



Improvisation,
Community,
and Social Practice

ImprovNotes

Project regroup following Ajay Heble's heart attack

Ellen Waterman of the University of Guelph will serve as acting project director of Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice as a result of **Ajay Heble** suffering a heart attack on Monday, May 26. Dr. Heble was stricken during a return flight from Paris where he and research collaborator **Winfried Siemerling** were representing the project at the "Voice and Vision: Situating Canadian Culture Globally" conference (*see next page*).

As of May 28, he was in stable condition and plans were being finalized to transport him to either Toronto or Guelph for further treatment, from Goose Bay, Labrador. The airplane made an emergency landing in Goose Bay, where he was transferred to hospital. While in the air, he was attended to by physicians and nurses who were on his flight.

Both the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice executive and management meetings planned for June 1-3 will go ahead as planned, as will the Guelph Jazz Festival in September. Dr. Heble is the artistic director of the Festival; he had recently completed booking the acts but the announcement of the program has been delayed in light of the heart attack.

Updates will be posted on the project's website:

www.improvcommunity.ca

Cards and messages of support can be sent to the project's office, to the attention of Michelle McMillan, project manager, at:
Room 042 MacKinnon Building
University of Guelph
Guelph, ON
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UPCOMING

See www.improvcommunity.ca for details.

June 21-22, 2008
McGill-Suoni Per Il Popolo
Improvisation Colloquium
Text, Media and Improvisation

Aug. 25-Sept. 7, 2008
Summer Institute for Critical
Studies in Improvisation
Envisioning Improvisation as
Social Practice

Sept. 3-5, 2008
2008 Guelph Jazz Festival
Colloquium
Diaspora, Dispersal,
Improvisation, and Imagination

Concert celebrates AACM book launch

George Lewis launched his history of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians – *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and Experimental Music* – with a panel discussion and concert in New York City on May 9.

AACM members Iqua Colson, Douglas R. Ewart, Reggie Nicholson, Amina Claudine Myers, Matana Roberts, Wadada Leo Smith, and Henry Treadgill joined Lewis on the panel. The moderator was critic and journalist Greg Tate.

Lewis, on trombone and electronics, and Smith, on trumpet, then took the stage with Muhal Richard Abrams on piano for the concert.

Lewis is Improvisation and Pedagogy coordinator and co-investigator with the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project. He is also Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music, Columbia University and director of the Center for Jazz Studies, Columbia University.

Book orders:

www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/236682.cml

Related articles:

www.nytimes.com/2008/05/02/arts/music/02aacm.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

www.timeout.com/newyork/articles/music/29299/collective-conscious

Project profiled at international conference

The Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice received international exposure as **Ajay Heble** and **Winfried**

Siemerling presented “Voicing the Unforeseeable: Improvisation, Social Practice, Collaborative Research” at the “Voice and Vision: Situating Canadian Culture Globally” conference, which took place at the Université Paris III/Sorbonne Nouvelle from May 22-24.

Dr. Heble, project director, and Dr. Siemerling, research collaborator, addressed some core issues arising from the project, such as the role that improvisation and jazz has often played in such intersemiotic practices as the use of musical patterns in different modes of writing. They also considered some of the methodological challenges faced in this extended collaborative project. They presented some examples of the unforeseen challenges the project has received thus far, and speculated about the opportunities, but also the risks, involved in this collaborative project.

Text, Media and Improvisation theme of Montreal colloquium

Noted scholars and musicians **Georgina Born** and **Roscoe Mitchell** are the keynote speakers at the McGill-Suoni per il Popolo Improvisation Colloquium to be held June 21-22 in Montreal. The theme of the colloquium is “Text, Media and Improvisation”.

Georgina Born will speak on “On the Publicisation and Privatisation of Music”. A professor of sociology, anthropology and music, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Cambridge, she is also Improvisation and Social Aesthetics coordinator and a co-

investigator with the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project.

Roscoe Mitchell’s topic is “Composition/Improvisation”. He is a composer, jazz instrumentalist, and educator.

Session topics include: Multimedia; Pedagogy; Philosophy and/of Improvisation; Media, Performance; Transcription, Traces; Global Scenes; and, Jazz. Several of the presenters are associated with the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project, of which McGill University and Suoni per il Popolo are partners.

For a complete schedule and further information, see: <http://www.improvcommunity.ca/research/tools/colloquia/montreal>

Summer Institute launches in August

Robert O’Mealley and **Deborah Wong** will lead the inaugural Summer Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation, to be held Aug. 25 to Sept. 7, 2008, at the University of Guelph. Under the theme “Envisioning Improvisation as Social Practice”, O’Mealley will lead sessions on Social Aesthetics and Wong’s focus will be on Transcultural Understanding, to consider the possibility of improvised artistic practices to inform community-building models and to shape public debate and policy decisions regarding the role of the arts in society.

The biennial Summer Institute, presented by the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project, provides an unparalleled opportunity for

graduate and post-graduate students from various disciplines to come together and, over the course of two weeks, attend lectures and explore their research interests with top scholars in the field of Improvisation Studies. It is intended for students and scholars who have an interest in musical improvisation and its potential for dynamic forms of community building.

For further information, see: www.improvcommunity.ca/summerinstitute

New Guelph community partner joins project

KidsAbility Guelph, a Centre for Child Development that aims to help children and young adults with developmental, physical and communication disabilities, is the newest community partner of the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project. It replaces the now-defunct Change Now, a Guelph outreach program for street youth, as an outreach agency on the project.

The first joint activity will take place in August and September, when musicians **Rich Marsella** and **Matana Roberts** and a group of 10 to 16-year-olds from the Centre will engage in a series of musical improvisation workshops (for more details see “Funding targets community-based youth music programs” below).

The project is also in negotiations to establish partnerships with two other community groups in Guelph and two in Vancouver.

Funding targets community-based youth music programs

Head and Hands and KidsAbility, both community partners of the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project, will benefit from an \$11,000 grant from the Artists and Community Collaboration program of the Canada Council for the Arts.

Youth from Head and Hands, a community centre in Montreal, and from KidsAbility, a Centre for Child Development in Guelph, will participate in hands-on workshops in improvised music. These will be led by Canadian musicians **Rich Marsella** (in Guelph) and the Kalmunity Vibe Collective (in Montreal) working with an international guest artist, saxophonist **Matana Roberts**. Ms. Roberts specializes in the presentation of personal narratives via structured improvisations.

The project’s community partner Société des Arts Libres et Actuels (SALA), a Montreal-based arts presenter, applied for the grant on behalf of the project and the Guelph Jazz Festival (GJF), another partner of the project.

Each youth group will have the opportunity to perform in concert with the resident musicians and guest artist to present their narratives.

This is truly a community-based project. SALA will coordinate the programming in Montreal through Head and Hands, a community centre whose mandate is to work with youth to facilitate their empowerment and to promote their physical and mental health. The workshops will culminate in

a performance at Popolo in the Park, part of the Suoni Per Il Popolo festival of avant-garde and experimental liberation music which is presented by SALA. The GJF’s Jazz in the Schools program will coordinate the programming in Guelph through KidsAbility, which caters to those with special needs due to developmental delays and/or physical disabilities.

Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice will conduct observational research during the workshops and concerts and will maintain archives of the events. The data will contribute to research on improvisational pedagogy and the relationship between improvisation and social justice.

National Jazz Awards recognize festival of the year

The TD Canada Trust Vancouver International Jazz Festival, produced by Coastal Jazz & Blues Society, received Jazz Festival of the Year honours at the National Jazz Awards in April. **Julie Smith**, the executive director of Coastal Jazz & Blues Society, is outreach coordinator and management team member of Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice, as well as a co-investigator on the project.

Nomination recognizes Guelph Jazz Festival’s contribution to music

The Guelph Jazz Festival is one of six arts organizations shortlisted for the 2008 Premier’s Awards for Excellence in the Arts, with the announcement coming just before the Festival announces its 15th season’s program. The GJF is a partner of the Improvisation,

Community, and Social Practice project; project director **Ajay Heble** is also artistic director of the festival.

Joint undertakings of the GJF and the project include Jazz in the Schools workshops and the Guelph Jazz Festival Colloquium.

The Festival is in distinguished company for the \$50,000 award, with Coach House Books, Hot Docs, Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People, Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, and Réseau Ontario also being nominated in the Arts Organization category. The awards will be presented in Toronto in mid-June.

“The nomination recognizes the Guelph Jazz Festival’s unique artistic vision to showcase new creative and improvised music, which continues in this, our 15th season,” said Dr. Heble, in his role as artistic director. “We will announce an exciting series of mainstage shows by the end of May and the full program in mid-June, when we’ll launch our redesigned website.”

Tickets for the September 3-7 festival go on sale on July 2.

For more information, see: www.guelphjazzfestival.com

World’s best artists at B.C. musical showcase

The TD Canada Trust Vancouver International Jazz Festival will welcome an extraordinary array of eclectic artists to the west coast, from June 20-29. The broadest range of mainstream, contemporary and adventurous improvisational forms is embraced as the Festival presents more than 400 shows (including 150 free concerts). Its artistic aesthetic, with its openness to a wide spectrum of music has not only drawn attention to the

Festival, it has nurtured and developed numerous musicians in the local and national scene.

“Over ten days our musical showcase will attract in excess of 500,000 people to experience and enjoy some of the world’s best performers,” says **Julie Smith**, executive director of Coastal Jazz and Blues Society. She is also Outreach Coordinator, Management Team member, and a co-investigator with the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project. “Yet size and scope notwithstanding, the Festival retains a remarkable grassroots, community spirit and vitality rarely experienced anywhere else.”

Over the past 22 years, the TD Canada Trust Vancouver International Jazz Festival has been recognized internationally as embracing adventurous, cutting-edge artists from Canada and around the world. The Innovation Series at the Roundhouse Performance Centre, June 20 to June 29, is a showcase and an axis for a number of enriching collaborations among musicians from different countries. This year the series will feature innovators such as Scandinavian band Atomic with Chicago’s School Days, Vancouver clarinetist François Houle with British saxophonist Evan Parker and French pianist Benoit Delbecq, Free Fall with Ken Vandermark, bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and pianist Havard Wikk, Ab Baars and Ig Henneman from Holland with Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and Paal Nilssen-Love from Norway, Michale Blake’s Amor de Cosmos, saxophonist Evan Parker, bassist Barry Guy and drummer Paul Lytton from the

UK with Spanish pianist Agusti Fernandez, Barry Guy New Orchestra, Japanese pianist Satoko Fujii with American violinist Carla Kihlstedt, the Peggy Lee Band and Wayne Horvitz Gravitas Quartet, Montreal vibist Jean Vanesse and Czech bassist Miroslav Vitous, Mark Feldman and Sylvie Courvoisier, Nicole Mitchell and Paul Plimley, and Corkestra led by Dutch pianist Cor Fuhler.

For more information, see: www.coastaljazz.ca

In Action

A monthly roundup of the activities of project participants, post-doctoral fellows, and students.

Tracy McMullen, post-doctoral fellow, is working on her book, currently titled, *Replay: Repetition and Identity Compulsion from ABBA to Zizek*, and continuing her research on the "improvisative" as an alternative to the repetition inherent in the performative.

Kevin McNeilly, Improvisation, Text and Media co-coordinator and co-investigator, has joined the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice management team as the site coordinator for the University of British Columbia.

Pauline Oliveros, research collaborator, completed her residency at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, with a concert of improvised music on May 18. It featured Jean-Marc Montera, an electric guitar player from Marseille, and Pascal Contet, an accordion player from Paris. They also performed together at Fondation Cartier in Paris on May 7. She and her Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute colleague Jonas Braasch have received a National Science Foundation Grant for \$200,000 to undertake research on a conducting avatar for telematic distributed network performances. The grant will support a post-doctorate position; Doug

Van Nort will run the project and contribute to the collaborative research.

Keith Sawyer, research collaborator, was a panellist at the "The Conversations Series: Improvisation, Innovation, Leadership" event organized by the Center for Jazz Studies and the Columbia Business School, Columbia University, on Apr. 18, 2008. In mid-May, he spoke at "Improvisation: Between Technique and Spontaneity", an international conference held in Padua, Italy.

Jesse Stewart, research collaborator, is teaching courses on the history of North American popular music this summer at both the University of Guelph and the University of Waterloo. He will also be playing with baritone saxophonist David Mott at Mezzetta Cafe in Toronto on May 28. On June 12, he will debut a new project for solo megabass waterphone at the EBar in Guelph on a double bill with Montreal indie band Torngat. Later in the summer, he is slated to appear at the Ottawa Blues Festival (yes – solo percussion at a blues festival!) and the Electric Eclectics festival in Meaford, Ont. He is also working on several recording projects.

Will Straw, Improvisation, Text and Media coordinator and co-investigator, was acting director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada during the 2007-2008 academic year. His major accomplishment for the Institute was organization of the conference "Are we American? Canadian culture in North America", in February, 2008. Invited keynote speakers included Gilberto Gil, the well-known Brazilian musician and current minister of Culture in the Brazilian government.

Publications over the past year include: "Squawkies and Talkies." *Parallax*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2008), pp. 20-30. "Screens and Extremes." In Pierre Tremblay and Louise Poissant, eds., *Prolifération des écrans/Proliferation of screens*. Montreal: Presses de l'université du Québec, 2008, pp. 405-410.

"Characterizing Rock Music Culture: The Case of Heavy Metal." (Reprint.) In Michael Ryan, ed., *Cultural Studies: An Anthology*. Boston: Blackwell, 2008.

"Documentary Realism and the Post-War Left." In Frank Krutnik, Steve Neale, Brian Neve and Peter Stanfield, editors.

Unamerican Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, pp. 130-141

Ellen Waterman, Guelph site coordinator, executive committee member, management team member, co-investigator, led a panel discussion at the Canadian New Music Network Forum 2008, held May 24-25th, in Toronto. The panel addressed "Exploring diversity: What is this thing called 'new music'? What is the scope of activities in the genre? What do we have in common?" She also represented the Guelph Jazz Festival as a member of its board of directors in the workshop "Selling to Festivals."

Newsletter launch

This is the launch issue of *ImprovNotes*, the monthly newsletter of the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project. We plan to carry a broad range of articles on the project, its participants and partners, and related topics.

Subsequent issues will be sent the last Friday of each month, beginning June 27. The deadline to submit items for inclusion is the third Friday of the month; email the editor, Jean Burrows, at jeanb@uoguelph.ca, or phone me at 519-824-4120 ext. 53958.

You've received this copy of *ImprovNotes* newsletter because you expressed interest in receiving information about the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice project. If you do not want to receive the newsletter, please reply with "unsubscribe" in the subject line.