

Parallel Pieces – Improv with Art!

Master Classes with *Camilla Hoitenga*

As a classically trained musicians we become proficient in interpreting a wide range of written music. When asked to improvise, however, we often draw a blank. How does one begin to play without a score?

In my master classes I offer as a starting point the idea of creating music as a parallel to visual art. While studying or being in the presence of actual artworks we look for inspiration by asking ourselves how what we observe could be “translated” into music.

Most obviously, we can “read” the artwork, following the shapes, lines or colors as a graphic score. But we can also consider the artist’s *process*, and ask ourselves how we can use his/her methods or procedures for our own musical process. E.g., what would the musical equivalent be of, say, throwing paint on the canvas? Of figurative drawing? Of sculpting in steel? If we are playing in a museum or gallery, how can we respond to the spatial elements? On yet another level, what is the thought-world of the artist behind his work and what can our musical response be to that?

By immersing ourselves in any or all of these aspects, we eventually find ourselves well-equipped not only for creating “parallel pieces” in the context of art, but eventually to improvising effortlessly alone or with others.

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