

# Spontaneous musical expression

by Severin Berz

English translation: Alistair Clarke

The essence of life is movement and movement has rhythm. Each and every one of our bodily functions is rhythmical or forms part of a larger cycle. From the moment we are conceived, cells divide, fluids flow, and all our growth processes take place in accordance with this principle. We quickly learn to synchronize these rhythms with our mother and, later, with our environment. This means we have a predisposition for listening as well as for adapting to cyclical tasks. Thus, we all have an innate and natural aptitude for perceiving, picking up, and expressing ourselves with, rhythms.

Presence, bodily awareness, and a readiness to listen are essential factors to spontaneous music. Being focused, immersed in the present, and listening to your body will help you to express your emotions freely with a musical instrument. Thanks to this open frame of mind, patterns of musical emotions and movements emerge, which may be hitherto unknown or simply arranged in entirely new ways, leaving the musician listening in amazement as the music flows through him. Nobody can claim authorship of such works. Rather, they emerge from the atmosphere created by the participants, and are expressed as musical emotions by the musician with his instrument.

This expression is evident not only in the choice and arrangement of different notes and empty spaces, but also in the intensity and intention transmitted by the way in which the instrument is played. Of paramount importance is to experience this emotion to the full, as it emerges from the instrument, the music, and directly from musician's body, and is transmitted to those of the other participants.

The difficulties we face in spontaneous creation are the same as those faced in our everyday lives:

- our creative energy being dissipated in a flood of disparate thoughts, making us lose touch with our bodies, emotions, and surroundings;
- giving in to a need to reproduce familiar patterns in an attempt to calm our anxiety in the face of the unknown;

- the need to control, or to make a conscious effort to decide, what is appropriate, necessary, agreeable, or esthetically pleasing;

- retreating into our own world, and losing touch with the people and environment around us.

Whenever they get the better of us, these difficulties prevent our inner being from expressing its sense of harmony in the most natural way. They make us lose the thread of our musical emotions, creating hesitant rhythms and awkward, wrong notes.

Spontaneous music in a group puts even greater demands on the faculties described earlier. When several musicians come together, communication doesn't merely take place between an active musician and a passive audience, but between multiple, active participants, who need to be receptive to each other. They need to feel the other participants in order to latch on to their creative energies and follow their lead as they initiate varying patterns and sounds. This is only possible when there is a physical connection between participants, enabling them to sense intuitively any subtle changes in intensity or emotion. A common "atmosphere" or "energy" is created and sustained, taking the musicians beyond the stage where they merely listen and respond to the sounds produced by the instrument. Each musician begins to feel his or her place in the musical picture that develops, sensing when to act as a supporting musician, by contributing to the background music, and when to become the soloist, by initiating variations to the central theme.

Silences are just as important, if not more so, than notes themselves. For these two opposites depend on one another to exist, stand out, and come sharply into focus. A silent opening will draw attention to the vivid sounds that follow, which will in turn find their ultimate fulfillment in a vibrant, fulsome silence.

Severin Berz

