

Free Improvisation

A Practical Guide

by Tom Hall





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SEVEN

Textures



At any moment in time, any place in the world has a unique sonic landscape (soundscape). Not only does a beach sound different from a city street, each particular beach sounds different from every other beach, and any moment at that beach has its own unique set of sounds.

A musical texture is a soundscape created by a particular group of people at a particular time. These textures can in themselves be the focus of an improvisation or they can serve as a background for people to play over, like a person walking through a landscape.

Any group of sounds, when played together and repeated, create their own unique musical texture. There is no limit to the kinds of textures that can be created in this way.

Exercise 52: Improvising a Texture

Step 1: Take a moment to be still and listen to the sounds around and within you.

Step 2: Wait for an impulse to movement. Allow that impulse to create sound. Whatever happens, stay with that material for the entire improvisation.

Step 3: Once everyone who wants to play is playing, this group of sounds is the group's texture of this moment. Improvise with this texture until satisfied, then end.



***Tip:** Although they may initially seem very different, a groove and a texture are closely related improvisationally. A groove is a specific kind of texture in time. When a texture is repeated in a consciously rhythmic way, it becomes a groove.*



***Tip:** Notice how these textures tend to repeat at a specific interval, to naturally “breathe” in a similar way. Experiment with both allowing that phrasing to establish itself and with consciously varying it.*

Exercise 53: Lots of Textures

Step 1: Improvise a lot of textures in a row, with short pauses in between. Play each texture just long enough to establish its character before going on to the next one. Try to make each one different from the last.