

Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz

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 UNCSA 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 can be repositioned if flexible scheduling is required.

MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I

2 credits – offered fall semester only

Prerequisites: 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, including those not pursuing the Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz (Minor in IMJ).

MUS 3835: Improvised Music and Jazz Multilateral Listening Perspective Workshop

1 credit – offered fall semester only

Prerequisites: Completion or current active enrollment in MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I, or permission of instructor. This course is available to all appropriately qualified students, including those not pursuing the Minor in IMJ.

Note: Can be taken non-sequentially but strongly recommended to pair with MUS 3843. This course should be prioritized over MUS 3839 if room for only one credit exists.

MUS 3839: Jazz Historical Listening Survey

1 credit – offered fall semester only

Prerequisites: None. This course is available to all appropriately qualified students, including those not pursuing the Minor in IMJ.

Note: Can be taken non-sequentially, completed prior to acceptance into the Minor in IMJ, or during any fall semester while pursuing the minor.

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz

1 credit – offered both fall and spring semesters

Prerequisites: Acceptance into, and good standing within, the Minor in IMJ.

Note: Any improvised music or jazz chamber ensemble/combo taken before acceptance into the Minor in IMJ will not be counted towards completion of the minor.

Semester Two (Spring of C2 or C3)

A 5-credit semester. Each class is required without any flexibility.

MUS 3844: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice II

2 credits – offered spring semester only

Prerequisites: Completion of MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I. This course is available to all appropriately qualified students, including those not pursuing the Minor in IMJ.

Note: If a student aims to earn the Minor in IMJ, they should seek acceptance into the minor before taking this class.

MUS 3836: Improvisation Forum

2 credits – offered spring semester only

Prerequisites: Acceptance into, and good standing within, the Minor in IMJ; concurrent registration in MUS 3844: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice II.

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz

1 credit – offered both fall and spring semesters

As previously described.

Semester Three (Fall of C3 or C4)

A 3-credit semester. Each class is required without any flexibility.

Note: If previously omitted from the first semester of the Minor in IMJ, 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.

MUS 3837: Advanced Improvisation Forum

2 credits – offered fall semester only

Prerequisites: Acceptance into, and good standing within, the Minor in IMJ; MUS 3844: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice II and MUS 3836: Improvisation Forum.

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz

1 credit – offered both fall and spring semesters

As previously described.

Semester Four (Spring of C3 or C4)

A 3-credit semester. Each class is required without any flexibility.

MUS 2077: Applied Lesson: Jazz Arranging and Composition

1 credit – offered spring semester only

Prerequisites: MUS 3843: Music Improvisation Theory and Practice I, or permission of instructor. This course is available to all appropriately qualified students, including those not pursuing the Minor in IMJ.

Note: For a student in the Minor in IMJ, a one-hour lesson, every other week; the focus will be on preparation of material for the recital. For a student not in the Minor in IMJ, a half-hour lesson each week.

MUS 2076: Applied Lesson: Improvisation

1 credit – offered spring semester only

Prerequisites: Acceptance into, and good standing within, the Minor in IMJ; MUS 3837: Advanced Improvisation Forum.

Note: A one-hour lessons, every other week, offset by the student's Applied Lesson: Jazz Arranging and Composition. The focus will be on preparation of material for the recital.

MUS 5197: Ensemble for Minor in Improvised Music and Jazz

1 credit – offered both fall and spring semesters

As previously described.

MUS 4131: Recital: Improvised Music and Jazz

0 credits

The required recital will consist of arrangements and original compositions by the minor candidate.