

Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium 2015
Among the People: Arts, Improvisation, and
Well-Being

Presenter Abstracts and Bios

List of Presenters
(Alphabetical by last name)

Jeff Albert
Arthur Bull
Rebecca Caines, Jo-Ann Episkenew & Erin Goodpipe
Douglas Clarke
Kathe Gray
Lisa Hirmer and Elizabeth Jackson
Marian Jago
Brian Jones
Rick Kotowich
Kathryn Ladano
Travis Laplante
Brian Lefresne
Lauren Levesque
Gabriel Levine
Josslyn Lockett
Charity Marsh
Kevin McNeilly
Rene Meshake
Matthew Neil
Rii Numata
Laurel Ralston
Sara Ramshaw
Brent Rowan
Kimber Sider
Marcel Swiboda
Alex W. Rodriguez, Joe Sorbara, and Rob Wallace
Kim Wide

Jeff Albert: Improvising Community: A Participant's Account of the Improvised Music Community in New Orleans Since 2005

2005 was a pivotal year for the city of New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina and the flooding that followed changed the city in ways that are still being revealed. Many of these changes were positive, and the musical culture of the city is a great lens through which one can see these positive changes. More specifically the improvised music community of the city has seen great growth in the ten years since "the storm."

There is a tradition of collective improvisation in New Orleans going back to early jazz, and there is also a strong history of freely improvised music in the free jazz/new thing tradition since the 1960s, with Kidd Jordan being the best known practitioner and face of the scene. Through the 1990s and early 2000s there were a number of presenters and musicians who created the events that were focal to the community. After Katrina, music was a common meeting point for people to connect, reconnect, heal, and move forward. This became especially true for the community of improvisers and practitioners of musics outside of the aesthetic mainstream.

In November of 2007, a weekly music series focused on improvised music and other non-commercially mainstream practices was founded. It is called the Open Ears Music Series, and it was directly and consciously modeled on the musician organized series model that was so successful in the Chicago improvised music community in the preceding decade. This weekly meeting place has served as an incubator for musical projects, social interactions, and other new performance opportunities.

This presentation will give a brief history of the improvised music scene in New Orleans, and look at the growth of that scene and development of community around that scene since 2005 by tracing the development of venues for the music, the activities of the musicians, and the experiences of audience members.

Jeffrey Albert is a musician, music technologist, and educator. He is an Assistant Professor of Music Industry Studies at Loyola University New Orleans, and in May of 2013, he became the first graduate of the PhD program in Experimental Music and Digital Media at Louisiana State University. He also holds degrees from Loyola University - New Orleans, and the University of New Orleans, and has served on the faculty of Xavier University of Louisiana and the University of New Orleans.

Albert has been named a Rising Star Trombonist in the Downbeat Critics Polls each year from 2011-2014, and performs regularly in the New Orleans area, and throughout the US and Europe. In 2013, the Paris based record label Rogue Art released his CD, *The Tree on the Mound*, which features Kidd Jordan, Hamid Drake, and Joshua Abrams. In addition to leading the Jeff Albert Quartet, Jeff is a member of Hamid Drake's Bindu-Reggaeology band, and co-lead the Lucky 7s with fellow trombonist Jeb Bishop. Jeff has performed with many great improvisers, including Georg Graewe, Tobias Delius,

Dave Rempis, Jeff Parker, and many others. He has been a member of the bands of New Orleans greats George Porter and Wardell Querzger, backed artists like Stevie Wonder and Bonnie Raitt.

Jeff is the founder and curator of the Open Ears Music Series, a board member of the New Orleans International Sound Exchange, and writes the blog Scratch My Brain.

Arthur Bull: Title Forthcoming

In this paper Arthur Bull connects his four decades of experience as an improviser and community activist, primarily in small fisheries advocacy. By juxtaposing narratives from these two worlds, he relates improvisatory practices aimed at initiating constructive social change. In particular, Bull describes how the underlying dynamics that inform conflict resolution demand practices familiar to improvisers. These include the creation of alternative spaces and new modes of exchange, the reliance on artisanal rather than formal knowledge systems, a rejection of dominant authority (score, conductor, chairperson), and a willingness to accept the risk inherent to letting go of preconceived concepts in the interest of spontaneous communication. Several examples are discussed: the conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous fishing communities in Atlantic Canada, the struggle of small-scale fisheries against neo-liberal fisheries policies, and the creation of learning networks as spaces for deliberative dialogue between diverse communities on the national and international stages. The paper closes with a comparison of the ways in which a group free improvisation provides insight into the role of creativity in conflict situations.

Arthur Bull is the Executive Director of the Saltwater Network, and an Associate Staff Member of the Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Centre. He is also the Past Chair of Nova Scotia's Coastal Communities Network, the Co-Director of the Rural Communities Impacting Policy project, and the Chair of the Digby Neck Community Development Association. He has been a director with The Western Valley Development Authority, The Bay of Fundy Ecosystem Project, The Nova Scotia Coastal and Rural Community Foundation, and is a member of the North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Team. Most recently he has been a president of the Bay of Fundy Inshore Fishermen's Association, a senior policy analyst with the government of Nova Scotia, and a policy adviser to the World Forum of Fisher People. Before working with the fisheries groups, he worked in community-based adult literacy field in Ontario for 15 years.

Arthur is also a veteran improvising musician. Formerly the guitarist with The Bill Smith Ensemble, Bull has also played with Paul Dutton, David Prentice, Michael Snow, John Oswald, John Heward, Derek Bailey, Roscoe Mitchell and Roger Turner. His most recent performances have been in Rome with British guitarist Mike Cooper, and in Toronto with the live soundtrack group Red Lantern and the blues band The Spokes. He is also a poet, with three books published, and a translator from the Chinese. Originally from Ontario, Bull now lives in Sandy Cove, Nova Scotia, with his artist and musician wife, Ruth Bull.

Rebecca Caines, Jo-Ann Episkew, & Erin Goodpipe: Acting Out! But in a Good Way

The Indigenous People's Health Research Centre (IPHRC), based at the University of Regina, in partnership with the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation has recently embarked on a series of interviews with artists, elders and youth who are participating in Acting Out! But in a Good Way, an arts-based health research (ABHR) project taking place in First Nations communities in Saskatchewan. This research is examining the use of improvised arts projects in communities to prevent suicides by helping youth to examine the decisions they make that affect their health, build a strong sense of identity, and find their voices leading to improved health and wellbeing. The youth engage with a number of improvised art practices including Forum Theatre, improvised theatre games, and art, filmmaking, and storytelling. Our research has shown that participation in the arts function as health interventions, increasing wellbeing and leading to improved health. These art projects are designed collaboratively following Indigenous research and art methodologies and protocols, many of which seem to engage with qualities of improvisational collaboration, including active listening, dialogical and collaborative decision making and information sharing, real-time decision making, risk, and the constant adaptation and response to failure and mistake. The researchers hypothesize that improvisation is, thus, taking place in both the design of projects and in the artistic practice itself in important and unique ways. They also seek knowledge of how different traditional First Nations' understandings of the improvisatory qualities of adaptation for survival and resistance might play out in the contemporary cultures of the communities being studied and look for evidence of these cultural tropes in the art projects that take place there. This interactive paper will present initial research findings and project documentation from a series of programs currently underway in order to ask the following questions. Is Indigenous youths' health and wellbeing in these communities positively impacted through the improvisatory? How might the support for, and expansion of, improvisatory practices benefit the communities? Most significantly, what contribution could the lived knowledges and experiences of these Saskatchewan artists and communities offer back to the wider field of Critical Studies in Improvisation?

The paper will present ongoing collaborative research undertaken by the IPHRC team (<http://iphrc.ca>), including Jo-Ann Episkenew, Linda Goulet, Warren Linds, and Karen Schmidt and their community partners, working with partner researcher Rebecca Caines, and student researcher Erin Goodpipe.

The paper will be presented in Guelph by **Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew** (IPHRC and First Nations University of Canada), **Dr. Rebecca Caines** (IICSI and University of Regina) and **Erin Goodpipe** (Undergraduate Research Assistant).

Douglas Clarke: Death comes a-Creeping in the Room: Funerals with Music and Improvisation

Music has been used for centuries to mark celebrations of every kind. Marriages, birthdays and graduations are all connected to recognizable musical pieces. But what about funerals? Funerals, much like other milestones, have produced familiar music that is usually sombre and slow. Dirges and odes, funereal marches and lamentations are just some of the music that has been around for thousands of years and is acknowledged as the "type" of music to mark the passing of human life.

Dolorous music, however, is not the only type of music that is used in funeral processions. So called “Jazz Funerals” or more appropriately Funerals with Music, celebrate the life of an individual with a mix of the solemn, sacred and sublime.

Funerals with music take a mix of the ‘traditional’ funeral music but change it up with an improvisation of more upbeat brass band music. Southern Black populations have been practicing a form of these funerals for hundreds of years, incorporating Christian myth with African religious practices and even vodou. What makes these types of rituals important and what makes them an enduring part of life and recovery from sorrow? I posit that a large part of the efficacy of Funerals with Music is the improvisation that occurs during the procession. The practice itself is a pastiche of religio-politico forms and it encompasses a wide variety of signifying practices and musical styles. Improvisation is a key facet of these funerals and therefore it is also a key facet in how it helps family members and citizens cope with losses.

In this paper I present a view of Funerals with Music as a ceremony with apotropaic and propitiatory qualities but I connect these closely with the practice of improvisation. I believe that investigating the role of improvisation in “Jazz Funerals” will lead to a deeper and more meaningful understanding of why they continue to persist as a central and integral part of some Black lives and communities.

Douglas Clarke is a Ph.D. student at York University in the Social and Political Thought Programme. He has previously presented at the Guelph Jazz Festival on the topic of improvisation and mythology. Douglas has an interest in all things Gothic including concepts of death, decay and monsters as well as the meaning of Gothic as it is traditionally used by Eurocentric historians of art and literature and as a term applied to the art and literature of Black culture.

Kathe Gray: Don't Worry that it's Not Good Enough for Anyone Else to Hear: Finding Voice through Vocal Improvisation

Researchers interested in the sensory awareness and bodily competence honed by dedicated participation in practices such as boxing, dance, martial arts, and wine tasting often take up what Sarah Pink calls a “sensory apprenticeship.” They undertake to learn the specialized skills of their interlocutors using their own bodies, opening themselves to sensorial, embodied, and affective ways of knowing that otherwise elude visual observation. For the past nine months (and counting), I have taken on just such an apprenticeship as part of a broader ethnographic research project on the repertoire of skills and attunements—sensory, embodied, material, affective, social—individual musicians cultivate over time in order to improvise in group settings. That is, in order to understand what improvisational music making feels like from the inside, I have been playing improvised music through participation in a variety of open improvisational groups. I have done so despite having limited formal training in music and—as people as various as my second-grade music teacher, my past roommates, and my mother might attest—emphatically no singing ability.

From the onset, I had intended my research to explore how improvised music might make a difference in the lives of those who play it, physically, emotionally, and relationally. However, I have ended up finding this difference demonstrated most dramatically in my own life: During my sojourn among improvising musicians, I quite accidentally stumbled across my own long-latent and steadfastly repressed love of singing. This rediscovery of my physical voice, my subsequent improvised explorations with it, and the ramifications these have had for my many metaphorical voices — as a woman, a parent, a scholar, an activist — have since had significant impact on my emotional, social, and political well-being. In this presentation, I consider how a marginal activity (improvising vocally for oneself) can encourage the productive re-imagining of and experimentation with the self; how these effects can percolate through one's relationships with others; and what this might mean more broadly for the importance of critical improvisation studies.

Kathe Gray is completing her MA in Social Anthropology at York University in Toronto, where she currently sits on the editorial collective of *Contingent Horizons*, the institution's student journal of anthropology. Prior to returning to post-secondary studies, she ran her own graphic design studio, specialising in print design and typography for publishing houses, cultural organisations, and not-for-profit entities. Her book and exhibition catalogue design has received national and international recognition. While Kathe is a published poet, her first peer-reviewed academic publication—a sensorial ethnography of eating in a blind dining restaurant—appeared in the *Graduate Journal of Food Studies* earlier this year. She lives in Guelph, Ontario with her partner, their daughter, and their Basset hound.

Lisa Hirmer & Elizabeth Jackson: Stoppaps, Beasts, + Other Strategies of Being in Public Space

In response to the Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium 2015 Call for Papers, we would like to propose an artist talk (approximately 15 minutes) and conversation (15-20 minutes) addressing the question, “How do improvisational practices resist the erosion of public spaces?” through the exploration and discussion of performative social practice works. Lisa Hirmer (artist) will share a series of DodoLab projects related to the use of public space, then will explore broader themes and questions related to improvisation and social practices in the public sphere in conversation with Elizabeth Jackson (Community Engagement Officer for the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation). Together they will discuss open-natured, improvisational community art processes as well as improvisation as a public engagement strategy that is able to move across (and disrupt) social barriers. The aim of this conversation will be to tease out the potential for collaborative community projects, working through improvisational means, to foster interactions and rehearse behaviors that resist the erosion of public space and build genuine community exchange and meaningful engagement within public and other collective spaces.

DodoLab is an experimental creative practice, directed by Lisa Hirmer, focused on developing provocative approaches to working with the public in public and the nebulous reality of public opinion. Often modeled as a type of performative research, the work explores and responds to the public's relationship with contemporary issues—an interest which arises from a conviction in art as a

meaningful vehicle of resistance and change. In the artist talk, DodoLab will share a series of projects that have used performative public interventions to create opportunities and mechanisms for meaningful conversation and exchange in the public sphere and playfully invoke new permissions for participants and collaborators to use public space in unusual but socially engaging ways. For example, in *The First Annual Tournament of Beasts* (Sudbury, 2011), a bizarre game of croquet provided the invitation for youth to productively inhabit an urban park in which they had previously felt unwelcome and create a public dialogue around the use and control of public space. Similarly, in *Stopgaps and Gems* (Guelph, 2014), collaboratively-designed sharable amulets provided an opportunity for newcomer youth to engage with other people moving through downtown spaces, creating brief moments of positive, non-commercial social exchange. In both cases, the uncertainty and discomfort of being in a public space in an unconventional way prompted improvisational strategies for overcoming the social barriers that limit how we exist and connect in public spaces. Though playful and temporary, these interventions use these strange or uncomfortable moments to not only make these often-unnoticed social barriers visible, but also act as a way of rehearsing other healthier ways of being within public space in ways that more-structured public activities cannot—something that becomes increasingly important the more our public (or privately-owned collective) spaces become limited by commercial and political interests. By creating disjunctive public moments that require improvisation, the hope is that glimpses of other possible public spaces emerge, resisting the current state of public space.

Lisa Hirmer is an independent visual artist/designer based in Guelph, Canada. Trained as an architect, she has a Bachelor of Architectural Studies (2005) and a Master of Architecture (2009) from the University of Waterloo. She currently works in a territory of overlap between visual art, design, criticism, social practice and experimental forms of research. She is the director of DodoLab, an ever-evolving creative practice focused on exploring contemporary issues with the public, in public. As DodoLab she has created projects across Canada and internationally at galleries and museums, including Confederation Centre Art Gallery (Charlottetown), Harbourfront Centre (Toronto), University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto), Foreman Gallery (Lennoxville) and Peninsula Arts (U.K.); with service organizations, such as Trillium (Sudbury) and the Gosling Foundation (Guelph); municipalities, including Breckland Council (U.K.) and the City of Rijeka (Croatia); and through research partnerships with academic groups, including The Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation (University of Guelph), The Institute for Child and Youth Studies (University of Lethbridge) and the Centre for Community Based Research (Kitchener). DodoLab was awarded the Fresh Ground New Works Prize from Harbourfront Centre in 2011 to develop *Icons of Canada* and in 2013 was selected to develop a commissioned exhibition work (*A Quack Cure*) for Toronto's Scotiabank Nuit Blanche. In 2014 DodoLab received a major project grant from the Ontario Arts Council to develop a new work called *The Passengers* and in 2015 was selected for an international residency by the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World.

Elizabeth Jackson uses her professional and personal lives to explore pathways to social justice. Her research interests include critical literary and cultural studies, community-engaged scholarship, the political implications of artistic practices, and the often vexed relationships between formal education and struggles for social justice. In her role as IICSI's Community Engagement Officer, Elizabeth works

to develop, support, facilitate, evaluate and/or analyze community-engaged, arts-based projects. In 2014, while supporting DodoLab's *Stopgaps and Gems* project, she witnessed firsthand the potential of improvised artistic practices to challenge and transform the social norms that can enforce distance, loneliness, and fear among neighbours. She looks forward to further exploring these potentials. Elizabeth holds a PhD (English & Cultural Studies) from McMaster University, and completed her BA and MA at the University of Guelph.

Magrian Jago: Improvised Music as a Means of Place Making

In 1995, French anthropologist Marc Auge proposed that our current age of super-modernity is marked by an over abundance of events. Broadcast and tracked instantaneously via social media and other technological means, these events come to us without buffers of time and distance. Collectively, we are now pressured to engage with and make sense of the whole of the immediate present—an overwhelming abundance of events streaming in at us—rather than building deep connections to localized places, events, and individuals. Subsequently, we find it difficult to give meaning to either the recent or historical past. We live in a time of recognition, rather than knowledge.

Super-modernity is also marked by a proliferation of what Auge has termed “non-places,” spaces of human interaction which are devoid of memory or shared history. Rather, the super-modern landscape is one which has become a landscape of solitary individuality. Anthropological place creates and nurtures the organically social (Auge), whereas non-places curate a solitary, yet strangely shared anonymity—we understand and submit to the behaviours expected of us in mute exchange for the services offered by the space we occupy (the movie theatre, super highway, concert hall, airport, bank, grocery store, shopping centre, etc.) Places rest upon shared history, the maintenance of relationships, and the development of individual identities. Non-places deny this sort of holistic communion in favour of solitude and similarity.

The very nature of improvised music would seem to position itself in opposition to this anonymous, rule-bound world of super-modernity's non-places. How then might participation in improvised musical practice—whether as an active performer or an engaged audience—offer ways to participate in the construction of place? One possible avenue draws upon aspects of sound-ecology, sound-walking, and sound-scape composition to explore the relationship between improvised music making and an embodied, experiential understanding of landscape and history. Drawing upon the work of musicologist R. Murray Schaefer and humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, as well as the process of composing and performing *The Landscapes Project* at Toronto's *Arrayspace* in May 2015, this paper seeks to discuss the ways in which the known history of a place along with a bodily experience of the landscape that informs it might combine in a musical exploration of imagination, meaning, and identity. Places are centres of felt value (Tuan) against which we can juxtapose the value-ness of super-modernity's non-places. As improvising musicians, how might we then bring a shared experience of place to the performance space, and how might we act to enable our audience to share in that experience? How might musical

improvisation be caused to resonate with place?

Marian Jago holds a PhD in Ethnomusicology from York University in Toronto, Canada. She has published on the lineal traditions and pedagogical practices of Lennie Tristano and Lee Konitz, which whom she studied for several years, has recently published a short ethnography of tenor saxophonist Ted Brown, and her work on jazz co-operatives in Canada during the 1950s and 1960s is forthcoming from the University of British Columbia press. Her current research interests include improvisation, sound ecology, the relationship of music to landscape, regional forms of jazz expression, ethnography, new forms of musical consumption, and popular culture.

Brian Jones: Scott Clark's *Bury My Heart*: Considering the Sonics of Aesthetic Resistance

In 2015, the Scott Clark 4tet, a Richmond, Virginia-based avant-garde jazz ensemble, will release the recording of their musical suite, *Bury My Heart*, on the Portuguese creative music label Clean Feed Records. Influenced and inspired by Dee Brown's groundbreaking text *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*, the music on the Clark's *Bury My Heart* reflects both the catastrophic reality imposed upon the indigenous peoples of North America in the mid-19th Century and their valiant efforts to battle against the incredible odds enforced by the hegemonic political ecology of the United States during this period.

About the music on *Bury My Heart*, Clark has made this statement: "[This music] comes from a journey of self-discovery into my own ancestry and the profound impact that reading and studying the history of Native Americans has had on my life." Scott Clark is a remarkable drummer/composer of Cherokee and Crow ancestry whose personal commitment to raising awareness for the historical narrative and current veracities of Native Americans has led him on this musical journey.

This presentation will focus on a lecture/performance format, with presenter Brian Jones providing cultural criticism and historical programmatic information about Clark's ensemble's specific compositions as an educational preamble before actual live performances by the 4tet. Three pieces from *Bury My Heart* will be highlighted: "Little Crow's War," "Sand Creek," and "Remembrance." The first two compositions are sonic meditations on violent and turbulent events between the United States Military and Native Americans, while the third piece focuses on the reification of the spiritual conceptions of hope and beauty that exist and promise to flourish in contemporary Native culture.

Clark's musical project represents a new way of positing resistance in the face of misery, above all promoting a message of what could be called the "affect of honesty." Clark himself averred: "The suite is written for my group, the Scott Clark 4tet: Jason Scott (saxophone), Bob Miller (trumpet), Cameron Ralston (bass), and myself on drums. The suite is mostly through-composed, but it also relies on the musicians' understanding of these events and their ability to provide their own voice to the subject matter. By choosing not to use improvisation in the traditional jazz sense, I am allowing the musicians to capture with their own voice the emotions involved in such delicate subject matter."

With this type of sincerity and integrity, the music on *Bury My Heart* embodies the political purview of the sonics of aesthetic resistance as an avenue for metaphysical panacea.

Brian Jones graduated from the University of Richmond in 1995 with a B.A. in history. Jones is currently a member of the music faculties at the University of Richmond and the College of William and Mary, as well as a PhD student in the American Studies Program at the College of William and Mary. His research interests include Miles Davis' life and work during the *Bitches Brew* period, Sun Ra and Afrofuturism, and jazz during the Civil Rights era. As a drummer, Jones has worked with a wide array of artists including Gary Thomas, Randy Brecker, John Abercrombie, Jason Mraz, Liz Phair, Steven Bernstein, and Jandek. In 1999, Jones started Slang Sanctuary Records as a limited edition record label focusing on creative music.

Rick Kotowich: Improvising with iPads: Using Improv Games and Music Making to Affirm Aboriginal Cultural Expression, Build Community, and Foster Creativity to Enhance Well-being in Healthcare Settings

It has been said that Improv is more than mere play or theatre; rather it is the very nature of the moments we live. Practicing improvisation can be healing, strengthening and life-affirming. This presentation shares the findings of an ongoing partnered research project, and weekly music therapy program, called "Improvising with iPads" that involves a group of First Nation and Métis residents in a long-term rehabilitation care, who are working with an three partners: an Artist/Researcher/Academic, a Native Health Educator and a Music Therapist to explore the social and creative possibilities of making music and intermedial art with iPad tablets. The project is supported by a range of health workers, volunteers, and by Elders in the local community. The project investigates the potential of improvisation projects for creative and cultural expression for First Nations and Métis long term care clients, and related benefits: reduced isolation and enhanced relationships, the development of collaborative, technical and listening skills, the development of new forms of innovative community-based art, and the building of new skills in new media literacy, participatory technologies, and digital citizenship (Jenkins, 2006).

Our research has continued our collaboration of last summer into 2015. Rick Kotowich, one of the project partners, will highlight the premises, processes, challenges and practices of the iPad program and share examples of creative moments and relationship growth experienced by participants, organizers and healthcare staff. Our study examines the potentials and issues of applying insights from the field of Critical Improvisation Studies to form our research methodology. This methodology engages with the social and cultural implications of improvised activity, and is informed by historical practices where improvisation has provided aggrieved communities new forms of agency (Lewis, 2008; Heble and Fischlin, 2004). Mr. Kotowich will also briefly discuss his particular perspective on the research team; which is informed by the philosophical and practice tenants of "social therapeutics" ~ an improvisation-inspired methodology for group-based personal growth and social development come revolutionary action, that is currently advanced by the East Side Institute of New York City (Fred Newman and Lois Holzman). This method is founded in Marxist thought and informed by philosophies

and practices of Vygotsky and Wittgenstein; it is being developed and realized in many projects worldwide.

Our research project asserts that improvisation has provided a powerful methodology for building community-engaged research, therapeutic goals *and* innovative improvised music making, whilst helping to address the complex health and wellness challenges faced by First Nations and Métis people in long-term care in the Canadian Prairie context. The presentation will emphasize pivotal moments of improvisational risk-taking and creativity, and a growing sense of community, participation satisfaction, and emotional uplift amongst project participants and staff, including their experiences of heightened compassion for all who play, create and perform together, despite the profound challenges of physical, social, verbal and cognitive difficulties.

Rick Kotowich is Health Educator for Native Health Services at Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Regina, Saskatchewan; he is of Cree Metis descent. His current work involves providing group and individual care and support to First Nation and Métis clients and families at Wascana Rehabilitation Centre, and other hospitals. He has over thirty years of experience serving First Nations and Métis peoples and causes through mainstream and community-based organizations in rural, northern and inner-city environments. He has worked as a community development coordinator working in education and public health, and in caregiver roles in acute care, extended and long term care settings. Rick's career focuses on service and development of First Nation and Metis Peoples; it has also included teaching small business training in Northern communities, coordinating community schools in inner-city neighbourhoods, and serving as Chair of the Board of Common Weal Community Arts connecting artists and communities for social change. He has also served Metis Caucus chairperson for a National Aboriginal Council on HIV/AIDS, and as a collaborator and community peer reviewer for community-based research projects. Rick holds a Bachelor of Administration degree from the University of Regina ('95) and has also participated online and residency development and training in improvisation and "social therapeutics" with the East Side Institute, NYC since 2004.

Kathryn Ladano: The Pedagogical and Psychological Benefits of Practicing Free Improvisation

This presentation will focus on my work as director of Wilfrid Laurier University's Improvisation Concerts Ensemble and my ongoing research into improvisation pedagogy and therapy. I will present and discuss the results of my recent study of improvisation pedagogy at the post-secondary level, in which I conducted a series of interviews with noted teachers of improvisation (Pauline Oliveros, Ed Sarath, Casey Sokol, etc.) and their students. This study focuses on the many ways (musical, psychological, social, etc.) in which free improvisation study at the postsecondary level can benefit students as well as examining the different teaching methods used. Lastly, I will discuss my ongoing dissertation research which focuses on how free improvisation practice can alleviate different anxieties in musicians, such as performance anxiety and social anxiety disorder. Recent work in the fields of music therapy and drama has shown that the practice of improvisation can help decrease feelings of unease and reduce anxiety. They have also shown that free improvisation in particular can

help musicians experience more enjoyment performing and creating music, helping to alleviate anxieties and emotional issues.

Kathryn Ladano is one of Canada's premiere bass clarinetists. She is a specialist of contemporary music and free improvisation and has performed as a soloist and chamber musician across Canada and abroad. Being heavily involved in both educational and creative work, Kathryn is currently the Artistic Director of NUMUS concerts, the co-Director of ICE (Improvisation Concerts Ensemble) and Improvisation Studio instructor at Wilfrid Laurier University, and the Music Director of Cold Mountain Internal Arts. Kathryn has been a guest speaker and performer at various conferences such as the 2013 Summit on Improvisation Pedagogy and Community Impact in Guelph, the 2014 McGill University Music Graduate Symposium, and the 2014 International Society for Improvised Music Conference in New York City. Kathryn is currently pursuing her PhD at York University under the supervision of Casey Sokol and her research interests include improvisation pedagogy and the use of free improvisation as therapy for musicians with various anxieties. www.kathrynladano.com

Travis Laplante: Wisdom, Love, and Vitality: The Aspects of the Great Improviser

The Taoist Sages have taught us about the 3 Elixir fields (Dantians) within the human body that respectively house one's Wisdom, Love, and Vitality. When these three centers are harmonized, the person lives in accordance with his/her true nature, and Heaven, Earth, and Man can work together with integrity.

I will speak about how this ancient wisdom translates to the improviser and how it opens doors to the infinite nature of improvisation. Personal cultivation of the 3 Elixir fields can assist in transcending internal obstacles that prevent access to musical potential, and ultimately to oneself. Among these internal obstacles are personal insecurity, lack of attention span, physical habits with the instrument, lack of connection with the other players, underdeveloped ears, weak physical stamina, judgment, attachment to musical comfort zones, and the desire to impress others.

I will speak about my personal journey as an improviser, as well as the practices to which I am devoted (musical and non-musical). Qigong, meditation, and work with Taoist alchemical medicine have contributed to the removal of my own internal obstacles, facilitating a deeper sense of integrity in my music, as well as life itself.

The human heart, in its mythical form, also holds an extremely important place in the world of improvised music. It is in the heart alone where mental walls and inhibitive habits can dissolve, taking down with them the limitations within the music. It is then that true spontaneity can come alive, and the musician can travel to places previously unimaginable in order to deliver music from the heart.

Travis Laplante is a saxophonist, composer, and qigong healer living in southern Vermont and Brooklyn, NY. Laplante leads Battle Trance, the acclaimed tenor saxophone quartet. He is also known for his solo

saxophone work and his long standing ensemble Little Women. Laplante has recently performed and/or recorded with Trevor Dunn, Ches Smith, Gerald Cleaver, Michael Formanek, Peter Evans, and Matt Mitchell, among others. As a Qigong student of master Robert Peng, Laplante has undergone traditional intensive training. His focus in recent years, under the tutelage of Laura Barnard Stelmok, has been on alchemy, Taoist medicine, and the cultivation of the heart. Laplante is passionate about the intersection of music and medicine. He and his wife are the founders of Sword Hands, a qigong and acupuncture healing practice based in Brooklyn, NY and Putney, VT.

David Lee, Moderator and Respondent to “Conflict, Creativity, Capacity : Pursuing Well-Being through Improvisation”

David Lee closes the panel, “Conflict, Creativity, Capacity: Pursuing Well-Being through Improvisation” with responses to the other panelist’s papers. Here, he reflects on the ambivalence of conflict in creative improvisatory practices. Drawing on examples from his scholarship into late 20th century Canadian improvisers, he discusses the ways conflict is often welcomed as a vital aspect of creativity. This discussion opens space for a dialogue with Colloquium participants on the benefits and limitations of broad understandings of conflict in relationship to improvisation and well-being.

David Lee is a PhD candidate in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph, writing his dissertation on the history of improvised music in Toronto. He has worked extensively as a double bassist and cellist in improvised music and jazz, as well as bringing musical improvisation to poetry and theatre settings. His books include *Stopping Time: Paul Bley and the Transformation of Jazz*, *The Battle of the Five Spot: Ornette Coleman and the New York Jazz Field*, and the recent novels *Commander Zero* and *The Midnight Games*.

Brian Lefresne: [AA(CM)²]: Masculinity, Memory, and the AACM, 1965-2015

As George Lewis notes in the opening of *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, the AACM plays a “crucial part of the history of world musical experimentalism”(x). For Lewis, the AACM’s influence extends beyond boundaries of genre, race, and geography and while doing so obfuscates and blurs aesthetic, political, and interpretive boundaries. From its founding in 1965 to the present day, the lifespan of the AACM bridges and crosses a number of critical frameworks and boundaries in praxis and academic discourse. These range from soul/post-soul, modern/post-modern, legible/illegible, and local/universal.

In my talk today I will explore how two critical approaches further the blurriness between critical boundaries, but also at the same time provide new pathways to consider the historical and cultural legacy of the AACM. In my opening, I explore how the idea of what I have labeled as “creative masculinity” positions the founding members of the AACM in direct opposition to commonly accepted narratives and pathways available to black males during the Civil Rights Era. In the second half, I deploy performance scholar Harvey Young’s idea of “critical memory.” For Young, critical memory “invites consideration of past practices that have affected the lives and shaped the experiences of

black folk" (*Embodying Black Experience* 19). The idea of "critical memory" allows for a deeper consideration of the musical practices and influences within the AACM. In closing, I argue that these two ideas, "creative masculinity" and "critical memory," position the members and ensembles of the AACM as vital and important contributors to the health and well-being of their community.

Brian Lefresne holds a B. Mus and an M.A. in Musicology from the University of Ottawa and is currently a Ph. D. student in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph where he is working on a dissertation exploring improvisation, performance, and theatricality in the life and works of Sun Ra in relation to African American culture and literature. Brian has presented papers at the Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium and meetings of the Canadian Association of American Studies, the Society for the Study of Southern Literature, and the American Studies Association. He has also published reviews in *Critical Studies in Improvisation* and was recently invited to write a response essay to book reviews published in *Critical Voices*.

Lauren Levesque: "Stirring People's Minds and Hearts": The Role(s) of Improvisation and Spirituality in Pursuits of Well-Being and Peace"

In this paper, Dr. Lauren Michelle Levesque discussed the works of Ursula King, a leading scholar in the field of spirituality. King argues for the role of spiritual resources in pursuing what she calls the 'flourishing' of humanity and the planet (2009, 2010). Such flourishing is built around pneumatophores or inspiring ideas that fire people's hearts and minds in the direction of constructive social change. King suggests that these ideas emerge from dialogue and collaboration between scholars, activists, artists, and spiritual adherents. Dr. Levesque considers whether understandings of creativity can act as pneumatophores to spur dialogue and collaboration between improvisers and scholars in spirituality on issues of conflict and well-being.

Lauren Michelle Levesque, Ph.D., is a former postdoctoral fellow with the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project at the University of Guelph. She currently holds a sessional lecturer position in the Faculty of Theology at Saint Paul University in Ottawa. Her research addresses the role of the arts, in particular music, as methodological frameworks for re-envisioning spirituality as a locus of nonviolent social change. Other research interests include the intersections between creative practice, arts literacy, and the building of cultures of peace.

Gabriel Levine: Message to our Folks: Tradition, Improvisation, and the AACM's "Mobility of Practice"

The word "tradition" is often used in conservative fashion to indicate a relatively static set of beliefs and practices, a bounded cultural "thing" handed down from generation to generation within a social group. As many scholars have argued, "tradition" is also a colonial concept: it has allowed European "moderns," who believe that they have freed themselves from the shackles of past customs, to differentiate themselves from supposedly unfree others, including land-based, Indigenous and

colonized peoples (Eisenstadt, Povinelli). These conservative and colonial imaginaries ignore the radical improvisatory qualities of “traditional” or vernacular practices – the way they experiment with materials at hand, shift and change over time, and transform themselves to adapt to new contexts. Moreover, they are blind to self-conscious experiments with tradition, the improvisational engagement with materials of the collective past, which continues to be a powerful artistic strategy in diverse contexts.

This paper will present a philosophical reading of the ties between tradition and improvisation, drawing on work linked with the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. The music and art that has emerged out of the AACM, from the Art Ensemble of Chicago’s “great black music” to young artists such as Matana Roberts, is notable not only for its musical innovations and creative performance experiments. It is also marked by an ongoing improvisation with Afrodiasporic and other vernaculars – a “boxing with tradition,” in George Lewis’s words. In the work of these and other artists, tradition is revealed as flexible, recursive, and improvisational, characterized by a “mobility of practice” (Lewis). This work’s emphasis on mobility, invention and vernacular omnivorousness keeps it from succumbing to fantasies of recovering the collective past – a “premodern” Africa, for example – “as it really was.” Instead, its spontaneous and playful strategies reveal tradition in motion, as Paul Gilroy (drawing from Amiri Baraka) describes it, as “the living memory of the changing same.”

Work emerging from the AACM, including Matana Roberts’ recent *Coin Coin* projects, also shows how improvising with forms and practices of the past can be a kind of healing. Improvised music-making is often linked with spiritual and social well-being, and this is all the more true for music that reverberates through a history of cultural suppression, deracination, enslavement, and structural racism. Here, improvising with tradition can become a dialogue with ancestors across profound gulfs of discontinuity. When faced with the hurt of history – what Cedric Robinson calls “the nastiness” – traditions of improvisation, and improvisations with tradition, send messages between unredeemed pasts and uneasy presents. This paper explores a few of those “messages to [and from] our folks,” arguing for their enduring healing power.

Gabriel Levine is a writer, researcher, musician, and performing artist working between Toronto and Montreal. His work – both artistic and scholarly – is concerned with “experiments with tradition,” the reinvention of performance forms and practices handed down from the past. He is currently a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Theatre at Concordia University, and in 2015-2016 he will be a visiting Postdoctoral Fellow at the Jackman Humanities Institute at the University of Toronto. He holds a PhD in Social and Political Thought from York University (2014), with a thesis entitled “Radical Vernaculars: Experiments with Tradition between Politics and Performance.” He maintains an active musical and performance practice, having released numerous recordings with various groups (Sackville, Black Ox Orkestar) and under his own name. He also holds the position of philosopher-at-large at the Museum of Everyday Life, in Glover, Vermont.

Josslyn Lockett: Koto Strings and Peyote Chants that Swing: Toward a Wider *Rebellion* in Jazz Documentary

June Kuramoto, a Koto player born in Saitama-ken, Japan and raised in the Crenshaw district of South Central L.A. and Jim Pepper, the free jazz saxophonist son of a Creek Indian mother and Kaw father from Oklahoma did not make the cut for Ken Burns's ten episode series *Jazz*. To listen to and perhaps more importantly to watch performances of musicians such as these two improvise with other Asian American, Chicano, African American and white avant-garde musicians gives us an entirely different portrait of the music Burns and Wynton Marsalis claim, "objectifies America." This paper will be a kind of call and response between two films, the documentary short by Duane Kubo, *Cruisin' J-Town*, about the formation of the jazz fusion band Hiroshima at the height of the Asian American Movement, and the feature length biographical documentary by Sandy Osawa, *Pepper's Pow Wow*, about the late saxophonist, Jim Pepper who also bridged musical worlds, in his case sacred Peyote chants with jazz improvisation. Asian American and Native American filmmakers, Kubo and Osawa were training at UCLA's Film School alongside the African and African American filmmakers popularly referred to as the "L.A. Rebellion," whose members include such groundbreaking independent filmmakers as Haile Gerima, Julie Dash, Charles Burnett and Zeinabu Irene Davis. While these black filmmakers and their works are finally beginning to receive important scholarly attention, their fellow student filmmakers of color have rarely been included in this literature. By engaging the work of Nichole Rustin and Sherrie Tucker (*Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*), Thomas Cohen (*Playing to the Camera: Musicians and Musical Performance in Documentary Cinema*) and Cynthia Young (*Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left*) I will argue that these films, particularly the performance footage within, help us train both our ears and eyes to listen for and witness the importance of the multiracial dimensions of and creative contributions to improvised music and independent cinemas of the U.S. Third World Left.

A former story editor and staff writer for *The Steve Harvey Show*, **Josslyn Lockett** wrote the original teleplay for the MTV movie, *Love Song*, starring Monica Arnold and Christian Kane and directed by Julie Dash. Her plays, "Rupture/Runnin' Thru Risk/Runnin' To Bliss" and "Chronicles of a Comic Mulatta: an oreo/choreopoem" have been performed at the Walnut Street Theatre, The Public Theater, and Aaron Davis Hall. Her solo piece, "Imitation Expert" was developed in Roger Guenveur Smith's 2005 Mark Taper Forum workshop and performed at REDCAT in 2007. Her most recent play, "Like Her Shanti Doesn't Stink: Black Women Eye to Iyengar" was commissioned by Company of Angels as part of their 2009 *Black Women: State of the Union*. In 2008/2009 she curated a six concert series at Culver City's Jazz Bakery called, "Come Sunday: Jazz on the Sacred Side" featuring such artists as Dwight Trible, Lesa Terry, Justo Almario and Roberto Miranda. She has a BA from UC Berkeley in Ethnic Studies, an MFA from NYU in Dramatic Writing, and an MDiv from Harvard Divinity School, where in 2011 she won the historic Billings Preaching Prize. A recent participant in the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (JWTC 2014), Josslyn is currently completing her PhD in Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where her research areas include jazz studies and independent cinemas of the U.S. Third World Left and the African Diaspora.

Charity Marsh: “Ignite the Future/ Joined by the Past”: Global Youth Empowerment through Hip Hop Improvisations

Youth around the world are turning to the arts practices associated with hip hop culture as a way to express and respond to their current lived experiences (Marsh 2011). In my research I have argued that hip hop culture enables a re-working of contemporary Indigenous identity and that from this reworking Indigenous youth “mediate representations of themselves and their current lived experiences through mobile technologies and local networks, challenging common stereotypes and reified identities that continue to circulate in political, cultural, and national discourses” (Marsh 2010). I have also made the claim that Indigenous youth in Canada, even from the most isolated communities, are becoming part of interconnected *global hip hop movements*, rather than as merely part of a *hip hop nation*, defined by Morgan & Bennett as “an international, transnational, multiracial, multiethnic, multilingual community made up of individuals with diverse class, gender, and sexual identities” (2011). In this conference presentation I will articulate how *global Indigenous hip hop movements* not only resist, but consciously challenge, “the erosion of public spaces and the rise of the surveillance state.” In so doing, I will argue that the interconnectedness of global movements, and specifically the improvisatory practices integral to the success of local hip hop community projects, can and often do empower participants, resulting in both a preservation and increase of “social and cultural mobility.”

Dr Charity Marsh holds a Canada Research Chair in Interactive Media and Popular Music and is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Regina. Her research focuses on Indigenous Hip Hop Cultures, DJ Cultures, the performance and production of popular music in western and northern Canada, and on-line interactive media.

Kevin McNeilly: Edgy Listening: Evan Parker and Jean-Luc Nancy

“To be listening,” writes Jean-Luc Nancy, “is always to be on the edge of meaning, or in an edgy meaning of extremity, and as if the sound were precisely nothing else than this edge, this fringe, this margin.” Nancy describes auscultation, close listening, as a species of referral that “strains toward a present sense beyond sound” (*À l’écoute* 6-7). To make sense of edgy improvisations such as Evan Parker’s works for solo saxophone involves addressing the material particulars of his performance practice, its phenomenology. To attend carefully, concretely and acutely to a music that exceeds most techniques of musicological capture, that without obfuscation still deliberately and actively defies transcription, involves taking some initial steps toward evolving a critical discourse around intermediality: without referring to anything but their own means, these improvisations can be read as collations of resonances, as haptic reciprocities, of sounding between. “It’s very necessary,” Evan Parker says in a 2004 interview, to listen closely to what happens when you try to do things, because usually at the fringes of what you’re producing is something that you’re not really in control of - that there is a central thing that you are fully in control of, and then a kind of halo of suggested other possibilities which have to come with the central thing that you’re in control of, whether it’s a wisp of breath escaping from the side of the embouchure, or an overtone that you could push harder, or

some key noise which you can't escape. There's always something there, and if you're listening at the fringes of the sound as well as at the centre of the sound, then you can be led to other things and other possibilities.

It's worth taking him at his word. While he appears to mean he's led as a performer to other formal and musical "possibilities," the non-intentional virtuosity he describes here as intensive and leaky listening suggests a complex practice of audience combining mimetic fantasia – passive, rapt attention – with palpable co-creative engagement – the tactile corporeal responsiveness of listeners in the room with him, of their resonant bodies. The fringe or edge that both Nancy and Parker describe can be mapped as a kind of interface, a porosity at the limits of present-tense, improvised sound that imbricates us in shared layers of mutual feedback. The flurries of overtones and arpeggios and fingerings that any given Evan Parker solo present, which Nancy might call a "perceptible singularity," also produce the nascent terms of community itself, and offer not just a metaphor for but a concrete realization of remediation, of social emollient: a coming to terms with the possibility of radical, mutual care, of our co-creative well being.

Kevin McNeilly is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of British Columbia, where he teaches cultural studies and contemporary literatures. He has published scholarship on poetry and poetics, on media studies and on improvised music (including the work of Steve Lacy, John Zorn, Charles Mingus and others). His book of poems on early jazz trumpeters is *Embouchure* (Nightwood Editions, 2011). He blogs at Frank Styles: frankstyles.blogspot.ca. See kevinmcneilly.ca for audio, video, writings and more.

Rene Meshake: The Gift of the Red-Tailed Hawk Flute Presentation

I am an Indian Residential School Survivor, and I am proposing to deliver a musical workshop and/or performance piece which explores, explains, expresses and celebrates the traditional Ojibwe Pipigwewin (flute culture). My presentation will integrate improvised music, spoken word, a cappella, and the story of how the red-tailed hawk came in a vision at the beginning of my healing journey.

The Anishinaabe have a long tradition of flute playing. The music died when the Jesuit missionaries came to our Odenang (villages) many generations ago. Growing up in Northwestern Ontario, Canada, I had never seen or heard the pipigwan (flute) played. So it was not a conscious decision for me to start playing the red-tailed hawk flute; I was lead to it by the vision that I had.

I will describe my healing journey that began with a vision of a shadowy bird flying through a river fog. Then over 10 years later, 'accidentally' acquiring a red-tailed hawk flute at an Aboriginal Heritage Festival.

After I acquired my flute, I had no idea what to do with it! I didn't know how to play it; I didn't know what songs to play; or why I should even go to the effort of learning to play it. Again, a vision came to me that inspired me to improvise on the flute. I play intuitively, with what I can only describe as

'blood memory' or I play along with the chirps of the small birds and the insects around me. I have never had a flute training or lesson – I am letting nature be my teacher. The living environment is teaching me. It is here that I feel my Ancestors, the Spirits of Pipigwewiniwag (Ojibwe Flute Players) are playing with me!

Once I began playing the flute, I realized there was a whole flute language, and culture that I knew nothing about. I became aware that the flute is medicine. It follows the path of the four directions of the medicine wheel in which there is a physical, emotional, spiritual and relational benefit to those who play it, and to those who hear it. For me, the language of the flute has been cathartic. It has changed me internally as an individual. For my listeners it has the power to heal, inspire, elevate, and enlighten. I will share these healing, inter-related aspects of the pipigwan flute in my presentation.

The Ojibwe word for flute is pipigwan, and it's an ancient word – so the language tells us that historically, and culturally the playing of this instrument is a core part of our identity as Anishinaabe nation. The word itself paints a visual picture of the origins of the flute.

The flute has changed my world view, and also my identity as an Anishinaabe male. The flute has the power to heal our men, and to heal First Nations communities. It is my vision to restore the well-being of my Anishinaabe nation by reviving the flute playing tradition.

By using a cappella, and improvised music, this is the experiential story I wish to share and describe in detail at this year's Jazz Festival Colloquium.

Rene Andre Meshake is an Ojibwe elder, visual and performing artist, award-winning author, storyteller, flute player, new media artist and a Recipient of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal. By seamlessly fusing Ojibwe and English words into his stories, poetry and spoken word performances, Rene communicates his Ojibwe spiritual heritage to the contemporary world. He was born in the railway town of Nakina in Northwestern Ontario and was raised by his Okomissan grandmother. His education includes: Anishinaabe oral tradition, language, arts and culture. Rene has a diploma in Graphic Design from Sheridan College and a certificate in Creative Writing from the Humber School for Writers. Rene's body of artwork, stories and his flute improvisations create a strong, expressive, and entertaining presentation for an ever-increasing audience.

Matthew Neil: Jazz is Dead: Popular (Mis)conceptions of the Health of the Genre

Jazz is rightfully appreciated by scholars and musicians for its ability to facilitate individual and community well-being through expressive acts of improvisation. In the popular imagination, however, jazz is often viewed as a music which thrived in the past but struggles to survive in the 21st century. Jazz is seen as existing either as culturally detached in the institutional walls of the conservatory, as exemplified in the Academy Award nominated film *Whiplash*, or as cannon fodder for nostalgic throwbacks, best evidenced in YouTube-cum-internationally touring pop cover band Postmodern Jukebox. This paper examines discourses on the supposed ill-health of jazz as a genre. These discourses often not only proclaim jazz to be dead, but delight in the music's irrelevance. For example,

in 2014 *The New Yorker* published a “satirical” profile of Sonny Rollins, in which the fake Rollins professed that he hates jazz and that he had wasted his life playing the saxophone. In the jazz community and social mediasphere, these proclamations maligning jazz, particularly its conservative bent, have become increasingly frequent in the last half-decade. In late 2011, Nicholas Payton sought to abandon the word “jazz” in part because he believed the term itself connoted a dead music killed by a racist music industry – a sentiment shared previously by Duke Ellington, Max Roach, and many others. More recently, Vijay Iyer has taken umbrage with satires such as the twitter account “Jazz is the Worst,” which posts mocking quips on jazz’s cultural irrelevance and lack of audience. In “jazzbro” culture, as termed by Nate Chinen, it has become cool to hate jazz. This phenomena crossed over to the mainstream with the emergence of BADBADNOTGOOD, a trio of white Canadian jazz school drop-outs, who have built their image as “jazz rebels” by denouncing their educational institution at Humber College in Toronto as well as the need to study “the tradition” of jazz greats such as John Coltrane and Charlie Parker. Though the group was swiftly rejected by jazz critics, they found wide popularity with mainstream and indie music publications and audiences. For non-jazz listeners, BADBADNOTGOOD represent a group that through their incorporation of stylistic elements from hip-hop, EDM, and punk, injects life into a genre that has been dying for decades. By examining these instances decrying jazz’s well-being, I seek to uncover the ways jazz is commonly (dis)regarded in the 21st-century. Doing so will allow better understanding of the conditions and misconceptions we as scholars and musicians face when we espouse jazz and improvisation as beneficial practices that promote well-being. It will also lend these efforts an increased urgency, not in any misguided attempt to salvage “the tradition,” but to promote the rich history and continuing transformative potential of improvisatory practices.

Matthew Neil is a doctoral student in the ethnomusicology program at the University of California-Riverside. He graduated with a bachelor of music degree in jazz composition from Temple University in Philadelphia, where he was also an active performer on electric bass in the city’s jazz scene. His dissertation research focuses on U.S. jazz in the 21st century, with a particular emphasis on the university institutionalization of jazz.

Rii Numata: The Otoasobi Project: Musical Improvisation to Create New Values for People with and without Disabilities

This paper considers the roles of musical improvisation in communities for people with various values and different levels of musical techniques by examining dialogues taken place in the workshops of The Otoasobi Project, Japan.

The Otoasobi Project is a group of musicians, music therapists, individuals with learning disabilities and their families who started music-making workshops in 2005 at Kobe University in order to explore new musical expressions. Since then these new musical expressions, which are created through our regular workshops, have been performed as free improvisation, balloon baseball, sumo match, graphic notation, rap music, and original-language songs at more than 30 concerts. To decide the direction of the musical performance we have discussed seriously on what “music” is or what

“disability” is, at the beginning of this project. “Who considers this to be music?” or “what kind of experience is that for non-handicapped musicians to play with people with disabilities?” are questions asked by professional musicians to all members. To answer these issues, various views and ideas are given including “eating ra-men (Japanese noodles) can be also music.”, “to know each other, it would be good to have tea time after workshop”. Through these discussions, we experienced that examining new musical styles is linked also to examining new relationship to be more inclusive. Moreover, after the members got to be familiarized in each other’s styles of expression, more radical expression was accepted to keep their performances lively and interesting. The meaning of improvisation in this group can be thought to include an attitude to be acceptable when some new happenings based on a value that hasn’t exist emerged.

In this presentation, I will discuss these issues by showing the excerpts from the documentary film by a young film director released in 2010.

Rii Numata, PhD is a lecturer at Kawasaki University of Medical Welfare as well as a research fellow at the Graduate School of Human Development and Environment, Kobe University. In addition, she is a JMTA Board-Certified Music Therapist and leads the improvisational music project The Otoasobi Project for people with learning disabilities and various musicians and artists. Her current research is on the music styles of musical activities for social inclusion. She has forthcoming article in Music and Arts in Action.

Laurel Ralston: Rehearsing the Unknown

Early in 2013, National Public Radio (NPR) interviewed saxophonist and composer Wayne Shorter – of whom the New York Times has written that he is jazz’s greatest living composer – on the occasion of the release of his album, *Without a Net*. The interviewer, Laura Sullivan, alludes to differences between classical performance structure suited to a piece on the album (*Pegasus*) performed by a wind ensemble, and jazz improvisation, and asks if Shorter works differently with musicians given the differences in structure.

Shorter responds that to him, “the word jazz means, I dare you. ... And this music, it’s dealing with the unexpected. No one really knows how to deal with the unexpected. How do you rehearse the unknown?”

For musicians, this question is a practical one, and performers develop strategies and ways to prepare to improvise – technical solutions like ingraining go-to note sequences or phrases, musical solutions like listening to and learning other soloists’ performances on the same tune, and so on.

But the question, how do you rehearse the unknown, resonates philosophically, too. Ensemble performance – and this is particularly evident in improvisatory musical genres – brings musicians in relation to each other and to the music they perform, through which they express and communicate

among themselves and with their audience. The structure of performance creates an obligation and responsibility to address what arises, even though that is unknown – to take up the dare.

Emmanuel Levinas, in his writing regarding the Other, hospitality, and ethics, takes up questions similar to Shorter's – considering the nature of relating and opening to strangers, the obligation and responsibility imposed by the face of the Other, the impossibility of preparing fully for the unforeseen, loss of freedom with regard to the Other. In *Is Ontology Fundamental?*, he writes, "We ask ourselves all the same if the impersonal but fascinating and magical march of rhythm does not, in art, substitute itself for sociality, for the face, for speech."

Rehearsing the Unknown relates Shorter's and Levinas's questions and observations to one another, examining how ethical relationships are cultivated – rehearsed – in musical improvisation. It asks how such practice might contribute to resilience in individuals and communities facing cultural or social challenges – building capacity to perceive, understand, and interpret these challenges and respond with compassion, ingenuity, and strength.

Laurel Ralston is a freelance writer, musician, yoga instructor, and independent scholar based in Ottawa ON. As a philosopher and classically trained trumpeter, flautist, and pianist who has branched unexpectedly (and at times terrifiedly) into jazz, she is particularly interested in exploring philosophical frameworks that deepen our understanding of experiences of identity and relationship in musical creation and interpretation. She is a member of The Jazz Council, the Symphony of the Kootenays, the Kootenay Brass Quintet, and has toured regionally as a chamber musician. She holds an MA in Philosophy from the University of Alberta and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Ottawa, and has completed a 200-hour RYT yoga teacher training at Upward Dog Yoga Centre in Ottawa.

Sara Ramshaw: Just Listening: Improvisation for the Health and Well-Being of Law

Can improvisation improve the health and well-being of the Western legal system?

Building on research presented (with Paul Stapleton) at the 2014 Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium on our UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded project, 'Into the Key of Law: Transposing Musical Improvisation. The Case of Child Protection in Northern Ireland', this presentation further considers whether, and if so how, the risk-taking, collaboration, responsiveness and "deep" or attentive listening, which improvising musicians must embrace in their performances, may also be of use to lawyers, legal academics and judges interested in the well-being and health of the Common Law. Focusing on decision-making processes in Northern Irish child protection cases through interviews with judges, barristers and solicitors, social workers and others, our research explores the possibilities for successful listening and negotiation amongst all those involved. This research project thereby engages with law *as* improvisation to explore the ethics of encounters with difference (Fischlin, Heble, and Lipsitz 2013: 71) and the possibility of an attentive listening to the otherness that is at the heart of justice. Just listening, or the justice that emerges from ethical or

attentive listening, is extremely important to this project. As Fischlin, Heble and Lipsitz (2013) note, “The ability to listen deeply, critically, attentively, creatively, curiously, and intensively to the others around you is a profoundly sensitive register of a broader set of commitments to social responsibility and cooperation” (196). Creativity, be it in law or music, requires risk, and it is the ability to bravely listen to what is often unheard, or what has yet to be heard, that allows improvising musicians (and judges/lawyers/etc.) the possibility to turn danger into imagination. Ethical listening is always already a listening-*with* others or otherness and thus a means to a better, healthier future for both law and society. Not entirely intuitive, it must be learned and honed. Improvised musical practices thus speak not only to the sonic arts, but to other realms as well, such as that of law and justice. While the Western legal system is slow to explicitly recognise the benefits of improvisation, our research finds that, if one listens attentively to what is actually being said about listening, its role in co-creating a more just and equitable future is indisputable. Giving barrister Baroness Helena Kennedy, QC and member of the UK House of Lords, the last word on the subject:

When I’m listening, I’m also very conscious of how the other person is speaking. I’m very alert to their manner, to their tone, to the possibility, particularly in court, to the possibility they may be selecting words which are perhaps covering *true* meaning. ... So, at every moment, I am making very careful and sensitive calculations and this is based on more than the person says coming out of their mouth. I’m hearing, but I’m also listening... (BBC Radio 4, *The Listeners*, 5 August 2014).

Dr Sara Ramshaw joined the University of Exeter, School of Law as a Senior Lecturer in September 2014, following several years at Queen’s University Belfast. After receiving her B.A. (Honours) (With Distinction) from the University of Toronto, Sara obtained both a LLB and a LLM from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. She then clerked at the Ontario Court of Justice (General Division) and was called to the Bar of the Law Society of Upper Canada in 2000. Sara worked as a Research Lawyer at the Superior Court of Justice, Family Court in Toronto, Ontario before commencing postgraduate studies at Birkbeck School of Law. Sara’s doctoral thesis, completed in 2007, examined the legal regulation of jazz musicians in New York City (1940-1967) through the lens of poststructural theory informed by feminism, critical race theory and critical improvisation studies. During the 2008-9 academic year, Sara was a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Improvisation, Community and Social Practice (ICASP) project in Montreal, Canada. Her monograph, *Justice as Improvisation: The Law of the Extempore* was published by Routledge in 2013. Sara is currently the principal investigator of a large UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded project, entitled “Into the Key of Law: Transposing Musical Improvisation. The Case of Child Protection in Northern Ireland”.

Alex W. Rodriguez, Joe Sorbara, and Rob Wallace: The Practice of Improvisation, the Freedom of Discipline: A Workshop and Roundtable Discussion on Practicing Musical Improvisation, Individual Health, and Community Well-being (Workshop / Roundtable Discussion)

In a Spanish television interview aired in 1991, Cecil Taylor stated that “In order to be a great improviser one must use the senses and to use them one must train them.” Audiences and young musicians alike are still often bewildered by the amount of skill required to produce various forms of

improvised music, and in some of the more utopian strains of critical improvisation studies, discussions of equality and freedom sometimes overshadow the actual histories of training and practice that groups like Taylor's, the AACM, and other collectives have historically engaged in. This workshop and roundtable is grounded in the notion that consistent musical practice (often called “woodshedding” by jazz musicians) can in fact further *enable* a sense of freedom and equality in a community of people who trust each another. This event uses the concept of *practice*--as a musical, spiritual, and even political category of *labor, preparation, meditation, and organization*--to discuss what it means to be able to improvise within a community (as musicians, listeners, and citizens). Some of the questions we will discuss include: how does practicing an instrument, or one's voice, lead to positive mental and physical transformation? How does the practice of rehearsing with an ensemble or carefully listening and studying a musical tradition contribute to the enhancement of mental, spiritual, community, and physical health? How can a teacher's careful guidance aid a student in self-awareness? Do musical mentorship and other forms of disciplined group negotiation lead to greater aesthetic pleasure and/or psychological health? In addition to opening up the discussion of these questions with the audience, we will also share several basic exercises/techniques from our own musical practices that can potentially aid audience members in developing a healthy and fulfilling experience in the practice room, the concert hall, and--à la Michel de Certeau--everyday life.

Alex W. Rodriguez is a writer, improviser, trombonist, and PhD student in ethnomusicology at UCLA. Ten years ago, Alex spent half of his undergraduate junior year based in Santiago, Chile, where he performed with jazz musicians in Chile, Argentina and Bolivia—a formative musical experience that continues to inspire his practice and research. He plans to return to South America for dissertation fieldwork in October. Alex studied trombone performance Amherst College, and completed a Master of Arts degree in Jazz History and Research at Rutgers University, where he wrote his thesis on early jazz trombonist Jack Teagarden and studied trombone with Conrad Herwig. Alex has written for Jazz.com, Oxford Bibliographies Online, and the *Encyclopedia of Latin Music*, *The Newark Star-Ledger*, *Hartford Advocate*, *LA Weekly*, and the *Village Voice*. During this time, he also worked as Digital Content Editor for Newark Public Radio (WBGO). Since moving to Los Angeles, Alex also served as Editor in Chief for the open access academic journal *Ethnomusicology Review*, and contributes occasional jazz coverage to NPR Music. His current research focuses on jazz clubs around the world and the creative improvised music communities that surround them—drawn from ethnographic case studies in California, Chile, and Russia. Meanwhile, he continues to study trombone, and has also performed in the Balinese gamelan while at UCLA. In 2013, Alex co-founded the Omni-Musicality Group (OMG), an intercultural improvisation ensemble, which he currently directs along with co-founder Steven Loza.

Joe Sorbara is a musician: a drummer and percussionist, an improviser and composer, a student and educator, a listener. He is currently enrolled as an MA candidate in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph, exploring his work as a musician by engaging with the worlds of literary and cultural theory, critical studies in improvisation, and pedagogy. In addition to his playing practice and studies he teaches about music-making through the School of Fine Arts and Music at the University of Guelph and the Regent Park School of Music in Toronto ; works with the Somewhere

There collective to present creative music concerts in adventurous local venues ; and maintains numerous collaborative relationships with musicians and artists based in Toronto and abroad.

Writer, musician, and teacher **Rob Wallace** holds a Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He is the author of *Improvisation and the Making of American Literary Modernism* (Bloomsbury) and co-editor (with Ajay Heble) of *People Get Ready: The Future of Jazz is Now!* (Duke). Since 2011 he has taught at Bowling Green State University in the International Studies Program, the Department of English, and the Department of Musicology, Composition, and Theory. His recordings can be found on the pfMentum and Ambiances Magnétiques record labels.

Brent Rowan: The Impact of a Jazz Improvisation Experience on an Amateur Adult Musician’s Mind, Body, and Spirit

Question; What is the impact of improvising in a jazz combo for an amateur adult musician?

Sub questions;

What is the effect of improvisation on the cognitive function of the participant?

What is the effect of improvisation on the physical health of the participant?

What is the effect of improvisation on the spirit of the participant?

Participation in improvised music situations can help humans interact on another level that taps into their mind body and spirit. Playing music stimulates cognition, the physical experience of playing music engages the body and improvising with a group produces emotions that are good for the soul.

My motivation is to gain insight into the participants experience with improvising so that I can receive feedback as to how to ensure positive experiences for future improvising sessions. Improvising in a jazz context feels good to me and I am hoping to share that feeling with others who have not had that musical opportunity in the past.

I heard a clinic by the great jazz saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi who said “there is no other activity you can do that gets more of your brain working than to improvise.” This fascination with keeping the mind active especially as we age is where my experience about the effects of improvising started. I believe that most jazz musicians have very active minds and it seems to me that those who combine this mind with healthy lifestyle choices seem to live a long, active and fulfilling life. I believe that by improvising with other people many things happen. We must learn how to listen which allows us to be more empathetic and overall better human beings. We also engage our mind which keeps the grey matter working and we are physically active with the act of playing an instrument and going to the musical group.

The participants are all members of the New Horizons Band Guelph program. NHBGuelph is an organization for amateur musicians that provides a fun and informative start to music for adults who have little or no musical experience, have been musically inactive for a period of time, or just love to play music. The jazz program is offered for members that want to learn about and play jazz improvisation styles and concepts.

Brent Rowan is a performer, director, composer and educator of music. A Guelph based saxophonist, who also plays flute, clarinet and other woodwind instruments, Brent performs in a wide variety of musical collaborations; including 2009 and 2015 Juno Nominated *Eccodek*, Big Bands, small jazz combos, classical chamber groups and creative music ensembles. Brent has performed and recorded all across Canada and the UK at music festivals in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and London England to name a few.

He has released two recordings of his own compositions; *"It's About Time"* in 2006 and *"IZ"* in 2012. Brent composes and arranges music for the Guelph Youth Jazz Ensemble as well as for his small improvisation groups.

Brent is the founding director of the Guelph Youth Jazz Ensemble and the New Horizons Band for Guelph. He is also the conductor of the Cambridge Concert band. In 2011 Brent became a *Nobel Instruments of Canada Jazz artist* performing regularly on their Baritone Saxophone.

Brent teaches woodwind and jazz improvisation techniques at his private music studio. He is also a clinician and adjudicator at music camps and festivals throughout southern Ontario, specializing in saxophone and improvisation concepts. In 2008 he received the inaugural Guelph Mercury *Forty under Forty* award for making a difference in his community.

He is a candidate for a Master in Community Music, Wilfrid Laurier University, holds a Bachelor of Music, Jazz Studies, from Humber College and a Bachelor of Mathematics from the University of Waterloo.

Kimber Sider: *Playing in Silence, Speaking through Resonance, Moving Meaning*

This paper is a follow up to my presentation at the 2014 Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium. My paper last year was an initial introduction to the project *Playing in Silence*, where musicians are invited to improvise with horses in an open and neutral space, in order to explore the possibilities of interspecies collaboration. This paper delves more deeply into the learning outcomes of this project and how engaging in interspecies performance, and providing a forum for collaboration across species lines, can expand human understandings of communication and how meaning is created through performance. By engaging in community with another animal (in this case a horse), notions of collaboration and difference are challenged, in that horses experience the world from a very different perspective from humans, and neither equine nor human perspectives are fixed. In order to truly

collaborate each individual must attempt to recognize and receive the offers made by the other, a notion that becomes significantly more difficult when there is (perceived) to be no shared language.

This paper delves into the specifics of individual sessions and explores how different human/equine pairs traverse the lines of connection and collaboration through engaging various spatial dynamics, body languages, and forms of resonance (both sonic and emotional). Each session has a tendency to lean towards one of these areas, making it the dominant mode of inquiry for the human to learn through, and by which to invite a connection. Lauren and Po explored the spatial dynamics of connection; David, Stueie and Shiva focused on the feel of resonance; and Dong-Won and Katrina played in movement and dance. How does each speak when words are not sufficient? And how does the other translate and experience the conversation? How do the layers of non-verbal communication influence each participant? And how does the emotional resonance and impact of the exchange change the individual, influencing their presence?

There are tones that draw in and tones that push away. There are vibrations that heal, such as the nicker of a mare, which can be mimicked by the resonance of a double bass, and others that irritate. There is touch that heals and touch that hurts. There are movements that soar, and others that shut down. All of these aspects speak. As David Abrams suggests, “the power of language remains, first and foremost, a way of singing oneself into contact with others” and that “these other beings [in the more-than-human animate world] do not speak with a human tongue; they do not speak in words. They may speak in song or rhythm, in the language of movements and gestures, or articulate themselves in shifting shadows” (11). So how do humans, new to the specific nuances of the languages of horses, hear their (predominantly) silent song? How does that song affect them, and how do they speak back in turn?

Works Cited

Abrams, David. *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2010. Print.

Kimber Sider is a PhD candidate in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph. Her doctoral research focuses on human/equine interspecies performance, exploring how this form of exchange has the potential to influence understandings of the complex ways meaning is constructed and communicated through the physical engagement of performance, challenging and advancing conventional human understandings of knowledge, agency, collaboration, and difference. Sider’s work employs practice-based methodologies to learn with/from horses through improvisational performance. Sider is also a filmmaker; most notable is her 2010 feature documentary *Chasing Canada*, which follows Sider’s 2008 horseback ride across Canada with her horse, Katrina.

Marcel Swiboda: Technological Tales of the Unexpected, Or What Happens When the Timelines of Musical Improvisation and Digital Culture Converge

Among the events organised to celebrate the city of Mons becoming Europe’s ‘Capital of Culture’, in 2015, is a series of workshops entitled ‘Les ateliers inattendu’, or ‘workshops of the unexpected’,

culminating in a 'festival of the unexpected', due to take place in the neighbouring Belgian city of Tournai, in August 2015. Both the workshops and the festival thus take the 'unexpected' as their focus — with the main emphasis being on musical improvisation. The primary goal of the workshops is the experimental use of digital technologies to enable prospective audiences of the festival to develop 'public listening criteria', whereby listeners without prior experiential or critical reference points will become able to meaningfully and actively engage with improvised music (<http://www.mons2015.eu/en/festival-unexpected-meetings> [15/03/15]).

The festival and workshops — co-directed by the jazz musician Bernard Lubat and the philosopher and social activist Bernard Stiegler — have been purposely conceived to make creative use of new technologies to make it possible for public festival-going audience members to become "students" in the practice and critique of improvised music' (ibid). Using a software programme adapted from non-linear digital film editing applications, called 'Timelines', developed for collaborative 'real-time' engagement with audiovisual objects by Stiegler and the Institute for Research and Innovation in Paris, the workshops aim to facilitate collaborative critical responses to improvised musical performances (<http://www.iri.centrepompidou.fr/outils/lignes-de-temps/> [15/03/15]). Underlying this endeavour is a set of urgent ethical and political concerns, analysed by Stiegler in his philosophical and critical works, regarding the contemporary uses of digital technologies in consumer societies as tools for 'attention capture'.

According to Stiegler, the use of digital technologies to capture attention on an industrial scale poses one of the gravest threats to the future existence of participatory democracy and is already responsible for generating what the philosopher-activist describes as mass-scale 'mal-ê tre', usually translated as 'malaise', but which in French carries the additional connotation of 'ill-being'. What Stiegler and Lubat hope to achieve by their 'unexpected' workshops and festival, is the bringing together of technology and improvisation to promote participatory and collective critical activity and agency in the public domain, as a means to creating an experimental 'economy of contribution' capable of mitigating the destructive effects of the dominant economy of consumption. In the process, the aim of their project is one of fusing improvisatory and technological practices to engender new forms of collective care, to counter the prevalent tendency within developed industrial societies towards generalised malaise.

This paper will use Stiegler and Lubat's 'unexpected' workshops and festival as case studies for exploring the potential of contemporary conjunctures between improvisatory musical and digital technological practices to help generate new modes of participatory critical engagement that function through public contributions to the production and dissemination of culture, in an age when many of our established cultural and educational institutions are ethically and critically ailing, as the 'public' increasingly becomes 'private'.

Marcel Swiboda teaches in Culture and Media Studies at the University of Leeds, UK. His main research interests reside at the intersections between technology, media, improvisation and sonic culture.

Kim Wide: Improvising to Change: Community Embedded Art and Improvisational Practice

Why is being improvisational in the commissioning and delivery of community based creative projects so vital? What happens when we give the audience, the community, the people, the choice? How can we shape artistic processes to encourage people to engage, be open and gain skills and well-being? What are the impacts of this method of approach?

Independent Curator Kim Wide will share the critical and artistic motivations behind the work of Take A Part (UK), using case studies from range of community projects to show that most often, improvised community based arts processes are worthwhile, challenging, risk-taking and evidence deep impacts. What methodologies are employed? What happened when things went 'wrong'? What makes improvisation 'right'? Using statistical analysis and anecdotal evidence, Kim will seek to investigate impacts of listening, being flexible, being resilient and being cohesive in approaches to community working. Impacts include – improvements to health, community cohesion, skills development, wealth, physical environment and access to greenspace. Take A Part is a long term process of working that has been case studied for its excellence nationally and continues to be seen as innovative, ground-breaking and sustainable.

Projects case studied include:

- Grow Efford (2008-present) – a long-term community based social enterprise started with a pilot project which has become a community run social enterprise, providing skills.
- Green Orchestra (2015) – a partnership project with the London Philharmonia to engage communities across the city in a vegetable orchestra, improvising and collaborating the London Philharmonia to create an orchestral live performance.
- Nowhereisland Radio (2012) – a city-wide 7 day live radio broadcast as part of the UK Cultural Olympiad touching on ideas around belonging, heritage and citizenship.

Take A Part CIC (www.affordtakeapart.org.uk) is a socially engaged multi-disciplinary arts organisation dedicated to working in a co-commissioning process to engage communities it works with to create art work. From radio stations to jam making, community allotments to mobile milk floats, vegetable orchestras to legacy sculpture, Take A Part aims to make art where the process of engagement is more important than the art works themselves. This ground-breaking, grass-roots and highly improvised approach has been case studied as a project of national significance by Arts Council England - <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/funded-projects/case-studies/take-part/> Our work is change-making. See our Organisational background for details on data that document some of the impacts of our approach and projects.

We believe – and evidence attests – that improvisation works. In fact, it is the way forward. It allows for dialogue, for gentle (and sometimes jarring) explorations. It allows voices to ebb and flow. It allows people to take part and feel they have a strong role to play in their neighbourhoods

and communities. It even develops strategies and opportunities to explore new ideas, think in new ways, create lasting partnerships and ultimately to change make.

Take A Part works in the City of Plymouth in the South West region of the UK to engage areas of high socio-economic deprivation to explore artistic engagement as a tool to improve communities and their well-being. Take A Part works in partnership with local community groups and trusts and with Plymouth City Council services to create opportunities for creative consultation, so communities are more open to discussing and planning their future as a collective. We never really know if, or how, a project will take shape, because we rely on improvisation with local residents and the careful co-creation of work with the artists to evolve.

Our work, although improvisational, is also highly strategic. We have been able to develop several Neighbourhood Plans in the city via this work and the creative consultation derived from it as well as improve the well-being of these areas via skills development, setting up new organisations and social enterprises along the way. We not only commission work that engages, we are dedicated to ensuring that work has legacy in the communities.

In 2006, when Take A Part started in the Efford area of Plymouth, the area was 5th most deprived in the City of Plymouth. Due to projects and partnership working, it is currently 12th most deprived (according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2012). Residents who have supported our work have gone on to gain direct employment, to go to further and higher education, to take on new career paths and to create their own community groups. Neighbourhoods we work in have been able to apply for their own funding and learn skills to manage their own projects, ensuring the process is carried forward beyond us and is always community led.

Kim Wide is a curator and producer, based in the South West region of the UK. Interested in communications, engagement, access to arts and culture and impacts of social practice, Kim has worked both nationally and internationally to engage communities and the public directly in sustainable, engaging, educational, risk-taking and fantastic projects about people's lives and communities.

Educated in Canada, Kim came to the UK in 2003 and has worked here for ArtSway, Kaleido Arts and currently at Take A Part, where she has established an innovative co-commissioning public realm curatorial process developed and managed by communities themselves. Kim has developed the project from a pilot to a city wide company, supporting the strategic regeneration of the City of Plymouth. Take A Part and the process was recently case studied by Arts Council England as a project of excellence on a national level -

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/funded-projects/case-studies/take-part/>

Previous to this in Canada, Kim worked for the Government of Ontario Art Collection, The City of Toronto Arts and Culture Department and The Museum of Health Care, Kingston.

