

Improvisation as a teaching-researching pathway in violin lessons

Our proposal focuses on a project originated from a teaching-learning context - the Course of Music Education at the Conservatory of Florence (Italy) - in which we met as a student (Marco Gallenga) and as a professor (Anna Maria Freschi). In Marco's musical biography, classical violin training is combined with the practice of improvisation in different musical genres and styles (popular music, jazz, blues, electronic music). The study of teaching-learning problems related to music education and his first experiences as a violin teacher gave us the idea of investigating the role of improvisation as a teaching-researching pathway in violin lessons. The project was selected a few months ago as part of a program of Artistic Research Workshops activated in collaboration with the Gent Orpheus Institute.

We started from some questions connecting the practice of improvisation to the practice of teaching. What role can improvisation play in the development of technical skills and postural awareness? Which kind of improvisation activities can be more useful? How is this practice connected with other activities during the lesson? Can improvisation change the methodological paradigm of instrument lessons, encouraging students and teachers to formulate new questions and to develop new answers? Can it stimulate experimentation with new performing situations?

In music education the role of improvisation has been supported by active methods (E. Jaques-Dalcroze, C. Orff, Z. Kodaly, etc.) and more recently by teaching proposals inspired by contemporary music (L. Friedemann, G. Meyer-Denkman, H. C. Schaper, B. Dennis, G. Self, J. Paynter, V. Hemsy De Gainza). Fewer studies deal with the relationship between improvisation and instrument teaching-learning. There has been an interesting development in this field in Italy, which we think worth continuing. Furthermore some authors attest a strong relationship between improvisation and artistic research (A. Douglas, N. Sajnani, K Nervin, A. Bain, S. Trump, S. Emmerson).

Presenting the first step of our ongoing project, we suggest that improvisation can not only support specific playing abilities, but also throw light on the relationship between artistic research and teaching.

Relation to the questions listed in the Call

Improvisation and artistic research have procedural and epistemological analogies: both develop new knowledge moving between freedom and limits, between open-ended critical questions and boundary conditions; both try to avoid chaos, both want to go beyond what is already known. We want to show how, thanks to these deep similarities, methodologies of artistic research may inform teaching through the practice of improvisation and how this can be devised in violin training. In other words, we investigate if and how the use of improvisation may encourage an approach based on strategies of problem solving rather than of giving instructions, bringing teacher and student to share an artistic research. Since in this project artistic research is oriented by educational aims, its development may show ways of incorporating the practice of teaching in the practice of artistic research.



Anna Maria Freschi
Conservatorio “Luigi Cherubini”, Florence, Italy
annafreschi@fastwebnet.it

Anna Maria Freschi is graduated in Literature and Philosophy, Piano, Drums and Music Education and teaches Music Pedagogy at Florence Conservatory “L. Cherubini”. As a percussionist, he performed in orchestras and chamber groups (ancient music, contemporary music, cross-cultural music). She has been member of the editorial board of *Musica Domani*, journal of SIEM (Italian Society of Music Education). She currently holds training and upgrading courses for school teachers and instrument teachers and presents lectures in Conferences about music education. She published books about music education, rhythmic training and instrumental teaching methodology: *Big Bang* (Textbook of Music Education for secondary school - Giunti-Ricordi 1994), *Insegnare uno strumento* (Teaching an instrument - 2002), *Movimento e misura. Esperienza e didattica del ritmo* (Movement and measure. Rhythmic experience and teaching - 2006), *Metodologia dell'insegnamento strumentale* (Methodology of instrumental teaching - 2012), *Insegnare la musica* (Teaching music - 2012).



Marco Gallenga
Conservatorio “Luigi Cherubini”, Florence, Italy
marcogallenga@gmail.com

Marco Gallenga is a violinist with classic and jazz training. He began his music studies at Florence Conservatory “L. Cherubini” and at Fiesole Music School. Later he studied jazz and blues, and explored improvisation also using electronic effects. He plays in classic orchestra, in trio for chamber music and with some rock and blues bands. Now he teaches violin in two music schools in Florence, and he is studying in the Course of Music Education at Florence Conservatory. In 2015 he got a master degree in artistic disciplines at the University of Florence, with a musicological thesis on the music by Castelnuovo-Tedesco of the René Clair film: *And Then There Were None*. He has been working with the Orchestra Regionale Toscana as musicologist for three years, in the project of music listening in the high schools of Florence.

