

Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz

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I. Overview

Improvisation in music is certainly as old as music itself. Throughout history, the ways in which the art of improvisation has been embraced as part of formal music education has varied widely. Sometimes organized study of improvisation has figured very prominently, while at other times it has existed more on the fringe. The incorporation of improvisation into public performance has likewise varied. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, improvisation routinely figured in public performances, with instances of cadenzas in concerti and variations on the newest, most popular opera aria representing common examples. The inclusion of improvisation has also been connected to certain functions of music. For centuries, organ improvisation on hymn tunes has been a feature of certain styles of corporate worship, and the practice persists to this day. Improvisation has also been closely connected to music making through various non-Western cultures. This expression of it is timeless.

The Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz does not attempt to address all possible manifestations of improvisation. Rather, it aims to focus on particular facets of “contemporary” music, with a specific connection to the jazz idiom. It responds to very real and present currents in the music industry, currents about which many of today’s undergraduate students are both aware and interested. While it obviously stops short of being a major in jazz, it is conceived to lay a sufficient foundation that can progress toward the possibility of professional employment and/or additional organized study in jazz. In addition, five of the ten courses are structured in such a way that they are appropriate for non-minor students to engage with improvisation and jazz as elective credit opportunities. Finally, by virtue of the nature of jazz and its antecedents, broader cultural diversity in student learning is an inevitable outcome.

While the Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz is most intuitively appropriate for students enrolled in the School of Music, the courses are such that a qualified student from one of the other UNCUSA conservatories might also participate, either for elective credit in individual courses or in pursuit of the complete minor itself.

II. Summary

16 credits over a 4 semester progression, predicatng a Fall Semester start

Inventory of Courses

MUS 2076: Applied Lessons: Improvisation (1 credit)

MUS 2077: Applied Lessons: Jazz Arranging and Composition (1 credit)

MUS 3835: Improvised Music and Jazz Multilateral Listening Perspective Workshop (1 credit)

MUS 3836: Improvisation Forum (2 credits)

MUS 3837: Advanced Improvisation Forum (2 credits)

MUS 3839: Jazz Historical Listening Survey (1 credit)

MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I (2 credits)

MUS 3844: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice II (2 credits)

MUS 4131: Recital: Improvised Music and Jazz (0 credits; graded P/F)

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz (1 credit per semester; 4 semesters required for total of 4 credits)

III. Curriculum

Semester One

Fall of C2 or C3

A 5-credit semester, but 3 of the credits are mobile if flexible scheduling is required.

MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I

2 credits – Fall Only

Beginning of the sequence, this can be taken as an exploration of the topic of jazz and improvised music before declaring minor. *Note: While not required, it is recommended to pair this class with the “Improvised Music and Jazz Multilateral Listening Perspective” (below), whether pursuing the minor or just taking as an elective.*

- Pre-requisites
 - Required: Completion of *MUS 1613: Theory I* (or equivalent), including a working knowledge of how to build major and minor scales; or permission of instructor. This course is available to all appropriately qualified students.
- Open to all students as an Elective, subject to pre-requisites.

- Max enrollment of 12, should prioritize IMJ minors first, aspiring minors second, and those taking as an elective third.
- Three one-hour meetings per week
- 30 minutes of outside work and prep, six days a week
- Redefining scales for an improvisation framework
- Chord notation, construction, “chord to scale to chord transmutation”
- Downbeat reduction for bass line creation
- Downbeat reduction melodic line creation
- Understanding form: 12 bar blues, basic 32 bar song forms
- Chord identification, visual and auditory
 - Major, minor, diminished, and augmented triads
 - Major seven chords, dominant seven chords
 - Minor major seven chords, minor seven chords, minor six chords
- Chord progression identification, visual and auditory
 - ii V7 I - ii#7 V7 i - I VI7 ii V7 I
- Using the above to begin creating solos over 12 bar F blues, *Autumn leaves*, *Take the A Train*, *Softly as in a morning sunrise*, and *There will never be another you*, and other basic chord progressions across a variety of feels.

MUS 3835: Improvised Music and Jazz Multilateral Listening Perspective Workshop

1 credit – Fall availability only

Can be non-sequential, though strongly recommended as a pair to Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I. This class should be prioritized over the Jazz Historical Listening Survey if room for only one credit exists.

- Pre-requisite: Completion or current active enrollment in *MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I* (above); or permission of instructor. This course is available to all appropriately qualified students.
- Open to all students as an Elective, with consideration to pre-requisites.

- Max number 12, enrollment should first prioritize IMJ minors, then IMJ minor aspirants, and then electives.
- Two one-hour meetings per week
- 20 minutes of outside practice time, 6 days a week.
- Multi-lateral ear-training
- Cross-training on all three primary rhythm section instruments
- Bass-line generation
- Beginning piano voicings (root position ii-V, root 2 hand ii-V, le# hand 3rd-7th derivations)
- Basic single sticking patterns into beginning drum set swing, bossa, straight eighths and 12/8
- Melodic singing concurrent atop bass, drums, and piano respectively

MUS 3839: Jazz Historical Listening Survey **1 credit – Fall availability only**

Can be non-sequential, taken before Minor declaration, or during any Fall while pursuing the Minor.

- No pre-requisite
- Open to all students as an Elective.
- Max number 12, enrollment should prioritize IMJ minors and IMJ aspirants.
- One two-hour meeting per week
- One hour outside listening/journaling per week
- Timeline weekly listening assignments
- Listening journal including artist, year, style, and comparable examples with comparable elements.
- In-class seminar-style discussion
- Simple analyses and compare/contrast across time periods.
- Basic socio-cultural context
- Active listening strategies

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz **1 credit – Available both Fall and Spring**

Can be non-sequential, but registration requires current good standing within the minor track.

Note: Any general jazz chamber ensemble/combo taken before a jazz minor declaration will not be counted towards completion of the minor, since those credits will not have had congruently experiential material that connects directly with the Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I and II and the Improvisation Forum/Advanced Improvisation Forum classes.

- Available to IMJ minors, with a required audition each semester for placement.

- Will consist of small groups and chamber ensembles with a primary focus on improvisation and group interaction.
- Only one Ensemble for Minor in IMJ per semester without administrative permission.
- Participation in the ensembles will synthesize with classroom offerings:
 - These ensembles will both serve as the Labs that utilize the melody-generation skills developed in *Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I and II*.
 - These groups will provide the source material for the individual transcription projects and analyses taught to students in *Improvisation Forum* and *Advanced Improvisation Forum*.

Semester Two

Spring of C2 or C3.

A 5-credit semester, each class is required with no flexibility.

MUS 3844: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice II 2 credits – Spring only

Note: If student aims to achieve the Minor in IMJ, they should declare the minor before taking this class, since they will need to concurrently register for and take “Improvisation Forum” (which requires Minor status, see below) to complete the sequence on time.

- Pre-requisite: Completion of *MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I*. This course is available to all appropriately qualified students.
- Open to all as an elective, subject to pre-requisites, with attention to the note about the intention to minor, above.

- Max number 12, enrollment should prioritize IMJ minors.
- Three one-hour meetings per week
- 30 minutes of outside work and prep, six days a week
- Altering V7 chords
- Unpacking turnarounds
- Transcription
 - Basic fundamentals
 - Alternate approaches
- Advanced improvisation song forms (ABA, AAB)
- Enclosures, harmony insertion, delayed resolutions
- Injecting emotional content while commanding standard chord progressions.
- Jazz Standards plus solo progressions in other modern genres – possible songs:
 - So what
 - Have you met Ms. Jones
 - Green Dolphin St
 - I got rhythm
 - Song for my father
 - Blues for Alice
 - Body and soul
 - What is this thing called love
 - I'll remember April
 - Just friends

MUS 3836: Improvisation Forum

2 credits – Spring only

- Pre-requisite: Completion of *MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I* and registered concurrently with *MUS 3844: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice II*
- Available only for Minors in IMJ
- One-hour weekly jazz studio masterclass, five hours of outside practice/assignments.

- Enhancement of “Music Theory and Practice II” material including:
 - The use of Downbeat Reduction to analyze solos.
 - Alterations and reharmonizations
- Enhancement of the concurrent “Ensemble for Minor in IMJ” material including:
 - Advanced transcription assignments congruent to individual student’s IMJ minor ensemble.
 - Analysis assignments derived from the individual student’s IMJ minor ensemble.

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz 1 credit

As described above.

- Required in this semester to feed material into *Improvisation Forum*.

Semester Three

Fall C3 or C4

A 3-credit semester of required material. Here is where the 1-credit *Jazz Historical Listening Survey* and/or the 1-credit *IMJ Multilateral Listening Perspective* classes can be added into the sequence if omitted from semester one.

MUS 3837: Advanced Improvisation Forum 2 credits – Fall availability only

Pre-requisite: Completion of *MUS 3844: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice II* and *MUS 3836: Improvisation Forum*

- Available only for Minors in IMJ
- One-hour weekly IMJ studio masterclass, five hours of outside practice/assignments.
- Building on *Improvisation Forum* (above), work will include transcription and analyses based upon the material the student is working on in their *Ensemble for Minor in IMJ*.

- Additionally, students will receive an introduction to advanced jazz standards, including transcription projects, from possible songs such as:
 - Alone together
 - Stablemates
 - 'Round midnight
 - Epistrophy
 - Giant Steps
 - Tom thumb
 - Fee Fi Fo Fum
 - Lonely Woman

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz 1 credit

- Details available above
- Required this semester to provide material that feeds into *Advanced Improvisation Forum* (above)

Semester Four

Spring C3 or C4

A 3-credit semester culminating in a *Recital: Improvised Music and Jazz*.

MUS 2077: Applied Lesson: Jazz Arranging and Composition 1 credit

- Potentially open to all as an elective, subject to pre-requisites, with load assignments prioritizing IMJ minors.
- Pre-requisite: Completion of *MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I* or permission of instructor
- As an elective, half-hour lesson each week.
 - Using downbeat reduction as an arranging medium
 - Rhythmic writing
 - Genre exploration
 - Approaches to original composition
- For Minors in IMJ:
 - One hour lesson, every other week, offset from the student's *Applied Lesson: Improvisation* (below).
 - The required recital (below) will consist of arrangements and original compositions by the minor candidate.

MUS 2076: Applied Lesson: Improvisation

1 credit

- Available to Minors in IMJ only
- Pre-requisite: completion of *MUS 3837: Advanced Improvisation Forum*
- One 1-hour meeting, every other week (offset by the student's *Applied Lesson: Jazz Arranging and Composition*, above)
- Focus will be on recital preparation.

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz 1 credit

- Details available above

MUS 4131: Recital: Improvised Music and Jazz 0 credit