

Joy of Jammin' improvisation course 2007 testimonials - 2007

Dear Susie!

I have been very busy but totally inspired by your course. Thank you so much. You are brilliant at turning the Orff theory into practical and deeply learned and understood practice. I have been using 'Sing jam and Jive' with all the grades in some way with improvisation. Also now I have a completely new understanding of chords and harmony melody and bass lines and the general structure of music. This means I have confidence and direction in the way I teach. I am using solfa and hand signs in class for all grades and choir and know I will be giving the students knowledge and structures they can use to create and interpret their musical experiences. The metaphor of the building being chords and harmony, separate to the melody which is the rooms contents, was a great image for me to understand it all. I really thank you from the bottom of my heart! We are so lucky to have such a National Treasure here in Melbourne.

Christine Murname, classroom music teacher, Vic

Fri 13th July 2007

During the first week of the school holidays I was privileged to be able to attend the "Joy of Jammin" Improvisation Course with Susie Davies-Splitter.

What an inspirational five days we had. We had 22 participants, and it didn't take long before Susie had us meeting each other, and remembering names. We had people from Singapore, China, Hong Kong, South Australia, Tasmania, NSW and Victoria and by the end of the course we felt that we had made some great new friends.

Under Susie's guidance, we had the opportunity to improvise with our voices, xylophones, recorders and keyboards. We sang, danced and played instruments and gained in confidence throughout the week.

Susie is an inspiring teacher, and she managed to coax some wonderful creations from even the most shy and those lacking in confidence. I learnt the piano for many years as I was growing up, and along with that I learnt the dreaded "theory". Susie made the theory come to life, and made it make sense. I now know how to improvise from one key to another on the piano - something I have wished I could do for years. I can also improvise with my voice. That was a pretty amazing experience.

If you are thinking of doing this course, I urge you to definitely do it. You will go back to your schools or kindergartens with some fabulous material, and with a greater knowledge and understanding of how and why music is played.

Thank you Susie so much for a fantastic week.

Heather Monro, Preschool music teacher, Vic

This course shouldn't be missed. To be able to try improvisation in easy small steps in a safe environment is priceless! Susie is so encouraging and the music so "toe-tapping good" that it's easily the ideal place to step out and build your own confidence in this area. Once you can demonstrate improvisation for your students you can encourage them to improvise themselves. It really empowers

them as they have a go, and some of them amaze you with what they have learned (or need to learn!). Allowing a student to improvise, for instance on recorder, gives you a really good chance to see what they can do on their own, and when this happens in the context of a whole song the group is well engaged while you assess individuals. I remember driving to the first day of the course wondering what I'd let myself in for. Aren't we all scared to improvise? Not only did I gain some valuable new repertoire, but a really useful assessment tool and a new skill. (It's quite something to be applauded by a class for "just making something up" on the spot!) Don't miss this one!

by Lynne Burt, Music teacher, Vic

The Joy of Jammin' improvisation course 7.07

As the locals escaped chilly Melbourne for warmer climes, 22 participants travelled from every direction to enjoy some joyous jammin' (albeit seriously joyous) with Susie Davies-Splitter for five very full days.

The Joy of Jammin', a course which was planned as part of Susie's masterate study, aimed to provide participants with a safe environment to develop personal improvisation skills as well as teaching children to improvise. It certainly achieved this.

In her usual style, Susie had prepared copious detailed notes which supported the new Welcome to Music resource 'Sing, Jam and Jive', focusing especially on improvisation. Those of us who completed the first night's homework and read all 52 pages would have been aware in advance of the carefully sequenced progression from rhythm improvisation to melodic through pentatonic, simple 2, 3 and 4 chord progressions to 12 bar blues. Those who didn't quite manage the first night's homework gradually became aware of the cumulative building of knowledge and skill which was almost magical. Gradually as trust was established in the group and participants gained confidence, out came the clarinets, the violin and even saxophone, which added a welcome change of tone colour to the all the melodic percussion, recorders, guitars and of course vocal improvisation. Visiting guest Christoph Maubach offered a well judged change of pace on day 4 when our elemental music making became almost meditative.

Given that this course was based on one resource, one could have expected that a full knowledge of that resource would be the best outcome. Although participants will now feel very familiar with 'Sing Jam and Jive', they will also be much more knowledgeable about how to use other material for improvisation. They have had practice at making effective use of solfa, they understand the function of the bass, harmony and rhythm sections and have had practice at arranging a song in Orff style. Their listening skills will be heightened to identify when to use doh or lah pentatonic scales or the aeolian or mixolydian modes, and their experiences of the blues scale will make jamming in 12 bar blues much more exciting.

One of the delightful aspects of our five days was getting to know the other participants almost half of whom had come from outside Melbourne – Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Adelaide, Tasmania and New Zealand. As a gesture of welcome, the only male participant prepared kangaroo meat sushi which impressed the Asian women immensely!

After 5 days of solid concentration, written homework and strong encouragement to practise each evening, the course culminated in a 12 bar blues jam with Susie at the piano and everyone consolidating their understanding of the blues scale. It was a wonderfully memorable way to end 'the Joy of Jammin' (Part 1?)

Thank you Susie for a brilliantly creative and empowering week.
Shirley Harvey, Music Teacher, Auckland, NZ