



Music Teachers' Association of California®

What is Improvisation?

The Improvisation program is an aspect of MTAC that is designed to support a student's innate creativity. Improvisation is, loosely defined, "something created without preparation." The study of improvisation can be free-form, or follow the traditional rules of music study, and enhance the student's understanding of theory, and traditional repertoire. One outstanding benefit of improvisation is that it allows a student to produce music without a written score in front of them. Studying and mastering classical repertoire is the desired outcome for most music students. How wonderful for students to also be able to understand basic music theory AND be able to apply it to their own meanderings on their instrument when they do not have a written score in front of them. Not only can improvisation improve a student's understanding and application of theory, it can help develop compositional skills as well. And all these aspects help contribute to the understanding of the classical repertoire, so the process goes full circle.

Information about the Improvisation Program can be found at new.mtac.org. Beginning this year, applications will be accepted online. The submission deadline for this year is March 15, 2019. The submission process in previous years has been via CD or mp3, but has been changed to a video platform that accepts .mp4 and .mpv. The fee to submit an application is \$25, payable online. Participation is open for ages 5 and older and open to all levels of experience. Students do not have to be enrolled in any other MTAC program to participate. An improvisation is limited to 4 minutes in length.

Students may apply for Standard Evaluation only, or Evaluation and (possible) Convention performance. Improvisations will receive a rating from 1 to 5, and students receiving a high enough rating will be invited to perform at Convention. Ratings are determined by an independent evaluator and are based on the musicality and confidence of the performer.

Students have the option to apply for the Standard Evaluation detailed above or, for more experienced improvisers, the Advanced Evaluation. Advanced applicants will submit two improvisations for a total fee of \$60. One of these two improvisations will be based on the student's choice of a required assignment. Students who apply in the category of "Advanced" might have the distinction of being invited to perform in the Honors Improvisation Recital at Convention.

Students invited to Convention will perform their improvisations and also be asked to actively participate in improvisation activities. These are high-energy, engaging recitals as the students have absolutely no prior knowledge of what they will be asked to perform.

The MTAC Improvisation Program is a fun way to help students' explore their creativity and can reinforce many CM theory and technique aspects.