



S/ SMART Improv

The **ART** of **S**ign language for **M**usical improvisation based on music therapy principles

Matijs de Roo

The *Smart Improv*-method (Matijs de Roo, 2022) is developed for music therapy students and professional musicians to train music therapy improvisation techniques and general musical improvisation skills within a group setting.

Smart Improv is a form of conducted improvisation in which musicians improvise music under the direction of a conductor. The conductor gives signs through hand gestures to shape the improvisation and responds to the musical input of the group.

There are 62 hand gestures in total; there are 22 basic signs to start an improvisation. For example, musicians are asked to play a rhythm, a melody, an ostinato or develop an idea. With the 40 signs based on music therapy improvisation techniques by Kenneth Bruscia (1987) and Tony Wigram (2007), musicians are asked to play a reflection, match with another player, make a transition or imitate a melody to name a few.

Workshop

The participants will play an instrument or use their voice within a group improvisation. The *Smart Improv*-method is explained and applied directly with the group by several improvisations conducted by the workshop leader. Participants will be familiar with the basic principles of the *Smart Improv*-method and know how to apply them practically, all linked to the theme of the conference.



For this workshop, it will not be possible to cover all the signs. The focus will be on the basics of the method and on the signs that have a direct connection to the theme: repetition and return. The signs from the Smart-Improv method that have a direct connection here are those for 'making transitions', 'contrasting' and 'develop'. A *Smart Improv* improvisation can focus beautifully on both repetition and returning. It can also lend itself to narrative, making it suitable to use the poem as a source of inspiration.

Biography

Matijs de Roo studied piano and composition at the conservatories of Enschede and The Hague. He obtained his master's degree in composition in Rotterdam. Since then, he has worked as a composer and has 10 years' experience as a music rehabilitation therapist for adults with visual impairments. As a composer, de Roo has written for numerous musicians, orchestras, and ensembles (see YouTube). Nowadays, he works as a music therapy lecturer at **Utrecht University of Applied Sciences**. Last year, his book on the *Smart-Improv* method was published. De Roo is an expert in musical improvisation and improvisation within music therapy.