix to illustrate the process.

Chapter 2.

The Benefits of Improvisation on Student Confidence and Creativity

Student confidence and creativity are affected by various factors in musical training. The manner in which a student experiences that training can have profound effects on how he or she perceives music, and how or if that student creates music. If the training is based largely on performance and technique, then there likely will be more emphasis on how to reinterpret preexisting music. If the training is based more on communication and expression, the emphasis changes to how to create music, both individually and by communicating with others.

Effects of Musical Background on Improvisational Skills

Patrice Ward-Steinman (2008) studied these factors, as well as student confidence, in her study, "Vocal improvisation and creative thinking by Australian and American university jazz singers: A factor analytic study." With a sample of 102 college level jazz vocalists, Ward-Steinman sought to find out how musical background affected improvisational skills. To study this, students improvised over a twelve-bar blues progression in F, "Rhythm Changes" in D flat, "Summertime" in D minor, and a completely free improvisation. One result Ward-Steinman found was that fewer parameters allowed for more creativity in terms of notes and rhythm. In other words, the free improvisation yielded more notational and rhythmic variation than the twelve-bar blues, "Rhythm Changes", or "Summertime" improvisations. Another result that Ward-Steinman found was that an extensive classical background (vocal or instrumental) had a significant negative correlation with improvisatory ability, while backgrounds involving jazz theory knowledge, listening, lessons, and/or time interested in jazz had a significant

positive correlation with both jazz and free improvisation ability. Ward-Steinman showed that musical ability and theory knowledge can greatly boost creativity through improvisation, but a strict classical background with no improvisation exposure can hinder this ability.

Improvisation as Ability, Culture, and Experience

In another context, Lee Higgins and Roger Mantie (2013) claimed that improvisation in the classroom can help boost creativity in a more musical sense. They argued for a greater emphasis on improvisation in the music classroom. Through examining teachers' views on improvisation, they identified three different conceptualizations (ability, culture, and experience), which helped to guide instruction of improvisation. In the context of ability, improvisation was the creative aspect of overall musicianship. In the context of culture, improvisation was a way to understand specific musical practices. In the context of experience, it was a way of being in and through music that reflected the act of living was largely improvisatory. Higgins and Mantie held the experience context in the highest regard. Since classical music tended to be the focus of most Western music classrooms, the experience connection of improvisation typically was suppressed. Even in jazz band classes, the authors pointed out there was usually minimal emphasis on the improvisatory aspect. If improvisation could be incorporated into music classrooms in a way that fostered the idea that everyone is able to do it, that it was relevant to the music being learned, and that it contributed to aspects of our daily lives, then it would be held with greater importance to more teachers.

Improvisation in a Group Context

While individual improvisation is beneficial for confidence and creativity, improvisation in a group context includes another level of creativity entirely. R. Keith Sawyer (2006) focused on the creativity of improvisation in a group context. According to Sawyer, while one's own improvisation was special and communicative, improvisation among a group added another dynamic. The communication became a network of many callers and responders. Essentially, Sawyer said that group improvisation is a musical way for people to talk to each other. He also noted the concept of "group flow," which was how a group interacted when performing music. The members of the group must be in sync with each other musically. The players must know the psychology of the other players. Individuals may be talented and prepared individually, but if they are not listening to each other as a group, the performance can fall apart. Even in score-based prepared performances, Sawyer argued that interaction among the ensemble is crucial to a successful performance. Without ensemble interaction in the rehearsal process, the ensemble would just be playing notes on paper. Ultimately, Sawyer cited the educational possibilities of group improvisation and communication not only in the music classroom, but classrooms of any content. Group improvisation and communication is crucial to the constructivist approach of education as a whole. If people can understand the occurrence of a creative product in a musical setting, they can understand group creativity in any setting.

These sources support the claim that improvisation does in fact help to benefit student confidence and creativity, both at an individual and group level. The next questions most educators might ask are, "Who is capable of learning improvisation? Isn't

improvisation only for the highest level jazz musicians?" It is natural to assume that young children are too young to understand the concept of improvisation, or that some diverse learners may not be comfortable in improvisational settings. However, researchers such as Coulson and Burke, Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, and Kimberly McCord offer evidence that suggests otherwise.

Capability of Elementary Level Students to Learn and Understand Improvisation

How can teachers implement improvisation into their lessons to promote student learning and creativity successfully? Much like other sources cited in their essay, Coulson and Burke (2013) suggested that aural examples and modeling on the teacher's part spark both creativity and safe parameters for improvisation. Additionally, manipulating targets for improvisation helps make students more comfortable in the early stages of learning. Lastly, Coulson and Burke advised that improvisatory learning be implemented as early as possible in order to make students more comfortable with it.

Coulson and Burke's research demonstrated that elementary school level students were capable of learning to improvise, but could they truly understand what they were doing? What if they were just playing random notes on their xylophones or recorders, with no purpose or direction? Kanellopoulos (2007) offered a strong rebuttal to questions like these. He described how young children are able to philosophize about music they make through the means of improvisation, and discussion with both adults and other children. First, he argued that civilization in previous centuries, perhaps dating back to the time of ancient Greece, had suppressed the value of children's art and music making. This was based on an ages-old preconceived notion that children walk a fine line between charming and innocent, or irrational and out of control. Thus, the need was felt to

constantly control children in every aspect, and the idea formed that children are unable to conceptualize and make sense of something as abstract as music, let alone improvisation. Kanellopoulos disagreed with this notion, saying that children are indeed capable of this, because children have an innate need to make sense of the world around them, even if their thought processes are not completely logical. In a series of dialogues with children in a music classroom, Kanellopoulos found that children were able to verbalize their knowledge that music comes from the human mind. Moreover, Kanellopoulos discovered that the children could communicate, and realize that improvisation was a means of communication that was unique to each individual. These dialogues helped support the claim that improvisation, even at a young age, can invoke critical thought and creativity within students.

Capability of Diverse Learners to Communicate and Express Themselves through Improvisation

Coulson, Burke, and Kanellopoulos offer valid support for elementary level students learning and understanding improvisation. What about diverse learners? Are students with emotional or social challenges capable of this? McCord (2009) illustrated how it is possible to teach improvisation to every kind of learner, as well as being an effective tool for students with disabilities to communicate and express themselves. She accounted how improvisation was incorporated into the learning experiences of three students with autism.

For one of the students, the process was a long one. At first, the student could not handle the sound of Orff instruments, and would cover his ears or go into the hallway. Eventually, through sensitivity by the teacher and enough exposure to the sounds, the

student could accept the musical sounds, and even participate on the instruments. The first step in exposing this student to musical sounds was through simple call-and-response singing with triads. McCord claimed that her students with autism easily echoed what they heard. Movement was incorporated to differentiate the pitches, and with this movement, the student could invent his own short phrases. In the following weeks, the student was gradually introduced to xylophone, with which he could improvise short phrases. This process moved gradually to an Orff arrangement in which everybody took a turn improvising by singing and playing xylophone. The student who had autism could play both the harmony and improvisation solos confidently. When the class was getting ready for a concert, this student started commenting on the musicality of peoples' solos, and the balance of the music.

There was one student in another class with cerebral palsy who was unable to play a traditional instrument, so an electronic one known as Soundbeam was used. Soundbeam allowed this student to make music by moving her arms around. There were also different settings to change the instrument timbre so that she could choose the timbre she enjoyed the most. McCord paired this student with another, and had them play an improvisational game in which they would guess what food the other had for lunch. For instance, McCord would ask one student, "What did you have for lunch?" This student would respond by playing the syllabic rhythm of the food (ba-na-na). The other student would guess what the food was. Improvisation seemed to be a creative outlet for expression and communication among these students with disabilities.

David Beckstead (2013) also argued that any level musician can use improvisation as a tool to bolster confidence and creativity. Beckstead examined the

neurological effects of improvisational music playing versus memorized music playing, as well as how incorporating non-complex improvisation into the music classroom can help improve student assertiveness and inventiveness. In a neurological study done with six jazz musicians, he cited that the right side of the brain (associated with creativity, daydreaming, meditation, etc.) was accessed during improvisation, while the left side of the brain (associated with sequence, planning, problem solving, etc.) was accessed during memorized music playing. Furthermore, there seemed to be no difference in cognitive processing between simple and complex improvisation, suggesting that any level musician was capable of learning improvisation. While Beckstead admitted the sample size was extremely narrow, he argued that the potential benefits of improvisation in music classrooms are large. With lesson simplicity, a balance of structure, a fear-free environment, and composition practice, a safe haven could be created where students felt comfortable expressing themselves and making mistakes. Exploring improvisation in an environment like this could provide the building blocks for students to be bolder and more innovative in what they did.

Interpretation of the Literature

Ward-Steinmann (2008) suggested evidently that students with classical music backgrounds struggled to invent music with a wide variety and personal appeal, while students with improvisational backgrounds thrived with these aspects. Higgins and Mantie (2013) argued that improvisation is part of our culture, as well as our everyday lives. Improvisation in a group context can add dimensions to communication, and while it is impossible to be absolute, researchers suggest that anyone at any level is capable of learning to improvise and using it as a form of expression.

Chapter 3.

Theoretical Methods of Approach in Guitar Classrooms

It is, indeed, possible to teach musicians at any level to improvise, and those who are exposed to improvisation tend to be more confident and creative in their music making. Why are so many teachers not teaching it? What are their views on improvisation and creativity? Looking back at the literature of Kokotsaki (2011), it seems that most teachers simply have no experience improvising. This is not the only apparent obstacle in teaching improvisation. Time constraints, a lack of pedagogical training, and other small issues also tend to get in the way. How can this be put to practice, and how can guitar teachers work with these methods?

Working Around Time Constraints and Lack of Improvisation Pedagogy Training

Rachel Whitcomb (2013) acknowledged the obstacles and fears that face many music educators when trying to incorporate improvisation into their classrooms. To address the obstacle of limited time, Whitcomb suggested incorporating improvisational activities into what is already being taught. For example, if a teacher is trying to teach students solfege, the teacher can include an activity within that allotted time for solfege by having students improvise a few measures freely using solfege syllables. To address the fear of no experience, Whitcomb cited the suggestion of participating in a small improvisation activity with the students. The activity needs to be only a small one, but this way, the teacher can meet the students at their level while gaining experience, and a great deal of effective modeling occurs. To address the obstacle of no pedagogical background, practicing teachers must reach out to fellow music teachers on all levels. Peers sharing and demonstrating their successful experiences with teaching improvisation

help other peers feel more comfortable in doing so, and these successful techniques get put to practice in more schools.

Whitcomb also introduced a series of lesson plans and games for teachers who are looking for a place to start incorporating improvisation. She started with beginning level classes, describing how to lead an improvisation lesson with "Hot Cross Buns." Then, she lists the steps for call-and-response exercises, improvisational rondos with folk music, rhythmic improvisation with pop music, and ultimately, harmonic improvisation with jazz music from "Charlie Brown." Evidently, there are many ways to incorporate improvisation, and Whitcomb stressed that there are always peers on a local, regional, or national level willing to help with this.

These problems and solutions are universal for music classes, whether it be band, choir, orchestra, or guitar. Guitar teachers must understand that these barriers will exist in their classrooms as well, unless and until they make the effort to change their lesson plans. The solutions put forth by Whitcomb can be altered to work for a guitar classroom.

With limited class time, there are multiple ways in which guitar teachers can weave improvisation into what is already being taught, based on Whitcomb's techniques. When students are learning scales on their guitars, the teacher can include an activity within that allotted time that allows students to improvise for one or two measures using whatever scale is being learned. Students could sit in a circle and pass the improvised measures off to each other so that everyone gets a turn. If there is not enough time for the whole class to participate in one circle, the teacher should divide the class in half and make two circles. This could draw some unwanted focus away from students who may

be nervous to participate. The circle activity also provides the teacher a way to informally assess the students on their understanding of the material.

Communication in a circle is also an effective way to practice new strum patterns and rhythms by ear, and to demonstrate understanding of those rhythms through call-and-response improvisation. When students are in a circle, the guitar teacher can initiate the call-and-response activity by strumming a rhythm on one chord, and having students echo. After a few sequences with the teacher, as well as verbally set parameters, such as, "Use only quarter and eighth notes, and rests," the students may take turns creating the "call." Once they are comfortable with the rhythmic aspect, the guitar teacher can eventually incorporate melodic and harmonic aspects to the activity.

If the guitar teacher is in his or her early rehearsal season, improvisation is a valuable tool to familiarize students with notes in the repertoire being studied. For beginning through intermediate instrumental ensembles, the repertoire typically falls within the rules of tonality. However, beginning to intermediate guitar ensemble repertoire contains an abundance of Renaissance and Flamenco-style music, introducing students quite early to modality. This means that an activity similar to the circle improvisation activity can be implemented. For example, if a piece of music looks like it is in the key of E minor, but contains a raised sixth (i.e. Greensleeves), students can take turns improvising on an E minor scale with the raised sixth in whatever position the music requires the students to play. If the guitar ensemble is a beginning-level class, the teacher does not need to explain all of the details behind modal music. Instead, the teacher should acknowledge that different scale degree, and briefly describe how that is common practice in the Renaissance era. As students become more inclined to

understanding music theory with time, then modality can be explained and learned more easily. As each student takes a turn improvising, the other students can play the supporting harmony in the music being learned.

Guitar teachers also must be willing to participate in these activities, regardless of their own past improvisational experiences. As Whitcomb stressed, the teacher gains improvisation experience, the teacher's participation eases the tension of the activities, and modeling helps the students grasp the concept more easily. Networking needs to be frequent so that the individual ideas and experiences of each guitar teacher become more accessible to these types of lesson plans.

Teaching Improvisation to Students with Classical Training

An important obstacle that must be addressed, however, lies in the potential rigidity of students who already have a fair amount of musical training. How can they be taught to improvise when they are already set in their classical ways? Nathan Buonviri (2013) explored how to teach improvisation to classically trained musicians, who are typically afraid of the prospect of creating music of their own, let alone music on the spot. This is ironic in a sense, as improvisation is part of the curriculum in the third national standard of music education. There are multiple ways to teach classically trained students about improvisation, but there are crucial first steps that should be taken. For classical students, this means starting by building on what they already know. If the students already know about musical concepts, such as dynamics, articulation, scales, etc., then they are capable of improvising. The key for the teacher is to acquire a target that he or she wants to manipulate with the students, while keeping the other musical aspects constant. Eventually, the students will become more comfortable with quick

decision making, and more improvisatory musical aspects can be explored simultaneously. Buonviri cited an example of this involving the initial lesson for classical students. In this example, the teacher played a single note (the constant), but with varying rhythms (the target). The teacher had the students echo the patterns on their instruments. Once the flow was established, the teacher then had the students create a pattern to be copied. When the students became more comfortable with improvisatory aspects, they began to take more innovative steps in creating their own music.

Edwin Gordon (2012), however, took the opposite approach to improvisation and creativity. He saw creativity as the simpler facet to train, claiming that students set their own restrictions when creating, but when improvising, students were subject to outside restrictions. If students had a wide musical vocabulary to draw from, and could understand the functions of that vocabulary through "verbal," "aural," and "symbolic association" (Gordon, 2012, p. 141-145), then they could invent music with more variety, which could ultimately strengthen their improvisational skills.

Christopher Azzara (2005) offered a means of expanding musical vocabulary by viewing music as a language, and improvisation as part of the process in language learning. He noted that, while musical improvisation is not the same as verbal conversation, there are still many similarities. First, children must listen and be exposed to music native to their culture, such as folk music, classical music, and jazz. Second, children need to learn to sing and play simple tunes and accompanying bass lines by ear. At the same time, they should be developing a vocabulary of tonal and rhythmic patterns, and names for said patterns. Once their ears are trained in this manner, reading and writing music becomes more accessible, and improvisation becomes more expressive.

Acquiring Single Targets to Practice Improvisation

The classical guitar is an excellent instrument to test Buonviri's research. With its both melodic and harmonic nature, variety of tone color, and range, there are plenty of opportunities to acquire single targets to practice. As Whitcomb demonstrated, practicing improvisatory rhythms and scales are not unique to the guitar. However, improvising different voices, tone colors, and ranges can be unique to the instrument.

Improvising melody and harmony may seem advanced compared to what has been discussed thus far, but classically trained guitarists are already accustomed to reading music with melody and harmony. One way to help classical guitarists improvise is to pick targets based on repertoire they are already comfortable playing. For example, if the student plays through a given passage in his or her music, the teacher can have the student improvise articulations on different voices in the music (i.e. staccato bass versus legato melody for four measures, then reverse it for the next four measures). The teacher can demonstrate this to the student in order to elaborate, but as Buonviri (2013) stated, the teacher should be removed from the process early and often. Ultimately, it should be the student's opportunity for creativity. The teacher should set the parameters, but the student should be making the decisions within those parameters.

In this same example, tone color is another target that is easily accessible for classical guitar improvisation. Given similar parameters (taking a single passage within a piece of music), the teacher can have the student experiment with improvising different tone colors. The average classical guitarist already knows about different tone colors, but this is an exercise that lets the student step outside of what is written on the page. Allowing the student to experiment with tone color theoretically would engage the

student to think critically about the music on a more orchestrated and musical level, rather than just a guitarist level.

The third target, range, allows the student to explore possibilities for voicing and fingering. If the same theoretical passage of music is taken into consideration, the student can alter in which octave the bass, harmony, or melody is at different moments. This potentially could allow the student, through self-discovery, to find fingerings in the music that are more efficient, and create smoother voice leading in the harmony and bass.

Buonviri's technique also has powerful classroom applications. In the guitar classroom, these methods can be put to use in ensemble sight-reading material, as well as ensemble repertoire. The students are capable of guiding innovative thought by figuring out, through class volunteers, how to alter different aspects of the music, one aspect at a time. These aspects may be those as stated previously: rhythm, articulation, tone color, range, etc. It is an effective way to keep sight-reading interesting when it becomes a mundane process for the students.

Using Improvisation as a Teaching Strategy

Janine Riveire (2006) took a non-orthodox approach to the concept of improvisation, using it as a teaching strategy rather than just another complex musical element to be learned. By weaving improvisational techniques into three separate curricula (beginning strings, intermediate band, and advanced choir), she illustrates various possible scenarios with which teachers can successfully add these elements.

The first scenario examined improvisational games for each curriculum. For beginning strings, one game involves students playing an accompaniment, either pizzicato or arco, on an open string while one student solos with first position notes on

the same string using arco bowing. Another game had students improvise rhythmically over a tonic-dominant harmonic progression. Lastly, students paired up with each other and had "conversations" with each other using the first four notes on an open string. For intermediate band, groups of instruments improvised melodically and rhythmically on a given scale in their own respective registers. This allowed students to play around with new fingerings, while not having to worry about harsh dissonances caused by close intervals. For advanced choir, students could create their own improvisatory cadenzas, using elements that are typically used in said cadenzas (trills, scales, arpeggios, etc.) from recordings to which they listen.

The next scenario discussed the use of repertoire that already involved improvisatory elements or passages. This typically includes repertoire from the mid- to late-twentieth century. Riveire cited two particular pieces, "For 1, 2, or 3 People" and "The Klickitat Ride" (Christian Wolff and Pauline Oliveros, respectively), which do not specify instrumentation.

Alleviating fear is crucial in any improvisational learning setting, according to Riveire. While many students fear improvisation for different reasons, Riveire argued that ground rules must be set in order to create a psychologically safe environment for the process. Referring to all improvisational activities as "games" is an effective way to start. Restricting feedback based on "playing wrong notes," and inappropriate responses such as laughing or cringing when notes are played out of key, helps as well. Keeping early-stage assessments informal alleviates the pressure of an absolutely correct way of doing these activities. As students become more comfortable with these activities, the teacher can begin to work in more formal assessments.

Guitar teachers must take note of the rules set forth by Riveire for psychological safety. Just because students are in a guitar class does not mean they are any less scared of the idea of improvising and soloing. The "games" introduced by Riveire may also be effective in letting beginning students explore improvisation, especially when they are just learning their first notes. The use of repertoire involving improvisation, which will be discussed in more detail later on, is helpful in providing students references and parameters to form their ideas. Currently, much of the classical guitar ensemble repertoire with improvisational sections is for more intermediate to advanced ensembles (i.e. Leo Brouwer's "Cuban Landscape with Rain," arrangements of "The St. James Infirmary," "Agua de Beber." or Terry Riley's "In C" for all instruments). Guitar composers and arrangers focusing on beginning music should find ways to incorporate improvisation into future pieces.

These activities are malleable and can be used to fit lesson plans depending on what the objectives are. It is important that students are exposed to these methods of "discovery instruction," as they incorporate:

> higher levels of cognitive processing: application, analysis, and synthesis. Students learn to explore their instruments, which may unlock the secrets of practice time for some students. This attitude of exploration can inspire more from the student who only does what the teacher suggests and doesn't think to go beyond what is expected but who has talent to go beyond what is happening in the class. Furthermore, students develop a habit of listening more acutely, which will enable them to participate more fully and effectively in any ensemble. (Riveire, 2006)

Whitcomb, Buonviri, and Riveire have introduced music educators to effective methods with which to train individual students to improvise in classroom settings, particularly under tough circumstances. The next logical steps would be to train students to build on their improvisatory vocabulary, collaborate with each other, and use improvisation as a form of communication. How can this goal be achieved? The next few methods of approach are recommended for classes of students who have already had experience in the culture of classroom improvisation for at least a year.

Building Improvisational Vocabulary and Collaborative Improvisation

At the New England Conservatory of Music, Tanya Kalmanovitch (2008) ran the Non-Majors Contemporary Improvisation Ensemble, composed primarily of senior undergraduate and graduate students. With this ensemble, Kalmanovitch had three goals in mind for her students every year: (1) "prepare students to enter into professional collaborations with performers outside the classical music tradition;" (2) "provide students with an awareness of the many musical paths open to improvising musicians, to help them to situate themselves with respect to the many conversations taking place in contemporary music;" and (3) "provide the students with tools for ongoing artistic and professional growth" (Kalmanovitch, 2008, p. 135-136).

To achieve these goals, Kalmanovitch (2008) described the parameters for the ensemble set forth in her curriculum, including free improvisation, scale practice, drawing inspiration from classical music, actually playing free-improvised jazz compositions, and community performance. Free improvisation was done both solo and with others. The solo aspect allowed students to focus on singular factors and create rhythmic and melodic motifs, while duo and group aspects reign in the conversational

side of improvisation. Scale practice exposed students to new scales outside of their comfort zone (typically major, harmonic minor, and melodic minor) and encouraged students to improvise beyond just stepwise motion and comfort keys. Learning modes familiarized students with these different intervals and expanded their improvisational vocabulary. To draw inspiration from classical music, Kalmanovitch had students bring in a melody from a piece or song of their choice, and focus on individual ways to vary it (melodically or rhythmically). Students could also create their own original composition by using aspects of classical music they had previously studied. Playing free-improvised jazz compositions was the toughest parameter, as repertoire had to be "carefully selected so that students are able to improvise within their own existing strengths." Community performance legitimized the curriculum, as it gave students an observable goal to work towards, as well as spread their musicianship to public places. Students were given creative control of setting up and promoting performances, transferring their creativity spawned from the class to real-world scenarios.

Much of what Kalmanovitch suggested is similar to the techniques of Buonviri and Whitcomb, but one technique stands out that can be adapted to more advanced guitar classes: teaching students about modes. Modes can be taught in a similar fashion as tonal scales, but since students learn tonal scales first, they must understand how to differentiate between that and modes. One way to do this is to start with a major scale that is idiomatic for the guitar (i.e., C Major). This is also the Ionian mode, so it will act as a bridge between tonal and modal scales. First, the teacher will have the students play the scale as a class. The teacher will then have students play the same scale starting on the second scale degree (D) and play up to the ninth scale degree (also D). Next, the

teacher will ask the students what scale they think it sounds like (D minor), and ask what the difference is between the two scales (raised vs. lowered sixth). This new scale is the D Dorian scale. Students should toggle between playing D natural minor and Dorian so that they can identify through active listening the difference between the two scales.

Once the students are comfortable with this new scale, they can practice improvising with it using the circle method stated previously. Students should improvise first without harmony, then with other students in the circle playing harmony. The harmony, of course, should go beyond typical I-IV-V-I progressions at this point, not just because advanced guitar students are more familiar with chordal harmony, but because typical chord progressions do not work with many modes. For this example, an appropriate chord progression would include D minor, E minor, D minor, and G Major (i-ii-i-IV). A table of chord progressions for other modes is provided in the Appendix.

This process is useful in learning most of the modes. The outlying modes in this scenario likely would be Phrygian and Locrian. It is not likely that students will ever find themselves improvising with the Locrian mode, but for all the other modes, the key to understanding them is recognizing the differences in scale degrees. Learning modes can be time consuming, so it is important that each new mode is learned in a separate lesson, and throughout the year in order to avoid as much confusion as possible. It is highly recommended that the teacher find repertoire involving modes learned when possible to reinforce the students' understanding. The more students understand the mechanics of modal scales, the more easily they will eventually be able to improvise using hybrids of modal and tonal scales.

Once the students have a larger vocabulary with which to improvise, they should be ready to start collaborating with each other. Kalmanovitch (2008) discussed the benefits of improvising by communicating with others, and using performance as a means to legitimize what has been learned, but Augusto Monk (2013) used a step-by-step approach to collaboration that would likely work better for teachers in a high school setting.

Monk developed eight approaches to teaching class improvisation for jazz students in ways that will build their interactionism in music. Using Keith Sawyer's theory of symbolic interactionism, Monk's goal was to apply his eight approaches by steering them towards different aspects of the theory. His eight approaches to these aspects were copying, adapting, contrasting, punctuating, highlighting, supporting, signposting, and allowing.

The first three approaches dealt with improvisational conversations, such as trading solos or improvising contrapuntally. The next three (punctuating, highlighting, and supporting) were best used in back-ups to a lead soloist. This typically involved the harmony filling in spaces during a moment of rests or breaths, acting as rebuttals to the previous phrase to continue the solo. Signposting gave collaborative improvisation coherence as it brought back previous motifs to either finish an idea, or continue an idea and develop it by adding new perspective. This helped keep improvisational sessions within parameters. Lastly, allowing helped students listen rather than get carried away with their own solos that would lose momentum. By giving others the spotlight, students were able to exchange ideas to create richer, more musical solos.

These approaches are helpful for developing improvisation not just for beginning players, but for players who have become more adept to improvising but have not had enough experience collaborating and improvising with others. Classically trained musicians especially can benefit from these approaches because they do not need to learn any new musical vocabulary; they can build on what they already know.

In order to apply these approaches to a guitar class, it is best to guide students towards repertoire that will be performed in order to set parameters and legitimize what is learned (Kalmanovitch, 2008). Classical guitar arrangements of "The St. James Infirmary" and "Agua de Beber" are just a couple of the many useful pieces to incorporate solos. It is also helpful if the class is broken up into quartets and/or trios, so that more students get the chance to improvise and focus on communicating with each other. Using Monk's first three approaches (copying, adapting, and contrasting), students can work on trading solos more fluently, and construct their solos by building on (and differentiating from) each other's ideas. With the next three approaches (punctuating, highlighting, and supporting), those who are not soloing can build on how to converse with the soloist rhythmically, how to play underneath him or her, and how to end the soloist's phrases. Inspiration for rhythm and harmony can be taken directly from the written music, but it is up to the students to arrange how that rhythm and harmony will work best around the soloist (Monk, 2013). Using signposting and allowing, students can also follow what is written in the music, as certain rhythmic gestures in the pieces can provide inspiration on how to end solos, and provide a frame of how long to solo so that students do not get carried away and stop listening to the other musicians.

Constructing improvisatory solos, as well as harmonic and rhythmic support, tends to sound stressful when discussed in detail. Luckily, Monk (2012) also developed a multi-dimensional model that focused less on the rigidity of how to improvise, but more on letting artistic ideas spring forth and develop. With many improvisation pedagogy models focusing mostly on mechanics and expanding vocabulary, Monk's multi-dimensional model counteracted the traditional methods, working instead to develop the cognitive processes involved in creating improvisatory music. These five dimensions, or "brains," were the performance brain, creative brain, continuation brain, structural brain, and the temporal brain.

The performance brain focused on the mechanical output of improvising, such as playing what is in one's existing musical vocabulary. The creative brain worked with generating ideas on the spot, and filtering them so that the strongest ideas emerged and became prominent. The continuation brain varied these strong ideas in every possible manner. The structural brain sorted out these ideas in particular orders, giving them satisfying endings. The temporal brain linked all of these dimensions together, which is the epitome of what improvisation is about, according to Monk.

Putting these brains in a pedagogical perspective, Monk provided examples on how to exercise each of them, as well as how to link them together using the temporal brain. The exercise noted to practice the temporal brain had students improvise not by number of measures, but by number of minutes and seconds. This made the music less restrictive and allowed students to focus more on the output and development of their ideas. While Monk's own specific exercises pertained more to high level jazz players, he

stresses that teachers and students alike should come up with their own exercises for these dimensions.

Monk's five brains are closely related to his eight approaches for collaborative improvisation. In terms of guitar techniques, the performance brain has already been described throughout this chapter, particularly in assessing the students' mechanical output of their existing vocabulary, and how to build that vocabulary. With the creative brain, students can focus on their strongest ideas to develop and vary for their solos. Students can work on their ideas at home, but it is also important for them to develop these ideas in real time with their quartets or trios, because forming and developing ideas on the spot are a crucial aspect of improvisation. The structural brain also should be a real time focus, as the structure of the solos should be connected with the structure of the harmony. Use of the temporal brain allows the students to focus less on counting measure numbers, and more on communication with each other and how to end together in a way that feels natural. The use of this brain develops not just improvisational skills, but musical skills necessary in any chamber setting in which guitarists may be involved.

Chapter 4.

Conclusion

Based on the literature examined throughout this thesis, a variety of researchers have found that students with improvisation-based backgrounds were able to create music with more variety, originality, and personal appeal, while students with classical music backgrounds struggled in terms of variety and personal appeal (Ward-Steinmann, 2008). Improvisation-based students were also more comfortable with creating music on the spot than classically trained students (Buonviri, 2013). Improvisation also has been successfully incorporated into elementary classrooms, and classrooms with diverse learners (McCord, 2009).

There are many recommendations for practice to be made for guitar teachers (see Appendix A for more details), but there are four crucial outcomes from the methods and techniques presented. First, teaching the concept of improvisation is most effective when it is incorporated into lessons. Second, teachers must participate in improvisational activities with students. This brings the teacher to the students' level, helps the teacher gain improvisation experience, and allows for a great deal of effective modeling. Third, guitar teachers must network with each other by sharing successful experiences with their peers, and putting their peers' successful techniques to practice (Whitcomb, 2013). Lastly, for more advanced students, guitar teachers must build on what those students already know, and acquire singular targets to practice improvising (rhythms, notes, dynamics, articulations, etc.) (Buonviri, 2013).

Throughout the research compiled for this thesis, it was noted that there is no known empirical research on benefits of improvisation in guitar classes, or successful

techniques implemented to teach improvisation to guitar classes. This lack of research was, in large part, an inspiration to construct theoretical methods for guitar based on existing research for other instruments. Future empirical research should test theoretical methods suggested in this thesis, so that they can be used more widely among guitar teachers, and so that more guitar teachers can teach the concept of improvisation with comfort and ease.

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Appendix A

Modal Chord Progression Chart

Ionian	I-ii-V-I I-IV-V-I
Dorian	i-ii-i-IV i-IV
Phrygian	I-II-III-II-I I-II-I-II-I
Lydian	I-II I-vii
Mixolydian	I-v-I-VII I-VII-I-v
Aeolian	i-iv-v-i i-VI-VII-i

- Roman numeral progressions are based on the first note for each mode.
- The Phrygian and Lydian progressions are based on Flamenco progressions, which typically use these modes for melodies.
- Guitar teachers are encouraged to expand upon the examples presented in this chart. Many progressions are possible for each mode, but the purpose of this chart is to provide basic examples of progressions that students may play.

Appendix B
Sample Lesson Plan: Improvisation as informal assessment

Goals/Objectives:

- Students will play the E natural-minor scale, one octave, in 1st position* with half notes by following the teacher's modeling (20 mins).
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of the E minor scale by improvising for two measures using notes from the scale (15 mins).

Class Procedures:

1. Teacher will guide students through each note of the E minor scale.
    a. Focus on one note at a time, make sure every student is on the right note.
    b. Start with 1 and work up to 5, then review the notes learned thus far.
    c. Ask the students which note comes next during the review.
    d. Once the students understand the first 5 notes, continue with 6-8.
    e. Review the notes of the whole scale in the same fashion.
2. Students will play the E minor scale in whole notes as a class.
3. Students will play the same scale, this time in half notes.
   -20 mins-
4. Students will divide into two groups and form two circles.
5. Teacher will model improvising for two bars using the E minor scale.
    a. DO NOT use the word "improvise".
    b. Use just half and quarter notes.
6. Students will take turns improvising for two measures in their own respective circles (see Assessment).

Assessment:

- Informal assessment in which students demonstrate their understanding of the E minor scale by:
    - Improvising notes in the scale for two measures using half and quarter notes.
    - Teacher will participate for some time in each circle by taking a turn improvising, and incorporating chord progressions as the students take turns improvising.

Accommodations:

- If a student is uncomfortable in group settings, he or she may improvise for the teacher one-on-one.
- Visual aids for notes in the scale may be used if necessary (i.e. looking at the scale written out).

*For more advanced classes, this same plan can be used for learning the E minor scale in 7th position.

Appendix C
Sample Lesson Plan: Acquiring single targets to practice improvisation

Goals/Objectives:

- Using a new chord they have learned, students will improvise strumming rhythms using half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, and/or quarter rests in a call-and-response style (10 mins).

Class Procedures:

1. Students will review the fingering for the new chord they recently learned.
2. Teacher and students will play the chord for 2 measures in quarter notes to ensure they can produce a clear sound.
    a. Provide individual attention if any students are still struggling. This activity is most effective when every student is comfortable with what is going on in his/her left hand.
3. Teacher will play a rhythm consisting of half, quarter, and/or eighth notes, as well as quarter rests, and students will echo.
    a. Play the same rhythm until students echo correctly, then change the rhythm.
    b. Limit any detailed explanation of what is going on. Just say "let's play call-and-response game" in order to maintain student engagement and avoid confusion.
4. Once students are comfortable and understand the activity, they will take turns initiating the call-and-response with their own rhythms (see Assessment).

Assessment:

- Informal assessment in which each student takes a turn initiating a call-and-response with strumming rhythms for one measure, using any combination of:
    - Half notes
    - Quarter notes
    - Eighth notes
    - Quarter rests
- Parameters of this assessment should be briefly explained and modeled before beginning.
    - When modeling, ask students what kinds of rhythms were used in the example.

Accommodations:

- Students who are uncomfortable with improvisation should not be forced to participate, however the teacher should regularly reinforce the idea that the classroom is a safe place to make mistakes without being judged.

Appendix D
Sample Lesson Plan: Constructing improvisatory solos based on Monk's methods (advanced classes)

Goals/Objectives:
Students will improvise and pass along solos in "The St. James Infirmary" with their respective quartets through non-verbal communication (i.e. eye contact, harmonic changes, phrasing) (15-20 mins).

Class Procedures:

1. Students will break into their respective quartets.
2. Students will run "The St. James Infirmary" once through.
    a. Each student will take turn improvising a solo on the spot. Let them find their vocabulary and construct their own solos.
3. Once each student has played their own solo, the quartet will focus on just the solo section.
    a. Soloists will play not by measure numbers, but by how long they interact with the harmony.
    b. Students playing harmony will collaborate to play rhythms that support the solos, as well as punctuate their phrasing.
        i. For example, playing chords on weak beats during phrases and ending the phrases on strong beats.
    c. Through eye contact and harmonic progression, soloists and harmony will communicate when to end solo sections.
        i. For example, looking at each other as a final dominant chord approaches to signal the end of the solo, or to pass the solo to the next student.
    d. When students are able to pass around solos and end the section effectively, they will then work on building their solos off of each other's ideas.
        i. Students may copy the previous soloist's rhythm, melodic direction, and/or interval spacing.
        ii. Each student should bring in their own original idea while copying the ideas of others (see Assessment).

Assessment:

- Informal assessment in which each student passes along a solo in their quartets, with each student using at least one idea from the previous player. Students are encouraged to bring their own new ideas into the exchange.
- Informal assessment in which students playing the harmony in their quartets collaborate to create a simple harmonic and rhythmic progression to accompany the soloists.
- Informal assessment in which soloists and harmony communicate with each other non-verbally to puncuate phrases and pass along or end solos.
    - Eye contact.
    - Listening to the progressions (dominant chord).

Accommodations:

- Students who are uncomfortable with soloing may continue playing the harmony.