

## Call for Papers

### **Sounding the Body: Improvisation, Representation, and Subjectivity**

**Gillian Siddall and Ellen Waterman, editors**

*Sounding the Body: Improvisation, Representation and Subjectivity* is one in a series of books on musical improvisation as a cultural practice to be published by Wesleyan University Press in 2012 as part of the Improvisation, Community and Social Practice research project ([www.improvcommunity.ca](http://www.improvcommunity.ca)). The editors invite contributions from scholars working on the relationships between improvisation and the body, and we especially welcome submissions that relate to the following themes:

- Material conditions of improvising bodies (across gender, sexuality, race, class, and ability/disability)
- Mediations of improvising bodies through technology
- Improvising bodies in time, place, and space
- Narratives of the body: issues of representation in and through improvisation
- Improvisation and performative bodies
- Improvising bodies and social/political change

We welcome critical essays on improvisation along these themes from diverse fields such as dance, theatre, performance, and literary studies as they relate to our main emphasis on music and sound art. We also encourage interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches.

A one-page abstract should be submitted to [ellenw@mun.ca](mailto:ellenw@mun.ca) and [gsiddal@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:gsiddal@lakeheadu.ca) no later than December 20, 2010. Completed essays are due by July 1, 2011.

#### **Description**

*Sounding the Body: Improvisation, Representation, and Subjectivity* explores the relationships among improvisation in music and sound art, the role of the body in the production of improvisation, and the social/political work that improvising bodies can do. We welcome submissions that explore this theme through its extensions into other art forms. For many, improvising becomes an almost utopian dream of a process, finally, that is truly democratic, that enacts and bespeaks principles of human rights, that disrupts hegemonic discourses to articulate new possibilities or models for social engagement and democratic principles. Such articulations may seem to result from improvisation's apparent ability to disrupt not only musical conventions, but social and even linguistic ones, to gesture to modes of meaning that lie outside of, or in the liminal spaces of, discourse. We are interested in thinking about bodies in relation to such claims about the radical social potential of improvisation, ways in which the improvising body itself articulates resistance to dominant social discourses (including discursive constructions of the body), and/or reinforces such discourses. The improvising body sweats, touches, breathes, spits, feels, and bleeds. In the act of improvising (often but not always framed as performance) the materiality of improvisation is present to all participating bodies: performing and witnessing. Mediations and extensions of those bodies are also part of that materiality. Paradoxically, the improvising body sometimes seems to disappear, and

we are also interested in that slippage, in discourses that disassociate sound from source, ideal from real, and ways in which bodies are excluded from participation.

What distinguishes *Sounding the Body: Improvisation, Representation, and Subjectivity* is that the authors locate their analyses not just in artistic products, but in material bodies (however mediated). This strategy invites us to consider the stories bodies tell through improvisation, how bodies (gendered, sexed, raced, classed, abled/disabled) are constructed through improvisational relationships, and how mediations of the body extend its reach while seemingly causing it to “disappear”. A close analysis of embodied improvisations, we argue, will help us critically to assess claims about the “revolutionary potential” of improvisation.

**Gillian Siddall** is the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. She is also an Associate Professor in English. Her publications include “‘That is what I told Dr. Jordan’: Public Constructions and Private Disruptions in Margaret Atwood’s *Alias Grace*,” *Essays on Canadian Writing*; “I want to live in that music’: Blues, Bessie Smith and Improvised Identities” in Ann-Marie MacDonald’s *Fall on Your Knees*, *Critical Studies in Improvisation/ Études critiques en improvisation*; and “Nice Work if You Can Get It: Women in Jazz” (co-authored with Ajay Heble), *Landing on the Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance and Critical Practice*. Siddall has been a co-researcher in several collaborative research projects on educational development, in partnership with other Canadian universities. She is currently a member of an international research team working on Adaptive Use Musical Instruments for the Physically Challenged (<http://www.deeplisting.org/site/adaptiveuse>) as a research member of the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice research project ([www.improvcommunity.ca](http://www.improvcommunity.ca)). She is also co-founder of the Guelph Jazz Festival, now in its 17th year.

**Ellen Waterman** is a flutist whose performance practice intersects closely with her work as a cultural theorist and musicologist; for example, in a cross-Canada study of experimental music ([www.experimentalperformance.ca](http://www.experimentalperformance.ca)), and through her extensive publications on the work of R. Murray Schafer, and her anthology *Sonic Geography Imagined and Remembered* (2002). With Andra McCartney, Waterman co-edited a special issue of *Intersections* on Women and Sound (2007). She is a founding co-editor of the journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation* [www.criticalimprov.com](http://www.criticalimprov.com). Waterman holds the Ph.D. in Critical Studies and Experimental Practices from the Department of Music at the University of California, San Diego. Her current research is focused on improvisation, and in particular on issues related to gender and disability studies, through the international Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice research project ([www.improvcommunity.ca](http://www.improvcommunity.ca)). She is Professor of Music, and the Director of the School of Music at Memorial University of Newfoundland.