

Listening Bodies: A Symposium on Improvisation and Interdisciplinary Collaboration
Feb 13, 2009 McGill University, Room A832, New Music Building

8:45 - 9:15 Registration and Coffee

9:15 Welcome (Ellen Waterman)

9:30 – 10:15 am: Presentations 1 *Listening* Gillian Siddall, Lakehead U., chair

Andra McCartney, Concordia. *Soundwalking and Improvisational Listening*.

Andra has been conducting 'soundwalks' for over a decade – these are walks that encourage us to be together in community, but instead of talking, we listen to the environment. What is the relationship between structure and freedom in the soundwalk? How does listening help us to engage with each other and with the environment?

Kathy Kennedy, musician, Montreal. *HMMMM*

Kathy is a Montreal based sound artist who leads a community women's choir, Maha. With her choir and many other community members, she created HMMM – a performance that included live hummers and micro-radio broadcast in a mass walk down St. Laurent. Many shop owners participated by playing the radio broadcast. http://www.kathykennedy.ca/music/m_hmmm.html

10:15 – 11 Sounding the Body (Listening Session with Deborah Wong, U. California, Riverside)

This group session will bring us together to listen, think, and talk. We will listen to two works made up entirely of bodily sounds. Nina Eidsheim's Body Music is a partly improvised, partly composed recording of Eidsheim making unvoiced sounds (breathing, gasping, etc.). It offers a haunting and even disturbing focus on a mouth, throat, larynx, and lungs hard at work. Miya Masaoka's What is the Sound of a Naked Asian Man? is a performance art work featuring, in fact, a naked Asian man lying on a table with microphones taped to different parts of his body; medical equipment (EKG, EEG, heart monitors) processed the sounds and signals from his body and was amplified. The audience saw an immobile body but heard breathing, a beating heart, a rumbling stomach, and more.

We will take in these works together and will have an open-ended, non-directed conversation about them.

11- 11:15 BREAK

11:15 – 12:15 Presentations 2. Collaborating David Brackett, McGill U., chair

Lisa Barg and Cynthia Leive, McGill U. *Collaborating within the Music Academy*

How can theories of improvisation be applied to facilitate interdisciplinary teaching and learning within a music school? Do models of collaboration help to solve problems that arise around the need for curriculum change?

[Sorouja Moll](#), Concordia U. *Dove Body and Soul*

As the script coordinator and researcher on the project Body and Soul, Sorouja followed playwright Judith Thompson as she built the play through monologues by listening to ten women tell their intimate stories. Sorouja discusses how Thomson's improvisational method and theatre's unpredictability worked to resist Unilever's corporate model.

[Ellen Waterman](#), U. Guelph *Play Who You Are*

When ICASP held workshops between musicians Matana Roberts & Rich Marsella and a group of children with physical disabilities and developmental delays we set out to 'teach' the children. But it was we, as artists and researchers, who learned by listening to the children, their parents and staff at KidsAbility. Adaptability and playfulness are key pedagogical strategies that emerge from collaborating with these extraordinary young people.

12:15 – 1 Panel 1 *Improvisation and Interdisciplinarity*

[Eric Lewis](#), McGill U., moderator

Interdisciplinarity is a much used buzz word in academia, but what does it really take to collaborate across borders (academic, social, cultural, or aesthetic)? Can improvisation help us to learn how to be more receptive, adaptive, and risk-taking collaborators?

[Sherrie Tucker](#) and [Michelle Heffner Hayes](#), U. Kansas

[Gillian Siddall](#), Lakehead U.

[Julie Smith](#), U. British Columbia, Coastal Jazz and Blues Society

[Kevin McNeilly](#), U. British Columbia

1 – 2 LUNCH

2 – 2:20 Presentation 3: *Improvising Against Discrimination: Organizing a Jazz Camp for Girls*

[Tracy McMullen](#), U.C. Berkeley, chair

[Ellen Seeling](#), Ellen Seeling, musician, San Francisco; [Jean Fineberg](#), musician, San Francisco.

[Jean Fineberg](#), Mills College

2:20 – 2:40 Presentation 4: *Improvising Across the Ether*

Increasingly, distance is no barrier to real-time communication, even the sensitive responses required by improvising musicians. Musicians from Mills College, (Danishta Rivero Zeina Nasr, Gretchen Jude, Zina v. Bozzay), and Montreal will improvise together over Skype.

2:40 – 3:30: *Improvisation and Deep Listening* (Workshop with [Pauline Oliveros](#))

Deep Listening® is a philosophy and practice developed by Pauline Oliveros that distinguishes the difference between the involuntary nature of hearing and the voluntary selective nature of listening. The result of the practice cultivates appreciation of sounds on a heightened level, expanding the potential for

connection and interaction with one's environment, technology and performance with others in music and related arts.

3:30 – 3:45 BREAK

3:45 – 4:30 Panel 2 *Embodied Listening*

[Sara Ramshaw](#), Queens U. Belfast, moderator.

In different ways, each panelist has explored the role of the body in listening, and the role of listening in representing bodies. What does it mean to listen (physically, culturally, empathetically)? What difference does a body make? Whose bodies are heard?

[David Brackett](#), McGill U.

[Eleanor Stubley](#), McGill U.

[Lloyd Whitesell](#), McGill U.

[Matana Roberts](#), musician, New York

4:30 – 5 Open Discussion, [Sherrie Tucker](#), U. Kansas, moderator

This session is a chance to draw together threads from the day's discussions and presentations, and for all present to have the opportunity to contribute to our understanding of listening, improvising, and collaborating.