103. WHAT MAKES A GOOD MUSICAL IMPROVISER? AN EXPERT VIEW ON IMPROVISATIONAL EXPERTISE

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Although improvisational expertise is considered an important constituent of modern musicianship, there is no consensus of opinion regarding its definition. As part of a PhD project on improvisation skill learning, we conducted a group concept mapping study to formulate a comprehensive view on improvisational expertise. The research questions of this study were: what characterizes a good improviser?, which characteristics are regarded important?, and do different groups of experts have different opinions on defining and valuing improvisational expertise? To answer these questions we invited 26 renowned improvisation experts (musicians, conservatory teachers and critics/researchers) to participate. The experts successively generated, sorted, and rated 169 statements defining a good improviser. Multivariate analyses, including multidimensional scaling (MDS) of sort data, a hierarchical cluster analysis of MDS coordinates, and the computation of average ratings of statements resulted in a seven-cluster concept map. Central to the map and most valued were characteristics related to the concept of 'self-regulation'. The six other clusters were (in order of value): 'basic (music) skills', 'affect', 'risk-taking', 'creation of novelty', 'responsiveness', and 'ideal'. No differences were found between the groups of experts. The results, as well as the implications for instruction and future research will be elaborated upon in the paper.