



Invitation/ Call for Papers:

SYMPOSIUM: Filming Improvisation – Improvising with Film 10th Symposium at the *exploratorium berlin* **January 31st – February 2nd, 2025**

“Too little of improvised music survives recording. [...] [Much] more important than the limitations of the technology is the loss during the recording process of the atmosphere of musical activity – the musical environment created by the performance [...], which is one of the main strengths of improvisation.” (Derek Bailey)

“Preservation becomes even more invaluable in the case of improvisation, as the creative act exists within the time span of the performance and only in that time span.” (Gilles Mouëllic)

The 10th symposium at the *exploratorium berlin* deals with the relationship between improvisation and film and filmic documentation, as well as with the potential of the medium of film for improvised events and the interaction with them. The focus is on contemporary, free musical improvisation as well as on creative and experimental forms of filmmaking. The aim is to bring together scholars, filmmakers, musicians and artists to explore both the documentation of improvised musical events through film and the experimental possibilities of improvisation within the medium of film itself. The symposium is held in English.

Improvised art lives decisively from the shared experience of events in specific spaces and situations in real time. Its characteristics are attributed to its immediacy and an auratised quality of liveness. Temporal and spatial co-presence as well as the inclusion of all actors on site – the particular composition of the performers, the audience, the space, the light, the acoustics, the atmosphere, etc. – are regarded as powerful constituents of the process design. What can be saved from this into a sphere of the media? Can the recording of an improvisation adequately represent this?

It has often been said that recordings of improvised music are inadequate or even inappropriate for the art form; one must witness the process of its creation live and experience it directly. Derek Bailey also made it clear in his book *Improvisation. Its Nature and Practice in Music*, that “there is something central to the spirit of voluntary improvisation which is opposed to the aims and contradicts the idea of documentation”. Even though Bailey refers primarily to academic analysis and audio recordings, his statements can also be read as a critique of audiovisual reproduction. But where would we be today – despite the difference between presence and representation – without the possibilities of film documentation? Where would we be without the recordings of improvised events and what treasures would not be available to us that would otherwise have disappeared from cultural memory forever?

Sceptical attitudes towards the recording and documentation process seem to have largely disappeared in our extensively mediatised world anyway. The omnipresence and self-evident nature of audiovisual representations of events has also spread to the improvised arts. But how can a live event be successfully translated into the medium of film? How does this change the live event? What possibilities exist in the medium of film to act improvisationally and to capture or transform moments of the depicted in a special aesthetic way in one’s own formal language? Can completely unique artistic forms emerge from the interaction between improvisation and the medium of film? Which moments of improvisation create aesthetic characteristics in film that convey meanings on a different level, both

in terms of content and form? What possibilities of creative handling exist in the conscious examination of the difference between filmed improvisation and its media equivalent? What influence can the practice of documentation have retroactively on an improvisation? What artistic potential does the direct inclusion of filmic levels in improvised performances offer? These and other questions will be raised in the symposium and discussed on the basis of examples.

Conference Opening: Sound & Lecture N° 25: Film – Sound – Improvisation

To open the symposium, we are happy to host silent film pianist **Eunice Martins**. Together with a quartet of her choice (**Sofia Borges, Cecilia Caroline Tallone** and **Eric Wong**) she will improvise to a total of five experimental silent films mostly from the 1910s to 1920s, followed by a talk with conference organiser Mathias Maschat.

Application / Call for Papers and Contributions:

We hereby invite active participation and request proposals for conference papers. The form as well as the exact length of the presentation is open. We welcome a wide range of presentation formats including the screening of filmic examples. However, the format of the symposium and the number of expected proposals also limit the possibility to show films in full length or to set up technically sophisticated performances. A particular research focus on the scientific analysis of the conference questions is welcome. Please send your proposal until **January 5th, 2025**, latest. We are asking for abstracts of up to 300 words. Your proposal needs to contain a title, your chosen format and the duration you are envisioning for your presentation. You will be notified about the acceptance of your proposal by January 12th, 2025.

Please send your application to Mathias Maschat via email: mm@exploratorium-berlin.de

For contributors to the symposium, travel and accommodation can be covered by *exploratorium berlin*. Our hotel contingent can also be used if required.

Registration:

The symposium on Feb 1st–2nd, 2025, is open to the public and free of charge (on a donation basis). To attend, please register by **January 26th, 2025**. Your registration will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Please send your registration to Mathias Maschat via email: mm@exploratorium-berlin.de

The conference opening on January, 31st, 2025, is not included and is charged with a reduced price for symposium participants, who do not actively contribute. Also, an additional registration for the Opening Event is recommended, using the form on the [website](#).

Symposium Website:

<https://exploratorium-berlin.de/en/events/think/symposium-filming-improvisation/>

Times:

Friday, Jan 31st, 2025, 8.00 pm: Opening Event *Sound & Lecture N° 25: Film – Sound – Improvisation*

Saturday, Feb 1st, 2025, 10.00 am – 10.00 pm

Sunday, Feb 2nd, 2025, 10.30 am – 3.30 pm

Conference Language: English

Contact and Information:

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