ABSTRACT

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Piece of Cake
A Pedagogical Model for Teaching Improvisation to a Large Group

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The purpose of this action research was to develop a coherent model for teaching improvisation to orchestral players as simultaneous teaching, utilizing the perspectives of the written source material and based on the researcher's own pedagogical experience. The goal was to find communal ways of working so that every player can find a grip, regardless of the skill level and previous background in playing. The functionality of the model was tested with two different research groups consisting of amateur musicians. The first research period was implemented in connection with the Imatra Big Band Camp summer course. The second research group was the Vuoksi Big Band of Imatra's Virta-opisto, which consists of both adult music enthusiasts and students of the music institute.

The research found out what kind of needs and wishes amateur players had regarding learning to improvise in a group and interaction in a group playing situation. The research methods were participant observation, questionnaires and group interviews.

A total of 37 people participated in the study. Based on the material collected from them, it became clear that there is a great need for teaching the basics of improvisation and group-based interactive teaching. Improvisation was perceived as a complex subject, which seemed exciting to study. Many amateur players had the experience that there were not enough guided practice opportunities in a group playing situation, or that the theory started at too difficult a level. The participants hoped to receive learning support from the group, a safe, accepting atmosphere in the practice sessions and more tolerance for accepting mistakes. Regarding the practice sessions organized during the research, they felt it was good that it was possible to focus on one topic at a time, the tasks were clear, everyone got a chance to play and there was enough repetition.

The Piece of Cake – pedagogical operating model was developed with big band players, but it can easily be applied to various orchestras and other group teaching of music.

Key words: improvisation, amateur orchestra, communal operating model, interaction, learning from others