An Examination of the Attitudes of American Music Educators Towards Musical Improvisation: 1948 to 2014

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Abstract

Music improvisation is currently in the midst of a slow, controversial process towards integration into the American music curriculum. Improvisation is being talked about and written about more and more, mostly from a positive perspective, yet our music education system, created within the framework of the Western classical music paradigm, strains to accommodate it. The purpose of this project was to uncover and examine attitudes of American music educators towards music improvisation in the music classroom since 1948. Articles in practical journals, philosophical and theoretical documents, and several books were chosen at random and searched for attitudes. The findings were then grouped into positive and negative outlooks, and further into more specific attitudes. It was found that despite a growing push towards including improvisation in the music classroom, teachers are still uncertain as to its practical value, and unsure of their abilities to integrate it into their classrooms.

Practical Connections

* Findings show that there are many who believe that including music improvisation in the classroom will increase the focus on music making, bridge informal and formal learning, and connect students to music in the real world.
* Music improvisation is reported to enhance musicianship, increase musical self-esteem among students, and deepen musicality.
* With a growth in the number of articles and books on teaching music improvisation since the 1990’s, there is no shortage of helpful information on how to integrate improvisation into the music classroom.