

The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

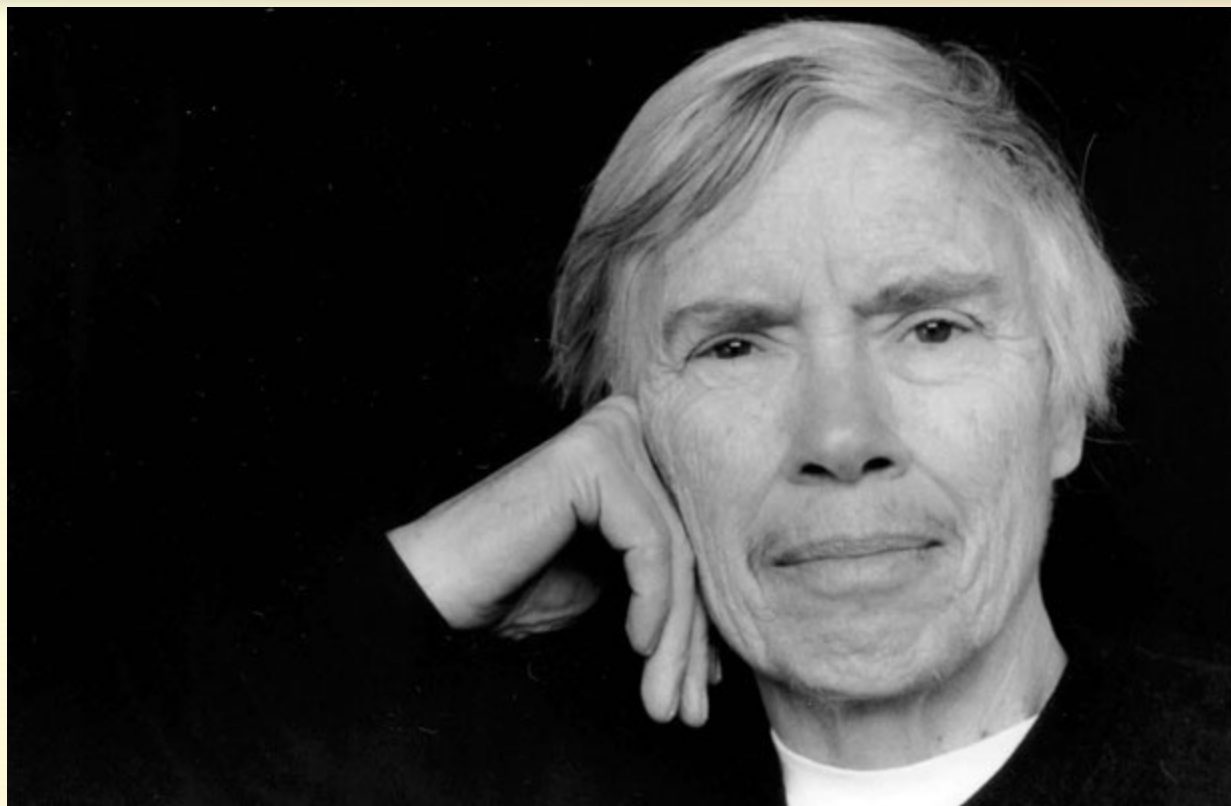
FYS 129

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Various Quotes

These slides contain a collection of some of the quotes largely from the musicians that are studied during the course.

The idea is to present “musicians in their own words”.



Pauline Oliveros

American electronics player and accordionist
(May 30, 1932–November 24, 2016)

Oliveros on Risks

Oliveros: I am something akin to a high wire artist. The audience is with you, because they perceive the risks and the dangers.

Arcana V: Music, Magic and Mysticism edited by John Zorn, Granary Books/Hips Road, New York, 2010 p. 296.

A Fragment of a Musical Score from Oliveros

Dissolving your ear plugs:

For classically trained musicians and anyone else interested

1. Take some time—no matter where you are—sit down and close your eyes for a while and just listen. When you open your eyes consider what you heard as the “music”. Later try to remember what you heard and express it with your instrument or voice. Do this practice often until you begin to hear the world as music.

Arcana V: Music, Magic and Mysticism edited by John Zorn, Granary Books/Hips Road, New York, 2010 p. 296.

Oliveros on Music Improvisation

Oliveros:

Creative music improvisation communicates collective musical intelligence as an energy field. Whether an individual soloist or ensemble is improvising, there is a mining of musical information stored deeply in the collective consciousness of humanity.

Intelligence is the ability to utilize and purpose detectable information or data from inner or outer sources.

Creative music offers new patterns and combinations spontaneously.

Improvisation is the ability to create spontaneously with or without pre-planning—within or without a plan of action.

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Oliveros on Deep Listening

Oliveros: I keep trying to explain what I mean by 'Deep Listening'. Here is a try.

"The key to multi-level existence is deep listening. Deep listening includes language and its syntax, the nature of its sound, atmosphere and environmental context. This is essential to the process of unlocking layer after layer of imagination, meaning and memory down to the cellular level of human experience.

Listening is the key to performance. Responses, whatever the discipline, that originate from deep listening are connected in resonance with being and inform the artist, art and audience in an effortless harmony.

"Deep Listening is a life time practice."

Interview from <http://media.hyperreal.org/zines/est/intervs/oliveros.html>, ca. 1997.

Oliveros on Deep Listening (version 2)

Oliveros: Well in general there are two forms of listening: focused listening and open, global, and receptive listening. This is also true of eyesight, you can focus on something for detail and you can have a peripheral vision of the field. Then, you can also defocus your eyes so that you take in more of the 180° that you can see, and thus you become quite sensitive to motion. The same applies to hearing. You can in a way defocus your ears so you're taking in all of the sounds around you, inside of you, in your memory or imagination all at once. The best image or metaphor I can give for it is a tapestry of sound: threads of sound that come and go and some that stay. Trying to expand oneself to include more and more of the field, I call inclusive listening. And then when something attracts your attention to focus in on, that's exclusive listening. You can do both at once, actually. I have a lot of exercises and pieces that try to expose these different forms. And this is what we do in the Deep Listening retreat. Deep Listening is a process. I guess the best definition I could give is listening to everything all the time and reminding yourself when you're not listening. You also have to understand that there's a difference between hearing and listening. In hearing, the ears take in all the sound waves and particles and deliver them to the audio cortex where the listening takes place. We cannot turn off our ears--the ears are always taking in sound information--but we can turn off our listening. I feel that listening is the basis of creativity and culture. How you're listening, is how you develop a culture and how a community of people listens, is what creates their culture. So that's the theory in kind of a nutshell.

Interview by Alan Baker, American Public Media, January 2003.

Oliveros on Conveying Ideas

Oliveros: It's certainly not easy to work in an abstract way that doesn't convey ideas directly to the listener, but it can be done. For instance, I recently took part in a meeting in the Catskills organized by activists who want to protect the watershed there from corporations that want to hydrofrack-- drill through the shale for natural gas, which will surely contaminate the watershed. They invited a lot of artists because they felt we would have a way of conveying the ideas to the people. I played a solo piece. The first part was called "Let's Get the Frack Out of Here," and it was pretty rousing and menacing. The second was called "Let's Keep Our Water Pure", and you could hear the water in the way that I was playing. So those are ideas that convey feeling. It's important to get to the heart and feeling of things like that, and music can do that. It can do it without words.

Interview by Marc Masters and Grayson Currin, March 2011.