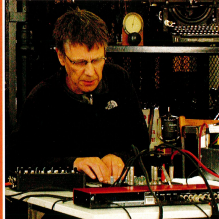


GÖTEBORGS
UNIVERSITET

THE CORWIN CHAIR PRESENTS

A SEMINAR/LECTURE WITH

PER ANDERS NILSSON



THURSDAY
OCTOBER 27, 2016
7:30 PM

LOTTE LEHMANN
CONCERT HALL





ADMISSION IS FREE


ABOUT THE SEMINAR/LECTURE

Dr. Per Anders Nilsson will present concepts and ideas from his current activities as an experimental musician and artistic researcher. In essence, his interests lie in exploring and developing concepts and systems for freer forms of improvisation. A basic aesthetic level is to regard improvisation as playing a game, and the role of the composer, or rather the designer, is to create the conditions for playing, like the playing field and the rules in a game. You will also see examples from some software employed, as well as examples on video from previous performances.

ABOUT DR. PER ANDERS NILSSON

Dr. Per Anders Nilsson (1954) holds a position as professor of electroacoustic music and improvisation at the Academy of Music and Drama at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He studied saxophone and electroacoustic music from 1981-87 at the School of Music at the University of Gothenburg. In September, Nilsson and fellow researcher Palle Dahlstedt received a huge grant from The Swedish Research Council for their project "Systemic Improvisation", which is about exploring and adapting systemic concepts on ensemble improvisation. As a composer, Nilsson has been internationally commissioned, for instance in France, Portugal, The Netherlands and the US. Nilsson has had a long career as a performing musician, and has toured with improvising musicians such as Evan Parker, Eddie Prevost and John Tibbary in addition to playing with his regular groups duo *pentatone* and *Natural Artefacts*.




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GÖTEBORGS
UNIVERSITET

Academy of Music and Drama University of Gothenburg

Per Anders Nilsson
Ph.D./Professor in music



Systemic Improvisation

An approach to music improvisation



Systemic Improvisation

The participants form integral parts of a system of human and virtual agents, and characteristic music emerge depending on the system structure and the nature of the transformations.



Systemic Improvisation

Music as game

A major aesthetic (and systemic) tenet in my thesis *A Field of Possibilities* is that musical improvisation has strong similarities to gaming, play, and sports.



Systemic Improvisation

Music as game

Another important tenet is the distinction between *design time* and *play time*.



Systemic Improvisation

Music as game

Concepts from the fields of interaction design and game design applied on music open new perspectives on music.



Systemic Improvisation

Gaming Theories

Play we said, lies outside the reasonableness of practical life; has nothing to do with necessity or utility, duty or truth: All this is equally true of music. (Johan Huizinga)



Systemic Improvisation

Gaming Theories

- Play is voluntary
- Play creates its own meaning
- Play is autonomous movement
- In play we represent ourselves

Exchange play for music?!



Systemic Improvisation

Gaming Theories

A game consists of:

- Goal
- Space
- Rules



Systemic Improvisation

Gaming Theories

Game mechanics

Static properties of a game, its fundamental rules, objects, and procedures.



Systemic Improvisation

Gaming Theories

Game aesthetics

Dynamics that occur between a player and a game as a consequence of its rules and goal; game mechanics give rise to activity and interaction.



Systemic Improvisation

Gaming Theories

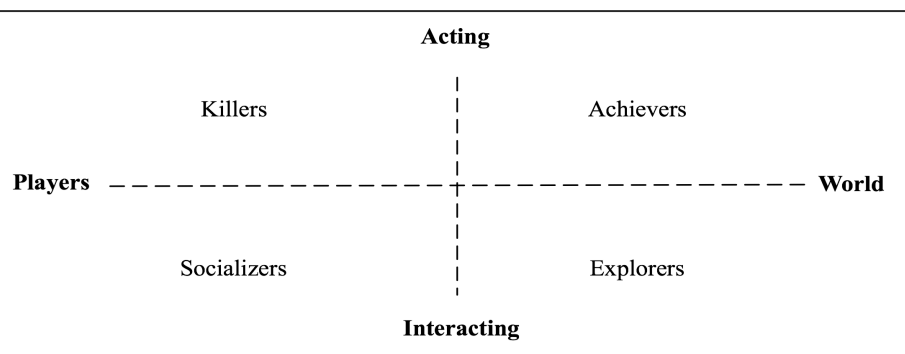
Game aesthetics

Rule consistency, emergence, chance, gamer elimination, skill, tempting challenge etc.



Systemic Improvisation

Player types





Systemic Improvisation

Music as a game 1:

Giant Steps (John Coltrane)

Player types?

Aesthetics?



Systemic Improvisation

Giant Steps

ScreenFlow Demo





Systemic Improvisation

Music as a game 1:

John McNeall says: "*Giant Steps* is interesting in itself, which means that a player is as much played by the piece, as playing it" (*Thinking in Jazz*, Berliner 1994).

Giant Steps is a play that is set in motion by the musicians, and according to Gadamer: "the movement of play has no goal that brings it to an end; rather, it renew itself in constant repetition"



Systemic Improvisation

Music as a game 2:

Click Piece (John Stevens)

The aim in this piece is to produce the shortest, most precise sound possible.

Player Types? Aesthetics?



Systemic Improvisation

Music as a game 3: *Chasing The Chords*

In essence, the idea is a musical game that asks a piano player to guess and play one chord, out of three possible, simultaneously with a randomly generated chord.



Systemic Improvisation

Music as a game 3: *Chasing The Chords*

From a system theory point of view the *Chasing Chords* concept is inspired of aspects of evolution. In *Mind and Nature* Gregory Bateson describes the forming of living organisms as the combination of two stochastic systems. If we regard the musical outcome as a living organism, how is it shaped?



Systemic Improvisation

Music as a game 3: *Chasing The Chords*

In the first system, according to Bateson, “the random component is genetic change, either by mutation or reshuffling”. The creation of the three chords involves two random processes, namely selection of one of the pre-generated three chords plus duration until the next successive event shall occur.



Systemic Improvisation

Music as a game 3: *Chasing The Chords*

Bateson describes the second system such as “the random component is provided by the system of phenotype in interaction with the environment.” In Chasing Chords the computer generated chords are moving targets, and in practice it is impossible to solve the task. The resulting musical outcome is a combination of those two stochastic systems; the random generations of chords and the musician’s struggle to hit them.



Systemic Improvisation

Natural Artefacts at CNMAT, March 2014



Systemic Improvisation

Systemic Improvisation is a kind of music-making where normal musical interaction is transformed by the introduction of aural or visual cues generated by computer-based virtual inter-actors. It also connects to, and rely upon, the tradition of experimental music.



Systemic Improvisation

A crucial and significant concept in the experimental music tradition, as Michael Nyman defines it in *Experimental Music*, is task; to perform is to solve a series of tasks rather than self-expression and/or expressing concepts. Michael Nyman argues: “for each experimental composition presents the performer with a task or series of tasks which extend and re-define the traditional (and the avant-garde) performance sequence of reading-comprehension-production”. What is important is the intention to fulfill the given task.



Systemic Improvisation

The Systemic Improvisation project aims to form a theoretical model of improvisation systems, and a tool-kit for the design, implementation and communication of such systems, to enable other musicians to work with systemic improvisation.



Systemic Improvisation

The Bucket System

The Bucket System is a new kind of musical interaction/situation/work, and a continuation of Dahlstedt's and Nilssons's long-term research into technology-mediated musical creativity and performance.



Systemic Improvisation

The Bucket System

The Bucket System is an open structure of signs, a notation, and it is up to the participators to make up rules for each particular performance.



Systemic Improvisation

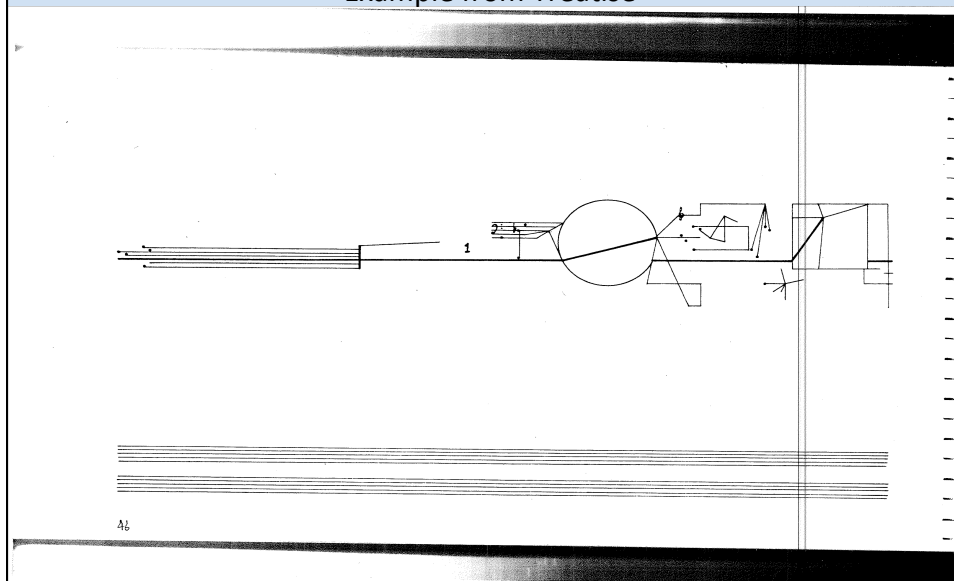
The Bucket System

The Bucket System relates to Cardew's *Treatise* (1963-67) such that it's graphic score demands the performers to make up their own rules. It is mention worthy that *Treatise* is to be read in a linear narrative fashion, whereas The Bucket system is non-linear. Tilbury (2008) claims that Cardew admired Christian Wolff's pieces such that: "the signs do not represented sounds; they created situations in which the performers act, and the instructions consists mainly of suggestions as how the players interact" (Tilbury 2008).



Systemic Improvisation

Example from *Treatise*





Systemic Improvisation

The Bucket System

A player receives a new instruction where (s)he is forced to halt or change whatever going on, and since the participants are interrupted all the time, no one will be able to develop things as usual. After a while, one get used to this, and change approach: from planned actions and personal expression, to be much more aware of the present, to be in the present, and to be open for what it offers.



Systemic Improvisation

The Bucket System

Metaphor

- Fast=Busy
- Medium=Simple
- Fixed=Extended

Behavioral

- Fast=Solo
- Medium=Interact
- Fixed=Vacillate

Simple Hierarchy

- Fast=Lead
- Medium=Support
- Fixed=Background

Hierarchy with Opposition

- Fast=Lead
- Medium=Support
- Fixed=Opposition



Systemic Improvisation

Signs, Cycles, Snares in Halmstad 2014.



Systemic Improvisation

Workshop at Gino Robair's place, 2015





Systemic Improvisation

Performing at NIME, 2015



Systemic Improvisation

Thank You!

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