

The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

FYS 129

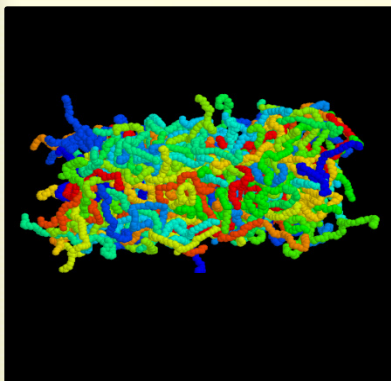
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David Keffer : molecular-level materials modeler



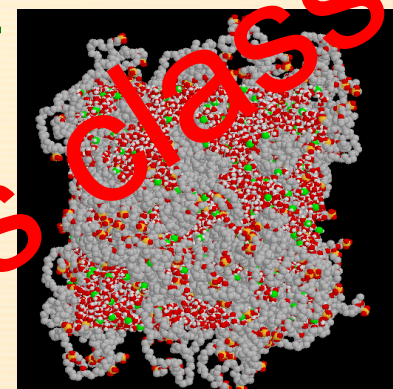
Apply molecular simulation to develop structure/property relationships

polymeric materials

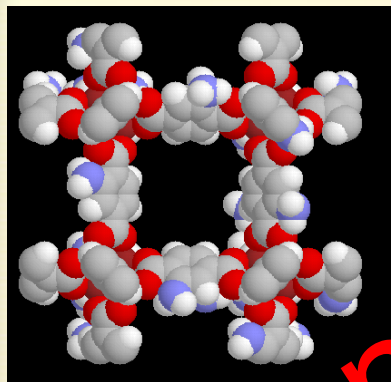


polymers at
equilibrium and
under flow
(PE, PET)

polymer electrolyte
membranes (PEMs)
in fuel cells

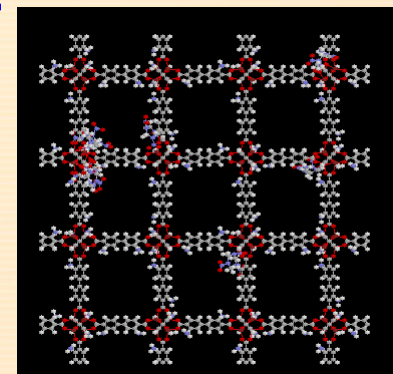


nanoporous materials

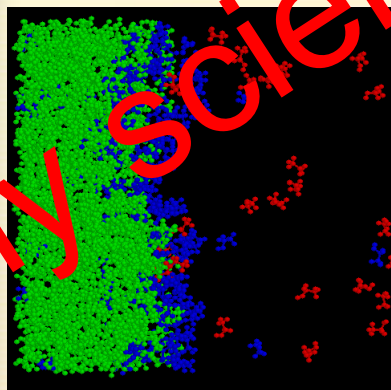


hydrogen sorption
in metal-organic
frameworks (MOFs)

Sensing of RDX,
TATP and other
explosives in MOFs



interfacial systems



near critical
vapor-liquid
interface structure

fuel cell electrode/
electrolyte interfaces



Only science slide in this class!

What is Non-Idiomatic Improvisation?

Improvisation is the practice of acting, singing, playing musical instruments, talking, creating artworks, problem solving, or reacting in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one's immediate environment and inner feelings. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improvisation>)

id·i·om

5. a distinct style or character, in music, art, etc.: the idiom of Bach.
(<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/idiom>)

Improvised Music: There are several idioms that routinely invoke improvised music including jazz, rock, flamenco, and classical Indian music.

Nonidiomatic Improvisation is music played outside any conventional idiom.

Musicians defining Improvisation

Improvisation is not knowing what it is until you do it,
composition is not doing it until you know what it is.

Derek Bailey

From “Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation” by Ben Watson,
Verso, London, 2004, p. 440.

I don't know who said: “A real improviser is someone
who prepares for being unprepared.” That's exactly
how it is, it's so true. He's ready for anything.

Joëlle Léandre

Solo. Conversations with Franck Médioni, Joëlle Léandre, kadima collective, 2011,
p. 66.

Does non-idiomatic improvisation now have a well-defined style?

From a philosophical point of view, any improvised music outside a conventional idiom is non-idiomatic improvisation.

In this course, we will listen to many sorts of non-idiomatic improvisation, that are seemingly unrelated to each other.

One historic class of non-idiomatic improvisation, European Free Improvisation, is now sufficiently established to be identified as its own idiom. (So I guess it is not non-idiomatic anymore.)

The European Free Improvisation Site is a portal to and resource for this music.

<http://www.efi.group.shef.ac.uk/>

Can you have an organized lecture on non-idiomatic improvisation?

This class is heavily dependent on discussion and input from the students.

It is not to be an exercise in which the instructor regurgitates information to the students.

If the discussion needs to be prodded, the instructor will provide some potential starting points.

Like any experiment, the outcome of this class is unknown. There is no guarantee that this course will be a success. It depends on what everyone (instructor and students) bring to it.

How This Course Works

1. Each week one hour of music listening is assigned.
2. At class, we discuss any aspects of the music.
3. Students take turns acting as discussion leaders.

What is the purpose of this course?

As you will hear, I don't think anyone taught me how to read poetry or even why I should feel it necessary to read poetry at all, though some assured me that, without poetry, not only my life but everyone's life would be less worthy. At times I believed this; worse still I've said such things to undergrads who were trying to get their degrees in nursing, business administration and hay-seeding.

--Philip Levine

from *A History of My Befuddlement*

The Judith Lee Stronach Memorial Lectures on the Teaching of Poetry
The University of California, Berkeley, 2009, p. 1.

The purpose of this course is not to convince you to become a devotee of non-idiomatic improvisation.

The purpose of this course is to get you thinking about avenues and motivations for creating in unconventional directions.

What is the teaching technique employed for this class?

“Self-education in any shape...is preferable to a system of teaching, which professing so much really does so little for the mind...How much better...is it for the active and thoughtful intellect...to eschew the college and university altogether, than to submit to a drudgery so ignoble.”

--Robert Frost

taken from *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*

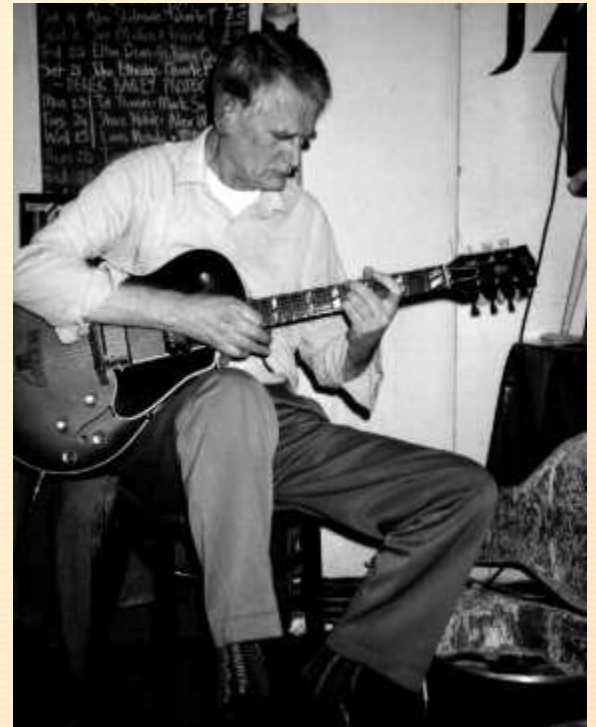
by Peter J. Stanlis, ISI books, Wilmington, DE, 2007, p. 200.

I hope only to stimulate your own critical thinking processes.

Inspirational Quote for the Course

My whole life story is really a strenuous attempt to push back this colossal ignorance I've always carried around with me.

Derek Bailey, interview 1997
From "Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation" by Ben Watson,
Verso, London, 2004, p. 55.



Derek Bailey
British guitarist
January 29, 1930 – December 25,
2005

Another Inspirational Quote for the Course

I decided, if I'm going to be poor and black and all, the least thing I'm going to do is to try and find out who I am. I created everything about me.



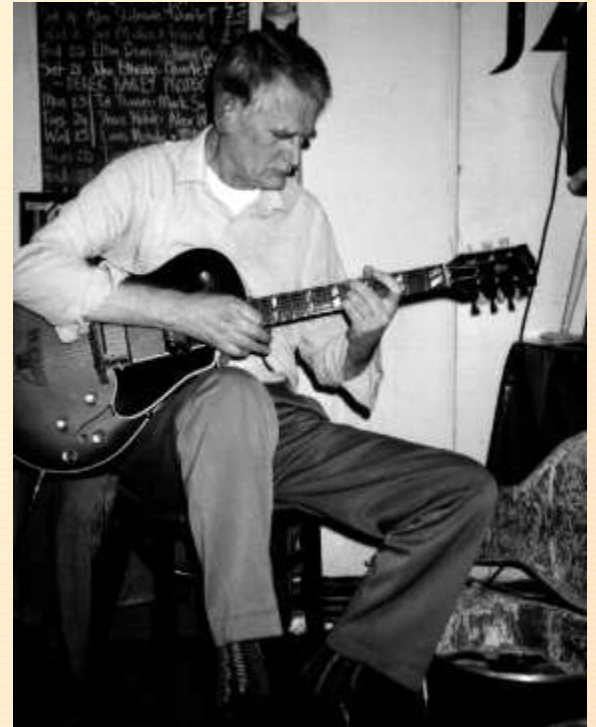
Ornette Coleman
American saxophonist
(March 9, 1930 – June 11, 2015)

source: unknown

Alternative Alternative Inspirational Quote

Stupidity was always
my ace-in-the-hole, I
could always play that.

Derek Bailey, interview 1997
From "Derek Bailey and the Story of Free
Improvisation" by Ben Watson,
Verso, London, 2004, p. 37.



Derek Bailey
British guitarist
January 29, 1930 – December 25,
2005

Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations

Much of the music in this class arises from a creativity born of social tensions, especially due to racial and economic inequality. Therefore, in this course, we will have discussions about racial perspectives of the music. Here are four recommendations for such a conversation.

1. Stay Engaged

You are explicitly invited into a dialogue on race.

2. Expect to Experience Discomfort

A hallmark of examining race is feeling uncomfortable with what we discover about others and our own perspective.

3. Speak Your Truth

We have an obligation to be honest about our thoughts, feelings, and opinions, even if, perhaps especially if, they are ultimately misconceptions.

4. Expect and Accept a Lack of Closure

Conversations about race don't provide definitive answers.

From "Beginning Courageous Conversations about Race" by Glenn E. Singleton and Cyndie Hays, in Every Day Anti-Racism, edited by Mica Pollock, The New Press, New York, 2008, p. 18.

First Discussion: Critical Thinking

- 1. What is critical thinking?**
- 2. What is the value of critical thinking?**
- 3. Why should critical thinking be applied to music?**
- 4. What is the difference between a first impression and a deliberate opinion?**
- 5. When an individual says “I like this” or “I don’t like this” about a work of art, literature or music, what information are they conveying?**

My whole life story is really a strenuous attempt to push back this colossal ignorance I've always carried around with me.

Derek Bailey, interview 1997
From "Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation" by Ben Watson,
Verso, London, 2004, p. 55.