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ROUTLEDGE

Children's Guided Participation in Jazz Improvisation

A Study of the 'Improbasen' Learning Centre

Guro Gravem Johansen

SEMPRE Studies in The Psychology of Music

‘Guro Gravem Johansen’s new book, *Children’s Guided Participation in Jazz Improvisation*, provides an innovative ethnography of the Improbasen school’s creative approach to teaching jazz improvisation to children and young people between the ages of seven and fifteen. Johansen carefully documents how Improbasen teaches young children how to improvise as they learn their individual instruments and become musicians capable of performing with others. There are many noteworthy pedagogical innovations in the Improbasen curriculum including teaching gender and ethnic inclusion, and ethical modes of social interaction. Johansen’s analysis emphasizes the creation of micro-communities through musical improvisation and the school’s critique of traditional modes of jazz pedagogy. Especially noteworthy is Johansen’s documentation of Improbasen’s emphasis on gender inclusivity from an early age, which successfully results in the full participation of female students in what is often regarded as a masculine art form. In demonstrating the capability of the female students, Johansen shows how the study of children’s acquisition of musical skills can have socially transformative results.’

– **Ingrid Monson**, *Quincy Jones Professor of African-American Music, Department of African American Studies, Harvard University, USA*

‘Guro Gravem Johansen’s *Children’s Guided Participation in Jazz Improvisation* stands as an important contribution to jazz and improvised music scholarship, focusing on the experiences of individuals who are not commonly considered in the music’s literature. Drawing upon the fields of musicology, ethnography, music education, Johansen both builds upon and offers alternatives to existing scholarship in jazz and musical learning that will find a warm and receptive audience. In the introductory chapter, Johansen makes the case for her study, noting that jazz researchers have tended to ignore “children playing jazz”. But children are, as she points out, among the most active and receptive of musical learners. The jazz community’s lack of direct engagement with children’s experiences in the music calls for a corrective, which Johansen provides in subsequent chapters through a close examination of Improbasen, a Norwegian learning center which focuses on the facilitation of improvisation in children. Chapter 3, for example, describes the nature of the center, tracing its development, demographic profile, and underlying principles, or the “way” that musical learning at Improbasen is structured and practiced. Central to these principles, Johansen writes, is the desire of Improbasen’s founder to “unite all the world’s children in jazz”. In a later chapter, Johansen engages more deeply with children’s engagement with a genre that is “constructed as adult’s music”. In examining Improbasen’s programs for teaching jazz to children, Johansen also calls into question the very notion of jazz as “adult music”. The desire to have children play jazz, while still being true to their “authentic” selves as children, serves as a catalyst for a deep, probing discussion of embedded assumptions about jazz, childhood, creativity, and identity. In closing, I am happy to endorse Johansen’s book, as it is a deeply researched and engagingly written study. I will look forward to seeing it in print, and I am confident that it will stimulate spirited debate among jazz communities, and in the field of musical learning in general.’

– **Ken Prouty**, *PhD, Associate Professor, Musicology and Jazz Studies, Michigan State University, USA*

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Children's Guided Participation in Jazz Improvisation

Improbasen is a Norwegian private learning centre that offers beginner's instrumental tuition within jazz improvisation for children between the ages of 7 and 15. This book springs out of a two-year ethnographic study of the teaching and learning activity at Improbasen, highlighting features from the micro-interactions within the lessons, the organisation of Improbasen, and its international activity.

Music teachers, students, and scholars within music education as well as jazz research will benefit from the perspectives presented in the book, which shows how children systematically acquire tools for improvisation and shared codes for interplay. Through a process of guided participation in jazz culture, even very young children are empowered to take part in a global, creative musical practice with improvisation as an educational core.

This book critically engages in current discussions about jazz pedagogy, inclusion and gender equity, beginning instrumental tuition, creativity, and authenticity in childhood.

Guro Gravem Johansen is a jazz singer and Associate Professor of Music Education at the Norwegian Academy of Music (Oslo, Norway) and researches instrumental practising and the teaching and learning of jazz and improvisation.

SEMPRE Studies in The Psychology of Music

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Guro Gravem Johansen

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Cover photo: Improbasen pupils and Odd André in performance. Photograph by Margrethe Rosenlund. Used with permission.

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The enormous growth of research that has been evidenced over the past three decades continues into the many different phenomena that are embraced under the psychology of music 'umbrella'. Growth is evidenced in new journals, books, media interest, an expansion of professional associations (both regionally and nationally, such as in Southern Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia), and accompanied by increasing and diverse opportunities for formal study, including within non-English-speaking countries. Such growth of interest is not only from psychologists and musicians, but also from colleagues working in the clinical and medical sciences, neurosciences, therapies, in the lifelong health and well-being communities, philosophy, musicology, social psychology, ethnomusicology and education across the lifespan. There is also evidence in several countries of a wider political and policy engagement with the arts in general and music in particular, such as in arts-based social prescribing for mental and physical health. Research into the potential wider benefits of music for health and well-being, for example, seem to be particularly apposite at this time of global health challenges.

As part of this worldwide community, the Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research (SEMPRE) – looking forward to celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2022 – continues to be one of the world's leading and longstanding professional associations in the field. SEMPRE is the only international society that embraces formally an interest in the psychology of music, research and education, seeking to promote knowledge at the interface between the twin social sciences of psychology and education with one of the world's most pervasive art forms: music. SEMPRE was founded in 1972 and has published the journals Psychology of Music since 1973 and Research Studies in Music Education since 2008, both now produced in partnership with SAGE,[1] and we continue to seek new ways to reach out globally, both in print and online. These include the recent launch of Music and Science in 2018 – an additional peer-reviewed, open access

academic journal. We recognise that there is an ongoing need to promote the latest research findings to the widest possible audience. Through more extended publication formats, especially books, we believe that we are more likely to fulfil a key component of our distinctive mission, which is to have a positive impact on individual and collective understanding, as well as on policy and practice internationally, both within and across our disciplinary boundaries. Hence, we welcome the strong collaborative partnership between SEMPRE and Routledge (formerly Ashgate Press).

The Routledge Ashgate 'SEMPRE Studies in The Psychology of Music' has been designed to address this international need since its inception in 2007.[2] The theme for the series is the psychology of music, broadly defined. Topics include (amongst others): musical development and learning at different ages; musical cognition and context; applied musicology; culture, mind and music; creativity, composition, and collaboration; micro to macro perspectives on the impact of music on the individual – from neurological studies through to social psychology; the development of advanced performance skills; music learning within and across different musical genres; musical behaviour and development in the context of special educational needs; music education; therapeutic applications of music; and affective perspectives on musical learning. The series seeks to present the implications of research findings for a wide readership, including user-groups (music teachers, policy makers, leaders and managers, parents and carers, music professionals working in a range of formal, non-formal and informal settings), as well as the international academic teaching and research communities and their students. A key distinguishing feature of the series is its broad focus that draws on basic and applied research from across the globe under the umbrella of SEMPRE's distinctive mission, which is to promote and ensure coherent and symbiotic links between education, music, and psychology research.

In this particular volume in the SEMPRE series titled 'Children's Guided Participation in Jazz Improvisation', Guro Gravem Johansen provides a fascinating insight into how children might be introduced to the world of musical improvisation. This is an enduring topic. One of the prime challenges in music education internationally is how to ensure a sense of 'agency' in the learner. Exploring and playing with elements of sound – improvising – is a natural human activity, especially for the young child, as evidenced in their language development and making sounds with items afforded by their environment. However, the world of formal music education is often biased in perspective towards more re-creative musical actions, often in a master–apprentice mode, as young musicians are inducted into an established repertoire. Such a bias in policy ignores the human need for exploration, of making sense of the world around us, and of engaging in the possibilities of music making in a more playful manner. Johansen's text is important because it offers a way into improvisation for beginning instrumentalists by adopting a 'close-to-practice' research methodology. Extended fieldwork in a specialist Norwegian centre for jazz improvisation provides the basis for a rich and engaging narrative.

The book offers a welcome addition to the breadth and depth of the SEMPRE series and should be welcomed by instrumental teachers and music educators everywhere for its insights, examples, and principles.

Professor Graham F. Welch
UCL Institute of Education
London
21 May 2020

Notes

1 See www.sempre.org.uk/journals
2 See www.sempre.org.uk/about/5-routledge-sempre-book-series

Preface

On a late afternoon in the autumn of 2014, I received a reminder from the research leader at my institution that the deadline for reporting research projects for the next year was, to my slight panic, the next day. I immediately acted to make an inquiry I had been pondering for some time and formulated a quick e-mail to jazz teacher Odd André Elveland asking if he would be interested in participating in a study of *Improbasen*. Ten minutes later, I received his reply: '*Yes, I am. I have been waiting for this*'. This initial e-mail correspondence started a two-year collaboration that was interesting, intense, and challenging. Odd André's alertness and eagerness to share turned out to be characteristic for our collaboration in the period to come.

Improbasen is a Norwegian learning centre offering tuition in jazz improvisation for children who are beginners on their instruments. In this book I want to display the practice from its inner micro-interaction to its outer social structure, including Improbasen's global outreach, to show how these facets are connected and contribute to a multi-layered, meaningful activity within the arts for and by children.

Many people have helped me making this book by providing their professional second opinions, giving feedback on text drafts, proofreading, advising me in the world of book publishing, and encouraging me through the research and writing process. I especially want to thank Raymond MacDonald, Una MacGlone, Laura Macy, Corey Mwamba, Even Ruud, Torgrim Sollid, Ellen Stabell, and John Vinge. I also want to thank the Norwegian Academy of Music and the Centre for Educational Research in Music (CERM) for supporting the project with extra research time and funding, and Rode Gustavsson at Recapo Edition for creating the music illustrations. I would like to express my gratitude towards Heidi Bishop at Routledge and the SEMPRE editors for taking on this book and supporting me in finalising it.

I want to thank Odd André for his generosity, curiosity, and willingness to engage in dialogue and parents and others who have shared their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. To all the children who have participated in the study: your openness, your ability to articulate yourselves, and your drive to learn and create music have amazed me. Thank you for all the wonderful and moving musical experiences you have given in allowing me to follow your development.

Finally, I wish to thank my daughter, Ingeborg Gravem Sollid, for going with me to children's jazz performances, for enduring my absence while working with this book, and for showing me *your* music-making practice. You are a gem.

Guro Gravem Johansen
Oslo
April 2020

1 Introduction

Making the case for Improbasen

Children playing jazz: an extraordinary everyday encounter

Vignette

Odd André asks Anne (nine years old, on double bass) if she can remember Watermelon Man.[1] *He starts to play the intro with a riff. Anne joins in the riff and plays the root while Odd André plays the melody. He asks: 'Do you remember the blues scale in B♭?' Anne starts playing the descending B♭ blues scale. 'Shall we try to improvise a little?' He counts in, and Anne improvises. Her phrases centre around the root and third in each chord, often in stepwise melodic movements. Rhythmically her phrases are lagging behind the beat, almost not reaching the next chord in time, most likely because of the physical exertion of her small fingers on the refractory bass strings. This fact is not causing Odd André to slow the tempo down; on the contrary, he is pushing it. I also notice the rich chords Odd André lays down on piano. After a chorus, he stops and says: 'And then we started to play walking [remember]?' Anne: 'Is it like this?' and she plays 1-2-3-1 on each chord.*[2] *Odd André nods, counts in, and then they play one chorus where Anne repeats this bass pattern on quarter notes through the form. Afterwards, Odd André says in a questioning tone '*You'd Be So Nice*? Can you play a little of the chord sequence from the start?'*[3] *Anne responds by playing scales, one scale per chord. She doubles the speed for chords that last only two beats instead of a whole bar, although the tempo is not steady. For chords that last for two bars, she plays the scale first ascending and then descending again. He counts in again, which is a cue to Anne to start improvising, while Odd André is comping her. After a chorus, he says: 'Very good. You're doing it right regarding improvising with drive and flow. Last time we talked about how you can play. You often start on the root, and that's good, but we can try to experiment by starting on other notes. Pick some places where you do that'. Anne nods, concentrated. Odd André counts in, and they play a chorus. He says: 'Now, that was very exciting and nice, but simultaneously you have to . . .' Anne: '. . . know where I am'. They play another chorus. Odd André: 'Very good, get used to listening to me to orient yourself'. Anne: 'But now I knew where I was. I think'. Odd André: 'Cool. Now you played something in between. One more time.*

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Let's try having you sometimes take chances and sometimes play [phrases] from the root. I will be playing what I'm going to play [on concerts]. Then you must be responsible yourself for knowing where you are'.

They play several choruses. Suddenly she plays a phrase with a rhythm that is different from the way she usually plays, and he immediately imitates the rhythm on piano. I wonder if she has noticed it. He ends the lesson: 'For next week, practise playing walking on Like Someone In Love'.[4] *You can make up and rehearse a fixed bass line. Remember the different ways you can create a bass line, you can go both downwards and upwards, within the B♭ major scale'. While Anne has her lesson, Thomas, her brother, is reading a book. Their mother, who has brought them to their lessons, is knitting. When Thomas's lesson starts and he unpacks his alto saxophone, it's Anne's turn to pick up her book.*

The vignette above is based on field notes from the very first time I observed lessons at Improbasen, a private learning centre in Oslo, Norway.[5] It was established around 2005 and is run by jazz saxophonist and main teacher Odd André Elveland. Improbasen is formally organised as a foundation with an informal board consisting of pupils' parents. The funding has shifted over the years, and Improbasen has mainly been financed from public sources and from pupils' fees. The centre offers instrumental jazz improvisation tuition to beginning instrumentalists between the ages of 7 and 15, on instruments such as saxophone, piano, drums, bass, guitar, trumpet, and occasionally vibraphone. The pupils receive weekly individual 60-minute teaching sessions. Improbasen holds regular concerts in Oslo and participates on collaborative projects with children from other countries.

From January 2015 to February 2017 I conducted fieldwork at Improbasen, following the activities within and around the centre closely, through observations of lessons and performances. I have interviewed participants and travelled with them abroad. The high number of social interactions with Odd André have ranged from three-hour conversations in his kitchen to riding the subway together after a long afternoon of teaching to late-night restaurant dining after children's concerts at jazz clubs or on tours. I helped stretching PA speaker cables on concerts, followed kids to the toilet when the adults around were busy with organising tasks, transported musical equipment in my car, listened to what sometimes felt like endless sound checks, and heard an almost infinite number of blues variations in B♭ and D major scales played from the second and fifth scale degrees, in various degrees of technical fluency. As I took part in these activities, I was constantly considering this study's main questions and asking myself how I possibly could manage to answer them: *how is jazz improvisation taught to children who have never played an instrument before? How do the children make meaning out of what they're taught? How do they learn?* As my acquaintance with Improbasen and its participants increased, a seemingly more significant question emerged: *why* do they do it? 'What makes them make the effort?' (Engeström 2001, 133).

On the Tuesday in January described in the above vignette, I watched two of the pupils, the nine-year-old twins Anne on double bass and Thomas on alto saxophone. The twins had started learning their instruments one and a half years before

this lesson took place. As I sat and watched, I found myself thinking that I was witnessing something extraordinary. The way they all behaved, how they placed themselves in the studio and the ways they talked to each other revealed a routine situation for the four persons involved. Their talk was limited to very basic information and practicalities such as how much the twins had been practising since last week, how the mouthpiece in the sax felt that day, and so forth. Odd André's way of communicating with the children seemed ordinary. They were not overblown with cheering or enthusiastic encouragement when they improvised. On the contrary, his messages were brief and neutral. After the lessons, I commented on what to me seemed to be a sparse communication, without much praise. 'Oh, I wasn't aware of that', he replied,

> [B]ut you know, I want them to get on stage and perform together as soon as possible after they have started here. I guess I want this improvising thing to be an everyday activity, not make a lot of fuss about it. I think that's the best way to avoid developing fear of failure. Because children, they do play a lot of strange notes when they improvise. But I want them to learn not to think or care about it, to move on. To play on.

The aura of ordinariness that permeated their interactions stood in stark contrast to my experience as first-time observer. In fact, there is nothing ordinary about 9-year-olds improvising on jazz tunes. *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To* is a jazz standard that only a few of my conservatoire jazz students know. But Anne and Thomas knew it. They could verbally account for all the chord changes and their roman numerals in modulations on the second 16-bar section when asked, and they could play the correct inversions of the harmonic minor scale on a II minor 7th chord and the following dominant chord, respectively. As I sat there and watched I was more and more puzzled by an interaction that seemed to me to be anything but ordinary. It wasn't that the children displayed extraordinary achievements or artistic original improvisations – they didn't. Nor was there anything exceptional about the pedagogy I observed. But what *is* perhaps extraordinary about Improbasen, and the source of my puzzlement, is the way children are introduced to and allowed to participate in a *knowledge culture* (Cetina 1999) that we normally do not associate with children.

The emphasis on learning to improvise with 'correct notes' is a central feature of Odd André's teaching approach and is often criticised, especially when used with children or other beginners. It is often claimed that this approach teaches children to be concerned with 'right' and 'wrong', which may hinder their creative development and encourage a fear of making mistakes.

Yet, as is clear from Odd André's statement quoted above, one of the ambitions of Improbasen is precisely to create a learning environment where the children are encouraged to express themselves, make musical real-time choices, and take chances within the tonal framework that the chord scales provide. If they make single mistakes, the flow of the groove (provided by Odd André through his piano comping) will persist; it will not stop and wait for corrections. The children are implicitly taught not to put any weight on mistakes, because new opportunities

for playing on that chord sequence, playing that song, playing on concerts, will be provided continuously. In a time when education is increasingly reliant on measurable achievements (Guro G. Johansen 2018) and 'assessmentism' (Elliott 2010), and where learning activities with potentially uncertain outcomes are not always encouraged, this feature of Improbasen is extraordinary.

Children in an adult knowledge culture

In Improbasen, the pedagogical emphasis on musical content (chord progressions and their corresponding scales), the musical context of the groove and harmonic form that always surround the children's improvisations, and the social and collaborative playing situations that are created around the children's music making, are examples of how the children are guided and supported in their entrance into the practice of jazz improvisation.

This approach to tuition in creative music making may seem problematic from the perspective of creative music education nurturing individual freedom and authentic expression (Kannellopoulos 2015). A common reaction that I have experienced from adults, especially music educators and musicians, is that the practice is too teacher-directed to promote creativity. This view can also be found in literature (Hickey 2009). The children do not truly learn to improvise, only to copy and obey rules. Jazz is an adult music genre, and the children who are playing are not – some people argue – authentic. Such observations raise issues related to interaction and creative agency. A considerable body of research on children and creativity confirms how children of all ages are able to take creative agency if allowed the scope (Burnard 2000; Kannellopoulos 1999; MacGlone 2018; Sawyer 2012; Burnard and Kuo 2016). In Improbasen, the priority is to ensure that the children's music making is surrounded and supported by a 'mature' sound. This standpoint invites a broad discussion about quality in children's music (Vinge 2017); about what constitutes quality in children's learning processes, and for whom. Discussions of agency, creativity, and quality in music for and by children (Vestad 2017) are at the core of this book and will be returned to throughout.

Over the course of my two years following Odd André, Anne, Thomas, and several other improvising children at Improbasen, I have come to think that my astonishment on my first day of fieldwork was a reaction to a perceived dissonance between *the sight* of the little girl with the pony tail and her quarter-sized double bass and *the sound* of what I heard, including the implicit social and musical codes I observed being played out between Odd André and Anne. Could it be that this perceived dissonance is caused by more or less tacit norms for what kinds of knowledge cultures (Cetina 1999) we think are suitable for children? Children participate in adult knowledge cultures their whole lives. Just as naturally as algebra is part of the mathematics repertoire in primary school, preludes and fugues by Bach are included in the piano repertoire for, say, a 12-year-old piano pupil receiving tuition from the age of eight. But jazz standards, swing phrasing, and Roman numeral chord analysis, it seems, are not quite as easy for adults to accept as knowledge children might possess.

The criticism referred to earlier deserves to be taken seriously. However, I wish to raise the question of whether it stems from certain assumptions about children's culture, learning, authenticity, and creativity. A central aim of this book is to submit such assumptions to scrutiny, and I will discuss them more thoroughly throughout the book in relation to the topic of each chapter.

In this book, I will present a practice that does not fit into simple dichotomies. By investigating the practices and values of a variety of actors thoroughly, from the 'outer' surface (its organization and practical conditions) to its 'inner' activity (the fine-tuned social and musical interplay between teacher and pupils), I hope to provide nuanced insights into the crucial beginning phases of learning to play an instrument and learning to improvise.

Guided participation

To theorise what it means for children to learn in an adult culture, I frame the teaching and learning at Improbasen within the theory of *guided participation* (Rogoff 1990). In guided participation, adults structure children's gradually increased participation in a culturally 'mature' practice; the adults purposefully 'rig' situations that help the children manage new tasks to be learned. This way, adults help to build a bridge between the children's existing knowledge and skills and new ones. The theory presupposes that children are not passive recipients of whatever knowledge they are 'taught', but that they actively engage in constructing meaning and that they are eager to acquire the knowledge it takes to see the world as adults see it. Thus, when given opportunities and not hindered, children urge themselves to try out and experiment with actions they observe from adults and to stretch their abilities in such adult activities. The admission into adults' practices can provide children with rich opportunities to be part of an activity that is meaningful both personally and socially and thus create a sense of being connected to the world of adults.

Situated creativity

Tanggaard (2014) proposes a theory of situated creativity with the premise that creativity is embedded in all learning processes, since learning is fundamentally social. Participation in social practices means that learners constantly face new situations to be met with creative solutions. In 'cultivation and sophistication of creative actions among participants in a given learning community' (ibid., 110), three learning principles are central, according to Tanggaard:

1 Immersion in the topic of interest, in traditions and in the subject matter
2 Experimentation and inquiry learning
3 Resistance from the material of interest

When we act creatively, Tangaard claims, we intervene 'in worldly processes that are already going on' (110) such as established practices and traditions, with their

repertoires of knowledge. The principle of immersion refers to developing solid and relevant knowledge within a given domain: 'It is when we know something about what we do that we are best able to handle the challenges confronting us' (op.cit.). However, Tangaard acknowledges that traditional knowledge can be a barrier for making up something new. The second principle emphasises the importance of play and experimenting with materials, where curiosity and open-mindedness are important attitudes to engage in creative problem-solving.

However, creative processes often involve phases of feeling lost, disoriented, or frustrated. The materials or artefacts we work with have an inherent resistance in our engagement with them; they can 'invite us to engage with [them] in certain ways' (111). There is a dialogical relationship between an object and an acting subject, Engeström (2005, 93) claims; 'objects resist and bite back'. This resistance may prompt the learner to think and act in new (and creative) ways, 'beyond existing frameworks' (Tanggaard 2014, 113) as long as the principles of immersion *and* experimentation are present.

Performance practices in jazz and improvised music

When I here refer to jazz as a 'mature practice' (Rogoff 1990) or an adult knowledge culture (Cetina 1999), it is necessary to enter a discussion of what this means. The notion of a knowledge (or epistemic) culture is used by Cetina (ibid., 3) to frame how practices produce knowledge about themselves. These 'machineries of knowledge construction' (op. cit.) can involve value judgements about 'what counts' as important knowledge in a practice. They can also involve different symbolic ways of structuring this knowledge, through language, for example, and other systems of classification. Although the theme of this book is a case study of a *learning and teaching practice* in jazz, it is important to look at this theme against a backdrop of *performance practices* in jazz, because the latter produce knowledge about what and how it is important to learn in jazz.

Jazz is a global phenomenon, and it is clear that jazz and improvised music practices encompass a considerable variety of musical conglomerates and micro-practices in performance in different social and cultural contexts (Whyton and Gebhardt 2015). Moreover, no single, unified historical account of jazz practices exists. On the contrary, such accounts have been subject to discursive battles about how 'stories' of jazz and improvised music should be told. As such, different accounts or 'versions' of jazz practices may in themselves be seen as contributions to 'the machinery of knowledge construction' (Cetina 1999, 3) in jazz, as they emphasise different aspects of knowledge in jazz. As the scope of this section is limited, I will briefly give some examples from central literature and on current tendencies in research on jazz and improvised music.

Currently, the 'collective logic of jazz practice' (Gebhardt 2015, 9) is increasingly emphasised, perhaps sparked off by Berliner's (1994) and Monson's (1996) two ground-breaking studies on North American professional jazz musicians. This tendency involves an increased interest in studying the social and collective aspects of jazz practices through detailed ethnographies of local communities or

groups (Fadnes 2015), as well as studying the wider, transnational context for collectivity in jazz (Currie 2015).

A central contribution to jazz research discourse is Berliner's (1994) discussion of the balance between individuality and collectivity. Individuality is seen (among other aspects) in the emphasis on forming one's own personal signature or 'voice'. This freedom of self-expression needs to be balanced against collectivity and interaction. In this sense, individuality and collectivity are mutually constitutive, as the democratic value enforces the common goal of making space for the voices of individuals.

In North American jazz practices, imitation is often mentioned as a central learning practice (Jackson 2002; Berliner 1994; Prouty 2005), a way of acquiring a vocabulary and thus internalising a socio-musical 'langauge'. Imitation can happen either through copying music from recordings (Guro G. Johansen 2013), or 'sitting in' with more experienced musicians, for example, on a jam session (Berliner 1994). This approach offers a deeper experience with the contextual meaning of the material: that is, how a particular phrase or line was shaped in relation to the musical context in which it emerged (Berliner 1994).

An emphasis on 'phrases' and 'vocabulary' in jazz is often associated with the tonal parameter, such as the relation between harmony and melodic choices. Early jazz research was dominated by analysis of the tonal parameter in improvised solos by individuals. However, this priority has led to a neglect of the rhythmic aspects of jazz practice, and thereby its embodied and collective and interactive dimensions, according to Iyer (2002). Monson (1996) places an even stronger emphasis on the interactional aspects of jazz and highlights the shared groove as the main framework that enables such interaction.

A priority of groove, interaction, tradition, and development of a personal sound, is central to what Lewis (2004) conceptualises as 'Afrological' improvised music. This is enabled by a shared frame of reference in jazz tradition. An opposing approach to improvisation, according to Lewis, is the 'Eurological' standpoint, grounded on ideas from European classical music, with a hierarchical division of labour between composer and performer. This view on improvisation emphasises structure over personal voice and control over participation, in Lewis's view (Borgo 2002; Lewis 2004).

Bailey (1992) distinguishes between *idiomatic* and *non-idiomatic* improvisation, respectively. Idiomatic improvisation is 'concerned with the expression of an idiom' (ibid., xi), such as jazz, flamenco, baroque, and Indian music. On the other hand, '[n]on-idiomatic improvisation . . . is not usually tied to representing an idiomatic identity' (ibid., xi–xii). Hence, *non-idiomatic improvisation* is often used interchangeably with *free improvisation* (MacGlone and MacDonald 2017), which borrows from a wide range of musical styles and traditions (Borgo 2007). Nevertheless, it is often characterised less by its stylistic features as it is by processes, actions, and attitudes of its participants and participants' ability to negotiate different perspectives and worldviews (Borgo 2002).

Framings of improvised practices in terms of Afrological versus Eurological or idiomatic versus non-idiomatic have contributed to an understanding of, and

vocabulary for, historical differences. However, such polarised views may be refuted by looking at contemporary practices. There is a broad spectrum of practices within contemporary improvisation, strongly linked to what now may be called *the traditions of free jazz* (Borgo 2002). Improvisation rooted in jazz may be seen in intersections with classical and contemporary music and with other art forms such as dance and visual arts (MacGlone and MacDonald 2017). It is further interesting to note an emerging generation of free improvising musicians with little to no experience in jazz (Borgo 2002) or who have only played free improvisation (MacGlone and MacDonald 2017). It is fair to assume that this new generation will challenge the weight some scholars have placed on tradition-oriented experience within a genre in order to develop a personal sound (Berliner 1994), even in free improvisation (Borgo 2002; Lewis 2004). Not the least do I believe it is important to keep in mind that even if new expressive forms emerge in contemporary practices, previous traditions and forms do not cease to exist. Instead, musicians with different backgrounds may continue to draw on different traditions in socially fluid encounters of improvised music creation.

Nevertheless, these historical accounts all contribute in highlighting tensions that continue to exist in various practices in jazz and improvised music, such as tensions between individuality and collectivity, tradition and innovation, freedom and structure, and cerebral harmonic theory and embodied rhythm. Thus, these accounts contribute in an understanding of jazz as knowledge culture, which in turn informs an understanding of Improbasen as an arena for teaching and learning.

Jazz practices – inclusive for all?

The democratic ideal in jazz (Lewis 2004; Berliner 1994) is seen for example in the emphasis on participatory interaction (Monson 1996) on equal terms. Despite jazz and free improvised music practices often having had a political agenda, addressing racial, class- and power-related issues (Borgo 2002), it remains a fact that jazz '[has] traditionally been viewed as a predominantly masculine pursuit' (ibid., 170). Hence, the democratic idealistic picture of jazz improvisation practices seems to crack when looking at them from a gender perspective. Gendered discourses are commonly seen as an explanation for why there are so relatively few female jazz instrumentalists in the professional performance field (Annfelt 2003). Since Improbasen has an articulated gender policy, it is necessary to understand the need for such a policy in relation to a larger picture. This will be returned to in depth in Chapter 3.

Learning to play, learning to improvise

Learning to play an instrument

For most of the children who attend Improbasen, it is their first encounter with playing a musical instrument. Odd André prefers to start working from their very first experiences, as he places great importance on the beginning phases of learning

an instrument: 'I like to indoctrinate them myself from the beginning. They might get all sorts of ideas if they fall into the hands of other teachers', he once said jokingly.

A significant body of research on beginners in instrumental tuition confirms that these stages are crucial in several respects. However, there is a dearth of research on teaching and learning jazz for children. This absence indicates that such teaching practices are rare. I wish to stress the view that learning is situated and context-specific (Rogoff 1990), therefore music learning cannot be considered in separation from musical genre (Guro G. Johansen 2017) or from the degree to which improvisation is involved or not. Although most studies concerned with instrumental tuition for children and beginners do not address genre specifically, one may assume that they have investigated classical tuition or teachers with a classical background, from looking at the research foci in these studies. Although tuition within the Western classical tradition does not in itself preclude improvisation in learning activities, it has not been a dominant theme in classical tuition from the twentieth century until very recently. Therefore, in the following review I will discuss the contexts for the studies I refer to, where relevant. Further, I will draw on a broad spectrum of research, not limited to studies of children learning to play instruments or learning improvisation, to illuminate my study on Improbasen from different angles.

Current research on children learning to play instruments suggest that awakening intrinsic motivation at an early stage is crucial if children are to persist with the activity, according to a review by McPherson, Davidson, and Evans (2016). Intrinsic motivation is often related to early exposure to high-quality playing experiences and a repeated sense of mastery. Such high-quality experiences can develop both the ability to 'think in sound', that is, to hear the music in one's head, and the physical actions needed to create the sound on an instrument. Further, children should acquire appropriate learning strategies to gain such inner representations of music (to think in sound) and physical/technical fluency. These three fundamental requirements work together: motivation leads to perseverance to acquire and develop learning strategies that result in mastery, which in turn inspires further motivation.

There is a considerable body of research on vocal and instrumental practising among beginners and young pupils in Western classical music (Sloboda et al. 1996; Barry and Hallam 2002; Hallam 1997). Such research has concentrated largely on strategies for learning composed works, strategies for memorisation, strategies for developing interpretation skills of composed works (Hallam 2008) and developing musical literacy (Blix 2012; Hultberg 2011). Efficient use of strategies as well as meta-cognitive activity increase as general musical knowledge and skills accumulate (Barry and Hallam 2002). These studies show that children are able only to a small degree to select effective strategies by themselves without the guidance of a teacher, and they seldom use meta-cognitive strategies in practising.

In line with this position, Blix (2012) suggests that in music literacy acquisition among children, learning strategies cannot be learnt solely through verbal instruction. Strategies must be tested out and rehearsed together with the teacher. Watson

(2015) investigated practice behaviours among music college students with little jazz experience who were given a task in jazz improvisation. The findings indicated that even college students, left to themselves with a task in which they were inexperienced, spent the practising time on inefficient and less relevant practice activities. Put together with Blix' study, Watson's findings suggest that learning strategies do not necessarily emerge naturally and that new learners can benefit from the assistance of a teacher, whether they are young children or older students.

This viewpoint is challenged in a study by Green (2012), in which children of around 11–12 years old were given the task of learning a piece of music from a recording with no guidance about learning strategies. The children developed their own strategies, and some learnt by ear remarkably quick, according to Green. It might be asked, however, whether these self-invented strategies were what an experienced teacher would consider efficient (just as we may ask whether teacher-chosen strategies are always what children would find enjoyable or motivating).

Further, the increasing number of children and adolescents who are autodidacts on popular instruments such as guitar, ukulele, and keyboard through channels that allow for self-direction such as YouTube (Geir Johansen 2014) challenges the view that beginning instrumentalists depend on guidance from a more skilled person. Nonetheless, if YouTube can be considered to have a function comparable to that of a teacher, it is still the case that children utilise a form of guidance of more competent others, even though the child is responsible for seeking this guidance and choosing which ways it will be used.

Children and improvisation

Studies on children learning to improvise have mainly concentrated on the creative musical activities in the context of the compulsory school classroom, which is often oriented towards approaches from free or non-idiomatic improvisation (Beegle 2010; Borgo 2007; Hickey 2009). The rationale behind this orientation is that children are able to be creative and to construct meaning even with only simple tools at hand (Burnard and Kuo 2016; Burnard 2000) and that creative activities should be easily accessible for all children, regardless of music knowledge and skills (Burnard 2000). Further, the free approach allows for a focus on communicative and interactive aspects of the improvisation process rather than technical mastery (Clarke 2012). According to Hickey (2009), improvisation as a school activity should be student-centred and put expressive freedom at its core. This cannot be achieved when teaching idiomatic improvisation such as in jazz, according to Hickey, since learning the objective skills needed for this kind of improvisation is associated with a teacher-centred transmission approach, where the student freedom she advocates is inhibited.

Kannellopoulos (1999) conducted a study of musical improvisation without instruction from an adult among a group of ten-year-old children. After each session, the children discussed their music making with the researcher. He found that the children developed an understanding of musical frameworks, thoughtfulness, and an ability for shared intentionality through socio-musical negotiations.

Kannellopoulos claims: 'These questions had little to do with skills: they had to do with concepts, which are immanent to the nature of music and its making' (ibid., 189).

In line with the argument proposed by Hickey (2009), Kannellopoulos's study clearly shows that children are able to create and engage in musical negotiations without having developed formal skills or using pre-existing materials. In contrast to the view proposed by Hickey (2009), it is claimed that creativity in music will flourish with materials and frameworks from existing traditions (Sawyer 2012), a view that corresponds with the theory of situated creativity (Tanggaard 2014). An interesting point regarding freedom and the use of existing material, is raised by Marsh and Young (2016) in a chapter on children's musical play. They claim that a long-standing assumption about children's spontaneous creativity, both in general and in music, holds 'that young children's play is aimlessly exploratory. However, careful analysis of young children's play activity reveals creative processes of transformation' (ibid., 474). The authors go on to describe how children revisit short motifs or ideas, repeat them, and gradually transform them through elaboration, often using formulae selected from their auditory environment. A central argument is that children absorb various musical expressions they hear around them, from 'adult' and popular music, without becoming passive recipients: 'In utilizing this material for creative purposes, children exert ownership and control over it' (ibid. 477). Blacking (1967, in Marsh and Young 2016) showed that children's songs in the Venda culture were not necessarily easier than the songs sung by adults and that difficult songs may be learned before easier songs by children, 'simply because they have been heard more frequently' (ibid. 474).

Improvisation in instrumental teaching and learning

McPherson (1994) undertook a study in which improvisation skills were tested among instrumental students in high school and correlating factors were sought. The skills were divided into instrumental flow (hesitating or spontaneous), musical syntax (logical or non-logical), creativity (unique or conforming), and musical quality (appealing or non-appealing). Technical skills on the instrument were not correlated with improvisation skills among beginners, nor was gender. In another study, McPherson, Bailey, and Sinclair (1997) investigated various factors that had an impact on different types of skills, such as performing rehearsed music, sight reading (with instrument), playing from memory, playing by ear, and improvisation, as well as the correlation between these skills. The researchers found that improvisation skills were not affected by the technical level or how long the student had been playing. Instead, ability to play by ear was the single factor most strongly connected to improvisation skills. In a literature review, Musco (2010) suggests that while researchers often recommend the inclusion of playing by ear in instrumental lessons, teachers often resist this. This indicates that formal instrumental tuition (by which is most often meant teaching in the Western classical tradition) seldom makes use of playing by ear. It may well follow that improvisation is also avoided in instrumental lessons with children.

In a study by Ryan and Bowden (2013), the researchers addressed the high dropout numbers from instrumental tuition shown in previous research. The intention of the study was to investigate piano teachers' perspectives on 'keeping' the students when they reach an intermediate level. The study revealed that repertoire is a major factor in motivation and teachers' pedagogical choices. A point of interest for my purpose was that, while teachers reported that they perceived jazz and popular music to be the genres their students by far found the most enjoyable and preferable, these were the genre domains *least* presented and utilised by the teachers, who were the ones selecting the repertoire. The study has a potential bias in the genre categories applied, since jazz and popular music were combined into a single category (and in the article described as 'commercial music'), while classical music was subdivided into four categories: baroque, classical, romantic, and twentieth century music. This feature may be symptomatic of the way jazz is perceived by both researchers and piano teachers, who themselves may have a classical background, although neither the researchers' or teachers' backgrounds nor genre-related competence were addressed in the article. Genre background may then be a major reason that piano teachers themselves give little priority to jazz in their teaching, although a lack of competence was not given as a reason for material selection in the article.[6]

I investigated instrumental practising as cultural practices among jazz students in higher music education (Guro G. Johansen 2016). Although early instrumental tuition was not a main topic, the students' musical biographies were addressed. When revisiting the data material, I found that most of the students had received formal tuition from an early age in local music or municipal School of Music and Performing Arts.[7] However, their first encounter with jazz and/or improvisation was often at a later stage, i.e. at the music programme in the gymnasium or in Folk High Schools (from the age of 16 or older), which most of the 13 participants had attended.[8]

There is little information about children learning jazz improvisation in the research literature.[9] Lee and Worthy (2018) describe the common courses of jazz ensembles in North American schools, but these are claimed to be score-centred and tend to not teach improvisation to pupils (Mantie 2008). When the above-mentioned studies are put together, it is fair to assume that teachers with a classical background in general may hesitate to teach jazz repertoire and improvisation on lower levels, and that opportunities to undertake formal tuition in jazz are something students have only when they reach a higher age level. However, to reach a level of mastery for entrance into higher music education one must assume that jazz students have gone through some sort of learning processes. This may then have been through informal and self-directed learning (Green 2002). Further, it may be the case that jazz tuition on the beginner or intermediate level is underreported simply because it has escaped researchers' attention. If it is the case that effective learning strategies should be taught by a more experienced teacher or facilitator for a child to utilise them as research indicates, it is reasonable to assume that many children who sing or play an instrument are missing potentially enjoyable learning experiences with jazz improvisation due to a lack of formal learning opportunities within the genre.

Teaching and learning jazz improvisation in higher education

In the field of jazz education, studies concerning teaching and learning have often investigated either informal learning practices among adults and/or professional musicians or formal learning practices within higher education. Such studies may have limited transfer value for the beginning phases of learning an instrument. Nevertheless, the research on jazz education may be informative about dominating traditions, values, and attitudes regarding learning to improvise within the jazz genre.

How should jazz improvisation be taught and learned? The position regarding teaching and learning improvisation referred to above – that learning technique and genre-related skills inhibits creativity – resonates with arguments in current debates on curriculum in higher jazz education. Historically, there has been a battle within formal jazz education between learning improvisation by ear from copying recordings and learning it from a theoretical chord-scale approach (Gatien 2012; Guro G. Johansen 2014; Prouty 2005; Whyton 2006). As we saw, McPherson, Bailey, and Sinclair (1997) found a positive correlation among intermediate students between the ability to play by ear and the ability to improvise, and this is consistent with the 'oral' position.[10] However, a quantitative study by Ciorba (2009) suggests that knowledge of jazz theory has a significant direct effect on jazz improvisation achievement.

Parsonage, Fadnes, and Taylor (2007) refer to Simon Purcell (2002, in Parsonage, Fadnes, and Taylor 2007), who claims that in the UK there is a tendency among both students and teachers to identify themselves with either a dominant *technicist pedagogy* (ibid. 297), or a more liberal, free improvised, and group-based approach. The technicist approach is stylistically specific and content-based, emphasising correct notes over standard progressions, and this can be aligned with the chord-scale approach mentioned above. The liberal approach, on the other hand, emphasises students' individuality and a personal 'voice'. Parsonage, Fadnes, and Taylor (2007) found that there is a strong and consistent pedagogical tendency toward constructing dichotomies as such, and suggest that such simplistic dichotomies in jazz education exist due to a lack of a substantive critical debate on the implication of various improvisation pedagogies. They express a concern about whether students feel pressured to choose between individualism and creativity on the one hand, or technique and theory on the other. This concern is confirmed by Guro G. Johansen (2014), who found that Scandinavian jazz students actively constructed two main perceptions of learning positions that correspond with a dichotomous way of thinking. Depending on which position they placed themselves in, they described their own practice as superior to the other.

The academic, technicist, and theoretical-oriented approach to teaching and learning improvisation is held to be disconnected from 'real jazz' and thus inauthentic (Gatien 2012; Guro G. Johansen 2014). Derek Bailey (1992) puts a similar viewpoint this way, when he claims that despite the large number of instructional jazz books, few musicians have actually learned to improvise from them. On the other hand, Parsonage, Fadnes, and Taylor (2007, 298) claim that 'the dominance

of the "liberal" over the "technical" may be just as problematic'. Within the context of formal education, it may be unrealistic and inefficient to avoid verbal or written communication altogether.

However, the references in the literature to 'theoretical/technicist' as one extremity and 'liberal/authentic' as the other may simply reflect a tacit adoption by the author of dichotomies as a basic, Western cultural frame of reference (and no researcher can 'stand outside' this cultural frame). In many cases, little is said about the *how* question*:* How is 'theory' or technique taught and learnt? Could not chords and scales as teaching content be taught through practical teaching methods and activities? On the other hand, could not the topic of 'personal voice' and individual, authentic musical expression be taught in a verbal (as opposed to 'practical', since a verbal teaching approach may be considered 'theoretical') and intellectual/philosophical way? In line with this reflection, Parsonage, Fadnes, and Taylor (2007) put forth the view that reflection, knowledge, and verbalisation of musical processes, if integrated in the musical action and creation of improvisation, can actually enhance students' performance abilities. In a Finnish study (Huovinen, Tenkanen, and Kuusinen 2010), a theoretical teaching approach (emphasising the chords and scale relation) was compared to a 'dramaturgical' approach (with emphasis on tension-release, density, call-responses, etc). The researchers found that both approaches enhanced the students' abilities to improvise, although with different results. They concluded that no single improvisation pedagogy can be claimed to be superior and that educators should embrace variation in their approaches. In other words, *integrating* different approaches in improvisation, instead of choosing between them, seems to be a fruitful path for formal jazz education.

Several studies on jazz students in higher education show that they are often autonomous in their learning paths in relation to teachers and institutions. Autonomy has furthermore been connected to creative agency (Guro G. Johansen 2014) and intrinsic motivation (de Bézenac and Swindells 2009). In this light, it is interesting to note that one of the prevailing tensions when looking at the literature on improvisation among children and on higher jazz education together is the one between objective skills and individual freedom. Based on this review, I suggest that the delicate balance between objective skills and traditional material on one hand, and the individual learner's need for agency and autonomy on the other is of major importance for further research on the teaching and learning of improvisation. Although I am aware of the danger of giving properties such as 'creativity', 'intrinsic motivation', and 'autonomy' an unquestioned value as inherently good (Barrett 2012), I believe that research that illuminates the relationships between these properties and learning practices in jazz can help us better understand how such practices can enable these properties. However, since research on jazz pedagogy is primarily concerned with advanced levels (in higher music education), and research on beginning phases of instrumental learning among children almost exclusively covers tuition in the classical pedagogical tradition, it is clear that we know very little about jazz musicians' early training.

Overview of the book

So far, I have provided important backgrounds for the rest of the book. I started with a narrative from my first encounter with Improbasen, an observation of a lesson, which illustrated a central theme of the book: the value, but also the inherent paradox, of a child learning to improvise within a tradition associated with 'adult' knowledge. The theoretical frameworks and central concepts of the study were briefly explained, followed by a short review covering four main themes: studies on performance practices in jazz and improvised music, on instrumental tuition for children, on children and improvisation, and on higher jazz education.

Chapter 2 outlines my research process when studying Improbasen, covering the basic principles of ethnography and trailing research, the research questions, and how the fieldwork and the processing and analyses of the fieldwork data were carried out. The title of Chapter 3, 'A fungus system: roles and rules in Improbasen', refers to Engeström's (2015) metaphor of mycorrhiza to describe loose networks with an ad hoc nature. In this chapter, I outline the way Improbasen is organised with the intention of providing context for the following chapters. The chapter provides insight into a highly successful ad hoc organization consisting of the main teacher, the pupils, and parents in volunteer roles. I will show how the idealistic visions of one person and the genuine effort of involved parties drive the activity forward. These efforts all centre around Improbasen's main object: to teach children to improvise in the jazz tradition. The fourth chapter is mainly presenting results from my conversations with the children in the study. It displays children's perspectives of what jazz and improvisation is and what it means to them to learn within a jazz and improvisation practice, and it discusses what children's own verbalisations can reveal about their meaning making and identity development in music.

In Chapter 5 the core subject matter in the instrumental lessons will be described; that is, the selection and structure of musical content. This content mainly consists of tunes from the jazz standard repertoire and what is mostly referred to as the 'chord-scale approach'. From their early beginnings of learning the instrument, the children learn Roman numeral analysis of chord progressions and their relations to chord scales. Simultaneously they learn to play this material on the instrument and to improvise with it immediately, in context. Where songs, chords, scales, and grooves comprise the learning content that is explicitly addressed, instrumental lessons at Improbasen simultaneously contain a range of knowledge dimensions that are crucial for learning to improvise in jazz, such as rhythmic and interactive dimensions. These are worked with in an implicit and contextual way, and in Chapter 6 I use the metaphor of a 'rhythmic scaffold' to describe implicit aspects of teaching and learning.

In Chapter 7, I will demonstrate and discuss an important feature of Improbasen, which is its arrangements of opportunities for performance and interplay. This activity happens on many levels, creating an impact for not only Improbasen's regular pupils, but for an international community of music educators working with children across the world. This is made possible by a shared repertoire of tunes

and that they have all learned the implicit codes for interplay in a jazz ensemble. In Chapter 8 I discuss a common criticism of Improbasen specifically and creative music pedagogy in general. It is often claimed that jazz is an adult genre, thus the children at Improbasen are not playing *their own* music, and hence, they are not authentic. Using Improbasen as example, I argue that competent and experienced adults have a responsibility to provide children with tools for participating in established practices, including musical ones, and empower children to take part in established, socio-historical and 'mature' practices.

Chapter 9 summarises the most important findings and key points from the study and discusses applications for music pedagogy directed at children in general, and specifically instrumental tuition for beginners. I argue that improvisation should be a core subject matter of music pedagogy and instrumental tuition and that children may benefit in the long run from acquiring cultural-historic knowledge and skills to give them direction on a long-term basis (Sawyer 2012). I highlight the musical scaffolding through the constant sounding presence of groove and form and the rigging of collaborative situations for children to experience interplay. Discussions of improvisation belong in a wider, societal context, and learning to improvise may be seen as both a metaphoric model and a concrete facility for learning to overcome fears of difference (Nicholls 2012). In this respect, Improbasen is a particular interesting example with its international outreach, which creates possibilities for children from different continents to meet and interact without another common language than musical improvisation.

Notes

1 *Watermelon Man* is composed by Herbie Hancock, original from the record *Takin' Off* (1962). Blue Note.
2 The numbers refer to scale degrees on the respective scale: 1 represents the root of a scale, 2 the second, and so on. This symbol system allowed me to rapidly jot down short melodic patterns or phrases when, in an observation setting, I did not have access to blank music sheet paper.
3 *You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To* is a jazz standard composed in 1943 by Cole Porter.
4 *Like Someone In Love* is a jazz standard composed in 1944 by Jimmy van Heusen.
5 Translated literally, the name Improbasen means The Improv Base. As the Norwegian Improbasen is a proper name and can be considered as a trademark both in Norway and abroad, I have chosen to keep its proper name in the book.
6 The possible limitations of a classical background for teachers is addressed by de Bézenac and Swindells (2009). They claim that classical students in higher music education are less likely than their jazz and pop peers to regard their genre background as a limitation to teaching competence in genres other than their own.
7 In Chapter 3, I will explain and give context for this typical Nordic culture educational institution.
8 A 'Folk high school' is a typical Nordic phenomenon. They are private boarding schools with an open and often practical curriculum, no grades, and no exams. They often have specific profiles, and Music Folk High Schools are common. Students in the Nordic countries typically attend such a school for one year between the Upper Secondary School and the University level, to indulge in their favourite activity with less pressure than in the formal educational system.

9 Although the lack of studies of children learning jazz improvisation indicates that such practices are seldom, in my two-year ethnography following Improbasen I have been introduced to or been told about teachers or administrators at such institutions or tuition practices in other countries, through Odd André. However, it has fallen outside the scope of this study to do an international review of practices similar to Improbasen or to study the ones I came across with the same in-depth analysis to make comparison with Improbasen meaningful.

10 In this context, I deliberately use 'oral' and not 'aural'. In performing music, 'aural' can refer to any aspect of the activity that involves listening and perception of sound, including when interpreting music from a score. 'Oral' refers to a particular feature of music cultures where learning primarily happens 'by ear', and not from a score.

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2 Researching Improbasen

The aims of this study have been to document, analyse, and critically discuss the pedagogy and learning processes at Improbasen, with the purpose of making knowledge about tuition in jazz improvisation for children and adolescents available, as well as contributing to an increased reflection of the topic in the fields of music education practice and research. I have *not* intended to determine what constitutes 'effectiveness' in teaching or learning strategies, for such an approach presupposes an existing answer to an underlying question: effectiveness *for what?* As underlined in the first chapter, the primary focus of this book is the perspective of the participants: to understand their motives and meaning making within the different contexts Improbasen and its participants operate. Building from this understanding, analytic and critical perspectives can be employed by holding the study's findings up against existing knowledge and discourses from the literature on musical learning in children, instrumental tuition, theory on improvisation and creativity, and jazz education.

Ethnographic trailing research

I have conceptualised the study design as an *ethnographic trailing research study*, a combination of trailing research epistemology and ethnomethodological strategies for generating and analysing data. These two approaches share some central principles, but they also differ in several respects. The differences are particularly salient when it comes to the purpose and design of the methodology, the role of the researcher, and how the relation between researcher and participants is viewed. Therefore, combining ethnography and trailing research in this study required a careful methodological prioritisation.

In traditional ethnography, the researcher tries to get as close to the centre of the activity as possible, but wants to avoid acting in an intrusive way. It is a common ideal to prioritise the subjects' worldview and perspectives (Eriksen 2012; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Monson 1996). These ideals can be difficult to live up to, for several reasons. First, there is often a discrepancy between the role one *ideally* plans to take as ethnographer and the various roles one is *ascribed or put in* by the participants in the activity, since one cannot control other people's agendas (Wadel 2014). Second, the ethnographical ideal of giving primacy to the

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participants' worldviews can be difficult to combine with a critical distance and analysis. Improbasen is a well-known and profiled practice (especially in Norway, but also in other Nordic countries); studying it would involve working closely with a few, easily identifiable participants of which many would be children; and I knew that the pedagogical approach was potentially controversial. These issues required a high degree of sensitivity and proximity to participants, but without violating the integrity of the practice and the participants I still needed to establish a position as researcher that enabled me to present critical perspectives. Therefore, it was reasonable to combine the study's ethnographic methods with an epistemology derived from trailing research (Baklien 2004; Finne, Levin, and Nilssen 1995; Olsen and Lindøe 2004).

Trailing research is itself a hybrid, developed from both evaluation research and action research. Evaluation research is often designed as effect studies, where the goal is to evaluate consequences of a certain project or incentive. The evaluation seeks to illuminate the processes that characterise an accomplishment and to judge the result. The ideal researcher must be objective and 'stand outside' the project under investigation. Action research is similar to evaluation research in the interest in results and effects, but is different in that the action researcher actively intervenes in the participants' activity for effects to come about (Baklien 2004).

In trailing research, the researcher follows processes that stretch over time, analysing intentions, activities, processes, and results belonging to the case under study. But unlike the ideal in evaluation research, the researcher is not a neutral observer on the outside. They are active participants with a commitment to influence these processes over time. In this sense, trailing research is *formative*. But unlike action research, the researcher does not intervene in trailing research, nor do they carry responsibility for events or strategies that are decided on. Instead, there is an emphasis on a mutual *dialogue* between participants and the researcher during the research process. The participants bring their first-hand experiences to the interactive setting, and the researcher brings their interpretations, new perspectives, or analyses 'back' to the participants, as a basis for further dialogue – a process called *double hermeneutics* (Baklien 2004). This dialogue approach presupposes shared reflection and mutual respect of the worldviews of the participants, but also an agreement of allowing a critical, interrogative attitude.

The dialogical ideal can be both a source of understanding and interpretation and at the same time an instrument to communicate the newly achieved understandings and interpretations. In line with this ideal, my fieldwork at Improbasen soon took the form of a collaboration, particularly with Odd André Elveland. His extensive experiences combined with my theoretically informed interpretations continuously fed into an ongoing discussion and mutual reflection. As stated in Chapter 1, I have been interested in illuminating a spectrum from the 'inner' micro-interactions on lessons and ensemble interplay, to the 'outer' structure and interaction between participants with different roles and positions. These are also common interests in trailing research, where participants' attitudes, values, competencies, intentions,

motivations, and agendas are all aspects that inform about the practice (Baklien 2004). In trying to understand how these everyday elements interact in a cohesive whole, I frame them as elements in an activity system (Engeström 2001, 2015). An activity system is constituted by the relations between subjects, the object (or problem space), resources, the distribution of roles among different members in a community, and rules, values, and norms. These norms constitute a 'script' for the participants' or subjects' scope of action.

Hence, central foci in the study of Improbasen were how the teacher and pupils' perceived the problem space to which teaching and learning strategies were directed; what constituted the available resources utilised by the teacher and pupils; how the shared practice was understood from different participants' perspectives; how the activity was organised and roles were distributed; and what rules, values, and norms guided teaching, learning, or administrative support.

In a period of two years, from January 2015 to January 2017, I followed the participants in Improbasen in various situations, aiming at covering as many everyday situations as possible, including weekly lessons, ensemble rehearsals, sound checks, concerts and performances, travels, meetings, and so forth. The primary participant group consisted of Odd André and ten pupils of various instruments, ages, and levels, both females and males. In addition, secondary participants were included, such as some of the parents and other pupils with whom my primary participants interacted in bands, in rehearsals, and so on.

In the beginning of the project, I was mostly interested in the individual training in improvisation and the selection of learning content (jazz standards, jazz harmony and scales). However, through observations of different social settings a much broader picture was drawn: I saw that learning opportunities were afforded through a large variety of participatory contexts that the pupils were put in. It also became clear that a number of key persons enabled the rigging of these learning contexts. These were mainly parents taking on different facilitating roles, such as carrying and setting up drum sets, helping children backstage and taking the roles as emcees or stage managers for concerts, writing applications for funding, et cetera. Not the least were the children learning from each other. By seeing Improbasen as a loosely organised community or activity system (Engeström 2015), I was better able to understand how the 'inner' and 'outer' activities were connected in order to support and sustain the activity system.

Recruiting participants

Odd André is the study's main participant and functioned as the gatekeeper that helped me recruit pupils based on my criteria for selection. The main criterion for selection was variation: in gender, instrument, age, and level. I emphasised that I wanted not only those pupils Odd André considered most skilled and successful but a variety of learning abilities and achievement, which he acknowledged. However, Odd André was the one who had the overview of all the pupils, and I could not control the selection process in every aspect.

I continued recruiting pupils gradually and successively over the first year in order to achieve enough variation in the data material. When Odd André made a suggestion and I had decided to invite a child to participate, he contacted the parents, informed them about the research project, and asked them informally. When they had signalled their interest and given an informal consent, I gave them the formal information in an informed consent form, either physically at the child's first lesson or sent electronically. All who were invited agreed to participate.

Table 2.1 gives an overview of 11 primary pupil participants that were recruited, with pseudonyms and when they were recruited. Which instrument the children played was the factor with most variation, as this was the easiest to control. I had not more than two pupils playing the same instrument. Regarding age and level, I also got a relatively varied group composition. Gender was the category with least variation: eight of the 11 children were girls and three were boys. The pupil group had most females, and in order to get enough variation on instruments and age, I could not have more than three boys in the study. However, the numbers of girls and boys in the study do approximately reflect the gender distribution at Improbasen (although this is continuously shifting). Unfortunately, Simon quit at Improbasen soon after I started the fieldwork and was thus taken out of the participant group.

Ethnographic material

In order to be able to capture as many facets of the activity of Improbasen as possible, I have used a number of data gathering strategies and formats. They consist of formal, semi-structured interviews with Odd André, the children, and some of their parents, and informal conversations with the same. I have used participatory observation of individual instrumental lessons, band rehearsals, and performances. Often the means to document and produce data were twofold: by making video recordings and writing field notes. These two strategies supplemented each other,

Table 2.1 Pupil participants

Name (pseudonym)	*Was recruited*	*Age when recruited*	*Instrument*	*Gender*
Anne	January 2015	9	Bass	Female
Christine	January 2015	12	Saxophone	Female
Sara	January 2015	7	Drums	Female
Thomas	January 2015	9	Saxophone	Male
Elisabeth	March 2015	11	Piano	Female
Helene	March 2015	12	Guitar	Female
Sigrid	August 2015	9	Violin	Female
Simon	September 2015	14	Trumpet	Male
Hanne	January 2016	9	Saxophone	Female
Inger	June 2016	9	Drums	Female
Tobias	October 2016	13	Piano	Male

since video recordings captured an actual course of events and enabled me to study them for details I hadn't noticed when they happened. Field notes, on the other hand, enabled me to combine observations with immediate interpretations and reflections which I drew on later, and once they were digitalised, they were easily searchable for keywords when I needed to find a particular segment on a video.

I also shadowed (Czarniawska 2007) Odd André on other activities, such as meetings with collaborating cultural institutions in Norway, or when Odd André was hired as a guest instructor on weekend workshops for children in school bands or groups of music teachers.

Roles and relations

The exploratory nature of the study required that I got access to as many situations in and connected to Improbasen as possible. My more or less constant presence in periods demanded that we established a great deal of trust to normalise the presence of the researcher (Dahlberg 2013). Although a participant can become gradually more familiar with being observed and followed, it is not likely that they are able to forget or ignore this factor altogether.

As researcher, I intended to be non-intrusive, and I hoped that once the participants were used to my presence they would naturally get on with business as usual. But the shadowing researcher can never become an unnoticeable fly on the wall, nor is this necessarily desirable. I often experienced that participants, such as children, approached me when I thought they weren't aware of me in the room. I then often worried that their awareness of my presence affected their actions, but on the positive side their initiatives towards me sometimes gave me valuable information and insights, and not the least they indicated that the children saw me as a trustworthy adult.

Another aspect that may affect the relation between participants and researcher is that participants may have their own agendas and interests in being researched (Wadel 2014). Hence, they may deliberately take roles as 'research objects' and display what *they* think is important for the researcher to see, but which may not necessarily coincide with the researcher's priorities. They may also have certain expectations towards the researcher and interact accordingly (Wadel 2014). How the researcher and participants understand the relations between them may indirectly affect what both parties say and do, and thus, these understandings become part of the data. As I will give examples of in the following sections, both Odd André, the children, and other adult participants ascribed me with various roles, depending on their own roles in relation to Improbasen. But instead of trying to avoid such processes of social negotiation between researcher and participants, I acknowledged that they happened. I tried to be alert to any strategic positioning from participants towards me, and to understand why they acted towards me in the ways they did since this in itself could reveal important information.

Talking to Odd André

The first spark to initiate the study was when I contacted Odd André by e-mail, asking if he was interested in participating in a research study of Improbasen

undertaken by me. As I mentioned in the Preface, he responded quickly with a positive answer, which indicates that he had a strong interest in the research study. This is an often-neglected feature of ethnographic research (Wadel 2014). Given that Improbasen is very much centred around the teaching practice and philosophy of one person, the study relied on him being willing to invest time and effort and to accept exposure and a certain degree of personal risk. Therefore, it has been important to balance our respective interests, which meant to acknowledge and respect his potential agendas. I was relying on Odd André's motivation to participate in order to carry out the study, while it was important for me to communicate that my motive for doing the study was not to merely describe or promote Improbasen, but to approach it from a critical, analytical perspective. This premise was both appreciated and encouraged by Odd André. A condition for this balance was to establish an openness and mutual trust. As our relation evolved, we also established a space for professional sharing of experience and knowledge within jazz pedagogy. At times I found it difficult to handle my role balancing between critical distance and loyalty. Several factors contributed to maintaining a critical stance. First, the method of the 'double hermeneutical' dialogue was established from the beginning, where critical examination of a topic became a natural impulse in our conversations. Second, continuously writing reflective notes enabled me to check in on my ability to distance myself.

In periods, we would conduct interviews with only a couple of weeks or even days between. Then one interview would hold repetitions and references to previous ones, where the reflection on topics we talked about continued to be developed. Hence, the row of interviews with him sometimes felt like one long and ongoing conversation instead of each containing unique, new information.

Odd André and I also used the chatting function via the Messenger application, which functioned as a form of remote ethnography (Postill 2016). Using the chat, I could approach Odd André with spontaneous ideas or questions without having to wait for an opportunity to set up an interview, and he could reply whenever it suited him. He also often used it as a means for telling me about events or sharing instant reflections. This contributed to a high degree of immediacy and continuity in our communication.

Talking to children

As an ethnographer who followed Improbasen's participants around for two years, I aimed at being around in the everyday life of their practice, in order to 'explain facts while preserving the manifold richness of [children's] lives' (Graue and Walsh 1998, 16–17). I was highly aware of the danger that they could perceive my frequent presence as invading, so I wanted to be careful about not taking too much of their time for interviews. The time and place for interviews had to be scheduled the way it suited the participants. Sometimes I visited the children in their homes, and sometimes I was able to arrange a short conversation with them in a break between rehearsal or backstage on concert venues when other children had soundcheck.

Since five of the ten children were recruited from the beginning of the study, I was able to conduct two or more interviews with each. The other five gave only one interview each. I made a rough interview guide inspired by the foci of a study by McPherson, Davidson, and Evans (2016). Table 2.2 shows the interview guide that I used for the first interviews with the children.

Table 2.2 Interview guide for talking to children

Interview guide for children's interviews	
Topic	*Subquestions*
Start of playing Relation to instrument	When did you start playing? Why did you start? Why your instrument? What is characteristic of playing your instrument compared to other instruments? What do you like about playing your instrument?
Perceptions of jazz and improvisation	What kind of music do you listen to? What is jazz? What is improvisation? What do you like about – playing jazz? – improvisation? Can you remember one time where you were particularly content (with your playing)?
	Is there anything about improvisation that you don't like? What is it one has to learn in order to be able to improvise?
Motivation and dedication	Compared to other interests that you have, how important are these compared to playing an instrument?
	Compared to other interests that you have, how good do you think you are on your instrument? (What do you think you are best at/what do you think is most fun?)
	Do you think it is useful to play you instrument? What is it useful for?
	Among individual lessons, band rehearsals, concerts, and practising at home, what do you like the most?
Aspiration/ future motivation and identification as musician	For how long do you think you will play your instrument?
	How important is it for you to become better/develop on your instrument?
	What kind of/how much effort do you think you need to develop further?
	What do you think is the difference between what professional musicians do/are able to do and what you do/are able to do?
Practising and learning	If you want to develop further, what things do you want to learn/do you plan to learn?
	If you think about yourself as better than you are now (for example, in 2–3 years), what is it that you have learned in the future that you don't think you know yet?
	How much do you practise at home? (Every day? For how long each time?)
	What do you practise? How is your practising undertaken?
	Are you able to improvise (when practising) at home?

I used the interview guide pragmatically, since relevance for each child was prioritised; I wanted to get the children talking about what aspects of their playing and learning *they* wanted to talk about. I also tried to encourage talk initiatives from them during the conversations because I assumed that such initiatives were telling the most about their individual meaning making and thus would give me the richest material.

Three of the interviews were conducted as Stimulated Recall interviews, where the child and I watched segments from video recordings from lessons and performances as points of departure for the conversation. Each time I discussed with the child first if there were situations they knew I had recorded that they wanted to watch. The segments selected by me were chosen on the basis of their content, sometimes because a segment represented a *typical* situation, and other times because it showed an unusual activity. Two of the children, Thomas and Anne, are siblings, and one interview was conducted with the two of them together, but both of them were interviewed individually as well.

All interviews were recorded, either with a Zoom audio recorder or with a video camera for the Stimulated Recall interviews and for the group interview with Thomas and Anne. Table 2.3. is an alphabetical list that shows which child I interviewed, where, when, how, and the age of the child.

Interviews with children differed a lot in length. The shortest lasted seven minutes, while the longest, one of the Stimulated Recall interviews, lasted for 62 minutes. On average the child interviews lasted 20–30 minutes. The younger the child, the shorter the interviews were. I was cautious about not stretching their ability to focus if I sensed that they lost concentration or seemed uncomfortable. Children also responded differently to the interview situation. Some spoke easily with elaborate and articulated answers, while others were more quiet and with less initiative in the conversation.

During my fieldwork, the children often behaved towards me as an expert, as when they asked about my opinions and judgements of the activity or asked me for advice on various matters. I sometimes had the impression that they saw me as a school or music teacher. To children, a teacher is perhaps a more comprehensible role for an adult who asks questions about their practising than the abstract role of 'researcher'. The potential role of teacher worried me, because I sensed that the children might then take on the complementary role of pupils. A pupil – teacher relationship comes with a certain action repertoire that could make them hold back their sharing of inner thoughts and understandings. This issue has both ethical and epistemological bearings, and I will come back to discussions from both perspectives.

Talking to parents and other stakeholders

Only Odd André, the selected children, and one parent have had the formal status of being participants in the research study. Nevertheless, it has been crucial for me as ethnographer to talk to people in the background to get supplementary information and perspectives from many angles. Therefore, I have talked to parents and

Table 2.3 Overview of interviews with children

Name (pseudonym)	*Instrument*	*Time and place for the interview*	*Type of interview*	*Age at the time of the interview*
Anne	double bass	May 2015, at Improbasen's studio	Semi-structured	10
		December 2016, at her home	Semi-structurd, with instrument (individually, and with her brother Thomas)	11
Christine	alto sax	April 2015, at Improbasen's studio	Semi-structured	13
		October 2015, at Improbasen's studio	Semi-structured	13
		April 2016, at her home	Semi-structured Stimulated Recall	14
Elisabeth	piano	May 2015, at Improbasen's studio	Semi-structured	12
		January 2017, at her home	Semi-structured Stimulated Recall, using instrument	14
Hannah	alto sax	January 2017, at her home	Semi-structured	11
Helene	guitar	August 2015, in a park by the outdoor stage at Oslo Jazz festival	Semi-structured	13
Inger	drums	August 2016, in a hallway at Sapporo Jazz Camp, Japan	Semi-structured	10
Sara	drums	August 2015, in a hallway at a concert venue	Semi-structured	8
		April 2016, at her home	Semi-structured Stimulated Recall	8
Sigrid	violin	October 2015, at Improbasen's studio	Semi-structured	9
Thomas	alto sax	August 2015, at the Norwegian Academy of Music	Semi-structured	10
		October 2015, at Improbasen's studio	Semi-structured	10
		December 2016, at his home	Semi-structurd, with instrument (individually, and with his sister Anne)	11
Tobias	piano	January 2017, at his home	Semi-structured	12

other people when and where I have had access to them, and if they agreed to talk to me. Some of these conversations were formally planned and recorded in agreement with the respective interviewees, and in others I just took notes, depending on what they were comfortable with.

I am using the data gathered in these conversations for two main purposes: to supplement my understanding of the children's activity and learning processes and to get information about Improbasen as an organisation, as parents play a vital part in the latter.

Sometimes at concerts, adult members of the audience approached me when they found out I was researching Improbasen, and in these instances it was clear that they ascribed me with different roles and thus expectations towards me. Sometimes they wanted to ask me about the research study or my opinion about Improbasen, and sometimes they wanted to share their opinions. In a couple of instances, bureaucrats from music organizations in Oslo talked to me about Improbasen as if I were a policy maker, and in a way that indicated that they assumed we had a mutual interest in promoting Improbasen as a positive cultural force.

Sometimes I experienced these instances as difficult, since I had not asked for these people's opinions, and I was unsure of what they expected from me. When such conversations happened in an informal mingling context, I felt that rules for polite social behaviour collided with norms for how a researcher should behave. In a fluctuating conversations with strangers, it is normally not appropriate to indulge in critical discussions of a topic, and I often found myself striving for social equilibrium by searching for points of agreement. At times these situations made me feel uncomfortable due the confusion of roles (Wadel 2014). However, despite the felt discomfort, these situations turned out useful as they did inform me about what could be assumed to be general attitudes towards Improbasen among adults.

Analysis and presentation

The high number of video recordings and interviews required me to be economical with how they were processed. All interviews with the children and parents were transcribed verbatim. This was particularly important due to the nature of children's talk, where it was important to capture their exact phrasings. Also, the number of interviews with children and parents was relatively low, which made verbatim transcription an achievable task. The results from the parents' interviews are mainly presented in Chapter 3, and the children's interviews form the material for Chapter 4.

The interviews with Odd André were treated differently, since the number of interviews with him was high and it would have been impossible to transcribe these in the same detailed manner. For some of the interviews I wrote summaries or I took notes of the main points while listening through sound recordings. Another reason for this treatment was that these interviews functioned more as a continuous discussion than isolated interviews with separate topics, as previously mentioned.

Transcriptions were thematically categorised (Braun and Clarke 2006), using the software HyperResearch. This enabled me to do cross-searches in the material

according to name of participant or thematic category and thus to sort text segments into the overall themes that became the division into chapters.

All video recordings of lessons were filed with date and name of pupil, and recordings of rehearsals and performances were filed with date and title of the event. The high number of hours of recordings prevented me from analysing them all in detail. As mentioned, field notes I made simultaneously were used as means to retrieve recorded segments that I decided to transcribe and analyse. Hence, video recordings were supplementary to material in text format such as field notes and interview transcriptions, but they enabled me to go into the finer details of multi-modal interaction in selected lessons, rehearsals, or performances (Norris 2016). Often, the teacher–pupil communication on individual lessons were non-verbal and primarily musical, and for some segments I have therefore considered musical utterances the main communicative mode as a basis for analysing interaction. Most often, I considered the whole of multi-layered interactive operations more important to depict than actual notes in musical segments. In a few music transcriptions I have incorporated talk and gestures into the score, but for the most part I have chosen to merge music, talk, gestures, and gaze into descriptive pieces of text: the vignettes.

Vignettes are used as a form of representation inspired by narrative inquiry (Riessman 2011). Narratives are not chronological retellings of stories (Riessman 2011); rather, shorter narratives in the form of vignettes 'are snapshots or mini-movies of a setting, a person, or an event. They tell a story that illustrates an interpretive theme' (Graue and Walsh 1998, 220). Thus, the vignettes I have created are the result of interpretation and constructed by using a combination of information from field notes, interviews, and video recordings. Here I have highlighted certain features and toned others down, with the purpose of putting the respective theme in relief. This way, I hope to give the reader a sensation of the musical sound and the atmosphere in the room, partly because these dimensions hold important information about positions, motives, and processes of teaching and learning, and partly because I hope the vignettes create an interesting story to read.

It has not been possible to provide a full descriptive report of two years of ethnography. Rather, my purpose has been to crystallise (Riessman 2011) the main themes and use them for discussing the big theme – children learning jazz improvisation – in a broader perspective. This is not to say that the non-reported conversations, encounters, and events were not useful. On the contrary, all the ethnographical data I produced has contributed in this crystallising process, in informing me about what was significant and confirming, adjusting, or nuancing how elements of significance should be understood.

Ethical challenges

The study has had several ethical challenges, and ethical strategies have been crucial to undertake in all its phases. The study has been approved by the Norwegian Data Protection Authority. In the following, I will present various problems I faced and how I met them.

Ethical undertakings with children and parents

In a research project with children, there are several challenges or pitfalls of ethical character. Graue and Walsh (1998) underscore the importance of doing no harm in research with children, a principle that calls for constant sensitivity for their experiences. As previously mentioned, all the children had given a written, formal consent signed by their parent. However, the experience of being researched is likely to bring up feelings that are unforeseen, especially for children, and I found that their permission was something that needed constant renegotiation in real social situations.

First, being present on children's instrumental lessons can be experienced as intimidating, where they potentially put their shortcomings on display. Previously I mentioned the risk that the children may have perceived me as having a kind of teacher role. In interviews, I found this issue to be an ethical problem, since they could potentially perceive my questions as a test of knowledge. If children feel they don't know what is expected of them or feel they will be failing what they perceive as a test, they may experience it as a threat to their integrity and employ a range of strategies to hide what they may think is their lack of knowledge (Blix 2012). I was aware of this danger and tried to compensate by constantly working on establishing trust, 'hanging around' backstage at concerts and in waiting time during band rehearsals and sound checks, trying to be a positive person who showed interest in how they were, and expressing my joy of hearing them play. I tried to adjust the way I acted towards them according to how they spontaneously approached me; I took more initiatives towards children who tended to greet me with a hug than those who appeared reserved when they saw me.

In interviews, I underscored that they could say whatever they wanted and that I was interested in hearing their opinions if they had any. Even if they did not think of interviews as a knowledge test, there was still a risk that my questions could render in them a feeling of being incompetent or that they feared I would see them as such. If a child during a conversation seemed to resign in a kind of 'I don't know' mode, I was cautious to change the subject into something I thought they were more able or motivated to talk about, to avoid making them insecure.

However, I didn't always succeed, such as one time when I interviewed one of the youngest children. I kept asking questions like 'What is jazz?', 'How do you know how to play that?', and 'Do you remember what you think about when you play in a concert?', most of which were probably too difficult to put into words for the child. Her voice became quieter and quieter in repeating 'I don´t know, really'. But it was not until I visited the video recording of this interview and watched her literally slide under the table that I realised how my questions possibly had made her feel incompetent instead of doing what I should have: helped her to articulate her tacit experiences.

I also asked the children for permission to pose a question or video record them in situations where this was not planned beforehand. It never happened that they refused, but it may be the case that they did not feel they had a choice. This relates again to how they may have perceived me – if I was seen as a teacher in

their eyes, then children's socialisation to accept what teachers suggest may have prompted them to say yes. Nevertheless, when I asked them to demonstrate things in interviews, such as to sing or play something for me, their reactions were varied. One pupil did say no when I asked them to sing, whereas others seemed eager to show me.

I also asked the children during interviews how they felt about having a camera present during lessons and concerts, which none said any negative about. Again, they may have felt that they did not have any choice. Therefore, I also asked Odd André if he noticed any difference in their behaviour. He said that he sensed they were slightly distracted by the camera to begin with, but after a while they seemed to have forgotten about it. One parent told me that their child had been worried about my filming one day because the child had worn what they thought was an ugly pair of pants. This had been serious to the child at the moment, but they were able to put it aside as soon as the lesson started, the parent said. After hearing this, I was reminded that what may concern children are not necessarily the things adults expect, and therefore our request for consent may not ask the questions that are important for children.

All the children and other persons referred to have been assigned pseudonyms. The children are identified by age, instrument, and gender. I interviewed or talked informally to several parents. Since parents are more closely connected to Improbasen and therefore easier to identify than, for example, peripheral persons such as other pedagogues I encountered, I have hidden parents' identities to a higher degree. For the most part, I avoid revealing the gender, occupation, and place of living of parents I am quoting. I have also avoided other identifiers such as 'parent A, parent B' so as not to connect statements to one particular person or their respective child. I have only revealed what particular role a parent had when this information is relevant to the meaning of what is said. The parents I have quoted have been given the opportunity to read through the transcript and comment, and all the material that is used with reference to parents has been approved.

Ethical undertakings with Odd André

In jazz tuition and education circles in the Nordic countries, Odd André is well-known. To carry out research in such a case involves ethical considerations of different kinds than when participants are anonymised. Therefore, the previously addressed need for mutual trust could not be overrated. As a point of departure, Odd André and I shared a common interest in spreading information about Improbasen. One might assume that this compensates for the ethical problem connected with identification. However, the agendas behind our respective interests may have differed, as previously mentioned. This creates two perhaps contradictory ethical obligations. On one hand, there is the responsibility towards the general public and the research community for doing honest and critical research (Finne, Levin, and Nilssen 1995). On the other hand, I have taken very seriously the responsibility to not undermine Odd André's integrity or harm his practice. The principle of dialogue within trailing research (Finne, Levin, and Nilssen 1995;

Baklien 2004) has contributed to minimising this potential tension, in the sense that I have raised problematic issues and critical perspectives during my interactions with Odd André – and not waited until the analysis phase. There, such issues have undergone a joint reflection where he has presented his perspective to them. These perspectives have been incorporated in what I consider the findings. Thus, the ethical balance mentioned above has been maintained through the ideal in trailing research to constructively contribute to change; sometimes I adjusted my views, and other times he adjusted his practice as a result of these discussions.

However, the dialogic nature of the research process would not be enough alone to maintain Odd André's integrity. In addition, he has been given the opportunity to read through and comment on preliminary texts such as chapter drafts and manuscripts for conference presentations, as well as final versions of all the chapters that contains material where he is represented (Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8). I have ensured him that I would not use information he was uncomfortable with. He has not asked me to remove anything, but has corrected information or interpretations that I had misrepresented and suggested rephrasing a few places to strengthen a point where I have quoted him. We have not always agreed on interpretations I have made in the text, so I want to underscore that the selected perspectives, discussions, and final results are my responsibility.

Epistemological challenges

Epistemological challenges are connected to the quality and justification of the chosen methods for producing trustworthy and meaningful knowledge (Finne, Levin, and Nilssen 1995). One major source of information about children's attitudes and experiences has been conversation: talking with them. However, children may not have language to articulate their experiences, emotions, thoughts, or opinions, and interviewing children was sometimes challenging from the perspective of validity. It is not necessarily easy for a child to articulate verbally what first of all is experiential and not verbal, especially within a conversation context, often detached from the practical context where these experiences are formed.

There was also a risk that they would under-explain various issues (Green 2002) if they thought they should not have to explain them to a knowledgeable adult. Therefore, I repeatedly stated that in interviews, we had to pretend that I was a fool or a stranger (like 'coming from Mars') who didn't know anything about music, jazz, or improvisation. This invitation to role-play sometimes created a laughter, which loosened up the interaction.[1]

With Odd André, the challenge was sometimes the opposite. An experienced teacher is likely to have developed his own distinct and articulated theories, a 'practical theory' on learning. For example, Odd André often provided me with his interpretations of various pupils' learning progress, sometimes as a means of helping me to get to know them before I observed them the first time. I often found, after a while, that I interpreted the pupil's actions or processes differently, which prompted me to be extra aware of the different layers of data in Odd

André's talk: they are already interpretations of his experiences and observations – and highly valuable as such, but not 'pure' observations.

This perspective of the 'pureness' of data is important to keep in mind against the ideal of a naturalistic approach in ethnographic studies (Silverman 2013). The naturalistic ideal means that phenomena should be studied where and when they 'naturally' occur, underpinned by the assumption that people in a practice will carry on uninfluenced by the presence of the researcher and by their awareness of being studied. My position is that the raw data (such as video recordings or interview transcriptions) are not 'pure' or 'true' in a naturalistic and traditional ethnographic sense. Data is always a result of someone's subjective decisions in the moment, influenced by the situated interaction (Graue and Walsh 1998). However, the discussion of 'natural occurrence' is less relevant in trailing research, given the premise that research can, and is allowed to, serve a formative function. As for some of the ethical problems described above, the dialogue ideal in trailing research reduces the epistemological problem of whether data can be 'naturally occurring' or not. By drawing on Odd André's and my joint practical and theoretical experience and knowledge, it has been possible to collaboratively develop reflections, ideas, and theoretical understandings of the teaching and learning practices at Improbasen. These joint discussions must therefore be seen as a research method, in line with the double hermeneutics of trailing research (Baklien 2004). Therefore, I have aimed at situating my voice clearly in the text, by showing the questions that I asked (and not only the answers), revealing my immediate thoughts in field notes, discussing my potential influence on participants and courses of events, and trying to make visible the reasoning a particular interpretation has undergone.

Note

1 I doubt that they really bought the premise of a real role-play. It is just as likely that they perceived me as an adult who, in a clumsy way, tried to communicate with children on children's terms, and that they just bore with me and pretended to play along. If so, this perception may still have contributed positively to the interaction by smudging the obvious hierarchy between us, in the sense that they felt they had an upper hand in the communication, "seeing through" me.

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3 A fungus system

Roles and rules in Improbasen

The title of the chapter refers to Engeström's (2007, 2015) metaphor of mycorrhiza to describe loose networks with an ad hoc nature. These are often created quickly as a result of rapid, emergent interests, but are also vulnerable to just as rapid changes. In this chapter, I outline the way Improbasen is organised, by using Cultural-Historical Activity Theory or CHAT (Engeström 2015) as a lens, with the intention of providing context for the following chapters. Seeing Improbasen as an activity system means to take into account the sociocultural context and historical background for its founding; to look at the different participants that form this micro-community, their tasks, and roles in relation to each other; and to highlight the multi-voicedness these participants create because of their different positions. Further, I will attempt to account for some of the characteristics of Improbasen, such as some of the educational values which are pedagogical efficiency, high expectations towards children's abilities, and the gender policy to contribute to increased gender balance. The main sources of information for this chapter are interviews and informal conversations with parents and other adult persons with a relation to Improbasen.

It is important to note that my descriptions are based on the situation up until December 2016. Since then, the organisational structure, the funding situation, and the distribution of roles among the participants have changed in ways I do not have solid information about. To my knowledge, developments after 2016 involve, among other things, the teacher situation where more teachers on different instruments have been engaged on a regular basis. It is important to keep in mind that the period of my observation in many ways can be seen as a refraction period, where the centre struggled to establish itself in Oslo. This phase had accumulated tensions and challenges combined with ambitious visions and a high degree of effort to make the activity work, and led to positive development.

Historical background

To understand the emergence of Improbasen, it is important to account for the phenomenon of school wind bands (sometimes called just 'school bands' or 'marching bands') in Norway. The instrumentation can either be pure brass bands or have a 'Janissary' instrumentation, which includes woodwinds and percussion as well.

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Traditionally, every primary school in Norway has its own school wind band that offers weekly instrumental and ensemble tuition to children in their spare time – sometimes several days a week. The local bands are volunteer organisations and usually members of the Norwegian Band Federation. They often have a professional conductor, but are operated by volunteering parents/guardians who are responsible for forming a board and obtaining funding.[1] School wind bands have a crucial role in the citizen parades around the country on the National Constitution Day on the 17th of May. Thus, marches form a big part of the repertoire. However, these bands usually have an all-year schedule of performances, participating in annual school band festivals and/or competitions arranged by the Norwegian Band Federation.[2]

Odd André Elveland started his teaching activity as a conductor of a local school wind band in a small village in the Southeast of Norway in 2005. Here, he made his own arrangements of repertoire such as Beatles and Abba songs and some jazz tunes, and he used Norwegian children's songs by the author and poet Margrethe Munthe for marching instead of traditional marches with a military connotation, such as the common American Sousa repertoire.[3] As an educated and experienced jazz saxophonist, he wanted to introduce the children to improvising, and started to make special arrangements for the wind band that served as vehicles for individual improvised solos. From here, he began to develop methods for enabling children in a large group and with little time for individual guidance to improvise within tonal and rhythmic musical frameworks. Hence, tools for improvising needed to be very clear and immediately usable for the child, and they needed to work for everybody in the group.

Eventually, he quit as the conductor of the school band. One reason among others for this was that his pedagogy, choice of direction, and repertoire were perceived as too radical for some of the parents on the board. He then established Improbasen as an independent teaching practice. Some of the children from the wind band and the local school in the village followed him over to Improbasen. Some years later, Odd André moved to Oslo, where his activity shifted to Improbasen alone, while some of the pupils from the village continued their tuition.

Organisation

While Improbasen is the name of the central activity, it has two organisational satellites, used to frame secondary activities; these are Barnas Jazzhus (which translates to Children's Jazz House), and the Kids in Jazz festival.

Improbasen

Improbasen is the name of the centre that holds the tuition activity. The tuition takes place either at Odd André's private house or at a small, rented community house at Carl Berners Plass in central Oslo. The community house is shown in Figure 3.1. Odd André is the founder of the centre and the main

Figure 3.1 The studio in the community house at Carl Berners Plass
Source: Photograph by Guro Gravem Johansen.

teacher at Improbasen.[4] While Odd André himself is an experienced jazz tenor saxophonist, he offers tuition in a range of different instruments, such as piano, double bass, drums, saxophone, vibraphone, trumpet, violin, and guitar. This means that he has had to acquire basic skills on these instruments. However, he invites guest instrumental teachers to give lessons to pupils from time to time, in order to ensure that children get solid technical instructions from an expert. During my observation period, a jazz pianist was regularly hired to assist him in the weekly teaching, together with a jazz flautist (a former pupil at Improbasen) to assist in ensemble teaching in workshops and seminars. The pupils at Improbasen receive 60-minute lessons every week, if possible. Some pupils that live in other parts of Norway have lessons when they have the opportunity to come to Oslo or when Odd André is visiting their home city or region to give seminars. He often gives seminars for teachers in Schools of Music and Performing Arts (SMPA) in the Nordic region, or he holds open classes for pupils at these schools. The SMPA is a publicly funded national leisure and voluntary school, and since 1997, every municipality in Norway is obliged by law to have one.[5]

When parents describe how the individual lessons are organised, they highlight Odd André's high degree of flexibility with regard to time, and they often compare his flexibility with that of the SMPA. One child lives in a different city and has weekly lessons in the local SMPA. This pupil's parent expressed the flexibility in terms of time devoted at Improbasen: 'a lesson here lasts until they are finished that day' if the pupil is working with a particular song that Odd André

considers needs to be thoroughly mastered before he calls the lesson off. Another parent pointed to the practical flexibility and personal devotion from Odd André, when they said:

> Improbasen equals Odd André, it's the same institution. And that is quite unique. He is quite self-sacrificing in what he does. He has a rehearsing locality in his private living room and kitchen, he helps out in taking care of the children, following them around, on the bus, and he takes care of things. . . . He is unique.

Odd André's devotion is also seen in the fact that he rarely cancels a lesson, even when he has been ill; one pupil, Christine, recalled that on one occasion Odd André lay on his sofa with a severe cold while giving her verbal instructions during her lesson. On the other hand, several parents addressed what they perceived as an occasional lack of structure on Odd André's behalf. Sometimes they were notified about a change of time or place for lessons at short notice, and information regarding concerts, travels, and repertoire were perceived as often being given late (a topic I will return to further on in this chapter).

Barnas Jazzhus and Kids in Jazz

Barnas Jazzhus is the name of a jazz club for children and can be described as the concert organiser for Improbasen. But just as 'Improbasen equals Odd André', the same may be said about Barnas Jazzhus. However, at various periods the administrative responsibility for running Barnas Jazzhus was distributed to other people, whether these were employed by Improbasen/Barnas Jazzhus or volunteering parents.

Kids in Jazz is the name of an annual festival organised by Improbasen simultaneously with Oslo Jazz Festival every August. It is always preceded by a three-day workshop called *BUZZ,* which is organised by Oslo Jazz Festival.[6] Odd André is hired by Oslo Jazz Festival to run BUZZ. BUZZ is open to all children, including regular students from Improbasen. It is divided into two age groups: one for children at the age of eight to 12 and one for 13 to 16. BUZZ and Kids in Jazz are separate happenings, but many of the workshops groups from BUZZ perform during Kids in Jazz. Through the Kids in Jazz festival, Odd André invites young guests from abroad to perform. In some years, the guests have been groups from similar jazz education institutions in other countries, for example Japan (Sapporo Jazz School), Venezuela (PandiJazz), and other Nordic countries (SMPAs). Other years, the guests have been individual students that Odd André has met while visiting such institutions or giving workshops. These come from Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, Portugal, Italy, and Japan, although this list of countries is not exhaustive. Detailed accounts of the international exchange and interplay between Norwegian children and children from other nations will be returned to in Chapters 7 and 8.

Funding

Before describing the funding situation at Improbasen, I will give a brief context for how cultural activities for children and adolescents in general are funded in Norway. School wind bands and the SMPA are the two main institutions for instrumental tuition for children and adolescents. Equal access and low thresholds for participation are central values for how cultural leisure activities are organised. In general, income-based differentiation is not common in Norway, as it may be seen as an exclusionary and stigmatising mechanism.[7] This sociocultural ideology is often considered to have led to a culture where it is expected that everyone pay for leisure activities, but where fees are to be low and equal for all.[8]

In school wind bands, every participant pays a membership fee, which is decided by each local band board. School bands can also apply for support from public funding bodies that support local cultural activity and the voluntary field. Some of these arrangements provide assets for regular funding, while others are projects-based. In addition, parents contribute considerably in voluntary work for fund-raising, such as arranging flea markets and cake lotteries.

The School of Music and Performing Arts aims at providing access for all children to receive tuition in the arts. This objective implies low fees, and the SMPA has had state funding since 1982 and up until 2004.[9] In this period, the financial model was that the Norwegian State covered 15% of a student place, while the municipality – the school owner – covered 70%, and the student covered 15%. Until 2004, the national maximum fee was NOK 1600 per year (approx. €163) (Gustavsen and Hjelmbrekke 2009). However, since the state subsidy was withdrawn in 2004, the financial model has been depending on local budgets in the municipalities. Thus, the fee varies a lot, and in most municipalities, it has gone up considerably (ibid.). From 2020, the average student fee in Oslo Municipality Music and Culture School is NOK 4024 per semester, in addition to instrument hire.[10]

This background gives important context in two ways. First, expectations of the level of pupil fees are shaped within this socio-political climate. Second, the public funding systems for leisure music activities are mainly set up for the two kinds of tuition contexts I have described. These systems shape the conditions for Improbasen's chances of receiving public funding. Improbasen did not meet the criteria in the municipality or the Arts Council to receive regular funding, which it did not have until the autumn of 2016.

Therefore, Improbasen had to apply regularly for project funding. This led to the paradox that Improbasen had to create and execute specific projects to finance its regular running, projects that took time and energy from the very activity they were supposed to finance. Running an ongoing activity based on single allocations of project funding requires a lot of administrative time and effort – tasks that were neglected by Odd André because the teaching took all his available time.

In addition to the external seminar activity Odd André undertook, the pupil fee represented the main income. In May 2015 the pupil fees were NOK 2000 per semester (approx. €204).[11] The fee at Improbasen was thus approximately the

same as for the SMPA, even though the lessons are one hour long at Improbasen, and 22 and a half minutes in the SMPA. This is despite the fact that the SMPA is publicly funded. When I started the observation period (winter 2015), Odd André himself was responsible for invoicing parents. He signalled to me that the exact fee was not entirely decided, that he wanted it to stay as low as possible and in no circumstance exceed the fee of the SMPA. Furthermore, he indicated that he didn't send invoices to some families, depending on his perception of the family's ability to pay. I also sensed a discomfort connected to claiming pupil fees in general, which may have been a second reason for why the pupil fees were a potentially unreliable funding source. This meant that Improbasen's financial situation was unpredictable from year to year.

This situation changed in 2016 due to two factors. A big parent meeting was held, where some parents volunteered to share the responsibility for going through the accounts and writing funding applications. Secondly, Odd André had established a working relationship with Østnorsk Jazzsenter [the Eastern Norwegian Jazz Centre], one of the five publicly funded regional jazz centres in Norway. Østnorsk Jazzsenter defined jazz pedagogy for children and adolescents as one of their priority areas and saw Improbasen as an important alternative to the more established institutions such as SMPA and the school bands, since Improbasen specifically educates for jazz. For these reasons, in 2016 Østnorsk Jazzsenter committed to fund Odd André's salary for one year, while supporting Improbasen in working out alternative and long-term funding arrangements.[12]

Characteristics and roles of the parents

Socio-demographic background of parents

Given the lack of a professional administrative structure, Improbasen's regular running depended on considerable effort and practical support from parents. This points towards the hypothesis that the children at Improbasen have highly motivated parents who actively engage in their children's leisure activities and education. Previous research indicates that parents who have this kind of engagement and enrol their children in music tuition activities belong to middle or upper classes, have higher education, are often academic, and have a high degree of cultural capital (Geir Johansen 2018; Gustavsen and Hjelmbrekke 2009; Stabell 2018). I have not systematically reviewed the families' socio-demographic or socio-economic characteristics, because the issue falls outside this study's main research foci. Since socio-economic background is potentially sensitive, I consider the case study design of this study ethically inappropriate for gathering this kind of data. The access I had to such information is limited to informal conversations with parents when asking about the family background felt natural and not intrusive.

Parents' occupations – in the cases where I have information – ranged from categories such as teacher, sales manager, TV producer, actor, architect, tram chauffeur, music producer, classical musician, jazz musician, and unemployed, although this list is not exhaustive. Three of the parents I talked to were musicians

themselves. Apart from these, many of the other parents had experiences of instrumental tuition from childhood. In the light of previous research, this may be an indication of middle to high socio-economic background (Gustavsen and Hjelmbrekke 2009; Geir Johansen 2018), although my findings cannot confirm this. Most of the children came from Norwegian ethnic backgrounds, although families where one or both of the parents come from Asia, Africa, US, or Southern Europe were also represented. Therefore, in this study I have no grounds to claim any particular patterns regarding socio-economic status or cultural habitus, other than stating that there is a variation, although parents with occupations within culture and the arts formed a relatively large group at the time of my study.

One common feature was parents' *interest* in the arts and/or in their children's development, a feature that is most often seen in their motivations for enrolling their children in Improbasen. However, this engagement can be expressed in different ways, which I will expand on throughout the next subsections.

Parents' engagement in enrolment

First of all, it was clear that parents' wishes on behalf of their children played a crucial role in providing instrument tuition for the children. In Tobias's case, he had been playing classical piano for a while when he had become tired of it. His parents wanted him to continue playing and receive tuition. They therefore searched for an activity that was slightly different in order to motivate him to continue. They took him to a Barnas Jazzhus concert and enrolled him shortly after. Tobias's parents' attitude was quite common among several parents; they wanted their children to learn music and to play an instrument.

Families' contact with Improbasen often happened by word of mouth between adults. Parents who were musicians had often heard about Improbasen through other musicians who knew Odd André. For example, the parents of Sigrid and Helene were old friends; they were both musicians, and both daughters were already playing instruments. Helene's parent had actively been searching for jazz guitar tuition for her, and when they found out about Improbasen they informed Sigrid's parent. The latter then informed the parents of Sigrid's friends Inger and Hannah, encouraging them to start together as a joint activity for the three friends.

Another example is the families of Sara and the twins, Anne and Thomas. Sara and the twins are cousins. Their grandmother had taken Sara to one of the concerts when she was four. The grandmother then talked to the twin's parents and said enthusiastically: '*This exists! You have to participate!*' At this time the twins were six years old, but their parents, who liked jazz very much, took them to a Barnas Jazzhus concert. One of their parents recalled:

> [T]hat was so good. It was with NN on drums, and what's her name, the flautist. . . . They had a thing for 20 minutes where they just improvised together, and it was incredibly cool to watch children do that. So I said 'Right, they are going to start here when they are old enough. If I get to decide!' [laughs].

The twins' parents had always wanted their children to play an instrument and do something creative. They underscored that it did not have to be jazz – but they were clear they would not have chosen school wind band either:

> I don't think that is so much fun. We would have let them if they wanted to, but none of us parents have any experience with or feelings for school bands. . . . It is a little selfish in a way . . . we would rather fill the house with jazz music than marching band music, in a way.

Later, after Anne and Thomas had been playing at Improbasen for a while, Sara was enrolled, too. Sara's parent was clear that having their child at Improbasen did take some effort since they had to drive her quite a distance for lessons and performances. There were not many other alternatives that they would have been willing to do that for, and they mentioned the classical tuition music institute Barratt Due when comparing with Improbasen:

> I don't have anything against Barratt Due, but it doesn't have to be such a prestigious thing. If it wasn't for the fact that it is jazz and this particular way of learning [music], we wouldn't have put in as much effort. Then we would have found something closer to where we live. I don't think any other music activity would have been worth the same hassle.[13]

Parents' vicarious identification

At a meeting with the board in Østnorsk Jazzsenter in June 2016, Odd André was asked how Improbasen recruited pupils. He then replied: 'The biggest problem is often that parents cannot imagine their eight-year-old daughter playing jazz on a double bass'.

This indicates that parents' views of what is possible or suitable for their children steer what kinds of activities children are presented with. For rare (and what may be seen as narrow) activities such as Improbasen, this issue may represent a problem with regard to recruitment. What Odd André was addressing had to do with parents' roles in identification on behalf of their children, which can be aligned to the concept of *vicarious identification*. Vicarious identification is used to frame situations wherein one's experiences occur through another person's experiences because one identifies with the other person (Robinson 2003).

In the case of Improbasen, the relation may be the opposite: parents may project their own identity or their ideas of the child's identity onto the child, and on that basis they encourage or direct their child into some activities and not into others. The point made in the quote above, was the rarity of eight-year-old girls 'playing jazz on a double bass'. First, it is rare that young children play jazz; second, it is rare that girls play jazz; and third, double bass is often codified as a masculine instrument. One of the parents addressed the issue of their daughter's identification in relation to both gender and ethnicity, and said: 'She has to identify with someone. Of course she can identify with everyone in some respect, but sometimes

it's good to be similar to someone, to be able to identify yourself into that role'. With Odd André's comment in mind, *parents'* identification on behalf of their children seem to be just as – or even more – important for children's opportunities to participate in what they imagine for their children. Interestingly, the majority of girls' parents that I talked to were concerned with identity in relation to gender and jazz, which is a topic that I will come back to in a later section.

The variety of parental support

Parents' involvement in children's music tuition has proved important for their children's development (Creech 2016; Davidson et al. 1996). However, research does not recommend one particular kind of involvement. In a study of different ways parents engaged in their children's musical development, Creech (2010) found that positive outcomes for the child such as enjoyment, motivation, self-efficacy, and self-esteem could be enhanced when parents engaged in a *variety* of ways, and that parents showed versatility in their support.

Several parents had an affinity for listening to jazz and didn't think their child had any relation to or perception of jazz before they started playing. Research indicates that parents with cultural interests are more frequently providing music tuition to their children than others (Gustavsen and Hjelmbrekke 2009). One parent problematised the issue that perhaps only children with resourceful and active parents could have access to music tuition:

> The parents hang out and watch, we are active, there are a lot of rehearsals. To other parents and other children, it may come across as . . . it may seem a bit elitist, in a way. That I, with my background, can find activities easier, I can be proactive to make things happen around my child.

However, children's enrolment at Improbasen didn't always depend on the parents' initiative. In Elisabeth and Christine's case, they were the ones who took the initiative to start, after they had experienced a workshop with Odd André at their local school. However, both these girls' parents supported their children's activity to a large scale in terms of driving to lessons and gigs, transporting and setting up equipment, selling tickets at concerts, and just being around when the group needed adults to look after them at seminars and concerts. Christine's parent claimed to not have a particularly strong relationship with music themselves, and that the drive to play an instrument came from their daughter. Nevertheless, their engagement and pride was striking. After a concert, I walked past the parent on my way out, and as our eyes met, they put their hand on their heart without saying anything, just smiling. In a later interview I picked up on this, saying that I had seen how moved they had been, and I asked what it was that moved them. They said:

> I am moved by so many things. One thing is that she is able to create such nice music out of . . . she hasn't exactly been training since she was four. She has learnt for three years. And manages to play with such emotion and presence,

> and the speed at which she learns new songs. . . . That she manages to play on such a register, at least she plays on my heart's register. And of course, I notice that other people notice, and then the pride just rolls over you. That . . . 'Wow, she is so fantastically good'. . . . when she listens to music with Odd André, she has begun to recognise how tempo may change, how dynamics may change, and she is learning how to control that herself. Technically, too. Not that I am a jazz expert, but I think she is getting really good at that too.

This quote shows more than just the feelings of being a proud parent. They are articulating quite specifically what in music they think Christine has developed. For an adult who claims to not be particularly interested or knowledgeable in music, the nuanced observations of various aspects of the daughter's learning processes are noteworthy. I interpret this as a very personal level of engagement with the daughter's activity. This engagement in relation to music may not have been there from the start of Christine's playing, unlike in the cases where the parents were the ones guiding their children into the activity; but regardless, this parent's involvement their daughter's interests and development is just as strong.

Division of labour: explicit and implicit roles

On a sunny but chilly afternoon in June 2016, Improbasen held a summer party with barbecue for the children and families at Carl Berners Plass. Parents organised food, tables, chairs, and decoration. After everyone had eaten and the children had played games outside, the party ended with a concert inside the house (Figure 3.2 shows the interior of the studio). The parents carried chairs inside to sit on, while the children were packing up their instruments and seating themselves on the floor. One father, a professional musician, was asked to tune the double bass. I realised that I also heard tuning of a violin, but I couldn't see anyone doing it, so I figured it was Sigrid's mother, also a professional musician, tuning it in the small kitchen behind the end of the room that served as a stage. Suddenly her arm stretched out through the kitchen door with the violin, for Sigrid to take it. Everybody laughed, and the dad who tuned the bass suggested that the parents should form a new parent committee responsible for tuning the instruments.

The effectiveness of this joke relied on the backdrop of the change in organisation during 2016. An increased number of enrolled pupils had led to the possibility of more parents engaging in the practicalities of running Improbasen, simultaneously as the *need* for more people to help it run had increased. At the time of the summer party, there had been informal talk among the parents to distribute designated tasks and form special committees.

Improbasen can be seen as an activity system where division of labour within the activity is a central dimension for understanding how this system works (Engeström 2015). Division of labour refers to the distribution of tasks and functions which often lead to establishment of different roles among all the people involved. Such roles can be explicitly defined or implicitly assumed, depending on

Figure 3.2 Interior of the studio at Carl Berners Plass
Source: Photograph by Guro Gravem Johansen.

what is expected within the particular context, the degree to which tasks are clearly identified, and how participants position themselves in relation to each other.

When I started following Improbasen, it had recently moved to Oslo and had only a handful of regular pupils. One parent had been asked by Odd André to volunteer as a parent representative and also to assist with administration. They found this role difficult for several reasons. First, they felt they should have been elected among the parents for this role (as the case is with boards in school wind bands). Second, they perceived the expectations from Odd André to exceed their competence and available time:

> Sometimes, Odd André has been frustrated about things, when I have just had to say that I can't help out with that. I don't want to be too much involved [in the economy], then suddenly I will have the role of an employed administrator. It has to do with capacity, and with just being a volunteering parent. . . . What works really well, and what I am happy to do, is what I do at concerts. For example, if I have had the chance to talk to Odd André in advance, getting to know the set list, *'what happens here'*, then I can be the one the children come to and ask about things. [The children] are in focus here. I want them to feel a communion; that they feel taken care of. That is a role I am happy to take.

While Odd André seemingly needed help with administration, the parent wanted to take a more caring and social role directly towards the children. Even though

Odd André highly appreciated this parent's effort, the parent started to feel that their capacity had been overstretched after a while – perhaps caused by having to relate to expectations they could not or did not want to fulfil. Eventually, they had to withdraw from their role.

Distributed roles with blurry lines

Due to increased activity of Improbasen during this period, Odd André was overloaded with work, and many parents interpreted what they felt was a lack of structure as a sign that he was exhausted. So after a meeting with Odd André and the parents in August 2016, some of them volunteered to form a kind of board, although not elected among the other parents. They decided that the role of the board would be to help out with administrative tasks, such as taking care of the (at the time) critical economic situation and working with marketing and concert arranging.

One of the board members functioned as a treasurer, and as a musician who knew the cultural field, they assisted Odd André with applications and budgets. They wanted to contribute since they felt strongly about Improbasen's existence and wanted to help make it work as well as possible for the sake of the children. As a musician, they had been wondering about what role to take, whether they should offer help as a music pedagogue or not. They came to the conclusion that it was best to keep a distance from artistic and pedagogical parts, to not mix roles. Further, it appeared clear that Odd André was concerned with being in control and having the artistic responsibility. The parent pointed out how Improbasen was Odd André's pet project and how much of his identity that was put into it, and they wanted to respect that.

Several parents noted that there were limits to what areas they sensed it would be acceptable for them to assist with – sometimes to their frustration, both because they felt that Odd André could have needed help and because these limits felt unarticulated. One parent said that the parent group had seen how tired Odd André had been:

> But he needs to let us [help]. It is challenging that he holds his cards so close to his chest that it becomes hard to help him. There are so many resources in this parent group. They step in where they can contribute. But it has been challenging to get that space cleared.

However, this picture is not unequivocal, as not all parents found Odd André to be in the need of total control. One parent (a non-musician) told me that they sometimes interfered with opinions about, for example, set lists on concerts and sensed that Odd André appreciated this on occasions when he had a lot to think about.

Improbasen is in between volunteering and professionalism, in the sense that Odd André is dependent on parents' contributions, but he also wants to maintain professionalism around all activities. It is interesting to put this situation up against the culture for parent involvement in the two major institutions I have referred to

before, namely the SMPA and the school wind bands. As mentioned, the latter has a culture for a high degree of parent volunteering in order to raise money and to run the organisation. Since SMPAs are public institutions they have professional infrastructure and staff, and it is less expected that parents contribute on a practical level. Improbasen originated from a school band structure, but it may be the case that parents perceived it as a *quasi* SMPA, shaping both Odd André's expectations and how parents perceived what was expected of them. This may create an ambiguous situation where roles were unclear, but where all actors were mutually dependent on each other.

The Christmas concert

An example that may serve as a prism to illustrate the complex layers of division of labour and the differing expectations of roles, was an ambitious Christmas concert with Christmas repertoire that Barnas Jazzhus arranged at the Nasjonal Jazzscene in December 2016. The concert was a wish from parents, while Odd André had been against going through with it. The children got the songs three weeks before the concert, according to a parent, and several extra rehearsals had to be organised. Odd André had decided that the children should sing together on some of the tunes, which added a new element; the children had to learn song lyrics. Some children rehearsed up to four hours in the evenings several days in a row, and one parent said: 'You got to be relatively eager in music to . . . like [name of child] is. They loved it. But no wonder some parents thought 'this is way too much'. A parent of siblings, who was also critical about the workload on the children preparing the concert repertoire on short notice, added: 'But my kids loved that they had to learn song lyrics. They didn't want to take their bikes to school for several weeks; they walked so they could rehearse lyrics'.

A couple of days before the concert, Odd André had been writing a performance script with directions for spoken lines, Hawaiian costumes (for the song *Mele Kalikimaka*), and stage timings. One parent perceived the divisions of roles and mutual expectations in the following way:

> [H]e had been sitting up all night, writing it. So then we had to go get those costumes the day before just like that [snaps finger]: 'it has to be fixed now!' . . . But he is used to fixing everything himself. Because if he had said a month before: 'can someone arrange a frame for this concert', we would had done it. But I think he is so absorbed with the music that I think he forgets to lay plans and involve the parent group.

Another parent had the impression that Odd André had been against the concert and thought that this was one reason for his postponing making decisions. Some children were nervous in advance because they had not known what repertoire they were playing. It was expressed that if had he brought about information a little sooner, both parents and children would have felt more at ease and relaxed.

However, disunity not only existed between Odd André and parents, but also between parents. Some parents had bought a lot of decoration and hired expensive light design for the concert without consulting the board, which the treasurer in the board was not too happy about. Odd André had been content with the children's playing afterwards, although he told me that he found the enormous amounts of light garlands on stage exaggerated: 'Had it been up to me, I would have just put up a single candelabra'.

Reflecting on the Christmas concert, a parent expressed a similar viewpoint in terms of parent involvement. They acknowledged the total amount of resources in the parent group and the effort people put in. Nevertheless, this parent was not so enthusiastic about the Christmas concept to begin with. Further, the question was raised whether some parents were a little overexcited and put their organising at the centre of attention, before the actual music and playing experience for the children. They discussed whether the Christmas concert had triggered the perhaps over-zealousness with the theme and decorations because of the attention and publicity of this particular concert. However, this parent did not bring up their reservations among other parents. Partly, they thought that the concert had gone well after all, and partly I interpreted them as not wanting to create conflict around their children's activity.

After discussing the tensions around the Christmas concert, one of the parents said that the board had discussed the importance of trying to balance several needs in how they handled things. First, it was important to avoid too much load on a few individual parents, a reason for the involvement from a high number of parents. Second, it was important to give Odd André the scope that he needed – despite the fact that they sometimes found it difficult to know what that meant:

> But we're not going to try to teach Odd André how to do things, but be as flexible as possible around him, trying to plan a bit ahead and have a good dialogue. But all right, if it happens that he just rumbles ahead like with that Christmas concert, we just have to try to catch what needs to be done and just land it.

Summing up, the Christmas concert highlighted several tensions. The first two tensions were the workload on the children and the short planning span. Also, parents found it frustrating that Odd André was perceived as wanting to be in control, while expecting parents to arrange things at short notice. On the other hand, there was no clear agreement among the parents of what aspects of the concert production they should be involved in or to what degree. Some expressed the view that parents should not interfere unless invited by Odd André or only be alert when they saw things that didn't work, while some wanted to engage with decorations and choice of repertoire to a degree that others found 'too much'. The lack of formally and clearly defined artistic intentions, roles, and tasks left a foggy space open to individual interpretations of what was needed.

This led to unspoken expectations, tensions, and resistance, and it may be seen as a problem that they weren't addressed. On the other hand, there was a will from

all parties to handle them diplomatically. This includes Odd André: despite perceptions from some parents that he wanted full control, he did entrust the organising and decorating part to the parents. Regardless of which position various parents placed themselves in, what was noteworthy and common to all participants was the *will to make it work*. The inclination from some parents to step back and let Odd André have control was an expression of what *they* thought would work. The high effort and eagerness from others to contribute with artistic ideas may be seen as an expression of the same good will.

Tensions, combined with the strong will to make it work, also drove an *ad hoc* emergence of temporary structures and role definitions, in a manner that may resemble the fluctuating creation of mycorrhiza (Engeström 2015), the root system of fungi. Engeström (2007, 50–51) expands on the metaphor:

> Mycorrhizae are difficult if not impossible to bound and close, yet not indefinite or elusive. They are very hard to kill, but also vulnerable. They may lie dormant for lengthy periods of drought or cold, then generate again vibrant visible mushrooms when the conditions are right. They are made up of heterogeneous participants working symbiotically, thriving on mutually beneficial or also exploitative partnerships with plants and other organisms.

Such forms of organising, Engeström (2015, xxxvii) claims, resemble mycorrhiza in the sense that they may pop up unexpectedly and are highly motivated:

> These activities show remarkable resilience and expansion in spite of a number of severe adversities and constraints. They are constantly learning to transcend the constraints and overcome the adversities – in other words, to renew themselves without much deliberate and centrally organised effort.

Why did this happen? Even when some parents criticised various aspects of how the Christmas concert was planned and organised, they still underscored that *their* children had loved it. Moreover, despite the inherent tensions among the participants, the Christmas concert was perceived as a great success by most. To parents who show this high level of engagement in their children's joy of artistic activity, such results represent a strong driving force. In this context, the tensions described may precisely mobilise the extra, genuine effort among the involved parties, and along with the idealistic visions of one person, these efforts and visions maintain the activity and drive it forward. These efforts all centre on Improbasen's main object: the opportunity for children to learn to improvise in the jazz tradition.

Educational values

The challenging of children

Previously, I mentioned how one parent said that the amount of effort and time they put in to Improbasen was linked with the particular way the teaching and

learning happened. In this section, I will elaborate on parents' perception of what characterises this particular 'way' and what particular educational values underpin Improbasen as teaching practice.

I asked the same parent what they meant with 'Improbasen's way', and they said:

> I have played piano myself as a child. It was sheet music drill for half an hour, then you are heard in the homework, and then you get to know if you are getting a new homework assignment or you are doing the same homework one more week. I was never inspired to continue with music. Never learned to develop my ear. . . . Here, there is a totally different approach to learning music. . . . To challenge them, give them freedom to try things out, the improvisation and the aural . . . learning scales, learning music. To understand it.

Similar to this parent, several others used their (or their children's) experiences from other music tuition contexts to point to what they found special about Improbasen. One such thing was how Odd André constantly challenged the children: 'His demands to them are very high. But he treats them as peers, right, he is a musician on the same grounds, in the band'.

Connected to the issue of high demands, a striking commonality in parents' perceptions was the efficiency of the pedagogy: how fast the children experienced progress. Again, other contexts were used for comparison. A parent who had their child enrolled at the SMPA on a different instrument than they played at Improbasen said:

> I must say I am a bit disappointed in the SMPA. The pedagogy is the same as when I was a kid. The same books, the same ideas about 'right' and 'wrong', a star in the book, and then on to the next piano piece. It hasn't changed in 30 years, which is delusional. . . . So it has been a blessing to come to Improbasen, in that respect. We talked about it the other day. Our child has almost had more progression in a few months on this instrument at Improbasen than they had over four years with the other instrument at the SMPA.

To give children high challenges and demands may have a downside to it, if it involves a lot of negative pressure (a topic that will be returned to in Chapters 6 and 7). I problematised this issue with parents. Many parents agreed that negative pressure was a potential problem, and some had been worried themselves. One parent, themselves a teacher in the arts, said they were sceptical towards the pressure he exposed them to, such as demands to always try to achieve more. However, they had noticed how the high demands enabled their child to concentrate, that the child felt seen and safe and grew from Odd André's expectation of always being able to achieve more.

A recurrent theme across different parents was that despite what they perceived as pressure and high demands, their children seemed to not only cope, but also enjoy it:

> It's really intense the way he works. He doesn't compromise, he works until you fall over. But I think the reason [name of child] copes with that intensity . . . they have exercised that 'muscle', the discipline, the stamina. I realise that if you are challenged and pushed, you will get those mastery experiences and learn something that makes you want to continue doing that. But if you drag your feet, the pace is too slow, maybe nothing really happens, or you get afraid of it, it's not the same. I don't know. It must be fun to feel that you actually play jazz, when you play jazz. They play until they sweat, right, it's boiling. It's hard work. And if you have experienced that in playing, you realise. . . . It's a quality . . . you understand what it is like, in a way. In the SMPA, they may play five tunes for a year. The first time [name of child] had a lesson here, they learnt ten tunes in a weekend. Since they have experienced both ways, the push, and the slow pace, they are able to compare what they get out of it. I think that's why they like the intensity here. Also, here, to get to feel what interplay is about right away, you don't have to wait three years until you experience what it is like to play with someone. That is what makes this project like 'wow', it's unique.

This aspect of the pedagogy was emphasised several times: through high demands, the children learn to stretch themselves and not stop until the set goals are reached. One of the parents connected this viewpoint to the lacks of challenges for their child at school, and that the tuition at Improbasen provided what the school failed at, according to this parent:

> At school, they are ahead of everything. So they seldom get challenges. . . . I think that is what makes them so happy here [at Improbasen]. That when they have mastered something, they immediately move on and learn more. And that they learn that they have to work for it to become better. I think they experience that as something good.

Another parent had a similar story:

> Our child doesn't get enough challenges at school. Doing music is a way of ensuring that the total challenge is big enough. After they started at Improbasen, I haven't heard one complaint about the homework being too easy. . . . I picture that the school wind band it is a bit like school . . . the skilled children sit and wait and wait and wait for the other children to get it. I want for my child to be in an arena where they can be themselves with the [high] pace they need.

Not all parents talked about their children in this vein, but the fact that several did was striking; their children were strong at school subjects, but did not feel challenged enough. What these children often learned at school was that learning came easy to them, and they didn't develop discipline or strategies to cope with challenges. Lessons at Improbasen represented an alternative to high-achieving children; it gives them something to grapple with at a high pace. But parents who didn't describe their children as particularly high-achieving had also noticed how the high demands benefited their learning, in the sense that they quickly reached experiences of mastery. Through those experiences, the children learned how effort and discipline paid off. At Improbasen, the children are 'socialised into a culture where they practise until they are finished', as one parent put it.

Who is Improbasen for?

The high expectations and efficient pedagogy as described in the previous section, were by some parents perceived as beneficial to children who didn't feel challenged at school. This issue may lead into a discussion of whom Improbasen is for and whether it is particularly suited for children with some types of characteristics. As I have previously accounted for, from the perspective of access to participation, Improbasen wants to be an inclusive practice. This was reflected in one of the parents' statements about what they perceived as Odd André's major idea: to 'unite all the world's children in jazz'. There is an attempt to keep fees low, and there is no audition to be enrolled. Parents' affinities and interests for jazz seem to represent the main reason why children get access, as well as parents' vicarious identification for their children and what they thought was suitable or possible for their child.

One parent addressed who the target group was from the perspective of genre:

> I am not claiming anything, my question is more out of curiosity, whether the goal is to learn the adult music as this is, or of it is a goal that they can sound like children. He is very concerned that they play concerts. So who is the target group for the concerts? It's not children. . . . [I]t is not necessarily so interesting to children to sit an hour and listen to jazz standards. So it must be for the adults. Again, I am just curious, it is not a criticism. More a question about the goal of what they are doing, the music they end up making.

The question '*is teaching children to play jazz for the purposes of adults or children?*' was expressed by several persons in the interviews. It is of major importance and was a constant 'stone in the shoe' for me during the ethnographic period. It relates to what I previously discussed about parents as gate-openers, potentially based on their own musical preferences or vicarious identification. Nevertheless, the question also ties in with a larger discussion about authenticity in arts education for children, notions of learning in the domain of creativity, and the position of jazz as an exclusive or inclusive music culture. Thus, I will return to the topic in Chapters 8 and 9.

The viewpoint that high demands are particularly suitable for high achieving children, as presented by some parents, is relevant in the discussion about who the target group is. One parent referred to the outspoken intention of Improbasen being for all and said that they did not perceive it as such:

> This is an activity for children who have an extra talent for music. And it is like in the sports, that the ones who have an extra talent, they get an extra demanding offer. It's more than the school wind band, sort of. And if you think of it as that, as a slightly more advanced offer, then it is also fair that Odd André can set higher demands. It is part of the package. If you think of it as similar to the school wind band, then he is too strict. But as a thing for the children who want something more, then you expect them to practice more, to put more effort into it. In that perspective, what I have observed [of the pedagogy] is not too strict.

Here, the parent seemingly discussed what they perceived as implicit or unspoken participation criteria: having talent for music. However, what they were also discussing was the grounds for which one can justify what they perceived as high demands and a strict pedagogy. As previously seen in this section, the common experiences of rapid progress and a high degree of mastery justified the perceived negative aspects of the pedagogy in many parents' viewpoints. In the next subsection, the notion of the word 'talent' as used by participants in Improbasen will be discussed.

Talent accounts in Improbasen

'Talent' is a concept that is used a lot around Improbasen's activity. As seen in the previous section, one parent believed that having 'extra' talent was an unsaid criterion for participation. Further, concert arrangers or parents in the role of concert hosts would often introduce concerts in the following manner: 'Welcome to this afternoon with Barnas Jazzhus! You can look forward to hearing a lot of talent tonight!' Odd André and parents always promote events on Facebook, which are often accompanied by texts like these: 'The talented player N.N. is central in the year's last concert in this [concert] series' (29 November 2018); 'A new concert series at Sentralen, – chamber jazz with young talents!' (4 February 2019), and '[T]he youngest jazz talents are going deep and will present complex jazz on a very high level' (8 February 2019).

The concept of talent has been extensively investigated and discussed in the music education research literature. Up until relatively recently, disparate viewpoints have existed, and the disagreements stem from discussions about what predicts expertise in music achievements (Stabell 2018). One strand claims that talent, as an innate capacity and reserved for a few gifted people, is a precondition for musical expertise (see Gagné 2004). It can be identified from a very early stage when children show rapid progress in music performance (ibid.). However, Gagné's model is criticised among other things for not addressing how to identify

giftedness in children who have not had training in their field (McPherson, Davidson, and Faulkner 2012). Research has also shown that expert classical performers have often *not* been characterised as 'talents' during childhood (McPherson, Davidson, and Evans 2016), and that other factors than potential innate capacities are more likely to predict success. Such factors are early childhood experiences with music, preferences, opportunities, habits (Howe, Davidson, and Sloboda 1998), a high degree of individual practising from an early age, family support, and a positive teacher-student relationship (Sloboda et al. 1996; Stabell 2018).

The commonly held belief by non-musicians, educators, and researchers that talent is innate and reserved for the few is referred to by Howe, Davidson, and Sloboda (1998) as *the talent account*. Their critique is that not only do a majority of studies contradict the talent account, it also serves as a socially exclusive and discriminatory practice, 'as it prevents a large percentage of the population from pursuing a musical trajectory' (Stabell 2018, 18). Further, the talent account may give rise to different expectations towards children who are labelled talented and those who are not. Expectations from significant others as well as self-expectations are considered crucial factors for progress (Howe, Davidson, and Sloboda 1998), and thus, the talent account becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Nevertheless, notions of innate talent have been found central in instrumental teachers' practice theories. Stabell (2018) investigated values and assumptions among teachers and students from 14 to 18 years old in classical string talent programs in junior conservatoires. She found that the talent account was present in both participant groups. Talent was equated with musicality, perceived as something that could not be taught and that the students either had or did not have. Talent was also used to grade students according to how much talent they were perceived to possess and was thereby used to create hierarchies among them; the 'talented' gained opportunities such as getting to perform at high prestige performances, whereas the 'less talented' were not selected.

Coming back to Improbasen and Barnas Jazzhus, the parents' use of the word talent may well align with what Howe and colleagues framed as the talent account, in the sense that it is a part of everyday language without a distinct definition underlying its usage. It is simply an easily available description of children who are good at something because they indulge in it. Compared to Stabell's (2018) study of classical string programs for 'talented' adolescents where the term is used in an exclusive and grading manner, it is noteworthy that the word was often used in an *inclusive* way, to denote *all* the enrolled pupils of Improbasen. The parents' use may also stem from the fact that Odd André himself uses it; they see him as the authority on musical learning at Improbasen and thus more or less consciously pick up his language. Hence, it is vital to examine his viewpoints.

When I asked him what he meant by using the word talent in promotion of Barnas Jazzhus activity, he replied that he did not like to use the word. The usage was often more strategical, to gain attention from funding authorities or if a concert needed some boosting to get audience. He added: *'*A curiosity, by the way, is that I don't think we [currently] have one single talent among the pupils. . . . Our system is not so suitable for the most talented'.

This response is interesting in that I perceive Odd André as aware of the talent account in everyday speech. He thus indicated a disbelief in actual innate talent. Nevertheless, the strategic reference to talent acknowledges that the talent account exists as a sociocultural marker of status, in a way that has practical bearings for what opportunities are available. In classical 'talent' programs, it is used as an individual grading marker and thus provides unequal opportunities for individuals (Stabell 2018). In Improbasen's case, the talent account is not used to differentiate between pupils, but to frame the practice as a whole. However, the function of using it for getting opportunities is similar, in the sense of public attention and ultimately, funding.

However, the last sentences in his response indicate a contradictory viewpoint. Here, he actually draws on a belief in talent as innate in order to place himself and his practice in opposition to it and to frame it as insignificant for learning. He even seems to consider talent as a disadvantage for a child facing his pedagogy. I interpret his clear expression of disinterest in 'talent development' as a way of signalling his opposition to the way the talent account is commonly used: as a means for exclusive selection of which children get access to tuition and performance experiences. Instead, he implicitly underscores an inclusive stand: everyone can learn to play an instrument and to improvise. Nevertheless, although all enrolled pupils are included in Odd André's and parents' usage of the word 'talent', it may still be perceived by external persons as a distinct marker of children who are already enrolled, and therefore excluding to outside children who potentially could have an interest in starting. Given the prevailing everyday meaning of the talent account, this may be an unwanted consequence.

Improbasen as gender activism

A central value at Improbasen is its gender policy. Odd André states that a main objective is to contribute to a more gender balanced jazz scene by actively recruiting girls for tuition. Thus, he aims at having a gender distribution where females are in the majority and never smaller than 50%: 'If the percentage of boys is higher than 50%, the girls will quit', he explained, and continued: 'I think it is completely insignificant whether they are boys and girls. But out of concern for both genders, I am conscious about *not* making it a pure girls' activity, but to keep them mixed'.

Because of this outspoken objective, Odd André is often invited to lecture for teachers at music schools and jazz educational projects focusing on gender balance in other Scandinavian countries. Previously in this chapter, I quoted a parent who pointed to the importance for especially young females to find identification in their music-making activity, and several other parents expressed the gender aspect as important for their children's enrolment at Improbasen. As one said:

> Especially as a mother of girls, I have to say that getting girls in on those conditions is fantastic. It really moves me. To make girls understand that they can do other things than the traditional girl stuff, and be taken seriously in everything with technique, for example.

Odd André mostly steered the choice of instruments for the children, partly based on which instruments he needed to form functional bands. However, instrument assignments also had a gender-related justification. For example, he said: 'Most of the boys who start are immediately attracted to the drums and bass. But I try to avoid that, it's so stereotypical'. On one occasion, a female bass pupil struggled with playing the bass and asked if she could sing at a concert instead, which Odd André refused. He did not explain it to her, but told me that he didn't want girls to give up too easily when they experienced challenges and switching from playing bass to singing would have been an easy, and stereotypical, way out for girls.

To understand why actively working with gender balance was seen as important, and to be able to discuss what mechanisms that hinder gender equality on the jazz scene, it is necessary to visit research on jazz, jazz education, and gender.

In general, female musicians have been under-represented in jazz study and performance (Annfelt 2003; Tucker 2004; Wehr 2015). Björck and Bergman (2018, 43) describe the current Swedish jazz scene as '*male-dominated and sometimes misogynist*'. North American research indicates a dramatic attrition rate for females playing jazz in secondary and upper secondary levels in schools, and a decrease in female participation related to an increased expectation for improvisation (Wehr 2015). *Why* this is the case has been addressed by numerous studies. According to Tucker (2004), there has been a historical exclusion of female musicians in books about jazz, conveying an assumed lack of ability by virtue of being women (Smith 2004). This devaluing and exclusion has led to a lack of visible role models to identify with for aspiring female musicians, which according to McKeage (2014) is a major reason for why female students give up playing jazz.

I asked Odd André why he had engaged in gender issues. When he began teaching, he did not think about gender balance and recruitment, but experienced an eye-opener after talking to a former female student of his, a wind player, who had attended the music program in upper secondary school (informally called *Musikklinja* in Norwegian):

> I had taught her a few years before she started there, and now she just played jazz all the time. She was so absorbed with it and constantly going to jazz concerts in Oslo. I was very happy about it. But in a conversation we had, she told me that at *Musikklinja*, she did not get any recognition for playing jazz. She told me how things were, that the boys gathered to play, and she was never invited along. Later, I happened to talk with the leader of the music program at that school, and came to mention that there were so many students interested in jazz at his school. '*No, not really that many*', he said, and then he mentioned some guitarists and pianists, all male. So I waited for him to mention one more name, but he didn't. '*Oh yes, then it is [name of wind player] who plays a little jazz*', he finally said. I was shocked. '*She played a* little *jazz*'. Her whole life is jazz. It is what she does! That was very awkward. Then and there I decided to do something about recruitment with my practice at Improbasen. That this is going to be a main objective with what we do, to recruit female instrumentalists.

While the teacher in this incident may have had different reasons for not being aware of the female wind player, according to Odd André the story was significant because it was quite typical regarding treatment of female students. He had often noticed how females he considered talented were minimised or ignored by teachers and facilitators, where there would be a lot more attention and support given to boys who in his opinion were even less talented. His observations are in keeping with the research I cited above, showing how female jazz instrumentalists have been overlooked and assumed to not have the same abilities as male peers. The isolation this student felt also ties in with research on social recruitment in informal learning practices (Green 2002). The phenomenon of *homosociality* (Annfelt 2003), that is, the social preference for people with the same gender, explains why male instrumentalists only invite other males to form bands or attend jamming sessions. Odd André's talk with the wind player had made him aware of the same practice among the pupils at Improbasen:

> In the beginning we had an equal number of girls and boys. But the girls started to quit when they reached their teens. And then I realised that the boys had been forming bands together without asking any of the girls to join them.

Another reason for the high attrition rate among girls in jazz tuition may be the unwanted attention females get for their gender rather than their musicianship. This is what is known as *tokenism* (Wehr 2015, 4), which 'describes an environment that some females may experience . . . where the female is the only female, or one of only a very few'. The masculine hegemony in jazz practices (Annfelt 2003) makes tokenism a common experience for female students or musicians. Being put in a token role often leads to the *stereotype threat*, which is the fear of confirming a negative or unwanted stereotype (Wehr 2015, 4).

Regardless of genre, research has confirmed that when children are allowed to choose their instrument, they pick instruments that conform to gender stereotypes, which indicates that instrument roles are gendered and that children are aware of this division from an early stage (Conway 2000; Hallam, Rogers, and Creech 2008; Källén 2014). In jazz, females' participation have often been limited to taking particular roles, such as singers and piano players or both (Oliveros 2004), which, according to Green (1997) have been historically acceptable roles for women since they are associated with the domestic domain. Further, the role as singer confirms femininity with its connotation to 'nature' and the body, delivery of emotional layers in song lyrics, and assumptions about singers not having to work with technique (since the instrument is 'natural'). Conversely, masculine stereotypes are associated with technical control, rationality (the mind), individuality, independence, experimentation (Green 1997). Simultaneously, these properties are often ascribed to the ideal jazz instrumentalist (Annfelt 2003). Thus, female musicians meet a double standard: what it means to be a successful jazz musician coincides with what it means to be masculine, which gives men a 'natural' advantage (Annfelt 2003). The feminine stereotype thus represents a deficiency in instrumental jazz (Green 1997). When females in jazz are expected to conform to

the feminine stereotype (Teichman 2019), they are simultaneously not expected to succeed in jazz improvisation, and thus excluded from jazz practices (MacDonald and Wilson 2006; Tucker 1998).

Wehr-Flowers (2006) investigated self-efficacy related to learning jazz improvisation among students in various educational contexts in North America and found that females were significantly less confident, more anxious, and had less self-efficacy than their male student peers. In her later paper, Wehr (2015) suggest that lack of self-efficacy make females withdraw from trying to or wanting to learn in a jazz improvisation environment. This lack stems directly from the experience of being given a token role and thus feeling the stereotype threat, which 'inhibits the experiencing of the multiple, small successes . . . that builds self-efficacy' (Wehr 2015, 11). Teichman (2019, 4) suggests that this risk may be higher with a jazz pedagogy where emphasis is placed on the individual delivering improvised solos in front of the student ensemble 'on display for all to see', a pedagogy that rewards normative masculinity. This individualist pedagogy may encourage the boys 'who play faster, higher, and louder' (op. cit.), but be experienced as threatening and intimidating to especially females, but also to boys who don't conform to this form of masculinity.

On both the professional scene and in educational pop and jazz contexts, all-female group projects have been established to prevent the alienation and stereotyping that females are likely to experience in male-dominated environments (Björck 2011; Björck and Bergman 2018; Smith 2004; Teichman 2019) and to create safe spaces and supportive environments. A problem with such projects is that while they may succeed in creating a space devoid of the stereotype threat, they still confirm the image of women-in-jazz as the Other (Tucker 2004). Alexander (2012) undertook a study among novice string student improvisers and sought to compare levels of confidence, anxiety, and attitude towards improvisation between genders. He found that the confidence level was not significantly different. Comparing this finding to the study by Wehr-Flowers (2006), Alexander (2012, 25) suggests that '[t]he higher confidence level of females in the current study may have resulted from . . . exposure to a curriculum specifically designed to build confidence and allay fears toward improvisation'.

A crucial question for the study of Improbasen is how lack of role models, patterns of instrument roles, and the potential stereotype threat from tokenism affect young girls and their self-efficacy when they *begin* to learn to play an instrument. These issues will be returned to in all the coming chapters. For ethical reasons, I did not bring up questions about gender with the children, as I did not want to impose the idea that it should be a problem. As a general impression, the children I studied at Improbasen seemed unaware of gendered roles in the wider jazz discourse, and I was unable to observe any gender differences in regard to confidence, self-efficacy, individual expression, or social preferences in informal settings; they all played and hung out with each other. For example, the awareness of gender stereotypes in instrument choice in children that has been shown in previous studies seemed absent among the children at Improbasen, while we need to remember Odd André's comment about what boys were

likely to choose if they could, and the bass player who asked if she could sing. Therefore, when the teacher chooses the instrument for the child with a gender perspective in mind, this effect seemed to have been dampened. The stereotype threat following tokenism was likely absent for girls due to the distribution of boys and girls. An unanswered question is whether boys at Improbasen ever felt intimidated and 'tokenised', since on some occasions there would only be one or two boys present with a majority of girls. I have no indication of this, but I cannot rule it out.

However, we may assume that the threat of being stereotyped is only experienced as a threat if a context holds expectations of normative femininity and masculinity. At Improbasen, the effects of gendered instrument roles and tokenism, respectively, are eliminated or at least reduced. Due to the fact that most children are very young when they enter Improbasen, there is a lesser chance of them having encountered the stereotypes that exist in the wider jazz community. As I will show in Chapters 4 and 7, the pupils' knowledge about jazz culture and history is limited and their identification with jazz comes primarily from meeting other peers who play jazz. Arguing, as Teichman (2019) does, that a pedagogy that emphasises technique and having to solo in front of a group may discriminate against females may be reasonable for older students who are already socialised into the masculine space of jazz practice. However, there is at the same time a risk of reproducing the notion that these aspects of music making are unavailable to and unsuitable for girls. I counter this by pointing to how both boys and girls at Improbasen are expected to master technique, as one parent noted: to solo, to tackle challenges, and to rationally understand and use theory from the very beginning of their learning trajectory. This pedagogy may function as what Alexander (2012, 25) framed as a curriculum 'designed to build confidence'. Thus, I argue that they learn mastery and to build self-efficacy in a crucial phase *before* they learn about normative gendered expectations, and before they experience homosocial interaction in jazz practice.

Notes

1 Source: Norwegian Band Federation's website. https://12rtnf1rcvbw40olyu2hwnu9-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/BrosjNMF_a5_8s_informasjon_eng_printes.pdf
2 Norges Musikkorps Forbund.
3 This particular choice was made as a reaction to US invasion of Iraq during the first Gulf war. Thus, as a self-claimed politically conscious person, Odd André did not want to promote North-American cultural markers such as the Sousa marches in a music activity for children. Therefore, he came up with the idea of using well-known Norwegian children songs for marching.
4 Up until the middle of 2016, he was more or less the only teacher, but this situation has changed gradually. Currently, several teachers are involved on a regular basis.
5 From The Curriculum Framework for Schools of Music and Performing Arts, file:///C:/Users/nmhansatt/Downloads/Rammeplan%20engelsk%20versjon%20(1).pdf
6 BUZZ is an acronym that denotes Barne- og Ungdomsjazz, which translates to Children's and Youth's jazz.

7 https://snl.no/universelle_velferdsrettigheter [Big Norwegian Encyclopedia. Entry 'universal welfare rights']
8 This situation does of course not rule out the fact that many children may still be excluded from music activities if their families are low in income. Several studies confirm that the majority of children enrolled in the SMPA in Norway come from predominantly middle- and upper-class families.
9 Kommunal Rapport, 6.2.2002. https://kommunal-rapport.no/artikkel/musikk_og_kulturskolen
10 Oslo SMPA homepage, http://www.oslokulturskole.no/no/om-oslo-musikk-og-kulturskole/prisliste.aspx. Date of retrieval: 03.08.2020.
11 In 2019, the fee increased to 2500,- NOK.
12 Østnorsk Jazzsenter is currently continuing to support Improbasen, although not to the same degree.
13 The Academy Barratt Due is the name of a private, classical music institute in Oslo that offers tuition for children and adolescents on a specifically designated 'talent program' (Stabell 2018) and music studies for conservatoire-level students.

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4 ‘Jazz is like slow carbs’

Children’s perspectives on learning jazz and improvisation

This chapter is devoted to the voices of the children at Improbasen. I want to investigate how children perceive, experience, and make meaning of their activities at Improbasen, including their learning activity and practising between lessons. The material in this chapter is based on 18 interviews I had with ten children and some perspectives from parents to further illuminate the children’s experiences.

Like adults, children do not always speak with correct grammar. Additionally, they sometimes choose the wrong words. Children’s talk is sometimes characterised by geographically local and age-related jargon. When I transcribed the interviews, I tried to stay close to their talk even when they misspoke, to be able to keep their personality and the oral ‘flavour’ of the conversation in the transfer from audio recording to text. However, when I use direct quotes of children’s talk in this chapter I have modified some of them. First of all, this is required when translating Norwegian into English. Linguistic idioms or jargon can seldom be transliterated, and in such cases I have tried to find corresponding idioms and expressions that are used in a similar manner in English as the original Norwegian ones. For ethical reasons, I have corrected what I have interpreted as errors if the meaning didn´t change as a result. Repetitions of words are included if I have interpreted them as eliciting contextual meaning, such as when a child searched for words in the process of reflecting. Otherwise repetitions have been omitted for better readability.

Being a pupil at Improbasen

Previously, in Chapter 3, I have outlined the role of the parents in getting their children in at Improbasen. For most children, their parents wanted them to start playing jazz and so arranged enrollment at Improbasen.

This was the case for the twins Anne and Thomas, who started playing their respective instruments (double bass and alto saxophone) at Improbasen at the age of eight, and Sara, their cousin, was seven when she started at Improbasen. Inger on drums, Hannah on saxophone, and Sigrid on violin were friends at the same school, and started at approximately the same time, when they were nine and ten.

Christine and Elisabeth were 11 and ten years old, respectively, when they started playing, after Odd André had visited their school for a workshop. Christine described how all of the children were encouraged to try different instruments, such as piano, drums, vibraphone, bass, and saxophone. Some children had

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already played their main instrument or a different instrument when they started at Improbasen, such as Hannah on sax, who already played the accordion at the local SMPA. The process described by Christine, where new pupils are asked to try different instruments, was common to most of the children. Hannah told me how she got to try the drums, piano, and the saxophone:

GURO: Why was it saxophone? And not, for example, guitar or piano or bass?
HANNAH: I don't know, it was Odd André who decided. I got to try the saxophone, and I managed to get sound in it immediately. And then I got to borrow his saxophone. . . . And . . . now I have got my own.

Tobias had played classical piano at a private music tuition institute for four years when he, at 11, started at Improbasen. Continuing with the piano was therefore natural to him. He started playing with a classical teacher at the age of six, which was something his mother had decided. I asked him about why he started at Improbasen:

TOBIAS: My dad had gotten information from somewhere, and then we went to see a concert, at Victoria.[1]. . . And my father though it was really fun, and my mother too. So then we sent an e-mail to Odd André. . . . It took a long time before we got a reply. It was 2–3 months. Or weeks. Don't remember, but it was long. But in the end we got a reply, and then I could start.
GURO: What did you think about that concert [at Victoria]?
TOBIAS: I thought it was quite nice. Nice music, and they were good, and all.

Tobias further explained that he had wanted to quit the classical piano tuition because he became tired of all the practising to learn new pieces. To begin with, he was reluctant to start at Improbasen because he worried that it would be like the classical lessons. After a year, at the time of the interview, he said that he enjoyed very much attending at Improbasen, and it was more fun than the classical: 'Because when it is improvisation, you can sort of play what you like, within a spectrum, sort of. And that is quite fun'.

Like Tobias, Helene on guitar had played her instrument before she started taking lessons at Improbasen. She lived in a different city, and she had weekly lessons in the local SMPA, where she played repertoire spanning from pop and rock tunes to some jazz tunes. Travelling to Oslo to attend Improbasen was a deliberate choice in order to develop her improvisation skills. The lessons at Improbasen were less frequent, more convenient in terms of travel arrangements for Helene and her parent, and were connected with Improbasen's concerts. Sigrid had attended classical violin tuition from the age of four, and when she started at Improbasen at the age of nine, she was already a skilled player.

The significance of playing jazz improvisation

Music is an integral part of children's and adolescents' lives (Campbell 1998; Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miell 2016). Campbell (1998) discusses what music means to children and states that '[m]usic's meaning is contained in the experience

of it rather than in the sound alone and is colored by life and times of the individual' (173). This means that the value and meaning that children attach to music making are intertwined with and weighed against other experiences in their everyday lives, whether they engage in music spontaneously and participatorily on the playground (Harwood and Marsh 2018) or in formal instrumental tuition. To understand how children find meaning in music and musical activity means 'to understand what they know and value' (Campbell 1998, 171).

Following the comment from Campbell above, I wanted to understand how significant playing an instrument, and playing jazz, were to the children at Improbasen. Sigrid (violin) and Helene (guitar) were dedicated in their pursue of music. To several other children, playing an instrument was just one out of many other interests. Tobias, for example, had started with football training three evenings a week and felt that it gave him less time to practise the piano. Although he said that piano and football were equally important to him, he felt he should prioritise playing football whenever he had the opportunity, since a piano was available to him all the time at home, while a ball and mates to play with were not.

Several children named reading books as a hobby they liked very much. Anne said that she thought reading was slightly more important to her than practising the bass, since practising was sometimes boring. Thomas, her brother, mentioned riding his bike when I asked about his favourite leisure activities. When I asked him to compare which activity he liked the most, he said it depended on the weather; if good, he liked to be outside with the bike the most. If it was raining, he preferred staying inside to practise his saxophone.

Some children, such as Hannah, played different instruments. As mentioned, she had played the accordion for some years before starting with the saxophone. When I asked her to compare them, she said she couldn't because she liked them equally. Hannah also had a loop station that she used for recording several layers of music to practise along with. She wished that her sister, who played the drums, would teach her that too, and said she wanted to learn even more instruments. It seemed as if, for Hannah, having a broad range of possibilities for playing, and *playing with*, music through different means was more important than specialising on one thing.

The way the children talked about what playing instrument and playing jazz meant to them may also reveal important aspects of their identity formation. Hargreaves, MacDonald and Miell (2016) argue that people's narratives about 'the ways in which [they] engage *practically* with music' (761, emphasis in original) often are used as markers for how they see themselves, their self-concept in music, or 'identities in music' (760), which is when people draw on culturally available musical roles or categories. A positive musical identity is important in order to continue pursuing music (Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miell 2016). We see that children like Tobias, Anne, and Thomas equated doing music with other leisure activities such as sports and reading. This may be understood as them being in a process of exploration (Marcia 1980, in Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miell 2016), which means to search for a sense of self while exploring different attitudes and activities. They have not necessarily developed a strong identity in music yet.

Others, such as Sigrid, Helene, and Hannah showed a stronger degree of commitment (Marcia 1980, in Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miell 2016) to playing music. Hannah was committed to music making, but also showed an exploratory attitude towards which instruments and by what means she could make music. When children express commitment to their music activity, this is related to how they perceive their 'possible selves' (Hallam 2016, 483) in the future, which influences their motivation for persisting with their activity in music. In the following section, I attend to how children describe and compare, that is, valorise, the different activities they were involved in at Improbasen.

The daily life of Improbasen: activities

The children partook in three major activities at Improbasen: individual lessons, playing concerts, and preparing for concerts in band rehearsals. I asked them how they liked the different activities and to compare how they valorised them. Playing concerts was by far the favourite activity for most of the children. Tobias said that the reason why he liked concerts the most was that then he got to show what he had practised. Even if he sometimes got nervous, he mostly felt happy afterwards, feeling that he had played well. As previously described, the pupils play concerts not long after they have started playing. Anne (bass) recalled that her first concert was in January, after having started in September the year before.

GURO: If you are to think about all the things you usually do playing your bass – practising at home, playing with Odd André alone, playing concerts, practising with other students – which of these do you think is most fun?
ANNE: Playing concerts.
(. . .)
GURO: What is it that you think is fun with playing concerts?
ANNE: What is fun with playing concerts is that . . . then you really have to shape up to not make mistakes, and then it becomes very good. And there are always a lot of people there. And you play with others.

In a later interview, when Anne had turned 11, she expanded on the topic, saying that she liked playing concerts because she thought that the music made the audience happy.

Hannah said that concerts and practising with others were what she liked to do the most:

HANNAH: Because I think it [sounds] better when you practise and play together, sort of. And it's nice.
GURO: It's pleasant to be with the others?
HANNAH: Yes.
GURO: What do you like about concerts, then?
HANNAH: Then there is a plan, sort of. And we play together, too.

Often, the children were articulate about their perceptions of mastery and musical quality when we talked about particular performances. In 2016 many of the children participated at *Sapporo Jazz Camp* in Japan, an international camp for children and instructors from Japan, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, the U.S., and Norway. Here, they had daily workshops at Sapporo Art Centre and performances around Sapporo. Immediately after one of the concerts in Sapporo, I talked to Inger (drums). This was Inger's second concert there, and on the first one, she had been very nervous. I asked her how she felt about the second concert.

INGER: It was really fun. I had dreaded the drum solo, because I had no idea if it was going to go well, but then it did go well when I played.
GURO: What was it that went well?
INGER: I think . . . Dahoud, one of the songs, went really well. And I liked that I managed the drum solo. Because everyone was very happy then.
GURO: Yeah, did you see that?
INGER: Yes. . . . Because everyone started to smile and clap and things.
GURO: Yes, that was good. If you were to compare it with the concert yesterday, what do you think about it then?
INGER: I guess this one was better, because . . . today we played some songs that we didn't play yesterday, and I did more different things on my drum solo. And that . . . yesterday I didn't do so many different things.
GURO: Yes, I noticed that, too. You played like [sings 16ths] fast on two different drums. It looked difficult, and yet you managed to keep the time. Very good.
INGER: Thanks.

As mentioned before, Tobias talked about being nervous before concerts, but the sociality surrounding Improbasen's concerts seemed to take off some of the pressure to him:

> [I]f you, for example, play a wrong note, it's not that easy to hear it if you have a whole band playing with you, than if you play alone and everybody focusses on you, right. But if you are with others, then there are a little bit more people, and then you perhaps get less nervous.

Since Odd André is often comping the children on stage, most of them are only playing when they have solos except for the drummers and bassists who play almost all the time. I was curious about what went on in their minds on stage, both while they were waiting for their turn and while they were playing. Tobias found that the waiting between songs was sometimes tiresome, and once he almost fell asleep backstage. Helene (guitar) said that she enjoyed listening to the other children when they improvised. She would then sit and think about their ideas and let herself be inspired by them. Christine (sax) has a similar response to Helene's, as she too enjoyed listening to the other children's solos: 'First of all, it's really nice music. . . . So I can't get bored. And then I . . . I do want to show [people] that I think it is fun, and not that I'd prefer to not be there'.

Elisabeth (piano) was the only pupil who said liked the individual lessons the most:

GURO: Out of all the different things you participate in at Improbasen, what do you think is the most fun thing?
ELISABETH: [hesitant] Perhaps playing with Odd André?
GURO: Oh, yeah?
ELISABETH: It's also great fun to play with others, then I get to know them better, and [get to] play with them. But it's also good to just play alone, since then I get to practise more. And learn more, instead of him being with all the others, because then we get less time.

This comment indicates that Elisabeth appreciated the time she had alone with her teacher, and getting Odd André's full attention. Also, she got to play more than when there were other pupils present. When I asked her to mention one episode when she had been happy with her improvisation, she described an individual lesson:

> It was when I had just started, not totally in the beginning, though. But then I improvised. Odd André was quite pleased, because I had never improvised like that before. And then I was . . . then it was quite good. Because I dared to improvise more. To play.

As seen in this section, social aspects of activities are a strong motivating factor for the children. In these situations, we can assume that their positive experiences of engaging with peers revealed a strong sense of peer identification. Identification with peers has proved crucial to vicarious learning experiences (Nielsen and Johansen In press), which means to learn by observation of other's experiences. Further, we may assume that peer identification also has a positive impact on their development of identity in music (Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miell 2016), in social recognition of each other. Elisabeth's highlighting of the individual lessons is also interesting in that it seems connected to her relationship with Odd André. Elisabeth's emphasis on her own courage as well as the approval from Odd André indicates that they were both important aspects to her sense of mastery in improvising. A close personal relationship with an instrumental teacher, where the student is acknowledged and can receive personalised tuition is seen as one of the most beneficial features of one-to-one instrumental teaching (Creech and Gaunt 2018).

Making meaning of jazz and improvisation

Experiences of jazz

The children I talked to were very aware that their musical activity was called 'jazz', but I wanted to understand the extent of their understanding of the concept. For example, were they aware of its history and cultural contexts, such as names

of prominent performers? Or was their understanding centred around their own experiences within the social context of a musical leisure activity for children? I expected this to be a tricky question for children to talk about. As described in Chapter 2, I asked them to pretend that I was an unknowing person when it came to music, jazz, and improvisation. This game implied that they had to pretend to be more *knowledgeable*, and therefore able to explain these phenomena. Also, this task invited them to make simplified explanations, instead of feeling they were expected to say something complicated. Another interview strategy was to ask questions that required them to compare something to something else, assuming that in trying to explain differences, it is easier to articulate characteristics of either phenomenon.

Therefore, in talking about jazz, I often asked them to compare with other genres, such as when I talked to Anne:

GURO: What is it to play jazz, the way you think of it?
ANNE: It's fun. . . . You get to improvise, and the sound [of jazz] is so cool.
(. . .)
GURO: Have you ever wanted to play other genres, for example rock, or pop, or classical . . .
ANNE: No.
GURO: . . . or folk music? Why not?
ANNE: I think jazz is cool.

Anne here highlighted the fun of improvising and the sound of jazz as 'cool', when asked to explain what jazz was. When I asked her to compare with other genres, she didn't pick up that strand, indicating that she either ruled out any interests in these, or that jazz was the kind of music she knew the most of. Anne's mother told me that Anne had a way of distinguishing between jazz and other genres:

> Often, when she listens to music, she says 'Mum, this is jazz, because I can't sit still'. And she also said the opposite: 'This can't be jazz, because now I don't feel any need to move'. So she defines it by whether she is able to sit still or not.

Anne was not the only one expressing strong bodily sensations related to jazz and the rhythmic aspects of it. Sigrid's parent told me how Sigrid expressed how she felt on stage, playing with Odd André and the other children: 'She says she thinks it's so cool. She tells me: "Do you know what I think about [onstage], it is so cool when the bass goes like that . . . I think it so cool to stand inside that"'.

Elisabeth (piano) had her own smart phone, which represented a constant access to and frequent use of pop music, so Elisabeth was able to compare pop and jazz. For example, Elisabeth said that jazz was different from pop music in the sense that pop was made mostly on computers, while jazz only had instruments. I understand her as pointing to a perception of pop music as electronic and/or electronically processed as well as having vocals, while her experience of jazz was the sound

from (acoustic) instruments played by herself and the other children at Improbasen. Her statement may also indicate her different relationship with these types of music: while pop music was available to her via her phone, and thus associated with the use of technology, she had direct experiences with jazz being played on instruments.

Tobias (piano) and Sigrid (violin) had previous experiences from classical music, so I asked them to compare and explain the difference between classical music and jazz. According to Tobias, classical music sounded best if you play 'the notes correctly, it's supposed to be proper, in a way. In jazz you can explore more, you can play strange things, that may sound nice, even if they are not written in the score'. I interpret his use of the word 'proper' as equivalent to 'correct', which implies that classical music is assessed in terms of 'right and wrong'. Jazz, on the other hand, is perceived as freer ('you can explore more') and less concerned with right and wrong, since even 'strange things' may sound nice.

To Sigrid, the main difference was apparently connected to rhythm:

SIGRID: When he [Odd André] says that I have to play eighths, they are a little different in classical and in jazz.
GURO: Yes?
SIGRID: I think that's why I don't quite understand how fast I'm supposed to play.
GURO: What are the differences between those eighths?
SIGRID: I think . . . I'm not totally sure, but I think maybe one of them is going a little faster.
GURO: One of the eighths?
SIGRID [still thinking, almost to herself]: Maybe . . . the classical. That's a little fast.
GURO: Oh, yes, okay.
SIGRID: No, jazz. That's the fast ones.

My question about whether she meant 'one of the eighths' came from me misinterpreting what Sigrid said. I thought she referred to swing phrasing of eighth notes (triplet feel), where the first eighth note in a group of two has a longer duration than the second. However, what Sigrid meant was that the eighths belonging to one of the two *genres* were faster than the other. Her grappling with concepts is interesting as it puts on display an emergent understanding of musical *differences* and how they were experienced at this particular stage of Sigrid's learning process. She knew that there were some things she was supposed to do differently. She hadn't quite grasped yet what they were, only that they might have to do with rhythm. When I followed up by asking her if there were other differences between the two genres, she said: 'Yes, it's sort of swing, in jazz. It goes more . . . it's more like . . . happy. . . . And classical is more calm, sort of'. Here, she drew on associations of feelings and musical expressivity. If we interpret her references to tempo differences in the light of these expressive descriptions, the latter adds a different meaning to her talk about tempi, which I want to interpret as experiences of energy in

music. If jazz to Sigrid was perceived as 'happy', it makes sense that she described that as 'faster' than classical, which Sigrid in expressive terms described as 'calm'. An encounter I had with Sigrid's parent on the first lesson I observed with her may provide context for Sigrid's utterance above. Before the lesson started, I chatted with her parent, who said they were curious to see how their daughter would deal with the transition from one genre to another. They expected the phrasing of swung eighth notes to be the most challenging part. Therefore, it may be the case that in Sigrid's perception, the expressive differences were the most striking, while she had picked up from adults' talk that *rhythm* was supposed to represent the biggest difference. I interpret the 9-year-old as verbalising her own perceptions of expression with the language about rhythm she may have heard from adults.

Christine (sax), who was 13 at the time of the first interview, used her own creative analogy to explain jazz in comparison with pop music:

CHRISTINE: Eehm . . . take, for example, pop-music. It's much more . . . it's more noisy, I think. I like . . . if I want to relax, I associate . . . relaxation is something I associate with jazz. It's sort of . . . groovy, in a way. And it's such a nice sound, if I can put it that way. Pop music is more like . . . what everybody listens to, what everybody likes. It's what gets you in a good mood, quickly. And jazz is like . . . it's almost like . . . [laughs]. I just learned about carbs and stuff. Those fast carbs, they are the ones that . . . quickly get you . . . your blood sugar raises rapidly, and goes rapidly down again. And pop music, that's what I associate with that. And jazz is the kind of thing that keeps [the blood sugar level] even, it is nice to listen to, all the time. And then pop is maybe the kind where you, you listen to a song and then you get tired of it, and then [the blood sugar] falls right down. But jazz is the kind you can listen to over and over again without getting tired of it.
GURO: So jazz is like slow carbs?
CHRISTINE: Yes [we both laugh] . . . I mix up music with science . . . [laughs].

Experiences of improvisation

As seen in the previous section, many of the children used *improvisation* as an immediate characteristic when describing jazz. On my request, Hannah (sax) defined improvisation as follows: 'It means to not have a plan, but to play on what you know'. Hannah had actors in her family, which perhaps was the reason for why she drew on theatre as an analogy:

HANNAH: For example, if you are supposed to improvise in theatre, you may have a character, or something. And if you're improvising in music, then you have what you can improvise on, those notes. My mum told me that when she played in a big band, she was bad at improvising, because they didn't get to learn what they were improvising on, so it was all wrong.
GURO: But you know what to improvise on?
HANNAH: Yes, I have gotten to know it. Odd André lets me know it.

As with Hannah, several children explained improvisation processes as choosing notes from a set selection such as chord scales.

GURO: What does it mean to improvise?
ANNE: That you just play . . . there are some notes that you can just play in what ever order you like. It doesn't have to be the same ever.
GURO: Right. But doesn't that lead to chaos and mess?
ANNE: No. It's just . . . you can't play on . . . all the notes, only some.
GURO: So that it fits with the chord and the scale, sort of?
ANNE: Yes.

Here, Anne talked about the notes in various chord scales, but she highlighted *decision making* when explaining improvisation, although she was aware of not having a completely free choice at any time. However, her statements indicate that she perceived scale notes as safe options on a particular chord, and that this limitation provided a framework that created order and within which she could do whatever she chose.

Processes of improvising

How are processes of improvising experienced by the children? Sara (drums) was 7 years old when the first interview took place and had then played for half a year. In order to get her to talk about her experiences of improvising, I asked her about the different things she knew how to play on drums. She told me that she could play swing and what she called plinky-plonky. Plinky-plonky referred to different sounds Odd-André had showed her how she could create in what he called free improvisation. One such technique was to make scratching sounds with the drumsticks on the cymbals.[2] I asked her how she knew when to play the swing groove and when to play plinky-plonky.

SARA: When Odd André starts to play like softer, then I must start to play plinky-plonky.
GURO: Right. And how do you know when to start to play swing again?
SARA: When . . . he begins to play a bit like . . . louder, in a way.
GURO: Yeah, right. So you just hear it?
SARA: Mm. So it's really the hearing that is most important.[3]

Since Sara here ranked listening (or 'hearing' in her wording) as the most important aspect of playing jazz, this quote shows that Sara was aware of the importance of attentive listening in improvised music, to be able to follow shifts in tempo, grooves, and expressions following from collaborative interplay with others.

The question of how much analytical or conscious *thinking* that is involved in improvising is a major discussion in psychological research on improvisation (Wilson and MacDonald 2019; Johansen 2018).

Sigrid was clear about what it felt like to her:

GURO: What do you do [when you improvise]?
SIGRID: You get some notes to use, and then you just choose some of them, you chose whether you want to play them, like that.
GURO: Yes, right. But how do you manage to choose? What do you think about when you are choosing?
SIGRID: I don't think, sort of, I just do it. . . . I don't think it is difficult to not think about improvising when I improvise, and rather think about something else in the song. So for example if I improvise, I think about that, and then I can think 'yikes, that was really ugly', I can think that, without playing mistakes, sort of.
GURO: Right, so you have time to think that.
SIGRID: Mm.
GURO: Do you have time to think 'wow, that was nice', do you have time to think that, too?
SIGRID: Yes.

Sigrid had a tendency to frame her own improvised playing as not very good, an attitude that became visible in the excerpt above. Whether or not it reflected her actual self-image, this attitude bothered me a little in the interview. As researcher I was aware of the risk that my interrogating presence would cause the children to be self-critical, and I also considered her negative self-descriptions in regard to improvising as not realistic; in my opinion, her improvising was very good. When I asked 'do you have time to think "wow, that was nice", . . . too?', my motivation was partly an impulse to try to shift to a more positive focus and partly, I wanted to find out about her reflection on mental processes while improvising. What Sigrid said in this excerpt is noticable for a 9-year-old, from a psychological perspective. First, the fact that she was able, in an interview situation separated from the improvisation context, to retell what she experienced mentally while improvising is noteworthy in itself.

Second, the content of what she said was interesting. She had a clear understanding of herself as not 'thinking', just 'doing'. Nevertheless, Sigrid was articulate about what she *did* think about, which indicates some degree of self-monitoring while improvising. However, in her view, the self-assessing thoughts did not affect her improvising. She even highlighted that keeping these two mental processes going simultaneously was easy for her to do: 'I don't think it's difficult to not think' and 'I can think about that [self-assessment], without playing mistakes'. It is likely that what she meant when saying she was not thinking, was that she could improvise 'without mistakes' without *planning* what to play, and this she found easy.

We saw that Hannah defined improvisation as playing on 'what you know'. The relationship between knowing and not-knowing was apparent in something Thomas said. *Satin Doll* was one of Thomas's favourite songs: 'it's not fun to practise the scales [on *Satin Doll*], but it's fun to improvise [on it]'. When asked to compare, he said that playing the scales was easier than to improvise on *Satin*

Doll: 'because then you know what to play'. Still, improvising was more fun than playing scales in Thomas's view:

GURO: So, you think improvising is more fun [than practising the scales], even if it's more difficult?
THOMAS: Yes.
GURO: Why is that more fun?
THOMAS: Because I don't know what to play before I play it.
GURO: Right! And that is what makes it fun! [Thomas is nodding.]

To Thomas, 'knowing what to play' in this context was framed as easy, but not very fun. It is important to keep in mind that what Thomas referred here, was to practise the drill of scales, which is a routine activity (and something Thomas described as boring) and different from the 'target' activity: improvising. Nevertheless, when I asked Thomas to explain what made improvising fun, it was the experience of making up the music while he played that was highlighted. Whether it was the inherent challenge of not knowing that motivated him or the joy of creating music in itself, it is his experience of improvising as not knowing what is going to happen before you do it that I want to highlight.

When Christine explained the act of improvising in performances, she reached the same conclusion as Sigrid about not thinking deliberately in the act of making music:

GURO: [P]laying the scale up and down, that is something different from when you improvise. So what is the difference?
CHRISTINE: When you play the scale, you play the notes in a certain order, but when you improvise you can do whatever you want. Then there are no limits to what you can do, you can decide totally yourself which notes and what order. How many times you want to play . . . you can play the same note over and over again. But it becomes very boring for those who listen, if you play the exact same note. But you can do it.
GURO: So you think about how to not make the improvisation boring to listen to?
CHRISTINE: Yes.
GURO: What do you think about to avoid making it boring when you improvise?
CHRISTINE: When I improvise, I don't really think that much. But I do think about certain things that Odd André has told me to think about. But what I believe happens in my brain, is that I just think . . . if I notice that I play the same note very often, then I can replace it with something else. And then I try to create nice compositions of notes. Yes . . . and if I hear that something doesn't sound so nice, I think that 'now you have to . . . don't play that again'. But most of the time I don't think so much.

In a later interview with Christine, we touched upon the same issue again; what goes on in the mind of the improviser. Again, she was clear about not having to know (or think about) scales to be able to improvise, she only needed to remember

the key. For example, if the progression was a Dm^7 and a G^7 (a II-V progression in C major), all she needed was to think about playing in C major:

CHRISTINE: [O]therwise it would have gone really bad . . . if I'd played in a concert and thought about 'II-V-I in A major, II-V-I in G- major' . . . that would have been so messed up. After a while I don't think about that at all.

Putting together Christine's statements, thinking about correct notes when performing would feel inhibiting. Instead, she was more concerned with variation and maintaining musical interest in her solos – the aesthetic qualities in an improvisation.

Imagination and variation

Aesthetic aspects occurred in many of the children's talk. Thomas pointed to the importance of making improvisations different every time, to avoid it becoming boring to listen to. Anne, his twin sister, compared her own improvisation skills at the time of an interview when she had turned 11 with how she played the year before:

ANNE: I didn't improvise very well. We [referring to herself and her brother] improvised like this [sings single notes with long rests between them]. We improvised really slow.
GURO: Yes, all right. So now you have become better at improvising?
ANNE: Yes.
GURO: How do you improvise now, if you were to compare?
ANNE: A bit faster.
GURO: Faster?
ANNE: Yes, and with more notes.

We continued to talk about the differences between how children and professional, adult musicians improvised, in Anne's view. Professionals improvised faster than children; 'and they have a better imagination, because they make songs, I will never . . . I don't understand where they get all the ideas from. All of my ideas are the same as everybody else's'.

I wanted to follow up her thinking around getting ideas, so I asked her to recall a time when she was particularly happy with her improvising:

GURO: Have you ever felt like . . . 'oh, that was a good idea' when you improvise?
ANNE: When I improvise?
GURO: Yes.
ANNE: Yes. Once I improvised two rounds on a song, so then I had to figure out something different [the second time]. And then I played a bit different from what I use to. It's not that I play the same always, but almost.

GURO: And you felt that you managed that, that time? To come up with something new?
ANNE: Yes.
GURO: And you were happy with it afterwards?
ANNE: Yes.
GURO: So, playing two rounds on an improvisation, that can be a good idea?
ANNE: Yes, actually.

These excerpts say something about Anne's ideas of learning and development as an improviser, but by highlighting what it meant to her to develop, she was also revealing her understanding of improvisatory processes. A better musician is able to 'play faster', which may refer to a higher technical ability on the instrument, but if we put it together with her previous statements about making decisions about notes, 'to play faster' may also mean to have developed a faster *mind-set;* to be able to speed up the mental process of decision making. Further, decision making was connected to musical imagination, the ability to come up with more varied ideas, in Anne's view. Being led to do something *different* during a solo because she had to improvise two choruses instead of one made her come up with more ideas and was a positive mastery experience.

Christine gave the following explanation when I asked her about the difference between a successful and less successful improvisation in her opinion:

> Well, when you don't get it right, then it might be the case that you don't play the correct rhythm. Often, I have to practise to play eighths. Because I often play them pretty uneven, and then it sounds very messy. So if you get the right rhythm, then it sounds much better. Then it is more right than not right. Because . . . that's almost the main thing, that you have to have the correct rhythm, that is sort of the bottom of the improvisation itself. . . . And then there's your note choices, if you play some notes that doesn't fit perfectly together, then it of course doesn't sound as good as if you had chosen some that do fit very well together. But if you sort of [manage to] create a melody out of those notes, then it just sounds . . . so good! So, when I really manage that, then sometimes, when I hear myself, then I go like 'wow, that sounded really nice', then I feel that it's a good improvisation.

Here, Christine brought up *rhythm* as an even more fundamental expressive tool than the issue of note choice that we have seen many of the children highlight when talking about what improvising means. In regard to both the rhythmic and the tonal parameter, there is a *relativism* to be interpreted out of Christine's statement that exceeds the understanding of improvising as playing right or wrong notes: an improvisation is not necessarily totally wrong, but some things sound better than others. For example, she pointed towards that even if you play the correct scale notes you don't necessarily manage to *'create a melody'* out of them, which I interpret as a meaningful musical whole. In this respect, Christine was not only able to articulate her aesthetic goals when improvising, she also showed a sophisticated

quality judgement in the context of improvised music. The sophistication lies in knowing the difference between a good and bad performance while having an awareness of the subjective relativity of what can be considered good and bad.

Personal voice

As mentioned previously, Helene (guitar) enjoyed listening to other children when they soloed in performances. When I followed up this issue, personal differences came up:

GURO: What is it that you like about listening to other's soloes?
HELENE: Well, the variation . . . to hear other ways of improvising than I use to do. To hear how they do it, whether they start from lower to higher, or what rhythms they use, those things.
GURO: Do you sometimes get that . . . that you try to . . . 'oh, what Christine played there was cool, now I want to try to do the same'?
HELENE: Yes, sometimes I get that, yes. But it's a little difficult, too, because if you have your own in you, that you start over and over, or you sort of have one [idea] that you use a lot, then it's a bit difficult to try, in a way. But I did try some times, I listened to Mami [a 15-year-old trumpet pupil visiting from Japan]. And she sometimes played like, like two notes on each, upwards on the scale, and I tried that a couple of times, and that was cool.
GURO: That's cool! I recognise that myself, with musicians I play with. Do you have that kind of things yourself, that you know you often play? Like phrases, or melodies?
HELENE: I sometimes swap between two notes, jump on top of the melody, if there is a comp . . . I don't play even eights, but more like, jumping, in a way on top, just play with it, back and forth.
GURO: With the rhythm, or something?
HELEN: Yes, I have a different rhythm some times. I think that's fun.

When Helene here talked about having 'your own in you', I assume she referred to musical elements or ideas characteristic for a musician's playing. From the examples she gave, these elements could be typical phrases, rhythmic or melodic patterns, for example, formed by the melodic direction (going '*from lower to higher*'), repeating a note in a scale run, repeating a two-note motive, 'jumping' with the rhythm instead of playing even eights, et cetera. Such elements could represent personal expression, but they could also be difficult to deviate from. The latter aspect indicates that Helene felt that personal markers could become automatised habits. However, the positive frame Helene gave to the elements she described as her own, and not the least the awareness she showed in describing them, may indicate that she was interested in nurturing such typicalities in her playing. Since I perceived Helene as an independent 13-year-old, I took the chance of asking her a probing question regarding the potential tension between personality and variation:

GURO: Can it become too much of one particular thing? You're absolutely allowed to answer no to this question. But if you have that kind of favourite phrase, of a favourite way of improvising.

HELENE: Yes . . .

GURO: Is it a good thing to have a lot of that, or can it become too much?

HELENE: A little bit of both, really. It's good to have some variation so that you don't hear the same thing all the time, sort of. But it's also good to have your thing, and perhaps try to listen to others. For example, if you have an idol and then listen to them and how they improvise and then blend it with a little bit of your own and a little bit of others, in a way. Then it becomes your own even more, but you just make it a little bit bigger in a way.

Christine also talked about the issue of having a personal voice:

CHRISTINE: A lot of people comment that it looks like I'm totally gone [when I play]. It's not that I'm that concentrated, because I'm not, really. It's that I just play. I just stand there and play and try to make it sound like me, in a way.

GURO: Yes! That was well put. . . . What does it mean 'to play like me'?

CHRISTINE: I try to put my emotions, in a way, into what I play. . . . I try to . . . since I can hear quite okay, I try to find the note combinations that I like, that I think sound nice. [Combinations] that strike me, then I feel it's more like me.

GURO: Right. And those note combinations that you think sound nice, they are in a way an expression of who you are? [Christine is nodding]

As seen before, *note choice* was what children commonly referred to when describing improvisation and improvising processes. We have also seen children pointing to the possibility of making mistakes or playing wrong notes in an improvisation, such as if one plays notes that don't belong to a current chord scale. Previous research on creative tasks given to children, such as composing in the school music classroom, has pointed to how the instructions given by teachers shape the children's understanding of creative products and processes in music (MacDonald, Miell, and Mitchell 2002). Therefore, their emphasis on the tonal parameter, note choice, and wrong and right notes as constitutive for improvisation is reasonable, given the prominence of learning chord scales in II-V-I progressions at Improbasen.

Practising and learning at home

When Thomas talked about variation in his interview, I asked how one can become good at playing with variation, he said: 'to practise the scales, so that you are confident in what notes to play'.

To both Hannah and Anne, the prerequisite for improvising and making note choices that sound good is *to know*. Christine (sax) elaborated on the *coming-to-know* process, the process of practising scales:

> First, you have to know which key, major or minor, you are playing in. Then you have to know what notes you are playing on. And then you have to drill . . . usually, we are drilling through all those chords, so that you are able to feel what notes to play and when to change. So you have to get familiar with all the chords and scales before you can start improvising, usually. . . . And then, with Odd André, we sometimes take the A section, which is sort of the first part before the bridge. Then you practice one section at a time. And when you have mastered what you are supposed to, you can try and put it all together, and then practise, and practise, and practise, and then perhaps go through all the scales one more time to check that you know everything. And then after having practised and practised, you master it really well.

Here, Christine partly talked about the practising of scales on lessons, and partly about her practising at home. This is illustrative of the relation between what they did in lessons and what they did when practising at home. Several studies on instrumental practising among children confirm the importance of *teaching* practising (Lehmann and Jørgensen 2018); that the teacher explicitly addresses, and has the child practise on lessons, how to undertake practising at home.

For many of the children, practising at home meant to repeat the melody of the tunes they were working with, and the chord scales of the respective tunes. This material was taught in a particular system that I will outline in Chapter 5. As I will show in Chapters 5 and 6, Odd André's piano accompaniment would support the children's playing all the time during lessons. This is potentially problematic in order to enable the children to know what to do at home, without access to accompaniment.

I did not study the children's practising directly. The information I have about it was what the children were able to tell me about it, supplemented by what their parents told me. Their practising was often structured in a similar way as how the lessons were structured. The material was also used similarly, which meant that they played through melodies and scales from the start to beginning. I asked them if they would ever improvise when they practised, which many of them said no to; that would have been difficult without Odd André. The siblings Thomas (sax) and Anne (bass) would occasionally practise together, and then Thomas was able to improvise over his sister's bass lines, but Anne said that she was not able to practise improvising without having piano accompaniment.

Several parents knew how to play the piano, and these parents often comped their children while practising, which enabled practising improvisation to a higher degree. However, this was not always prioritised, as drilling the scales on a tune in order to prepare it for the next lesson often felt more important to prioritise in the total practise time available to the child. An exception was Elisabeth on piano. As pianist, she was able to comp herself with the left hand, and improvise on scales

with her right, which she demonstrated to me once when I visited her at home. Odd André had specifically showed her how she could practise this on her own. In these instances, he had her playing alone and also talked about how she could do it without his accompaniment.

However, learning in their home environment was not limited to direct practising on their instrument, especially since not all of the children had their own instrument at home. This was the case of Sara on drums. Nevertheless, her parent told me how Sara easily became absorbed with the drum parts on music that were played at home or in the car: 'If we are driving the car and listening to music on the radio, she always picks up the drums in the tune, saying "Listen to how they play swing!" And then she will play the drums along with the radio, with her hands'.

Many of the children listened to jazz at home. Often, the incentive came from Odd André, when he, for example, sent audio files to parents with recordings of tunes the children were playing, asking them to make sure the child listened to it between lessons. But as in Sara's case, music listening, and especially jazz, was initiated by parents. Anne's and Thomas's parents enjoyed listening to jazz at home, and apparently this interest had been transferred to the children. For example, one of their parents told me that especially Anne asked to put on jazz in the car, and when the children had friends over for visits, it was jazz that sounded from their room.

A micro-community of jazz

In summarising these children's talk about jazz, we see that improvisation and exploration are aspects they drew on to explain the genre. Further, jazz was described in terms of being played on real instruments (as opposed to electronically produced music), it was perceived as swinging and 'happy' (or energetic) but also relaxational, and it contains more 'nutritional' substance than music one quickly gets tired of. The rhythmic groove aspect was highlighted by several, either directly or indirectly, and either by themselves or from their parents' renditions of children's experiences: the urge to move her body when Anne heard jazz; the 'coolness' of 'standing inside' the band on stage Sigrid felt when the bass played its rhythmic lines.

Children's descriptions of improvisation often centred around scales and playing the right notes. Nevertheless, the children's talk revealed a spectrum of dimensions, such as decision making and the scope of freedom in creating improvised solos. Aspects of knowing was not only related to knowing the scales, but also to the excitement of not knowing what is going to happen in improvised music. The children were able to address and articulate aspects that in psychological research on improvisation are considered complex and often not available to conscious thinking (Wilson and MacDonald 2019), such as awareness of what to think about and what not to think about in the process and listening for changes in the music coming from fellow players. They also displayed awareness of musical parameters and their usage in order to create variation, use imagination, and aim for richness in ideas, and awareness of dramaturgical elements (Huovinen, Tenkanen, and

Kuusinen 2010), such as density, melodic direction, using melodic and rhythmic motives, personal expression, and voice.

The three next chapters will mainly concern the teacher-led activities at Improbasen, so in this chapter, I wanted to address children's own experiences and learning processes outside the lessons and organised performances. Their talk about learning and practising mostly related to playing the right notes and knowing the right scales. This domain represents what is explicitly taught at Improbasen, and is the main topic for Chapter 5. Therefore, it is interesting to note their talk about experiences related to rhythm, interplay, and personal expression, which are domains that are *not*, or at least rarely, explicitly addressed. In Chapters 6 and 7 I outline these, and frame them as parts of implicit teaching and learning. Therefore, it is fair to assume that these descriptions were not mere reproduction of what they had picked up from adults' talk, but that they instead were experiential, shaped by their own meaning making and construction of knowledge.

Early in this chapter, I discussed children's evaluations of the significance of playing in their lives and whether their various degrees of commitment to music could reveal anything about their identity in music. It is clear from the children's talk that they are able to tap into processes that Campbell (1998, 175) describes as

> [Coming] to understand themselves symbolically and emotionally. Music is . . . a means by which they can relate to who they are (or are in the processes of becoming). . . . Through music, they reflect upon themselves, their experiences, and the relationships they have with their friends and members of their family.

The children at Improbasen's abilities to articulate musical and experiential aspects as described above, with their own language, clearly show that they felt a strong degree of ownership of and identification with the genre and repertoire (Hargreaves, MacDonald, and Miell 2016), and with the expressive possibilities they experienced through jazz.

An equally interesting aspect is what they didn't say when asked to explain what jazz is. None of them drew on historical, cultural, or geographical 'textbook' knowledge to explain jazz, such as for example 'jazz originated in North America', 'jazz was first played by black American musicians', or mentioned personified markers such as famous musicians. Thus, none of the children revealed any cultural-historical contextual knowledge about the music they played. Their experiential descriptions stemmed from their own activity within the micro-community constituted by the other children who also played jazz at Improbasen. In Chapter 7, I will elaborate more theoretically on the factors that contribute to the emergence of such a micro-community, drawing on Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice. The absence of cultural-historical descriptions may be seen as a lack of knowledge among the children or even a lack in Odd André's teaching. It is impossible to know whether a wider contextual knowledge about the jazz (that is often male-oriented, hierarchic, and canonical) would have disturbed their sense of ownership, but I will not rule out the possibility that it could have contributed

to alienation and non-identification – especially for the female pupils. Jazz as children's or adults' music, ownership, and identification are important topics that will be returned to in Chapter 8.

Notes

1 Victoria is the name of a theatre in Oslo that is currently used as the National Jazz Scene venue.
2 Sara had used this word on a rehearsal just before this interview, and as it turned out it, it became a point of reference to the other children, who started referring to free improvisation as 'plinky-plonky'.
3 In both English and Norwegian, there is a distinction between *listening* and *hearing*. Here, Sara did use the Norwegian word for *hearing* in a context where *listening* is more accurate. The fact that Sara uses the word that is available to her even if it is imprecise indicates that she is verbalising an actual experience, rather than just replicating words she has picked up from adults.

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5 The subject matter

Explicit teaching and learning

In this chapter, the core content and subject matter in the instrumental lessons will be described: how the content is structured and how pupils grapple with it in order to learn. I frame these aspects as *explicit teaching and learning*. Within a cognitive psychological paradigm, Berkowitz (2010) distinguishes between implicit and explicit learning in learning to improvise by drawing on theories of language learning (Ellis 1994, in Berkowitz 2010). Implicit learning is defined as 'the acquisition of knowledge . . . by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations' (Ellis 1994, 1–2, as cited in Berkowitz 2010, 7). This acquisition is 'arrived at from experience' (op. cit.) and connected to procedural memory: the ability to perform a learned skill. By contrast, explicit learning is defined as happening through conscious operations in search for structure, by creating and testing hypotheses, and is related to declarative memory: the ability to 'recall facts and events' (Berkowitz 2010, 8). Through communication by language, explicit learning may also mean 'assimilation of a rule following explicit instructions' (op. cit.).

Berkowitz claims that a key difference between implicit and explicit learning is 'the lack of conscious effort in the former and the presence thereof in the latter' (Berkowitz 2010, 7). Although this distinction may seem like a dichotomy, it is important to consider implicit and explicit learning in a continuum, where processes and learning foci may be more or less conscious or non-conscious. For example, *intentions* behind procedural (and non-conscious) actions may be conscious. Explicit and implicit learning may also happen simultaneously, depending on what the learning subject is consciously focusing on in the situation, and what aspects are learned 'additionally' and non-consciously, according to Berkowitz.

However, framing implicit learning as more 'natural' and 'simple' than explicit learning is problematic, since it renders its processes in a black box. When we think about all learning as situated (Rogoff 1990), we are able to take into account learning that may go 'under the radar' for those involved. Any explicit learning content will carry implicit meanings depending on the particular context (Kannellopoulos and Wright 2012); the subjects may not be aware of these meanings, but that does not mean that they are unintentional or can't be guided, as the word 'natural' may allude to. Nor does it mean that implicit learning necessarily lacks effort; this will depend on intention. From Berkowitz' outline, I will emphasise *focused awareness* and *language* as markers of difference between the implicit

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and explicit. Language provides structure for understanding by using labels for objects and events, as well as directing a learner's attention to such objects and events (Rogoff 1990).

The children's learning of improvisation at Improbasen has both explicit and implicit dimensions, where the explicit refers to learning content that is deliberately focused on, articulated, and made concrete. This includes a repertoire of tunes, mainly from the jazz standard repertoire, and verbalised structuring of how to improvise on chord sequences on such tunes, but also explicit rhythmic content and focused approaches to phrasing.

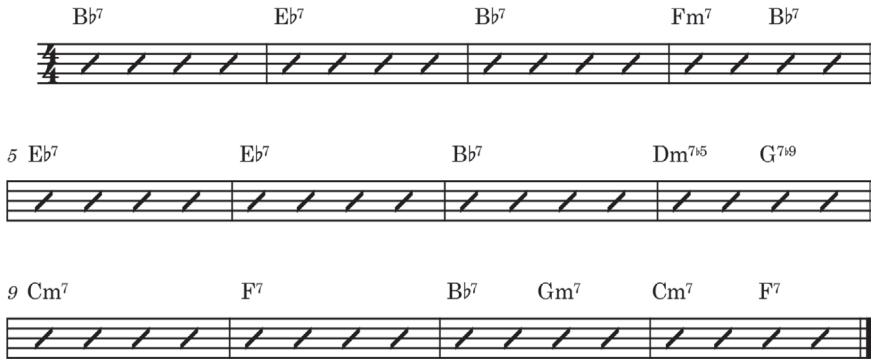
The content is always presented and practised in a musical context, whether a pupil is practising improvising to Odd André's accompaniment on lessons, or the children play in bands on rehearsals or performances. Thus, learning tunes, chords, and scales is always intertwined with the situational presence of a rhythmic groove and form. These contexts afford implicit learning dimensions that span from how to relate to and create and interact within the rhythmic environment, to how to inhabit appropriate roles in a band. Such aspects will be attended to in the next chapter. In this chapter, I will primarily focus on the explicit dimensions explained here. I will provide a detailed level of musical description and analysis, which serves two purposes. First, the episodes I have chosen to use as examples in this chapter mainly contain interaction that is primarily musical and non-verbal communication. In order to interpret the participants' thinking and meaning making in the situation, I have therefore had to examine musical utterances as the main mode of communication. Second, it helps to show an important dimension of Improbasen's teaching philosophy, namely that a detailed and systematic structuring of the learning content is seen as crucial to support children's learning experiences.

The very beginning

Vignette: Sara – the piano introduction

The first time I meet Sara on her third lesson at Improbasen, she is seven and has never played an instrument before she started here a few weeks ago. In her previous two lessons she has tried playing the saxophone, trumpet, piano, and drums. Today Odd André wants her to play piano. They sit across from each other, each at an electric piano. Odd André shows her the notes in a B♭ blues scale, and they practise playing short phrases within the scale, using call and response. He wants her to improvise on a blues form in B♭, and asks her to use the notes from the scale she has learned. He counts off in a relatively high tempo and starts to comp with walking bass and chords, using a progression common in jazz blues (see Music example 5.1*).*

Sara improvises on the scale notes with her right index and long middle finger. She is listening and probing. After some rounds, Odd André stops and says: 'Remember that you can play faster as well! An easy way to play fast is to play several times on the same note'. He also encourages her to use the whole keyboard when she plays, not only the keys on front of her.



Music example 5.1 Jazz blues chord progression

She repeats some of the motifs she created, and sometimes she centres on the tonic, B♭. She uses a lot of rests, she listens, probes. Her fingers move down to the bass register, and Odd André immediately stops playing walking. The next chorus his walking bass is back in.

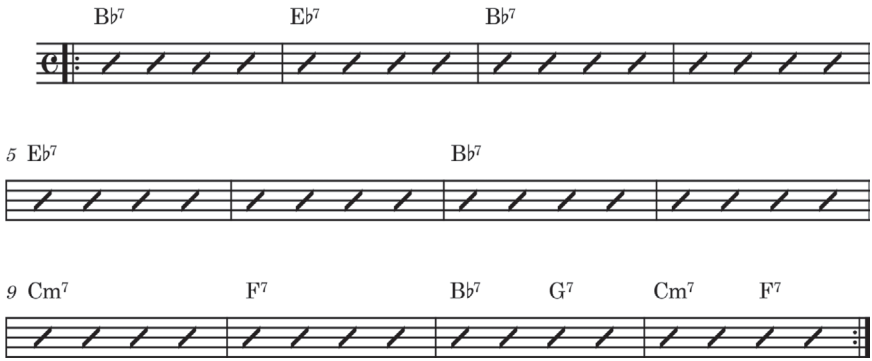
After they have played the blues, he goes over to her piano to show on the keys how to play the melody Varme Brød [Hot Cross Buns] *in B♭. As soon as she can play it on her own, he goes back to his piano and starts comping it using a swing groove.*

ODD ANDRÉ SAYS: *'Do you remember that you learned this song?'*

He starts playing the melody of Eight Days a Week in B♭. She is unsure, so Odd André repeats the melody on the A-section on his piano. She then plays it while he is comping. When they come to the bridge, Odd André plays the melody and nods her back in when he comes to the beginning of the last A section. He then walks over to her and shows her the blues scale, descending from B♭.

SARA: *Is it these two [plays B♭ and A♭], these two [F and E] and these two [E♭ and D♭], and that [B♭]?*
ODD ANDRÉ: *Yes.*

They start playing, Odd André plays the jazz blues progression. Sara plays the descending scale repeatedly. He says: 'Now you are playing the same thing all the time. Try to do something different'. They play another chorus. 'That was really good. Try to play something faster, with more speed.' He goes over to her keyboard, showing how she can alter between two fingers to create faster phrases. Then he suggests they play the whole song. Odd André plays the intro and Sara comes in with the melody on the A section. Odd André plays the melody on the bridge, followed by a section for Sara to improvise, on the chord progression of the A section.



Music example 5.2 The chord progression used for *Sonnymoon for Two*

They follow the form of the song, and when Sara continues to improvise after the bridge has started, Odd André quietly says 'pst!' without stopping and plays on. Sara comes in with the melody on the last A section.

They proceed to play the melody on the Abba tune Mamma Mia *in B♭. This one is without improvisation, it is just about repeating the melody. Odd André says: 'And then there is the tune that is almost like the scale!' He refers to Sonny Rollins's tune* Sonnymoon for Two *(see* Music example 5.2*). Sara plays the first two bars of each line, and Odd André the two last.*

After they have played the melody, he asks her to play freely on the scale. I notice that he has been looking intensely at Sara the whole lesson and also that he doesn't say much or praise much. His comments and feedback seem neutral.

This vignette illustrates several aspects of the very beginning phases in the tuition at Improbasen, all comprised in this single lesson with Sara. First, all the children start by playing the piano, unless they have already had experience on a different instrument. The piano has the advantage of incorporating many senses when learning: the notes are neatly ordered next to each other, the hands are moving in a consistent direction according to how a melodic line moves,[1] and it's easy to get a visual overview. Thus, the auditory, visual, and kinaesthetic senses inform each other in developing audiation and establishing connection between audiation, learning musical concepts, and operational abilities.

Repertoire

The lesson demonstrates Improbasen's approach to repertoire. The tunes Sara had learned by her third lesson were *Hot Cross Buns, Eight Days a Week, Mamma Mia* and *Sonnymoon for Two*, which were connected in a particular learning progression. They were all taught in the key of B♭ major, and when used in the same key they contain a similar repertoire of notes. Odd André is careful to make them use a fingering in B♭ major or B♭ blues that is organic to the hand when learning

these first songs. All these melodies except *Sonnymoon for Two* centre on the third, second, and first scale degree; the notes D (third finger), C (second finger) and B♭ (first finger). This way, the child becomes increasingly acquainted with one key, in a repeated experience with the same operational repertoire, but also with musical variation. Learning these songs in B♭ is also the introduction to the first jazz tune they learn, which is *Sonnymoon*. This tune differs from the others in the sense that it consists of the B♭ pentatonic blues scale played downwards, a feature he used as the cue for Sara to remember the melody.

The choices of B♭ major scale and blues scale are important. B♭ major lies well in the hand on the piano. After the lesson, I asked him about the importance of using a particular fingering, to which Odd André replied:

> Since Sara hasn't learned the note names yet, I use a particular finger as a referent to a certain note. So far, the forefinger is always the referent to the note C if we are in B♭ major. The point is not technical, that this is always the best fingering for the B♭ major scale, it is to establish references. This will change later, but to begin with, I think it is important with such codes.

The key of B♭ also works for children with transposing instruments to play together: which means C for B♭ instruments and G for E♭ instruments. Thus, the immersion in this particular key points forward to creating opportunities for the children to start playing *together* from a very early phase. This is a topic I will lay out more thoroughly in Chapter 7.

Lesson structure

The use of time in this lesson was also typical for the newcomers at Improbasen. By Sara's third lesson, she had already a repertoire of four songs, learned by ear. During the lesson, they spent a relatively short time on each song. Still, the 60 minutes were filled with *playing music*. This way, she was able to work with many different things during an hour. Instead of working with one song for a long time, which would potentially have been straining for her concentration and motivation, she had learned fragments of several songs. This gave them more time for the necessary repetition over the subsequent lessons. Knowing only some sections of each song was enough for her to participate on all of them when put in groups with other pupils. This is intended to give a sense of a quick progression and mastery. Simultaneously as she had learned several *new* things, she had worked *with the same thing* all the time; improvising in the key of B♭.

There was very little talking during the lessons. In Odd André's experience, children are used to being instructed by talk, and it will sometimes take time for them to be able to pick up what to do without being told verbally. Therefore, Odd André introduces a non-verbal mode of communication deliberately from the start for the children to get used to it. The non-verbal approach has several purposes. First, it makes the use of time efficient. It allows them to *be in the music* while still communicating, as in the example with *Eight Days a Week*. It also directs the child's

attention to what is sounded. Even Odd André's comping to *Hot Cross Buns* had a swing rhythm and rich harmonisations, and for the blues tune he used a progression with II-V-Is (jazz blues) instead of the simpler, three-chord version (with only I^7, IV^7, and the V^7 chord). Odd André's accompaniment can be seen as aiming at sensitising the children to what is played musically, and teaching them the kind of auditory awareness that is needed in an improvising jazz ensemble, where musical utterances may be played unexpectedly. The constant presence of a musically mature piano accompaniment exposes them to jazz harmony and groove, to how instructions are communicated *in-music,* and allows the music to *last* – the beat doesn't stop unless needed. The latter aspect affects their learning of feeling *form* in jazz music. Even if Sara waited through the bridge of *Eight Days a Week*, seemingly passive, she was exposed to the form of the tune. Further, since a non-verbal approach allows the children to experience *being in the music* temporally, they are also allowed to experience duration and concentration, regardless of whether they are playing themselves all the time. This will be returned in Chapters 6 and 7.

Improvising from the beginning

As we saw, the lesson started with improvisation, before tunes were introduced and repeated. The improvisatory, tonal repertoire has an inherent progression from using the black keys on the piano, to the pentatonic blues scale, and eventually, they learn the chromatic blues scale. The B♭ blues scale, with its variations, is thus used when improvising on all these tunes. This way, the child gets repeated experiences with using a very specific note material, but in a variety of musical contexts: the different tunes. The chromatic blues scale is often used for improvisation, even on diatonic tunes in major keys, and with functional harmonic chord progressions. This allows children to play more advanced melodies and still be able to improvise on them even if their improvisatory repertoire is limited.

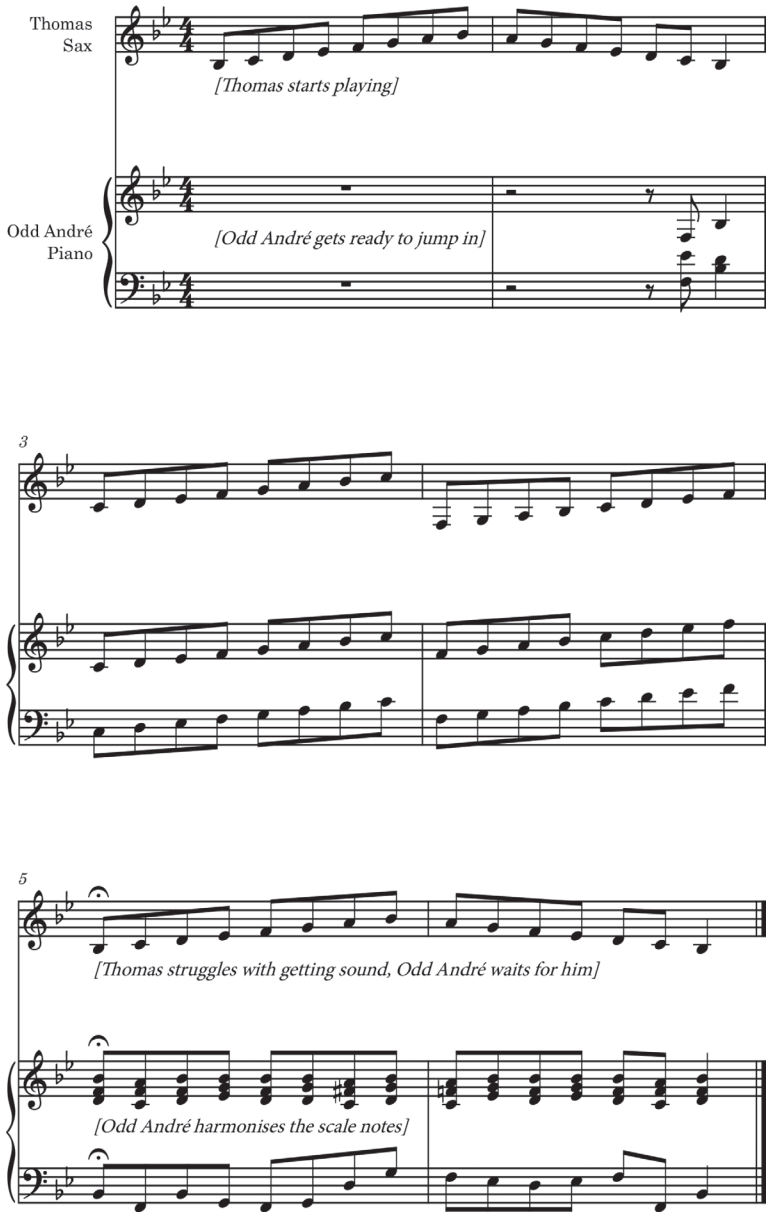
The act of improvising is incorporated in the lessons from the very beginning, even before songs are taught. Often, Odd André does not use the word 'improvising' when instructing the children what to do. Instead, he may show them the notes they can use, and ask them to 'play variations' with them. The beginning phase of improvising also focuses on *what do to* with the notes. In the vignette, we saw how the dramaturgical aspects (Huovinen, Tenkanen, and Kuusinen 2010) of creating music were introduced, such as when Odd André talked about using repetition, pacing and speed of phrases, and register.

Chords and scales, ears and hands

Vignette: Thomas – the cycle of fifths warm-up

We are at the studio at Carl Berners Plass one Tuesday afternoon in April 2015. Ten-year-old Thomas has just put aside the book he always reads while waiting for his sister to have her lesson. Now it is Thomas's turn, and while he picks up his alto saxophone, Anne finds her book – this is their routine. Odd André wants to hear how his reed works and says: 'Let's try G major, then' [he plays B♭ in concert

pitch on the piano]. Thomas immediately starts playing the G major scale on the saxophone [B♭ major]: first ascending, then descending. This is followed by an ascending A dorian [C dorian] and an ascending D mixolydian [F mixolydian], which is shown in Music example 5.3.



Music example 5.3 Thomas's warming up exercise, transcribed to concert pitch

The same pattern of scales is then run through in a cycles of fifths. Thomas knows the routine; he only sometimes hesitates to think about the notes. But the further out in the cycle, the more he has to search and try out a few notes. Odd André is not correcting him when he plays an error, only stops and waits with the accompaniment. Thomas finds the notes by himself. But after the key of A♭ major [B major], Thomas can't find the root.

ODD ANDRÉ: *You came from A♭, so then it is . . .*
THOMAS: *A♭ . . . it must be . . . E♭.*
ODD ANDRÉ: *Yes.*

He starts to play the harmonisation, and Thomas plays the pattern from E♭ [G♭] hesitantly, slowly and searching for notes, but he gets it right. Odd André doesn't help him, only waits for the right note, giving short positive comments when Thomas gets the right notes.

The harmonic cell of II-V-I

The vignette with Thomas shows the central place of II-V progressions in a lesson. First, the warm-up exercise that is used consists of cells through the cycle of fifths, where each cell is comprised of the chord scales for I-II-V-I in each key. The dorian and mixolydian scales are not taught as separate entities, but as modes of a major scale, belonging together. However, the names of the modes are not used, nor are they described as modes. This means that the II of the I-II-V-I progression in B♭ is not called 'C dorian', but 'the second degree of B♭ major'. When Thomas struggled remembering the scales, he had to use his ears to figure out the notes himself, without Odd André doing anything but wait for Thomas to find it. Only when Thomas was unsure of the key, did Odd André guide him towards using theoretical knowledge about the cycle of fifths ('you came from A♭, so it must be . . . ') to reason what the next key would be. Thomas managed the task, which is possible because he had internalised an expectation of how the three scale types sounded and what they sounded like in the order of a I-II-V-I progression; the sound of a II-scale anticipates the sound of a V-scale, which in turn anticipates the I-scale. The task was predominantly ear-based, but theory was integrated when needed.

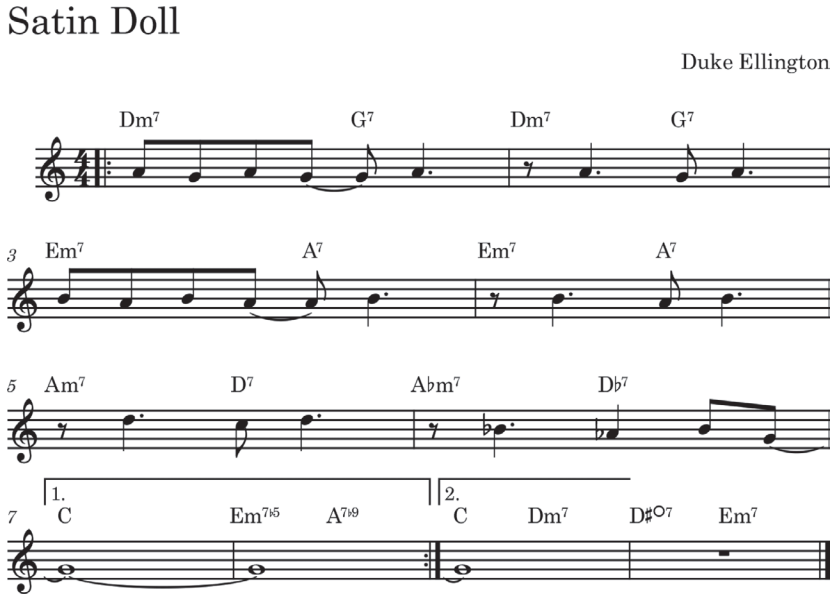
Another approach to learning improvising on functional harmonic progressions is to use the chord notes to create melodies. I talked to a parent who was a musician and had taught improvisation to their two daughters using a chord-note approach. The parent told me that their youngest daughter generally struggled to hear where she was in a tune. In the lessons she had started having with Odd André, the principle of tonalities with chord scales from different scale degrees was used, and this approach seemed to have solved the problem. When she started to think of shifts of chords as shifts in tonality, she noticed them while playing, which she hadn't before. This indicates that the sound of scales is easier to internalise and make immediate meaning of for the child than the sound of chords, perhaps because the melodic parameter is more available to a child's perception than harmony (Costa-Giomi

2003). Thus, having learned to associate chord shifts with tonalities may function as a clearer 'way in' to perceiving harmony-based form for the beginning improviser.

Vignette: Sigrid – 'the* Satin Doll *lesson'

Sigrid, nine years old, is already a skilled classical violin player when she begins attending Improbasen. This day she has her third lesson, and arrives with her parent to the studio at Carl Berner. After the parent has helped her tuning the instrument, Odd André takes a seat at his electric piano with Sigrid facing him. The previous lessons covered the songs It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing) *and* Bernie's Tune *and practising improvising over the blues scale in the key of D harmonic minor. Today, Odd André has put out a blank music writing pad and a pencil. To begin with, they warm up with the I-II-V-I scales through the keys of G major, C major, F major, B♭ major, E♭ major.*[2]

Odd André plays the opening motif of Satin Doll *and asks: 'Did we play this before?' Sigrid picks silently on her strings and sings the start of the theme on* Bernie's Tune*, which almost similarly to* Satin Doll*, opens with a repeated second interval. 'Is it this one. . .?'*[3] *Odd André replies: 'Right, yes, we played that one. Let's take it,' before he counts in. After the head is played through once, he says that she is going to learn a tune called* Satin Doll*. Motif by motif, he plays first and asks her to copy. In this way, they work their way through the whole melody (see* Music example 5.4*).*



Music example 5.4 The first sixteen bars of *Satin Doll*

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Odd André then asks Sigrid if she knows about intervals. She has heard the word, but she can't explain what it is. Odd André writes out a C major scale on the blank sheet and explains to her what chords are: 'They can be any notes played together. But the most common chords are built up with every other note within a scale', while he plays a C^{maj7} chord, a Dm^7, and an Em^7 chord: 'And so on. So if you want to create a chord from C using every other note, what notes will you get?' Sigrid points to an E on the sheet.

ODD ANDRÉ: *And then the next is . . .*
SIGRID: *G.*
ODD ANDRÉ: *Yes, and then the final one, since we need four notes . . .*
SIGRID: *B.*

When Odd André then asks her to do the same from D as the bottom note, it comes rapidly from Sigrid: 'D, F, A, and C'.

They go similarly through the notes of a G^7 chord before Odd André shows her that the thirds can be either minor or major and how she can use the piano to find out which one it is. He then explains: 'The name of the chord is the same as the root. What we write after the name of the root depends on the third and the seventh. So if it is a major third, we write nothing, just C. But if it is a minor, we write Cm. If the chord has a major seventh, we write maj7, and if the seventh is minor, we just write 7'.

Sigrid nods. She uses the keys on the piano to determine the thirds and the sevenths and then figures out that the chords they wrote are called C^{maj7}, Dm^7, and G^7.

Odd André goes through the same procedure of building fourth chords of the first, second, and fifth degrees in D major, asking her to check the thirds and the sevenths and write the chord symbols. At first, Sigrid seems to be guessing, but as they work through the task her answers come quicker and quicker. She has cracked the principle.

He then summarises the rules about chords he wants her to remember.

ODD ANDRÉ: *All chords that ends with maj7 are the first degree in a major key. All chords that has a name that ends with m^7 are second degrees in a major key. All chords that is called something and 7, are fifth degrees. What is G^{maj7}?*
SIGRID: *It is the first.*
ODD ANDRÉ: *In what key?*
SIGRID: *In G major.*
ODD ANDRÉ: *How about F^{maj7}?*
SIGRID: *The first, in F major.*
ODD ANDRÉ: *And what about Gm^7?*
SIGRID: *That is a. . . second.*
ODD ANDRÉ: *Yes, in what key?*
SIGRID: *In G major.*
ODD ANDRÉ: *No . . . G can't be the second in G.*

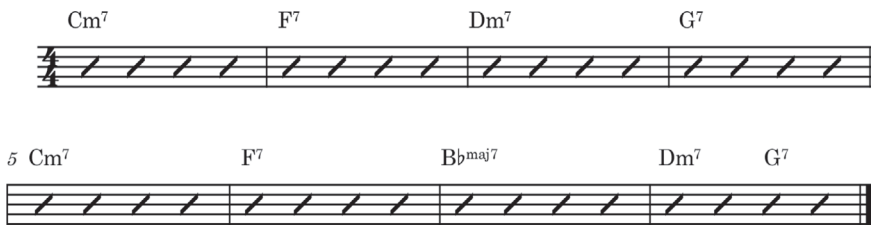
SIGRID: *Oh, in . . . in . . .*
ODD ANDRÉ: *If G is second, what is first, then?*
SIGRID: *F*.
ODD ANDRÉ: *Yes. What about Em^7?*
SIGRID: *In D major*.
ODD ANDRÉ: *Yes, the second in D major*.

Odd André writes up the chord changes of Satin Doll *without telling her which tune it is. He uses a simplified version (see* Music example 5.5*)*.

He asks Sigrid to say what chords they are and which degrees in what key. They play through the scales from the second and fifth degree in C and D major, respectively.

Then they play through all the chord-scales on Satin Doll. *'We will go through it like you did when you warmed up. So this [points to the first Dm^7 chord] is C major, only played from D'. It takes some trial and error to get all the chord scales right, to remember that an Em^7 has the same notes as D major and not E major. Odd André asks her to talk through the chord sequence, to say each chord, what scale degree it is, and in which key. He then asks her how many different keys these eight bars have all together. After some discussion, Sigrid concludes that there are two different keys altogether: C major and D major. Odd André ends the session: 'For next week, I want you to learn how to play all these scales. When you master that, you will be able to improvise on a lot of different tunes'*.

This vignette is representative for the session that all the pupils on pitched instruments go through, where they are presented with the theory of chord scales on II-V-I progressions. However, Odd André uses the concept of *tonality* and tonalities played from different scale degrees instead of 'chord scales'. This is to avoid thinking of scales as isolated entities and instead help the understanding of the harmonic connection between chords in a tonal progression. They use blank sheet paper and pencil to work through the principle, but after this lesson, which Odd André calls 'the *Satin Doll* lesson', working with II-V-Is and chord-scale tonalities is done by ear. Thus, the sound of the major scale, the dorian, and the mixolydian scale and their relative relationship from the I, II, and V, respectively,



Music example 5.5 The first eight bars of the chord progression of *Satin Doll*, simplified, and in B♭

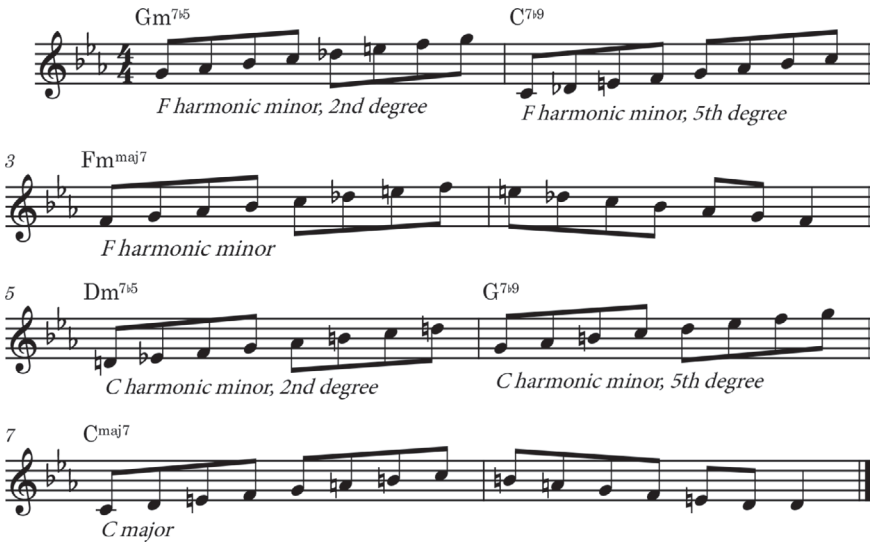
followed in a succession becomes strongly internalised. This makes it easy for the child to learn these scales in new keys, since they know what they are going to sound like. The set rules for the functions of chord symbols that we saw in this vignette are used when Odd André first introduces chord-scale tonalities, but exceptions are introduced as the pupil becomes more accustomed to thinking in this way.

The reason why the introduction to chord-scale tonalities is tied to the tune *Satin Doll* is because the first four bars contain a transposition from II-V in C major to II-V in D major. This progression invites showing how II-V chord scales are often connected, without necessarily going to the I after the V – which is a common phenomenon on jazz standards. Because of the transposition, the principle can be illustrated in two different keys over only four bars.

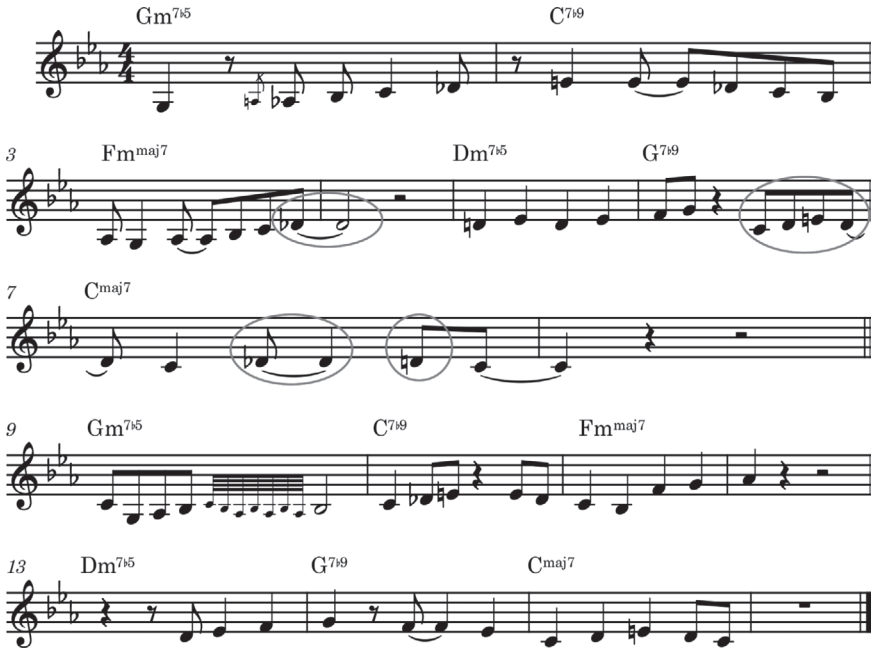
Vignette: Thomas – what is this thing called love

After the warm-up on I-II-V-I scales over the cycle of fifths, Odd André announces the tune What Is This Thing Called Love. *When Thomas picks out the sheet music, Odd André asks 'You know this by heart, don't you?' Thomas responds: 'Yes, but I need this for improvisation'. Odd André says: 'Oh yes, that's right. Just play a little bit on the chords' (see* Music example 5.6*).*

After Thomas has run through all the chord scales, Odd André asks him to improvise and counts in in a medium swing tempo (see Music example 5.7*).*



Music example 5.6 The chord scales of the first 8 bars of *What Is This Thing Called Love*, in concert pitch



Music example 5.7 Thomas's improvisation on the first 8 bars of *What Is This Thing Called Love*

Odd André asks Thomas to improvise a second chorus and asks Thomas to try and use more eighth notes. Odd André plays the first couple of bars, improvising a melodic line consisting of mostly eighth notes. Then he counts Thomas in.

Improvising on chord scales

The tune *What Is This Thing Called Love* is central in the repertoire at Improbasen since it contains II-V-I progressions in minor keys. For jazz musicians, minor keys may have several options regarding choices of scales, depending on the harmonic surroundings – what chords a II-V in minor comes out of and where it is proceeding. In the beginning phases for the pupils at Improbasen, a minor I chord is always played with a major seventh, as seen in bar four of *What Is This Thing Called Love*. The pupils then learn to associate a minor chord with a major 7th to the harmonic minor scale as the I-scale. A II-chord in a minor II-V-I is always a half-diminished chord, and the scale is harmonic minor from the second scale degree, which in modal theory would be called a dorian ♭2, ♭5. Correspondingly, a V-chord that leads to a minor I is always presented as a dominant seventh chord with a flat ninth, and the scale is harmonic minor from the fifth scale degree, or a mixolydian

♭2, ♭6. However, the pupils are only taught the harmonic minor scale, and the modal names are not used until they have become quite experienced. The reason for using the harmonic minor scale for each scale degree in a minor tonality is that it creates a consistent system for the children to relate to. The characteristic sound of a harmonic minor scale (and its inversions from different degrees) helps the children to not confuse a minor tonic from minor chord scales in a major tonality (such as from the third and the sixth scale degree). Once internalised, the distinct character of a half-diminished chord immediately allows the inner ear to anticipate the minor tonic two chords ahead.

When looking at the transcription of the first sixteen bars of Thomas improvising on *What Is This Thing Called Love*, it is clear that he approached the task from his knowledge of the scales and perhaps also looking at the chord symbols on the sheet. For the most part his phrases consisted of stepwise scalar movements. However, he did *not* seem to think about one scale at a time. His phrases all stretched over a four-bar period, using space at the end of each period. Some phrases and motifs start on the chord roots, but he doesn't play the root of every chord. His melodic lines did not follow the ascending pattern as in the scale rehearsal exercise; after an ascending movement, a descending movement follows, and sometimes short motifs are repeated.

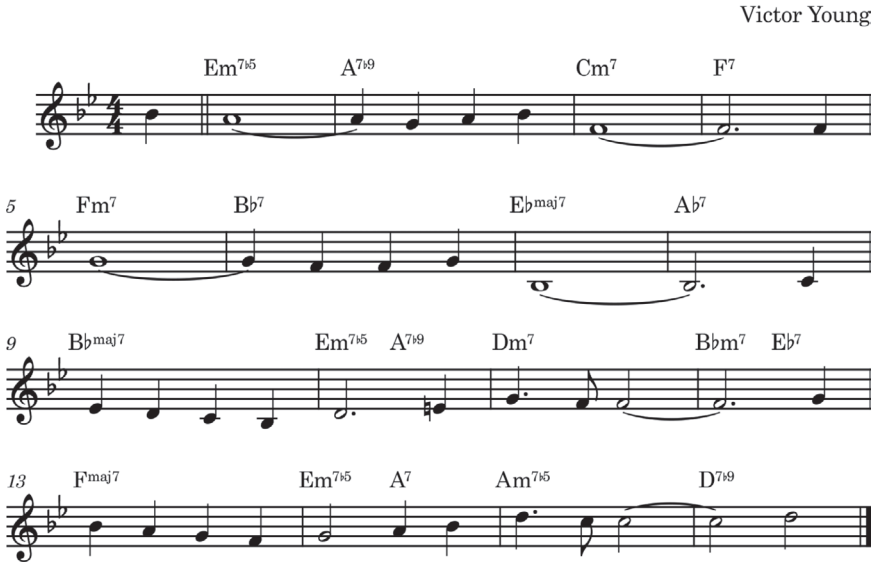
In bar four and five, he ended his phrase on a ♭6, which was correct in terms of the chord scale, but may have sounded wrong as it is a passing note and not common to emphasise. In bar 6, he seemed to have anticipated the C^{maj7} chord, and the D♭ immediately after can be understood as Thomas thinking about his note choice in bar 6 as a mistake – a note that was sharp that was supposed to be flat – and that he tried to correct it. However, he immediately seemed to hear that D♭ was not the right one and corrected it to a D.

Rhythmically, his improvisation was varied and the phrasing stylistically adherent to a swing idiom. Towards the end of this section, he seemed to be more cautious with his rhythmic phrasing, playing fewer eighth note phrases and syncopations and more quarter notes. If it is the case that he became more cautious, it may be related to wanting to avoid playing more note mistakes.

Vignette: Christine – memorising Stella

Christine, soon 13 years old, has her lesson at Odd André's home this afternoon. After having played All the Things You Are *and* You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To*, Odd André asks: 'And then . . . [starts to play the melody on* Stella by Starlight*] . . . do you remember this one?'*

Christine immediately starts to play the head from memory (there is no sheet music), Odd André following (see Music example 5.8*). He controls the tempo: it is slow, rubato. At the second 16-bar period, he sets a firm tempo, playing medium swing. Christine follows, adjusting her phrasing. After the head, he says: 'We started learning the chords, but you probably don't remember so much of them?' Christine says no, and he replies: 'Let's figure them out again'. He lays down the chords, one at a time. Without using words, he lets Christine find the root on the*



Music example 5.8 The first sixteen bars of *Stella by Starlight* (Victor Young)

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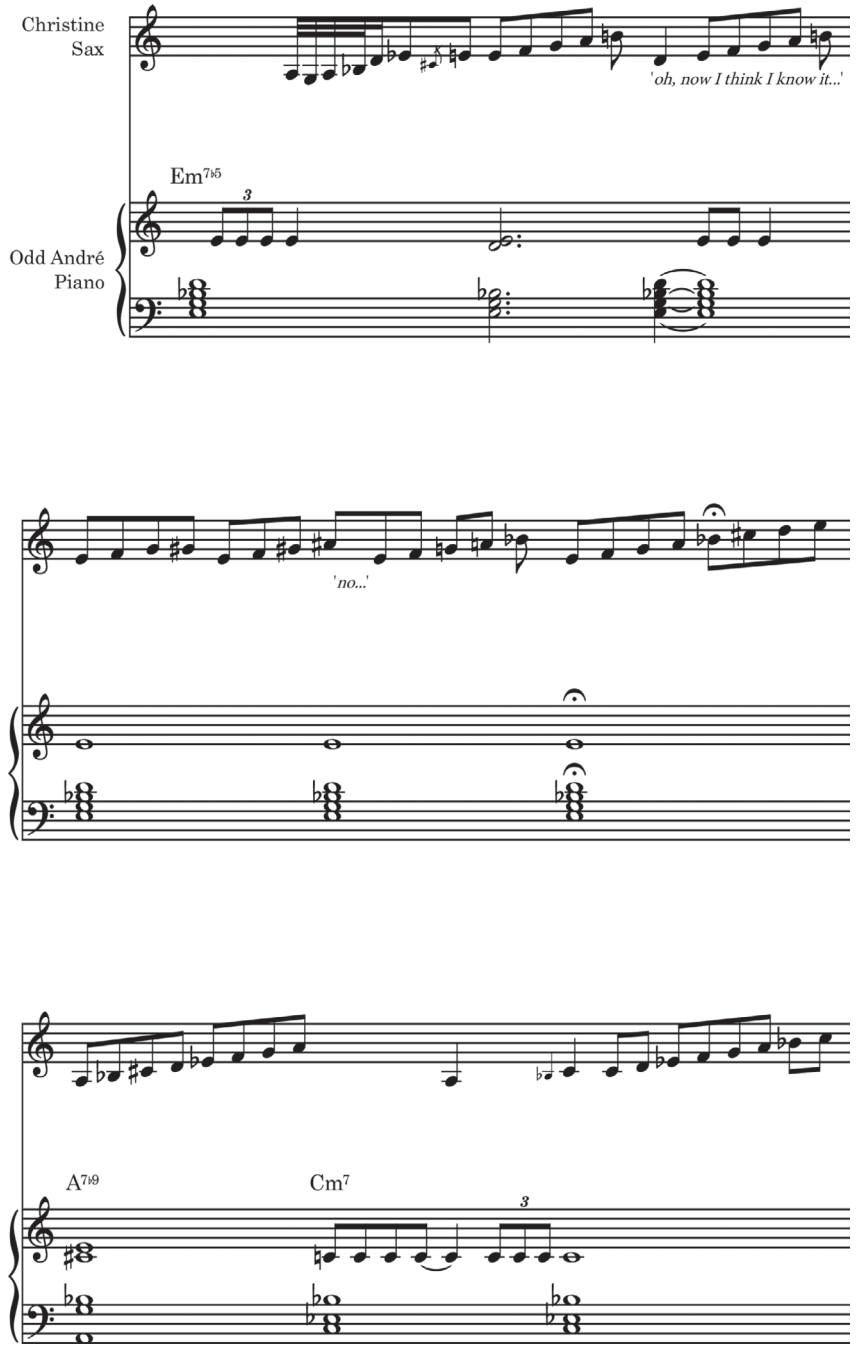
saxophone and search her way to the scales. For chords that last for a whole bar, he lets her play the slow, rubato scale runs up and down. For chords that lasts for two beats, he says 'fast' (see Music example 5.9*).*

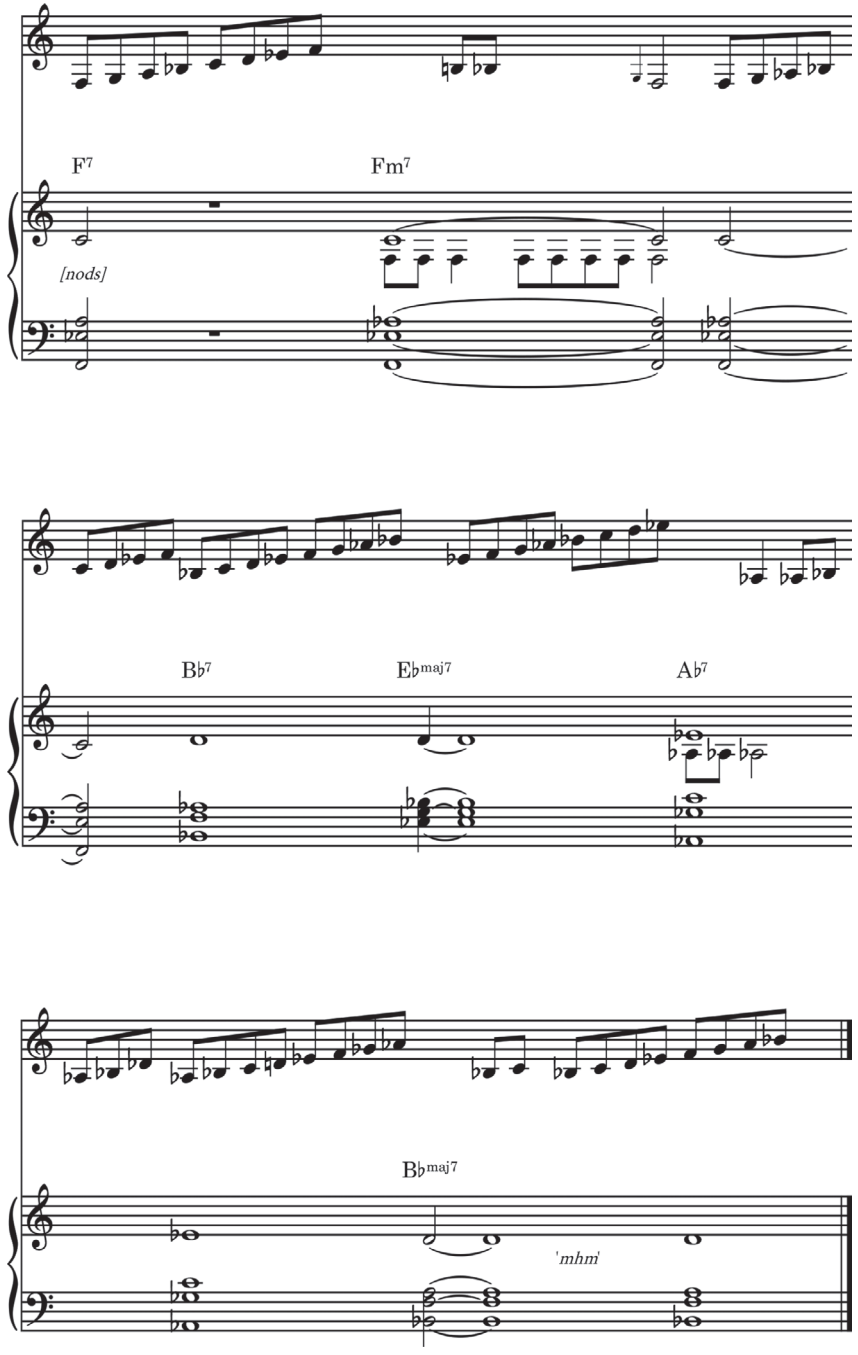
After having gone through the form once like this, it is repeated, and she gets most of the scales correct at once. Then Odd André asks Christine to sing through the scales in the same manner. She does it correctly at the first attempt.

Figuring out the scales

I have included the vignette above because it is an example of the aural approach to learning and memorising chord scales on tunes. In the excerpt, Christine is in the process of learning *Stella by Starlight*. She had learned the head of the tune and gone through the chord changes on it the previous week, but couldn't remember them. They went through it again chord by chord, without using verbal explanations. *Stella* is a tune in B♭ that consists of several II-V chord cells, but where the expected I-chords sometimes are replaced with a new II-V. It has another challenge in that it starts with a II-V which does not belong diatonically to B♭, but to the tonality of the third scale degree of B♭, namely D minor. This makes the Em$^{7\,\flat5}$



Music example 5.9 The scale run-through on the first 9 bars of *Stella*



Music example 5.9 (Continued)

and $A^{7\,\flat 9}$ a *secondary* II-V progression. However, the expected D minor chord after the $Em^{7\,\flat 5}$ and $A^{7\,\flat 9}$ is replaced with a II-V to the tonic (B♭). But instead of going to the tonic, it is turned into a II-V to the fourth scale degree of B♭, namely E♭. The $E\flat^{\,maj7}$ chord is followed by an $A\flat^7$, which together with $E\flat^{maj7}$ can be interpreted as a IV-V to a D♭. However, the $A\flat^7$ is followed by the tonic ($B\flat^{maj7}$) in bar 9, which makes the function of the $A\flat^7$ a ♭ VII^7 dominant.

Odd André laid down each chord one by one and wanted Christine to figure out herself both the roots and the chord scales by playing them on the saxophone. As seen in the transcription of the first 9 bars of the changes, he emphasised the root by playing it repeatedly in the first octave, as a cue. The first scale is a D harmonic minor from the second degree. This is the one Christine struggles the most with figuring out, possibly since it is unusual to start a jazz standard tune with a secondary II-V and it certainly is unusual in her repertoire of tunes. Once she has found the root, she immediately places the first tetrachord correctly, a phrygian movement from E to A. However, she stops herself after having played a B, hearing the clash with the chord Odd André is playing. Apparently, she starts doubting the root and seems to start over again from a D, following by Odd André insisting on the note E. Christine comments herself, thinking she has got it, and then starts over three times before she plays it right. When she does, she stops herself and repeats the correct movement from the root to the fifth, holding it there before she either *hears* or *remembers* the rest of the scale and that it is a harmonic minor scale from the second degree. After she realises this, the corresponding dominant scale, a D harmonic minor from the fifth degree, comes immediately. Then she searches for the next root, which is a C in a $Cm^7 – F^7$ progression. One could expect she would try out the D as the new root, following from $Em^{7\,\flat 5}$ to the $A^{7\,\flat 9}$, but it is as if she remembers that there is something unexpected coming, since she tries to repeat A as the root in the next chord. However, once the B♭ major from second degree (C dorian) is in place, the same thing happens as with the previous dominant scale; the scale from the fifth degree (F mixolydian) follows quickly. This is where Odd André nods at her quick response.

At this point, the F^7 is turned into a II chord, the Fm^7. Again, Christine doesn't immediately remember this progression, but as soon as she has found the F, she lingers on it, and then plays the whole II-V-I progression $Fm^7 – B\flat^{\,7} – E\flat^{\,maj7}$ relatively rapidly. The transition from an F^7 to an Fm^7 may have been the reason why she earlier repeated an A after having played the $A^{7\,\flat 9}$; she may have remembered the phenomenon where a V chord is transformed into a II chord from the same root. But her thinking about this does not stop her from *hearing* relatively quickly that is a C instead. The relationship between 'thinking' and 'hearing' is something I will come back to in Chapter 7.

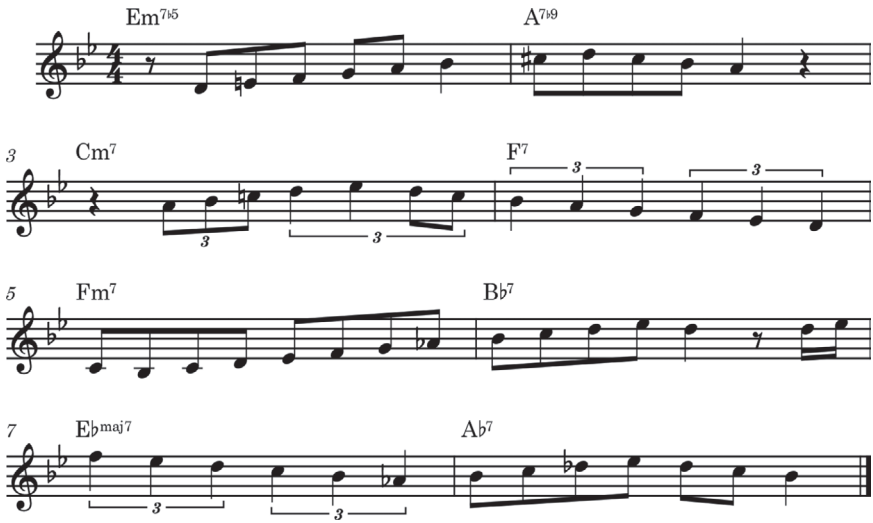
After the E♭, Odd André was quick to remind her with his playing that the next chord is an $A\flat^7$. She picks up the root quickly, but has to search before she is certain about the scale. The last chord of my transcription, the $B\flat^{\,maj7}$ tonic in bar 9, she plays correctly but seems to doubt herself for a second – hence the confirming '*mhm'* from Odd André. This may be due to the fact that the progression ♭ VII^7-I^{maj7} – although quite common in the standard repertoire – is unusual to Christine.

This excerpt illustrates very clearly the non-verbal approach in Odd André's teaching style. He expected Christine to pick out all the information she needed

from what he played, which she was able to do. My interpretations of the moments where she made mistakes and the moments where she got it right very quickly, indicate that her thinking involved a combination of responding to what she heard – an internalised systematic knowledge of what chords can be expected to proceed from other chords – and remembering by rote the particular chord changes on *Stella by Starlight* from the week before. Part of this remembering may be motoric, since no names were used in this lesson – for neither the song's title nor the names of the chords. However, given that, after having played through the chord scales twice, she sang them almost perfectly by ear, she must have *audiated* them very clearly. This audiation involves both hearing the root of single chords as well as associating the sound of the whole chord structure with a corresponding scale. The associative links between a II chord and its V chord in both major and minor – that is, an *audiated anticipation* of the next chord – seemed to be very strong in Christine. Moreover, the feel of form was also present indirectly in this exercise, since those chords and scales with half the duration of a bar was to be played 'fast'. 'Slow' and 'fast' played rubato does of course not relate to a beat, but their relative duration is still kept in place.

Vignette: Christine – improvising with scales

Three months later, I attend another lesson with Christine, this time at the studio at Carl Berner. She is ready with her saxophone, and Odd André takes a seat with the piano, striking a short $Em^{7\flat5}$ *chord. He says: 'Do you have sound today?' Christine says she thinks so, and Odd André suggests they start with the scales on* Stella *as a warm-up. After one run through, he says: 'Good. Improvise a little from the beginning' (see* Music example 5.10*).*

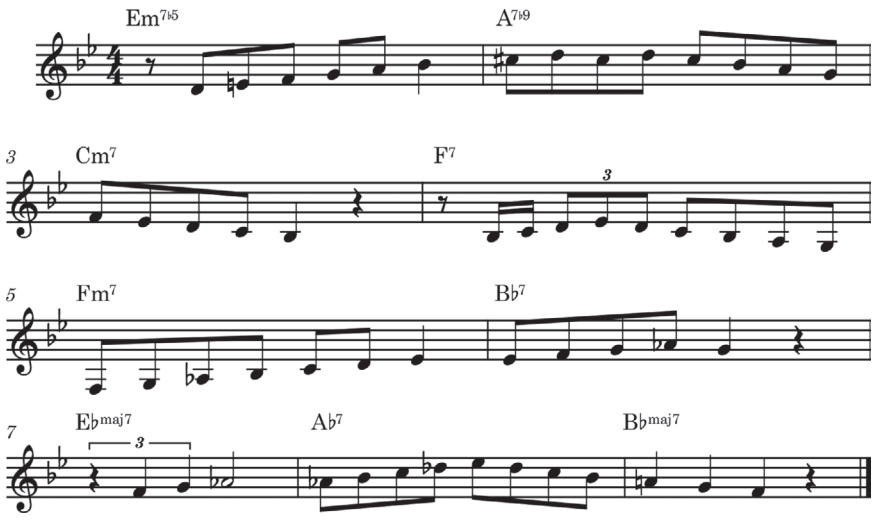


Music example 5.10 The first eight bars of Christine's first improvisation on *Stella*

After they have played through, Odd André asks her about the reed, and they decide together that Christine had better change her reed. When she is done, he asks her to improvise again from the start (see Music example 5.11*).*

I included this short vignette to present what melodic improvisations could sound like after having practised chord scales and improvising on them on a tune for a period of time. The short break when Christine had to change the reed shows us two versions of the same material played relatively immediately after each other. One question we may ask is whether improvising on tunes is understood as playing separate scales on different 'stations' of the form. A musician parent raised this concern: 'I have been thinking that when you improvise by using scales, it might be the case that they only learn the tune as a variation of scales, without having a relationship to [the whole]'.

Another question is to what degree children's improvisations are different each time on the same material. If they learn a tune as an ordered set of scales, then we may expect little variation. If we compare the first eight bars of the two improvisations by Christine, we see how she exclusively played scalic movements both times, within the correct chord scales. Another notable element is that she started both improvisations with the identical phrase, a stepwise ascending movement from a D on an $Em^{7\flat5}$ chord. The continuations of the first phrase over the $A^{7\flat9}$ chord were also similar both times. The note D is the seventh in $Em^{7\flat5}$, but more likely than if she was thinking to start on the seventh, is that she thought of the first II-V as in the tonality of D minor, and therefore she starts on what she thinks of as the root. These elements indicate that Christine had limited melodic solutions. However, when looking at the rest of the improvisations, the phrases go in different melodic directions. There are no patterns as to the melodic directions of her

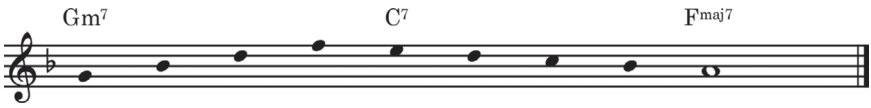


Music example 5.11 The first eight bars of Christine's second improvisation on *Stella*

phrases (in light of the fact that all the chord scales are practised ascending), nor which chord notes she starts each phrase on. One pattern seems apparent, though: after ending a phrase, she starts the new phrase on the same note or a neighbour note from the one she ended on. This indicates that her understanding of the material is *not* represented as separate 'stations' of different tonalities, but that she is able to create melodic connections *between* each chord, while still being able to adjust the notes to the underlying chord scale.

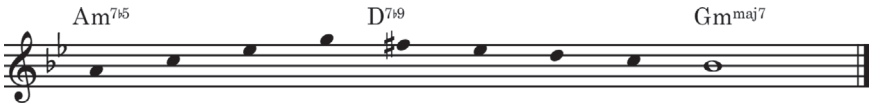
Vignette: Elisabeth – using licks

Elisabeth works with Like Someone in Love *on her piano lesson today. The lesson starts with running through the scales and repeating the melody while Elisabeth plays the chord voicing she has learned in her left hand (roots and sevenths – called 'left hand shells'*[4]*). Odd André has picked up his double bass and comps her. She improvises a few choruses with him playing walking. Odd André says: 'Now, let's try that thing with every second note'. He refers to a melodic lick over a II-V-I progression that Elisabeth had learned before. First, she plays it in F major (see* Music example 5.12*).*



Music example 5.12 The II-V-I lick in F major

Odd André asks her if she remembers it on any other chords. Elisabeth plays (see Music example 5.13*)*:



Music example 5.13 The II-V-I lick in G minor

Odd André says 'Really good! Have you played it in any other keys?' Elisabeth plays the lick over the II-V-Is she remembers. Odd André then asks her to try to play it in all the II-V-Is there are in Like Someone in Love*. Elisabeth plays her way through all of them, slowly, until she gets the lick correctly at first attempt for every new II-V-I. Odd André gives her the task of playing chords in her left hand and the II-V-I-lick in her right. After a couple of repetitions of the first bars, Elisabeth is confident in doing it. Odd André quickly picks up the double bass, and says: 'Really good! Improvise from the beginning, and every time you play a II-V-I in your left hand, you can play that phrase in your right, with improvising in between'. This is difficult, and sometimes they stop to repeat some isolated*

segments to practise the transitions between improvised phrases and the lick. If Elisabeth plays a II-V and forgets to play the lick, he asks her to think about what the chord is and what scale degree it has. Odd André explains: 'Now, when we improvise we should try to avoid using phrases like this, that are rehearsed. So this is just to make you used to using those notes. And you can use some of it, some of those intervals. Let's try again from the start and try to use it where it fits'.

Elisabeth improvises and most of the time her improvised phrases flow neatly into the lick. She never stops, prioritises her left hand chords if both of her hands are too much to think about. They play several choruses, Odd André plays walking on the double bass. Elisabeth looks as if she plans to stop at the end of one chorus, but Odd André continues to play, so she carries on. After a couple of more choruses, he stops, enthusiastic about the flow in her play.

This vignette shows a phase in Elisabeth's development where they work with how to create greater variation with the melodic material. Using 'licks' over II-V-I progressions is an approach mainly known from printed method books in bebop improvisation, for example from Baker (1997) and the Jamey Aebersold series.[5] As a method, it is criticised for 'dictating' note choice in constructing melodies and for not helping learners to create meaningful and personal improvisations. As we saw, Odd André was careful to underscore that one should avoid using a phrase repertoire when improvising, but that the lick they worked with could be useful for 'getting used to' hearing the particular collection of chord notes. This lick was constructed as a series of ascending thirds followed by a descending scalic movement, landing on a third of the next chord. As we saw in the previous vignette, there is a risk that the children's melodic choices are formed by how they have learned the material – that is, playing them as ascending scale movements. Thus, using the exercise of playing broken chords in thirds can be seen as a way of coming out of the habit of playing stepwise phrases. Another aspect of the exercise is what Odd André asked Elisabeth to do, namely to transpose and adjust the lick to all the II-V-Is she could discover. Although that task was clearly challenging to her, she managed to do it. As such, the transposition task became an exercise in harmonic analysis – that is, strengthening the awareness of where these progressions were in the form of *Like Someone in Love* and which tonal centres they had, but from a different angle than the scale runs they normally practise.

Critiquing the chord-scale approach

At the Leeds International Jazz Education Conference in 2000, musician and educator Graham Collier (2000/2002) presented a paper with the rhetorical title 'Are chord-scales the answer?', followed by clarifying that this depends on what the question is. Collier criticises jazz education's preoccupation with technique and the chord-scale approach often found in method books, firstly because it reduces jazz to 'notes, harmonies, chords' (Collier 2000/2002, para. 2). Secondly, Collier claims that 'many players are scared off playing jazz by this stress on technical ability and the sheer terror of seeing a row of complicated chord symbols' (para. 8). He continues that there are many ways of playing jazz 'where a lot can be said with

simple methods' (op. cit.), by thinking of music first of all as *sound*, and learning as exploration with sound. Further, Collier claims that over-focusing on technique, such as chord-scale theory, serves a 'retro-jazz agenda' (para. 3), but that the chord scale is relevant if one wants to learn to play in the bebop idiom.

This critique against the chord-scale approach represents a commonly repeated view in jazz education discussions. It holds forth that it is insufficient in addressing what makes meaningful music and what motivates musical choices, and that it is fostering mechanical and predictable improvising (Berliner 1994; Kenny and Gellrich 2002).

The critique against the chord-scale approach seems to raise mainly two issues, where the first is that such an approach represents a codified or stereotypical method or procedure. Second, a link is created between this method and certain idiomatic and standardised musical expressions. However, we should be careful about the assumption that a certain learning *content* implies a particular *procedure* or method by necessity. Since chords, scales, and tonalities are materials, it is important to look at *how* this material is worked with. Moreover, the assumption that there is a causal relationship between learning chords and scales and the development of a limited idiomatic sound may be challenged by looking at *purpose: why* this musical content is selected as the subject matter.

In my conversations with Odd André, the advantages and limitations of the chord-scale tonality approach was recurrently addressed, and he was fully aware of the content of the above described critique. Several times we talked about whether his pupils developed the ability to make musically meaningful choices when the emphasis was so heavily on the standardised 'craft'. The following quote from Odd André may at first seem as a sharp contrast to the view that meaningful choices should be emphasised:

> I tell [the children] to not try to make music, but stick to the scale – which is almost grotesque! But often, I feel they make better music when I ask them to not think about it, because then they are using more different notes than if they think too much about making nice music.

The use of the word 'grotesque' shows that Odd André is fully aware of the problems with focusing on the right notes of the scale instead of trying to 'make nice music'. In line with the general critique in jazz education discourse, his pedagogy was often criticised for only teaching the pupils to 'play scales'. Here I will quote him at length:

> I think that view is a conflation between [what I teach, and] that thing within the Berklee tradition where they rip off scales and phrases [sings chromatically sequenced scale motives]. But I don't work with that. The goal is to develop their aural skills. And I think you need some tools, or hooks to hang those skills on. By understanding things, you train your aural skills. And that's the common misunderstanding. One thinks that it's just a motoric drill-based learning. I am convinced that by acquiring those tools, they develop the aural

> skills that enable them to play in the way those who criticise it want them to play. . . . And the thing about learning scales, or tonalities as I call them, is . . . that if you analyse the harmony and figure out what notes that harmony consists of, then the scales . . . are just a way of organising the notes you can use. . . . They are just a selection of notes. And that selection is easier to learn if you play them in an order first. And then we work with changing the order of them later. . . . There is a huge difference in teaching someone who can play and someone who can't. If we assume that we are still going to play tonal music, then you have to learn some notes. So you know how to organise them. . . . All of those who criticise my pedagogy, they already know how to play notes and read music. And then they want to take away the chance for the new generation to learn it.

Returning to the question of purpose, Odd André's emphasis on chords and scales is for developing aural skills, a point that can be backed up by previous research. Based on a review of a number of studies on learning jazz improvisation since the 1980s, West (2015) concludes that research repeatedly confirms that teaching that provides aural training leads to the strongest learning experiences for young improvisers. This is where the important how-question comes in, and here I want to return to the concepts of explicit and implicit learning. Explicit learning is predominantly seen as declarative, linguistic, and with a focused awareness and intention, whereas the implicit kind is experiential, non-conscious, and 'natural'. As shown through the examples in the vignettes in this chapter, the children are presented to the chord and scale material in an explicit way, in the sense that they learn words for theoretical concepts and the material is worked with in a conscious manner. However, emphasis on verbal language is not sufficient to describe how these matters are worked with, since *playing and producing sound* as communicative means often replace talking in the lessons. I will argue that this communicative mode is still explicit (despite that it consists of procedural actions and not declarative reproduction of facts) since it involves a focused attention to particular issues and content. They simultaneously experience the material in an integrated, embodied, and musical – often non-verbal – way. As shown in the various examples, the pupils do not work with the chord and scale material in isolated drilled exercises. The ways they make use of their inner hearing and inner aural imagination show that these learning processes first of all are about making and expressing musical meaning. The children are able to hear and anticipate tonal connections, as the relations between chords and scales are not treated as isolated entities with one chord and its corresponding scale at a time but as functions within a tonality. This is seen when they, for example, use their anticipation of harmonic shifts to learn to feel the form of a tune, or 'know where they are'. The non-verbal exercise of using their instrument to 'find' the notes they hear reinforces their embodied connection with the inner ear.

The question of whether playing scales dictates the children's aesthetic choices is still relevant. In an earlier quote, Odd André mentioned the assumption that learning scales is the same as 'ripping off phrases' when improvising. As I have

shown through my analyses of Thomas's and Christine's improvisations, these often did consist of scalic melody formations. The children's experiences with the chord-scale material is partly acquired through drilled exercises, such as the scale warm-ups and the use of a II-V-I lick, but these drills are immediately combined with the task to vary the melodic material in improvisation. This way, I suggest that the children avoid learning the material as note and motor *patterns*, but rather as a flexible repertoire with an affordance for individual choice making. Hence, in Odd André's experience, the ability to improvise expressively and meaningful, or '*the way those who criticise it want them to play*', develop later when the children have acquired a foundation of strong aural skills. I would like to emphasise that while a 'motoric drill-based learning' had a negative connotation in Odd André's statement, the examples in the vignettes show how the motoric dimension of learning is highly present but *integrated* with an aural approach as well as the theoretical understanding Odd André mentioned. If development of aural training is integrated with theoretical understanding and technical ability – to be able to use musical structures in improvised creation of music – then yes, the chord-scale approach is one of many possible answers.

Notes

1 Interestingly, we use often vertical concepts to refer to melodic directions (such as ascending or descending movements) and transfer the same vertical language to any melodic instrument. On the piano, the movements are sideways, going towards the right if the melody goes 'up', but we may still teach that these movements are called 'upwards'.
2 For the violin, Odd André used the cycle of fourths instead of fifths since the order of the keys is easier technically on the instrument than a cycle of fifths.
3 *Satin Doll* starts with a major second, while *Bernie's Tune* starts with a minor.
4 MacDonald, Earl. *Left hand shells*. www.earlmacdonald.com/jazz-piano-lessons/left-hand-shells/
5 See for example Aebersold, Jamey. *The II-V^7-I Progression* from the Jamey Aebersold Play-A-Long series. www.jazzbooks.com/

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6 The rhythmic scaffold

Implicit teaching and learning

In the previous chapter, I distinguished between teaching and learning that is explicit and that which is implicit. Implicit learning is based on acquisition of experience and practical action and not necessarily dependent on articulating verbally what is learned. Although learning may be intentional in implicit processes, the learning processes may not be conscious (Berkowitz 2010). By this I mean that the person who is learning may know and feel *that* they are learning, but they may not be aware of *what* it is they learn or *how* the learning happens.

I include *teaching* in the distinction between the explicit and implicit. Implicit aspects of Odd André's teaching partly refer to his emphasis on non-verbal communication in his teaching. This way, he steers the process for the pupil in an experiential direction.

Another implicit aspect is that not all of Odd André's pedagogical facilitations are always conscious to him. This was apparent when after a lesson I had observed, I mentioned to Odd André that there were many things his pupils were exposed to in terms of playing jazz improvisation which he seldom talked about or explained. He seemed surprised at this observation and asked me what I meant. I explained that if he were to talk about his teaching, he would often emphasise his application of the chord-scale tonality approach, as accounted for in the previous chapter. He rarely talked about the musical context he provided for the pupils' playing or how this context facilitated learning other aspects of improvisation than what notes to play. When I mentioned this to him, his reply was 'Oh, I am not sure I have thought about the fact that I am doing that, before'. Hence, not only can learning have implicit, unconscious, and unarticulated dimensions, but teaching can too. The topic for the present chapter is these implicit dimensions of teaching and learning.

Scaffolds of rhythm

Vignette: Sara practises brushes

We are in Odd André's living room, with Sara (eight, on drums) behind the drum set, and her parent on the sofa. Odd André sits squarely across from her

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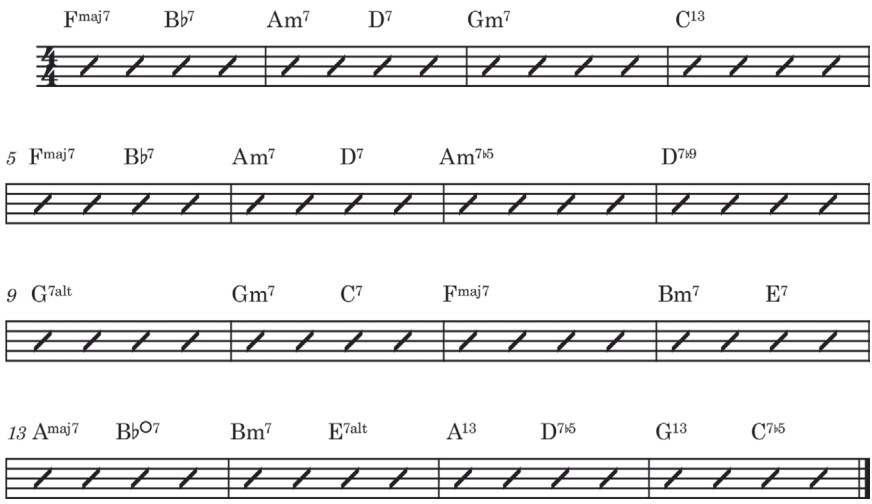
at his electric piano, and I am by the kitchen table, taking notes. After having practised trading fours on All the Things You Are*, Odd André picks up his pair of brushes and hands them to Sara. 'Will I be playing swing?' she asks. 'Yes', Odd André answers. He taps the second and fourth beat of a new tempo on his thigh, thinking about what will be the right one while Sara holds the brushes over the snare drum. He counts her in with a medium slow swing tempo: 'One; two; one, two, three, four'. making the tapping the second and fourth beat. Sara looks distracted, but she starts the groove on a precise downbeat. She knows that 'playing swing' with brushes is different from 'playing swing' with sticks. Her left hand is shoving the brush from side to side on the snare drum, and the right is striking quarter notes on the top of the drumhead on every first and third beat and two eighth notes lower down on the two and four;* dan-da-da-dan-da-da-dan*. Odd André plays a chord progression on the piano (see* Music example 6.1*), walking bass in his left hand and rhythmic comping in his right. He stops in the middle of the chorus and says: 'Very good. And then you stamp on the hi-hat', referring to the hi-hat pedal. Sara replies: 'Oh, yes'. He counts in again, Sara starts the same groove but now with the hi-hat pedal on two and four.*

Odd André now plays the full 16-bar chord progression, sometimes with richer chords, some melodic fills, and more chromatic bass lines. After one chorus, he starts over again from the top, and when they arrive at the fourth bar, C13, he looks at her and counts: 'One, two, three, four'. Sara looks at him and takes a solo over the next four bars. It consists of quarters and eighth notes in the same rhythmic pattern, only played on different drums. Meanwhile, Odd André's bare foot holds the beat audibly against the wooden floor. Sara



Music example 6.1 Chord progression played for Sara's practising on brushes

loses the tempo slightly at the end of her solo, but Odd André comes in on the next four-bar period according to his own tempo. Sara is able to adjust when she starts playing the groove again so that she is back in the first tempo. They continue trading fours. After another chorus, Odd André stops to suggest that she can swap the order of the rhythms she plays to vary the solos: 'Try dat-dat-da, dat-dat-da every now and then, so it's not always da-dat-dat-da-dat-dat'. Sara nods. Another chorus. Sometimes Sara stops during her solos, seemingly thinking about what decisions to make, other times she slows down because the movement she chose was difficult technically. Odd André's stamping is then louder, and he sticks uncompromisingly to his own tempo every time he comes in.

ODD ANDRÉ: *[stops and moves his face in her direction]: Yes, good. Just remember that if a stroke slips, it doesn't matter.*

SARA: *No.*

ODD ANDRÉ: *[I]f you continue inside your head. I know it's really difficult. But try that, that if there is a thing you are planning to play, that . . . doesn't come, then just think that we move on.*

SARA: *Okay.*

PARENT: *Do you teach her to count, in her head? Have you taught her to count to four?*

ODD ANDRÉ *[to the parent]: Ehm, no. I usually avoid that, because counting is great if you count correctly, but if you count wrongly . . . and trust it, then you will turn the beat around. [To Sara:] Try a bit more?*

They keep trading fours again a couple of 32-bar choruses. Odd André only stops once to remind her how she should come back to the groove between her solos, that the hi-hat is on two and four. 'Now, let's try one more thing with those brushes'. He goes over to her and takes the brushes, presses them down on the drumhead, cross them on the centre of the drum, makes a slow, pulsating and accentuated 'swish' outwards, and repeats the circle movements a couple of times. He gives the brushes to Sara, who hesitates, but tries to copy the movement, insecure first, but continues to try. Odd André stands over her and makes the same gestures with his hands in the air that the brushes are supposed to do: 'Very good, just notice that when the brushes come down, they are moving apart. Then together, apart, together, apart'. He demonstrates some more, shows her how the right hand's brush needs to cross the left. Sara tries again, looks concentrated down on her hands, focusing on the slow, physical gravitation in the movement. It's a strenuous movement for her to do while creating a quarter note accent every time the right brush passes the same point on the drum head. Her accents are slightly uneven. Odd André suddenly hurries over to the piano, without a word. He watches Sara's arms closely, and starts to play the ballad My Romance*. The timing of his pickup on the melody places Sara's accents on the second and fourth beat. She looks up for a moment, causing her pulse to be slightly out of sync with itself, then she looks down again but without stopping playing. He waits for her to*

settle the pulse back to where it was and starts over from the beginning of the tune. Sara's pulse is gradually more and more even, floating on top of the jazz ballad coming from the piano. He is watching her closely, playing soft and stretching the phrasing rhythmically to time it to her playing every time her arms can't hold the tempo. He reaches the end of the tune, but Sara looks absorbed with her task, and he extends the ending with a long tag on a dominant pedal, before he ends softly on a tonic chord.

Odd André slowly gets up from his chair, saying 'That's it, we're done for today'. Sara gives him the brushes. 'Oh. That went by fast'.

Learning the framework of time

This vignette illustrates several aspects of implicit learning, emphasising the experiential and holistic character of the activities. When Sara changed from using sticks to brushes, she herself named the groove concept she was playing within as 'swing' when she asked what to do. Up until then, she had just been playing the concept of 'swing' with sticks, with the ding-ding-di-ding rhythm played with one stick on the ride cymbal. But 'playing swing' when she was given brushes implicitly meant a different concept to her: the brushes shoving and striking on the snare drumhead and the foot stamping the hi-hat pedal on two and four. These different groove concepts functioned as an *instrumental template* for her, in the sense that they were generic and not locked to a particular tune or arrangement.

In the two segments of playing with sticks and with brushes, respectively, she practised soloing by trading fours. In other words, Sara practised the form, and the *time* that maintains the form. The significance of this learning focus may be found in Iyer's (2002, 397) description of groove-based music as:

> [A] steady, virtually isochronous pulse that is established collectively by an interlocking composite of rhythmic entities and is either intended for or derived from dance. . . . [T]his steady pulse is the chief structural element, and it may be articulated in a complex, indirect fashion.

This '*chief structural element*' provides the basis for improvised interaction in jazz, metaphorically framed as a conversation by Monson (1996, 81):

> In jazz improvisation . . ., all of the musicians are constantly making decisions regarding what to play and when to play it, all within a framework of a musical groove, which may or may not be organized around a chorus structure. The musicians are compositional participants who may 'say' unexpected things or elicit responses from other musicians.

The musical statements and responses in this conversation are enabled through the participatory framework that the groove constitutes. Several cues point to how

form and time were emphasised, such as the audible stamping of Odd André's foot and almost demonstrative entrances after Sara's four-bar solos. It was never said explicitly that she had to keep the tempo during solos, and he didn't correct what she *played* while improvising. The things he did say had more to do with variation (which was put forward as a tip, but not as a direction) and how she could mentally tackle the problem of not having time to execute the ideas she decided on, as when he suggested she should 'just move on' if the things she planned did not 'come out' in time. So, the focus of this lesson was not primarily the improvisations themselves, but to practise awareness of the frameworks of beat and form, to be able to follow these frameworks. And the means to practise this was to let Sara do it repeatedly, with as little stopping and talking as possible. Odd André's stamping foot, and his on-and-off playing in four-bar cycles provided the rhythmic scaffold for her learning.

Vignette: Watermelon Man

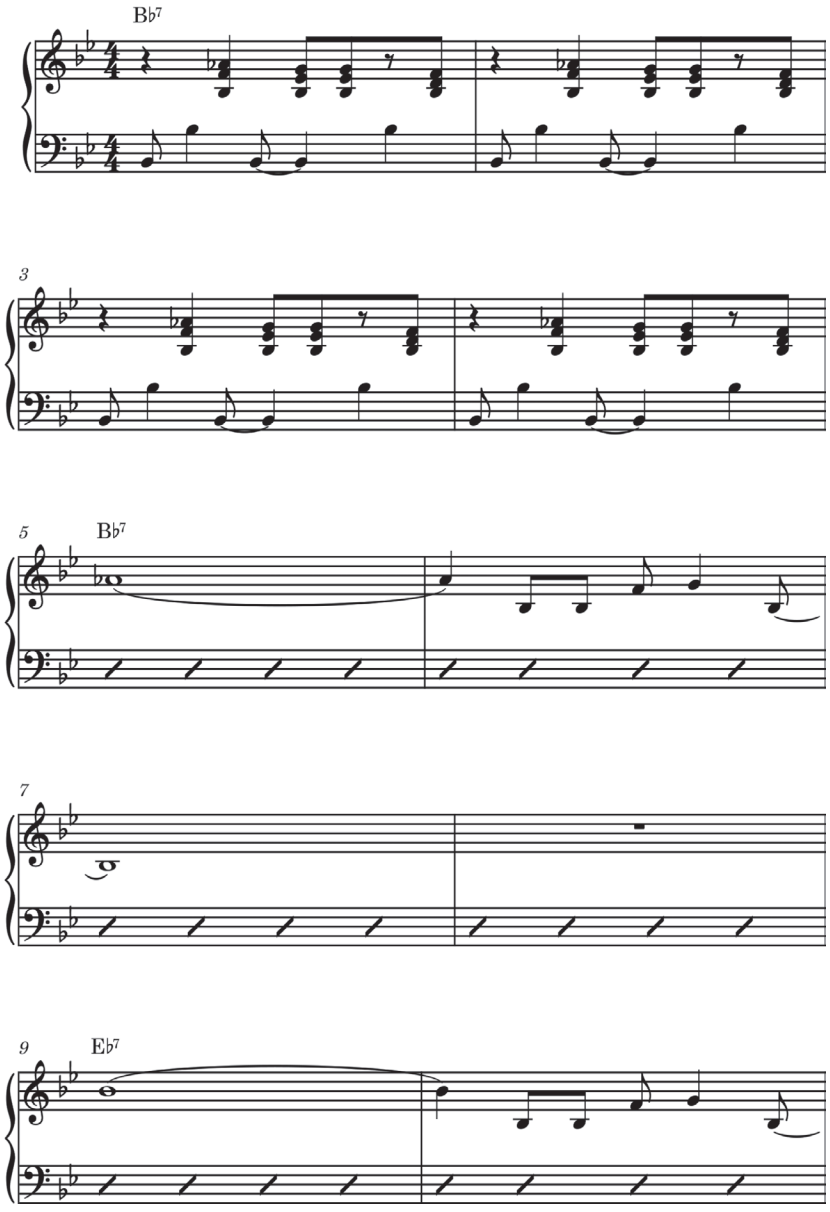
Helene (13, on guitar) is going through some of the tunes she knows in her lesson. After playing a bit on Moanin' *and* Blues Walk*, Odd André suggests they play* Watermelon Man *(see* Music example 6.2*)*.

He plays the first notes of the melody to remind her how it starts and then starts the riff of the intro, adopted and simplified from the original by Herbie Hancock.[1] *After vamping on this riff for four bars, he looks slightly up at Helene, who is watching the guitar neck. She starts to play the melody while Odd André is comping. In bar 13, she plays an F♯ instead of an F, she looks at him, and he smiles back without stopping. In bar 15, she makes the same mistake. This time Odd André stops and plays two F notes. Helene then searches to find the note she hears, and Odd André responds from his piano (see* Music example 6.3*)*.

As soon as Helene has got the ending right, Odd André says: 'Take from [plays the notes in bar 13]' and counts in 'three, four, now', with the 'now' filling out the rest on the first beat to cue the correct rhythmical entrance. They play together, Odd André with the rhythmic riff, and Helene the melody. She gets a note wrong in bar 14, and Odd André immediately counts in again: 'Three, four, now'. They start at bar 13 again and play the melody without mistakes. 'Mhm. One more time from [plays bar 13]'. Helene makes the mistake of playing C-D instead of C-D♭ several times. Then Odd André either waits or repeats the notes C-D♭ on the piano, without saying anything. For every time she manages to correct herself and find the right notes, he counts her in again, always from bar 13. The last time he doesn't stop the rhythmic comp, but doubles the melody with her. After one whole round when she manages to play the melody without mistakes, he keeps the beat going while saying: 'One more time'. The next round is correct. Helene improvises on B♭ blues scale two choruses. In the last bar of the second chorus, he looks up. She looks back and starts to play the head.

Watermelon Man

Herbie Hancock



Music example 6.2 The head of *Watermelon Man*

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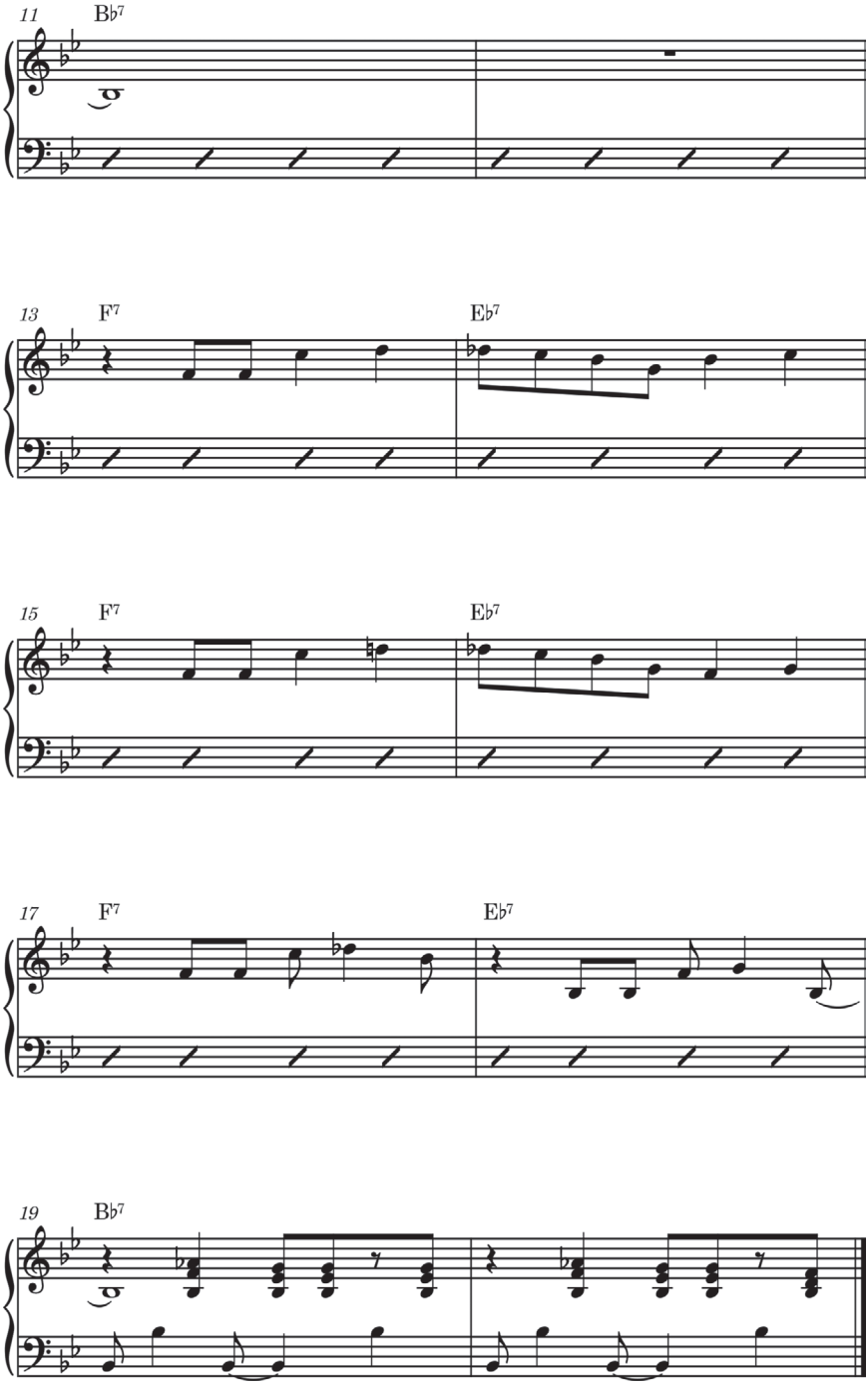
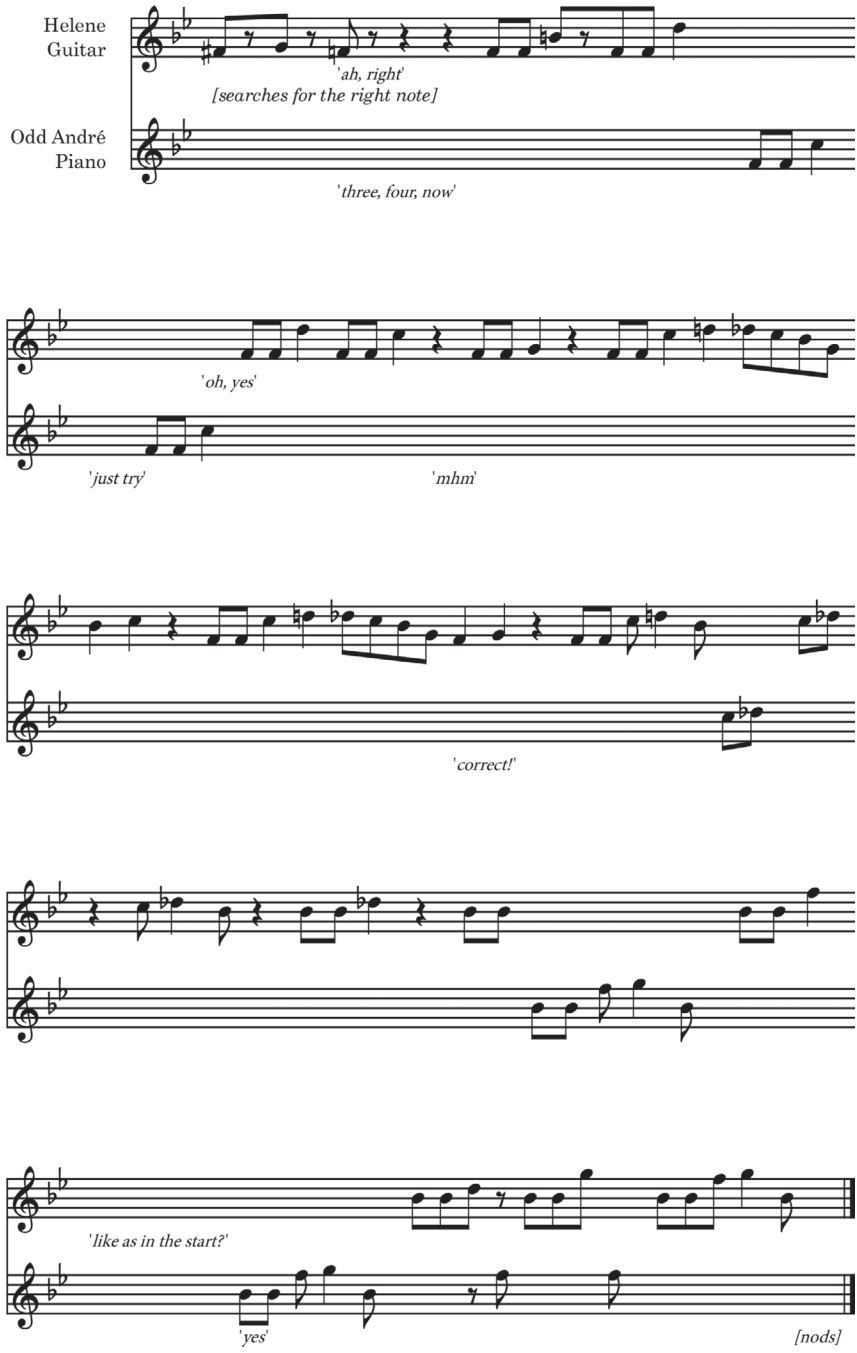


Music example 6.2 (Continued)



Music example 6.3 Helene practises the head of *Watermelon Man*

Learning to listen, listening to learn

This vignette, where Helene was practising the head on *Watermelon Man*, is illustrative of the non-verbal approach to learning and also the level of detail orientation. It was important in the repetition of the melody that she got all the notes correct. But Odd André didn't explain what she needed to play or think to get the notes right – none of the notes were referred to verbally by their names. Instead, his non-talking, playing, and waiting prompted her to use her ears to find the notes. There is a conversation, as seen in the music transcription, using *notes*.

However, keeping a musical flow of the activity was also important. These are two contradictory priorities: to get the details correct, and to maintain the musical flow where the groove and form is not interrupted – a holistic performance of the tune. This contradiction is handled by avoiding 'dead' talking time and the quick return to the groove whenever Helene managed to correct the details. This way, Helene's active use of her ears to coordinate the auditory with psycho-motor control and immediately putting it into context of the groove and form are factors that contribute to a learning process that highlight active and embodied *experience*.

One of Hannah's (nine, on sax) parents had noticed a similar feature in one of the lessons they had observed with their daughter:

> They learn that they have to listen. He has some pedagogical tricks that are . . . for example, in the beginning, she was practising to use her embouchure for intonation. Because on the saxophone, you can almost go a whole note up or down just from adjusting the mouth position. But instead of telling her 'you are under' or 'you are over' to correct her pitch, he just said 'hold it longer'. Then he kept repeating the note on the piano, so that she heard it herself and adjusted her mouth position to a tuned note. He didn't say that that was what he did, but he taught her to listen. It made me speechless, how pedagogical that was. I observed that several times, and I realised that this was his way to teach her to play in tune.

A recurring reflection I made during many observations was how strong even young children's aural relationship to their instrument was. For example, Christine had the habit of forming the grips on her saxophone when she was singing something, both in formal situations where she was asked to sing by Odd André and when she was just unconsciously humming to herself and she happened to have her sax strapped on. In an interview with Anne (11 at the time, on bass), her ability to 'think in bass' was apparent. I asked her how she managed to remember so many songs.

ANNE: I don't know, I just remember them, sort of.
GURO: Do you need your bass to remember them, do you have to play them to remember them, or could you have told me the chords here and now on a song I suggest?
ANNE: I can just say them.

GURO: Okay, so what are the chords on You'd Be So Nice? Or . . . the scales?
ANNE: Right. Gm^{7}, no . . . Gm^{maj7}, I think . . . Am $^{7\flat5}$ . . . $D^{7\flat9}$ . . .Gm^{maj7}, and . . . Fm^{7}, and $B\flat^{7}$, and $E\flat^{maj7}$. And . . .
GURO: Okay, great, you can stop there! What did you think about now to remember . . .
ANNE: Really, I imagined what they were on the bass. . . . I know whether it's a II, or V, or I, and major or minor . . . but . . . I have to think about it to remember the notes.
GURO: The root notes?
ANNE: Yes.

I then asked her if she could sing the melody of *Like Someone in Love* to me, which she did without a problem (although I think it was the first time she actually sang it, after having learned to play the melody on bass). When I asked Anne if she needed the bass to remember the chord scales, I meant to ask her if her knowing them was tied to her tactile memory on the bass. At first, when she said no, I interpreted it as that her knowledge of the chord scales was memorised on a more verbal, explicit and intellectual level. However, as she explained, she did connect the memorisation to her instrument, but she could imagine the notes on the bass *away* from it, that is, she showed a strong internalised tactile representation of notes on the bass. Whether this representation was purely tactile or she could imagine the chords aurally as well, this excerpt doesn't reveal. Nevertheless, the fact that she could sing the melody on *Like Someone in Love*, which she had (presumably) only played on the bass before, shows that at least this material was aurally internalised.

Knowing where you are

I mentioned two different prioritisations shown in the *Vignette: Watermelon Man*, where one was the importance of getting the details correct. The other was the importance of putting the learned material into the context of the groove, tempo, and form as immediately as possible. In an interview, Odd André articulated something similar when he said: 'When you improvise on tonal music, there are two main challenges. The first is to figure out what notes you can play, and the other is to hear where you are in the tune'. Therefore, aspects such as being able to *continue playing* even if you miss a note or a phrase and *knowing where you are* in the form are just as (if not *more*) important to learn as correct details. Hence, Odd André often continues playing even if the pupil makes a mistake. These aspects are intended to prepare them for interplay with other children. The following excerpt from an interview with Sigrid (nine, on violin) after she had just been playing at Improbasen a short time, illustrates that knowing where you are while improvising is a challenge:

GURO: I heard you discuss in the lesson that you didn't quite know when you were supposed to change [the chord scale]?

SIGRID: Yes, because when I play fast, it's like supposed to be 1, 2. . . . Like, four beats in the bar, and I sort of don't know exactly when I am supposed to change to the next bar, and that.

GURO: No. Is it hard when you're thinking about improvising to know when the four beats have gone?

SIGRID: Yes.

Elisabeth (12, on piano) had improvised for longer than Sigrid at the time of Sigrid's interview, and I talked to Elisabeth about form. I told her about how I had often noticed her ability to come in after seemingly having lost where she was in the form when she played.

GURO: Sometimes you stop, and that may be because you don't know where you are. And then you come in, and then you hear exactly where you have come in the form. Isn't that very hard?

ELISABETH: Well, I have gotten used to it. So, I play, and then I might come out, but that is because I don't have time to take the next chord. But I know where I am, really. So then I just think a little bit, wait, and then I come in again.

GURO: So you know where you are, all the time?

ELISABETH: No, sometimes I just fall completely out and don't know where I am.

GURO: Right. So those times where you know where you are and stop, that's because you don't have enough time to . . . and then you just . . . take the time to . . .

ELISABETH: Yes, because it goes too fast.

GURO: Yes, doesn't it. That is something adult musicians do too, that they have to stop and listen a bit, and then just 'ah, there we are'. I think it is well done, that you can hear where you are. And that's because you have gotten used to it, was that what you said?

ELISABETH: Yes.

GURO: How have you gotten used to it? How have you learned it?

ELISABETH: When I used to stop before, theeeen . . . there were some lessons, he just played, and then I was supposed to hear. And then I could hear the bass and all. Then I could learn the song without . . . it's a bit hard to explain. Then I could learn it and just know where I was without playing it myself. By just listening to him playing.

The question posed by Sara's parent in the *Vignette: Sara practises brushes*, and the answer they got, pinpointed the significance of the approach of listening as a means to learn to 'feel' the form. 'To count to four' in this context may be seen as an explicit, cerebral, and analytic approach to learning it. However, as we saw, Odd André considered such an approach to be unreliable in terms of what the learning goal was: explicit *thinking* may give the wrong information of where you are. According to Odd André this often causes pupils to turn the beat around (i.e.,

to mistake the second beat for the first, that the backbeat feels like the downbeat). This may be explained as the cerebral thinking *overriding* intuitive perception of rhythm and time, or what Berkowitz (2010, 148) explains as the conflict between thinking about structural references and 'the more rapid and subconscious decision-making . . . in the heat of the moment'. Also, because rhythm perception is semantic and categorical (Snyder 2016), the mind tries to anticipate what we hear and interprets what is heard in accordance with the expectation (ibid.). We may therefore ignore the musical cues that inform us of where we are in the form if this auditory information goes against what the mind anticipates.

Another musical, contextual layer has to do with the tonal inputs Odd André performed through his piano playing in Sara's lesson. Playing a functional harmonic chord progression underscores the feeling of time periods, since the harmonic rhythm of tension and release between dominants and tonic chords neatly follow symmetrical periods. But at first glance, the chord progression he played and the variations he performed of it throughout the number of choruses may be seen as more complex than what Sara needed (see Music example 6.1). Often, when a pupil was practising soloing on a chord progression they knew well, Odd André would comment musically with melodic fills between the child's phrases or add complex polyrhythms in his comping figures. I once asked him why he often used a piano comping that seemed too complex for what the children probably were able to pick up. This was an aspect that he admitted not having thought too much of, but when reflecting on it, he was clear.

> Partly, it's for my own sake. The rich harmony is also good for them. They haven't heard much jazz when they start to play, so this way, they will hear some, at least. But I also try to lay out ideas to the pupil, without being too directive. I want to hint at communicative things and make sure they come 'under the skin' of it, without directly telling.

When it came to his improvisatory musical 'comments', he explained that he wanted the pupils to experience that the performance of a tune is different every time, that their musical choices could influence what others in the band wanted to play, and finally, that his musical comments were offers for *them* to pick up on, if they wanted (and if they perceived them).

Through his rich piano playing, the children are implicitly exposed to jazz as a musical language – both the sound of it and how it may be *used* in musical conversation (Monson 1996). Neither the particular elements nor holistic composition of this language are explained or addressed. Many of the elements may not be directly perceivable to the child, but like language acquisition in a context where the language is spoken in daily life, the children are immersed in its codes.

The segment where Sara was taught to play ballad brush comping underscored the holistic character of learning music implicitly. Odd André told me later that his gentle entrance with the tune was unplanned and came as an impulsive response to her playing in the moment, which indicates the two-way musical communication in a teaching situation. Importantly, it added an extra layer

of musical meaning to Sara's physical effort to create the slow brush 'swish' on the snare drum. Despite that this happened during the last ten minutes of a 60-minute-long lesson, the moment had a deep concentration to it from the eight-year-old. It is visible from the video recording how immersed in the action Sara was. I remember sitting by the kitchen table slightly in my own thoughts, when I suddenly had to look up, struck by the enhanced focus and musical energy in the room, and for a moment I lost my intended critical distance. My notebook said: '*A magical moment*'.

The hub in the band: Odd André's left hand

On the sound check at a concert in Oslo, Odd André was testing the sound on his keyboard when the sound engineer asked him if he really wanted the keyboard to sound so '*bassy*'. Odd André then replied: 'This is not a piano, it is a bass. Consider it as a bass. It has to sound bass-like'.

Directions to sound engineers like the ones above often led to longer negotiations between them and Odd André, since he had quite specific demands on how his keyboard should sound in performances. First, he wanted the keyboard to be loud. If the venue was big enough to have separate settings for the monitors on stage and the PA system towards the audience, the keyboard had to be louder on stage than in the PA. Second, the sound quality from the keyboard was crucial, which he described like this:

> I use a woolly sound deliberately, it's an advantage in the way we work, with the piano as the link. . . . It's an ugly sound, where I turn down the treble frequencies and enhance the low frequencies. To make it un-nuanced, in a way, so that the piano is anonymised, and creates a 'fog'. It works to be within that fog. Because then I can direct my playing in many directions, to horn players and the bassist, and drummers, especially. It is mainly because of drummers I have developed the awful sound; it contributes to pulling it, in a way.

He underscored that this sound strategy is mostly used when the children are beginners; that is when his musical steering is needed the most. The muddy piano sound enables him to serve musical ideas to soloists without stealing attention. By 'pulling it', Odd André refers to keeping the beat and groove going in a way that creates a rhythmic flow. As we see in the quote above, he considered his piano playing as the link between the other instruments. Primarily he thought of this as supporting the drummer in the band, but his playing was directed at any instrument. The various instruments in a small jazz band all have distributed musical roles (Johansen 2016b), which together provide 'a framework for musical interaction' (Monson 1996, 26). Central to combining these roles is 'the achievement of a groove or feeling' (op.cit.) so that they form such a unified framework. Although Odd André talked mostly about the sound quality above, the purpose had to do with rhythm, since the sound was an important means for using his piano to 'pull' the groove.

Monson (1996, 26) elaborates on how the different instrumental roles complement each other: 'Keeping time, comping, and soloing are three of the most basic musical functions traded around the improvising band, and each rhythm section instrument has particular ways of fulfilling them'. Further, it is the rhythmic flow that 'frames and integrates' all the musical elements (ibid, 28). According to Monson, the role of the bass is particularly important in this respect, as it has both a rhythmic and harmonic role and thus a particular stabilising function in the band. It is therefore not a coincidence that the sound Odd André wanted from the keyboard had the ideal of a bass sound, when he said: 'It is almost as rich as a bass, so it is like you had a bassist to pull it'.

During solos, Odd André often doubles the bass player's walking lines on the piano with his left hand. He explained this by saying that since the bass players often were inexperienced, his left hand bass was necessary in order to keep the band together. Thus, I was often unsure whether I could hear Anne's bass playing or Odd André's left hand, since her volume was often quite low. Odd André would often not let accompanying instruments such as chord instruments fulfil the comping role independently in performances until the pupil had become very experienced. Instead, he would fulfil the harmonic and rhythmic function of the piano. When I asked him why he doubled the bass in performances, he said:

> With Anne, right, she is totally amazing, but she can't pull all those bands alone during a whole concert. And that means that [if I didn't pull] there will be 12 bars here and 12 bars there that sound quite bad, and then everybody falls down, and it's not worth it. That is the most important thing, that everyone gets to do their thing.

He continued:

> One thing is to keep the tempo up, but it's also about being able to vary the tempo. That you can create a *ritardando*, then suddenly play totally loose, and then the whole band reacts immediately because the piano is a part of the organism all the time. They catch what happens in the piano really quickly.

While Anne and Elisabeth were both able to play within instrumental templates of a bass and piano's respective roles during other instrumentalists' solos, they weren't necessarily able to *make it groove* and create the rhythmic flow that Odd André wanted all the children to experience, at least not consistently and in a stable manner during a two-set concert. In other words, the concern of the collective, the whole group of children, justified his doubling of Anne's playing so that they all had the opportunity of getting a solid, rhythmic comp while soloing ('doing their thing') and that he could direct improvised shifts in feeling and tempi through his piano (which is a topic I will expand on in Chapter 7).

It may seem as if the concern of individual learning for bassists and chord instrumentalists was left to suffer due to the prioritisation of providing the 'mature' groove for all soloists. However, the individual need of especially the bass player

was in fact given as another reason for letting his left hand be dominant in the total sound: 'The audience can't always hear whether it's me or Anne who plays the bass. That means that she develops'. When Anne played walking lines along with Odd André's way of playing the same walking lines, he meant that she would hear his way of phrasing and placement of the notes on the beat as the auditory feedback to her own playing. This way, he believed that she would get used to *hearing the time feel* of a 'mature' bass, and thus, that she became sensitised to how a walking bass line should sound and feel like in order to 'pull' a band.

He further commented on the process of reaching this 'end point', where the bass player could take independent responsibility for fulfilling the bass functions:

ODD ANDRÉ: It will be her who plays the bass at the end. . . . It is not good if they learn to depend on always having that doubling from me, that the bass is always doubled.

GURO: Do you let go of it eventually?

ODD ANDRÉ: Yes, I let go of it eventually. Often, I do that gradually by turning up their sound more and more, and my sound down more and more. It is a goal that my playing should be lower in the total sound.

As shown, both a concern of the collective band and the concern of individual learning for comp instrumentalists, particularly drum and bass, were addressed and pointed to as explanations of his support of the bass. These concerns can be seen as contradictory, and they may be seen as ethically problematic to balance. In a later interview, I problematised further the fact that his walking lines in the left hand sometimes were louder than the bass player's:

GURO: It was very interesting what we talked about yesterday, when you explained that about giving support over a phase, giving a firm groove for everyone to relate to, and then gradually building down the scaffold, as their abilities increase. But do you think there may be a problem with that experience . . . that for example the parents of a bass player are thinking: 'wow, our daughter plays so good', and then it's not their daughter they actually hear? That what they hear is not authentic children's . . .

ODD ANDRÉ: Yes, I agree with that, but I still think it is better for example for Anne that it is the way it is, but the most important thing is that it is much better for everyone else. Because if it falls apart, so that when one person is finally presenting the thing we have worked so bloody hard with mastering, if it collapses right there, it's not worth it. It's very important that that concern trumps everything else. And as I said, I think it's better for Anne, too. But we try . . . it's a process, when we practise, we work all the time with her playing alone. And when it's mastered I pull out. . . . But she is 9. When she is 11 the problem has gone, I am convinced of that.

How this dilemma of whose sound is heard was dealt with, sometimes depended on practical conditions. Here, he commented on a tour where Improbasen played

concerts in the studio in Oslo; in a large culture house in Helsingborg (Sweden) which had a professional, stationary sound and light system; and in the localities of a small SMPA in Copenhagen (Denmark):

> The problem may be the venue in which we play. If we play somewhere where she [Anne] can be heard acoustically, then this is more manageable. For example, it's easier at Carl Berner than it was at the venue in Helsingborg. Because there she had to be amplified quite a lot to be heard. And if she is not amplified, and I stop playing, the bass is gone. And then it falls a bit apart. So that's a part of the problem. That's why it worked better in Copenhagen than in Helsingborg, because of the acoustics. Even if it is venues like that [in Helsingborg] we prefer to play in. But it's better that they almost play acoustically.

The previous description from Monson (1996) of the mutually complementing roles in professional jazz practice may be seen as giving an idea of a developmental direction for the children who are learning to participate in such a practice. Hence, it is a given that as beginners, they have not learned how to fulfil these musical function independently yet. As shown, it was important to Odd André to nurture the bass player's independency. However, the need for the collective group of children, on their different levels, to have a musical framework where the different functions of groove and harmony is present, is more important: 'This is one of the things I think the most about, to find that balance. But the most important concern is that when Lisa [a clarinettist who had played for a very short time] is playing her solo on 16 bars, the comp has to be steady.'

Frictions in implicit teaching and learning

The ideal of avoiding explanations to children was not without issues. In both individual and ensemble lessons I observed several situations where Odd André wanted the child to 'crack' a code for interplay, but often did not get direct verbal guidance or corrections to clarify what they potentially did wrong. Sometimes this led to considerable frustration in the child. Previously in this chapter, I showed examples of how children could find it difficult to hear elements such as the form by themselves, and in Chapter 3 I referred to parents who observed that Odd André could even become annoyed and impatient with the children.

A few parents addressed what they perceived as lack of verbal explanations of certain creative elements of improvising, such as how to use the scale materials in an expressive and artistic manner. One parent, themselves a musician, felt that Odd André was particularly reticent when it came to rhythm, and that many other aspects were left understated:

> He gives too few rhythmical tips. What he says from what I have picked up, is things like 'Listen to the rhythm here'. But he doesn't specify it. . . . This is probably different from child to child. . . . I notice when [name of child] doesn't understand. But they do understand if he explains it properly. But

> sometimes, maybe he thinks that things are implied, that they are self-evident. [I think sometimes] he proceeds a little bit too fast, or doesn't say things clearly enough. And sometimes I think 'but this is . . . if he had just explained it like this' . . . just explain it, sort of.

Instead of explaining or giving guidance when a child seemed unable to solve the problem themselves, Odd André would sometimes only repeat a 'no', or 'that's wrong'. Often, the child would then repeat the error, making Odd André impatient and the child frustrated, and this frustration often led to the child making even more mistakes. However, I also observed a high degree of sensitivity towards the states of individual children. For example, I asked Hannah (ten, on sax) if she sometimes experienced the lessons as difficult. She said: 'Yes, sometimes, but he just looks at me, and knows if I am tired'.

After a lesson, I asked Odd André why he insisted on avoiding an explanation despite the aggravated frustration in the child. He replied that the aim was to make them independent and make them learn that he expected them to figure out problems themselves. When I asked one of the pupils about whether there were things they didn't like about the lessons, they told me the following:

> There may be times if I don't quite. . . If I am trying to play a rhythm, and then I try it over and over again, and I just don't get it right. Then there is nobody who tells me how the rhythm is supposed to be. I just have to try again, and then it takes quite a long time. But often, I manage it after just a few times.

GURO: But do you sometimes wish Odd André could just tell you how the rhythm is supposed to be?

PUPIL: Ehmm, on some songs, maybe, that I haven't heard before, it could have been . . . but on some songs, I can just try some more, too.

At the time of the interview, the pupil's parent told me that their child had been nervous before lessons to begin with, worrying that they wouldn't understand what Odd André wanted them to do. The parent felt that the times Odd André would become impatient were if he sensed that the children did not concentrate properly. Partly to prevent him from becoming annoyed and partly to prepare their child for such stressful situations, they had said 'You just have to pay attention really well, all the time'. According to the parent, thinking about paying more attention when something felt extra challenging had worked well for this child, and they had felt less nervous.

However, if in a learning situation a child doesn't understand what to do and doesn't seem to be able to move on by themselves, leaving too much responsibility for solving the situation to the child is an issue with ethical bearings. It is problematic if children learn that when they experience tension in a situation with an adult, it is only up to them to 'try some more' – especially if they don't understand what 'doing better' means – when the tension could have been solved by the adult, who in a pedagogical situation should possess the tools for doing so.

The child whose parent told them to pay extra attention was potentially put in this position. They managed to use that approach constructively, which also seemed to be the case for other children whose parents told me that they talked with their child about how to handle pressure on lessons. However, if a child is unable to do that – for example, if they don't have that kind of parental support – then they are potentially rendered with a feeling of failure and low self-efficacy. What then may happen is that what they actually learn is to think that they are incapable of solving problems, and instead develop hiding strategies (Blix 2012) to not lose face in front of their teacher. This is a topic I will return to with more examples in the next chapter, which also expands on Odd André's own thinking on the potential contradiction between guiding by providing tools and aiming at nurturing independence by not guiding.

Developing expressivity

The sociocultural nature of learning jazz phrasing

As mentioned above, one parent thought that rhythmic aspects were particularly under-communicated in Odd André's teaching. Rhythm as musical phenomenon in jazz encapsulates many elements, and previously in this chapter I have mostly described rhythm in terms of *framework* (pulse, groove, form) for improvisation and interplay (Iyer 2002; Johansen 2016a; Monson 1996). Another important aspect of rhythm in jazz has to do with the performer's improvisatory choices within this framework, in shaping phrases. Phrasing may involve what Iyer (2002, 398) describes as micro-timing:

> In groove contexts, musicians display a heightened, seemingly microscopic sensitivity to musical timing (on the order of a few milliseconds). They are able to evoke a variety of rhythmic qualities, accents, or emotional moods by playing notes slightly late or early relative to a theoretical metric time point.

Phrasing also involves how to articulate eighth notes on grooves with or without a swing feel; the use of common rhythmic phrases idiomatic to jazz; and creating rhythmic 'gestures' and form, that is, the 'dramaturgical' aspects of improvising (Huovinen, Tenkanen, and Kuusinen 2010) by varying pace and density.

Micro-timing was seldom addressed in lessons. I understood this as perceived by Odd André as too early for most of the pupils at Improbasen to be able to master. Gestural and dramaturgical aspects were sometimes talked about for the more experienced pupils. Odd André could then suggest for the pupil to vary the placements of stresses and attacks (especially on wind instruments), vary the use of long notes, 'try to create longer sentences', 'sometimes you can repeat two notes, play "da-dat"', and similar kinds of instructions. Common to these were that they were general and, as the parent pointed out in a quote above, unspecific. Rhythm may be seen as a defining parameter for the narrative shape of an improvisation, and by giving open instructions, the child was given freedom in shaping such narratives.

In Odd André's experience, if he were to focus too much on rhythmic phrasing within a swing feel in the lessons, it would have some unwanted consequences:

> I deliberately under-communicate the rhythmic aspects. It is my experience that if they try too much to create cool jazz phrases, it sounds clichéd. That is why I want them to play legato for a long time, and quite un-nuanced, as Christine does now. She has developed a good [breath] flow from playing legato, then she can explore attacks and dynamics and stuff later, and then all of that will be in place. We have to remember that these are beginners as instrumentalists. If they try to start playing fancy jazz phrases before they know how to play legato, they will acquire a bad technique. The breathing will not be in keeping with their tongue technique [on wind instruments]. That is why I start working with getting the notes right, then the rhythm will be settled eventually.

The reasons for not addressing rhythmic phrasing explicitly towards the pupils were partly technical; the micro-dynamics involved in using stresses and attacks as rhythmic devices in phrasing had to wait until they had established a solid instrumental technique, for which playing legato helped, he thought. The other reason had to do with the risk of playing a clichéd swing phrasing. In Odd André's experience, being explicit about swing phrasing often led to an exaggerated swing (where the first eighth note in a pair of two becomes longer than what is aesthetically common). Instead, he wanted them to play almost even eighths and gradually learn to feel swing phrasing by implicitly picking it up from his piano accompaniment.

Odd André compared the Norwegian pupils' phrasing with the phrasing of the Japanese pupils he had met and taught. He thought that the Japanese children played with a more idiomatic jazz phrasing than the Norwegians did, despite the Norwegian children *improvising* a lot more.

> This is the biggest difference between them and us, that they have listened so much more to jazz. I think a lot about how I can teach my students to phrase like that. As you know, I have given Christine a sound file with Chet Baker. But I don't think she completely understands why she is supposed to listen to that, and what to do with it. It's a different culture; [the Norwegians] don't listen so much to jazz. I think it has to do with social things. When you are young, you listen to music that your friends listen to, and in Norway it comes more from TV than it is a deliberate choice. In Japan, jazz is their interest, since their early teens. I don't see how we can make that happen in Norway, it has to evolve gradually, you can't rip people out of their environment.

What Odd André talked about here, was the importance of musical enculturation (Green 2002) and immersion in a musical style (Kingscott and Durrant 2010; Virkkula 2016) for learning idiomatic phrasing. In both Japan and Norway, Odd André found that the social peer culture influenced young people's engagement with listening to jazz to a high degree. In addition, he presented another possible

explanation for his perceived difference in phrasing between his Norwegian pupils and those from other countries he had worked with:

> The other thing I have found out is surprising. When I met the Japanese and the Swiss children, they all had a lot better phrasing than my pupils. But they were not better tonally. And it is easier to work with phrasing on something that is not improvised. Because if it is improvised you can't say 'play that note shorter than that one', because you don't know what note it is yet. . . . This is why the Japanese are so good at that, because they listen a lot to music, and because they play a lot of sheet music in big bands.

This quote has to be understood in the sense that the Norwegian pupils were more used to improvising than the other children, hence Odd André's reference to the Norwegians' tonal skills. From meeting these other jazz schools, he had learned that their practices were more oriented towards playing from scores than teaching improvisation in small bands. This is an interesting point: the idiomatic learning in jazz depends on having models, either from listening to recordings or using written scores 'where it is decided that this dotted quarter note is stressed, and that this note is short', as Odd André put it. When the pupils at Improbasen had acquired an idiomatic rhythmic vocabulary to a lesser degree than children from other schools (in Odd André's opinion), it was because their learning activity predominantly consisted of *their own* improvisations.

Improvisatory choices

As referred to previously, the rhythmic frameworks of groove and form constitute structures within which soloists form their expressive statements (Iyer 2002) or take part in musical conversations with each other (Monson 1996). The relation between hearing and understanding the musical framework and the scope it holds for individual choices was a topic in my conversation with the drummer Inger (ten). We talked about her playing on a newly learned song: *Love for Sale*.

GURO: On *Love for Sale*, you do some different things. What do you do there?
INGER: There, it's more clinking sounds, sort of. To begin with I thought it was just about striking some cymbals, but later I have started to make more rhythms and stuff, like 1; 2; 3 [counts slowly], 1,2,3 [counts fast].
GURO: Oh yeah?
INGER: Only it depends on what there is time to do, since sometimes there is just room for a little, and others some more.
GURO: Yes. And is it different every time you play it, or the same every time?
INGER: Ehm . . . I guess it's the same, but with new ways of doing it every time. . . . I invent new possibilities, and I think about . . . sometimes, I just use some cymbals, and then, on drums, there is this metal thing, and I can strike that, and on the hi-hat there is a pole on the stand . . . and Odd André has shown me . . . 'look, everything you see [on the drum set] you can use'.

Some things are difficult and sometimes they are really very exciting. So if I play a swing rhythm with brushes, I often think that it is boring to play the same the whole song, but then I can change it like [says a swing rhythm with a stress on the fourth beat]: dan-danda-dan-DAN, dan-danda-dan-DAN. Or I can move the brushes around, it's so much fun. If you keep a rhythm over a long time, and hear other instruments, then it's quite hard to hold that rhythm if you think about it. Before, I used to think it was easy to hold a rhythm. But it's getting harder and harder.

GURO: Why do you think that is? That is interesting.

INGER: It's because when you hear other sounds, then maybe you start to think like them.

GURO: Are you saying that you have started listening to others more?

INGER: Yes, a bit!

GURO: I understand. What is it that you listen for, when you listen to others?

INGER: I listen for . . . sort of, how long the notes are. If it is a long, long note, then I might be supposed to just making those clinking sounds. And if they have fast notes, it is probably swing, sort of. It's important to listen to how long the notes are.

As with the drummer Sara, Inger here talked about two main instrumental templates: playing 'clinking sounds' when the melody had 'long notes' (slow or rubato tempos) or 'swing', as when the melody had more 'fast notes'. The cues to know which one it was supposed to be came from listening to the piano (Odd André) and the saxophone (which was often the melody instrument). However, within these templates, Inger had discovered some creative options she had as the drummer, both in terms of sound choices and rhythmic stress in performance of a groove. These choices had to be in accordance with what the other played, but she seemed to find it both more interesting as well as challenging the more she was able to listen and discover what the others were playing – while not starting to 'think like them', that is, come out of her own instrumental role.

At a concert with Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish pupils (one which will be described further in Chapter 7), I noticed that even children who had only been improvising for a short while solved the task very differently. Some would play simple phrases within a blues scale, but form them as questions and answers, while others seemed to press the correct keys without thinking much about phrases. I then asked Odd André how much he wanted to interfere with the children's expressive and creative development.

GURO: Do you want to just let it happen [by itself] or do you interfere?

ODD ANDRÉ: I let it happen for a long time, I let them play for a very long time the first times they improvise, to see if that change comes, that they begin to make music instead of just pressing the keys, doing as they are told. Most of them can sit there and fool around for a while, and then they start to notice that what they create is music. Some things start to build. . . . [T]hey start to experiment. And very often, it suddenly happens after a while. That is also

> why I play a quite proactive accompaniment, to trigger some things. But if nothing happens, I often stop and say 'perhaps you can try something like this', and then I steer the process a little. So then I interfere.

This quote illustrates the communicative context created for children to nurture their entering into creating music. The main themes in this chapter have been the ways the pupils are put into a musical 'pool' that contains a rhythmic and harmonic framework, and thereby also form. I claim that this pedagogical situation is one of the most important features of the teaching at Improbasen. Odd André's approach when it comes to children's improvisatory choices is to not steer or guide until the child has had plenty of time to discover and explore what it means to 'create music'. This approach may on one hand be criticised for not giving the children guidance and rendering them without tools for a long time, as mentioned earlier. On the other hand, it shows faith in children's ability to discover and explore by themselves if they get the chance, and if they can do it in their own pace without being rushed. The freedom pupils are given in terms of rhythm and expression may, where Odd André takes on a teacher role described as 'mentoring' (Creech and Gaunt 2018), seems to contrast to the quite detail-oriented and directive teaching of melodic and harmonic material, which can be aligned with an 'engineering' teacher role (ibid.), outlined in the previous chapter. In my opinion, this must not be understood as a *laissez-faire* attitude and thus a low priority given to rhythmic aspects. On the contrary, it is crucial to acquire the ability to orient yourself in form in jazz improvisation, as this is a precondition for interplay with others. How the children learn to participate in improvised interplay in jazz is the topic for the next chapter.

Note

1 Original is in F mixolydian.

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7 ‘Then we can play together’

Inter-play, inter-nations

To introduce this chapter, I will revisit one of my conversations with Anne (bass), who had turned 11 years old. I asked her what she thought it meant to be a professional jazz musician.

GURO: What do you do, what does it mean [to play bass for a living]?
ANNE: You travel around the world and play, sort of, perhaps with people you have never met before. And with your band.
GURO: How is it possible to play with someone you have never met before?
ANNE: But, you have to. . . . Everyone must know the song, of course.
GURO: Is that possible?
ANNE: Yes. . . . If the song is well-known, they have probably played it.
GURO: Do you have any examples of songs you think musicians in other countries may know?
ANNE: *Bjelleklang* [*Jingle Bells*]? Or, maybe not *Bjelleklang* in other parts of the world, but in their language. The melody is the same, though. . . . *All the Things You Are, You’d Be So Nice* . . . probably some more, too.

Later in the same interview, we talked about how the children at Improbasen get to play with other children a lot. The ability to play with new people came up again.

ANNE: [S]ometimes you play with people you have never met before.
GURO: Yeah? And that . . . people who don´t understand the system in jazz, they don´t get that. How it is possible to play with people you´ve never met. . . . So if you were to explain that, then, how that is possible?
ANNE: Because everybody must play the same song. Then it works, then we can play together. Ehm . . . you don´t always play the same . . . thing . . . the same notes, but you play in a way that fits with that song.

Anne pointed to an aspect of interplay in jazz that often fascinates non-musicians: namely how musicians are able to play together without knowing each other or having rehearsed a lot beforehand. The main answer to that were clear to her: you have to have a shared repertoire of songs. This functions as a framework for each individual’s improvised contributions (in not playing ‘the same’, but still having

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to 'fit in'). To me, her certainty in giving these explanations was as fascinating as what she said; she knew these things because she had experienced them, in her two-year career as a jazz bassist.

This experience illustrates the theme of this chapter: musical interplay, its conditions and learning processes, and activities of interplay across borders. In Chapter 4, I touched upon the children's experiences of performing together on concerts, a cornerstone in Improbasen's activity. Overall, this was the decidedly most fun part of playing at Improbasen. They start performing very soon after their enrolment. For example, Anne (bass) played at her first concert five months after starting, and some pupils go on stage after a few weeks. The joy of presenting what one has practised was something many of them talked about, as well as the achievement in feeling that they had played well even if they were nervous. Some highlighted positive reactions from audiences as important and that they could make listeners happy by playing music. As mentioned, the sociality that permeates performances was highlighted. For example, Hannah (sax) said she thought the music sounded nicer when she played with other children, and Tobias (piano) talked about how playing with a whole band made him less nervous, since the audience's focus was not on him solely. Both Helene (guitar) and Christine (sax) liked listening to the other pupils' solos on stage, and found others' ideas inspiring.

Activities

Since the establishment of Improbasen, performing on concerts was a core activity of the learning centre. *Barnas Jazzhus* [*Children's Jazz House*] started running in 2012 and arranged monthly concerts under the series *Barnas Jazzcafé* [*Children's Jazz Café*]. *Barnas Jazzhus* was awarded the prize *The Norwegian Jazz Club of the Year* by Norsk Jazzforum [the Norwegian Jazz Forum] in 2013.

When I started following Improbasen in 2015, Improbasen had just moved to Oslo, and the organization was in a process of establishing a regular concert activity here. This process depended on several conditions. First, they had to recruit more children to be able to form functional bands. Second, they needed arenas on which to perform. In March 2015, *Barnas Jazzhus* was opened at the rented studio on Carl Berners Plass, when launching the first *Barnas Jazzcafé* concert in Oslo. During 2016, a monthly arrangement at the Norwegian National Jazz Scene venue at Victoria Theater in Oslo was established, renamed to *Barnas Jazzscene* [*Children's Jazz Scene*]. Later, different concert series with Improbasen's regular pupils as well as invited guests were arranged in collaboration with other venues in Oslo, such as *Det internasjonale barnekunstmuséet* [*The International Museum of Children's Art*][1] *Sentralen*,[2] *Cafétheatret*,[3] and *Kafé Hærverk*.[4]

Table 7.1 below gives a brief overview of performance activity that I attended over the course of 2015 and 2016, and thus, it is not complete. Nevertheless, it may give an impression of the variety of activities Improbasen's pupils participated in.

During tours and festivals, the children play a number of concerts in a row. Improbasen seldom sets up separate rehearsals before concerts. Although Odd André would prefer regular rehearsals, arranging them would be challenging since

Table 7.1 Selected performance activity 2015–2016

When	*Where*	*What*	*Who*
27.3.15–31.3.15	Oslo, Helsingborg (Sweden), Copenhagen (Denmark)	International project: Rehearsals and concerts at Carl Berners Plass, Dunkers Culture house (Helsingborg), and Frederiksborg Musikkhøjskole (Copenhagen)	The regular Norwegian pupils, guest students from Japan and Austria, and local music pupils from Helsingborg, Gothenburg, and Copenhagen
18.4.15	Oslo	Ensemble rehearsal at Carl Berners plass	Helene (guitar) and 6 other regular pupils
1.5.15–2.5.15	Oslo	Rehearsals at Carl Berners Plass and concert at Caféteatret in connection with International Jazz Day	10 of the regular pupils
28.5.15	Oslo	Rehearsal of free improvisation, at Odd André's home	Anne (bass), Thomas (sax), and Sara (drums)
3.8.15–11.8.15	Oslo	The Kids in Jazz Festival	Regular pupils, seminar participants, Mami (trumpet) from Japan
26.9.15	Oslo	The concert series Barnas Jazzscene at Victoria National Jazz Scene	All of the regular pupils
5.11.15–8.11.15	A Scandinavian town	The seminar *Fabula*	Odd André, Hana, some of the regular pupils from Improbasen, and children and teachers from Sweden and Denmark
30.4.16	Oslo	International Jazz Day concert at Caféteatret	All of the regular pupils
23.6.16	Oslo	Summer party with barbecue and concert at Carl Berners Plass	All of the regular pupils and families
31.7.16–5.8.16	Sapporo, Japan	Sapporo Jazz Camp: an international jazz camp with seminars and a number of performances at Sapporo Art Park, Sapporo centre, and Bankei Ski centre; invited by Sapporo Junior Jazz school	Participants are children and adolescents from Japan, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. Jazz instructors from the same countries and the US.
9.8.16–15.8.16	Oslo	The Kids in Jazz Festival	Regular pupils, seminar participants, and guest students from Japan
19.11.16	Oslo	The concert series Barnas Jazzscene at Victoria National Jazz Scene	All of the regular pupils
11.12.16	Oslo	The concert Barnas Jazzjul [Children's Jazz Christmas] concert at Victoria National Jazz Scene	All of the regular pupils

the pupils live widespread and far apart from the studio. Instead, sound checks at the venues are scheduled for the whole day and used as rehearsal time. When practical, Odd André gathers children to play together for the sake of practising.

One of the major events in 2016 was the participation in Japan in July 2016 at *Sapporo Jazz Camp*, an international camp for children and adolescents from Japan, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, and Norway. The camp was arranged by Sapporo Junior Jazz School, and Improbasen was responsible for recruiting and facilitating for participants from Europe. Odd André travelled with a group of Norwegian children and parents. There were teachers from the same countries in addition to three instructors from Berklee College of Music in Boston, US. Improbasen also participated in similar events, such as one in a Scandinavian town (the seminar *Fabula*, which will be described in Chapter 8).[5] During 2018 and 2019, Odd André went with a group of children on concert tours in Japan, Italy, and Switzerland respectively.

Odd André has collaborated with Sapporo Junior Jazz School and similar jazz education institutions for young people in Yokohama and Tokyo since 2012. In a similar vein, Odd André has initiated contact with children's jazz projects or music schools in Northern Sweden; Switzerland; Lisbon, Portugal; Barquisimeto, Venezuela; and Reykjavik, Iceland. These collaborations evolve from Odd André making contact with institutions or teachers, and then visiting them to observe lessons and give workshops. In this way a 'bridge' is created to invite children from these institutions, travelling with guardians, to come to Norway and perform with Improbasen. For example, during the Kids in Jazz festival in 2018, Icelandic and Venezuelan children performed as guest musicians. During the Italian tour in 2019, a young vocalist from Venezuela and a trumpeter from Japan joined. Odd André's own international workshop activity therefore not only represents educational exchange on the teacher level, but also functions as a door opener for children from different regions of the world to meet and play together.

The conditions for such musical interplay in all these contexts are very much established through the *shared repertoire of tunes*, but not the least a shared repertoire of *codes for interplay*. In addition, the social setting around band rehearsals and performances provide the children with opportunities to learn from each other, in *shared learning processes*. In the following sections, I will use vignettes as examples of how these repertoires are developed and the processes take place.

Learning together

Vignette: Helene is visiting

Helene (guitar) lives in a different city in Norway and is visiting Oslo this weekend. Odd André has asked Christine (sax) to have a joint lesson with Helene, so the girls are spending their Sunday morning in the studio at Carl Berner. Odd André has made a thoroughly brewed cup of coffee for himself and for me. They are now

playing What Is This Thing Called Love. *Odd André asks the pupils to improvise eight bars each. After a while he asks them to trade fours, that is four bars each.*

ODD ANDRÉ: *And now you are going to try something difficult, which is 2/2, because then you have to try to create something together.*

He explains that the first person has to play up until the first beat in the third bar and that the next person has to be careful picking up where the other ended. They practice this for one chorus. Odd André says they are doing well: 'Because this is difficult'.

ODD ANDRÉ: *And now you are going to try something even more difficult, to play at the same time. I think it is the hardest for you, Christine, because you have to play so soft that Helene is heard. And both can't play eighth notes at the same time, but some long notes here and there. If one of you play long notes and the other da-da-da-da-da, then it's very nice together. But you have to listen to each other.*

They play. Odd André praises how they sounded together: 'Let's take the melody, can you split it?' The two girls negotiate how they can distribute the melody between them. After they have played through the melody with one phrase each, Odd André looks at Helene, and says: 'Improvise!'

In this segment of the duo lesson, the focus seemed two-fold. First, the exercise of trading various periods of bars had the purpose of strengthening their sense of time and form. The exercise challenged them to pay attention to where they were in the form regardless of whether they were playing themselves or not. Second, the turn taking and eventually the exercise of playing over each other may have had a communicative purpose, with an implicit call and response, where the other person's phrases can provide ideas for the next player. Eventually, Christine and Helene were asked to interfere with each other's phrases, to play over each other, and Odd André suggested a strategy for how that approach could work musically – by creating contrast and giving each other space in a process of listening and making choices.

Vignette: 'here it is improvising'

The Kids in Jazz-festival is opening at Victoria National Jazz Scene this afternoon, and the venue is packed with audience members and expectations. The concert is about to start, and the stage lights are framing the only two persons on stage, Anne (ten, on bass) and Sara (eight, on drums). Odd André is introducing them and telling the audience that they are going to start the concert by playing free improvised music, alone. 'Let's hear it', he says, before he steps down. The girls smile at each other, partly excited and partly nervous. Sara starts, four rapid strikes with the side of the drum stick on the edge of the ride cymbal. Anne joins quickly, repeating a two-note motif of E♭ – F followed by a long upwards glissando *on the D string.*

Sara lets her sticks wander around the set while Anne continues to play short melodic motifs in a chromatic landscape, sometimes resting on long notes. Gradually she expands the lengths of her phrases, alternating between distinct melodies and glissandi. *Anne is looking concentrated on the floor in front of her while Sara's eyes are following her hands around the set, scraping the crash cymbal with the tip of the stick or making a roll on the floor tom. Sometimes patterns of call and response occur, with short three-, four-, or five-note motifs echoing from one musician to another. Sara starts to play denser textures while Anne's melodic gestures become longer and more rhythmically rapid. After three minutes, their eyes meet for the first time, causing the two cousins to smile at each other. From this point, Sara starts to watch Anne attentively while playing. Anne focuses her phrases in the low register, while Sara lets her sticks strike across the whole drum set in one gesture before she starts to repeat short motifs on the bass drum. They both look at each other more often now. After five minutes, Anne plays a slow and articulated phrase with a* ritardando *that ends in a sustained note while looking suggestively at Sara. In that moment, Sara had started something loud on the ride cymbal but feels Anne's gaze and meets her eyes. She smiles and plays one last strike on cymbal, letting it ring. The music has found its end. Their faces look determined and crack up in big smiles as the applause is starting.*

In an interview seven months later, I let Sara watch the video of this performance. I asked if she could explain to me what was going on.

SARA: Improvising, and . . . yes.
GURO: What does Anne do when she improvises?
SARA: She plays something . . . I can't explain it. . . . In a way I follow her, I hear how she plays, and then I know that I am supposed to play this or that.
GURO: So, if Anne plays like this [I sing ascending melodic movements] . . .
SARA: It's either improvising or swing.
GURO: How about here? [I point to the video screen]
SARA: Here it is improvising.
GURO: Do you follow Anne here, sort of?
SARA: Yes.
GURO: Can you try to explain how you follow her?
SARA: Yes, but it's difficult, I listen to how she plays.
(. . .)
GURO: There, you looked at her, like you were copying her, or . . .?
SARA: Yes, you're not wrong, I do copy her a little.
GURO: Is it just you who follows her, or does she copy you too?
SARA: I think it is I who copy her.
GURO: Did you like doing this?
SARA: Yes, because I got to follow someone else, and not just one.
GURO: Did you think it was difficult?
SARA: No, I didn't think it was difficult.
GURO: Because you and Anne knew what to do?
SARA: Yes.

Seemingly, it was difficult for Sara to articulate what their playing was 'about' and what she had focused on while doing it. Nevertheless, what she did say gives important insight into Sara's process of making sense of her playing practice. She talked about two major musical concepts that were important to her as drummer; they were 'improvising' and 'playing swing'. In Chapter 6 I referred to Sara's and Inger's understandings of different groove concepts as *instrumental templates*. The distinction between 'playing swing' and 'improvising' constitute another set of instrumental templates, which also function as templates for *form*. Playing swing meant to comp while melodic instruments played melody or solos, while improvising meant to make sounds on the drum set and try to be inventive in creating a varied sound palette. This concept was often used on intros to songs or running through the head of a song *rubato*. The cue for her to know when to play one or the other was to *listen*. In Chapter 4, I quoted Sara explaining that she knew the difference from Odd André's playing; when he played calmly, she was to play 'plinky-plonky' (which was what she called free improvising at that time), and when he played 'louder' (which meant in a steady groove, often with walking bass), it was swing.

The way the children had been instructed in free improvising was often limited to operational demonstrations of what they could do on their instruments to create various sounds. I seldom observed explicit talk about *how* or *when to use these sound elements* in musical interplay, for example, as means to interact by commenting or contrasting a fellow player's sound making. Therefore, their free playing could sometimes come across as parallel individual performances of learned instrumental operations in a more or less random order. This was also how I recalled the performance in the vignette above; I wondered if they experienced musical purpose and meaning in playing free. However, when studying the video closely, I noticed that there were several musical and communicative cues that indicated how their decision making related to mutual listening and interaction, as described in the vignette. Also, in Sara's own recollection of their playing she was clear about having followed Anne musically. Their subtle exchange of small motifs is one example, as well as Sara's impulse to play the bass drum when Anne moved to a lower register. The fact that Sara after a while started to watch Anne more attentively indicates that she was beginning to prepare for an ending. When Anne did decide to end, her clear signalling by using *ritardando*, the long note, and the gaze and Sara's quick response with the final cymbal stroke showed their mutual and present awareness as well as showing that they *knew what it meant to end a piece of music*. These are all indications of shared meaning making that emerge in musical conversations between musicians.

When I asked if Sara had liked doing it, she gave an answer that I didn't understand immediately: 'I get to follow someone else, and not just one'. She may have meant that she mostly followed Odd André when he played along, but in this duo she had Anne to follow, which indicates the particular significance of peer-to-peer playing. It is also interesting that she didn't think playing free improvised music was difficult, and while my question whether this was due to the fact that they 'knew what to do' could have been leading, she did confirm that this was the case.

Given the signs of shared meaning making, this 'knowing' not only pertains to an operational repertoire of 'free improvised sounds' on the instrument, but also of strategies for creating a piece of music with 'head and tail' in improvised interplay.

Vignette: all the things they know

Later at the concert at Victoria and after some songs, each with a new constellation of children, Sara and Anne enter the stage again, together with Christine (13, on sax). As soon as Sara is ready behind the set, Odd André lays down an F minor chord on his electric piano. Sara responds with three rapid strikes with her stick on the cymbal edge, and Anne immediately plays an F three times as an echo, before the note turns into an ascending glissando. Sara and Anne continue to play 'free', which means the sound colouring effects they use within this concept. Christine starts on the melody of All the Things You Are, *taking her time with stretching the notes. Odd André and Anne follow Christine with the chords; Anne plays the chord roots while timing them with Christine's melody notes, and Odd André plays textures from the chords, sometimes adding chromatic fills or bending the notes with the pitch bender in the electric piano. Christine is leading them. In the last bar of the first half of the tune, Odd André plays a comping figure indicating to set the time. Sara immediately looks up, but doesn't change her playing. On the pickup for the B section, Christine plays the three quarter notes with a set pulse, and Odd André starts to comp with a swing groove from the downbeat of the B section. He looks at his hands on the keyboard. Sara now constantly looks at him but continues the free, colourful playing. Anne plays chord notes on beats 1 and 3. In the three last bar of the B section, Sara has stopped, but holds her stick over the ride cymbal, as if she is ready to 'jump in' at the right moment. She hints at the swing figure on the ride cymbal, but seems to change her mind and plays a rhythmic fill in time, using all the drums, with a clear marking of beat 2, 3, and 4 in the bar before C section. On the downbeat, she starts a confident swing figure on the ride and keeps it steady while she adjusts her position on the drum stool. It takes Anne one bar into the C section before she switches to walking. The head is ended; Christine holds the last A♭ note sustained. This is the first time Odd André looks up, and he looks at Christine. She has turned her head slightly towards him to see what is happening. While still keeping her A♭, she notices his gaze, he nods, and she departs from the A♭ with an improvised phrase, entering her solo.*

Close to the end of the first chorus, Anne and Sara are looking up attentively. Both Odd André and Christine are continuing to play, neither looking up. The drummer and bassist continue too. At the end of the second chorus, Odd André plays quieter, looks up, first at Christine and then at Anne, making sure they have contact. Christine makes a decrescendo *of the descending phrase she is playing, ending it on a sustained G that makes an expressive ninth on the Fm^7 chord at the start of the next chorus. Anne has caught Odd André's signal, and she immediately starts to solo. Two beats into Anne's chorus, Sara seems to become aware of the change in soloist and alters her playing style to free again. The time feel is ambiguous; it feels loose, although there is always an indication of the initial tempo. On*

the C section of Anne's second chorus, Christine starts to look at Odd André, to wait for a cue. He looks up at her, and she starts to improvise again. Anne goes into a 1 and 3 pattern but switches to walking when she senses a look from Odd André. Sara keeps the swing pattern on the ride (even when she has to scratch her right arm with her left). Here and there she throws in various fills with her left hand, on the snare, tom drum, crash cymbal, and bass drum. Her fills become more and more rhythmically dense. It's the last chorus, and Christine has improvised on the A section. She enters the pickup for the B section, when Odd André plays a demonstrative ritardando*, slowing the whole band down. Sara switches to free playing again, and Anne rests on long chord notes, following Christine's* rubato *phrasing, while Odd André colours with* arpeggios*. Christine lets her last three notes linger, creating a space that Sara fills with long rolls on different drums for each of Christine's notes*.

The purpose of this vignette is to shed light on what I argue are fundamental aspects of learning to play jazz in an ensemble: a shared repertoire of codes for interplay. As with the aspects described and discussed in Chapter 6, these aspects are mainly implicit – yet intentional.

The only thing the children knew before they entered the stage was that they were going to play *All the Things You Are*. The performance of *rubato* parts; the length of them; what tempo would be set; the order of solos; and how to end the tune were all improvised elements. The form was not instructed in advance, nor the fact that these elements were going to be improvised. However, the improvisatory options in regard to form were not totally open but consisted of what I have called form templates. The two approaches ('free' and 'swing') that Sara talked about in *Vignette: 'Here it is improvising'* were also used in the version of *All the Things You Are*, and were familiar to all the children. Moreover, the children were not the ones improvising the form – the cues for what was happening on the overall level came from Odd André. Thus, they didn't know or decide how the form is going to unfold. This means that they had to pay attention, and once they had picked up the cues, they needed to react quickly and make choices about how they individually wanted to contribute *within* the given form template at any point.

In order to make such choices, they had to be aware of their instrument's available musical roles within the given musical concept, which I addressed in Chapter 6. Where *rubato* intros or versions of tune heads involved playing free for Sara, Anne's role was to play the chord roots, following the succession of the lead instrument's rendition of the melody. However, she could combine the root playing with some free playing. Christine, the lead player in this case, had a responsibility for performing the *rubato* melody with authority, to make it easy for the others to follow. Here, Odd André let her have the initiative, as when he waited for her phrase beginnings and endings. When the tempo was set, all the children adjusted how they played immediately; Sara went in to the swing groove, Anne started to play rhythmically (on 1 and 3, or walking), and Christine started to play with a syncopated swing phrasing. Interestingly, when a chorus came to an end, the comping musicians, Sara and Anne, looked up to check in on Odd André. This

would be the spot where Odd André would signal another soloist or a change of tempo, depending on whether it would be time to play the head as an end. Just as noteworthy was that at these moments, when Odd André just looked down without trying to get their eye contact, Sara and Anne stopped looking at him too. They knew that when the signal didn't come there, they could continue another chorus with 'business as usual'.

Another dimension of available instrumental roles, is for example, how the drummer is supposed to comp depending on what instrument is soloing. Sara's cue to start with the free concept was when Anne started soloing. It is common jazz practice to play looser and softer while accompanying a bass solo, to create a soundscape that allows for the lower frequencies of the bass to be heard.

In other words, a lot of information passed across the participants during the course of playing *All the Things You Are*. None of it was verbal; signals were either musical (Odd André playing out-of-tempo fills to signalise *rubato*, setting the tempo, or slowing it) or by gaze and gestures. The children's non-hesitant musical responses to all of these signs show that they were confident with the basic codes for ensemble playing in a jazz context: codes for organising an improvised course, for turn taking, and for creating form.

Knowing these codes is in itself a practical precondition for playing together. Nonetheless, using such templates makes performances predictable. The templates for form and instrumental roles do not in themselves ensure that the children think about *interacting* when improvising together. The set framework may just as well encourage what I previously described as individuals playing in parallel, without actually listening or communicating. As Anne noted in the opening quote in this chapter, it just 'has to fit'. Odd André admitted that this is a weakness with his approach:

> [T]hat they all can just grind away on their own thing; it just happens to fit together. The form becomes similar on many tunes. I wouldn't do it like that if I had played myself [as a musician], but after all, they are nine years old. They get to do a number of concerts where they just play these versions that go up and down [in tempo], and get it under their skin. . . . The rest comes later.

Thus, in Odd André's view the disadvantages of predictability and rigid form elements were outweighed by the foundation that internalising them builds for later. Knowing these codes for interplay may be seen as more than just organising how musicians play together, but also a precondition for working with the *quality* of interplay, or as Odd André put it:

> [A] higher degree of communication-based interplay. . . . That we can follow each other, and let ourselves influence each other. . . . To do something outside of just counting to four, one solo each, and that's that . . . That things can happen, and that there can be an unexpected order of things. . . . It's important when you play that you listen to those you are playing with.

By using relatively simple form templates, the children easily become familiar with what the form templates sound like and how to contribute to them appropriately. Thus, when the form – what I slightly reductively may call *the order of templates* – is improvised, they experience first of all that *attentive listening* is the key to knowing what to do at any moment. And when the children are able to maintain this attentiveness as a 'default' attitude when playing, Odd André tries to expose them to this next dimension, creating in communication. The question remains that if the goal is that the children develop a stronger freedom and creative autonomy and agency in the long run, does the strong emphasis on internalising templates and predictable musical solutions impede their ability to free themselves from them later? This issue represents one of the major tensions that permeate Improbasen's pedagogical approach to improvisation, and one that will be further addressed in Chapter 8.

International jazz days

Vignette: the girls from Yokohama

The Japanese students Akira (16, alto saxophone), Mitsu (16, tenor saxophone), Reina, and Sachi (15 and 17 respectively, on trombones) are arriving in Oslo a day in March, to participate in a Scandinavian tour with the regular children at Improbasen. The four girls are members of a youth big band in Yokohama, which Odd André has visited several times and taught.

It has been snowing a lot in Oslo the day before. When they arrive with Odd André at the yellow community house at Carl Berners Plass in Oslo, I am waiting for them outside. Once inside, Odd André explains to them, slowly in English, that they will begin practising two by two. Mitsu and Reina will be picked up by a parent to go for a sightseeing, while Akira and Sachi are asked to start warming up. Then they will have lunch, and after that the girls can swap.

After lunch, Odd André tells me about Akira. He met her the first time he visited Japan to meet a youth big band from Sapporo as well as the big band from Yokohama. Four members from the Yokohama band visited Kids in Jazz in Oslo in 2013. Odd André was amazed at how well the young kids played, and especially Akira, who was their star soloist. When he invited her to have lessons, he discovered that she wasn't used to improvising her solos; they were often pre-learned. After this experience, she wanted him to teach her to improvise solos. Odd André visited Yokohama again in March 2014 to give workshops and teach some of the students in a quintet, including Akira. But he noticed that Akira, despite her eagerness to learn at the beginning, now seemed reserved. According to Odd André, the teaching of the quintet did not go well. He noticed that Akira was intimidated by some male members of the band who appeared more confident than her, and that she didn't manage to play at her ability. After a while she had contacted Odd André again, asking

for more tuition. He told me that he was determined to build her confidence back up again.

The next day, Akira, Sachi, Mitsu, and Reina get to meet Lena, a drummer visiting from Austria, and the Norwegian children Anne, Thomas, Elisabeth, Christine, and Sara. Andrea on drums and Rolf on bass, both 15 years, arrive later. Lena is 16 years old, and she has travelled to Norway alone. The Japanese students have had lessons for two hours already.

The first song they rehearse is Moanin'. *They play the head together, practise the start and ending, and go through solos. Some improvise on the blues scale, and Odd André suggest that they try to use the harmonic minor scale. After a while they shift to* Work Song. *Odd André walks around the kids to show them some phrases or which notes to use in improvisation, before he sits down at the keyboard: 'Everyone okay?* Moanin'*, improvise in F minor'. They run through* Confirmation *and* Satin Doll. *Some children are asked to improvise on a blues scale on the A section of* Confirmation, *while the more advanced improvisers use the II-V-I chord scales. Odd André shouts out the name of the soloist when it is their turn. 'Can we take it from the bridge?'*

In the breaks, all the pupils, from the youngest seven-year-old to the teenagers, put on their coats and winter shoes to run outside in the snow, having a snowball fight (see Figure 7.1*). Their verbal interaction is limited as none of them speaks English very well, but their cries and laughter sound all over the park that surrounds the studio house*.

Figure 7.1 Jazz children in snow ball fight
Source: Photograph by Tora Stenbråten Frøseth.

The Scandinavian tour

The first concert on this tour was at the same studio two days after the Japanese girls had arrived, and the little yellow house was packed with family members and representatives from music organizations in the municipality of Oslo. This was the official opening of Barnas Jazzhus. Later the same day they all travelled to Helsingborg in the south of Sweden for a concert the next day. Here, pupils from the local SMPA were joining the children from Norway, Denmark, Japan, and Austria. The rehearsal was a sound check on stage in the local culture house where the concert was going to be. Before sound checks, Odd André often creates a set list that includes which children are playing on which songs. This is often not communicated in advance. Each child is notified about which songs they are playing on when they are called on stage, and the order of soloists is communicated during the song itself, by a nod from Odd André or by him saying the soloist's name.

In one interview, I confronted Odd André with the critical objection that he was the one deciding on all the repertoire the children were supposed to learn, what repertoire was performed at a given concert, and who got to play on each tune and that not much was left for the children to decide on.[6] He admitted that it was controversial that the children in general had little choice, but the more he had developed the collaborative projects, the more he discovered that if everyone knew the same songs, the flexibility in programming set lists and ensembles for a concert would be greater. Further, when the concert program was not fixed, Odd André observed how this made the children more alert and flexible, and that it enhanced creativity and variation.

During a break in the sound check in Helsingborg, I told Odd André that I had noticed that the children he chose to play on each tune had changed from the day before, and I wondered why. Odd André explained that it varies how many songs each pupil knows. The further they have come in their playing the bigger their repertoire of songs is.

> That's why it is so important that the ones who know the fewest songs get to play on the songs they know. Sometimes I put them together with people who are able to play more advanced on these songs, that is better for everyone. The versions [of the tunes] become slightly lighter. 'Queuing jazz' can be quite heavy, if there is a lot of searching for notes from the less experienced ones. It's good to freshen it up a bit, both for the sake of the audience and for the soloists who are fiddling more with improvisations. Then the morale is kept high, for the comping musicians as well. So I try to lighten it up, to put them in a mixed order when they play, according to the entertainment value of their playing. And I don't mean entertainment in a negative sense, but that there is some action.

Thus, when programming concerts, both musical and social aspects were considered. He wanted to ensure that there was enough variation and flow for the concert as a whole. Thus, the musicians were able to keep the musical energy and thus

motivation (or 'morale', as he put it) high, and the audience had a better concert experience. He also thought about how to facilitate a bonding between children to strengthen their social relations. Sometimes social considerations meant giving children of *similar age and level* the opportunity to play together, and other times he prioritised letting the less advanced improvisers play with more experienced for the sake of the sounding result and motivation for all involved. He had observed how the children could nurture a jazz interest in each other. On the same tour, Odd André let the then ten-year-old Thomas perform *Confirmation* together with Akira, the 16-year-old saxophonist from Yokohama. His parent later told me that afterwards, Thomas had been in awe by the fact that he got to play with her. Thomas admired her playing, and Akira had come over to Thomas to tell him she thought he played well. He was in heaven from this comment. Lena, the Austrian drummer, had visited Kids in Jazz two years before, along with an experienced young drummer from Sapporo. Lena's father, who was her drum teacher and often travelled with her, had noted that Lena started to play things he had never heard her play before and that they had never talked about. But Lena's visit made a clear mark on one of the Norwegian drummers as well, Andrea (who was 13 years old at the time):

ODD ANDRÉ: On the festival the year after, I saw that Andrea had picked up things from Lena, quite obviously.
GURO: Yes, Andrea told me so herself, she is aware of it.
ODD ANDRÉ: Yes, her parent said it too, that her comping with brushes was directly learned from Lena. Andrea had asked her to show her.

Exchange of knowledge does not only happen directly in music, or when the older or more experienced children show things to the younger. It also takes place through socialisation and what the children talk about in informal settings. In a break during one of the days of the Scandinavian tour, Odd André made the following observation to me:

> Look, now one of the young Swedish girls is sitting over there with Lena, discussing what kind of jazz they like to listen to. It's important to create those connections, so they have something to build their interest on further on. It's a funny thing, this, that if they know someone from Austria who plays jazz, then it becomes a little bit more important.

The tour was very successful, musically and socially. The children had been closely acquainted, and Anne and Thomas had especially connected with the Japanese girls, despite the age difference, Odd André had noted:

> They really miss them. The Norwegian families have given me a lot of positive feedback. They have been strongly affected. It has been amazing to get to know so many people, to be part of an experience like this. The music, and the felt communion. And that is good.

Borders, boundaries, and bondings

Why these facilitations of both musical and social character were so significant may be attributed to identification. One aspect of identification is its mediating function to enhance learning (Nielsen and Johansen In press). I will tie it in with Odd André's observation that when he is gathering children from different places who haven't met before, they start to pick up things from each other that they normally don't play, at least not in the same degree. He mentioned the commonly advised practice of listening to well-known, 'great' performers and pointed to the difference in listening to someone you can identify with:

> For example, I gave Christine an audio file with Chet Baker. But I think she got much more out of listening to a recording of Akira that I gave her. We worked a lot with articulating what she heard in Chet Baker's playing. But she surprised me, because she had a lot more opinions about Akira's playing. Christine liked Akira's nuanced use of attacks and the notes Akira ends her phrases on. And I don't think it is because Akira plays the sax. It's rather because she is a human being that Christine knows and has had nice experiences with.

Odd André presented the thought that this had to do with gender:

> I think it is a girls' thing. Boys often want to listen to Charlie Parker and Jan Garbarek and God. While girls . . . it doesn't matter who it is, as long as they get to know what they need. Doesn't have to be a famous person.

This observation is most likely only based on Odd André's personal experience with teaching boys and girls, because he often underscored that he didn't '*know anything about gender'*. We also talked about how a strict gender-based classification of children's learning behaviour is over-simplified and may cause us to overlook variation between individuals. However, his description of gender differences may resonate in certain aspects with jazz research. Jazz has been described as a masculine space (Annfelt 2003) and characterised by a monolithic, admiration-based culture (Wilf 2014). Berliner's (1994) descriptions of informal learning among North American jazz musicians may illustrate this culture, where musicians often referred to learning from 'masters' and 'mentors', exemplified by this quote: 'Just as [learners'] early idols had learned from numerous mentors, aspiring musicians learn to re-create faithfully discrete bundles of traits and concepts from a succession of idols' (136).

On the background of this description, we should note that the musicians in Berliner's study were almost exclusively male. Thus, Odd André's perception as an expression of a wider male culture may be reasonable.

Nevertheless, I do not wish to contribute to essentialising young boys' and girls' ways of seeking knowledge. If there are such gender differences, I suggest identification is a more plausible reason for this difference than differences in the way boys and girls relate to perceptions of status. Since the 'great' jazz performers over history are predominantly men, males may 'naturally' identify as a jazz performer (Annfelt 2003), making females the Other (ibid.). Thus, girls

may feel alienated towards a jazz community because of the lack of people like themselves among the cohort of 'great' musicians (McKeage 2014). Wehr (2015) points to how tokenism and stereotype threat may prevent females from building self-efficacy through mastery experiences (see also Chapter 3). Composer and improviser Pauline Oliveros (2004) recalled how creating all-women improvising gave '[me] permission to be myself that had been covered or more hidden in the mostly male musical environment I inhabited, where as a woman I had to prove myself more intensely' (55).

When pupils are gathered at events arranged by Improbasen, such as this tour or the festival Kids in Jazz, females are always in the majority; thus, the chance for girls to find someone they identify with is huge. This may be the most important reason for why the pupils were so eager to learn from other pupils. However, being able to meet and socialise with slightly older pupils did not only benefit girls, as we saw from the example of Thomas and Akira. It is fair to assume that Odd André's observation of how children's interest in other young people's playing is due to the fact that they know them applies to children in general. Nevertheless, the significance of peer-to-peer identification may be greater for girls playing jazz, since they have a higher risk of experiencing stereotype threat and intimidation because of their gender.

Another aspect of identification is when the shared interest in jazz creates a sense of belonging. For example, the interaction in social play between the Japanese and Norwegian children and adolescents had very little common verbal language to draw on. Cultural and age differences were also striking. The common factor was that they all played jazz. This shared affinity was on one level very concretely manifest in knowing and playing the same repertoire of tunes. Although the pupils had different levels of mastery, the concerts were the result of joint efforts around this shared main object: jazz improvisation. Etienne Wenger (1998, 58–59) uses the concept of reification

> to refer to the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'. In so doing we create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized. . . . A certain understanding is given form.

Such forms can be certain rules, procedures, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts produced within a community, used to make a point, to know what to do, or to perform an action. Through the process of reification, some objects become standardised to serve the function of 'coordinat[ing] the perspectives of various constituencies for some purpose' (Wenger 1998, 106). In the community that Improbasen represents and in the expanded 'pop-up' community that emerges when for example Akira, Mitsu, Reina, Sachi, and Lena are included on a tour, the object 'jazz improvisation' does not mean exactly the same as in other communities surrounding jazz practices. Its meaning within Improbasen is particular, in the selection of tunes for all to learn and in the standardised tonal frames and forms through which these tunes are performed. These rules help the children *know*

what to do. Wenger calls objects that have the purpose of coordinating perspectives *boundary objects* (Wenger 1998, 106). They are meant to help connect the practice with the rest of the world. 'In everyday life we constantly deal with artefacts that connect us in various ways to communities of practice to which we do not belong' (107). Through the bounded set of tunes, the delineated set of musical rules and templates, a potentially abstract and fluid phenomenon as 'jazz improvisation' is reified, made into tangible 'things' that coordinate the experiences and meaning making of children from such different background. Not only does the shared repertoire make actual musical interaction possible despite culture and language barriers, it may also function as a strong identifier that constitutes a sense of belonging across age and geographical regions, but still enhances the feeling of being part of an *in-group* of children around the world interested in jazz.

Balancing the collective and individual

Vignette: what's this thing?

A number of Improbasen's regular pupils are gathered at Carl Berner to rehearse for a concert at Caféteatret the day after. Helene on guitar is in Oslo this weekend, so she is there, as well as Grete and her sister, who are new. The sisters have only had a couple of lessons each, starting in February the same year. Elisabeth, Christine, Anne, and Thomas are there as well. It's a puzzle to Odd André because he has to make sure that during one day, Helene, Grete, and Grete's sister learn enough of the tunes that the others know so that they can all participate in ensemble playing. First, he needs to think about how to create a good set list for the concert the day after. Second, he wants to follow up on each pupil and the individual learning processes they are in for the time being. Thus, he wants to use the concert for different individual purposes as well.

On the rehearsal, they start working with You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To. *Since Anne has great control of playing walking lines on this, it's wise to use that tune to teach Grete the* rubato *and tempo shifts on the heads of tunes, Odd André thinks. He shows her what she can do when she has a drum solo. They then work with the head of the tune and to play it* rubato. *He tells Grete to wait with the steady groove until they settle the tempo. Bass solo, then sax solo. Grete is confused. It's supposed to be a drum break, but she stops and asks 'What am I supposed to do?' Odd André is annoyed: 'You don't stop, we stop, you play'. Grete says 'Oh, okay'. At the end of the tune Grete is confused again, and she keeps the time when it is supposed to be* rubato. *Odd André stops the whole thing without saying anything, starts it again, and signalises with his hand that she is supposed to slow down. After they have finished the song, he goes over to her and explains calmly what was supposed to happen. Then he asks Elisabeth on piano to join the drums, bass, and saxophone, but it turns out that she does not know* You'd Be So Nice *after all. Therefore, Odd André decides to spend time going through the chords with her. He worries that the other children get tired and 'demoralised' when having to wait so long. Elisabeth knows* What Is This Thing Called Love *better, so Odd*

André decides to use this song to rehearse the tempo shifts with Grete. But then, Anne doesn't know that one. In order to show Grete what she needs to learn for the concert, Odd André needs the bass player to be confident and to be able to play with flow.

Grete is frustrated, yet Odd André has stopped explaining to her what she is supposed to do. Grete hasn't learned the codes yet. The other children know what it means to get a nod from Odd André – then they have to solo. Grete stops. She doesn't get that.

On the next day, I arrive at Caféteatret, the concert venue, around ten in the morning, when the sound check starts. All the kids are there, and Grete's parent comes over to me. They tell me that her sister is nervous before the concert, but that Grete is okay; she had had butterflies in her stomach before the rehearsal yesterday, but she came home and expressed that it had been fantastic. Grete had said that the other children were so nice and that it was so much fun to play together. On the concert, Grete plays drums on You'd Be So Nice *and* Like Someone in Love. *She is right in place in all the tempo shifts and solos on trading fours. When Christine plays the head* rubato *at the end, Grete plays free on the drum-set*.

This vignette illustrates some of the challenges involved when rigging ensemble situations, especially with the ambitious set of goals Odd André wanted to achieve through these situations. A main topic for this chapter has been the importance of the shared repertoire of songs for the purpose of facilitating interplay between children of different ages, levels, instruments, and backgrounds. In this vignette, we saw the complications that occurred when the pianist Elisabeth and the bassist Anne didn't know the same tunes that Odd André had planned to use for practising the basic form templates with Grete. Since Grete was new to ensemble playing, Odd André had counted on a steady bassist to play with, which meant that ideally, Anne should have been confident on the tune chosen for this purpose. However, using the tune Anne knew best led to a dilemma, because that would have excluded Elisabeth who knew another tune better.

It is important to note the attention that was given to individual children and what they could master, even in an ensemble situation. Odd André took his time to go through the chords on a tune with Elisabeth, despite the fact that the others were waiting. This priority may seem inefficient given how many children were present, but it is motivated by Odd André's view that for the children to get anything out of playing tunes in a format with a full band, they have to *know* what they are supposed to be doing. Individual confidence is a precondition for playing together, especially when the shared repertoire functions as a binder between children of different levels. Moreover, *what* the more experienced children know is used to scaffold the teaching of the less experienced, such as in the cases of Elisabeth and Anne, and Anne and Grete. For this deliberate use of distribution of knowledge (Hutchins 1992) to work, what repertoire the different children are working with at a given time needs to be adjusted to what others are working with for the benefit of the collective. In other words, the shared repertoire constitutes a complex 'building structure' for learning and participation, and when parts of it fails, it will

potentially limit the learning opportunities for the individual, at least the way Odd André had planned them.

An ethical paradox

Another important issue demonstrated by this vignette is the deliberate choice of non-verbal approach in his teaching, which I outlined in Chapter 6. After the rehearsal session, I asked Odd André why he only explained things verbally to begin with, and then stopped doing it despite the frustration the child must have felt.

> I could easily have told her what to do. I don't want them to be afraid, and I think maybe she was a little. Sometimes I think it's alright to be slightly worried, so that you are forced to figure out . . . I don't want a terror regime, of course. I don't intentionally avoid reassuring them, and I wished I had done that sooner than I did. But I also prefer not having to tell them that 'now it's your turn to have a solo, look, everyone has stopped, they are looking at you'. I know I can be a little . . . that they feel pressured. But I want them to figure it out, that they get used to think for themselves, to be awake, it has to do with being present in the situation. If I am always explaining everything, they will never become independent. I feel bad about having made her insecure, but on the other hand, I think that is why the others aren't insecure, because they have been through that hard process. But it is important to find that balance, that it's not too uncomfortable, and I want to avoid exposing their insecurity in plenary. It's difficult.

According to Odd André, steering the child to pick up cues and their meanings by themselves is the best way to enhance independence in the children – an independence that is necessary for a performing improvising musician: to be able to pick up unexpected changes quickly and to immediately act musically on them.

In situations like the ones referred to here, where he deliberately put pressure on the children, Odd André's teaching behaviour could come across as unnecessarily hard to an observer. He was aware of this, and although he was concerned about finding a balance, he also expressed the view that a certain amount of stress should be tolerated and was perhaps even needed as a driver for the child to solve the problem. He thought that the fact that the more experienced students seemed less insecure and more independent was a sign that the 'throwing-in-deep-water' approach worked as intended, in general.

Though this may well be the case, I want to underscore that it is important to not take it for granted. Children are able to develop sophisticated knowledge about how to behave according to a significant adult's expectations (Rogoff 1990). This involves an ability to hide what they think is difficult (Blix 2012), if they perceive that by showing it they will lose face or disappoint the adult. Thus, Odd André's perception may stem from the fact that the less confident pupils had learned to hide it. In Chapter 6, I addressed the ethical problem where adults potentially leave too

much responsibility for solving a problem to a child without providing tools to solve it. Then the child may be learning to fear failure instead of how to persist to solve a particular musical problem.

This leads to yet another point. Developing independence, which was the goal of the non-verbal teaching approach, is closely connected with the development of critical thinking. Such development is enhanced if the environment avoids expecting 'right and wrong' answers or solutions, and instead rewards unexpected ideas and children's own solutions (Wright and Kannellopoulos 2010). Sanctions when giving wrong responses may hamper the development of critical thinking because they incite fear of failure. The exposure in the group and tough comments from Odd André potentially had this function, and as such, I suggest that they may instead hamper the child's development of independence.

Nevertheless, these objections do not by default rule out a consideration of Odd André's point. The reactions from children should not be ignored, even if they hold sources of error as mentioned above. For example, the parent's report about Grete's feelings after the rehearsal supports that it had been a positive learning experience. My notes from the concert showed that she did master the matters that had been practised. If some form of resistance, and even pressure, lifts the children to achievements in a quicker way than what they had managed without the pressure, then I suggest it is fair to assume that they will experience mastery quicker than without the pressure, and the question is whether that is worth it. Performing on stage in a pleasurable social context (together with other, 'nice children'), mastering what you were struggling with the day before, and getting applause from the audience can be a powerful experience – a sense of mastery that accumulates with the repeated opportunities to perform. Although ethical considerations should be at the core of any pedagogical practice that involves children in particular, it is worth thinking about whether this process would have come about without the pressure. If not, a pedagogy that moves too slowly and challenges children to a lesser degree (as was the case on one parent's description of the SMPA, mentioned in Chapter 3) may also be ethically problematic, if it denies children of powerful experiences of mastery.

Notes

1 See information on the venue's homepage: www.barnekunst.no/en/
2 See information on the venue's homepage: www.sentralen.no/
3 See information on the venue's homepage: http://nordicblacktheatre.no/tag/cafeteatret/
4 See information on the venue's homepage: https://kafe-haerverk.com/
5 Since the Fabula seminar is described in detail, I will not provide the place where it was held.
6 The same passage of that interview is referred to in Chapter 5, related to children's autonomy and agency in choice of repertoire.

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8 Creative music pedagogy
Authenticity and childhood

A dominating discourse within music education research is one that criticises traditional instrumental tuition for being too score- and teacher-oriented. The alternative is a democratic, student-centred music education which highlights autonomy (Kannellopoulos and Wright 2012) and authenticity (Green 2008). Within the 'wave' of informal music in research and pedagogy (Allsup and Olson 2012), one highlights an instrumental tuition that allows children to learn self-chosen music by ear from recordings in a self-directed manner (Georgii-Hemming and Westwall 2012; Green 2012) and gives room for creativity throughout the learning processes (Green 2012). Creative music pedagogy often rejects idiomatic material from 'adult' music in favour of fostering children's authentic exploration with their own material (Beegle 2010; Hickey 2009). In this chapter, I discuss a common criticism of Improbasen specifically and jazz improvisation tuition in general. It is often claimed that jazz is an adult genre, and so the children at Improbasen are not playing *their own* music, and hence, they are not authentic.

Creative music pedagogy

Materials and strategies

Studies on children learning to improvise have mainly concentrated on the creative musical activities in the context of the compulsory school classroom, which is often oriented towards approaches from free or non-idiomatic improvisation (Barrett 2012; Beegle 2010; Borgo 2007; Hickey 2009). The rationale behind this orientation is that children are able to be creative and construct meaning with even simple tools at hand (Burnard 2000; Burnard and Kuo 2016), and that access to creative activities should be easily available to all children and not dependent on previous music knowledge and skills (Burnard 2000). Further, the free approach allows for a focus on communicative, interactive aspects of the improvisation process rather than technical mastery (Clarke 2012).

Several scholars hold forth that one of the main purposes underpinning teachers' choices of materials and procedures is to create possibilities for creative freedom. This represents a potential dilemma, as Beegle (2010, 235) notes: 'Finding a balance between freedom of choice and useful constraints is key to inspiring and

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maintaining children's creative musical growth'. She further suggests that if the purpose is to promote originality in the creative products of children, avoiding formal structures in the presented material or task 'may inspire more creative improvisational responses' (op. cit.). Hickey (2009) strongly advocates the view that expressive freedom and a student-centred pedagogy should be at the core in improvisation activity in schools. This leads her to the conclusion that teaching idiomatic improvisation, such as jazz, should be avoided, since learning the objective skills needed for this kind of improvisation is associated with a teacher-centred transmission approach, where the student freedom she advocates is inhibited. In addition to expressive freedom, another educational purpose with improvisation activity may be to learn specific musical concepts or skills (Beegle 2010; Rebne and Sætre 2019). If the goal of the activity is to learn concepts or skills through improvisation, 'teachers need to consider prompts and structural constraints that will direct the children's attention to the concept or skill at hand', Beegle (2010, 236) states.

The research I have cited here addresses the compulsory school classroom, and given the differences in conditions in this context compared to voluntary instrumental tuition, the cited literature may have limited relevance for my discussion. But the issues they point to, such as the continuum between freedom and constraints, developing subjective expression versus learning musical idioms and skills, and student-centred versus teacher-centred curriculum, are influential on more general discourses about creative music pedagogy regardless of context, as I will show throughout this chapter.

Jazz and the natural child

In Chapter 3, I quoted a parent who asked '*whether the goal [for the children at Improbasen] is to learn the adult music as this is, or if it is a goal that they can sound like children*'. This is an important problem to address, and the statement points to differences between adult and children's music, where jazz, in this case, is constructed as adults music. Furthermore, the statement reveals the view that there is a tension between playing 'adult music' and children-like ways of sounding.

The first question, whether jazz is adult music, can be exemplified by an incident after an instrument lesson, retold to me by Odd André (which I mentioned in a note in Chapter 4). A pupil's grandfather came to pick them up, but he had arrived a little bit early, which made him sit and listen for a while. After the lesson was over, the grandfather started to whistle the melody of the tune the child had been learning, as if to show 'I know this tune, too!'. Odd André told me he had been quick in interrupting the whistling by starting a conversation about something else with the grandfather.

'I didn't want the child to notice that their grandfather also knew that song. I try desperately to hide the truth from the children, that this is old music. I don't want that idea to get into their heads', he said as a joke, laughing. Because if the child's *grandparent* could know a tune, the child would understand how old the music was. Although wrapped up as a joke, the incident was an example of a concern Odd

André had, namely that he was aware of a general perception of jazz as 'old' music, being for adults, and thus not suitable for children. As a teacher whose professional practice is based on the opposite – *making* jazz suitable for children – this idea is of course potentially devastating. As I interpreted him, he feared that his pupils would lose motivation if they were introduced to the thought that jazz was for adults and thus not something children could possibly identify with.

The second question, what it means to 'sound like children' or to 'play like children', ties in with another episode I encountered. During my observation period, adults would sometimes approach me to share their opinions about Improbasen and its activity. Once, a relative of one of the children did so. They told me that they were impressed with the level of playing the children achieved in a short time, but they were also hesitant to call their playing creative. They pointed to how children when creative had a playfulness to them, and that the children at Improbasen looked too serious when they were playing to possibly feel playful and happy.

I am not going to discuss whether the relative's observation was true or representative for the children's general mood when they played at Improbasen.[1] The point here is that the opinion expressed by the relative is reflected in research. Play is considered a vital force in children's development, and Niland (2009, 19) suggests that a child-centred music curriculum allows for play on children's own terms, in order to 'support the natural learning and development'. This view is supported by Wassrin (2019), who highlights the multi-expressive and spontaneous nature of very young children's engagement with music. As a contrast to child-centred curriculum that allows spontaneous play, Niland (2009) criticises music instrumental tuition directed at beginners for often being too skill oriented, and thus inhibiting the possibilities for a play-centred curriculum.

Both Niland's (2009) and Wassrin's (2019) studies are directed at children in preschool age. However, ideas of playfulness and 'naturalness' as connected constituents of childhood have a wider significance. The notion of the natural, playing child is a trope that may be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1762 (1911)) novel *Emile*, and Ellen Key's (1909) *The Century of the Child*. The latter became central in constructing the Western idea of childhood. Vestad (2014, 268) provides accounts of children's subject positions in discourses of music in everyday life and refers to two dichotomous positions, where one is about children who play instruments and have '"to practice every day" and the other is about children who are "playing outside and engaging with children's games"'. The first discourse corresponds with Niland's critique of skill-oriented instrumental tuition, in its depiction of 'having to practice every day' as inhibiting to children and impeding their natural inclination to play instead. The notion of 'the natural child [who plays] outside' (Vestad 2014, 269) is a powerful one in Scandinavian countries, according to Vestad.

Both questions addressed above, regarding whether jazz is for children and what constitutes children's creative expressions, relate to dimensions of *authenticity*, a notion I will unpack in the next section.

Being true to the music or oneself?

The concert in Helsingborg, Sweden

The concert starts. I am thinking about tempo. Thomas, Reina, and Sachi are playing Confirmation. *None of them manage to get all the notes in the melody in place, still they play in medium up-tempo swing. The beat is not stopping. Thus, they are operating in an 'adult' setting, they have to hang on and stretch their abilities to a maximum (or beyond . . .). The ensemble context is totally authentic. What does this do? Maybe it's not a problem that they can't play the melody line. They play within an authentic framework, and in this situation they learn about the frame. Which is: follow the beat, it's supposed to swing, and* Confirmation *swings best in this tempo. Then turn-taking with improvisations. They get to experience the musical context*.

This was from a field note written at a concert on a tour with Norwegian, Japanese, Austrian, Swedish, and Danish children, accounted for in Chapter 7. It describes the three pupils playing the be-bop tune *Confirmation* by Charlie Parker in a tempo that was too fast for any of them to master all the notes in the melody line. Regardless, they were told to perform it on a concert. From one point of view, one could say that the chosen repertoire was too difficult for the pupils. The situation deprived the children of authenticity in terms of mastery and autonomous decision making (since the task was imposed on them by the teacher). Thus, they could not be authentic in the situation. In the field note, I reflected on authenticity from another point of view, namely that the musical *context* was authentic: *Confirmation* is usually played in a medium up-tempo, common to the be-bop tradition. The situation had authentic features if interpreted in terms of *the music*.

This aspect points to an understanding of authenticity as more complex. Schippers (2006) problematises the notion of authenticity from the perspective of music traditions and reduces what can be seen as several dimensions of authenticity to two main perspectives. One of them is when we emphasise preserving the original context of the music in a teaching situation, a 'music-in-culture'-perspective, or *context* authenticity (Hung and Chen 2007). The other places an emphasis on the experience and vitality of expression among the persons involved, a 'true-to-oneself'-perspective (Schippers 2006), or *subjective authenticity* (Fleeson and Wilt 2010). Subjective authenticity presupposes sense of ownership (Scully 2015).

To take the position that improvisation activity should be taught with an emphasis on children's own initiatives and agency may be seen as prioritising the subjective dimension of authenticity. On the other hand, the priority of context authenticity was expressed in an interview with a parent, quoted in Chapter 3, who said: 'It must be fun to feel that you actually play jazz, when you play jazz'.

However, to enable a person to be acting like one's 'true self', they have to experience a bridge between subject and context authenticity. Coming back to the performance of *Confirmation*, I questioned how authentic the pupils could possibly feel when they never managed to play the head right; the 'vitality of expression'

(Schippers 2006, 339) was missing in my perception, due to what I heard as a technical struggle.

However, several aspects are in play when it comes to the subjective experience. Thomas's parent told me that when it came to his practising of *Confirmation*, 'It works in a strange way. It is way too difficult for him, but he has gained a sort of ownership to it'. When talking to Thomas himself, he told me that *Confirmation* was one of his favourite tunes. Firstly, this was one of the few songs that he enjoyed learning the scales for, which he attributed to the *variation* (of scales and shifting keys) it had. He also said that 'On *Confirmation*, there is so much more to remember [than on *Blues Walk*]. And a lot more notes. So that makes it more fun'. When I asked him about what made practising fun, he started talking about *Confirmation* again. He said: 'If I feel that I become better during practise, it is immediately more fun. . . . For example, a while ago, I remember practising really hard on *Confirmation*, and the day after I played almost all of it perfectly'. Here, the inherent challenge for Thomas, that he *almost* managed something that was slightly too difficult, seems to be the factor that gave him the sense of mastery and ownership that his parent talked about.

The case of Fabula

A weekend seminar on improvisation for invited teachers and pupils from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark was held in a Scandinavian town. Each country participated with two teachers, and the teachers selected children from their own music schools.[2] Attendees from Norway were Odd André, Hana (the assistant piano teacher at Improbasen), voluntary pupils from Improbasen, and three parents. The content and program for the seminar were planned in advance by all the teachers in collaboration. However, the teachers had disagreements about the content and pedagogical approach, where the Norwegian and Swedish teachers wanted to introduce jazz tunes, and the Danish teachers primarily wanted to play free improvisation, using conduction, graphic scores, and programmatic approaches such as images of animals in a jungle. Hence, it was decided that they could teach different approaches in their various groups, and then they would swap the groups in order for the children to have varied experiences. Nevertheless, the Danish teachers decided that the topic and name of the seminar would be an imaginative jungle animal called *Fabula*.

On the first evening of the Fabula seminar weekend, all the national groups and their respective teachers were presenting themselves for each other at a concert. Christine, Elisabeth, Sara, Anne, and Odd André formed the last group. They played *Stella by Starlight* and *Fables of Faubus* with improvised transitions.[3] Odd André did not announce the songs to the audience or to the children, he just started. The children figured out on the spot which songs they were performing by listening to Odd André's playing. In my field notes, I had written: 'They play exceptionally well, in my opinion'.

After the concert, all the teachers had a meeting. They commented on how good the concert had been with all the varied contributions from the different groups.

All the teachers took turns to comment on their experience of the workshop and the concert that day. I had written the following in my field notes afterwards: 'No one comments on the last group. When it is Odd André's turn to talk about his workshop activity during the day, one of the Danish teachers stands up to get a beer from the fridge'. The atmosphere in the teacher room was tense and highlighted what later showed itself as a conflict between different pedagogical positions.

Vignette: the Fabula Forest

This morning there is a plenary session in the school's concert hall. It came about as a suggestion from Odd André at the teachers' meeting yesterday, that Søren and Preben, the Danish teachers, could work with their approach in the large group so that other teachers could take out individual pupils to work with them.[4] *When I arrive, the large group has worked for 30 minutes. Thomas, a Swedish teacher, is sitting near the Swedish children, ready to assist. Hana is observing. She tells me she thinks the children looked happy to be together on the stage. I agree. I think it is a valuable experience, to do this together. The children's faces look expectant and smiling.*

Søren and Preben are working with the large group. Their focus is on dynamics and instrumentations/sound combination in such a big orchestra, and on the participation of everyone by playing something simple for all to master (which they told me after the session). The sax group has been assigned the task to create a melodic motif together based on the notes F, A, and B (an abbreviation for the project Fabula), and they have now returned with the result. Preben is instructing the children to play a rhythm ostinato that he told me afterwards he had made up on the spot, and then he works on having the children follow signs for playing loud and soft. The teachers are very energetic and positive and walk around at a fast pace in the big orchestra, using large body gestures and loud voices to communicate to the children (who are making noise by talking and playing). They talk a lot during their instruction. For a while, I perceive what is happening as chaotic – the situation seems to be devoid of direction and guidance. Thomas is quietly translating to the Swedish children and asks Preben to speak slower.[5] *To me, it seems as if the teachers are working impulsively, except with the rehearsed elements, which are the rhythm ostinato, the sax melody motif, and the bass ostinato. The teachers have also made a graphic score, which they spend some time explaining to the children. The bass ostinato is an ascending scale movement from the root to the fifth scale degree in D major, played in fourths. The intention here was that the bass players could play on open strings.*

The sax melody is played by different instruments in different keys, since it has not been transposed. The teachers say: 'Just play the melody as it is written, non-transposed, it sounds awesome'. Søren told me afterwards that this is a concept from Ornette Coleman, called harmolodics: '[Y]ou get an exciting harmony by not transposing. And it sounded really good!' Preben filled in: 'Yes, you have the sixth in the saxes and the ninth in the trumpets'.

Preben notes that they are beginning to run out of time. Now the actual playing time gets more condensed for the pupils. The music is starting to flow, very ostinato-based. Søren and Preben are standing in front of the big orchestra. Preben is conducting. Søren plays the rhythm ostinato on claves.

There is now a break. When they are all back in, they run through the whole piece. Søren and Preben are instructing and bring up a lot of suggestions: 'For example, the basses can repeat notes, one octave higher, and guitarists can also play an octave up to increase the intensity. You can also play a little solo when it is supposed to build up. Can the trombones be an elephant? The trumpets can make owl sounds'. After the session, the teachers explained their approach to me: 'The children have a lot of freedom within certain frames'.

In a longer break, I overhear another music teacher from the local SMPA asking Søren and Preben how the seminar was going. They say that despite of some discrepancies among the teachers, they were good, and so were the children. They want to make sure that all the children have a nice experience: 'We had a fantastic session this morning, where all the children got to play together, just have fun. We believe all of them benefited enormously from that'.

The same evening, I am talking with the parents who are accompanying the Norwegian children on this trip. One of them has a lot on their mind about the joint session earlier. They think that it was good to give all the children at the seminar a common experience. However, the children's faces had looked quite tired after a while. The parent has also been thinking that their own daughter probably had found it quite boring to sit and play the same ostinato over and over again, 'when she can play her instrument, and quite advanced things, too'. The parent wonders what it really must be like for a child to sit inside that big orchestra – it is probably easy for adults to evaluate such a project as fantastic when so many children are improvising together, but for a child to sit inside that and have assigned very limited and humdrum tasks to them – that might be something else, the parent says. It was probably experienced as a lot of waiting.

After dinner, the teachers hang out in the teacher office, and I am sitting next to Søren. He asks me about the research project I am conducting and is eager to tell me his opinions based on observations of performances these couple of days. He says that to him, it looks as if Odd André wants to show himself when he plays with the children. He questions the use of jazz, which is adult music, and the choice of difficult and complex music such as the tune Stella by Starlight *with its difficult chord progression. I then ask Søren about his teaching practice and pedagogical approach. He teaches creative music-making processes for children a lot and is concerned with making them listen to sounds around them and listen for sounds they can create by themselves. He likes to use repertoire and elements that children can understand and feel an ownership to, on their terms – he always teaches 'at eye height', as he puts it. He does not want to impose 'adult music' onto children, and I sense that he is implicitly directing this as a criticism to Odd André's approach.*

Creative music pedagogy

I have included the notes from the talks I had with both the parent and with Søren, to add reflections from different positions to my description of the event itself, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the event. The following elements can be withdrawn as crystallised characteristics of the event described in *Vignette: The Fabula Forest*:

- the musical building stones or elements are, or are intended to be, created by the children themselves
- the structure is often made up by ostinatos that are repeated for a longer time
- the activity can take place in large groups of participants, and the emphasis is on the group as one entity and not on the individual
- the adults may sometimes take on a role where gestures and voice are used to create a positive atmosphere with humour and to model playfulness
- the adults are improvising the course of events

Several of these aspects are in line with recommendations from the literature referred to at the beginning of this chapter, for example avoiding pre-created material and complex structures (Beegle 2010; Hickey 2009). In the Fabula session, the emphasis on subjective authenticity through expressive freedom was apparent. In order to achieve this, the intention is to avoid pre-existing structures and to tone down music-in-culture (Schippers 2006), or what Hickey (2009) frames as idiomatic approaches to improvisation. However, in the Fabula session, both subjective and context authenticity were drawn upon, despite the insistence on avoiding pre-existing frameworks. For example, when the teachers referred to Ornette Coleman's concept of harmolodics, they drew on a cultural-historical context (and thus, validation) for not transposing the melodic motif to different instruments. Further, the use of riffs as a foundation for group improvisation has a long tradition in jazz, for example in Count Basie's music (Monson 1999).

In terms of the teacher role, Abramo and Reynolds (2015) recommend a flexible and improvisational teaching approach when teaching creative activities. In the session described above, the impulsive teacher behaviour seemed to stem from a lack of planning of the progression and pedagogical development. In my perception, this led to a situation where the teachers were unaware of the distribution of time between the talking of the adults and the playing of the children. Regarding the group focus, given that there were around 40 children in action at the same time, it is noteworthy how the teachers could state with such certainty that all of them had fun and that all of them had 'benefited enormously'. The tendency from adults to assume that children are having fun because many are participating in the same activity at the same time was addressed and questioned by the parent I talked to. When they tried to look at the event from their daughter's perspective within the big orchestra, they wondered if it had been more boring than fun to play the ostinato the whole session.

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, literature on creative group activities often argues that simple structures and child-created materials allow children to make music together without having to have the same level of skills – without even having any instrumental skills at all. However, the question is whether the same approach is appropriate as an entrance to creative music making for children who do have basic technical skills, a rhythmic vocabulary, and structural knowledge of chords and scales. As the viewpoint of the cited parent indicates, a potential lack of challenge for the individual child may contribute to a humdrum experience.

I also want to point to the issue of agency and activity. From the Danish teachers' perspective – and especially Søren, who expanded on this in a conversation – a central value is that the children are the ones that should be active and take initiatives during creative activities to make sure they experience creative freedom. I interpret this comment as indicating that initiatives that come from the child ensure that the child experiences ownership. This is what I understood as teaching improvisation 'at the eye height' of the children, emphasising the subjective dimension of authenticity. From my observations of this event, the teachers were participating actively on stage. In addition to moving around, they talked a lot to explain the ideas. To regulate the children's activity and the order of elements and direction of the piece, they also steered by using visual signs and musical support. The result was, as far as I could observe, that the teachers were *the most* active persons in the room, an impression confirmed by the parent I talked to. The amount of verbal explanation caused the children to wait, and they were not the ones steering the course of musical events. The piece did consist of self-made elements, but it was the teachers who decided the rhythm, the bass riffs, and the notes for the sax melody.

The fact that I am problematising the potential experience of individual children and the degree of activity on the children versus the teachers is not to say that I think the session was without musical and pedagogical value. I assume that the teachers' moment-to-moment decisions of actively guiding the children through the joint piece with 40 children of different levels were what they considered functional in order to make it work. I also acknowledge that participants within any situation are better judges of what the situation demands of them than an observer. Nevertheless, I do wish to point to a discrepancy between pedagogical values and practice, at least in this accounted situation. I do not, however, wish to pin this discrepancy on these individual teachers, but rather relate it to the bigger discourse of the idealised 'creative music pedagogy'.

Taking down the scaffold

During the third day of the Fabula weekend, one of the organisers come over to Odd André, seemingly after having had a discussion among other organisers: 'It is desirable that the pupils perform what they have practised without the teachers playing along'. Odd André says 'Yes, okay, fine'. Afterwards I ask him how he

planned to relate to the instruction, to which he then replies that he is not, he is 'definitely' going to play with the children.

The same afternoon all the group were presenting what they had practised. My field notes say:

> *I listen the two groups led by the two Norwegian teachers, and one led by the Swedish teachers. Olle, one of the Swedish teachers, plays trumpet with his pupils. Odd André's group is the last one. In this session, his group had more inexperienced children in it than the others, and I can sense a sign of relief among the adults in the audience (parents and other instructors) since it sounds so good. Odd André's sensitive comping on the free intro to* Autumn Leaves *lifts the brush playing from the drummer Julie (who has played the drums for three months), and the total sound of them playing together is so beautiful. It made me think of a comment he had when we previously talked about teachers playing along or not: 'Under no circumstance am I letting down Veronica, who almost can't play the saxophone, when she plays her solo'.*
>
> *Later that evening, we have had dinner and I am standing outside talking with Odd André. I bring up how his group had sounded, despite it consisting mostly of beginners:*
>
> GURO: *About having the scaffold for them, and when to take it down. We have talked this over lots of times.*
> ODD ANDRÉ: *Yes, and I have also said this many times: I do take it down. When they have become independent enough.*

Vignette: you'd be so nice to come home to

On the second day of the seminar, Christine on sax, Elisabeth on piano, Anne on bass, and Sara on drums are alone during a break in the classroom where they have their workshops. I go in to them, and apparently they are having fun with swapping instruments. Eventually they decide to play a tune together, which is You'd Be So Nice to Come To. *It takes some time for them to figure out how to start it.*

ANNE [IN A LOUD VOICE]: *we start with plinky-plonky, and you [pointing at Christine] start on the melody. Then you have to be really clear when you start with the melody.*
ELISABETH: *But don't make it last too long.*
SARA: *Okay, I start.*
CHRISTINE: *All right, okay*

Sara strikes a couple of times on the edge of the cymbal and plays a roll on the snare drum. Elisabeth plays chromatic trills, and Christine plays diatonic trills in G minor and melodic runs on the G harmonic minor scale. Anne repeats some fast attacks on a low G, while Sara, Elisabeth, and Christine continue with the

textures. Christine is gradually centring around a G with approach notes (A and F). Elisabeth and Anne reacts by centring around a G as well, and Sara continues to play dense textures around the drum set. Christine now holds a long G, and the others are waiting, looking at her. Christine plays a slow pick-up for the melody theme: G, A, B♭. When she reaches the B♭, Anne plays a low G, and Elisabeth lays down a chord with the notes B♭, F♯ and A (which is a $Gm^{maj7(9)}$ with omitted root and fifth) with her left hand. Since it is clear that Christine has now started on the melody, Anne and Elisabeth lay down chord roots and chords following Christine's rubato tempo and phrasing. Sara plays tremolos on the tam, snare, and cymbals, moving around, creating textures with different sounds. Elisabeth joins Sara's tremolos by playing trills on chord notes on the piano. After the first half of the tune is played through, Christine starts the pick-up for the second half in a quicker motion. Anne responds, ready to play in a faster, set tempo, but Sara continues with texture. Anne quickly looks over at Sara, stops the walking bass movement she started on, looking back at Christine, smiling. Sara watches Anne. Elisabeth has stopped playing. On the melody pick-up, Christine is firm that she has started playing in tempo, and Anne confirms this by starting the walking bass movement again. This time Sara is with them, and starts with swing groove. Elisabeth starts to play again, and lays down chords for every shifts. After the head is played through, Christine takes a solo, and then it's Elisabeth on the second chorus. When Elisabeth's chorus is done, Christine stops and says: 'Let's take 4–4'. Elisabeth does not want to, but Christine just tells her firmly 'Yes' and gets ready with her saxophone. They play from the top, but Sara doesn't seem to have noticed the message about trading fours from Christine.

CHRISTINE: *[laughs]*
SARA: *What?! [throws her arms with the sticks out to the side]*
CHRISTINE: *[laughing] Drum solo!*
ANNE: *[smiles, looks back and forth between Christine and Sara]*
SARA: *[smiling]: Ahaaa . . .*
CHRISTINE: *[impatiently, but still smiling]: Just play, then*.

After two bars of Sara's solo, Anne plucks a string, initiating to start, but Sara continues with her 16ths, so Anne draws her hand back. She looks from Sara to Christine and to Elisabeth, laughing silently and shaking her head, throwing her hands out. Christine smiles back but looks at Elisabeth. After four bars, Elisabeth is the one landing with the Fm^7 chord in bar five. Christine and Anne follows Elisabeth, who starts to solo. After one bar, Sara stops playing, and then Anne stops, too. She looks at Sara, nodding in time as if to say: 'get ready'. Sara gets in with swing groove. After they finish the tune with the head at the end, Anne says:

'That was total chaos with the drum solo!'
CHRISTINE: *Yes, but we have never tried it before, so . . .*
ANNE: *We haven't?*
CHRISTINE: *Not without Odd André*.

The next day the girls are clearly proud of this session and use the breaks to jam some more on their own. They also decide to perform You'd Be So Nice *on the evening performance without Odd André, which they do.*

Autonomous music making as authentic music making?

In Chapters 6 and 7, I described how Odd André uses his playing along on the keyboard for a variety of scaffolding purposes. His playing along ensures the time, the swing groove, the chord progression, and thus the form. This way the musical context is held together as a secure building for the child's (sometimes) insecure climbing steps through her improvised solo. The organisers' request for not playing along came on the third day, which indicated that the viewpoint was shared by several people who had had it up to debate. In the context of the tensions between the Danish teachers and Odd André, this request appeared as signifying a deeper conflict of values. The Danish teachers perceived his pedagogy as steering the children's creativity too much, and over the heads of children. Thus, his playing along became the very representation of a pedagogical ideology they found problematic, in my interpretation. This indicates a pedagogical ideology where children's art making should be performed independently without interference from adults. Thus, their expressions will be more authentic *as expressions from children*. The Danish teachers criticised Odd André for using musical frameworks that did not give much creative scope to the children. The argument from Odd André's perspective is that children who are beginners on their instruments are better able to improvise solos on tunes like *Moanin'* or *Autumn Leaves* when scaffolded by a 'mature' harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment, and that their learning experience and sense of mastery will be greater. The counter-argument is just as obvious: if so, then choose a different content, a different repertoire, a different set-up – whatever adjustments are needed to enable the children to master it without help from an adult.

The question is whether the Fabula approach was less directive. One aspect is the amount of instructions. In the Fabula session the teaching contained a lot of verbal instructions and a lot of talk before the children were given time to try out the tasks. This is in contrast to Odd André's approach, where he gives short instructions if any. Often, he counts off almost without explaining anything about what he expects the child to do, leaving it for the them to figure it out. Thus, *verbal* scaffolding is almost absent in Odd André's teaching, whereas there was a lot of it in the Fabula session. In my view, both teacher roles are best seen as different ways of scaffolding and supporting the children's music making, given different contexts and conditions. As stated before, I don't criticise the teachers' (more or less aware) choice of taking active positions, only the discrepancy between words and action and the apparent double standard they set for Odd André. His way of scaffolding was perceived as putting himself in the centre, and thus unwanted, whereas the perhaps unplanned and thus unconscious active behaviour on stage went not criticised, while their intention was to 'give the children a lot of freedom'.

With both these positions as a backdrop, it is important to note that the four pupils who were jamming on their own managed to both negotiate rehearsals and perform the tune on their own. One critique against too much teacher support during playing is if this support makes the children dependent on always playing with their teacher. The children would probably not have been able to do what they did without the teacher-scaffolded *training* they had received. Nevertheless, their ability to draw on a shared repertoire of form and codes, as well as their social agency in instructing each other in what to do, point to their proximal development ahead and show that their training had empowered them enough to perform independently.

Jazz as creative framework for children

In descriptions of jazz as adult music, too 'old' for children or too complex, I suggest that there are several assumptions at play that may appear inherently inconsistent. First of all, the view that jazz repertoire from the 1930–1980 period is too old to use in instrumental tuition for children is somewhat peculiar as long as the most prevailing repertoire in instrumental tuition is still classical music from 1600–1900.

Moreover, the opinion that jazz is adult music may stem from the idea that using jazz tunes as framework for improvisation is too complex for children. For example, the Danish teacher Søren reacted to the use of *Stella by Starlight*, since it had such a complex chord progression. Interestingly, he said this after actually having observed three pupils, Anne, Christine, and Elisabeth, manage to play on the chord progression of *Stella by Starlight* on the first performance at the Fabula seminar. In their performance, they did not fall out of the form and they knew which keys to improvise within. How can it then be said that it was 'too difficult'? What does difficult mean in this context, if it does not refer to the ability to play it? In the context of creative music making, what may have been meant was that he didn't assume that the children were able to *understand* what they were doing: to ascribe meaning to the action – or to be 'true to oneself', from the perspective of subjective authenticity. Further, they may not be able to use the framework of a tune like *Stella* with a higher degree of creative freedom, a position that has been highlighted in literature on creative music making (Beegle 2010; Hickey 2009; Niland 2009). There are several aspects to consider in response to these potential opinions.

Firstly, I have shown through the reflections of children in Chapter 4 that they experience strong senses of meaning in relation to the repertoire they are playing. It is also apparent in their playing that they understand many facets of what improvising together in a jazz context is 'about', such as form, turn-taking, and entering and exiting a solo in a meaningful way. For example, Sara on drums is able to play free sound textures on the drum set in rubato for a whole chorus. Then, on the first beat of the next chorus she is right in place, starting a firm swing groove. Sometimes she does this on the cue from Odd André, but often without any cue: 'I just hear it', as she told me.

In the session where Elisabeth, Anne, Sara, and Christine were jamming without a teacher on *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To*, their verbal utterances, gestures, and musical operations showed that they understood and mastered (from collaborative negotiation) possibilities for creating form. They also mastered cueing changes and turn-taking between soloists.

Secondly, what *kind* of meaning children ascribe to improvising on jazz standards is another aspect. Most likely, children do not experience the same facets of meaning as an adult musician. For example, when Thomas played *Confirmation*, his motivation (and thus, the meaningfulness of playing it for him) was connected to the challenge and enjoyment of having to memorise all the different keys it has. Often, the fact that improvising for the children at Improbasen is learned to be 'about' playing scale notes in the right key, is an aspect that is discharged in adults' evaluations of these children's creative expressions. This opinion is expressed in statements I have heard from both musicians and researchers, such as 'she doesn't improvise, because she plays the same rhythm each time she has a solo' (music education researcher), and 'she doesn't improvise, because she only plays scalic phrases and never bigger intervals or nice melodies' (musician).

In countering such views, I will turn to Christine, who made an interesting comparison of the different approaches to improvisation she had experienced. In an interview a year after Fabula, I was showing her video recordings of various performances she had participated in. I came to mention the Fabula session, to which she spontaneously burst out: 'Oh, do you have that joint number?' I told her that I didn't film it due to privacy concerns for all the other children, but her enthusiasm prompted me to ask her about it.

CHRISTINE: That was my favourite, because it was so different from what we usually do.

GURO: Yes, tell me, what was so interesting?

CHRISTINE: Well, first, it was the fact that it was us, the saxophonists, who had made the main theme of the . . . 'song', that's not right to say, but for that thing. I thought that was cool. And, this is also jazz, but it is not what I associate with jazz, since I don't play that kind of jazz. And then I seriously felt that I was in the jungle . . . There was so much. . . . Normally I would have thought that it was noisy, if I hadn't been interested in jazz, but as it turned out it made me feel really happy to play on it. It was just really fun to play. Something completely different from the songs that I think are really nice, that I play myself. It was nothing like that at all, it was really cool to just play something different from what I am used to.

GURO: If you were to explain to me the main difference between this way of working with improvisation, and the way you work with it with Odd André?

CHRISTINE: The way we worked at the Fabula seminar wasn't really improvisation . . . until . . . we didn't improvise, everybody knew what to play, only that we didn't play in the same key. But on that particular thing, there wasn't a real melody. Only a little theme-thing, a short melody. But here, there are

real songs. Proper melodies and a chord progression. And I don't use a written score, I learn it in my head. And we didn't do that at Fabula.

GURO: So it wasn't really improvisation?
CHRISTINE: No. [laughs]
GURO: But you think it has value?
CHRISTINE: Yes.
GURO: It was fun, and a nice experience?
CHRISTINE: It was more free, and lovely.

In the light of viewpoints about what is and what is not improvisation, it is interesting to look at how the 13-year old Christine herself made meaning of the Fabula session, when comparing it with the teaching she was used to from Improbasen. Christine was clear about not perceiving the music as improvised. She grounded this on the fact that the elements such as the riffs and the graphic score were rehearsed. She did not mention that other dimensions such as that the dynamics and orchestrations were improvised – maybe because she perceived them as improvised by the teachers through conduction. Another interesting aspect she connected to degrees of improvisation was the use of written material in the Fabula session, compared to learning the material by ear – or 'in the head', as she put it – at Improbasen. Both the location of improvised decision making in the teachers as opposed to in the pupils and the use of external and visual aids to organise a piece as opposed to embodied memorisation by ear demonstrate different degrees in experienced ownership. From this perspective, subjective authenticity was lacking in the Fabula session and perceived as strong at Improbasen, in the way I interpret Christine. However, it is important to note that this did not reduce her positive experience with the Fabula session, and she also described it as 'free', whether she felt that it was the music or her music making that were free. Barrett (2012) challenges taken-for-granted views about what creativity is by pointing to how conceptions of creativity are socially constructed, and suggests that we investigate the normative values that may underpin such views. In this case, it is clear that adult notions of what is free, creative, and 'really' improvised and simultaneously positively value loaded are potentially different from what children perceive as free, creative, and positively loaded.

Just as much as adults' perceptions of creativity can be seen as socially constructed (Barrett 2012), children's conceptions may simply stem from what they have been taught to be improvisation. The fact that they may repeat the same rhythm, that they play scalic movements and not larger intervals when they improvise, is precisely because they are in early phases of a learning process within a particular improvisation context. The solutions they choose when they improvise are illustrations of the inherent challenges of learning to improvise: learning a vocabulary and using it with variations and learning a framework and being able to make musical choices within it. There is a contradiction embedded in the adult perception; these vocabularies or frameworks are characterised as being too complex for children. Simultaneously, when children make use of the same vocabularies and frameworks – thus showing that they are not too complex, the children are

perceived as inauthentic improvisers. I claim that the contrary is the case; when children repeat phrases, improvise from within scale notes, or are just *almost* able to play the head of *Confirmation*, they are operating within the continuum of process and context (Hung and Chen 2007), and thus they are authentic *as children in the middle of a learning process*. Further, when these children express how much they love to improvise and to play jazz the way they have been taught, adults' definition of their activity as inauthentic may in fact be diminishing of their experience. A final remark in this chapter from an interview with Christine may illustrate this point:

GURO: I think it's rather common to think that jazz is mostly for adults and not for children, because it's too complicated. What do you say to that?

CHRISTINE: I think I manage to play what I do quite well! I think it would be much harder for an adult to learn what I am learning, because children learn much easier, like language and stuff.

Notes

1 It should also be added that the relative mostly had observed the children in performance situations.
2 Further details about the seminar and its participants are excluded for confidentiality.
3 *Fables of Faubus* is a composition by Charles Mingus. Odd André chose to rehearse it specifically for the *Fabula* seminar, which may be seen as Odd André's contribution to the seminar topic given the similarity in the titles. However, the song was one of Mingus's most political songs, written as a protest against Arkansas governor Orval E. Faubus, who tried to prevent the integration of nine African American teenagers at a high school for white people. The song had biting, satirical lyrics, which Colombia Records initially denied Mingus to include when the song was recorded for the album *Mingus Ah Um* (1959) (Wikipedia/Fables of Faubus). Thus, the song connotes exclusion and censorship on several levels. Although Odd André never explicitly confirmed this to me (even if I asked), the choice of song may have been a subtle comment on the fact that he felt jazz was treated as less valuable in preparing for the seminar.
4 All names on persons other than Odd André are pseudonyms.
5 The Scandinavian languages Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish are so similar that Scandinavian people will normally understand spoken language from one of the other countries. However, children without much experience in hearing the other languages may find it difficult.

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9 Children, jazz, and learning to improvise

In this chapter, I aim to summarise the main results of the study of Improbasen and use various counter-perspectives from jazz research, jazz education, and fiction literature to discuss what Improbasen may teach us about instrumental tuition for children, about jazz education, and about learning to improvise.

Developing musicianship through guided participation

During the late phase of finishing this book, I had the pleasure of chairing a conference symposium on improvisation pedagogy with an international panel of researchers.[1] Professor Emeritus John Kratus was in the panel.[2] In discussing the nature and purpose of improvisation and improvisation in music education, he drew an analogy:

> I know that the non-native English speakers in this room can *think* in English. Do you know how I know that? Because I hear that you can improvise in English when you speak. It's the same with music. Children who can improvise on their instruments have learned to *think in music*.[3]

This simple analogy is illustrative of what perhaps is one of the main answers to the initial research question of this study: what characterises the teaching and learning at Improbasen. McPherson and Hallam (2016) claim that there is not an automatic transfer between developing different domains of music performance. Each aspect has to be trained separately and in combination. They distinguish between the visual, aural, and creative aspects of performance, and suggest that the visual aspects typically dominate a formal learning situation, with its centring around the musical score. This suggestion indicates a score-based teaching culture, which is often found in Western classical music tuition, and we should therefore be careful in seeing the authors' claim as a generalisation of how integrated musicianship may develop in other genre cultures. Nevertheless, their point makes it even more interesting to look at learning and development among the children at Improbasen. Here, skills are not taught separately, for then to be combined. The children learn to physically master a musical instrument integrated with learning tunes and musical structures comprised of chords and scales, by ear. Simultaneously,

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psycho-motoric and aural skills are used to create music from the beginning: to shape musical thoughts, integrated with developing the procedural capacity to express these thoughts. Hence, with Kratus's analogy in mind, they learn to *think in music*. In language, simply reproducing fixed and imitated phrases does not enable us to *speak*. Speaking requires that we try to articulate what we think in the moment. To think in music therefore goes beyond internalised representations of music and aural skills; it requires that we *articulate our own musical thoughts*. I claim that it is the immediate improvisation with the musical material that enables the children to develop this ability, to think in music.

As I have shown, this process happens within musical contexts, and with an implicit character. Even explicit musical content is aimed at being taught and acquired in implicit ways; emphasising the non-verbal, experiential, and interactive. The instrumental, musical, and creative learning is repeatedly rehearsed in social situations, where the less experienced can play with more experienced pupils. Central to facilitating this interplay is the shared repertoire of tunes, instrumental templates, form templates, and socio-musical codes for interplay. Despite what may seem a narrow selection of tunes and rigid frameworks for improvisation, it is the fact that this repertoire is shared and relatively fixed that makes the gradually more advanced participation in the activity (Lave and Wenger 1991) possible – across borders of language and culture. Wright and Kannellopoulos (2010, 82–83) point to the importance of implicit learning in music, where improvisation is seen as an 'exemplary case' of learning:

> Through the perspective of situated cognition and the importance it gives to leaving things implicit, we could arrive at a solid conceptualisation of the value of improvisation as a mode of learning. Thus its value as a learning resource might be formulated in the following manner: creating a context where implicitness is deeply valued, recognised but not analytically pursued, leading to sustained engagement with the workings of musical structuring and communication from the 'inside'.

This 'structuring and communication from the inside' is a precise characterisation of how children's learning experiences are contextualised in their lessons. The musical context provided by Odd André's piano playing creates an intersubjective space (Wertsch 2007) that allows the children to participate in a conversational framework (Monson 1996), constituted by the groove and form. This comping sometimes contains musical 'commentaries' that may go beyond the child's competence, such as extensions and alterations of chords and complex rhythmic fills. Wertsch (2007, 188) sees this differentiated degree of participation as important for learning:

> Not only may it be possible, but it may be desirable for students to say and do things that seem to extend beyond their level of understanding. This is because such a possibility means that they can enter into a basic form of

> intersubjectivity with more experienced teachers and experts and thereby leverage their way up through increasing levels of expertise. What might at first appear to be a failure to communicate is often the key to entering a new area of instruction.

Thus, the child may not yet be able to respond to such subtle conversational elements that professional musicians constantly draw on in improvised interplay (Monson 1996), nor do they have the awareness and control of micro-timing against an underlying groove that professionals have (Iyer 2002). However, in a Vygotskian sense, this musical context forms a kind of zone of proximal development for their musicianship, where they are guided to take part in a knowledge domain that they have not yet learned to master: the intersubjective space of jazz improvisation.

The need for binaries in jazz education discourse

In Chapter 1, I accounted for persisting tensions in research and practices of jazz and improvised music. These tensions pertain to whether one emphasises embodied groove (Iyer 2002) and learning by ear or theory of jazz harmony (Prouty 2005); whether improvisation is characterised as idiomatic or non-idiomatic (Bailey 1992); negotiations of collectivity and individuality, tradition and innovation, structure and freedom (Berliner 1994); and technicist or liberal approaches to improvisation (Parsonage, Fadnes, and Taylor 2007). According to Whyton (2006, 68), 'binary oppositions govern both the theory and practice of jazz at every level, whether . . . championing the cerebral/corporeal, masculine/feminine, recorded/live; polarities are present throughout'. The binary between an Afrological or Eurological understanding of jazz and improvised music, as Lewis (2004) originally framed it, has a parallel in binary perceptions of North American and European jazz education. From a European perspective, North American jazz education is assumed to be mainstream, 'using bebop as its centrepiece' (Whyton 2006, 68), whereas European jazz education is assumed to be more pluralistic, looser, and individually oriented (ibid.).

In my study of Scandinavian jazz students' practising practices (Johansen 2014, 2016), I recognised similar binaries as accounted for above, in that two distinct learning positions among students were salient. One position was to valorise individual technical skills, craftsmanship, and structured practice habits. From the other position, students emphasised the value of a collective jamming culture and the development of a unique sound. I also found examples where the students characterised the other position in negative terms. I suggested that such dichotomous and stereotypical positions as learners were internalised and perceived

> as two rigid options one has to choose between, . . . [and] that the act of reproducing dichotomies can be seen as a socio-cultural feature of the jazz tradition in itself. Thus, it is possible that not only the 'content' of the mentioned learning narratives is internalized, but the controversy between them as well (Johansen 2014, 49).

I agree with Whyton (2006, 68) when he claims that 'generalisations such as these create an unhealthy environment, where musicians, academics and enthusiasts feel they have to take sides or make a choice'. First, binaries create a narrowed and reductive view of reality. Second, there is a risk of ascribing opposite poles with implicit and unquestioned values (Barrett 2012). This is the case, for example, if free improvisation (without pre-existing structures from traditions) is seen as inherently more creative than improvising by the use of jazz theory and standards. If we feel inclined to 'take a side', it is easy to miss out on valuable, productive, and meaningful practices and resources that can contribute in developing the teaching and learning of jazz and improvisation. However, by 'development' I do not refer to the goal of searching for consensus or 'the best' jazz and improvisation pedagogy, which would be to 'take sides', but to expand the repertoire of approaches and pedagogies and to acknowledge that their value and meaningfulness depends on local contexts and how various approaches are put into practice. If we claim that improvisation can potentially nurture the ability to respect difference and diversity (Kannellopoulos 2015; Nicholls 2012; Mwamba and Johansen In press, 2020), we should cherish difference and diversity in jazz and improvisation education as well.

What is being critiqued?

As I pointed to in Chapter 1, there needs to be a balance between learning objective skills and individual freedom. I presented Tanggaard's (2014) theory on situated creativity, which emphasises the need for a reciprocal relationship between immersion in existing material and tradition, and exploration of material and tradition. Inherent in this kind of relationship is the resistance in the material. However, such resistance is not the same as when knowledge becomes a barrier for creating something new (ibid.). For example, codified skills and theoretical, structural knowledge can represent externally exercised power and control for the individual student and may hinder their own play and exploration. The chord-scale approach to learning jazz improvisation may have a similar effect, if it is taught in a too directive and rule-based way to give any explorational scope.

It is perhaps this power/control aspect and lack of diversity in 'traditional' (whatever that means), institutionalised jazz education that has led to another critique, that against a traditionalist approach to teaching jazz. Mantie (2008, 7) criticises the North American practices of pre-university level jazz education, where schools tend to teach jazz in big bands and from a score-centred approach:

> What sort of identity or social membership is constructed when one's learning involves participating in a practice that does not, for all intents and purposes, exist outside the confines of educational institutions? What message is communicated when improvisation is largely or completely neglected in favour of 'polishing' the sound of orchestrated passages? . . . Viewed from the perspective of situated learning, it appears current practices in jazz education help to produce individuals who do not see themselves as part of an in-the-world

> community. In addition, those who are exposed to these practices experience a society that has no reason to value, or means to negotiate, improvisational practices. . . . [T]hose with power are responsible for the current paradigm of jazz education – one that certainly validates the name of 'jazz,' but one that manifests itself *in practice* in the dubious 'swinging concert bands' that pass for jazz education. So whose interests are served? Certainly not the students, who fail to develop the kinds of musical skills and understandings that might allow them to better negotiate the musical landscape of the twenty-first century.

Mantie here describes a reactionary and conservative jazz pedagogy, and it seems to be the lack of learning opportunities in improvisation that he criticises. Learning the 'musical skills and understandings' to be able to participate in improvisational practices could be a way in for students to see themselves as part of a larger, global musical landscape, Mantie argues. This argument allows for a more nuanced understanding of the problem of jazz education, and it gives interesting perspectives to the teaching practice at Improbasen.

A community of children in jazz

What kind of social membership may the children at Improbasen develop through what they experience? As I have addressed from different angles, they are rarely exposed to socio-cultural context in terms of jazz history or knowledge of performers. When discussing sources for learning jazz phrasing (Chapter 6), I showed that neither written scores nor recordings were used as teaching materials to a significant degree. Odd André considered this a deficiency in terms of learning jazz styles, but he also saw this as a strength in terms of the children's development of improvisation skills. I pointed to how they *improvise* their ways through learning; they did not *copy*. Further, the connotations of jazz being 'adult' or old music led Odd André to not wanting to contextualise jazz practices to the children (Chapter 8) for the sake of enhancing children's identification with the music. I have also suggested (Chapter 3) that this may 'protect' children from encountering the gendered and exclusionary features of jazz in terms of normative gender stereotypes. They are not socialised into the part of jazz culture that is hierarchical and admiration-oriented towards idols such as 'Parker, Garbarek, and God', to paraphrase Odd André. From this perspective, they perhaps do *not* participate in the larger world of the jazz community.

From another perspective, which is the basic theoretical underpinning of this book, they are guided and socialised into an established socio-historical practice (Rogoff 1990) 'from the inside' (Wright and Kannellopoulos 2010), through their *activity*. What they do learn are the 'boundary objects' (Wenger 1998, 105) that tie them in with such a practice. They learn 'skills and understandings' (Mantie 2008, 7) for improvisation such as basic structures of how notes are organised in traditional jazz; how jazz tunes are shaped in interplay in the context of form and groove; social codes and cues for role and turn taking; and

that having a shared repertoire creates opportunities for community building across borders.

Improvising children: between naturalised childhood and talent accounts

In the context of discourses on children's creativity, similar binaries as in jazz education discourses can be found, such as tensions between childhood and adult culture; spontaneity versus rule-guided behaviour; playfulness versus seriousness; and authenticity ('natural', from 'within') versus learned skills ('imposed', from the 'outside'). As I mentioned in relation to binary positions within jazz practice and research, when we create polarities, we risk ascribing one end of the pole as inherently good and the other as inherently bad. This may in turn influence what we think of as acceptable roles and behaviours from children playing instruments. For example, with regard to children's culture, we may see children's spontaneous creative expressions as positive expressions of children's nature and learned skills associated with the adult world as oppressions of the same nature.

Imposing naturalised ideals on children?

In Chapter 8, I referred to Vestad (2014), who described the naturalised ideal of 'the playing child' as a strong normative notion in Norway. I connected this to an utterance by a relative in the audience on one of Improbasen's concerts, who was sceptical about the creative value of the children's improvising, since they looked so serious and non-playful. Vestad refers to the sociologist Jens Qvortrup (2001, in Vestad 2014), who criticises an idealisation of children's culture stemming from this naturalised view. When we think of 'the child as a "noble savage" – an outsider who has not been corrupted by culture and society' (Vestad 2014, 257), their cultural products become 'sacred': 'somehow better than other parts of culture' (op. cit.).

To add to this discussion, I wish to refer to a passage in the novel *T. Singer* by Norwegian author Dag Solstad (1999). Singer is the main character, a single man who has just lost his partner and mother of nine-year-old Isabella. After the partner's death, Singer is left to take care of Isabella, and Singer worries about her emotional state. He makes the following observation and wonders what to make of it:

> Isabella was an introverted child, but nevertheless she did normal children things, . . . as if they were the most natural things in the world. She liked to jump up and down on the mattress in the bed in Singer's room, which she did quite often, and she did it for a long time, all by herself. She also liked to hide in closets, and then be found, and to balance on kerbs on her silent way to school. But even when she did these things, which are so natural to children, they were done in a serious way, in stark contrast to what playing really should

> express. . . . When children jump up and down on a mattress it is usually accompanied by joyful whines. But Isabella jumped up and down in silence, with a thoughtful expression on her face. She lacked childish expression, even though she was a child as good as any.
>
> (178, my translation from Norwegian).

Singer further reflects on the absence of 'ingenious devotion to the fact that they are children' (180, my translation), which, when the 'devotion to be a child' is replaced with a withheld seriousness, makes an adult worried. He wonders whether Isabella just knows how to behave correctly as a child, 'as if she constantly tried to copy something she understood should leave her in rapture?' (179, my translation).

In this description, Singer's interpretation of Isabella's state is based on expectations of how the child is supposed to express her 'childishness', in a manner that resembles the stereotype of 'the noble savage'. 'Joyful whines' and laughter become markers of naturalised child behaviour. Singer's worry about Isabella not being okay *as a child* is not relieved, even if she apparently does child-like things; it is her serious expression when she does them that causes his worry. As an adult, not only does he carry expectations of child-like behaviour; he suspects that even the child knows what is expected of her, internalised from the external world, and tries to act accordingly. As readers, we wonder if Isabella goes into Singer's room and jumps on his bed to avoid disappointing him.

With such strong ideals about authentic childhood found in Western discourses, there is a danger that this ideal view of how children should act is primarily *adult*. Thus, the ideal becomes normative, and, as the example of Singer and Isabella illustrates in Solstad' fiction, children themselves are not unaffected by it. Paradoxically, the naturalised view of authentic childhood may then turn into a script for acceptable child behaviour, imposed from above.

How the talent account shapes acceptable 'children-as-musicians'

The phenomenon of children playing instruments is often surrounded by discourses of 'talent development', as I accounted for in Chapter 3. Instrumental music education is often concerned with how it in the best way can offer specialised tuition to help children achieve high levels of technical proficiency on their instruments. Sometimes this agenda seems to be justified by treating early tuition first of all as preparation for specialised higher music education (Stabell 2018).

In Chapters 1 and 8, I referred to some common reactions to Improbasen's activity, when, for example, music education researchers or professional musicians or teachers questioned the pedagogy. They often referred to perceived lacks in the children's playing as signs of deficiencies in the pedagogy, such as repetitions and scalic movements in children's phrases that resemble scale exercises. Observations of serious-looking children could be interpreted as a lack of playfulness, and therefore indicating that playing jazz was less suited for children.

However, to avoid oversimplifying the reception of children performing jazz, we can take a look at the celebration in the public domain of child prodigies in jazz. One example is the pianist Joey Alexander from Indonesia, who at the age of 13 has recorded two albums, is nominated for a Grammy award, and is, according to *Time Magazine*, 'a celebrated jazz artist'.[4] Another example is Angelina Jordan from Norway, who at the age of 8 won the competition *Norske talenter [Norway's got talent]* produced for TV in 2014, for her renditions of songs made well-known by Billie Holiday. She is described as a 'vocal sensation', and, at the age of 11, has performed in the US and Japan.[5] The celebration and admiration such children evoke in the general public may be due to the notion that high-level performance simply intrigues people (Clinkenbeard 1998). When such performances occur in unusual and unexpected cases, such as in children playing jazz, it confirms the socially constructed narrative about 'giftedness' (O'Connor 2012) in popular psychology (Sloboda 1996).

An important interpretive frame in the cases of Alexander and Jordan is that they are both depicted as self-driven from an early age, with a strong inner urge for learning this particular music. The processes that have led them to acquiring the skills they have come across as effortless and uninfluenced by the direction of adults. This seems to be the picture that is conveyed to the public through media in the cases of child prodigies.

In most cases, however, when children are trying to learn, their learning processes contain phases (at least part of the time) of non-mastery and struggle (McPherson, Davidson, and Evans 2016). Adults, either as parents or teachers, expect and accept these phases and often have a broad range of strategies to help the children with the stamina to endure such phases (Rogoff 1990) and to continue practising (McPherson, Davidson, and Evans 2016).

It might be the case that in domains where children's participation is more unusual, adults can more easily accept children' achievements when we don't have to witness how they also struggle. In other words, their activity may be more acceptable if they can fit into the constructed category of 'gifted'. Although the children at Improbasen show rapid development and impressive understanding of what they are doing, they don't necessarily show the extraordinary level as Alexander and Jordan. They struggle with their time feel, their technical playing is clumsy, and they repeat phrases – these may be seen as expressions of insufficient jazz playing or inauthentic creativity from a critical adult perspective. We can compare this with children of the same age playing football, who also may struggle, fall over, and miss the ball. In the first case, we may take the children's imperfect playing as signs of a failed pedagogy, for example by holding children's playing against a standard of spontaneous and child-invented creative music. In the latter case, adults may ascribe the children's clumsiness to the fact that the children are in a learning stage, and they may (therefore) even find it cute.

If adults discredit a certain pedagogy on the basis of their perception of children's playing as not extraordinary; if we find it difficult to listen to children's jazz if it does not sound like professionals' jazz; if we need to hear 'giftedness' in

order to accept that they play jazz; then I suggest this reveals an elitist and highly problematic view of music education for children.

The future of instrumental tuition for children

What should the future of music pedagogy directed at children in general, and specifically instrumental tuition for beginners, hold? I argue, based on this study, that improvisation should be a central activity in music pedagogy generally, and instrumental tuition in particular. Dimensions of improvisation such as creativity and spontaneity have been recognised as important twenty-first-century skills, since they show relevance for critical reflection, collaborative abilities, and responsible citizenship (Trilling and Fadel 2009; Bellanca and Brandt 2010). Further, improvisation can strengthen participants' agency (Johansen et al. 2019). Since learning an instrument is an important leisure activity for many children around the world, instrumental tuition can be seen as an opportunity to reach many children with mastery experiences in improvisation.

However, the neoliberal notion of creativity as instrumental for developing abilities such as flexibility and adjustability in a 'growing marketisation of the educational system' (Tanggaard 2014, 107) is problematic (Kannellopoulos 2015). Tanggaard (2014) calls for an attention to *learning processes:* 'what kind of learning is vital and how learning processes actually lead to more creativity' (ibid., 108). That improvising affords important opportunities to learn central concepts in music has been addressed by several previous studies (Campbell 2009; MacGlone and MacDonald 2017; Rebne and Sætre 2019). As I argued in the first section of this chapter, learning to improvise enables children to develop the ability to *think in music* (with reference to a statement by John Kratus). It is not the integration of psycho-motor operations and the non-verbal, oral approach as such which enable this alone. Rather, it is the immediate improvisation in the learning situation, analogous to how children learn to speak a language: they improvise with the bits and fragments they pick up in order to master the language (Berkowitz 2010). Therefore, in line with Sawyer (2007), I claim it is high time that improvisation changes its position from being considered as a side-dish in instrumental tuition and rarely taught to becoming the core subject matter.

Here, I would like to return to the already mentioned tension between creating music within a tradition or genre, and creating music without pre-existing material except produced by the children themselves. The view that creative learning in children should be disentangled from existing material with cultural-historic connotations in the adult world is, I argue, based on a false dichotomy. Building on Tanggaard's (2014) model of situated creativity, I propose instead that children may benefit in the long run from acquiring cultural-historic knowledge and skills, because such knowledge may provide direction and creative resistance (Engeström 2005, Tanggaard 2014) in the children´s development on a long-term basis (Sawyer 2012). When we look at Improbasen as example, I suggest that the contradiction between cultural-historic knowledge and skills (such as chord-scale theory in jazz)

and the way creativity is often addressed in literature on free improvisation can be overcome by the following pedagogical means: a primarily musical, non-verbal teacher–pupil communication; musical scaffolding through the adult's participatory music making; and setting up collaborative situations for various degrees of peripheral participation. Participation at Improbasen provides children with rich opportunities to play and perform together, mediated by a common repertoire that crosses countries, languages, and cultures. If these pedagogical means intersect in ways that enhance pupils' agency and experiences of mastery, then participating in a mature and improvisatory practice such as jazz may contribute to meaningful and empowering experiences in collaborative music making and a sense of belonging across time and place.

Further, I wish to counter discourses on authentic childhood and 'the noble savage' by arguing that it isn't necessarily inauthentic, undemocratic, or a 'colonisation of childhood' (Vucic 2017) to offer children musical material and experiences they probably would not have discovered without adult guidance. On the contrary, I argue that competent and experienced adults have a responsibility to provide children with tools for participating in established practices (Rogoff 1990), including musical ones. Avoiding idiomatic traditions and established techniques is not necessarily a fruitful path for creative music education. We may then deny children of opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills they can build upon over many years, rather than taking part in separate 'happenings' with limited application outside the immediate situation. Hence, the democratic ideal might have become anti-democratic by failing to empower children to take part in established, sociohistorical, and mature practices.

As indicated by Mantie (2008), discussions of improvisation belong in a wider societal context. Improvised musical interaction has previously been addressed as a metaphor for participation in social spaces and communities (Monson 1996). However, the aforementioned neoliberalist, utilitarian discourse of creativity as an entrepreneurial value may be counterproductive towards this goal. According to Kannellopoulos (2015, 319), 'neoliberalist ideals that promote a highly individualist vision of humans as flexible, competitive entrepreneurs who are always in a position to invest in creativity . . . in profitable, nonlinear ways' are in stark contrast to seeing 'creative music education as a site of engagement with social justice' (op. cit.). This perspective calls us to be aware of how we justify creative music activities. Learning to improvise holds a potential for 'welcoming difference as a means for cultivating personal freedom and democratic participation' (op. cit.), and thus, as counteracting xenophobia, for promoting inclusiveness and appreciation of individual and cultural differences (Nicholls 2012). In this respect, Improbasen is a particular interesting example with its international outreach, which creates possibilities for children from different continents to meet and interact without another common language than musical improvisation, as well as for the responsibility it takes for working against the social injustice of gender-based inequities in the jazz field.

Improbasen is not a flawless practice, and features such as a high demand on children, the high degree of teacher direction, and using a relatively limited

repertoire of improvisational materials are all aspects that I have discussed critically. However, to preserve a nuanced and non-binary understanding, a critical examination must also involve considering the reasons and reasoning behind those aspects. Improbasen's particular practice is shaped by local conditions and priorities, as other practices elsewhere will be shaped by other conditions and priorities. As indicated previously, I don't see it as a goal to define and delineate the 'one' ideal jazz and improvisation pedagogy – that would mean to exert unnecessary control and suppression of local variation and inhibit diversity and pluralism in jazz and improvisation education. With this in mind, I hope practitioners and researchers in music education will read this book and consider what Improbasen has to offer with regard to developing musicianship, empowering children with tools and opportunities for musical communication across borders, and its work towards a better gender balance in the jazz field.

I will let one of the parents have the ending of this chapter. After having pointed to some issues they were critical about, they added:

> I also want to say about the pedagogy, the way I see it, that joy of creating that you want children to experience . . . I get tears in my eyes when I think about how he does that. Because it's special. I played in a big band when I was young, and I never learned to *live* in the improvisations. He is so concrete, and then gives them so much freedom. So that they are not ridden by fear when they improvise, they understand that they are co-creators, and that they have to listen. You asked about the challenges [with Improbasen], but this is what makes up for that. To me, it is the fact that music is joy, and that it is an everyday thing.

Notes

1 The 11th Research in Music Education Conference (RIME), Bath Spa, UK, 23–26. April, 2019.
2 John Kratus is Professor Emeritus of Music Education at Michigan State University, US.
3 The quote is rendered from my memory.
4 Jenkins, Nash. *The master of the keys*. http://time.com/collection-post/4518781/joey-alexander-next-generation-leaders/
5 Johansen, Øystein David. *Norske Angelina (11) fant tonen med Norah Jones [Norwegian Angelina (11) tuned in with Norah Jones*. www.vg.no/rampelys/norske-angelina-11-fant-tonen-med-norah-jones/a/23985366/

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