

# The Improvisation Tool Kit

## Successful Musical Improvisation Workshops: A Guide for Teachers, Musicians, and Facilitators

Ellen Waterman and Rob Jackson

When a group of about 40 university researchers started the Improvisation, Community and Social Practice research project in 2007, one of the things that excited us most was the opportunity to work with our communities. Some of us had worked for years as jazz festival organizers, performers, music teachers, and workshop leaders in addition to working in universities. We wanted to explore our ideas about the educational and social benefits of musical improvisation in collaboration with artists, music festivals, and community groups. We felt that the best way to find out the benefits and challenges of using improvisational music in both classroom and community settings was to develop projects in partnership with a variety of different groups. Since then, we've brought jazz festivals together with community partners, schools, and master improvisers to create dynamic workshops and performances. With the invaluable aid of many student research assistants, we've carefully documented the projects through field observations, interviews, and audio/video recording. One outcome is The Improvisation Tool Kit at [www.improvcommunity.ca](http://www.improvcommunity.ca), of which this Guide is one part.

### What's in this Guide?

This is a guide to leading creative musical improvisation workshops. By improvisation we mean to reference the "free" playing that first emerged both in post-1960s jazz and in European experimental music. We're inspired by this kind of music making because of its focus on creative exploration and collaboration. However, we don't mean to privilege any particular style of improvisation. We're less concerned about musical aesthetics than we are about musical and social processes.

We've looked carefully at examples of how musical improvisation can provide a valuable creative and social experience for a wide variety of people: children with special needs, at-risk teens, high school and university students, and residents of an inner-city neighbourhood. Taking seriously the words of participants, parents and caregivers, community staff and volunteers, as well as improvising musicians, we've come up with a number of strategies for holding successful workshops. We share them with you here.

When you visit The Improvisation Tool Kit, you'll find additional resources, including a set of tool cards – specific improvisation activities that you can download, video examples of some of our projects, a resource list, and personal reflections in which participants describe their experiences facilitating improvisation workshops.

### Who are We?

The Improvisation Tool Kit was compiled by Ellen Waterman (a university music teacher, improvising musician and ensemble leader) and Rob Jackson (a student research assistant who participated in several of the projects). But the work that is represented in this Guide and on the website was accomplished by dozens of creative and inspiring participants. We owe all of them a huge debt (check out the "Credits" section) – but most particularly we want to thank everyone who participated in the workshops and the wonderful musicians who generously shared their expertise: Dean Bowman, Jane Bunnett, Larry Cramer,

Jean Derome, Lori Freedman, Doug Friesen, DD Jackson, Rich Marsella, Brad Muirhead, William Parker, Matana Roberts, Greg Tate, and Rob Wallace.

### Who is this Guide For?

This Guide is for anyone who is interested in using musical improvisation in a classroom or workshop setting, including musicians, teachers, therapists, and community workers. Our aim in this Guide is to present the results of our research in a clear and practical format. We hope to inspire you with our stories and give you some strategies for organizing and facilitating musical improvisation workshops.

### Why Musical Improvisation?

The funny thing about improvisation is that it's probably the most widespread and ancient form of music making on the planet but musicians and music educators are not offered much exposure to improvisation through their formal training – at least not in North America. That's a pity, because we've seen just how much improvisation can enrich and complement musical training! Curiously, many formally trained musicians are reluctant to improvise. This is understandable in a culture where musical training focuses so closely on particular genres, styles, and techniques that are closely tied to attaining high skills on an instrument and reading and interpreting musical scores. We value this deep training and the wonderful music that results! But it does tend to produce musicians who do not feel able to make music without the supporting apparatus of a composition and the instrument on which they are an expert. Improvisation, we argue, is a valuable complement to traditional musical training, and it can be beneficial at every stage of musical education.

Through improvising – coming out from behind the music stand – the musician is able to develop attentiveness, careful listening, and the ability to respond in the moment to musical stimuli. To improvise is to experience and develop one's own musical creativity. Confidence as an improviser (you could also call it the ability to rely on your own resources) is a great asset when the musician returns to the score as an interpreter or sets out to compose.

At the same time, improvisation is a remarkably flexible and adaptable way of making music. It does not depend on literacy or special equipment. Master improvisers certainly demonstrate a deep and complex knowledge of music, but they'll be the first people to tell you that anyone can begin to improvise. Anyone. That's because improvisation is a process of listening, attention, and responsiveness that is not tied to any one type of musical expression. (Just think of the musical differences among these types of improvisers: jazz musicians, DJ's, garage bands, classical South-Asian musicians, little kids in the playground, and church organists.)

That's not to say that love of a particular musical style isn't a powerful motivator! Jazz musician Brad Muirhead leads a devoted group of musicians in the Carnegie Jazz Band. Some are experts and some are beginners, but what they share in common is a love of jazz music and the experience of living in Vancouver's Downtown East Side, an inner city neighbourhood that is notoriously low on economic resources and where many residents live with particularly tough social problems. By creating an ensemble that is responsive to the needs of its members, Muirhead has created a safe and creative space where musicians can come together, share their knowledge, and just enjoy making music together. The trick is to focus on the process instead of the product, making empathy and community explicitly musical priorities.

Improvisation also has a social role to play in many community contexts. Here are some examples from our projects:

- In our workshops with young people at KidsAbility, a community organization that provides outpatient rehabilitation services and programs for children and teens with developmental disabilities and delays, physical disabilities, and communication difficulties, improvisation made it possible for young people who are not able to join their school band or choir to form an ensemble. They rehearsed, created songs, took turns leading the group, and performed for a large and appreciative audience at the Guelph Jazz Festival.
- In Montreal, saxophonist and band leader Matana Roberts worked with Head and Hands, a community group that promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of youth in the neighbourhood of Notre Dame de Grace, and the Suoni per il Popolo festival. In addition to sharing her musical knowledge, Roberts used writing, art, and dialogue to encourage self reflection and self respect – qualities she finds elemental to unlocking creativity.
- Rob Wallace held drumming workshops at Give Yourself Credit, a street-level high school class in Guelph that helps young people to complete their education when life has delivered hard knocks that make it difficult to attend a regular high school. Here, students and teachers reported increased social skills and enhanced self-confidence among participants.
- Rebecca Caines and Ellen Waterman also experienced the positive social aspects of improvisation when they organized a series of improvisation games at a teen drop-in centre at Onward Willow in Guelph. Combining theatre and music games, they helped university music students to facilitate workshops with the teens. The resulting exchange was educational (and fun!) on all sides, as participants traded leadership and supporting roles, and developed an open dialogue with one another.

There are certainly challenges to integrating improvisation into either a community setting or a regular music classroom. High school music teachers carry heavy workloads, are often in a position of defending diminishing resources, and are bound to deliver prescribed curricula. In spite of the challenges, there are some inspiring examples of teachers who manage to reach beyond these limitations. Doug Friesen, whose work is documented in the Improvisation Tool Kit, is one example of a high school music teacher who has found improvisation to be beneficial to his students, and who has worked to carve out space and resources to include it in his program. Similarly, the Guelph Jazz Festival partners with local high schools to run Jazz in the Schools, a program that brings major improvising artists into band classes. When the ICASP research project didn't have artists' funding to run workshops at Onward Willow, we found a way to dedicate university student resources to the project: students took an independent studies course for credit and in turn got a hands-on, community experience that is invaluable to their training. Because most of the students had previously participated in the CME, a university ensemble devoted to improvisation, they already had a good basis for developing their workshops. Improvisation is a way of making music, but those same skills of adaptability, resourcefulness, and collaboration come in very handy when trying to stretch limited arts and education dollars.

### **Strategies for Holding Successful Improvisation Workshops**

#### How did we come up with these particular strategies?

For most of the projects discussed here and on The Improvisation Tool Kit website we documented our initial planning meetings, recorded the workshops and performances, interviewed all kinds of participants, and wrote observation notes. We then combed through all this material looking for improvisation strategies that seemed to work well. After that, we arranged them into four broad categories: Organizational Strategies, Facilitation Strategies, Social Strategies, and Musical Strategies.

There are many ways to organize and run improvisation workshops; here we offer the results of our own experience. Remember, for a wide variety of specific activities to try out, you can check out the Improvisation Tool Kit website where you'll also find a handy Resource List.

## Organizational Strategies

### 1. Before workshops

- **Successful collaboration begins and continues with consultation** This may sound obvious, but we've found that planning meetings that bring together all stakeholders are crucial to creating workshops that are meaningful to the participants. We've often found that the suggestions of the high school band teacher, the festival organizer, or the volunteer coordinator at a youth centre are what really shape the project and get everyone committed. Consultation also builds trust – a crucial element to good improvisation.

When running workshops, it's important to continue to ask for—and listen to—feedback from the folks involved. When we worked with KidsAbility, we benefited from the insights of parents, volunteers, and therapists who helped ensure that we provided the right kinds of materials for the participants. It was very important to make sure that the workshop could meet each child's very different needs.

When we did our first workshops with teens at Montreal's Head and Hands and the Suoni per il Popolo music festival, we unfortunately scheduled workshops during the high school student exam period, making it tough for students to commit to every session. Like making music, collaboration is all about communication!

- **Develop clear goals for the workshop** Who does the workshop serve, and what are their needs and restrictions? What materials can you give the school or community centre in advance to help prepare participants? How does the workshop fit in with the organization's mandate? For example, if a band teacher is responsible for delivering a particular curriculum your workshop might support one element of it – like rhythm or modes. While working with children with special needs, we decided that our primary goals were to ensure the children were being included and having fun. When working with at-risk youth, issues of self-esteem and social cohesion became primary. If you are teaching improvisation in a high school or university class, then a variety of musical and social goals can be addressed over time. If you only have one or a few sessions with participants, then you need to focus your goals.

Some practical ideas that worked for us: sending visiting improvisers information about the participants and a "tip sheet" in order to give them a sense of what the organization expected; providing teachers with a lesson plan so they would feel comfortable and able to prepare the students for the workshop; providing the organization with the visiting improviser's bio and website; delivering a short satisfaction survey to participants in order to get feedback for 'next time'.

- **Leave plenty of time to deal with bureaucracy** There's nothing worse than planning an inspiring workshop, only to find out too late that you don't have the correct permissions to go ahead! Make sure that your planning includes time to get volunteer police checks, permissions (school boards, principals), ethics clearance (if research is part of your project this is a big one), and

permission to document (take photos, record). These things can take weeks, so you need to start early!

- **Pay attention to details and be as self-sufficient as possible** Do you need a large open room to work in? Will you want to play a CD, or record the group? Do you need equipment (from buckets for drumming to amplifiers and extension cords)? Recognize that participating organizations may have very limited resources and adapt to that reality.

Some of the improvising musicians who facilitated our workshops went out of their way to provide lots of instruments for people to work with. Providing non-traditional instruments like buckets, wind chimes, toy whistles, small electronic toys etc. can create a playful environment that invites everyone to participate.

## 2. During workshops

- **Introducing improvisation** We often found that improvisation was an unfamiliar idea when we went into schools and community settings. But no one wants to sit around and listen to a lengthy explanation of “what improvisation is” during a workshop. Better by far to get people involved through participation!

Our improvising artists had some great strategies for introducing both themselves and improvisation, and of course these depended on the audience. Playing for the group right off the bat was very effective in high school and university settings: less talk, more action drew students in and they were impressed by the visiting improviser’s skills. Another strategy is to get participants involved in some improvisation games. They break the ice and get people improvising before you explain “what it is”. Several high school teachers, however, reported that they really wanted their students to have a context for understanding improvisation. A logical progression for them would be to show a video documentary about jazz or free improvisation to students the week before an improvising artist arrives to work with students.

- **Large group or small groups?** Each of these configurations has different advantages. In a large group new improvisers can take their time and participate gradually; they are less likely to feel exposed. A small group allows participants to express themselves and explore ideas; letting 4 or 5 people work together over several sessions is a great way to build empathy and trust among the players.

In the University of Guelph’s improvisation-based Contemporary Music Ensemble, the term is structured so that students begin with large-group activities that are conducted by the ensemble leader. By the second or third class, they are put into smaller groups of players who will work together for the rest of the term. Rehearsals are divided between small group time and a large-scale project that involves everyone.

- **Process vs. product** If you only have a few workshops during which to accomplish your goals, it is important to establish and maintain a momentum. If a performance is involved, then it’s important for the facilitator to develop a clear plan for that event that is adaptable to the strengths and limitations of the participants. This plan should be kept in the background, however, so that the focus of each session remains on the process and on participants’ growth.

Some of our visiting improvisers adopted a strategy of making the first session quite loose and playful – trying out a number of different ideas with participants and allowing for a certain amount of chaos. Each subsequent session provided a balance between repetition and new activities. It is very important to pay close attention to the needs of different groups. A therapist at KidsAbility was concerned that a child with autism be given the highly repetitive and familiar environment she needed in order to feel comfortable enough to participate. Labelling the instruments with each child’s name meant that they all knew exactly what to pick up and play. The therapist provided the workshop facilitators with notes after each session, so that they would know how each child had responded.

In working intensively for a week with a mixed group of high school and university musicians, William Parker wrote jazz charts for the high school improvisers but challenged the university musicians to “play free”. He had a quite structured vision for how the performance – which combined all 40 musicians on stage – would unfold, but he didn’t share this with the musicians. The players were able to concentrate on developing their skills as improvisers during the sessions, and Parker quietly adapted and developed his plan in response to those sessions.

### Facilitation Strategies

- **Attitude** One of the most common comments from participants, teachers, and community organizers was the importance of the workshop facilitator’s non-judgmental attitude in the sessions. This was true across all our venues whether in school, university, or a community centre. Improvising requires musicians to be a bit vulnerable, to risk making musical decisions in the moment and then work with the results no matter what they are. Giving encouragement and positive reinforcement creates an atmosphere in which participants feel relaxed and willing to take risks.

One of the teens at Give Yourself Credit said about percussionist Rob Wallace: “I liked how he didn’t really care how we were thinking, how he just closed his eyes and played his music. It made it easier for the rest of us to play.” Another student shared that: “I thought it was really fun to be able to express how I feel and be able to play the music and not have anyone judge me.”

- **Demonstration** Inspiring improvisers teach by doing and know that students will feel secure in following them when they hear musical ideas demonstrated convincingly. Strategies for teaching by demonstration include using call and response, setting up musical “conversations” between players, and giving a loose structure to follow. For example, a leader might suggest that a player choose three sounds and make a solo out of only those sounds. Rather than describing in advance how this might work, simply play an improvisation on three sounds and then say “now it’s your turn”. Have several people try the exercise and afterwards discuss the various results and the challenges and rewards of playing with limited materials.
- **Responsiveness** Constructive feedback is important for growth and as a mark of respect. In the spirit of improvisational dialogue, it’s important that this feedback go both ways.

In one of the KidsAbility videos you can watch on the Improvisation Tool Kit website, we see Rich Marsella giving very clear, supportive but critical feedback to a child who conducted the group. There’s no sense that he’s talking down to the children—he’s meeting them where they’re at, and respecting their desire to learn. Matana Roberts encouraged frank responses from teens at

Head and Hands. When one of them admitted he was “a little bored” she thanked him for being honest and changed up the activity. When another teen insisted that he needed a steady beat for his rapping, she demonstrated through playing with him that she could both work with a beat and then stray from that steady pattern to freely improvise. She acknowledged the integrity of his statement, but showed him additional possibilities.

- **Simplicity** When working with new improvisers, offer activities that they can understand and get engaged with right away. Exercises may contain the elements of all good music making: rhythm, space, texture, line and form, but they will be most memorable and effective if they are well-constructed and relatively uncomplicated.
- **Adaptability** The ability to adapt to the demands of a particular situation may be the most important skill an improviser possesses. Improvisation involves constant and instant decision making based on careful listening and creative response. Modeling adaptability for students is an important way of teaching this skill.

High School students who worked with clarinetist Lori Freedman during the Guelph Jazz Festival’s Jazz in the Schools program praised her “open attitude” towards improvisation: “She was really open about it, because she’s like, “There are no rules. You can do whatever you want and you can break the rules—in fact it’s encouraged to break the rules, so everyone was like, “Well that’s pretty cool.”” Their teacher identified the same approach in terms of Freedman’s adaptability: “She didn’t really try to steer what was happening in certain directions, she really just went with the flow of the room and sort of adapted what she had planned on doing to what she was getting from the kids, which was good to see.”

Saxophonist and flutist Jane Bunnett described the experience of working with children with special needs this way: “If your field is music you’re use to approaching music in a very aggressive manner and speed. [With KidsAbility] we sort of slowed ourselves down and allowed something else to happen. We allowed the kids to take time to be able to impact the project. It’s really surprising how these kids connect in their processing and it’s just that they are processing differently and it is still happening for them and YOU as the workshop leader. You have to be making adjustments to find something that works. Because it is hitting them, and you have to figure out how to work with them.”

- **Leadership** Across all our projects, participants greatly enjoyed the opportunity to show leadership during the workshops. This may be experienced in small groups, with short solos or duos, or through demonstrating activities. For example, a participant could be invited to play the “call” in a call and response improvisation.

One particularly successful strategy is found in the technique known as “conduction” or conducted improvisation. Demonstrate a few selected hand signals for tempo, dynamics, and texture. (There are plenty of different systems of conduction symbols to draw on: Butch Morris, Walter Thompson, and Dave Clark are some examples – see the Resource List. Or you can invent your own.) Use the hand signals to “conduct” an improvisation. Now invite other participants to come and conduct the group.

The children at KidsAbility greatly enjoyed conducting the group using a graphic score (a chart with pictures that signalled different musical sounds). When the child pointed to one of the pictures everyone knew what to play. Staff had the brilliant idea of creating a “stop/go” sign that

made it easy for the group to know how long to play. One parent was very moved when her daughter, who rarely participates in activities, asked to conduct. The next year, that same child felt so confident that she took a solo during the performance at the Guelph Jazz Festival!

- **Structure** Providing a sense of structure for improvisation acts like a safety net: when participants know that they have something to fall back on, they feel more comfortable about taking creative risks. At the same time, structures provide focus and encourage a disciplined approach to improvisation.

From the point of view of high school music teachers we interviewed, structured workshops provided a familiar point of entry for their students. This might include providing a basic score that identifies some pitch or rhythmic material, or asking students to improvise on familiar materials such as a pentatonic scale. Teachers felt that students would then be more receptive to making “weird sounds” on their instruments.

Structures can also be used to create space for large improvisational groups. One common strategy is the use of card games (a famous one is John Zorn’s *Cobra*). Quebec saxophonist Jean Derome used a very simple game piece called *Spectacles* to improvise with the CME, a 30-member university improvisation ensemble. Everyone sat in a circle. Each player was dealt three cards. On each card was a set of musical parameters that dealt with dynamics, rhythm, and texture; for example: “soft, fast, sparse”. The rules are simple: each player may play each card only once, for one minute or less. Musicians decide when to play, and which of their cards to select, based on what they are hearing in the ensemble. Responsibility for the music making rests with the players who work together to create a satisfying large ensemble work, but no one is allowed to dominate the work, because each person may only play a total of 3 minutes of music!

Finally, structure is a great way of encouraging players to focus on specific musical ideas and materials. R. Murray Schafer, who worked with Canadian school children in the 1960s, encouraged them to be as creative as possible using only one note. (Schafer has been a major influence on creative music education in Canada: see the Resource List for his useful handbooks.)

- **Freedom** Highly structured activities should be balanced with “free” activities. There comes a point in every workshop when participants need to be allowed to “just blow!” Freedom may also be defined as an invitation to try new things, take risks, be playful, and express yourself. Creating an atmosphere where this can happen is one of the most important things that an improvisation teacher can do.

One of Ellen Waterman’s favorite “teaching” techniques with her university improvisation ensemble is to leave the room. Students in small groups work out their own creative ideas; they use spare classrooms, stairwells, hallways—the space doesn’t seem to matter. Waterman moves from group to group, sometimes giving feedback but more often simply listening. Students routinely express their appreciation for having this freedom in a classroom setting and note that they learn a lot about improvising from other members in their small group.

## Social Strategies

- **Respect** This is, of course, a basic principle of all music making. People who feel respected tend to be respectful and responsive. Strategies for fostering a climate of respect include the very



simple but effective idea of treating participants as individuals—know their names, speak to them directly, listen to what they have to say. Respect is also another way of saying “listen,” and listening is the foundational musical skill of improvisation. Encourage participants to listen carefully to each other’s musical gestures and to respond respectfully. That might mean playing a supportive, complementary line, or it might mean playing a contrasting gesture that further opens up the musical space so that others may respond. In all cases, the goal is to make enjoyable music as an ensemble—a goal that can only be realized when everyone has a voice.

- **Inclusion** For many participants in our workshops, feeling included was a key to feeling respected and being creative. Many of the strategies already mentioned are actually strategies that will make participants feel included (respect, adaptability, structure, leadership, simplicity, attitude, responsiveness).

For their first workshop with KidsAbility, Jane Bunnett and Larry Cramer brought a whole pile of musical instruments and laid them out on the floor. Participants were encouraged to help themselves and play anything they liked. The therapist present, Meg Shirley, reported feeling anxious because of the ensuing noise and chaos. She was concerned because not all of the participants could handle a loud, noisy environment well. But she also noticed that it “actually had the benefit of drawing everyone out of their shell...I noticed that with two participants from last year, who were quite shy last year, there was no hint of that this year. They were right in, hands on the instruments just exploring and playing and that set the stage for more expression I think.”

- **Laying out** One of the most powerful things an improviser can do is to lay out, just stop playing and listen. With eager players, this is sometimes a difficult skill to encourage. An important thing for workshop leaders to realize is that the shy participant who prefers simply to listen is also modelling that very skill. It’s important to be sensitive to whether a shy participant needs encouragement to join in, or simply the space to hang back and observe.

When university music students led improvisation games at a teen drop-in centre, they worked with a crowd of 30 to 40 teens from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. They ranged from wild and rambunctious to shy and awkward with everything in between. In her teaching journal, one student observed that one of the shy participants reminded her of herself at that age. She noted that she feels like quite a confident person now, but that as a teen she preferred to watch from the sidelines. She speculated that one of the values of playing improvisation games in a large group was that it allowed teens to choose how much or how little they wished to participate.

- **Building relationships** Breaking down the distance between teacher and student, leader and participant, can go a long way towards building relationships. A circle in which everyone is playing provides a model for a democratic social group, and such social cohesion is a beneficial aspect of good improvisation workshops.

When Rob Wallace worked with Give Yourself Credit, he emphasized the importance of interpersonal relationships to good improvisation. As teacher Roberta Kraven noted: “he talked about not doing it in isolation and feeding off each other and getting to know each other. I think that was really good. I think it strengthened the bond between the kids.” At the same time, students remarked about how casual and nice Rob was, how he participated *with* them instead of teaching *at* them. One student said that “it felt just like a bunch of friends just getting

together, just kinda hanging out...” Give Yourself Credit is a street-level high school classroom that caters to students for whom the regular school system is alienating. In that context achieving a sense of social bonding at school is a very positive result of the improvisation workshops.

## **Musical Strategies**

All of the above strategies are, in some sense, musical strategies. That is, they foster the core skills that make up improvisation: listening, responsiveness, empathy, and creativity. Because these are essentially human attributes, we want once again to assert our claim that anyone can begin to improvise.

Improvisation is also a rich and complex terrain of music making that, as we’ve noted, crosses many style boundaries, from jazz to hip hop, from Baroque music to classical Indian and Persian musics. Our goal here has not been to address particular styles. Instead, we’ve tried to capture some of the broader practical, social and aesthetic ideas presented in the improvisation workshops we studied.

On the Improvisation Tool Kit website, as we’ve noted, you’ll find a set of Tool Cards. Each one has a specific activity for improvising that includes clear directions and lists the source. You’ll find many different types of activities:

- **Games**
- **Graphic Scores**
- **Conduction**
- **Theatre and Story Telling**
- **Writing and Reflection**

Two key musical strategies were employed by all the master improvisers we worked with:

- **Sonic Exploration**  
For highly trained musicians, it can be difficult to explore outside our hard won and deeply engrained technical abilities. Viewing the instrument (and we include voice here) in a holistic manner opens up great possibilities for discovering an expanded palette of sounds, textures, and playing techniques.

This might mean playing your instrument in a new way (dismantling it, trying new ways of tonguing or bowing or striking it, exploring the extreme bottom and top registers, looking for all the timbral possibilities available in each note). Another approach is to improvise on an instrument you don’t know how to play—that sounds like a joke, but it isn’t. It’s an opportunity to approach an unfamiliar instrument as an open territory for exploration and to accept all sounds as potentially musical.

Try improvising with non-traditional instruments: toys, everyday objects, electronics. Be playful!

- **Intensive listening**  
By this we mean all kinds of concentrated listening: to a wide range of music, to the sonic environment, to people and their ideas. We also mean active listening while making music. Improvisation is not a random or nonsensical music, it is intentional and interactive. Some great improvisers are analytical, some never talk about the music—but they’re all active listeners.

We hope that the Improvisation Tool Kit, and this Guide, will be of use to anyone who wishes to explore the possibilities offered by improvisation. If you have ideas that you would like to include in the Improvisation Tool Kit, please contact us at [www.improvcommunity.ca](http://www.improvcommunity.ca).

### **Credits**

This is a list of our partner organizations, improvisers, researchers and research assistants who participated in ICASP's various improvisation workshop projects. They were instrumental in making this project possible, but any mistakes or gaps in the tool kit are our responsibility alone.

We're enormously grateful for artists' funds that have been provided over the years by SOCAN (Jazz in the Schools) the Canada Council for the Arts (2008) and the Musagetes Foundation (2010).

### **Partners**

Carnegie Centre <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/carnegiecentre>

Coastal Jazz and Blues <http://www.coastaljazz.ca>

Give Yourself Credit – Upper Grand School Board, Guelph

Guelph Jazz Festival [www.guelphjazzfestival.com](http://www.guelphjazzfestival.com)

Head and Hands <http://www.headandhands.ca>

KidsAbility Centre for Child Development [www.kidsability.ca](http://www.kidsability.ca)

Onward Willow Better Beginnings Better Futures <http://www.onwardwillowbetterbeginnings.ca>

Suoni per il Popolo <http://www.casadelpopolo.com/suoniperilpopolo>

### **Guest Improvisers**

Dean Bowman

Jane Bunnett

Larry Cramer

Jean Derome

Lori Freedman

Doug Friesen

DD Jackson

Rich Marsella

Brad Muirhead

William Parker

Matana Roberts

Rob Wallace

### **Researchers/ Improvisers**

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Julie Smith

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Ellen Waterman

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Rob Jackson  
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