

IMPROVISE, ADAPT AND OVERCOME!



"You can't make a mistake when you improvise."
Patti Smith

Goal

Enjoyment of playing is the driving force behind student motivation. Working on expression and playing technique can be done by approaching improvisation in different ways. For pupils with learning disabilities, differentiation in methodology and approach is important. Some methods are described below.

Target Audience

- Suitable for students with learning disabilities
- Group lesson

Getting organised

- Adequate number of djembes and xylophones for all students present
- No desks, one chair for each student, chairs placed in a circle

Getting started

Method 1: Playing motifs:

Each student finds a number of previously agreed notes on the xylophone (or other instrument) that the student can repeat. The teacher takes a walk through the classroom and indicates students who can perform their motif. The students repeat their motif until the teacher individually indicates to stop. In this way, the consonance of all motifs is used when playing.

Allow a student to be the 'conductor' for a change.

Method 2: Minimalist music:

Each student chooses one note/tone to play on the xylophone (or other instrument). Each student plays the chosen note 8 times in the same metre. After eight beats, each student changes note.

With this task, it is important to listen to the sound colours that emerge. In this way, the students learn to experience what consonant and dissonant sounds feel like.

Method 3: Building up a rhythm:

One student starts with a simple rhythm in a 4/4 metre, e.g. one beat on beat 1. If the students do not know this exercise well enough, the teacher starts.

After the first rhythm has been played a few times, the next student adds something to the rhythm. In this way the rhythm grows until the whole group is playing.

Afterwards, the rhythm can be reduced again. The person who started stops first. So everyone stops one by one until only the last pupil remains.

Method 4: Free improvisation with a chorus:

When students can play a well-trained chorus steady on the xylophone (or other instrument) improvisations can be added.

All students play this refrain and then one student goes on improvising freely. During the improvisation the teacher plays the chord scheme of the chorus to support it. After the improvisation all students play the known chorus together. You can add as many improvisations as there are students.

Fixed beginning and end:

The students are free to improvise. Only the beginnings and endings are fixed. This can be the tonic or a previously learned short three-note fragment (cadenza).

Method 5: Melodic improvisation on a fixed rhythm:

The students are introduced to a rhythm. The students convert this rhythm into a melody. Students choose whether to use the same rhythm during the whole improvisation or to let the rhythm occur only once.

Improvisation on command:

Slow to fast, loud to soft, ...

In this exercise it is important to listen to each other and to be aware of each other's actions, so that the interplay is ensured and thus the interplay sounds faster/louder/... sounds great together.

Time allotted

🕒 5 to 10 minutes per exercise

References

Muzieklabo Inclusief, Academie Wijnegem - Schilde - Zoersel
<https://muzieklaboinclusief.weebly.com/>