

STANISŁAW MONIUSZKO ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN GDAŃSK

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
(Artistic Work with its description)

Prepared as part of the doctoral education at the Doctoral School
Of the Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk
Of the procedure for the award of the academic doctoral degree
in the field of arts, in the artistic discipline of music

Supervisor

Prof. dr. hab. Leszek Kułakowski

Gdansk 2026

ARTISTIC WORK

Title of the work:

Live in Kalisz, Hymns - vol. II Hymns of Power [Pieśni - vol. II Pieśni Mocy]

Performed by:

Dominik Kisiel - piano

Program:

Dominik Kisiel - improvised and re-improvised compositions:

1. *Announcement [Zapowiedź]*
2. *Introduction [Wprowadzenie]*
3. *Home [Dom]*
4. *Discovering Vibrations [Odkrywanie Wibracji]*
5. *Path [Ścieżka]*
6. *Power [Moc]*
7. *Love II [Miłość II]*

Duration: 55'50"

Recording location: Auditorium of the Culture and Art Center in Kalisz

Recording date: November 21, 2025

Mixing and mastering: Mateusz Banasiuk

Cover design: Dominik Kisiel

Release date: May 2026

Label: Vibrant Records

DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTISTIC WORK

**Abstraction, intentionality, polystylistics - techniques for shaping
artistic expression in modern jazz piano**

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Introduction

This work is devoted to the artistic concept of my album *Live in Kalisz, Hymns - vol. II Hymns of Power* and presents a proposal for an action research variant in the field of musical arts -*artistic research*¹(or more precisely, according to Angelika Boeckart *practice-based research*²) and focuses on the analysis of the creative process in the field of solo jazz piano, as well as an attempt to characterize it on the basis of a musical experiment (performing improvisation *live*) – as a consequence, an attempt to outline the techniques of artistic expression in modern jazz piano. The goal of this type of research is to generate knowledge specific to artistic practice, stemming from and inextricably linked to creative activities. In this way, the artistic process becomes an integral part of the research, where practice and theoretical reflection intertwine within a single project.

The main goal of this dissertation is to present contemporary styles of solo piano improvisation, placing it within a musical and philosophical framework, and to create an original method for entering the world of improvisation. The tangible result of this method is an experiment in the preparation, intention, and use of elements of a musical work in the field of improvisation.³, where assumptions and intentions⁴are inseparable and synonymous with the process of composing while improvising. The main thesis is to define techniques for shaping the artistic expression of modern jazz piano and to explore the importance of improvisation in artistic expression – a description of the tools of artistic expression based on one's own music album.

The scope of the research includes an analysis of the art of performance in the field of autonomous (improvised) piano music, based on original musical material

¹ defined as creative processes of a systematic nature in which artistic practice is both a research tool and a source of knowledge (Hannula, M., Suoranta, J., & Vadén, T. *Artistic research methodology: Narrative, power and the public*. Peter Lang 2-14, s. 4)

² Boeck A. & Tepe P., *What is Artistic Research? w/k-Between Science & Art Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.55597/e6798>, 2021, s. 1

³Bertinetto, A., *Aesthetics of improvisation*, Brill Fink 2022, s. 1-2

⁴The inspiration to treat intention as an important component, both symbolic and form-creating, in improvisation came from the results of Masaru Emoto's research on water - Emoto, M. *Water - the image of life energy*, Medium 2008, s. 75-107

created as part of the dissertation. The main focus of the research is on performance practice and the mental preparation of the composer.⁵ Spontaneous creation becomes the basic form of artistic expression and compositional method.⁶, whose musical material is created in real time⁷, where the creative idea and its implementation occur simultaneously – as a result of the free but intentional action of the performer. Paul Berliner says about this:

From the outset of each performance, improvisers enter an artificial world of time in which reactions to the unfolding events of their tales must be immediate. Furthermore, the consequences of their actions are irreversible. Amid the dynamic display of imagined fleeting images and impulses-entrancing sounds and vibrant feelings, dancing shapes and kinetic gestures, theoretical symbols and perceptive commentaries-improvisers extend the logic of previous phrases, as ever-emerging figures on the periphery of their vision encroach upon and supplant those in performance. Soloists reflect on past events with breathtaking speed, while constantly pushing forward to explore the implications of new outgrowths of ideas that demand their attention. Ultimately, to journey over musical avenues of one's own design, thinking in motion and creating art on the edge of certainty and surprise, is to be "very alive, absolutely caught up in the moment. Few experiences are more deeply fulfilling for improvisers than the compelling, all-absorbing nature of composing music in performance.

This is a vivid and apt description of what happens to an improviser during a live performance before an audience. In the context of this dissertation, it reveals the nature of creative expression and captures the dynamism and spontaneity of this type of musical experience. It also speaks to the great satisfaction of remaining in a creative state, but its fleeting nature presents certain difficulties in defining it. In this case, I have undertaken such an attempt, which stems from my artistic and scientific needs. It is essentially subjective, but strives for a certain objectivity based on artistic or scientific facts and, supported by literature, generates conclusions defining a general picture of creative methods.

The research in this work assumes (takes) the form of a musical experiment based on an original method, the central element and creative technique of which is improvisation, and the external effect (among others) - an improvised album for solo

⁵Lehmann, A. C., Sloboda, J. A., & Woody, R. H..*Psychology for Musicians: Understanding and Acquiring the Skills*, Oxford 2007, s. 19-23

⁶Orlow, T., *Improvisation: The Art of Spontaneity*, Values in Music 4, 2012, pp. 195-204

⁷ Berliner, P., *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994, s. 219-220.

piano, including a live recording of improvised (and re-improvised) compositions.⁸⁾ creating a coherent sonic and conceptual narrative—a unity of form, expression, and intention. The experiment encompasses the observation of artistic activities, practical preparation, the use of elements of a musical work, documentation of the process, and analysis of musical sessions, the course of which encompasses technical aspects of instrumental performance as well as subjective and spiritual experiences. The album is the subject of this dissertation as an artistic work illustrating my reflections as an artist—a jazz pianist, composing improviser, and searching creator. It constitutes part of the documentation of a larger research process and is not its ultimate goal, but rather a certain (current) stage of the project's implementation.

The concept combines three pillars - abstraction, intentionality and polystylistics - equally and inextricably linked and uniting the artistic expression in order to achieve the intended effect and present the creative method - in its essence ambiguous and undergoing constant transformation under the influence of the development of the artistic personality:

- Abstraction - metaphorically shows the dimension of performance perception in the conditions of spontaneous and undefined essence of improvisation in its metaphysical shape, as well as the creative process itself, which includes a spiritual aspect;
- Intentionality⁹- opens the way to the creation of an original theory of improvisation, which consists of entering a creative state, consciously setting intentions, looking at the performer-listener relationship in the interpretation of the equivalent sense of participation (co-creation of an improvised work) and shaping an original system of values in the experience of music;
- Polystylistics - is a reference to the tradition and history of music in general, in its entirety - an attempt to establish a dialogue with many styles and composers

⁸the reimprovisation process is restarting the improvisation process in order to recall a specific sketch, but performing it in accordance with the current state of reality - emotional state, acoustic conditions, state of mind, etc.

⁹intentional use of the term intentionality rather than intentionality - a subtle distinction between intentionality (purposefulness of actions) and intentionality (a fundamental feature of consciousness)(Searle, J. R., *The Intentionality of Intention in Action*.Cognitive Science, 4,1980, pp. 47–70, and Krokos, J.,*The three-dimensionality of intentionality*,Studies in Christian Philosophy 52(3), 2016, s. 52-66)

or creators; learning about many musical areas in a way determines and/or increases improvisational and compositional possibilities, being a mine of inspiration and tools¹⁰ for an artist constantly eager to expand his artistic horizons.

This is my own understanding and meaning of these concepts, proposed for the purposes of this work; therefore, I do not define them in a competitive manner. These concepts will be justified by the context and developed in more detail later in the dissertation. Their purpose is to provide a general outline of the foundations of the concept and contribute to artistic and scientific considerations, lending an original character to the proposed creative method.

The phenomenon of improvisation itself is nothing new, and currently exists in many different forms and concepts. Methodologically, it serves as both a tool and a subject of artistic research. According to researchers, it is both a means of creating musical material and a field of reflection on many processes—perception, intuition, and performance decisions. Bertinetto identifies four categories: emergence, presence, curiosity, and authenticity.¹¹ being the basis of the aesthetic approach. Norgaard notes that experienced improvisers do not analyze every sound consciously, but use learned and ingrained patterns or intuition¹² Monson talks about coherence through contradiction, and improvisation functions as a metaphor for hybridity.¹³ In this way, the artistic process becomes an integral part of the research, and as a whole can be described as the discovery of vibrations (my own term) - it is a specific state where music appears to the performer as a kind of potential to be read and transformed into a specific sound form, the creative intention becomes a tool to try to direct this potential, and improvisation, being a space of infinite possibilities, gives the same meaning to the path and the goal of the artistic work - the path becomes the goal in itself. This is a kind of pleonasm, but it defines what is most important in improvising - the goal itself is what happens during

¹⁰tools drawn from observing compositions (recordings, live performances or scores) and their interpretation (synthesis of experiences) and created during improvisation - adapted to current performance needs

¹¹ Bertinetto, A., *Aesthetics of improvisation*, Brill Fink 2022, s. 31-45

¹²Norgaard, M. *Descriptions of improvisational thinking by artist-level jazz musicians*, 2017, s. 32-35

¹³ Monson, I. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. University of Chicago Press, 1996 s. 214

creative playing, and the performer is fully focused on overcoming the path. The musical material is undefined, but the initial settings are defined - the intentions and technical preparation, mental and spiritual of the player.

In this context, the source of knowledge is practical conclusions that meet intentions—fulfilling them and defining the type of mental preparation of the creator so that the expression of the desire to fulfill the intentions can be seen in the artistic work itself. This focuses on the creative process—a specific musical experiment based on an original method, largely based on improvisation, which, according to Bailey,¹⁴ or Berliner¹⁵ can function as a structural mechanism of musical creation - equivalent to a written composition. It is also the result of perceiving the composition process directly or indirectly as a result of improvisation without the need for prior planning or notation, which allows for non-linear (vertical) creation¹⁶) and developing in real time¹⁷(in relation to the conducted experiment). Although in this case the act of improvisation does not presuppose a strictly defined form, in the performance practice natural formal divisions emerge, resulting from the processes of perception, memory, and the organization of the sound material.¹⁸ The concept is the result of striving to synthesize previously developed stylistic means with the search for new and unconventional forms of expression. These efforts are not aimed at reproducing existing patterns and concepts, but at consistently developing one's own performance path -which fits into the concept of individualization of artistic style¹⁹.

*

From my personal perspective, improvisation is a one-time (i.e., present) recording of a given moment through music and the reception of data from the

¹⁴ Bailey, D. *Improvisation: Its nature and practice in music*. Da Capo Press 1992, pp. 48-58

¹⁵ Berliner, P. F. *Thinking in jazz: The infinite art of improvisation*. University of Chicago Press 1994, s. 1-17

¹⁶ Kramer, J. *The Time of Music*, New York: Schirmer 1988, s. 54-65

¹⁷ Improvisation, whose long-term goal is to develop the concept of large forms in the context of contemporary jazz piano, can be understood as a special case of "real-time composition," in which the musical structure emerges in the course of performance. (Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*, London: Da Capo Press, 1992, pp. 140–142)

¹⁸ Berliner, P. F. *Thinking in jazz: The infinite art of improvisation*. University of Chicago Press 1994, s. 192–196

¹⁹ Lehmann, A. C., Sloboda, J. A., & Woody, R. H. *Psychology for Musicians: Understanding and Acquiring the Skills*, 2007, s. 7-23

surrounding world here and now (in a given moment)—a transposition of the whole into musical reality through an improvised performance of a musical work, which in my case is a solo piano act. Here, the performer's task is to constantly adapt to this type of reception—expanding their ability to observe and be attentive to subtle information and stimuli coming from the real world.

Dealing with improvised music and coming from jazz music²⁰I started organizing and performing solo improvised concerts, where the music is created here and now, live – as a form of the so-called *comprovisation* (in David Borgo²¹ i wg Danilo Perez²²) – treated as a fully-fledged creative act, equivalent to the traditionally understood compositional process. This concept (composing while improvising) can be defined as an activity in which the improviser performs and simultaneously shapes the formal structure of the work. Compositional elements such as the development of themes/motifs, form, harmonic tension and resolution, dynamics, and other features typical of composition are present in the process. The improviser not only reacts but also plans to some extent – which stems from prior knowledge, their own improvisational language, aesthetic perception, and performance intention.

In this sense, through this research, I open a discussion on the contemporary role of the jazz pianist as an artist-researcher. This is based on a created artistic work, and empirical data are drawn from the analysis of recordings by numerous improvising pianists (including Keith Jarrett), the literature on the subject, and autoethnographic reflections on performance practice. The exclusive use of original material underscores the originality of the dissertation topic and emphasizes its creative nature. This

²⁰ inspired by solo concerts, in particular those of Keith Jarrett and Brad Mehldau, and the works of Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Esbjörn Svensson, Tord Gustavsen, Lyle Mays, as well as Polish pianists - Leszek Możdżer, Mieczysław Kosz, Andrzej Dutkiewicz, and Sławomir Jaskulke (and many others)

²¹ Borgo, D. *Sync or swarm: Improvising music in a complex age*. Continuum 2005, s. 245-249

²² a term known from Danilo Perez's statement on creative improvisation, e.g. in: Romero, E., *Each Culture Has Its Own Blues: Danilo Pérez in Interview*; bopspots.com, 20/07/2020, <https://bopspots.com/en/2020/07/20/each-culture-has-its-own-blues-danilo-perez-in-interview/> [accessed 12 May 2026], and in: Harris, G. W., *Danilo Perez's Chrysalis: The Development Of An Artist*; jazzweekly.com, 19/05/2022, <https://jazzweekly.com/2022/05/danilo-perez-interview/> [accessed 12/05/2026]

understanding of the process of musical creation allows not only for the individual's artistic development but also contributes to the legacy of jazz music, particularly solo piano performance, and places it within a broader philosophical and ontological context. In my view, modern jazz piano can be defined as pianists who have been active since the 1950s. That was when Keith Jarrett began his career, far exceeding the standards of solo jazz piano performance, expanding its style and the power of its message in concert. In the context of this work, he is one of the greatest authorities and inspired me to take up the challenge of creating a large-scale improvised form that emerges during performance. Throughout this work, I will attempt to discuss my own observations regarding other solo pianists and the development of modern jazz piano, although the main topic will remain my own work, and above all, the artistic work related to this dissertation—though continually inspired by the achievements of pianists in Poland and around the world.

The aim of this dissertation is to critically analyze the adopted creative method from the perspective of artistic research theory and performance practice, as well as to document this stage of the experiment in the form of a musical album exemplifying the author's theory of improvisation and the method for entering a creative state. The results may serve as a reference point for further research on the art of jazz piano and the relationship between the compositional process and improvisation in a performance context (whether creative or re-creative).

The highest (superior) goal of the method presented in the thesis is to propose a concept of music that will aim to formulate and implement the idea of love in the sense of *agape*²³- the highest form of selfless love in its purest form, a universal bond between physical and metaphysical reality. Music serves as the primary medium for the symbolic transmission of light, unity, and spiritual truth.²⁴- as a tool for increasing personal and universal awareness. Thanks to this, I have developed my own approach, stemming directly from my own observations and what is happening in my understanding of the

²³Chmiel, J., *The biblical concept of agape as an ethical model*. Biblical and Liturgical Movement. 30. 1977, 181. 10.21906/rbl.1682. pp. 182-185

²⁴Bocheński, J.M., *Towards philosophical thinking*, Warsaw 1986, pp. 28-35

ethical and aesthetic image of music.²⁵ During improvisation, a system of values crystallized from my perception of sound, revealing the interdependencies of the human psyche in its pursuit of leaving this world a better place thanks to what it creates while perceiving reality. The system illustrates what happens within the creator during such a performance and is a general conclusion drawn from observing the creative process, observing oneself during the process.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters and a summary. These are preceded by an introduction containing reflections on the dissertation and a general overview of the reasons for developing the concept of exploring the artistic expression of modern jazz piano playing. The first chapter discusses the pianist-improviser's artistic path—the reasons and goals of his research, his methodology, and his multifaceted inspirations, including quantum mechanics. The second chapter focuses on the musical experiment and its concept, addressing performance, philosophical, and symbolic aspects, as well as the issue of intention in the creative process. It also provides an overview of research on the neurobiology of improvisation. It also presents the author's value system. The third chapter provides a detailed description of the artistic work and its reception, introducing the characteristics of modern jazz piano playing, the construction of the work's formal structure, and touches on the issue of polysitylist thinking. The summary contains a synthesis of the concepts and conclusions from the conducted experiments, and a short conclusion concludes the dissertation, also presenting the experimental findings.

There are many definitions of improvisation and publications on it or related topics. The aim of this dissertation is not to redefine improvisation itself, as its essence likely lies beyond human cognition, but rather to attempt to organize the meanings it carries in this particular case. Trying to draw this picture is a rather daunting challenge, because in the very definition *jazz* There are a growing number of meanings, and a growing area of musical activity is being absorbed in diverse forms. There is no space here to cite or attempt to discover divisions and categories in this field, but the essential

²⁵ Bertinetto, A., *Aesthetics of improvisation*, Brill Fink 2022, s. 45-55

goal will be to present a fragment of my work as a representative of modern jazz piano (if I may call myself that)—one who strives to illustrate the general direction of improvised performance in the form of a full-scale live concert, with audience participation. While seemingly standard, participation is crucial to my artistic concept as an inseparable element of the musical encounter, the musical journey, and the continuation of the sonic dimension.

In quantum physics, it is a popular statement that the observer changes the result of the experiment - this comes from the general conclusions of the theorems of quantum mechanics, where during the experiment, the tested particles behave differently when they are observed (e.g. measured, position or direction of motion determined) - as if they knew in some sense that they were being observed²⁶This inspired me to attempt to transfer this analogy to the realm of music itself, recognizing as a fact (at least artistic or symbolic) that observers of this concert experience, by their mere presence and perception, influence the final outcome, and consequently, the sounds produced by the improvising performer. I also want to demonstrate that the performer is also an observer—a recipient, and therefore all concert participants influence it equally (with the improviser having the advantage of directly influencing the music). And here, a certain responsibility of the artist's statement emerges—the responsibility to convey the truth of the message, a truth contained in the music itself—which, as I mentioned, is influenced by all participants. Thus, truth could flow directly from the participants in the improvisation, which ultimately leads to the conclusion that the music flows from them, exists within them, or perhaps the reverse—we, as humans, exist in or through the music.

And this, as it were, emerges before me, reveals itself, and reveals itself—I feel the privilege of seeing the music and, at the same time, the obligation to reveal it, for there lies something within it that allows the listener to experience themselves profoundly. It also generates the judgment that when there is intention, the performer experiences a deeper kind of experience, or communication of observations of reality, than when such intentions are absent. The symbolic vision during the process of

²⁶Lukasik A. *Philosophical issues of quantum mechanics*, UMCS Publishing House 2017, p. 29

exploration is the discovery of musical cards, paths—to arrange them in pursuit of the maximum return to self-building, growth, and love.²⁷—an attempt to create a complete universal message of unity in love. The guiding idea also becomes an attempt to bring the participants of the improvisation into a state of mind where they can experience the absolute of music.²⁸Improvisation is a tool that allows for this kind of experience, this kind of experience, this kind of creation—so improvisation requires some kind of preparation, in the form of certain tools. The resulting artistic work—a fragment of the improviser's work, and at the same time an image of the creative method and musical activity in general—is one of (many) effects of implementing the technological idea of improvisation in the sense of imbuing the intention to read love in listeners, passing it on to them as (potentially therapeutic) feedback.

These kinds of philosophical considerations are part of the artistic process, and therefore play a significant role in it, or could even be its very essence. In any case, they are certain idealistic assumptions that I strive for in my musical practice as a creator, artist, and human being—thus guiding me and giving meaning to my further actions. I try to translate emerging musical thoughts or challenges analogously into the psychological and philosophical spheres, because I learn a tremendous lesson from each day of practicing music—it teaches me humility, perseverance, and also how to view reality from a completely different perspective. Music also taught me (and taught me over time) meditation, peace, persistence in my intentions, recognizing and coping with (or bypassing) various obstacles in pursuing my goals. It also teaches me the ability to look rationally when chaos reigns—observing one's actions as they occur. And here we return to the topic of quantum mechanics—being an observer of oneself changes the outcome of the experience that is my life. And I would like to live this life on my own terms, or at least with the belief that I am pursuing some goal (specific or more general).

The topic of intentionality emerges here – being an observer in such a way as to influence not only the experiment itself, but also its direction. We arrive at a moment of

²⁷for Hawkins, love calibrates quantitatively at the midpoint of the scale of levels of consciousness (500), while qualitatively it is one of the highest levels (Hawkins, D. R., *Transcending levels of consciousness*, Virgo 2010, s. 265-273)

²⁸James, J. *Music of the Spheres - About Music, Science and the Natural Order of the Universe*, Znak Krakow 1996, pp. 24-26

dissolution, a difficult to imagine, or a transition to the next level – observation of the observer. It seems that imparting directional intentions to the experiment also requires control of the observer, so that they have the ability to consciously influence the outcome. Thus, a dual skill develops in this process – observation of the observer, but also *in fact* It's one and the same person, and striving for conscious perception of musical meaning leads in precisely this direction. It means nothing other than experiencing a kind of detachment or doubling of vision, and in practice, an almost physically tangible vision of existence somewhere beside, behind the performer—that is, being on the other side of the musical experiment—on the side of the listener, the audience. Such experiences are quite shocking at first, and at the same time abstract and new, and one might be tempted to say that they are hallucinations, or perhaps a kind of autosuggestive response to a multitude of musical stimuli. These experiences led me to attempt a role reversal in understanding a standard concert situation—what if the listeners are the performers, and the improviser is not the creator at all, but rather the recipient of the music flowing from the audience? This framing of the situation leads to the conclusion that the improviser is a transmitter, and their role and responsibility is to convey the clearest possible image. And in this case, both as performer and observer, subsequent layers of sound experience begin to emerge during the act of improvisation. Systematic practice introduces increasing ease in achieving this mental state, ultimately leading to its immediate attainment. This can also be compared to a state of *flow* about which M. Csikszentmihalyi writes and philosophy *deep listening* Paulina Oliveros or general references to practices *was*.

So now, how can this be rationally applied to the research field of musical improvisation? I don't know if it's entirely possible, but in this dissertation, I attempt to demonstrate that modern jazz piano can be expanded and recognized as a fundamentally improvised creative act, with the addition of abstract references to artistic intentions, based on a broad, polystylistic creation of an original language. And consequently, recognized as creating a transcendental encounter between listeners and performer during a unique experiment within the musical arts.²⁹- creating a large-scale musical

²⁹ Stockhausen, K., *Towards a cosmic music*, Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1989 s. 3-18

form - an improvised jazz concerto for solo piano. One of the results of the search for answers to the questions posed during the process is the artistic work that constitutes the main subject of this dissertation - *Live in Kalisz, Hymns - vol. II Hymns of Power*. Concert *live* with the audience, and therefore consistent with the assumptions of the research plan and the possibility of observing and analyzing the implementation of the effects of the author's improvisation concept. It was performed and recorded during the 52nd International Jazz Pianists Festival in Kalisz at the Auditorium of the Center for Culture and Art in Kalisz on November 22, 2025 - as the festival's opening concert. It is also a continuation of the author's series of music albums "Pieces" - the first of them *Hymns - vol. I Hymns of Time* premiered on July 12, 2024, and was also one of the results of implementing my own method, albeit in a different dimension—completely composed as improvisations, with subsequent re-improvisation during recording. Interestingly, I successfully attempted to record it myself in my home environment, resulting in 12 compositions created and recorded using the method with the addition of intention. This series is being released by the independent label Vibrant Records, of which I am the founder and originator. Its name refers to the exploration and building of vibrations. Album about this dissertation (*Live in Kalisz*) is another part of my discovery of music and its influence on my artistic personality, which I try to document regularly through the publication of music albums and concert recordings. Music constantly reveals its pages to me and reveals ever deeper meanings—it surprises, inspires, and builds meaning, granting agency in action. I hope that I will demonstrate this in this dissertation and prove, even to a small degree, the truth of the discoveries I experience along the life path that is music.

I share my conclusions here with complete kindness and openness - with the hope that this work convincingly presents a description of the issues and techniques of shaping the artistic expression of modern jazz piano.

I extend my gratitude for the opportunities for my scientific and artistic development to the entire Doctoral School Council of the Academy of Music in Gdańsk, and in particular to the Director of the Doctoral School, Prof. Aleksandra Gruczy-Rogalska, and to my supervisor, Prof. Leszek Kułakowski. I also thank Dr. Andrzej Łukasik for his support in shaping this dissertation, for revealing aesthetics in the depths of theoretical issues of quantum mechanics, Dr. Danuta Stankiewicz for his insights into the abstract and philosophical dimensions of music, and Dr. Tomasz Orłow for experiencing the fascinating spaces of polystylistic possibilities in improvisation.

I also thank all the Light Ones I meet on my life path

- for guiding me, imparting wisdom and showing me the path in Love.

1. The artistic path of a jazz pianist, reflection on the meaning and mission of creativity

1.1 Origin of the concept

The construction of an improvised statement seems to be a reflection of the artist's personality, and vice versa. Continuing to develop and prepare for new artistic paths generates existential reflections. Throughout the artistic process (and indeed throughout an artist's entire life), doubts and questions arise about the foundations of musical activity, which help to establish an individual path. Here, questions about the role of the pianist-improviser:

1. Why do I play the piano?
2. Why do I improve my playing technique?
3. Why do I improvise?

These questions (among others) touch upon the artist's identity and take on a universal character – the individual's place in musical culture. The question of the purpose of improvisation becomes a determinant of further development – should the expression of the individual self be at the forefront *ego?*³⁰), or rather an attempt to communicate with the recipient in every sense? The search for a concept of one's own artistic path becomes a response to the desire to have a mission - a clearly defined goal that gives meaning to the creative process and its effects.³¹

This opens the door to further reflection and deepening the motives behind their actions – the question arises about the artist's intentions: What exactly do they want to convey and what values can they communicate through music? The question of reception also becomes crucial – how to play so that others can find a part of themselves

³⁰David R. Hawkins describes evolution *ego* in the context of levels of human consciousness (Hawkins, D. R., *Transcending levels of consciousness*, Virgo 2010, s. 17-26)

³¹This problem is part of a broader musicological and aesthetic discourse concerning both the role of the performer and the status of improvisation itself in musical culture - Nettl, B. *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998, s. 1-19, oraz Berliner, P. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994 s.1-17

and their own peace in the music? In this way, the improviser develops a desire to imbue artistic work with intention, a desire to perform music in a way and with an attitude toward the listener – so that they experience something important.³² As Adorno notes, a critical and social dimension is always present in the performance act, and music does not exist in a vacuum – it becomes part of interpersonal and social relations.³³ Christopher Small's concept of "musicking" suggests that music is, above all, a social practice.³⁴ and Berliner describes it as a social and interactive process, requiring many years of training and internalization of musical language, in which participants establish relationships³⁵ Improvisation thus appears as a medium of encounter and dialogue, and not merely a form of self-presentation by the performer.

In this approach, improvisation ceases to be merely a formal process; it becomes an act of communication between listener and performer, in which the artist's intention and attitude during performance are crucial. This stems from a multi-faceted approach to the aspects of improvised music and the actions undertaken in its creation as an artistic work. Philosophical concepts, such as Gadamer's musical hermeneutics, emphasize that a work of art requires interpretation.³⁶ indicate its role and the work's openness to the audience. Improvisation, in this approach, is a communicative act in which the artist's intention—kindness toward the listener, the desire to co-create and share the experience—is the condition for its meaning, which is revealed precisely in dialogue with the audience. Bertinetto emphasizes the transformative and identifiable dimension of improvisation.³⁷ Identifying the value of a message becomes the main challenge to reach a higher level of performance. On the one hand, the creator's awareness of their own limitations, and on the other, the search for universal values, opens the door to the question: What is truly worth communicating?³⁸ The improvising

³² At the same time, the performer is also obliged to experience something important, because in this way he can convey his intentions - while celebrating the moment, entering a state of mystical concentration in sound and conducting the music as an act of meeting

³³ Witkin, R.W., *Adorno on Music*, Routledge 1998, s. 1-27

³⁴ Small, C. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 1998, s. 8-13

³⁵ Berliner, P. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. University of Chicago Press 1994, s. 95-105

³⁶ Gadamer, H.-G.. *Truth and method*. Krakow: Inter Esse. 1993, pp. 149-157

³⁷ Bertinetto, A., *Aesthetics of improvisation*, Brill Fink 2022, s. 125-131

³⁸ A question often raised in musical aesthetics - Roger Scruton develops this idea, treating music as a space for giving meanings that go beyond the purely sonic dimension of art (Scruton, R. *The Aesthetics of Music*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997, s. 19-35, 357-374

pianist is therefore faced with the task of discovering a higher quality, and the great goal in life becomes striving to discover the highest possible quality that can be offered through art.³⁹

Thus, artistic reflection expands to include a philosophical and axiological dimension: musical performance is meaningful insofar as it becomes a space of encounter in which the listener can experience something true and significant. The process of arriving at one's own concept of creative playing and conscious improvisation (in the sense of being aware of the processes occurring during it) gives rise to the belief that authenticity of intention enhances the music's impact on the audience. In light of jazz pianistic practice, improvisation cannot be treated solely as self-presentation, technical demonstration, or a tool of expression *ego*, but it appears here as both an aesthetic and ethical act—a conscious choice of a way of being in music and being with another person. Thus, it can be said that the factor that enhances the impact of music on the audience is the authenticity of intention in the artist's improvised statement, which transforms into an act of communal experience. Being essentially a dialogical process, it generates a view of the jazz pianist not only as a performer, but also as a co-participant in building a space of interpersonal understanding (or even its creator in the context of creating such a possibility). In this context, improvisational experiences from the metaphysical sphere are also important—while in a state of creative engagement, the performer experiences the impression that the music does not necessarily flow from within them, but rather functions as a kind of transmitter or antenna receiving signals from the surrounding space and the absolute of music (already existing in some abstract dimension).

Thanks to this, the performer can perfect the performance of the improvisation and inject intentions into it (because he can observe this process from the outside) - that is, emotions that can lead to building one's own life (and not destroying it) through a reference to the most appropriate attractor of consciousness⁴⁰ The very act of performing an improvised composition can be interpreted as a tool for tuning into such levels of

³⁹ Not necessarily realistic to achieve, but somehow required to pursue this path

⁴⁰ In Hawkins's view, human consciousness is subject to certain energy (emotional) levels, and love is one of the highest of them (higher are joy, peace and divine enlightenment) (Hawkins, D. R. *Power vs. Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behavior*. Hay House 2002, s. 59-76)

consciousness.⁴¹ - levels of emotions leading to an increase in a person's sense of meaning in existence and a deep feeling of oneself and one's potential.

From this perspective, the missing link in jazz music education may lie in the broader development of moral values. References to the psychological and spiritual spheres in the context of creative responsibility are something missing in improvisation teaching—something that is rarely or never discussed. This work, therefore, attempts to draw attention to this issue as well: for the creator to express their intentions with the fullest possible awareness of them and to increase awareness of their impact on the audience. This fosters a sense of responsibility in the practice of music and for the overall impact of improvised jazz music—the absence of any inhibitions in creation is the opposite of the approach presented in this work. Observing the impact of improvisation on listeners creates the opportunity for conscious work on an intentional artistic message and, consequently, the possibility of establishing certain ethical and aesthetic requirements for the advanced improviser.

In summary, this prompts us to begin exploring the creation of various tools appropriate for piano improvisation and the intended intentions. It also leads to the development of a compositional process of voicing concepts, emotions, and intentions through the selection of appropriate means, methods, and techniques for expressing the intended goals and artistic effects of the work. The broad formula of the adopted creative method (improvisation) allows for unlimited activity and possibilities of expression within the field of jazz piano, and also allows for expansion beyond this realm.

1.2 Research methodology and objectives

The analyzed problem of the artistic path of a jazz pianist is theoretical and research-based, and lies at the intersection of other fields: musicology, musical aesthetics, and philosophical reflection on art. This interdisciplinary approach structures the research process, which, as a starting point, combines three main components: hermeneutics (interpreting the meanings and values of music), artistic autoethnography

⁴¹ Hawkins, D. R., *Transcending levels of consciousness*, Virgo 2010, s. 393-395

(the artist's self-reflection as research material), and the analysis of theoretical texts from the literature on jazz music and improvisation, as well as other fields. m.in. philosophy of music, aesthetics, quantum mechanics, and neurobiology. Also, as a dynamic and ephemeral phenomenon, improvisation is not an easy subject to study within traditional methods of musicological analysis (e.g., score analysis). Therefore, choosing a hermeneutic and autoethnographic perspective seems most appropriate, as it allows for the examination of the artist's subjective experience in relation to theory, enables the capture of meanings emerging in real time, and opens up space for the integration of the aesthetic, existential, and social dimensions of improvised music.

Hermeneutics provides an interpretative perspective that allows for understanding the meanings and values embedded in the process of musical improvisation and can treat it as an open space whose meaning is revealed in the dialogue between the performer and the recipient.⁴² Due to its subjectivity, the autoethnographic method may be perceived as less objective than empirical or statistical analyses, but its value lies in revealing the artist's inner perspective, less accessible in other research approaches. Combined with literary analysis and hermeneutics, artistic autoethnography⁴³ provides a complementary picture of the phenomenon, being a starting point in which the jazz pianist uses his own creative experiences as research material - and reflections, questions and observations resulting from the practice of improvisation become raw material for further scientific analysis.

This approach enables: (1) documentation of internal questions, doubts, and discoveries arising during the creative process, (2) combining the subjective perspective (the artist's experience) with the theoretical perspective (musicological and aesthetic analysis), (3) distinguishing the conceptual categories and values that shape the pianist's artistic path. In the autoethnographic method, the artist's experience is not merely personal testimony; it becomes material for interpretation within the context of broader scholarly discourse. The interconnections and dialogue between these three elements are also crucial – autoethnography and hermeneutics do not exist in isolation – the literature

⁴²Piotrowska, M., *Musical hermeneutics: theory and praxis*, Studia Theologica Varsoviensia 25/2, 1987, pp. 179-199

⁴³ Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. *Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity*. W: N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (red.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* 2000, s. 736–759

on the subject complements and confronts their conclusions. Literature analysis encompasses texts from various disciplines, thus placing artistic self-reflection within a broader scholarly context, allowing for comparison of individual experience with theory and previous research.

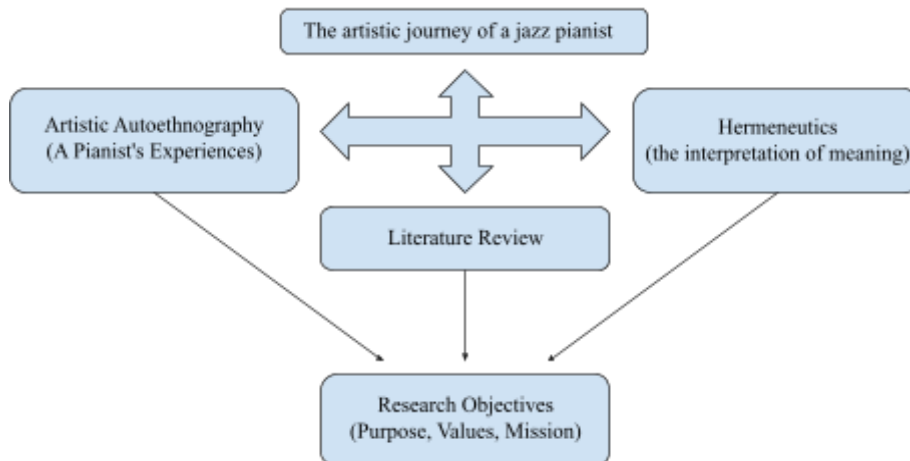


Diagram 1. The artistic path of a jazz pianist

Artistic research stems from needs that emerged during a creative journey and, in a sense, attempts to answer questions about the purpose of creation or generate tools useful for implementing a concept. The starting point for this concept was the need to create an alternative form, a concept of musical art, and to return to the perception of musical art—restoring its original meaning as a factor shaping human personality, determining the rhythm of life, and the dimension of spiritual quality. This approach relates to the perception of music as a carrier of communal, existential, and metaphysical meanings.⁴⁴

The aim of this research is based on several fundamental assumptions:

1. A synthesis and attempt to transform the contemporary idiom of the jazz pianist, an attempt to go beyond the existing framework;
2. Building and researching one's own musical practice aimed at improving and enhancing the system of transmitting intentions in piano performance, as well as

⁴⁴ Small, C., *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Wesleyan University Press 1998, s. 130-143

broadening the horizon of awareness of performing improvisation in many contexts;

3. Showing the beauty of piano art in its essence, referring to the standards of beauty of piano music and incorporating it into jazz music;
4. Presenting the concept that improvisation is not just an image of an internal process, but reveals the external world, shows a record of reality at the moment of improvisation (transformed by giving intention);
5. Creating a kind of matrix of intentions, according to which the music is arranged, creating harmony, beauty and coherence on many levels - it is created spontaneously as a result of giving such intentions, creating a specific image of the matrix and improvising in accordance with it;
6. Showing improvisation as an important and inspiring compositional technique, and the role of the improvising pianist is to combine styles;
7. Searching for a common language with contemporary discoveries and descriptions of the world or theories about its functioning and attempting a dialogue with science, looking for common points or analogies;
8. Exploring the relationship between performer = improviser = composer = creator

More specific goals:

- Description and analysis of essential stylistic features of solo improvisation: e.g. harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, timbral, formal, expressive and symbolic;
- Developing a method for preparing the performer (workshop, intention, awareness of structure, awareness of intentionality) so that the improvisation process is integrated with the composition process;
- A performance experiment consisting in creating an original recording of a solo improvisation, in which a developed method will be used - analysis of the process: from preparation, through the creation of intentions, through the performance itself and recording;
- A description of the philosophical dimension relating to reflection on the function of improvised music as a medium that can serve to build existential

awareness, a sense of unity in love - as universal values, and this may also require references to aesthetics, phenomenology or the philosophy of music;

- Presentation of the modern style of solo piano improvisation from a musical and philosophical perspective and creation of an original method of entering the state of improvisation.

This creates certain challenges and limitations that the improvising performer should take into account:

- Difficulty in operationalizing concepts such as intention, executive awareness, love - in the context of music;
- Subjectivity of executive and analytical assessments - the need for transparency of the methodology;
- Problems with recording the creative process in improvisation - how to capture, for example, moments of decision or unconscious processes;
- Maintaining a balance between reflective elements (concept) and practical action (execution).

In summary, the general issues of musical experimentation include technical, expressive, mental, and spiritual aspects. It focuses on the richness of means of expression, the authenticity and sincerity of the message, and the portrayal of the present moment experienced by all participants in the improvisation (each also has an impact on that moment). Music brings a multitude of threads to the description of musical improvisation – a comprehensive use of the skills of the pianist, performer, composer, and improviser, as well as a broad stylistic approach. Performance itself does not require the use of all techniques and tools during a single improvisation, but their diversity allows for flexibility in their selection (the message is paramount) and the discovery of appropriate tools through immediate decisions, which are intended to reveal the current state of reality perceived by the participants in the improvisation. This is further enhanced by the development of meditation skills.⁴⁵, mindfulness, stopping the moment in the music - simultaneous observation while completely devoting oneself to the performance from the outside and inside.

⁴⁵Ajaya, S., *Meditation - the psychology of yoga in practice*, Galaxy pp. 146-150

1.3 Non-musical inspirations

Improvisation is one of the foundations of jazz practice, its importance in shaping musical awareness is widely emphasised in the literature, and contemporary approaches often emphasise its open dimension as a creative process not determined by strict frameworks - in contrast to idiomatic improvisation based on being rooted in a given stylistic language (e.g. *bebop* the *modal jazz*). Open form offers the performer unlimited freedom, transcending stylistic, formal, and harmonic boundaries, and can also lead to the development of a new type of musical awareness. Exploring sound—the value of time and acoustic space—during improvisation allows for a redefinition of the relationship between performance intention and the sonic outcome. This imparts an epistemic and aesthetic character, broadening the individual language of expression—providing a space for shaping the performer's musical awareness, deepening sound perception, and creating unique artistic experiences.

Developing musical awareness during the performance of open improvisation may include and integrate the following dimensions:

- perceptual – development of the ability to actively listen and analyze one's own playing in real time (or the playing of other musicians);
- cognitive – building and strengthening new patterns of musical thinking⁴⁶;
- somatic – using and deepening the relationship between body sensations and the instrument in order to integrate the elements of the creative process - the way the performer plays and the sound result of the instrument;
- intersubjective – communication with other performers and/or the audience, shaping a common space of musical meanings⁴⁷.

⁴⁶contemporary research shows improvisation as a model of cognitive processes and indicates that it resembles dynamic decision-making under conditions of uncertainty - Torrance, S., & Schumann, F. *The spur of the moment: what jazz improvisation tells cognitive science*. AI & Society, 34, 2019, s. 256–258

⁴⁷ Monson, I. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago Press 1996 s. 97-106

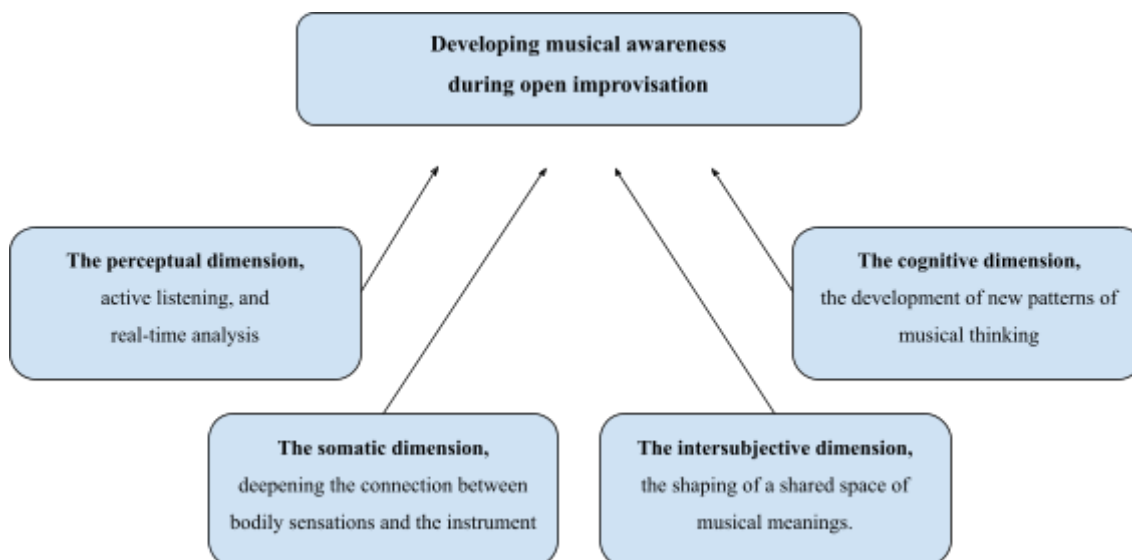


Diagram 2. Shaping musical awareness

A research perspective might define open improvisation as a kind of laboratory in which the creator is confronted with an infinite number of potential artistic choices, which fosters the formation of a reflective attitude towards music as a cultural and cognitive phenomenon, as well as the development of performance competences. Each creative decision generates new possibilities for the development of musical narrative.⁴⁸ and enables the performer to transcend the boundaries of traditionally understood harmony, rhythm or form – a fusion of various elements.

As sensitivity to the sound structures and dynamics of the musical process develops, an intuitive understanding of sound processes also appears.⁴⁹ Music psychology points to the processual nature of improvisation, where the work emerges from social interactions and cognitive and emotional mechanisms.⁵⁰ The musicological perspective, on the other hand, highlights the importance of improvisation as a tool for redefining the very essence of music and its cultural function, as well as for transforming the musical language in contemporary jazz.⁵¹ Bailey points out that

⁴⁸ Bailey, D. *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*. Da Capo Press 1993, pp. 105-112

⁴⁹ Stockhausen, K., *Towards a cosmic music*, Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1989, s. 35-43

⁵⁰ Csikszentmihalyi, M. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. Harper & Row 1990, s. 108-113

⁵¹ Gridley, M. C. *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson PrenticeHall. 2017, s. 18-36

improvisation transcends all styles and is a universal musical practice present in many cultures.⁵²

The experience of an improviser can be described in the category *flow*—a state of optimal engagement, in which the artist achieves a sense of complete unity with the activity being performed. This means intense concentration, in which musical decisions are made coherently, while integrating cognitive and motor processes, while maintaining complete spontaneity and deep immersion in the activity, ultimately resulting in a high level of satisfaction and joy.⁵³ In the context of this concept, achieving such a state may be preceded by meditative activities (concentration, calming down, and focusing attention), which help reduce mental and physical tension and increase the performer's perceptual sensitivity. The literature on the subject emphasizes the use of extensive cognitive representations (so-called schemas)⁵⁴, which enable quick, real-time decision-making. Improvisation is therefore not a completely random action, but is partly the result of internalized knowledge and experience - they can be used in a seemingly "mindless" way in a state of high concentration⁵⁵.

Analogies to the theory of quantum mechanics⁵⁶

Music, an essentially abstract phenomenon, plays a huge role in every person's life. It doesn't exist in the material realm, but it profoundly influences our experiences, emotions, memories, and even our perception of the world. Its impact is cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic, and it also serves an existential function—becoming a form of communication and a space for spiritual experience. Music, as a sound wave, organizes time and space. Thanks to its performative nature, it enables the creation of meaning and nonverbal communication, which can be considered a space for exploring analogies

⁵² Bailey, D. *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*. Since 1993 s. ix-xii

⁵³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, New York: Harper & Row, 1990, s. 48–67

⁵⁴ Sloboda, J.A., *The Musical Mind - Cognitive Psychology of Music*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 166-180

⁵⁵ Lehmann, A. C., Sloboda, J. A., & Woody, R. H. *Psychology for Musicians: Understanding and Acquiring the Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, s. 160–162.

⁵⁶ cThe purpose of this thesis is not to provide a technical reference to practical issues of quantum mechanics, examples of which experiments and research are also starting to appear - but in the context of mapping input parameters of quantum data (obtained from specially prepared tools) and processing them into musical parameters - which is a rather indeterministic and aleatoric process, so it is not relevant to this thesis

with theories of quantum physics.⁵⁷ Attempting such a comparison generates additional reflections that can complement the current understanding of the phenomenon of improvised music performance. Theoretical considerations in quantum physics lead to the conclusion that the player experiences all possible paths simultaneously—music is all possible paths—so the improviser experiences the present moment, tuning in to it and vibrating with it.

In the context of jazz improvisation, this is a special area of the phenomenon, where the creative process takes place in real time, and the performer, being both the constructor and implementer of musical structures, makes decisions here and now.⁵⁸ Each sound is a micro-decision based on a complex mechanism that allows for the performance of music. It's a bit like a dialogue with the unknown—balancing on the border between consciousness and intuition. Quantum physics has assumptions that similarly alter our perception of the world, even leading to the conclusion that elementary particles, in a sense, improvise their existence. A single photon exists simultaneously as a particle, a specific point in space-time, while in a broader context, it behaves as if controlled by a field of some kind, which, upon prolonged observation, we perceive as a wave (similar to magnetic or radio waves). This is reflected in the double-slit experiment—quantum particle interference.⁵⁹

In quantum theory, a particle does not exist in a single, predetermined form—until it is observed, it moves along all possible paths simultaneously. A surprising discovery is that its velocity and position parameters cannot be known simultaneously. Knowing its velocity means we cannot locate the particle, and knowing its location leaves its trajectory unknown, making it impossible to estimate its next destination. Similarly (symbolically), a musician knows precisely where they are at any given moment, but has no idea where the music might take them. As quantum mechanics indicates, an elementary particle exists in a state of superposition.⁶⁰—represents all possible states until the act of observation reduces this multitude to one of

⁵⁷Physical issues are merely facts devoid of symbolism, and on the other hand, they generate theories that seek the nature of divinity or so-called quantum healing - the treatise is intended to remain neutral, not to take sides, but may present certain analogies that accompany the exploration of music theory and quantum theories

⁵⁸Ajaya, S., *Meditation - the psychology of yoga in practice*, Galaxy pp. 150-160

⁵⁹double-slit interference experiment using quantum particles - interference fringes (Łukasik A. *Philosophical issues of quantum mechanics*, UMCS Publishing House 2017, pp. 22-32)

⁶⁰ Łukasik A. *Philosophical issues of quantum mechanics*, UMCS Publishing House 2017, s. 87-90

them (state vector reduction)⁶¹A similar process can be observed in piano improvisation—every chord, every melodic line, every harmonic or rhythmic decision opens up an infinite number of potential musical paths. The pianist, like an observer in a quantum experiment, performs an act of selection in real time, narrowing the multitude of potential paths to a single actualization in the sonic space—infinite possibilities to a single version of reality that becomes audible. Thus, improvisation can appear as an act of conscious resonance with the present moment. Each sound is both the result of a decision and the effect of a flow—the current of the river in which the performer flows, but is also an observer. Improvised music can be said to be the art of communing with a multitude of simultaneously existing paths and choosing one of them in a unique and authentic way—each concert is a different experiment.

Improvisation can therefore be interpreted as a process of reducing the superposition of artistic possibilities—the listener perceptually experiences a linearly unfolding musical narrative, although the performer may be aware of the possibility of multiple simultaneous alternative paths that could hypothetically be realized. From a performance perspective, the improviser attunes to the performative context—reacting to the acoustic conditions of the room, the instrument, the current reality, and the audience's state of mind. This process is emergent in nature.⁶², resulting in a dynamic coexistence of controlled and spontaneous elements. In this sense, improvisation is not only an individual creative act, but also a phenomenon embedded in relationality.

Improvisation is not based on the linear reproduction of musical notation (while maintaining all due respect for the interpretation and technical capabilities of the performer, etc.). Instead, it is, in a sense, a vertical act, an action in a particular moment, yet the structure still exists linearly. One could say that the performer perceives it in its entirety, in that particular moment—and their task is to explain it to the listener in the form of a musical narrative, which is inscribed in an undefined way in an abstract sound field. The observer of this phenomenon, the improviser, influences the outcome of the experience, limiting this field to a single form, yet this form is still a much more complex entity, influencing multiple meanings. So improvisation is merely a translation

⁶¹ibid. pp. 99-108

⁶²Mazur, R., *The Path of Improvisation - Lecture One*, YouTube, 30.06.2020 r., [video], <https://youtu.be/1nSkdojSU5M?si=sL0ZxNTdEkE3PQGD>, [accessed 14/05/2026]

into the language of music (which, in turn, seems to be the most universal medium), and here its image becomes an incomplete medium, a sort of demonstration of what improvisation is trying to show and describe—a multidimensional form of existence that we try to describe in our space-time perception—and thus simplify and flatten it. It's like drawing a sphere first in one dimension—only a segment of the sphere's diameter will result; and then in two dimensions—it becomes merely a circle, a demonstration, and does not fully reveal its form as it exists in three dimensions. When attempting to draw in three dimensions, it's impossible to fully depict the sphere's original shape on a two-dimensional sheet of paper without distorting its proportions and overall character.

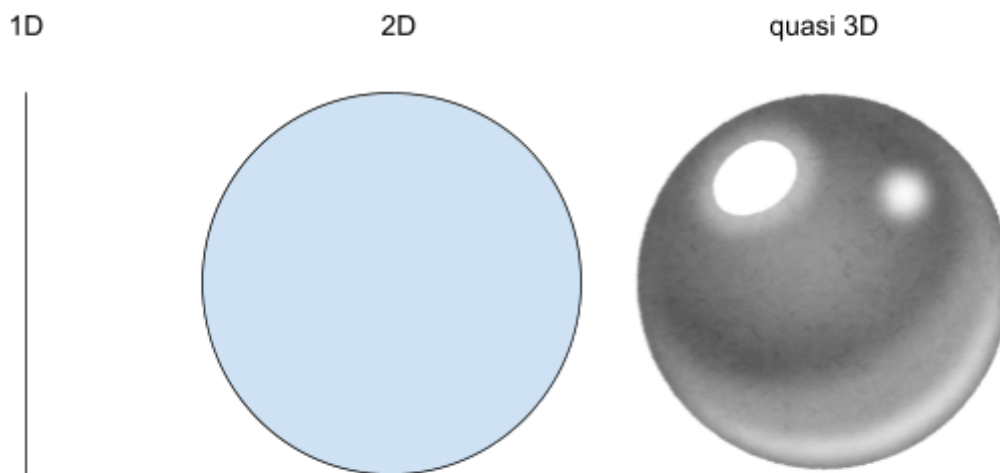


Diagram 3. Sphere shape in 1D, 2D and 3D samples.

In summary, another dimension of improvisation is the relationship between performer and listener—directly in a concert setting and indirectly in the case of listening on a physical medium or streaming. This is crucial from the perspective of musical perception, and the process itself can be interpreted analogously to the observer theory in quantum physics, where the act of observation influences the outcome of the experience.⁶³ A similar thing can happen in improvised music – the listener present at the

⁶³ Lukasik A. *Philosophical issues of quantum mechanics*, UMCS Publishing House 2017, s. 99-108

concert co-creates the work through their perception and emotional response.⁶⁴ However, the live experience has a unique dimension of social interaction, where the process of reception of an improvised work encompasses at least two levels: auditory perception, i.e., direct sound and emotional impressions, and hermeneutic reception, in the form of the listener's attribution of meaning and emotions.⁶⁵ Berliner describes a jazz concert as an interactive space in which the audience influences the music through emotional responses and "is an active participant in the musical event."⁶⁶ Improvisation, therefore, creates a shared field of experience that transcends the traditional division between creator and recipient—the ultimate meaning is revealed in the interaction between them.

⁶⁷ .

⁶⁴ In the indirect case, the recording of the improvisation (e.g. a recording) may transfer this effect to the audience at a later time.

⁶⁵ Sloboda, J.A., *The Musical Mind - Cognitive Psychology of Music*, Warsaw 2002 s. 71-79

⁶⁶ Berliner, P. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994, s. 389–392

⁶⁷ Monson I, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, s. 67–74

2. The concept of musical experiment - the process of discovering vibrations

The apex of impressive artistry is the ability to perform technically advanced music with the same ease and inspiration as a simple folk song. If one combines masterful technique with the "channeling" of inspiration directly from within, the result can be awesome (I regard the execution of scales, chords, dynamics and expression as being "technical"). After all is mastered, the inner being may manifest, unimpeded by the vehicle's (i.e., the performer's) lack of knowledge. In this light, training oneself to the highest possible level may be regarded as an act of worship to that inner being

2.1 Practical aspect

The musical experiment conducted as part of the research is based primarily on practical aspects: observation, development, and conclusions drawn from the music sessions. It relies on systematic observation, analysis, and formulation of conclusions resulting directly or indirectly from the music sessions conducted in conditions that allow for the free development of improvisation. It includes critical analysis of the collected empirical data (in the form of recordings) in light of the adopted aesthetic assumptions, in accordance with the action research methodology, which combines practice with theoretical reflection, and treats the work as both a result and an integral part of the research process.⁶⁸ The concept of entering a creative state of improvisation—a state of creative and conscious artistic engagement—is a long-term endeavor that ultimately boils down to the ability to immediately enter using original methods. The creative concept underlying the experiment is comprised of a multi-year artistic process—the result of artistic maturation, which includes the development of instrumental technique, the search for new formal and sonic solutions, and reflection on the pianist's role in shaping musical structures.⁶⁹ During this process, an individual performance language was formed in the field of jazz piano, which resulted from a synthesis of existing stylistic devices and the need to seek unconventional means of expression – not to duplicate existing concepts but to strive to create one's own way of performing solo piano.

⁶⁸Borgdorff, H. *The conflict of the faculties: Perspectives on artistic research and academia*. Leiden University Press 2012, s.131-138

⁶⁹Lehmann, A. C., Sloboda, J. A., & Woody, R. H. *Psychology for musicians: Understanding and acquiring the skills*. Oxford University Press 20017, s. 39-42

During the research, attention was paid to various aspects, including:

- technical and performance issues of instrumental performance;
- elements of a musical work;
- creative inspirations;
- the process of reception and perception of the work;
- spiritual experiences accompanying the performance process (experienced thanks to the use of the author's method).

The last sphere is fundamentally subjective, abstract, and difficult to grasp unequivocally within scientific language. While not subject to unambiguous scientific verification, the spiritual sphere undoubtedly remains a significant element of the experience and the main reason for the entire experiment. As a factor largely shaping the performer's identity, its essence lies in the perspective of a holistic understanding of the creative act. This lies at the intersection of art, music psychology, and sound aesthetics, and the goal is also to attempt to capture the relationship between individual experience and the universal potential of music as a medium of communication. Considering the immaterial sphere is consistent with the paradigm *artistic research* - is one of the three main aspects of artistic research⁷⁰.

Research indicates that spontaneous music-making fosters experiences of transcendence and a sense of unity.⁷¹, and the concept of spirituality in music can be interpreted not as a category in the strict metaphysical sense, but, for example, as an intense aesthetic experience that involves deep emotional and cognitive engagement. Literature in the field of musical aesthetics indicates that this experience can be transcendent in the phenomenological sense – exceeding everyday perception and leading to a sense of unity or immersion in the musical depth⁷².

The author's concept includes several external types of activities within a broader internal process of one's own - which here is called discovering vibrations⁷³: (1)

⁷⁰Borgdorff, H. *The conflict of the faculties: Perspectives on artistic research and academia*. Leiden University Press 2012, s.123-124

⁷¹ Corbett, G., & Moerman, S. (Eds.) *Music and spirituality: theological approaches, empirical methods, and Christian worship*. Open Book Publishers 2024. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0403> s.34-39

⁷² Kramer, J. *The Time of Music*, New York: Schirmer 1988, s. 218-220

⁷³ resonating with the surrounding reality, listening deeply and attentively in search of its present nature

a large improvised form for solo piano (which is the foundation of the treatise); (2) individual vibrations, thoughts, themes, improvisations - for solo piano; (3) improvisational activities in a duet or in a larger group of musicians; (4) improvisation as one of the parts of an arranged composition⁷⁴; (5) the process of composition in the imagination of playing an instrument⁷⁵ Each of these refers to a different nature of creative activity and differs significantly in its final effect. The first two are soloistic activities and demonstrate extreme approaches – on the one hand, full-blown, unrestricted improvisation lasting approximately 30-90 minutes, and on the other, the exploration of individual thoughts existing within the improviser's scope. The third type engages a larger vocal-instrumental ensemble and begins the process with a single voice. The fourth is a fragment of a piece where one of the ensemble's soloists has the opportunity for improvised expression, albeit based on the formal arrangement of the composition. The last, on the other hand, speaks of composing by imagining creatively playing an instrument without actually using it.

The presented concept is the result of the author's general artistic aspirations, focused on maximizing the piano's sonic potential and exploring harmonic relationships that create naturally beautiful harmonies. These foundations provide a platform for experiencing the art of piano and mastering the instrument to perfection. Improvisation is at the heart of the concept – it serves as both a means of artistic expression, a tool for exploring the sonic space, and a form of music therapy.⁷⁶

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An integral element of the artistic concept discussed here is the observation and meditation of sound material during performance. Musical improvisation appears to be a complex psychophysical process, requiring both preparation and mastery of technical means, as well as a special state of consciousness and perceptual and emotional sensitivity. Entering the creative state of improvisation can be considered in terms of

⁷⁴Tomaszewski, P., *Methods of developing melodic-rhythmic structures in contemporary forms of jazz improvisation*, Katowice 2013, s. 5-6

⁷⁵ Orzechowski, P. 24 *Preludes and Improvisations as an Exemplification of the Author's Concept of "Creative Play."* *From Improvisation to Interpretation of the Work*, 2020, s. 92-94

⁷⁶improvisation can function as a form of music therapy, promoting the release of inner expression, deepening contact with one's own emotionality and building a sense of connection with the surrounding world (Wigram, T., Pedersen, I. N., & Bonde, L. O. *A comprehensive guide to music therapy: Theory, clinical practice, research and training*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2002, s. 126-134)

music psychology, aesthetics, and performance practice, including meditation. In accordance with the concepts of mindfulness in music -*mindful music-making*⁷⁷- serves to deepen performance awareness, as well as to capture structural, sound and expressive nuances in real time.

Building an improvisational skill encompasses mastering technical techniques and creating one's own musical language, as well as developing perceptual and emotional sensitivity. A crucial aspect of practical preparation is working with limited sound material—for example, exercises involving exploration of the piano's extreme registers, working within a specific material (e.g., a single scale), or reducing visual stimuli (playing in semi-darkness or near-darkness). Building musical sensitivity is achieved through various systematic exercises and performance preparation. An example is an exercise involving randomly striking notes within a selected scale (in such a way as to focus attention not on the selected notes but on the scale as a whole), which serves to immerse oneself in its sonic character and thus develop an intuitive understanding of its structure and timbre. It also generates a gradual immersion in the material of a given scale—its sound, structure, properties, character, emotional connotations, and structural arrangement under the pianist's fingers, in terms of comfort and freedom of performance. Understanding the differences between scales, also in terms of clarity of sound - often resulting from differences in the form of just one note between them, facilitates intuitive movement around the circle of fifths and smooth operation of keys.

Such exercises can be interpreted as forms of training in attention and auditory perception, and lead to a deeper internalization of musical material and the development of the ability to process it intuitively.⁷⁸ This stage of work can also be compared to internships.*was*, where it is important not only to master the technique, but also to achieve a state of non-thinking, enabling free action without rational control⁷⁹ These are meditative processes in which repetition and concentration on sound lead to a shift in

⁷⁷Steinfeld, M. & Brewer, J. *The Psychological Benefits from Reconceptualizing Music-Making as Mindfulness Practice*. Medical problems of performing artists. 30. 2015, 10.21091/mppa.2015.2014. s. 84-86

⁷⁸Clarke, E. *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, s. 17–25

⁷⁹ Suzuki, D. T. *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1970, s.126-127

time perception and a deepening of auditory awareness. An improviser who has thoroughly mastered tonal and scale relationships begins to perceive the piano keyboard as a dynamic field of possibilities—a place of potential choices that can harmonize, contrast, and create unique musical qualities.

The practice of meditation through music developed within this project finds theoretical and methodological reference (roots) in the concept of the so-called *deep listening* by Paulina Oliveros. Defined as a deep, conscious, and holistic approach to sound perception and production.⁸⁰ - encompasses the perception of external stimuli (the acoustic environment) as well as internal ones (sound perception, bodily and emotional awareness). The idea of deep listening emerged during the research – it was an important impetus for the development of the concept, although it did not change the fundamental direction of the research (it was a kind of confirmation of the author's activities and needs related to music and improvisation). It allowed for a deeper understanding of the essence of the activities undertaken in connection with the experiment, as well as the interpretation and conceptualization of experiences gained while working on musical material, and a clarification of the nature of creative practices based on meditative concentration in sound. It also enabled the recognition and incorporation of elements of introspection and contemplation into the creative process.⁸¹ and a more precise identification of activities related to performance awareness and sound perception. Thus, Oliveros's concept acted as a catalyst for reflection on the role of perception in the process of improvisation and shaping musical form.⁸², and also became an interpretative tool and enabled a more precise description of implementation issues.

On the other hand - in the burst of creative play (adaptation of Piotr Orzechowski's movement⁸³) What's important is not judging what comes, but rather focusing on a specific path, which makes it an end in itself. During performance, this becomes paramount, leading the performer to find their way through the twists and

⁸⁰ Oliveros, P. *Deep listening: A composer's sound practice*. iUniverse, 2005, pp. 1-5

⁸¹ Oliveros, P. *Deep listening: A composer's sound practice*. IUniverse 2005. s. 21-26

⁸² Ceraso, S. *Sounding composition: Multimodal pedagogies for embodied listening*. University of Pittsburgh Press 2018. s. 163-175

⁸³ Orzechowski, P. *24 Preludes and Improvisations as an Exemplification of the Author's Concept of "Creative Play."* *From Improvisation to Interpretation of the Work*, 2020, s. 94-96

turns of various emotions. The performer's task here is to carefully observe the music and not allow it to drift into the shallows of reality. In performance practice, the process of entering a state of improvisation can be summarized in several principles, guiding principles:

- Expecting the unexpected - improvisation assumes openness to unpredictable sound and emotional events⁸⁴;
- the goal is the way, the way is the goal - according to philosophy^{was}, the process of improvisation is the meaning itself, not just its result;
- look not for obstacles, but for opportunities - each sound situation is a starting point for further creation, not a limitation.

2.2 Preparation for the creation of an artistic work

The main aspect of practical exercises is striving to achieve a creative state—to not dwell on the sound itself, but simply enter it, immerse oneself in the music, and flow with its flow. Therefore, the improviser should not focus on external sound selection, as it is the result of many elements—including the mystical nature of creative expression, where the performer appears as a kind of medium between the absolute of music and what emerges through processing and decoding into the current standard musical language (the perception of sound systems in the major-minor tonal system—12 notes, tempered in the tuning of A = 440/442 Hz).

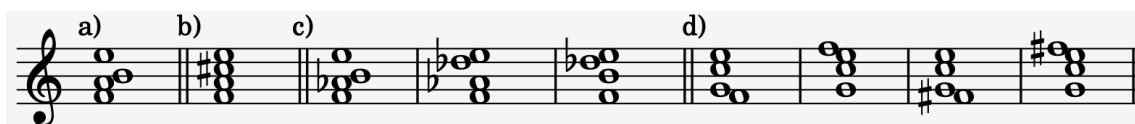
Preparation assumes openness and the search for non-standard artistic tools, such as:

1. Creating specific supporting chords⁸⁵- chords that sound characteristically when using the circle of fifths in any configuration with any bass note, e.g. a) a Lydian chord with a characteristic sound of an augmented fourth; b) an augmented chord with a major seventh with a specific sound of an augmented fifth; c) three types of structures created on the basis of a symmetrical diminished scale based

⁸⁴Bertinetto, A., *Performing the Unexpected Improvisation and Artistic Creativity*. Daimon no 57, 2012, s. 117-135.

⁸⁵in the sense of supporting the development of harmonic and compositional skills and expanding the artistic and improvisational language

on two minor third intervals and a perfect fourth interval in various configurations; d) four types of chords based on a major triad in the second inversion with the addition of a minor or major second at the bottom or top of the chord.



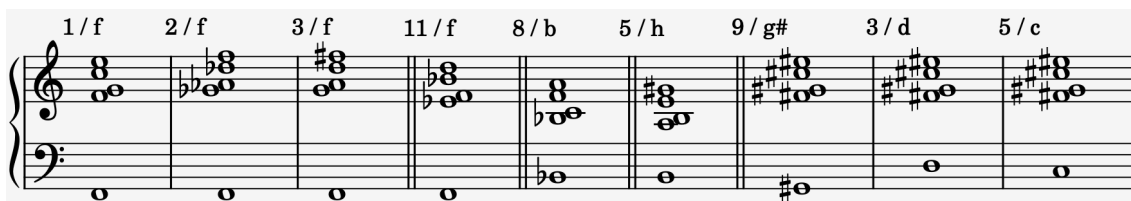
Example 1. Supporting Chords

- Building harmonic patterns based on supporting chords, from which individual chords, chords, harmonies can be derived, e.g. a table arranging in chromatic order all the configurations of combining any note in the bass with any major triad with an added major second at the bottom [category d) of supporting chords]:

/	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>f</i>	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#
<i>f#</i>	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2
<i>g</i>	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3
<i>g#</i>	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭
<i>a</i>	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11
<i>b</i>	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#
<i>h</i>	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11
<i>c</i>	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7
<i>c#</i>	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#
<i>d</i>	Δ 5# add6	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭
<i>d#</i>	13sus4	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6
<i>e</i>	Δ 9 11#13#	Δsus2	add11 /3	6/9 add9 ♭	- 9 11	Δ 9# 11#	add11	add11 /Δ7	6/9 11#	- 7 6 ♭	Δ 5# add6	13sus4

Table 1. Harmonic scheme of creating consonances

You can use the chord chart in several ways - by selecting different chords for the same note in the bass, selecting different notes in the bass for different chords, or selecting the same chord for different notes in the bass:



Example 2. Selected sample chords

3. Scales exercise⁸⁶ to read their deeper character, to read the emotions behind them, to find the characteristic sounding components, consonances, harmonies,
4. Creating your own language that helps to properly present the content - an individual language is needed to fully convey what the improviser sees and feels through the music;
5. Exploring and incorporating contemporary techniques and styles into the improvisational language. Adding contemporary rhythms as a synthesis of many worlds;

The exercises also assume polystylistic preparation, which will be described in more detail later in the dissertation.

The piano technique included issues that were not obvious for a jazz pianist's workshop, although important in terms of the solo performance of live improvisation, i.e.:

- working on the game apparatus and hand positioning so that technical difficulties do not cause a mental or physical block;
- creating a sound framework - strong fifth fingers, creating the bass foundation and melodic clarity, and a balanced and commentary middle, creating another sound plane;
- plays without using the right sustain pedal as in a harpsichord or organ;

⁸⁶ Levine, M., *The Jazz Piano Book*, Sher Music 1989 s. 60-84

- taking care of the technical details of the performance, including articulation, sound, dynamics, composition - register, counterpoint⁸⁷, voice leading, arrangement, orchestration;
- presentation of the melody and counterpointing middle voices/planes;

Memorizing the theme and sound material is no easy feat, so the demands placed on oneself as an improviser are high, but not impossible.

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In the literature on improvisation, there are more and more works related to the analysis from the cognitive and aesthetic perspective.⁸⁸ Another example is work that also examines the cognitive context⁸⁹ - demonstrate that improvisation engages processes of intuition, reflection, aesthetic awareness, and the performer's intentionality. Exploring the relationship between improvisation and composition⁹⁰ comes down to finding a way to treat improvisational activities as a composition taking place at the moment of performance, with all the formal and aesthetic consequences.

Accordingly, there is a return to combining the roles of creator and performer in one person (widely practiced mainly by piano virtuosos in the Romantic era).⁹¹ - a combination of compositional and performance art with the addition of modern techniques. Functioning as a pianist generates compositional possibilities, and improvised composition employs a variety of instrumental and performance techniques. Therefore, expanding performance and compositional techniques is a result of exploring improvisation, allowing for broader and more free expression, while also having at one's disposal a variety of creative tools as a pianist and composer.

⁸⁷ Wegman, R.C., Menke, J., Schubert, P., *Improvising early music*, Leuven University Press 2014, s. 17-32

⁸⁸ e.g. article: Davisson, K., *Improvisation as a Method of Composition*, 2022

⁸⁹ np.: Rosen, D., Oh, Y., Erickson, B., Zhang, F.(Z.), Kim, Y.E., Kounios, J., *Dual-process contributions to creativity in jazz improvisations: An SPM-EEG study*, *NeuroImage* 2020, and Torrance, S., & Schumann, F. *The spur of the moment: what jazz improvisation tells cognitive science*. *AI & Society* 2019, 34, 251–268. DOI: 10.1007/s00146-018-0838-4

⁹⁰ Orzechowski, P. *24 Preludes and Improvisations as an Exemplification of the Author's Concept of "Creative Play."* *From Improvisation to Interpretation of the Work*, 2020 s.104-107

⁹¹ Schonberg, H. C. *The Great Pianists: From Mozart to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987 - pages: Bach p. 21; Mozart pp. 36-37, 47-48; Clementi pp. 52-58; Beethoven pp. 80-81; Hummel pp. 113-116; improvised duels p. 52; Mendelssohn pp. 230-232

2.3 Intentionality and the creative process

Here, in the creative process, one of the key elements, indispensable and giving meaning to the entire method, are intentions added to music. They are of fundamental importance here - understood as a conscious direction of the expression and meaning of the performed work, they act as an internal compass that shows the path of form development and a specific filter shaping performance choices. Music, despite its inherent abstractness and lack of an unambiguous (direct) semantic language⁹²- it can function as a multi-level message referring to the areas of psychology, philosophy, nature, and even metaphysical concepts of the cosmos or the structures of the universe (symbolically, programmatically).

In the context of improvised music, a special process takes place here - the role of intention takes on a special significance - the process of giving intention, which takes the form of a unique (at least from the performer's perspective) state of consciousness, similar to the practice *it was*. During improvisation, the performer often enters a state comparable to meditation, and in the terminology of the psychology of creativity - to a state *flow*. The performer becomes an observer of themselves and a participant in the creative act, distancing themselves from the flow of thoughts, entering into deep concentration, intense engagement, and a sense of oneness with the activity being performed. After many improvised performances in this creative mental state, an increasingly distinct dual perspective can be observed – the performer remains simultaneously an active participant in the ongoing musical structure and a conscious observer of themselves. This requires constant distancing (balancing) from the perception of their own thoughts, emotions, and impulses, while simultaneously maintaining a deeper connection with the mental and sensory aspects of creative performance.

This dual perspective—an introspective perspective while fully immersed in the experience—enables deeper connection with the psyche, as well as the sensory impressions the body processes from the various stimuli surrounding it. In this approach, improvisation becomes an act requiring a high degree of mindfulness, understood here as conscious and continuous monitoring of both one's own internal

⁹² Meyer. L. B. *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 1956; s. vii-x

state and the parameters of the acoustic environment.⁹³ Through subtle decisions regarding the flow of the performed form, the performer surrenders to the flow of the music, yet simultaneously retains the ability to direct its flow through micro-decisions concerning, for example, dynamics, articulation, timbre, or the narrative flow of the form. This approach is also characterized by a loss of sense of time, a high level of concentration, and a harmonization of actions with the creator's internal predispositions. During improvisation, the performer strives to enter a state of creative engagement comparable to a state of meditation—simultaneously observing themselves and distancing themselves from their thoughts, emotions, feelings, desires, etc., while simultaneously delving as deeply as possible into their psyche, body, and sensation. In this way, intention combines the abstract nature of music with a focused, personal, and communicative dimension. It allows for simultaneous flow with the flow of the music and exerting a degree of control over it—through conscious decisions regarding the shaping of the musical work's elements—dynamics, tempo, and articulation. Such a state of double consciousness creates a kind of creative tension that is one of the driving forces of artistic development - surrendering to inspiration and/or intuition and actively shaping its course.

The metaphor of a river current aptly captures the nature of the experience the performer navigates. It can lead into potentially infinite realms of imagination, but the musician's task is to skillfully steer—tuning in to those areas that convey the intended message and modulating the musical energy so that the listener can decipher the meanings contained within. Intention here becomes the link connecting abstract sound structures with emotional, personal, and symbolic dimensions, and the process of improvisation itself appears to be a field of dynamic interaction between consciousness, the subconscious, and the surrounding world of sound.⁹⁴

⁹³ Kabat-Zinn, J. *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. New York: Hyperion 1994, s. 3-7

⁹⁴ Sandor, G., *About playing the piano - gesture, sound and expression*, Warsaw 1994, pp. 203-205

Intention becomes, so to speak, the key that connects three levels—(1) the abstract language of sound; (2) the subjective emotional perspective; and (3) the objective neurophysiological mechanism that enables real-time synchronization. In this light, improvisation is a complex cognitive and neuroaesthetic process in which the creator enters an optimal state of coordination between body, mind, and the surrounding sonic environment.

Research on the neurobiology of improvisation provides important data on the mechanisms underlying such an experience - it shows that the areas of the brain responsible for spontaneity, creativity and expression are activated⁹⁵An fMRI study of professional jazz pianists revealed that during improvisation, critical control and self-correction (dorsolateral prefrontal cortex activity) are weakened, while structures related to emotional processing and musical imagination (medial cortex) are simultaneously activated—reflecting a state of flow when excessive self-control disappears and spontaneous creativity emerges.⁹⁶In practice, this means shifting from a control mode to an associative-expressive mode, which promotes spontaneity and originality in formulated musical ideas. Other studies show that emotion cues (e.g., instructions to improvise sadly or joyfully) alter the functioning of brain structures, including the connections between creativity systems and limbic emotion processing.⁹⁷, and VBM studies show that creativity in improvisation correlates with smaller gray matter volume in areas related to memory and sensory integration (including the hippocampus)⁹⁸. However, research on the perception of improvisation highlights listeners' ratings of spontaneity, which correlates with their musical experience and general empathy, and activation of the amygdala suggests emotional involvement in the

⁹⁵Daikoku, T. *Shaping the Epochal Individuality and Generality: The Temporal Dynamics of Uncertainty and Prediction Error in Musical Improvisation*, Competing Interests Author Contributions 2023, s. 4-6

⁹⁶ Limb, C. J., & Braun, A. R. *Neural substrates of spontaneous musical performance: An fMRI study of jazz improvisation*. PLoS ONE, 3(2), e1679. 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0001679> s. 2–8

⁹⁷ Mcpherson, M. & Barrett, F. & Lopez-Gonzalez, M., Jiradejvong, P. & Limb, C. *Emotional Intent Modulates The Neural Substrates Of Creativity: An fMRI Study of Emotionally Targeted Improvisation in Jazz Musicians*. Scientific Reports. 6. 10.1038/srep18460. 2016

⁹⁸ Arkin, C., Przysinda, E., Pfeifer, C.W., Zeng, T. and Loui P. *Gray Matter Correlates of Creativity in Musical Improvisation* Front. Hum. Neurosci. 13:169. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2019.00169 2019

perception of improvisation.⁹⁹

In neurobiological terms, the metaphor of a river current as a flow of music corresponds to a dynamic network of neural activity in which interactions occur between the resting state network (*default mode network*), responsible for generating associations and ideas - and the executive network (*executive control network*), responsible for shaping the structure, organization, decision-making and selection of musical material in real time¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the performer's task is not only to surrender to this flow, but also to attempt to precisely fine-tune their own cognitive and emotional processes in such a way that intention can direct spontaneous creation.

It's also like running a marathon without a pre-determined direction, without knowledge of the terrain, only with the thought of stumbling upon magnificent sites along the way. The performer trains their body to be capable of running such a marathon and gives it control—intuitively guiding them to various areas, while the improviser, acting as an observer, ensures they don't run into obstacles. To better illustrate the experience the performer experiences, let's imagine this marathon runner also puts on a blindfold and runs at full speed ahead, relying solely on the intuition of their body, which mysteriously senses their surroundings. Music isn't physically visible; we can feel the vibrations of the air—the eardrum converts these vibrations into electrical signals, which the brain interprets, thus making the sound real in our perception of the world.¹⁰¹

In summary, musical improvisation emerges as a multidimensional and interdisciplinary phenomenon, in which the aesthetic, psychological, and neurobiological spheres intertwine in the process of simultaneous creation and reception. A central element of this process is intention—understood as the conscious direction of musical expression—serving as an internal regulator of the flow of form, dynamics, and narrative, creating a space in which the artist can both discover and

⁹⁹Engel, A. & Keller, P. *The Perception of Musical Spontaneity in Improvised and Imitated Jazz Performances*. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2. 83. 10.3389/fpsyg.2011.00083. 2011

¹⁰⁰ Berkowitz, A. & Ansari, D. *Generation of novel motor sequences: The neural correlates of musical improvisation*. *NeuroImage*. 41. 20018, 10.1016/j.neuroimage.2008.02.028. - pp. 538–541 – brain structures involved in generating new phrases

¹⁰¹Plack, C. J., *The sense of hearing*, Fourth edition, Routledge 2024, s. 60-86

consciously shape infinite possibilities of expression. From the perspective of performance aesthetics, intention is what unites these processes into a coherent whole and constitutes a bridge between the sonic structure and the emotional and symbolic layers, giving improvisation direction, coherence, and individual character. By using intention, the performer balances freedom of expression with conscious control of the narrative, allowing for a balance between spontaneity and the discipline of form-making.

2.4 Symbolic dimension

Analogous to the structure of a musical work, the motivic development, complexity, and multifaceted elaboration of musical material can be interpreted and expanded in a symbolic dimension. This becomes a metaphor for discovering one's own potential and self-knowledge through experience. The transformation and gradual deepening of sonic material can reflect the process of human personality development, where existential motifs are subject to reinterpretation and adaptation. As in music, when the sonic fabric is consciously shaped and transformed, people throughout their lives have the opportunity to revisit the fundamental themes of their identity, discovering themselves in many ways, on increasingly deeper levels. This is illustrated by the evolution of musical motifs—from simple, primordial form to richly developed structure. Similarly, in human life, the guiding themes of experiences undergo transformation, leading to a fuller self-awareness and the realization of creative potential.

Music perceived as a vibration of the soul and a new paradigm of consciousness in the experience of jazz piano—these are far-reaching conclusions interpreting music as vibration, acoustic resonance—as an existential and community-building experience. A medium that reflects the fundamental mechanisms of existence, and in the context of live improvisation, the co-vibration of listeners and performers creates unity among the participants in the musical act, opening a space for delving into consciousness and building a communal experience.

Contemporary research on music perception indicates that sound perceived

emotionally, sensorially and somatically can generate a state of trance (co-vibration) between the listeners and the performer¹⁰²Improvisation becomes a process of shared experience, where openness to the flow of emotions and feelings is a key element of the experience. In this context, and also as a cognitive process, improvisation can be treated as a kind of reading of current data from the surrounding world – from the acoustic and social reality (in the context of the participants' participation in the improvised work). The performer receives stimuli, interprets them, and processes them, then synthesizes them into a musical narrative. They do this here and now – in real time, and therefore are fully attentive (*mindfulness*) and conscious¹⁰³what is happening (*awareness*), however, it requires a certain mental preparation, which may refer to the cognitive dimension (expanding musical thinking patterns), emotional dimension (experiencing the bond with oneself and with others) and transcendental dimension (understanding music as a universal vibration of the world through intuition¹⁰⁴). Not being merely technically spontaneous and constituting an epistemic-ontological act, improvisation creates a field for discovering sound relations that symbolically refer to the relations governing reality and for reaching the structure of reality.

Music can also have therapeutic or transformative aspects - as MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell note: making music together promotes well-being and strengthens social bonds¹⁰⁵Improvisation, as an open form and limited only by the imagination or technical capabilities of the performer, can function as a therapeutic process.¹⁰⁶The expression of emotions, their processing, and the release of tensions, traumas, or blockages—similar to psychological therapies—points to the potential for deepening self-awareness and spiritual transformation for both the performer and the listener. The metaphor of the ocean, river, or stream depicts the experience of fluidity and flow, while mastering the instrument, the ability to improvise, and observing the stream of consciousness can be compared, for example, to learning to swim.

¹⁰² Becker, J. *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2004 s.117-122

¹⁰³Babauta, L., *Zen Habits - A Little Book for the Rest of Your Life*, Helion SA 2019, pp. 112-116

¹⁰⁴ Pressing, J. *Improvisation: Methods and Models*. [w:] J. A. Sloboda (Ed.), *Generative Processes in Music* (pp. 129–178). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988, s.147-149

¹⁰⁵ MacDonald, R., Kreutz, G., & Mitchell, L. (Eds.). *Music, Health, and Wellbeing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012., s. 76-82

¹⁰⁶Kokowska, M. *On the phenomenological experience of music*. 2022 s.64-67

Value system

The last and key artistic (symbolic) element of the theory of improvisation is the system of values (love), which results from the attempt to systematize the processes that take place in the creator during a spontaneous act - from the source, in the state of *flow*, in flow. During musical experiments, spiritual (transcendental) experiences appear - i.e., the feeling of being cut off from the body - being an observer of oneself, being a listener of one's own performance, and even observing this observer (listener). This is related to deep listening to reality, feeling it with compassion, as well as the distinction between passive listening and active hearing (*hearing a listening*¹⁰⁷).

By opening up the possibility of experiencing a shared experience, a value system emerges that elevates the concept of intentions added to music and creates an indisputable (in the experimenter's opinion) reason to implement them in music and in life. This is consistent with Christopher Small's approach, who views music as music—a social practice that constitutes relationships and values, not a finite artistic product.¹⁰⁸ Improvisation can be understood as a sonic equivalent of the present moment. As Dolan, Sloboda, and Juslin note, music is an emotional mirror of experience¹⁰⁹, and in this case, observing the sound, observing your feelings, the flow - without judging them and without imposing any frameworks or patterns, references, versions.

¹⁰⁷ Oliveros, P. *Deep listening: A composer's sound practice*. IUniverse 2005. s. xv-xxiv

¹⁰⁸ Small, C. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press 1998,

¹⁰⁹ Sloboda, J., & Juslin, P. *Handbook of Music and Emotion*. Oxford University Press 2018, s.45-48

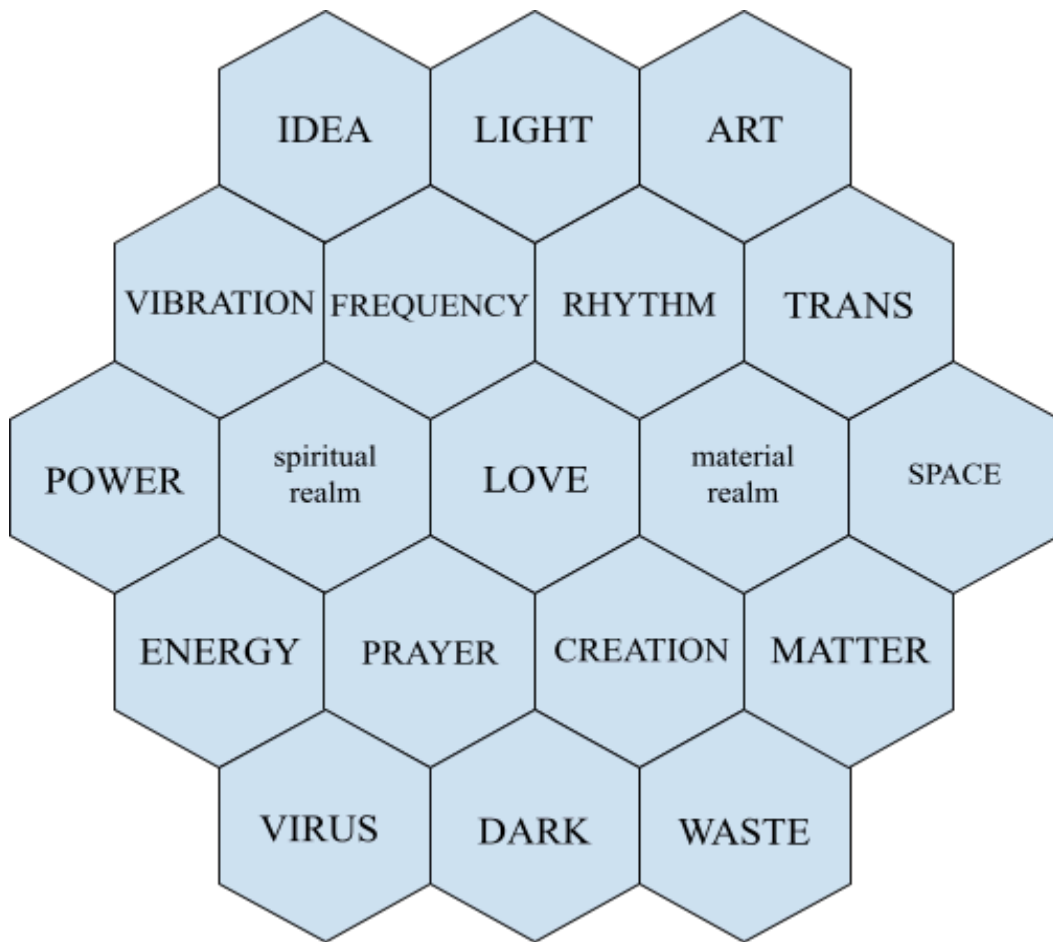


Diagram 4. Sketch of the author's value system

The concept of love as an organizing principle of the improvisation process requires particular methodological caution. This term, although useful at the metaphorical level, lacks a clear status in scholarly discourse and can lead to interpretive imprecision. Therefore, in this work, the concept is interpreted as a relational category, referring to the ability to integrate elements into a holistic structure—an artistic vision of what is happening within the performer. This is an expression of the exploration of the nature of music, the nature of improvisation, the nature of the piano, and the result of an empirical exploration of the phenomenon of improvisation itself. It leads to the creation of a specific matrix of values and improvisation in accordance with it. At the center of the system, love emerges, the result of the interaction of two circles stemming from the duality of human nature. These circles combine to give meaning to the construction of a life of love. Both extremes

must be understood so that they can interpenetrate, digest, grow, and bear fruit—achieving balance, harmony, and unity. Growing in love generates light, where both idea and art exist, and apparent waste and viruses (any creations that disrupt previous work) become fuel for the transformation of darkness into light—a motor for arranging chaotic and useless elements into some form—idea or art. The entire system is also based on opposites—light and darkness, spreading in different ways: a constructive idea and a destructive virus, from which, in turn, beauty grows.¹¹⁰ Art and the ugliness of waste. The material realm refers to corporeality, sensuality—the creation of rhythm, entering into trance, the functioning of matter in physical space, and through creation, one part of love arises from this side. The spiritual realm captures the metaphor of vibrational frequency, which reveals the metaphysical power that moves energy through prayer and creates the other part of love. It is also a metaphor for creating something from nothing while simultaneously growing through experiencing the process itself, where music, being a vibration, is a means of transmitting information of boundless love through consciously given intention—a composition of love.

The creator's responsibility becomes to skillfully guide the music—to build, not destroy, and to guide it toward the light using all available means. The value system can also be understood here as a kind of score that the improviser strives to reveal, or to strive to realize intentions in the work as a conceptual framework for entering a creative state of improvisation. In this case, the author's intentions and the work's intentions become identical, and the meaning lies in understanding the workings of the value system in order to control the musical flow. In this way, the work can become, in a sense, universal, presenting a general image of love, but each time different, from a different perspective, depending on the participants in the improvisation. Therefore, each improvisation is essentially different, taking into account the multitude of variables.

¹¹⁰Stankiewicz, D., *Saving beauty - the lost reality of contemporary aesthetics*, [In:] *Sacred Music. Beauty Saved and Saving*, Gdańsk 2016 pp. 20-25

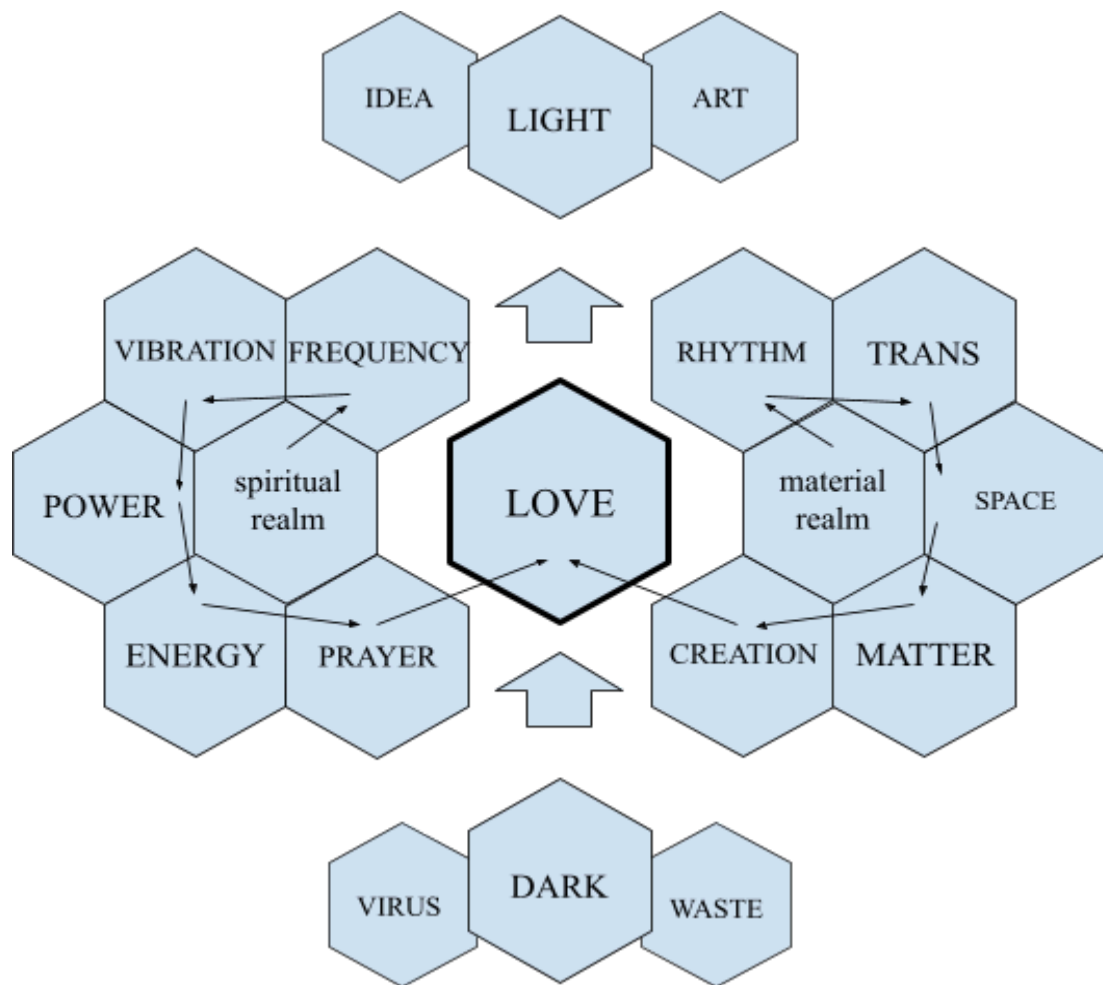


Diagram 5. Sketch of the author's value system - expanded version

The combination of all elements creates a matrix of love, which constitutes a universal artistic message in conveying intention during improvisation. It creates a holistic, closed system, where each element has its place, meaning, function, usefulness, and purpose—apparent waste is a driving force, being appropriately utilized with the intention of transformation. Thus, the value system functions as an important aspect and foundation for experiencing the creative process, guiding modern improvisation. These are idealistic, perhaps even utopian, assumptions, yet they become the sole purpose—the only important reason for creating music, for seriously exploring the principles governing music and the absolute. These transcendent assumptions also have a certain connection to the work of Alexander Scriabin, with his mystical approach and

perception of music as, in its essence, salvation for the world.¹¹¹ Here, the symbolic saving element is precisely the matrix of love, which identifies the path and the goal, as Exupery wrote - the goal, being an illusion of the wanderer between one mountain peak and another, becomes the path, and only this path counts.¹¹²

¹¹¹Zukowski, P., *The Evolution of Musical Language in the Piano Works of Alexander Scriabin*, Poznań 2015, pp. 13-21

¹¹²Saint-Exupery de A., *Fortress, XLIX*, Warsaw 2012, pp. 133-134

3. Artistic work - improvised solo piano act

*It's this freshness, a certain quality that can only be achieved through improvisation—something you can't achieve in any way through writing. It has to do with the edge. Always being on the edge of the unknown and ready to jump. And when you go there, you have all your years of preparation behind you, all your sensitivity and resources prepared, but it's a leap into the unknown. If you discover something through it, it has a value that I think can't be found in any other way. I value it more than what you can prepare. But it also fascinates me, especially in the way it can take you to the edge. What I write is meant to lead you safely to that very edge, so you can go outside and discover these other things. But it's really these other things that interest me, and I think they form the basis of jazz.*¹¹³

3.1 Improvisation in the context of the concept of large piano forms in contemporary jazz piano

Namely, multidimensional artistic maturation can be attributed to the process of achieving the ability to perform solo piano improvisation. This maturation is both performance-wise, compositionally, and personally—leading to the point where the improviser is able to independently perform solo piano improvisation. Achieving this stage/level requires, among other things, advanced piano skills and an internal discipline of form-creation. Such an attempt to organize creative playing does not mean abandoning the essence of improvisation, but rather directing it toward an intentional goal, which is to follow a specific path—experiencing the improvised work in its entirety, from beginning to end. This signifies the unity of path and goal, and the tension between spontaneity and on-the-fly formation can deepen the artistic dimension. With this perspective, the concept of error ceases to exist.¹¹⁴ Even if a sound or consonance

¹¹³ “That is a freshness, a certain quality, which can only be obtained by improvisation, something you cannot possibly get from writing. It is something to do with the ‘edge’. Always being on the brink of the unknown and being prepared for the leap. And when you go on out there you have all your years of preparation and all your sensibilities and your prepared means but it is a leap into the unknown. If through that leap you find something then it has a value which I don’t think can be found in any other way. I place a higher value on that than on what you can prepare. But I am also hooked into what you can prepare, especially in the way that it can take you to the edge. What I write is to take you to the edge safely so that you can go on out there and find this other stuff. But really it is this other stuff that interests me and I think it forms the basic stuff of jazz.”. [tłum. własne za:] Bailey, D., *Improvisation: Its nature and practice in music*. Da Capo Press 1992. s. 57

¹¹⁴ Marcos, T. *Cognitive processes in improvisation*. w Pressing, J. *Cognitive processes in the perception of art*, 1984 p. 354. and also mentioned by Misk, E. *Process and End Results: A Paradigm Shift in Improvisational Narrative Formation Based on Scratches for Eight Musicians*, 2024, s. 66, 68

appears inappropriate to the performer or listener at a given moment, it is, in a sense, fine-tuned or resolved by the succession of subsequent sounds. Thus, it is virtually impossible to determine which sound is inappropriate, because each sound, even seemingly inappropriate, acquires meaning through further development and viewing it through the context of a larger musical process, or even a retrospective perception of the entire work. Thus, improvisation can appear as a self-organizing artistic process, in which meaning is revealed only in a holistic perspective, and the category of error is redefined—each sound or consonance can be incorporated into the semantic structure through appropriate context and further development of the musical material. Full acceptance and development without evaluation as an error can foster a state of experience where limiting excessive cognitive control can foster the generation of new ideas.

The original act of improvisation did not assume any form or have any clear structural assumptions. However, analyses of the performance processes during experiments indicate the emergence of natural and inevitable formal divisions. In the long term, the spontaneity of improvisation takes on the shape of structures with complex architecture. Over years of practice—through improvisation, perfecting the form of communication and the construction of content—an image of a form resembling sonata form has emerged.¹¹⁵ or suite¹¹⁶ In this sense, it becomes possible to observe analogies to great classical forms – the sonatas of Debussy or Scriabin could serve as historical references in their intentional pursuit of perfection and beauty. In the field of contemporary jazz piano, there are several examples of attempts at consciously creating improvisation as a process leading to the development of great forms, also comparable to classical sonata or symphonic models.¹¹⁷ - interpreted as the seeds of a cyclic or sonata form¹¹⁸ - understood as the principle of development of musical material through tension, contrast and thematic return¹¹⁹ In this way, improvisation approaches classical concepts of musical construction, in which the development of thematic

¹¹⁵ *sonata form*, [in:] Śledziński, S., (ed.) *A small encyclopedia of music*, Warsaw 1968, pp. 963-965

¹¹⁶ there is no clear comparison, especially since research shows a lack of uniformity in the definitions of sonata or suite forms (Kosz, S., *Symbolism of form in Alexander Scriabin's piano sonatas* [In:] *Piano Music VII*, Special Works 42, Gdańsk 1987, pp. 65-67)

¹¹⁷ *symphony*, [in:] Śledziński, S., (ed.) *A small encyclopedia of music*, Warsaw 1968, pp. 1001-1002

¹¹⁸ Schoenberg, A. *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. London: Faber & Faber 1967, s. 200-213

¹¹⁹ Rosen, C. *Sonata Forms*. New York: W. W. Norton 1988, s. 262-283

material and returns to primary motifs give the whole a formal and semantic coherence – while remaining a free creative act in its essence.

The large improvised form is intended to resemble the form of a specific piano symphony, which is a response to the tradition of organ improvisation, where the ability to maintain the coherence of the material was a test of the improviser's mastery.¹²⁰ The Creator, acting *in time*, created forms with complex architecture, often of a character *Almost* symphonic. Transferring these practices to the piano allows for the development of this idea and the introduction of contemporary harmonic and rhythmic means.

The final result of this process is a work with an elaborate and multi-part structure, characterized by the organic development of sonic material, which is consequently subject to constant verification and transformation. Motif work is fundamental here – in the spirit of Beethoven's motivic development.¹²¹ understood as a systematic transformation of musical material and consistent reference to the initial motif. It functions as a structural core from which the performer-composer draws inspiration and returns in many forms – initial presentation, development, variant transformations, re-expositions (including partial re-enactments of the main theme). Individual stages, referring to the thematic material, both literally and with changes, maintain narrative coherence and ensure a wealth of variants and transformations.¹²² In this way, one motif sets the tone for a creative expression.¹²³ becoming the structural axis, and the thoughtful elaboration reveals a multitude of possibilities, ideological and intentional unity, and the ability to remain within a seemingly limited creative environment (a single motif) – which demonstrates the compositional artistry of the improviser. Such a theme becomes, in a sense, a pretext – a trigger point for creating music. Another form of reference is variational development, where the improviser, using motivic material, implements a process in which each subsequent section stems from the previous one and introduces changes, while maintaining narrative continuity.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Whitmer, T.C., *The Art of Improvisations*, M.W.&Sons 1941 . 45-64

¹²¹ Rosen, C. *Sonata Forms*. New York: W. W. Norton 1988, s. 356

¹²² Schoenberg A., *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, London: Faber & Faber, 1967., s. 58-62

¹²³ may concern one of parts of the work or even its entirety - although this is very demanding on the part of the improvising performer in terms of a full-scale improvised composition

¹²⁴ Schoenberg A., *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, London: Faber & Faber, 1967, s. 167-174

The goal of improvisation, understood in this way, is free expression and conscious direction of the creative process, which leads to the creation of a coherent form. From a perceptual and cognitive perspective, implementation requires the performer to develop advanced mental structures (in relation to improvised music), enabling long-term planning and, consequently, developing compositional skills.¹²⁵ At the same time, the listener's perception of this type of improvisation is based on recognizing patterns, tensions, and relationships between musical elements, which allows for the experience of the form as a holistic process.¹²⁶ Unlike classical music, where solo pianist concerts outnumber those in chamber ensembles, in jazz the proportions seem to be reversed: ensembles dominate, while solo recitals are relatively in the minority and are often treated as an artistic phenomenon. This situation raises questions about how to maintain the listener's attention throughout an improvised concert through the truth of expression and authenticity of the message, which in music psychology literature is associated with the category *flow* and optimal autotelic experience¹²⁷.

General characteristics of contemporary jazz pianists

Due to its artistic impact in the context of the subject matter of this dissertation
¹²⁸Keith Jarrett is paramount here. His pianism encompasses many facets and creates a form that pianists often practice in a different sense—as individual pieces (more or less improvised) that form an entire concerto, or indeed as large improvised forms, but devoid of tonality and relative intention.

Keith Jarrett has completely redefined the interpretive, polystylistic, technical, and spiritual depth of piano performance. In addition to his moving solo performances of jazz standards and brilliant trio concertos (and other configurations), he has also

¹²⁵ Lehmann (red.), *Psychology for Musicians*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, s. 132-137.

¹²⁶ Kramer, J. *The Time of Music*, New York: Schirmer 1988, s. 218–220

¹²⁷ Csikszentmihalyi, M., *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York 1990, s.67-70

¹²⁸ described here as external types of activities within a broader internal process of one's own - a large improvised form for solo piano

performed works by Bach and Mozart.¹²⁹ - is one of the pioneers of the practice of full-scale solo concerts, entirely improvised. Cult *The Köln Concert* from 1975 (one of the best-selling jazz albums in history) is an example of spontaneous musical narrative, in which music based often on simple motifs develops into long, meditative, trance-like forms. The artistic work grows into a transcendental act.¹³⁰, in which the improviser becomes the medium of the music's flow, and creative awareness involves fully surrendering to the moment and allowing the music to happen on its own. What is visible here is a very natural and organic process, developing over time on principles reminiscent of the structure of classical forms. Jarrett's improvisation is characterized by an extensive, long-distance narrative, in which motifs and themes recur and are processed in variants or integrated into a whole, reminiscent of a multi-movement suite.¹³¹ or even a piano symphony. He can also uncompromisingly achieve a *stateflow*¹³² which is passed on to the listeners, which could partly explain the phenomenon of its enormous artistic impact.

Peter Elsdon points out Jarrett's use of several different types of recognizable styles¹³³ within the framework of the construction of improvised concerts - *ballad style* lyrical and without a clear pulse, *folk ballad style* showing the simplicity of harmony and constant rhythm or the so-called *blues vamp style*—strongly rhythmically embedded in the character *jazzblues*. Gerald Early points to the idiom of universal folklore (something that sounds familiar but cannot be attributed to a single tradition)—similarities to gospel, blues, as well as baroque counterpoint, Glass's minimalism, or Schoenberg's atonality. He says that Jarrett, on the one hand, draws on the American jazz idiom, but on the other, fits into the European ECM aesthetic of the 1970s. In this way, he becomes a symbol of transatlantic jazz—Jarrett's music became

¹²⁹ Gelly, D., *Jazz Icons - illustrated biographies 1900-2000*, Olesiejuk Publishing House 2013, p. 93

¹³⁰ Early, G.; *Keith Jarrett, Miscegenation & the Rise of the European Sensibility in Jazz in the 1970s*. Daedalus 2019; 148 (2): s. 78

¹³¹ *suite*, [in:] Śledziński, S., (ed.) *A small encyclopedia of music*, Warsaw 1968, pp. 992-996

¹³² Blake, J. *Improvising Optimal Experience: Flow Theory in the Keith Jarrett Trio*. <https://doi.org/10.17615/187e-c798> 2016, s. 65-71

¹³³ Elsdon, P. *Style and the Improvised in Keith Jarrett's Solo Concerts*, *Jazz Perspectives*, 2:1 1008 ,s. 54-63

fashionable and profound, contributing to a shift in the understanding of European jazz and gaining new audiences around the world.¹³⁴

*

Analyzing the many solo performances of improvising pianists, one might conclude that each of their styles is undoubtedly a multi-layered system that develops a certain contemporary eclecticism with polystylistic elements—combining jazz with, for example, classical music, ethnic music, electronica, hip-hop, and minimalism. It's impossible to name each artist individually, so a small selection will be described here.¹³⁵to demonstrate a certain example of authorial language and artistic expression. Keith Jarrett's case revolutionized solo piano music and demonstrated the construction of emergent form with modal organization of material. However, in his performances one can also find atonality or a message with a certain aggressiveness, and it was primarily in this context that Cecil Taylor worked, creating free jazz forms based entirely on clusters, a dense texture that in itself created the character of the work. In turn, in a sense, McCoy Tyner played in a contrasting way, with a strong and rigid technique, yet remaining tonally and formally structured (closer to the style of Joachim Kühn or even Bill Evans). This is also reflected in the piano playing of Kenny Barron, Ahmad Jamal, and the more stylish playing of John Hicks, John Lewis, and Tommy Flanagan. Eldar Djangirov and Fred Hersch also adhere to the stylistic idiom of jazz, and Hersch also practices counterpointing for freshness and surprise.¹³⁶Andrew Hill *Shapes Progressive Jazz Piano*¹³⁷ and is close to Paul Bley, Abdullah Ibrahim and Mal Waldron. Remaining within the jazz idiom, Oscar Peterson's legacy is currently being continued by Jesus Molina and Hiromi Uehara with their extroverted virtuosity and stage energy, as well as electronics. Joey Alexander creates in a similar style, but with a more relaxed approach.

Uri Caine combines idiomatic references with free jazz and atonality, creating a large improvised form played with a single string, yet it remains clearly linked to a

¹³⁴ Early, G.; *Keith Jarrett, Miscegenation & the Rise of the European Sensibility in Jazz in the 1970s*. Daedalus 2019; 148 (2): s. 76-78.

¹³⁵ This characterization does not aspire to be complete or exhaustive, either quantitatively or qualitatively, of the topic of contemporary jazz pianists.

¹³⁶ Heinen, B.B., *Counterpoint In Jazz Piano With Specific Relation To The Solo Work Of Fred Hersch*, 2019

¹³⁷ Reyman, C.E., *An analysis of selected improvisations by Andre Hill and the development of progressive jazz piano, 1959-2005*, , 2011 s. 20-29, 87-89

specific form. Craig Taborn, on the other hand, practices an escape from a specific idiom (texture, sonorism, abstraction, ostinato).¹³⁸), Kris Davis, Ethan Iverson, Benoît Delbecq and Sylvie Courvoisier do not have a specific style and create their own personal language, also referred to as avant-garde with preparations, formal and sound experiments.

Modern research highlights differences in pianists' rhythms¹³⁹, which suggests a significant role in shaping individual language. Marcus Olgun, in turn, draws attention to the importance of gospel music and its organ performance in the language of a jazz pianist.¹⁴⁰, and closer to soul are Robert Glasper and Cory Henry. Tigran Hamasyan includes polyrhythms and irregular meters in his language¹⁴¹, elements of rock, metal, and minimalist music, as well as those derived from Armenian tradition. Vijay Iyer describes his approach to these types of improvisation styles and his theoretical-cognitive perspective¹⁴², and Shai Maestro relies on poetic expression and attention to dynamics and articulation. Versatile multi-instrumentalist Jacob Collier and the Grand Prize winner impress with their stylistic bread the *Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz International Piano Competition*- Jahari Stampley.

Another strong inspiration in the context of this dissertation is the musical language used by Brad Mehldau (although he does not create large-scale improvised forms, he has developed a very rich, stylistically rich improvisational palette useful for creating such a form). He relies on motivic development and multi-layered harmony, and his improvisations represent a more analytical and structurally organized model, strongly inspired by classical piano music (which certainly had a great influence on the development of many jazz pianists).

Sergio Pamies writes about the relationship between Debussy and the

¹³⁸ Boyle, A., *Flexible Ostinati, Groove, and Formal Process in Craig Taborn's Avenging Angel*. Music Theory Online. 27. 10.30535/mto.27.2.6. 2021

¹³⁹ Cheston, H., Schlichting, J.L., Cross, I., Harrison, P.M.C., *Rhythmic qualities of jazz improvisation predict performer identity and style in source-separated audio recordings*. R Soc Open Sci. 2024 Nov 13;11(11):240920. doi: 10.1098/rsos.240920

¹⁴⁰Olgun, C. M., *The Implementation of Contemporary Gospel Organ and Keyboard Techniques in Jazz Piano Improvisation, Accompaniment and Composition*. Open Access Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington. Thesis. <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.26122297>, 2024, s. 156-188

¹⁴¹ Schumann, S., *Asymmetrical Meter, Ostinati, and Cycles in the Music of Tigran Hamasyan*. Music Theory Online. 27. 10.30535/mto.27.2.5. , 2021

¹⁴² Iyer, V., *Improvisation, Temporality and Embodied Experience*. Journal of Consciousness Studies. 11., 2004, s. 159-173.

innovations of post-bop pianists¹⁴³ (Bill Evans, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner), who in turn contributed to the further development of the genre. Chick Corea, on the other hand, was inspired by the theories of Bela Bartok (e.g. the Axis theory¹⁴⁴), which shaped his rich harmonics and individual style, combined with Spanish music. The influence of native Cuban music is clearly audible in Gonzalo Rubalcaba and Danilo Perez, and the Latin-American style is most profoundly revealed in the playing of Michel Camilo. On the Scandinavian side, in a slightly hazy and melancholic style - Michael Wollny, Tord Gustavsen, Esbjörn Svensson (with a solo improvised album). The minimalist trend using electronics is cultivated by Nils Frahm, Kit Downes and, in Poland, Hania Rani. As for the Polish piano scene - the closest to the topic of the dissertation is Sławomir Jaskulke, creating improvised forms based on meditation, as well as Piotr Orzechowski with references to preluding, or inspirations from Ravel and the wide technical possibilities of Dominik Wania. Direct references to Chopin's music are in Mieczysław Kosz, Władysław Sendecki, and Leszek Możdżer, and for classical music in general (and actively performing it) – Marcin Masecki. In turn, the jazz tradition is continued by Adam Makowicz, Wojciech Niedziela, Kuba Stankiewicz, and many others.

Ultimately, however, in every pianist across the world and in Poland, one can hear, to a greater or lesser extent, echoes of the jazz idiom (e.g., bebop, post-bop, modal jazz, free jazz, fusion, neo-soul, modern jazz)—each of them carries a distinct rhythmic, harmonic, and phrasal language. The jazz idiom encompasses, but is not limited to, most improvisational activities. Therefore, analyzing the language of other modern pianists allows us to see a broad interest and a move beyond tradition. Its vestiges vary depending on individual pianists, but a common thread is the ability to create a musical narrative without prior preparation. The improvisational aspect of the traditional jazz idiom relied on limited sonic material—for example, a single scale (e.g., minor pentatonic, major bebop, Lydian dominant) or several within a tonal center. Later, increasing amounts of reharmonization and tonal modulations (temporary and sustained) were employed, and consequently, chordal functions began to be treated not as part of cadences or tonal progressions, but as independent, individual chords that,

¹⁴³ Pamies, R. S., *Deconstructing Modal Jazz Piano Techniques: The Relation between Debussy's Piano Works and the Innovations of Post-Bop Pianists*. Jazz Education in Research and Practice. 2. 2021, s. 76–105

¹⁴⁴ Lendvai, E., *Bela Bartok - An analysis of his music*, London 1971, s. 1-16

when combined with others, created a certain artistic expression. Currently, jazz music draws from an increasing number of styles, becoming the center of their encounter and dialogue, which has always been its core and immense value.

In summary, the general observations that shape modern jazz piano music boil down to certain extremes in the use of expressive means and can be defined on various levels. Harmony develops, on the one hand, as an emergent process, not a set of chords, and on the other, as written compositions that spontaneously evolve during performance. From a rhythmic perspective, time in improvisation appears as a field of metric tension, devoid of a fixed grid, but can also be a simple groove upon which complex rhythmic figures are superimposed. The development of an idea, motif, or phrase is a crucial aspect of improvisation, with counterpoint and motivic development increasingly dominant. From a formal perspective, the structure of pieces is determined by a specific performance, without predetermined time or quantitative frameworks, and is based more on modules, main points, or a sketchy outline of form, or even the absence of a rudimentary plan. Structures are the result of the improvised composition process and are ultimately not accidental, as they arise intentionally, stemming from a conscious perception of form.

3.2 Performance polystylists

The goal of a polystylistic approach is to develop textural and historical awareness and deepen skills through stylistic practice. It also creates opportunities for acquiring the ability to freely improvise in various musical idioms (not just the jazz idiom) and for developing performative concepts and reflection on perception. Research in music psychology suggests that combining formal analysis with active improvisational practice and a daily, systematic process promotes the internalization of styles and increases performance fluency, which is a prerequisite for implementing polystylistic strategies in real time.¹⁴⁵The polystylistic nature of the improviser's

¹⁴⁵Lehmann, A. C., Sloboda, J. A., & Woody, R. H. *Psychology for Musicians: Understanding and Acquiring the Skills*. 2007 s. 62-71

expression emphasizes the use of more than just the jazz idiom and aims to expand the musical language in order to understand existing musical traditions.

Polystylistics in improvised performance here and now is a complex practice that transforms historical resources into a new, contextualized musical narrative. It becomes an instrument of critical dialogue with tradition: it both reaffirms the connection to the past and transforms it into new forms of meaning. Research on this phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach—combining historical musicology, form theory, ethnomusicology, the psychology of perception, and performance practice. It is one of the foundations of the creative and performance technique crucial to this dissertation.

Polystylistics in improvised performance should be understood as an element of musical practice, allowing for the acquisition of experience and the development of improvisational tools. These can be developed through exercises and attempts to apply them to improvised experiments. They can function as textural references to eras and techniques, and as a musical practice involving the conscious combination and/or citation of harmonies, textures, compositional techniques, and aesthetics from different historical periods and styles. In the context of live improvisation, polystylistic references to textural material mean that the performer does not recreate or directly reference a completed historical work, but rather utilizes its specific features (as elements of musical language in the live creation process) as a semantic and syntactic resource.

In performance practice, exercises in this understanding of polystylistics arise – several basic types of mechanisms can be distinguished where imitations and references are implemented: (1) quotation or paraphrase – indirect evocation of fragments of existing works or their syntactic transformation (e.g., a passage from baroque music woven into a modal jazz improvisation); the quotation here serves as a semantic marker that the listener can recognize and interpret in a new context; (2) recontextualization of technical and formal means – transferring compositional techniques to the improvised idiom, where they play a generative role for the current material; (3) textural synthesis – may occur with the simultaneous superposition of layers from different eras, leading to

interference effects and new sound qualities; (4) performative stylization – adaptation of articulation techniques and performance movement recognizable for a given era.

The practical preparation of the contractor includes:

- systematic work on textures characteristic of different eras (e.g. the motific work of Romanticism, 20th-century sonorism);
- exercises in rapid recontextualization of material: e.g. transposing fragments into different styles, processing quotations into alternative textures;
- development of motivic memory and the ability to expand short sentences into longer structures;
- aural and analytical practices, studying scores and recordings representative of particular styles and practical attempts to combine them in improvisation.

The exercises aim to develop the improviser's own tools within the context of musical traditions, but not directly related to them. They aim to understand the workings of certain principles prevalent in various styles, so that they can create their own rules during improvisation (by recognizing the many paths and possibilities, and also recognizing the desire for direct reference).

The experiment involves searching for techniques that are useful (functional in this improvised work) for use in improvised compositions, due to their practicality and ability to build tension, convey intentions, or convey emotion. Polystylistic references also encompass the practice of improvising forms, or the general characteristics of the styles in which the forms were created.¹⁴⁶ Textural exercises include:

- Baroque and classical textures - preluding, working on basso continuo and simple two-voice polyphony (awareness of counterpoint)¹⁴⁷, baroque figuration and ornamentation or the improvisation of miniature periodic phrases in the classical style and classical homophony and cadences as a way of closing a phrase;

¹⁴⁶ Orlow, T., *Interpretation of creative activities in organ improvisation: from own research*, Values in Music 5, 2013, pp. 167-174

¹⁴⁷ Wegman, R.C., Menke, J., Schubert, P., *Improvising early music*, Leuven University Press 2014. s. 96-117

- Romanticism and 19th-century piano idioms, analysis of Chopin and Field's nocturnes, works by Liszt and Schumann - textural and expressive techniques, development of a short motif based on chromaticism and rubato), cantilena motifs in a slow tempo, development of a short motif modeled on romantic fantasy, as well as virtuoso etudes with octaves, passages, dramatic contrasts;
- impressionism (symbolism) - the possibility of reflecting the impression of the real world, sound painting (Debussy, Ravel, Szymanowski);
- 20th century avant-garde and free jazz - experiments with clusters, sonorism and piano preparations, practicing improvisation without a tonal center, focusing only on color and dynamics (Cage and Ligeti), the textural method is a specific equivalent of the theme, not the melody itself and the power of contrast as a means of expression, the controlled aleatoricism of Witold Lutosławski;
- sonorism, preparations - searching for experimental techniques of non-standard sounds in the context of piano preparation using non-obvious means that do not function in jazz piano;
- exercises in cyclical forms - improvised polystylistic suites, e.g. in the form of a baroque prelude - blues - scherzo - romantic nocturne - free finale, transformation of textures and rhythm, narrative thinking, each part is a chapter in the told story, maintaining motivic coherence, a clear and coherent structure of the whole, effective transitions between parts, experiencing full responsibility for the form of improvisation;
- folkloric influences - melodies containing mazurka, highlander elements, ornaments;
- drawing sounds from other pianists - analyzing the ways of creating artistic expression in order to extract its specific principle of operation in a given musician, searching for stylistic features and historical references;
- Perceptual and reflective integration Goal: consciously listening to oneself and analyzing the improvisation process;
- polyrhythmic, polymetric and polytonal exercises;

- harmonic exercises without the use of an instrument - only notation on a piece of paper;
- consequently, the development of individual polystylistic strategies.

In summary, artistic experimentation involves the use of multiple techniques and styles, with the decision or intuition as to which one to use made on the fly, in accordance with the musical process (in order to present it as authentically as possible at a given moment, as one of many experiments). It does not, however, imply the direct use of stylistic or formal references—polystylistic exercises are a way to explore various creative paths and find one's own way. It involves improvising in such a way that the impression of a previously composed form emerges—planned from beginning to end, whereas the plan for improvisation is merely to maintain an intentional and mental flow.

Music itself is a transcendental experience and requires no artificial divisions. However, out of respect for previous generations of composers, the current task is not to replicate or repeat predecessors, but to draw as deeply as possible from their legacy and move forward to reinterpret the work that is a musical piece. As the name suggests, a piece was created by someone using available tools. This is also where improvisational tools come into being, allowing the beauty of music to be revealed in its absolute form. Capturing the moment of creation, the moment of inspiration, becomes a challenge and a requirement.¹⁴⁸, the moment of entering a creative state - the freshest situation is a concert with real listeners. Recording *live* is the most evocative image of this method, as an example of true devotion to music in favorable conditions - with an audience, rich, inspiring acoustics and a great instrument.

¹⁴⁸Sloboda, J.A., *The Musical Mind - Cognitive Psychology of Music*, Warsaw 2002, pp. 139-148

3.3 *Live in Kalisz, Hymns vol. II Hymns of Power* - form composition

The initial assumptions of the musical experiment - an artistic path that created the need for improvisation and led to its recognition as the ultimate factor in shaping musical material, where the initial assumption is to enter a creative state thanks to an original method and to give intention¹⁴⁹, which intuitively leads through a multitude of possibilities (formal and sound solutions) showing the path as a goal in itself - the process becomes as important as the final result¹⁵⁰. Adopting these initial assumptions allowed for a certain systematization of expectations for this part of the experiment and provided a formal framework and (coherent) character for the entire artistic expression. This serves as a confirmation of the statement – the goal is the path, the path is the goal – that guided the entire experiment. This approach reinforces the aspect of personal development – growing as a person and an artist, and contributing to the musical cultural heritage.

The compositional path (adopted in this work) presents itself as a multi-stage creative process, the sequence of which reveals an open structure called the discovery of vibrations (a proper name taken from one of the stages). It can be described as follows:

1. Entering a creative state (creative concentration and expanded perception -*flow state* i *deep listening*);
2. Discovering vibrations - a metaphorical term for capturing the energy and original structure of sound (understood as a vision or matrix of the absolute of music) exploring the inner image of music;
3. Reading music - recognizing its internal logic and development potential, recognizing the essence of current reality and transferring it to music;
4. Giving intention - defining the internal purpose and direction of the dialogue with music;

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, E. *Intents and purposes: philosophy and the aesthetics of improvisation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2019. s. 57-64

¹⁵⁰ Improvisation is not merely a means to an end – it is the end itself. The creative process has an autonomous and transformative value. As Csikszentmihalyi points out, the greatest value of creativity lies in the experience of action itself (Csikszentmihalyi, M. *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. HarperCollins 1996, s. 113–116).

5. Creative execution - the introduction of an individual artistic language and means of performance and expression that give the work a unique character - the composition takes on a real shape;
6. Naming the music and arranging it into a whole, which serves both an artistic and documentary function;
7. Finalization of the artistic work – production and release of the CD album.

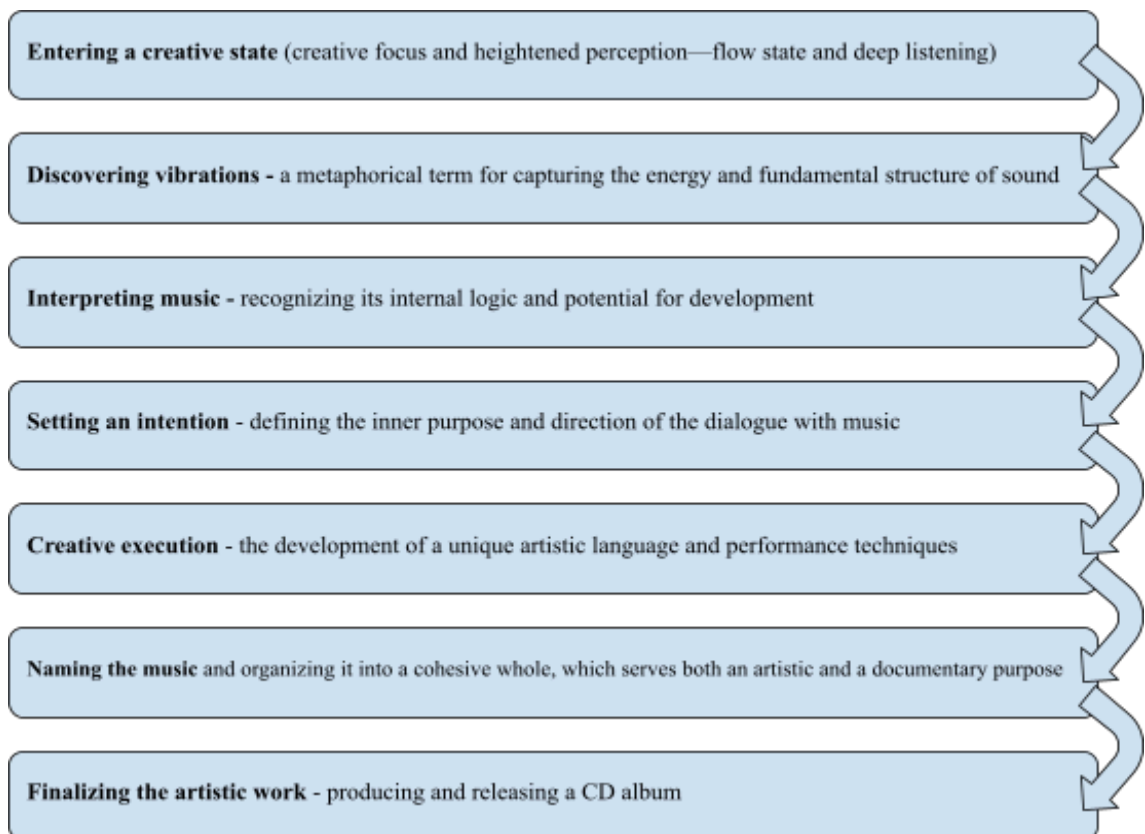


Diagram 6. Compositional path

Musical properties are holistic in nature in relation to the described theory of improvisation and, being the core of the experiment, they provide a developmental direction, although the presence of listeners - these and not others, in these and not other conditions - an image of reality consistent with this exact moment of performance, capturing the image of this moment and presenting it in a musical dimension - is still an important factor.

Formal structure of an artistic work: *“Live in Kalisz, Hymns - vol. II Hymns of Power”*

Analysis and interpretation of the recording in terms of the practical application of improvisational techniques—abstraction, intention, and polystylistics—as well as their overall symbolic form—a message revealed during the journey and after listening to the entire piece. The artistic work illustrates the author's practical application of the method of entering a creative state and employing improvisation and re-improvisation techniques. The omission of the musical notation stage, and the consequent lack of a score for the artistic work, is a deliberate action resulting from the nature of improvisation, which is created ad hoc and does not require additional visualization of the notes played, while remaining creative and vibrant.¹⁵¹

Album description attached to the inside CD cover:

‘Live in Kalisz - Hymns vol. II Hymns of Power - is a live concert album recorded during the 52nd International Jazz Pianists Festival at the Center of Culture and Art in Kalisz.

This is the second album in the "Hymns" series, which calls for a search for personal vibration, personal power, and life's path. Its goal is to present an original creative method based on reading the music contained within all concert participants—listeners and performers alike. It is a record of the results of a musical experiment utilizing improvisation and re-improvisation techniques as the primary methods of creative expression. Discovering vibrations and setting intentions are stages of meditative dwelling in sound—the beginning of the concert is an introduction and invitation to enter a comfort zone and a state of creative engagement. It then enters unknown territories, which lead through diverse soundscapes—exploration and a willingness to embark on one's own path, which in turn leads to the exploration of power. The ultimate goal itself is to travel this path—to experience through music and improvisation, to discover the next stage of Love.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹For the purposes of this dissertation, it can be stated that the symbolic score is the audience and the reality perceived by the performer/improviser at a given moment.

¹⁵²author's own description [after:]Kisiel, D.*Live in Kalisz, Hymns vol. II Hymns of Power*[audio documentary], Vibrant Records 2026, CD

Live in Kalisz, Hymns - vol. II Hymns of Power

N o.	Title of the song	Character	Comment	Time
1.	<i>Announcement</i> [Zapowiedź]	(improvisation)	verbal announcement of the concert	02'22''
2.	<i>Introduction</i> [Wprowadzenie]	improvisation	meditation, concentration, entering a creative state	04'56''
3.	<i>Home</i> [Dom]	reimprovisation	first Hymns from vol. I, mini variation form	03'41''
4.	<i>Discovering Vibrations</i> [Odkrywanie Wibracji]	improvisation	almost suite shape, motivic development	17'37''
5.	<i>Path</i> [Ścieżka]	improvisation	polyphonic form, motivic development of the main theme	11'18''
6.	<i>Power</i> [Moc]	reimprovisation	sonata form, arranged (The hymn was premiered)	09'27''
7.	<i>Love II</i> [Miłość II]	reimprovisation	another concert (The hymn has already been performed but not previously recorded)	06'29''

[Total duration - 55:50]

Table 2. Formal structure of an artistic work

General time breakdown of the album *Live in Kalisz*: quantitative - improvisation 43'51" and re-improvisation 19'37", so the ratio is about 2:1 with improvisation dominating. However, the qualitative division, i.e. the detailed ratio of planned composed sounds to improvised ones - is approximately 6:1, previously prepared elements constitute in this case about 15% of the entire work. But to further increase the

influence of improvisation on the final effect of the work - it must be said that the re-improvised Hymns - i.e. *Home, Power, Love II*, were woven into the flow of improvisation without prior full certainty of the intention to use them. This means that the performer has a resource of compositional sketches – that is, partially arranged musical themes reflecting certain states of mind (discovered during the previously performed process of discovering vibrations). Therefore, the intention was to use specific Hymns only and exclusively when conditions for their use occurred. Of course, this is a subjective choice and intuition of the improviser, but it is also a fully intentional action – so that the Hymns are not obligatorily woven into the flow of music, but result directly from it – and when the preparation for their introduction was sufficiently adequate to justify their introduction. This means a certain kind of preparation, but with the condition of using improvisational tools. This dependence is also the reason for the multitude of experiments undertaken (recordings of performances).*live*) - only the result of this experiment was considered satisfactory and became an artistic work of this treatise, fully presenting the author's creative method (its current form).

Description of individual parts¹⁵³:

1. **Announcement** - The first item is a verbal announcement by the concert's author, which simultaneously serves as a part of introducing the audience to the musical experiment – a suggestion that directs the reason and principle of the improviser's action, so that the audience is at least partially aware of the ensuing process. It is the proper beginning of the concert, a preparation for entering a creative state, and also shortens the distance between the performer and the audience, which in the case of this experiment is a condition for its full realization. It is also a challenge for the improviser to show, even if only a small part of what the music can express through words, but it is undoubtedly important for its very resonance and the coherence of the performer's intentions. It informs the way of entering a creative state – singing together with one sound. The idea itself is not innovative, of course, but in the case of a jazz solo piano

¹⁵³ bformal presentation and general description of creative methods were observed after the recording was made

concert, it is certainly *new*- an unexpected element of the concert. After the announcement, the musical part begins and continues until the end of the album, with applause and an encore as the final element of the work.

Announcement text:

*Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, I'm very pleased to be performing here. This is a special evening for me, as it's my first time performing on the main stage (of the festival). Thank you very much for the invitation. My performances are fundamentally improvised, so improvisation is at the forefront. While practicing improvised music, it became clear to me at a certain point that the most important thing is to simply feel together, as naturally as possible. That's why live performances with improvised music are the most important – you really matter, the audience matters, and the fact that I can do this live is simply very important. I'd also like you to help me a little, to try to create such a community, such a bond, such a unity, simply through the simplest of things – maybe not even singing one note – but feeling together in that one note. You can hum, you can sing, you can do it. murmuring Sing to yourself. I also like to say that this is a way to enter a certain creative state—simply feeling that voice. It's not about singing technique at all, but simply about finding your first voice—and that's the first step into music in general. I'd like to try an experiment of entering a creative state of improvisation—let's try singing one common note together, vibrating together. Let's try to feel, imagine this sound somewhere in space—imagine it as a creation, something creative that comes from our hearts, from our souls—something that allows us to feel a sense of community—and I invite you to experience the music. Thank you!*¹⁵⁴

2. **Introduction** - This is the first improvised composition, aimed at a delicate, minimalist introduction to the musical genre. A string preparation element is introduced – damping with a felt wedge (typically used as a piano tuning tool), which creates a characteristically warm and soft touch. This absorbs the string vibrations caused by the hammer attack, while simultaneously producing a rich overtone (with the sustain pedal pressed) from the entire instrument – all the strings (over 200 in total) and the soundboard. Subtle repetitions of a single note create a kind of tranquil trance, intended to focus the attention and relax all participants in the improvisation. The melodic line unfolds (comparable to motivic weaving) – developing from a single note. It is based on three notes,

¹⁵⁴own statement as an announcement of the concert and the first track on the Kisiel D. album. *Live in Kalisz...*

which, as they develop, are repeatedly reharmonized, building tension and narrative.



Example 3. Reharmonization of the motif *Introductions* (0'52''-3'14'')

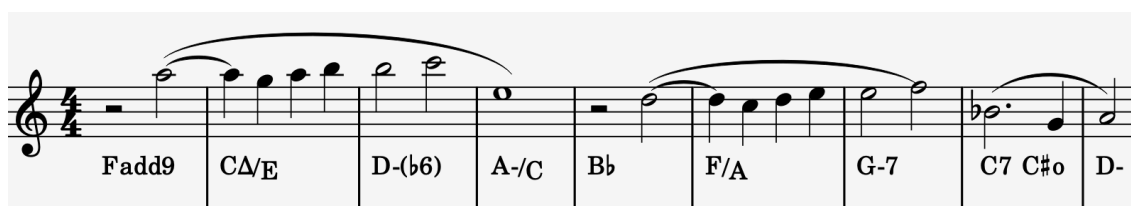
In the background there is a constant repetition of a muffled sound (a bass drone note¹⁵⁵), to depart from it at the end and modulate based on the first motif, but then return to the initial tonality, imperceptibly introducing another theme - the next part - *Dom*.

The first two parts¹⁵⁶ are intended to give the work a meditative character, to prepare the entry into a creative state of improvisation - into flow (*flow i deep listening*), and also build unity and trust (working both ways) among its participants. All this in order to prepare for the musical journey that will follow.

3. **Home** - the first process of re-improvisation - The hymn, which was the only one previously recorded (on the previous album in the series). The first process of re-improvisation takes place here - processing the theme with development *Almost variation* - each repetition generates additional changes, but remains within the original theme. The intention of this movement is to provide a simple, recognizable melody - a theme that reveals the personal character of the music, becoming something familiar.

¹⁵⁵ *bourdon*, [In:] Śledziński, S., (ed.) *A small encyclopedia of music*, Warsaw 1968, s. 146

¹⁵⁶ both verbal and musical - complementing each other in a way



Example 4. The main theme of the *Home* hymn

The intention is to feel at home and relaxed. This is the beginning of the story, a stepping stone, entering the flow of the music, revealing a comfort zone, and imbuing listeners with a sense of safety and peace. All this prepares them for the next stage, which involves entering unfamiliar territory, entering improvisation – to expect the unexpected.

4. ***Discovering Vibrations*** - the second form, entirely improvised, its name refers directly to one of the stages of the compositional process. It is the longest movement of the concerto and, although it is divided into distinct sections¹⁵⁷, but uses the same or similar motivic material, ending with a clear change of this material only after a longer period of time. Therefore, part 4 can be considered as part *Almost* cyclical, referring to the suite form in its size and individual episodes:

- a) the beginning is an entry into unknown areas, it introduces new musical material that opens up space for improvisation; the melody is led with an ostinato, dynamic accompaniment, as well as the transition of the melody to the left hand and the mutual counterpointing of both planes; it is also a reference to piano playing Brad Mehldau (solo performance) *My favorite*

¹⁵⁷ The division of the entire concerto into individual pieces could also be: reduced - combining the 4th movement with the 5th (but a different symbolic character is revealed here, so a division was introduced to emphasize this); or increased into individual contrasting sections (however, this turned out to be not necessarily the right task, as it would create about 20 individual pieces, which fragments the message, and this was not the improviser's intention - each of them does present different images or emotions, although after longer reflection and analysis - they combine into one larger form).

*things*¹⁵⁸), where there are repetitive chords, a lack of a uniform meter, and rhythmic development based on a variable ostinato – successive polymetry. There is a symbolic vibrating, opening to inner searching, opening the flow and deepening the experience of emotions, asking questions about one's own potential;

- b) [from 04:10] - appears string preparation - muting with the hand using a thin felt strip, opening and closing; creating three sound planes - (1) melodic in the higher register, (2) prepared, rhythmically dense, and (3) melodic in the lower register, where registers (1) and (3) work motivically and counterpoint; this symbolizes wandering through the labyrinth of emotions, searching for meaning, indecision and defining expectations for oneself;
- c) [from 07:00] - recitative as in Keith Jarrett's piano (e.g. in the first part *The Köln Concert*) - rich ornamentation, dynamic and melodious phrases of the right hand on the sustain of left-hand chords, lyrical motifs, and then two counterpoint lines; in the next stage; this means searching for delicacy and firmness within oneself;
- d) [from 10:15] - appears ostinato groove in irregular 7/8 meter, developed into polyrhythm¹⁵⁹ - changes in the meter in the right hand in relation to the left, rhythmic permutations, there is also an opening of the extreme registers of the piano and vibration; a multitude of sound planes appear, constantly fluctuating and mutually reinforcing; it signifies a symbolic search for decisiveness and openness to changes, to the new, to the unexpected;
- e) [from 14:40] - more types preparation - using a hard rounded object¹⁶⁰ and a thin felt strip - the rounding creates the possibility of an effect *vibrato* and detuning by gently pressing the strings, which causes a minimal change in their tension - vibration of the strings (the effect of sound

¹⁵⁸ Mehldau, B., *My favorite things (live)*, 10 years solo live, [audio documentary], Nonesuch Records Inc. 2015, CD

¹⁵⁹ *polyrhythmia*- the principle of simultaneous use of several different and equivalent rhythmic divisions in a given fragment of a piece (after: Panek, W., *Mały słownik muzyka luzowej*, ZAKR - Warszawa 1986 p. 87)

¹⁶⁰ specifically elongated rounded plastic Allen key handle

sitar), detuning, creating an effect of otherness, and the next preparation - plucking the strings with a fingernail (harp sound effect), the appearance of the theme, a clear motif developed in the next part; also using preparation in the form of tapping with a rubber hammer¹⁶¹ in the frame of a piano and a string in a low register; this is supposed to illustrate the slow discovery of one's potential, introduce an aura of mystery - opening unknown doors in the darkness.

5. **Path** - the third part, fully improvised, follows from the previous one and continues it (at the end of the 4th part the motif of the theme of the 5th part appears). It symbolizes finding the theme, and therefore entering the right path, and is divided into three sections:

- a) main topic entry *quasi* polyphony (*fugato*¹⁶²), presenting the theme using polyphony with elements of counterpoint, motivic development of the theme, contrast, development of sound planes; presenting the image of the path, understanding the goal, also understanding that this goal is the current path;

The musical score is written for piano in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major (two flats). It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a supporting line. The second system continues the polyphonic texture with more complex counterpoint. Labels (T1), (T2), and (T3) are placed below the staves to indicate specific thematic entries or sections.

Example 5. Polyphonic theme *Path*

¹⁶¹to be precise, it is an own design - a standard drumstick, with a rubber handle for attaching the exhaust system of the brand's cars *Ford*

¹⁶² *fugato*, [In:] Śledziński, S., (ed.) *A small encyclopedia of music*, Warsaw 1968, p. 333

- b) [from 03:38] -getting into the groove like Keith Jarrett¹⁶³, in a tranceriff in the left hand, there is further motivic development, polymetry¹⁶⁴, then the right hand plays passage harmonies like in Brad Mehldau's work (e.g. in the solo performance *Paranoid Android*¹⁶⁵), the first rudimentary presentation of the theme of the last movement appears; it symbolizes walking the current path with courage to reach the point where a deep sense of power appears - rudimentary presentation of the theme of the 6th movement (*Power*);
- c) [from 07:50] - preparation - a chain on the strings giving a vibration effect, a bass vibration, a second, more explicit presentation of the theme; it marks the entry into the final phase, opens the last stage, shows the feeling of incoming energy and power, as well as the search for determination, courage, potential and arranging oneself to finally accept one's power.

6. **Power** - second re-improvisation process - A hymn never performed or recorded before - premiere performance. A large, stormy and virtuosic form, arranged as a form *Almost* sonata - 4-part with the last *grand finale* (or perhaps a better equivalent would be romantic ballads¹⁶⁶ Chopin in its relatively open form while maintaining thematic coherence). The intention of this movement was to fully showcase the technical and pianistic possibilities inherent in the improvisation process, as well as to push the improviser's current performance capabilities to their limits. This is the most orchestrated form, yet it still allows for considerable freedom in its detailed execution (which also depends on individual performances). It begins with the decisive entrance of the main theme and, as planned, is divided into four movements:

¹⁶³e.g. part II A or II B [In:] Jarrett, K., *The Köln Concert*, [audio document] ECM Records 1975, CD

¹⁶⁴polymetrics - the principle of simultaneous use of several different metric divisions in a work (after: Panek, W., *A small dictionary of popular music* (ZAKR - Warsaw 1986, p.87)

¹⁶⁵ Mehldau, B., *Paranoid Android*, Live in Tokyo (deluxe edition), [audio documentary], Nonesuch Records Inc. 2004, CD

¹⁶⁶ *ballad*, [in:] Śledziński, S., (ed.) *A small encyclopedia of music*, Warsaw 1968, pp. 83-84

- I. decisive showing the first main theme, the transformation of the theme; symbolic presentation of the depth of the soul, accustoming oneself to the enormity of the potential of power, talking about one's own power and developing it;



Example 6. The first main theme of the *Power Hymn* (melody only)

The main theme was arranged based on the author's performance technique - developed in the search for accompaniment structures in small rhythmic values at a fast tempo, it uses triplet filling.

Example 7. The first theme of the *Power Hymn* (with accompaniment)

- II. [from03:10] - showing the contrasting the second main theme - calmer, gentle but still energetic; it illustrates learning to be gentle in using one's power, in controlling energy, in controlling one's emotions - so that they don't overwhelm, in controlling them, in controlling one's power - to feel light like a bird, in order to use the power to fly and not fall despite challenges, learning to maintain one's power while flying - the right hand flies, while the left one strengthens the first theme;

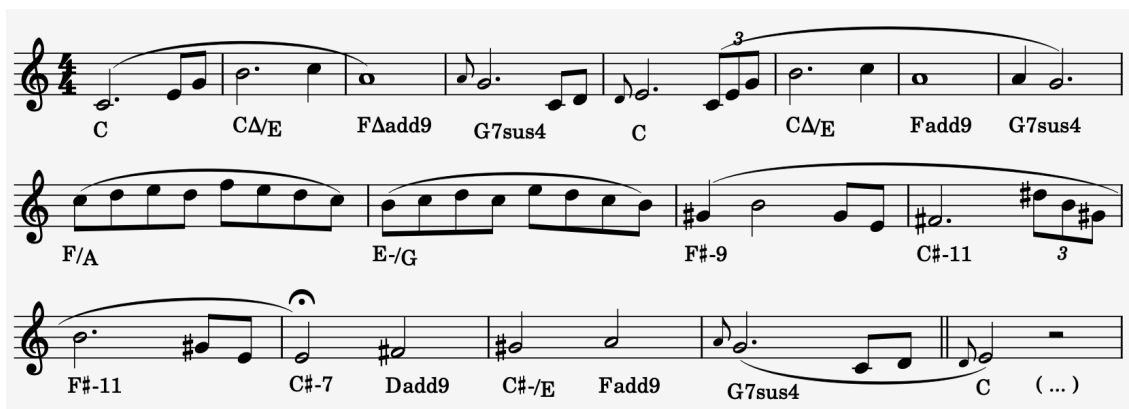


Example 8. The second main theme of the *Power* hymn

- III. [from05:00] - a metric difference appears - polyrhythm, the left hand maintains the eighth-figure progression, and the right hand reaches the heights of speed and technique, opening up metric relationships; the improvised part symbolizes mastering the power of flight and lightness;
- IV. [from06:40] - *gfinal round*, reprise and return of the first main theme with minor changes, virtuosic ending, strong chords, cadence and strong ending; symbolizes a profound feeling of the greatness of power and potential, leading to entering into full power.

WITH the end of this part's form comes at 08:40 - then there is applause and a few words from the master of ceremonies (Andrzej Zieliński) and a transition to the next piece for an encore as the end of the concert.

7. **Love II** - third re-improvisation process - The hymn was performed during several other concerts *live*, but not recorded and not released yet; it has a ballad character (like Keith Jarrett's e.g. *Danny Boy (Live at Teatro Comunale, Modena / 1996)*¹⁶⁷) - a clear lyrical melody, delicate accompaniment of the left hand, while the right hand develops the theme and improvises around it.



Example 9. The main theme of the *Love II* hymn

Exceptionally lyrical and deeply moving, the hymn is played with the intention of forgiveness, unity, and love. The ending is soothing, lullaby-like, instilling a sense of peace and joy. It leaves all participants in the improvisation feeling relaxed, complete, and fulfilled in achieving their goal. Ultimately, it aims to lead them to discover love for themselves, and consequently, love for those around them and the world at large.

Hymns

The re-improvised compositions (Hymns) were never written down - only in the form of memorized sketches, clear themes and motifs do they survive in the resources of current improvisational tools. The only form of recording is the recording of a series of albums, the first of which (*Hymns of Time*) contains 12 reimprovised compositions (including *Dom*). This method of recording also stems from an artistic concept - each

¹⁶⁷ Jarrett, K., *Danny Boy (Live at Teatro Comunale, Modena / 1996)*, *A Multitude Of Angels (Live)* [audio documentary], ECM Records 2016, CD

time a current image resulting from the re-improvisation of a given melody is recorded - and therefore each time different, changed (more or less).

Hymns as part of an artistic work—this is a manifestation of a pre-improvised compositional element that meets melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and formal assumptions, within which the sonic fulfillment was determined by these—but with permission for change, opening, and greater improvisation within. The concept is the foundation, while the miniatures (Hymns) exemplify the method (one of the results of creating according to the method), isolating individual improvisations as vibrations that pass through the performer's interior, resonating with their life experience, and as a result of a renewed act of re-improvisation (evoking the image of improvisation, imagining creative playing, or reinterpreting the emotion or intention contained in the remembered improvisation), they present themselves to the audience as a composition for solo piano (also as part of an experiment). Here, the compositions are intended to reveal individual vibrations, capture individual threads of improvisation, refine them, and perform them in an improvised form from the present moment.

While representing one of the results of using the author's method, they are not the final product, but rather a record of a certain branch of mainstream improvisation, brought to fruition in the form of a full CD album. Their goal is also to create an accessible and understandable message and form, yet one that is not complex to understand. It doesn't require perceptual practice to understand, nor does it require delving into the art of improvisation. Nevertheless, it is still a manifestation of high culture, confirming the art of improvisation in its expression.

To sum up - the discovery of vibrations as a compositional process gave shape and enabled the creation of a great form *Almostsymphonic*, combining forms such as the variation, sonata, suite, and ballad. The whole can be compared to a neo-Romantic return to classical forms, but the modern form aims to avoid direct references and develop a unique understanding of the form through its own technique of improvisation and re-improvisation. In detail, each of the sub-movements of the artistic work lasts approximately 3-4 minutes and contrasts, continues, or introduces new material.

3.4 Reception of the concert performance

JazzForum¹⁶⁸

author: Szymon Ratajczyk

The fifty-second edition of the International Jazz Pianists Festival in Kalisz, held November 20-23 of last year, was the first to be organized by artistic director Krzysztof Herdzin. He maintained the tradition established in previous decades, with three concerts each evening on the main stage of the Kalisz Center for Culture and Art. (...)

Friday, November 21

The evening opened with a focused, intimate, and from the very first moments, palpably emotional recital of "Hymns" by Dominik Kisiel – a pianist who sought sonic relationships in his playing, subtle harmonizations that formed naturally beautiful harmonies. His improvisations had a meditative quality. Dominik entered a state of deep mindfulness and followed the sound, allowing it to lead in unexpected directions. Echoes of the Tricity jazz tradition could be discerned in his compositions, appearing not in a cry of yass rebellion, but in his approach to form – openness and the courage to leave space, which contributed to a coherent, highly personal artistic statement. (...)

Calisia.pl¹⁶⁹

(...) The evening began with Polish pianist Dominik Kisiel presenting his project "Hymns" for solo piano. His performance – a solo recital – was an intimate, emotional journey into the world of improvisation, subtle moods, and sonic narratives. Kisiel, known for his extraordinary musical sensitivity, immersed the audience in the festival's atmosphere in an elegant, thoughtful, and deeply moving way. It was this artist who captivated Jan Ptaszyn-Wróblewski during the 2018 "Bielska Zadymka Jazzowa"

¹⁶⁸S. Ratajczyk, *Kalisz 2025*, JazzForum 1-2/2026, pp. 26-29

¹⁶⁹For: Calisia.pl, *The 52nd Jazz Festival kicks off with a bang! World jazz stars captivated the Kalisz audience*. Available online: <https://calisia.pl/start-52-festiwalu-jazzowego-z-rozmachem-world-jazz-stars-killed-kaliska-audience,74941>, [accessed May 12, 2026]

Competition, noting his extraordinary harmony, classical-inspired chords, and ease of improvisation. (...)

Kalisz.pl¹⁷⁰

(...) Dominik Kisiel, said to be Leszek Możdżer's successor, inaugurated the stage events with his solo project "Hymns" - improvisations based on the achievements of classical composers and outstanding jazz pianists. (...)

JazzJournal¹⁷¹ (UK)

author: Szymon Ratajczyk

Friday evening began with a solo recital by Dominik Kisiel, who presented music filled with focus and intimacy, devoid of ostentatious gestures. His playing was characterized by subtle dynamics, thoughtful phrasing, and a natural flow of form. Echoes of the Tricity jazz tradition were discernible in it – not as an aesthetic manifesto, but rather as a way of thinking about structure and narrative.

Portalkalisz.pl¹⁷²

author: Krystian

(...) The concerts began with Dominik Kisiel, a representative of the young Polish scene, who led the audience through focused, almost meditative phrases. His playing—sensitive, full of harmonic explorations and references to nature, classical

¹⁷⁰For: Kalisz.pl, *The jazz festival in Kalisz is behind us!* Available on the Internet: <https://www.kalisz.pl/dla-resident/news/culture/jazz-festival-in-kalisz-for-us,74615>, [accessed May 12, 2026]

¹⁷¹Own translation after: S. Ratajczyk, *52nd International Jazz Piano Festival, Kalisz, Poland*. Available online: <https://jazzjournal.co.uk/2026/02/12/52nd-international-jazz-piano-festival-kalisz-poland/> [accessed 12 May 2026], *Friday evening began with a solo recital by Dominik Kisiel, who offered music of focus and intimacy, free of ostentatious gestures. His playing was shaped by subtle dynamics, attentive phrasing and a natural unfolding of form. Echoes of the Tri-City jazz tradition could be heard – not as an aesthetic manifesto, but rather as a way of thinking about structure and narrative.*

¹⁷²For: Krystian, *Musical worlds in Kalisz: the second night of the 52nd International Jazz Pianists Festival* Available online: <https://portalkalisz.pl/20251123354634/muzyczne-swiaty-w-kaliszu-second-night-of-the-52nd-international-jazz-pianists-festival>, [accessed May 12, 2026]

music, and even less obvious sources of inspiration—spread the evening with subtle tones. (...)

Conclusions summarizing the conducted research

The implementation of an original creative method developed during the doctoral program is a musical experiment, one of its outcomes being a process of musical creation unconstrained by strict formal, harmonic, or stylistic constraints. It provides a unique space for shaping and deepening the performer's musical awareness, encompassing not only theoretical knowledge but also an intuitive understanding of sound processes and their perception. Unlike idiomatic improvisation, rooted in a specific stylistic language, open improvisation, as defined in this dissertation, offers the performer unlimited freedom to explore the time and space of sound. It allows for transcending the boundaries of traditionally understood harmony, rhythm, and form, and, on an artistic level, allows for the development of an individual musical language and illustrates the shaping of the artistic expression of contemporary jazz piano.

From a research perspective, open improvisation and precise intentions can be viewed as a laboratory of musical awareness, in which the musician confronts a multitude of potential artistic choices, and each creative gesture generates new possibilities. This process fosters not only the development of performance competences but also the formation of a reflective attitude toward music as a cultural and cognitive phenomenon. The improviser demonstrates the ability to spontaneously construct a musical narrative while simultaneously maintaining control over technical skills and utilizing the overall image of the contemporary jazz idiom. Although this term is no longer unequivocal and encompasses increasing diversity, and music created in this context does not necessarily refer to the genre's roots—swing feeling or characteristic harmonic structures—it still retains spontaneity of expression, a niche artistic language, and unconventional ways of using instrument sounds, which are still relevant and can stylize the concept of the contemporary jazz idiom.

The process of creating a personal sonic experience is complex and can be analyzed from many perspectives. It can be described as a cognitive and aesthetic act and involves creating a unique musical narrative at the moment of performance. Therefore, it is a temporal phenomenon, also dependent in part on the momentary state

of the performance.¹⁷³Being a unique process of creation in which the improviser is confronted with a multitude of choices, the act of creation reduces this quantity to a single actualization of musical reality, which can be compared to the phenomenon of superposition reduction in quantum mechanics.¹⁷⁴It's worth noting that analogies to quantum theories can be a unique interpretive tool—they highlight the unpredictability and multiplicity of potential creative paths, and their observation materializes one of many possible probable versions of the work. Each entry into a creative state creates a unique musical structure and a singular perceptual experience.

Entering a creative state of improvisation can be considered from the perspective of the psychology of creativity through the flow theory, *flow* that is, an optimal creative experience characterized by full concentration, unity with the flow of music, a sense of control, and deep immersion in the process. It is particularly useful for analyzing improvisation as an autotelic and intersubjective manifestation of artistic expression in an undefined form, yet determined by certain factors known to the conscious and experienced improviser. It fosters the creation of a personal sonic experience – on the one hand, it is an individual experience – the pianist creates a unique musical structure that is an emanation of their sonic imagination, aesthetic, and emotional experiences, and on the other, this process is strongly conditioned by the performative context, i.e., the acoustics of the concert space and the dynamics of the relationship with the listeners. It is this feedback between the individual and the environment that allows for the deepening of the personal experience and their artistic vision. Also through the trend *deep listening*- developing the ability to actively listen and analyze one's own playing in real time, strengthening the ability to predict and make decisions in conditions of uncertainty, building new thinking patterns, deepening the relationship between the performer's body sensations and the instrument, and building a dialogue with the audience in which a common space of musical meanings is shaped.

¹⁷³ Berliner, P. F. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. University of Chicago Press 1994. s. 205-210

¹⁷⁴Kafatos, M., & Nadeau, R. *The Conscious Universe: Parts and Wholes in Physical Reality*. New York: Springer 2000, s.45-51

The state of improvisation is a moment of transcending everyday consciousness, in which performance decisions are made almost automatically, simultaneously in full harmony with the flow of the musical narrative, in response to external stimuli processed by spiritual intention and immersion in the process. Each entry into a creative state leads to the creation of a one-time perceptual experience that cannot be fully reproduced or reconstructed. One way to achieve partial or updated reenactment may be to consciously feel the emotions hidden behind fragments of musical expression. Such a process has been called the discovery of vibration—a phenomenon emerging from dynamic interactions between the individual and the performance context, ultimately building an emergent and autotelic character of the process. This is a musical vision arising from meditative concentration in sound.

In light of the research and personal observations, improvised music becomes a phenomenon with potential that the artist must sense, interpret, and infuse with intention, and then communicate to the recipient. An artistic work stems directly from an artistic approach that utilizes a mental process. The result is a kind of capturing the act of composition in a single moment, writing a work on the fly, where the ultimate effect is an improvised form stemming from a range of experiences, many years of practice, and questioning the purpose of performing improvised music. It is the result of focused intention (one might even say a kind of prayer directing spiritual energy), resulting in the improvisation of reality during the act of improvisation, which is a vertical approach to the composition process.¹⁷⁵ implemented using polystylistic techniques.

The essence of this act is the shared love of all participants in improvisation – the fulfillment of intentions generates the opportunity to open up to the music and, at the same time, to love and compassion. The performer's role is to create a comfort zone so that all participants can feel safe – in this sense, to create a kind of improvisational ceremony, to create a musical path that is simultaneously being discovered (allowing for discovery through such circumstances). Or, to put it differently, the observer, with their baggage of experience and conscious attitude, changes the outcome of the experiment – the intentions with which they approach creation are the driving force behind the

¹⁷⁵Zukowski, P., *The Evolution of Musical Language in the Piano Works of Alexander Scriabin*, Poznań 2015, p. 14

creation (or, in this case, the discovery) of music that meets the requirements of these intentions – the resulting music is generated precisely by focusing on specific intentions. Thus, intention becomes an equal meaning of composition, in which the deliberate arrangement of elements in order to achieve an image of experiencing love as a carrier of human intelligence, striving to build life understood in the sense of evolution and continuous growth through light, in which photons, being wave-particle particles, behave like a wave, existing in observed positions. As a process of spontaneous composition, it balances with the concept of improvisation, and man, being part of a great mechanism, when he turns off his own ego is able to create and compose reality, one might say - with the power of the universe.

Artistic observations suggest that the improviser enters a certain state of mind where the music itself guides the creator, who, by allowing this, simultaneously pushes forward and provides the appropriate musical context. In this way, they evoke various states of mind, or rather, provoke them to seek them out, and, in a sense, invite listeners to join in the search, to explore through intuition, emotion, and experience. A provoked listener can also enter an altered state of consciousness, experiencing extrasensory sensations, triggered by a sensory experience—auditory perception. The information contained within them is transmitted from certain thought forms generated by all participants in the improvisation—the totality of thoughts, emotions, and energy creates a unique cloud of information, which the improviser processes and imbues with musical character by retransmitting it. And thus, a closed loop is created, where information from the beginning of the process is transformed by the intention of the matrix of love and the author's value system—not through understanding them at the level of the mind, but through feeling them with the heart, spirit, and intuition. The matrix itself is simultaneously recognized in the listeners—it is precisely this that I strive to reveal—the intention of improvisation is to project the image of love contained within the listeners, so that they may experience it, live it, and know it, and consequently, come to know themselves and their own matrix of love. Hence, an attempt was made to create a map of intentions—a value system that could more broadly describe what I discover during improvisation. What appears before me is what I understand as the path of Love, Light and Unification - leaving aside religious or symbolic issues, it is a certain universal form of Love, which is described by each religion, but I do not intend to

consider any of them as a starting point, but rather as a certain point of contact, a point of understanding between each of them - Love in the understanding of the universal power that gives life to the entire universe.

*

From a research perspective, the phenomenon of creating a personal sound experience during piano improvisation can be based on an interdisciplinary research approach combining three perspectives: (1) phenomenological, which examines and focuses on the subjective experience of the participants of the improvised work; (2) psychological, referring to the cognitive and emotional mechanisms involved in the improvisation process (mechanisms of attention, working memory and emotions); and (3) musicological, which examines improvisation in the context of an idiomatic creative act embedded in the jazz tradition.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, entering the creative state of improvisation should be understood primarily as a process of consciously shaping and experiencing music—a process that, on the one hand, occurs at the individual level, and, on the other, fits into the broader cultural and social dimensions of jazz practice and the imparting of transcendental intentions. The juxtaposition of phenomenological, psychological, and musicological perspectives allows us to present improvisation as a complex process—simultaneously individual and communal, conscious and intuitive, controlled and spontaneous.

In the context of contemporary musical culture and aesthetic reflection, the creative process becomes an existential practice, not merely an artistic act. In this perspective, music represents the entire world and is an indispensable tool for co-creating it through intention, vibration, and consciousness. For a jazz pianist, the state of creative improvisation is simultaneously the foundation of being a musician and a human being, becoming a form of engaged action that can contribute to the integration and transformation of the individual and the community. As the quintessence of perhaps even a paradigm shift, it serves as a spiritual and social practice, enabling integration with other people, with nature, and, more broadly, with the entire universe. This leads to

¹⁷⁶ Gridley, M. C. *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*. Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007, s.6

the conclusion that music as vibration could be interpreted as the fundamental vehicle for human understanding of the world. Improvisation, in its openness, serves as a laboratory—a space in which musicians and listeners experience community, spiritual healing, and transformation.

In summary, I view improvisation as a field in which the boundaries between composition, performance, and conceptualization remain fluid, and the process itself exhibits a complex semantic structure, presenting itself as a holistic approach to music creation. It demonstrates the influence of the pianist's expressive craft on the work, expressive values and intentions on the final form of the music, and the symbolic aspects of love in music. It is the result of a search for artistic expression, expanding the message and building improvisational skills, and repeatedly undertaking the performance process—to be processed live in an improvised performance as an experienced and conscious artist. The current vision can be summarized in terms encompassing the range of interests and issues addressed in improvisation:

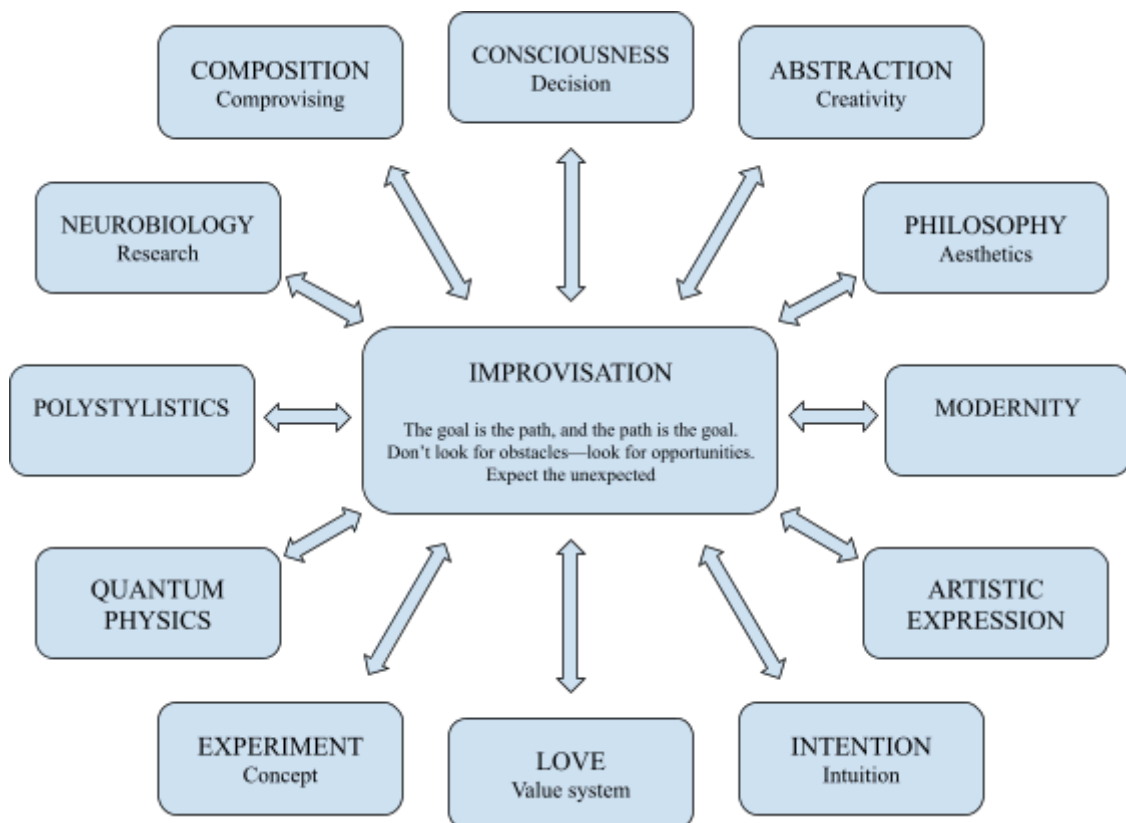


Diagram 7. Improvisation and concepts derived from it

The conducted research allows us to conclude that improvisation can be analyzed as an interdisciplinary process, due to the nature of music itself.¹⁷⁷, which generates a multifaceted approach to the art of musical improvisation. The methods developed in this dissertation constitute an attempt to organize these processes, and their status should be understood as interpretive proposals, not systemic solutions. In my opinion, these methods have not been fully developed and require further clarification or deeper verification. However, this image already crystallizes a certain perspective on modern jazz piano playing, and the process of discovering vibrations itself provides a point of reference for further artistic activities and research. At this stage of the experiment, it is impossible to clearly and objectively determine whether these processes enhance the impact on the audience, the recipients of the work, and all participants in the improvisation, so this is a contribution to further research on the creative method and its broader impact. The dissertation also did not aim for a detailed melodic-harmonic analysis, as this stems from the individual style of the performance language. However, future research could also expand on this factor—for example, identifying references to specific emotions based on a comparative analysis of multiple recordings.

Therefore, the topic of my dissertation cannot be considered exhaustive, but rather a contribution to the development of artistic expression in modern jazz piano. The dissertation's contribution includes a development of the concept of improvisation as a cognitive process, the development of practical methods, and verification in artistic action—practice is an element of research. The introspective method limits objectivity, self-analysis does not involve independent verification, and the conclusions obtained are in the nature of an exploration of the unambiguity of intention, composition, and improvisation. It does not create an entirely new theory, but integrates existing cognitive models, combines structural analysis with practice, and introduces the operationalization of intention as an element of the process—in this sense, the novelty lies in synthesis and application, not the complete originality of each component. It also proposes to fill a gap in the study of modern jazz piano from a spiritual and

¹⁷⁷Sawicki, J., *Adaptation and synchronization -- basic mechanisms in music performance*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2504.03958>, 2025

autoethnographic perspective. Further work could include a larger sample, a deeper analysis of listener perception, and a broader comparative context.

Ending

This dissertation presents my perspective on the issue of performing a large-scale improvised work and, in my opinion, effectively implements my own creative method, according to which the artistic work was created. This was a challenge I set myself – to create such a work in a concert context. To this end, I organized and performed solo improvised concerts in various environments – small and large concert halls, outdoor stages, and clubs. This was also preceded by daily practice of various aspects and issues related to the subject of the dissertation – technical, mental, and spiritual. Many sessions were held during which I refined my creative methods and techniques for entering a creative state of improvisation. I included all the forms of activities mentioned in the dissertation as part of the process of discovering vibrations: (1) a large-scale improvised form for solo piano; (2) individual vibrations, thoughts, themes; (3) improvisational activities in a duet or with a larger group of musicians; (4) improvisation as one part of an arranged composition; (5) the composition process as imagined by playing an instrument. All these activities enabled the final realization of a final artistic work that met all the conceptual assumptions, which were to treat improvisation as a starting point for the creator to broadly experience music, with the intention of simultaneously performing it with a specific and expanded message.

To reveal the artistic expression of modern jazz piano, I characterized the artist's artistic path, including his needs and desires, which informed his research goals and direction. I described the concept of musical experimentation, which revealed the process of discovering vibrations and establishing intentions. I included practical aspects of preparing for the performance of an artistic work, extra-musical inspirations, and the spiritual and symbolic dimension, including a system of values in striving to achieve a sense of unity in love. I described the artistic work in detail in the context of contemporary jazz pianists, polystylistic performance, and the concept of large-scale improvised forms.

Thanks to my artistic journey, I learned (in my subjective opinion) to enter a state of creative engagement quickly enough to immediately focus on the music and

begin improvising in any performance space, in accordance with the method's and compositional principles. A principle I developed for this purpose was to mentally transfer the stage conditions to the home practice environment—always playing and practicing as if I were on stage in front of an audience—with responsibility, creativity, and full commitment.

Secondary results, but also important in the context of creating the dissertation and improvisation methods, are other music albums or audio-video recordings that I created or co-created as a co-author or sideman (during the experiment), i.e.:

- Bergiel meets Kisiel and Anahata -*Into the Woods*, 3oak Studio 2023
- Jazz.u - *Elijah*, Grigio Records 2023,
- Magda Kuraś Quintet -*The Bilgoraj Triptych*, Alpaka Records 2023
- Dominik Kisiel & Krzysztof Pawłocki *Late Summer*, Grigio Records 2023
- Dominik Kisiel - single *New Life*, DK Records 2024,
- Lukasz Reks -*Album_Images*, Music Elements 2024,
- Dominik Kisiel- *Hymns vol. I* for solo piano, **Vibrant Records** 2024,
- Dominik Kisiel & Krzysztof Pawłocki - single *Window*, GR 2024,
- Szymon Zawodny Quintet -*Zero Waste*, Soliton 2024,
- Gootovsky / Kisiel - *432 vol. 1*, Gootovsky Music 2025 (LP),
- Gootovsky / Kisiel - *432 vol. 2*, Gootovsky Music 2025 (LP),
- Dominik Kisiel & Krzysztof Pawłocki - video clip of an improvised session *Kurowo Live Session* 2025 (YT),
- Dominik Kisiel Quartet -*Pulse of Awareness*, **Vibrant Records** 2025,
- Szymon Zawodny Quintet -*Defragmentation of Mind*, Soliton 2026.

They are available in their entirety online on streaming portals or on physical CDs and LPs (available online).

Modern piano music develops numerous approaches and branches that cannot be exhaustively listed or distinguished, as stylistic boundaries are blurring and the personal artistic language of each musician can only be defined individually. Certain general expressive tendencies (e.g., those described as the sound of Scandinavian or Latin American jazz) still exist, containing characteristic elements, but these do not limit the artist's expressive language and are part of it. Of course, the use of divisions could introduce some validity into the distinction, but it would still remain relative to the subjective feelings of the person dividing and describing such a division, as the artists themselves cease to define themselves in a specific idiom and even emphasize a certain synthesis and openness.

The path of improvised music, in a sense, answers the question of how to achieve a goal. The means used to achieve it emerge on the fly and often don't involve the conscious creation of innovative tools. They arise, in a sense, from the need to travel the path to the goal, from the moment of improvising with available means, improvising with current data to synthesize them into a form that most closely resembles the intended goal. In such a case, if the goal is an artistic path—a creative path, that is, performing improvisation together with listeners—then this is precisely the purpose of the artistic work, and its method of performance relies on the creation of tools at the moment of their creation, enabling contact and unity with the audience. Such unity can be achieved by attempting to switch roles, becoming one's own listener and practicing music evocatively enough to convince oneself that, as a performer, I can define myself as a transmitter of music (which is already present in all participants in the improvisation).

Intentional reading of the love of all participants in an artistic work—this is the main goal of my artistic path—discovering the love brought by those participating in the work. Consequently, creating an atmosphere in which they will want to share it in the unity of experiencing the dimension of reality that is music, sound, and vibration. Therefore, sharing love can be the essence of improvisation—the fulfillment of intention generates the possibility of opening to music and, at the same time, opening to love and compassion. The overarching postulate is the perception of music as unity, a single creation without divisions, uniting all humanity—a universal vibration of the universe that provokes purification, moves the soul, and glorifies creation.

Thank you for sharing this journey with me - searching for opportunities and tools

to be at least a little prepared for the unexpected - this is the goal.

In improvisation - in growth - in Love.

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