

The analysis of improvisation now occupies a secure, if peripheral, position in the field of music theory. This was not always so. Improvisation analysis entered the field by way of jazz studies, as music theorists interested in jazz worked to convince their colleagues that an improvised, “vernacular” tradition was worthy of scholarly attention. This intellectual project began with analyses intended to demonstrate that the best jazz improvisations and compositions shared certain signal features with European classical music. Theorists then began to apply the latest analytical methods to jazz, producing analyses that drew upon Schenkerian theory, set theory, theories of rhythm and meter, and Neo-Riemannian and mathematical music theory.

A major breakthrough in this project was the emergence of interaction-based approaches to analyzing improvisation. Pioneered by music theorist Paul Rinzler and popularized by ethnomusicologists Ingrid Monson, Paul Berliner, and others, analyses of musical and social interactions in performance centered on processes rather than products, and on the ensemble rather than the soloist or composer.<sup>1</sup> The interactionist paradigm would become highly influential in music theory as well as in the “new jazz studies,” an interdisciplinary movement dedicated to the study of jazz as a culture and—accordingly—suspicious of analytical techniques originally developed for concert music.<sup>2</sup>

A generation later, interactionist methods are among the most widely used for analyzing improvisation in jazz and other musics.<sup>3</sup> However, the interactionist paradigm’s limits are increasingly coming into focus. Interaction seems to enable nearly every mode of musical

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Benjamin Brinner, *Knowing Music, Making Music: Javanese Gamelan and the Theory of Musical Competence and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); John Brownell, “Analytical Models of Jazz Improvisation,” *Jazzforschung* 26 (1994): 9–29; Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Paul Rinzler, “Preliminary Thoughts on Analyzing Musical Interaction Among Jazz Performers,” *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 4 (1988): 153–160.

<sup>2</sup> Robert O’Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin, eds., *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> For three very different examples, see Roger T. Dean and Freya Bailes, “The Control of Acoustic Intensity During Jazz and Free Improvisation Performance: Possible Transcultural Implications for Social Discourse and Community,” *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 6/2 (2010); Garrett Michaelsen, “Analyzing Musical Interaction in Jazz Improvisations of the 1960s” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2013); and Keith Waters, *The Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1965–68* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

performance, from solo performance to the interpretation of composed music.<sup>4</sup> Interactionist analyses may misrepresent improvisers' intentions or overstate their cognitive capacities.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, interaction-centered approaches can inscribe on improvisation an ideological frame that risks essentializing the practice (and practitioners) of real-time music-making, which is precisely the ontological orientation that the interactionist paradigm was intended to avoid.<sup>6</sup>

The papers in this session reconsider the role of interaction in the analysis of improvisation. Some questions that might be asked include: Are certain kinds of interaction associated with particular musical styles? How can we productively analyze instances of non-interaction in free jazz and experimental improvised music? What strategies do composers use to facilitate interactions between performers? Can we revise standard interactionist approaches to focus not only on musician-to-musician interactions, but also on improvisers' cognitive processes, or on the engagement between performers and their scores, sketches, and scripts? Which kinds of improvisational performance seem to require alternative analytical methods?

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The above call for papers is for a special session to be held at the 2014 conference of the Society for Music Theory. The session will be co-sponsored by the SMT Interest Group on Improvisation and the SMT Jazz Interest Group (although one need not be a member of either organization in order to submit an abstract for consideration).

Abstracts should be 500 words or less, in keeping with SMT's general guidelines (<http://societymusictheory.org/events/cfp2014>). Alternative presentation formats are welcome, as are standard thirty-minute papers. Abstracts may be submitted by email to Paul Steinbeck, chair of SMT Improvisation ([paul.steinbeck@gmail.com](mailto:paul.steinbeck@gmail.com)). The deadline for submissions is December 15, 2013.

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<sup>4</sup> This observation is often credited to Alfred Schutz, "Making Music Together: A Study in Social Relationship," in *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory*, ed. Arvid Brodersen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964): 159–78.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew W. Butterfield, review of *Interaction, Improvisation, and Interplay in Jazz*, by Robert Hodson, *Jazz Research Journal* 1/2 (2007): 239–249.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Also in Nicholas Cook, "Making Music Together, or Improvisation and its Others," *The Source: Challenging Jazz Criticism* 1 (2004): 5–25.