Introduction to Musical Improvisation for Year 10-12 Students

This course introduces students to the multifarious uses of improvisation within today’s ever-changing music industry. Whether you have a background in classical or popular music, or theoretical or ‘ear’ based learning, this course is designed to encourage you to step out of your comfort zones and create music ‘in-the-moment’.

The course will equip you with the basics of improvisation, moving from improvising over drones and standard chord patterns to ‘jamming’ in a freer manner. Improvisation is at the heart of everything you do as a musician. It teaches us how to tackle complex musical situations with confidence and agility, and to work collaboratively with others. It will ignite your potential to become composers and songwriters.

The course will be facilitated by Jessica Arlo Irish. Jessica is a gifted performer, composer and multi-instrumentalist with a background in classical music performance. After receiving two performance scholarships for classical violin, she transitioned into improvisational/contemporary performance and composition. Jessica has gained much international recognition and awards for her contemporary/world/orchestral/cinematic works and accompanying music videos. Jessica works independently in the Australian music industry as composer, songwriter, session musician, touring artist, producer and music improvisation/performance tutor. She is completing her final few months on her Doctor of Creative Arts in Composition and Improvisation at Western Sydney University.

Winner of the UK International Songwriting Contest 2017 for ‘Secrets’ Music Video • 2nd Place in the ‘Music Video’ Section of the International Songwriting Competition (Nashville) 2017 • Highly Commended Award in the Music Video Section of the International Songwriting Competition (Nashville) 2018 • Honourable Mention in the ‘Unsigned Only’ Competition for Songwriting

Course Fee
$100 – FREE with a Creative Kids Voucher


Course Outline
5 x One Hour Online Sessions

Course Dates
Course commences week beginning 20 July 2020 and runs every Wednesday at 4.30pm.

Registration
The course is strictly limited to 15 participants and registration will be open between 15 June and 15 July. The course will operate on a “first-come-first-served” basis.

Register for the course here https://forms.gle/nic1eEvG4XR4MLo8

Please note that you will need to have your Creative Kids Voucher details to complete your registration.
Course Overview

Lesson One (Wednesday 22 July, 4.30pm)

*Introduction to Improvisation and Improvising Over a Drone*: Students are introduced to the various ways that improvisation is employed across a number of professions within the music industry and how it is utilised within these professions to provide creative solutions. They will also learn how to improvise over drones using specific major and minor scales.

Lesson Two (Wednesday 29 July, 4.30pm)

*Ear Training, Melodic Imitation and Modes*: Students are taught how to train their ears to develop relative pitch, imitate melodic fragments within performance and use specific musical modes of the major scale as the basis for improvisation.

Lesson Three (Wednesday 5 August, 4.30pm)

*Improvising over Chordal Structures*: Students are taught some common chordal structures within popular music and how to use this knowledge to improvise effectively. They will experiment in class with developing melodic lines for these structures.

Lesson Four (Wednesday 12 August, 4.30pm)

*Communicating the ‘Trans-Sensory’*: Students are taught how to use a ‘theme’ as the impetus for creativity as well as how to communicate meaning, emotion, and a sense of ‘place’ through composition. There is a focus on music for film/television/games and advertising. ‘Themes’ will be given in class and students will be given the opportunity to select a ‘theme’ and communicate it through improvisation.

Lesson Five (Wednesday 19 August, 4.30pm)

*Discomfort and its Creative Potential*: Students are taught how to challenge themselves using unfamiliar contexts and stylistic aesthetics to move outside of the known into new sonic territories, and the many different ways this can be done within improvisation, composition and collaboration. Examples are given using mp3’s in a number of genres and students are encouraged to improvise in these different styles.

Students are encouraged to discuss the potential direction for their musical careers with a view to personalising how improvisation will work specifically for them. A non-compulsory task is laid out to be worked through during this course, depending on the direction of the student. The task is as follows:

1. **Performance Students**: Record an improvised, self-written, melodic performance using a chosen instrument or voice over an mp3 track (either selected individually or using the one provided by the teacher) featuring a popular chordal structure in contemporary pop music.
2. **Songwriters and Composers**: Perform/submit a sample of their work or generate a piece of music using a ‘theme’ given by the teacher. This work can be recorded, videoed or scored depending on the individual’s preference.
3. **Composers for TV/Film/Advertising**: Find a scene from a film/TV show/game or an advertisement and suggest either an existing work of theirs or a work created specifically for the scene/advertisement. This work can be recorded, videoed or scored depending on the individual’s preference.
4. **Music producers**: Showcase some of their own work or take a modern popular song and explain/demonstrate alternate ways in which this song could be orchestrated in the studio.

At the end of the course, students will have the opportunity to submit this task to the teacher as an audio/video/pdf file for individual feedback.