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Following in the footsteps of improvisation: the experience of the participants of the musical movement studio

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Abstract

Context and relevance. Improvisation is becoming increasingly popular among artists, as well as psychologists and educators who incorporate it into their methods of art therapy. While there are few works aimed at understanding the psychological aspects of improvisation, it is important to study the experiences associated with it. This study focuses on the psychological effects of improvisation on individuals through the lens of motor improvisation within a music movement studio. The aim is to describe and analyze these effects based on the experiences of participants. **Objective.** To study the states that occur during improvisation and the corresponding inner experience of the participants. **Hypothesis.** There is a connection between the characteristics of participants' experienced states and the quality of improvisation. **Methods and materials.** The study involved 25 women ($M = 37.1$, $SD = 10.7$). The material for the analysis was 50 transcripts of semi-structured interviews devoted to the experience of successful and unsuccessful musical and motor improvisations. The quality of improvisation was assessed by the teacher based on the selected criteria. A thematic analysis of the received texts was carried out. **Results.** The features that characterize the experience of successful and unsuccessful improvisations are revealed. **Conclusions.** It has been shown that the inner experience of participants in musical and motor improvisations varies depending on the quality of improvisation. Successful improvisation experiences include a description of a specific state that combines full conscious awareness and spontaneous movement. Post-spontaneous mediated behavior is realized. Common to all successful, fully developed improvisations, regardless of the context, is the experience of flow and the ability to overcome fear, internal resistance, and focus on the content of the improvisation. The improvisational experience in the context of musical movement focuses on musical content and can contribute to the development of self-transcendental abilities.

Keywords: improvisation, musical movement, state, spontaneity, flow, experience

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По следам импровизации: опыт участников студии музыкального движения

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Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Импровизационные практики обретают все большую востребованность, как среди представителей искусства, так и среди психологов, педагогов, включающих импровизацию в различные методы арт-терапии. Однако работы, направленные на психологическое осмысление феномена импровизации и изучение опыта переживания, с ней связанного, встречаются редко, в связи с чем возникает задача описания и анализа психологических эффектов, которые оказывает на личность импровизация. Данное исследование опирается на опыт двигательной импровизации участников студии музыкального движения. **Цель.** Изучить состояния, возникающие в процессе импровизации, и соответствующий им внутренний опыт участников. **Гипотеза.** Существует связь характеристик переживаемых состояний участников с качеством импровизации. **Методы и материалы.** В исследовании приняли участие 25 женщин ($M = 37,1$, $SD = 10,7$). Материалом для анализа послужили 50 стенограмм полуструктурированных интервью, посвященных опыту успешных и неуспешных музыкально-двигательных импровизаций. Качество импровизации оценивалось педагогом на основании выделенных критериев. Использовался тематический анализ полученных текстов. **Результаты.** Выявлены характерные для опыта успешной и неуспешной импровизаций особенности. **Выводы.** Показано, что внутренний опыт участников музыкально-двигательных импровизаций различается в зависимости от качества импровизации, опыт успешной импровизации содержит описание особого состояния, сочетающего полное сознательное присутствие и спонтанное движение, реализуется постпроизвольное спонтанно разворачивающееся опосредствованное поведение. Общими для успешных, полноценных импровизаций в разных практиках является состояние потока, а также способность преодолеть страхи, внутреннее сопротивление, направить внимание на содержание импровизации. Импровизационный опыт в рамках практики музыкального движения отличается фокусированием на музыкальных содержаниях и может способствовать развитию способности к самотрансценденции.

Ключевые слова: импровизация, музыкальное движение, состояние, спонтанность, поток, переживание

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Introduction

Improvisation has recently gained increasing popularity in artistic creation and psychological practice, yet research exploring the experiential and psychological dimensions of the improvisational process remains scarce (Dumaresq, McFerran, 2024).

Improvised practices in theater, dance, music, and the visual arts emerge as a reaction against academicism and elitism, often grounded in the concept of artistic synthesis. Through the fusion of various forms of creativity, such as painting and movement, artists aim to convey impressions from other creative domains or stimuli from different modalities, such as music or sound. These practices originated as theatrical experiments, challenging

the established boundaries of theatricality and serving as an exploration of dance and movement art, rejecting traditional dance steps and choreographic constraints. Simultaneously, improvisation allows each participant to embrace their role as a creator, expressing their individuality and conveying their current experiences.

These artistic experiments served as the foundation for pedagogical and psychological approaches aimed at addressing the challenges of aesthetic education, unlocking the creative potential of individuals, providing psychological assistance, and facilitating correction. The employment of improvisation within the context of teaching dance and music allowed for the transcendence of the limitations imposed by the traditional pedagogical framework, which predomi-

nantly emphasized the memorization and replication of predetermined patterns, resulting in a mechanical reproduction of isolated elements. Improvisation provided students with the opportunity to actively engage in the process of creating music, dance, and artistic imagery, imbuing their role with meaning and intrinsic motivation. This approach fostered the awakening of initiative and created an environment conducive to exploring novel solutions, surpassing the confines of established conventions in improvisational performance. These techniques were integrated into training programs aimed at cultivating creativity and fostering innovation. Ultimately, it has been discovered that engagement in improvisational activities enhances self-confidence, elevates one's energy level, and unveils their inherent capabilities (Misluk-Gervase, Ansaldo, 2022; Kong, 2025). The emerging approaches in the field of art therapy heavily rely on the utilization of improvisation, enabling individuals to manifest their inner states through external expressions, such as creative works. This process allows for the release of suppressed emotions, providing a means of venting anxiety, fears, and other pent-up feelings. The work with the products of personal self-expression serves the purpose of identifying and altering destructive attitudes, habitual patterns of behavior, and communication styles, among other aspects.

It is worth noting that, despite its practical significance, improvisation remains an under-researched area in psychology. This may be attributed to the fact that Russian schools of thought, such as cultural-historical and activity theories, prioritize the processes of learning and the formation of mediated behaviours. The diminishing focus on the subject's independent activity, spontaneous actions, and involuntary behaviours has been recognized as a limitation within the framework of developmental learning systems. Thus, P.G. Nezhnov articulates the issue and delves into the intricate interplay between mediation and spontaneity within the framework of the "cultural development" model. "The educational process, structured as a chain of instrumental mediation, with both direct and indirect outcomes, does not allow for the incorporation of these outcomes into the child's spontaneous actions, which are determined by a wider context in which a full actualization of thought as the foundation of an individual's personal identity can occur" (Nezhnov, 2007, p. 133).

However, the works of L.S. Vygotsky have already indicated the need to "cultivate" cultural forms through a child's self-directed activity (Vygotsky, 1983). A.V. Zaporozhets, V.V. Davydov, and D.B. Elkonin have pointed out the role of independent activity and spontaneous processes in children's development. These ideas were specifically embodied in the idea of testing a goal by action (A.N. Leontiev). The concept of developmental learning by B.D. Elkonin includes ideas about trial-

productive or search-and-trial actions, which function to expand the range of possibilities, transform circumstances, rethink objectives, and discover hidden properties in the context of an activity situation (Elkonin, Semenova, 2018).

Improvisation is an action that does not have a clear definition of its outcome or execution process. It unfolds in a way that is not from conception to implementation, but rather in a reverse order, in a sense. The purpose of the action is born within the action itself. An extended exploration, groping, testing, and "short-circuiting" to an unexpected solution or answer, or an image that emerges, are characteristics of improvisational actions that allow one to go beyond pre-defined boundaries. We can say with confidence that such actions or processes exist in any creative endeavor.

Improvisation can be seen as a logical and psychological model of the creative process in general. The suddenness, randomness, and lack of conscious thought that characterize any genuine work of art are also present in improvisation. In fact, its nature is noted to be ahead or beyond the conscious intentions of the creator. B.M. Runin has emphasized this point, stating: "The paradox of 'anticipation', where the desired outcome is realized by the artist before they have time to consciously plan it, becomes a source of surprising discoveries. ... After all, it is only through the creation of their work that the artist can truly understand their ideas, the work tells the author itself only by being created, only by unfolding at his fingertips. There should always be a place for 'spontaneous', 'accidental' decisions" (Runin, 1980, pp. 48–49).

However, the psychology of improvisation is revealed not only through the characteristics of the actions, but also through the features of the individual's state, which can be considered internal conditions for the occurrence of such actions.

As an essential component of the creative process and even more so, as the central aspect of improvisational art practices, genuine improvisation is linked to the specific state of the artist. This can be described as spontaneity, receptivity to impressions and inner impulses, reduced conscious control, vitality, etc. J. Moreno, one of the pioneers of improvisational theatre, emphasized the critical importance of the spontaneous state: "The beginning of the spontaneous creation of a poet, actor, musician, or artist does not lie outside of them, but within them, in their spontaneous state. ... This is the state of creation, the fundamental principle of all artistic activity" (Moreno, 1993, p. 55). F.E. Vasilyuk also refers to spontaneity as the fundamental inner force awakened through the practice of psychodrama. He describes spontaneity as an "active will prior to the distinction between good and evil, a creative process as the first phenomenon that creates being from nothing and gives rise to the beginning", "a self-active being,

the pulsation of life originating from its deepest sources and layers" (Vasilyuk, 1997).

At the same time, J. Moreno emphasizes the dual nature of the spontaneous state, it does not arise spontaneously. On the other hand, the rational component in our consciousness blocks its manifestations. "This state is not automatic; it is not given to humans from the start. It can only be brought about through volitional effort, and not by anything other than one's own will. However, this state does not result from conscious volitional efforts. Rather, consciousness acts as a barrier here. It is only due to an internal striving for freedom that is, in essence, nothing more than the manifestation of liberated spontaneity" (Moreno, 1993, p. 56). Therefore, for a free, spontaneous response, revealing inner strength, it is necessary to master it by cultivating and strengthening one's will. This issue leads us to Vygotsky's "paradox of the will", which "consists of creating an involuntary acting mechanism with the help of the will" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 283). Therefore, a bridge is being constructed from "natural" spontaneity to spontaneity, which manifests itself already at the stage of developed ability based on appropriated cultural forms (Nezhnov, 2007).

We explore improvisational practices that emerge in the process of cultural development, conceiving them as catalysts for cultivating the ability to freely spontaneous response, since they provide means and ways of expressing one's own impulses or other content. The focus of our attention turned to improvisational practice of musical movement.

The aim of our research was to investigate the states that occur during the process of improvisation, and the corresponding internal experiences of the participants.

Materials and methods

Musical movement, as a form of free dance, challenges participants to express emotions arising from music through movement. This process leads to the creation of musical-motor forms during improvisation, which can then be refined, conceptualized and reproduced.

Practical experience demonstrates that improvisations arising during independent work are not always equivalent in value. Participants may not always be able to respond emotionally to music, let alone reflect it accurately and profoundly. As a general rule, successful improvisations stand out against the background of dancers. They immediately attract the viewer's attention due to their meaningfulness, emotional richness, and clear expression. Through observations, we have identified several movement characteristics that help assess the quality of an improvisation.

Successful improvisations in motion reflect the intonational aspect of the musical composition, changes in the emotional and semantic content of the music.

This process is accompanied by the emergence of holistic experience for the listener. The movement is also unfolds as an integrated whole, rather than a differentiated response to specific components of the music score. It represents the "dynamic interplay of sounds in this musical piece" and can convey musical meaning indirectly, through the use of "convenient bodily techniques that help the listener experience and reveal the musical image" (Ilyina, Rudneva, 1971, p. 69). At the same time, a musical-motor form can gradually emerge in the process of improvisation: "At first, movement may separately reflect sub-rhythmic features of a musical composition or the melodic process may be emphasized. Phrases may turn out to be too short, with the melody 'breaking' in the movement or the movement being aimless, without finding a climax. Finally, the process 'collapses', with a piece of music or excerpt performed as a complete and sequentially unfolding movement that reflects not features of the musical texture but something more whole that holds the musical text together" (Ailamazyan, 2013, p. 40).

The data were collected during music classes. During each lesson, after a stage where exercises based on a given motor form were performed, there was a stage for improvisation, where all participants were invited to provide a free response to the music through movement. The teacher assessed the improvisations of students based on the following criteria:

- 1) The correspondence of the movement with the music (i.e., completeness, accuracy, and depth).
- 2) The degree of engagement of the participant.
- 3) The characteristics of the movement, such as integrity and continuity.
- 4) Originality and lack of pattern.

Improvisations that demonstrated characteristics that satisfied all four criteria were considered "successful".

After the lesson, a brief, semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants. The responses of those participants whose improvisations fell short of the set criteria were collected using the same format (they had only partially completed the task, or substituted it in their perception).

The study involved 25 women aged 23 to 65 years ($M = 37,1$, $SD = 10,7$), of different professions, with different levels of musical education. Most of the participants provided answers about both successful and ordinary experiences with different improvisations in different classes.

The material for the analysis consisted of 25 transcripts of interviews with participants who had their improvisations rated as successful, and 25 transcripts from interviews with those who did not have their improvisations selected by the teacher.

Interview questions that were answered verbally in a free-form manner by the interviewees:

1. Could you please describe your impressions of the music that you listened to?

2. How did you feel when “living in music”?

3. When did you start feeling the music, and how would you describe that experience?

4. If you have an image, at what point did it occur?

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results

We can discuss the following common themes that emerged from the participants' accounts of their experience of successful improvisation.

1. Improvisation is accompanied by a state of detachment from one's immediate concerns, allowing for a momentary oblivion to the surroundings. A crucial aspect is the creation of a mental space devoid of distractions, liberating the mind from the clutches of daily worries, that allows for the release of attentional resources. This allows one to be receptive to music and experience a response that manifests itself in movement.

Here are a few examples of statements:

“It seems to me that when I am inside myself, I am not waiting for anything, it is then, in this silence, that the very impulse that motivates movement is born inside my body”.

“It's like no one sees me, like ‘I'm on my own, in some kind of joy and inner silence.’ it just helps to find that very movement”.

“When I realize that I got into music, the people around me cease to exist for me. That is, I don't notice what they are doing, I don't focus on them, I don't try to follow them, but I just float in the music and feel free”.

“The biggest problem for me is to get ready. And I felt like I was sinking into this music, and... it was so subtle, I even tried not to look at anyone, just not to come out of it”.

2. Entering into improvisation, the process of improvisation can be described as falling into the flow, coupling with the music. Movement arises along with the music and under its guidance: the participant does not need to invent anything, he hears intonations and reflects them in spontaneous movement. The participants describe the music as “guiding”, “prompting”, or “making sense”. At the same time, some people notice that reality itself takes on new qualities for them, as if they have fallen into a “different world”, feeling magic and lightness.

These aspects of improvisational experience are reflected in the following examples:

“I felt myself getting into the music at the moment when I realized that it had lifted me like a wave on the sea, and I was already caught in its current and felt so light inside. I didn't know what to do, whether to move forward or backward, or what movements to make. You just let the music take you and go with it”.

“The feeling of freedom, lightness, falling into the flow of it (music). It's as if you've entered another dimension”.

“In this music, I felt the sound itself pouring down on me from above, and I accepted it. It felt like moonlight was pouring down on me, and I moved in that light, as if I were in another dimension while listening to the music”.

“At some point, there is a special connection with music. It is a connection that, if I may say so, is almost divine. It's like a portal into which you can enter and merge with the music, tuning in with it as if you have entered a stream”.

“There's an admixture of the feeling that you don't have to try to be sophisticated and do something, because you're already connected with the music. You're sort of singing along with it, so you're not trying to go beyond what it offers. There are such ripples, waves in this music, and it's as if you are moving with them. So it's like you're voicing the music with your movement”.

“When you start moving, the music tells you everything”.

“In those moments when I could feel the music, I felt like I knew the music already, even though it was my first time hearing it”.

“... it was magical for me”.

3. Communion with music can also be accompanied by a sense of personal integrity, inner harmony, and unity with one's surroundings and the world. There is a holistic physical, emotional, and personal involvement of the improvisers.

This is confirmed by the following statements:

“When you get into music, it's like a complete fusion, a fusion with sounds, with everything around you. And inside, there's some kind of, you know, calmness”.

“It feels like I'm moving this weight not just with my hands, but with the whole of my body”.

“It felt like a very harmonious state... You're doing something right and interesting. I was like an artist, who was brushstrokes on a canvas, painting what the author wants to convey. There's a connection between all the senses, emotions, soul and your experience, musical and choreographic. That's how music affected me as a whole – like a puzzle, all the pieces fit together, and my body and mind react. This reaction was an improvisation”.

4. Feelings come to the forefront in the process of improvisation. This confirms the compatibility of improvisation with the criteria of movement in music and the reflection of its content: there is no preconceived image, it is not imposed on top of the music; the image is created later. First of all, there is a general involvement, often consisting of abstract sensations and undifferentiated feelings that correspond to the musical texture. Feeling, entering to music through an emotional and physical response, is primary. At the same time, a visual image may not be present.

These observations are reflected in the statements of the participants:

“I didn't realize it at first, the image of the doll didn't come to mind immediately. Instead, my legs began to

move and my arms responded sharply, albeit sharply. At the same time, the violin provided me a sense of life, a gentleness and a kind of interest in living”.

“And there was a sense of footsteps, like this. Well, they probably first appeared in my body, and then, actually, the image of the footsteps appeared. That is, somehow, through my body, into representation, into image”.

“I didn't have any image, such a visual artistic one, I just entered this music and it was as if I had entered some completely different world in which everything was completely different, I just lived in this music and it's even hard to explain”.

“As for the image, I don't think a specific image came to mind right away. It was more of a gradual process, and it had to do with the oriental motifs and the tints that you imitate with your body. Overall, the impression is that you're in an oriental fairytale, and that's the preface to it. That is, everything is still calm, there's still a slightly detached story that calls out to you and creates anticipation for what will happen next”.

“The image of the bird, the crane, didn't come to me immediately. That is, at first... there was just a sense of some kind of delicate beauty, like something filigreed. Then, I had a vision of this crane. When I worked on it again, several times in the next class, I could already clearly reproduce this image”.

“The image was born gradually, through listening and dancing, as we had several improvisations on this music. At first, it was just a kind of ‘immersion’ or orientation. Then the bright accents and bursts began to become more recognizable as a mental storm. And then there was an attempt to hear and understand where these bursts came from and what led to them”.

5. The experience of improvisation is characterized by the participant's personal involvement and is often accompanied by emotional uplift, joy, and delight.

Here are some examples:

“I felt great joy. ... The impressions are very strong”.

“It was an incredible feeling of freedom and happiness”.

“And so, when I manage to get into such an improvisation, then ... I am very open and vulnerable internally”.

“And the inner state is a great pleasure from what is happening”.

“I was in a state of great emotional elation. My feelings were all somehow uplifted...”.

“I was probably very close to this music, and it was very melodic and desirable for me. That's probably why, first and foremost, it was such a joy for me to move in it”.

“It felt... well, it was just good... it was good, interesting, and it was as if I wanted the music to continue so that it wouldn't stop”.

At the same time, while analyzing the participants' responses, based on improvisations which partially or completely fail to meet the criteria for success, the following observations are recorded:

1. Participants discussed the incompleteness of their musical experience, dissatisfaction with their improvisation and lack of immersion in music, despite the fact that they may like musical composition.

2. Impression often includes descriptions of the music and the visual images or feelings it evokes, which is typical for listening to music without movement (Ailamazyan, Savchenko, 2025). In such cases, the image can be a projection adapted to the overall mood of the music.

3. It is noted that there may be internal resistance or unwillingness to fully hear, engage with and express the musical content.

Here are a few instances of responses:

“Music was not available to me at all. It seemed incomprehensible to me. It was as if there were a lot of things in her at once. I even closed myself off from her to some extent. I realized that there was something about it that I was afraid to let myself feel, because it would be hard to deal with”.

“The music seems quite romantic to me, gentle, rushing somewhere, like a flower opening and closing again. I probably haven't fully explored this music for myself, I don't feel a great depth to it, or any strong emotions. It's still somewhat surface-level and doesn't cause any excitement or goosebumps for me. I take it very calmly, but definitely gently, simply. I understand that there is no hit, because when there is a hit, there are special sensations that come with it, in my body and head, well... at the level of feeling. But... I'm not ready to go further yet. Maybe I can't, maybe I don't want to let something more serious inside through this music. I don't want to get anything too intense from the inside”.

“In improvisation, I felt that I had caught movements that were able to convey at least a partial essence of the experience and the inner conflict that existed within it. However, while I was not fully immersed in the music, there was resistance inside me that prevented me from completely entering into the music and living it. I found myself rather illustrating the feelings that I was hearing. I cannot say that a specific image emerged, but rather, it was a process of selecting from life situations and attempting to find appropriate one”.

“This music, I feel as if it belongs to me, but I can't quite get into it, like I don't have enough time to tune into it or somehow immerse myself in it. In other words, I generally feel as if I'm passing by it. I want to answer because there's something about her character that's deep, her inner self or something that I like. I would like to understand her better, but I didn't find any image there. Yes, I think I've lived there, but I couldn't quite catch up with her. It felt like she was slipping away from me, despite her apparent simplicity”.

“Unfortunately, I have nothing to say about this improvisation on my own. There was no reflection”.

Discussion

The internal experience of participants varies depending on the quality of improvisation in terms of overall satisfaction, significance of the experience, nature of the emotions and states experienced, and connection with music.

Let us consider the fact that descriptions of experiences of successful musical and motor improvisation contain an indication of the specific state of the participants. This state combines full conscious presence and following the music, merging with music through a movement that unfolds spontaneously, as if by itself. This duality in improvisational creativity is emphasized by J. Moreno (Moreno, 1993). Such improvisation could be considered a form of post-spontaneous regulation, where “emerging movements and gestures are spontaneous and involuntary, yet at the same time, mediated and conscious” (Ailamazyan, 2023, p. 26).

The condition under consideration can be described as a non-everyday, uncommon combination of activity, subjectivity, and involvement with music and the Other, in a broad sense. It is assumed that there is dialogical communication between the person and music, during which the personality achieves integrity, self-recognizing, and development (Bakhtin, 1979). This may be the psychological significance of experiencing this type of improvisational activity for a person. By being open to a meeting and expressing his inner experience through an expressive movement, a person can find their true self, authenticity. “Through exposing their inner self, the personality overcomes their duality and division into acting and observing, reflecting selves, allowing them to experience self-identity, coincidence with themselves” (Ailamazyan, 2023, pp. 31-32).

The experience of improvisation under consideration can be compared to A. Maslow's description of a peak experience. During this experience, a person becomes free from control and fear — which can distort perception — by directing attention to a certain part of reality that is important at that moment and is perceived as integral. The perceiver's state during this experience is largely contemplative and non-egocentric, which is necessary for aesthetic experience (Melik-Pashaev, 2023), however, the perceiver is not devoid of his own activity. This type of experience leads to an integration of all aspects of the individual's personality, and it is self-valuable, positive, and desirable, and is characterized by a unique perception of time and space, akin to being in another world, and often accompanied by intense emotional reactions that can be paradoxical (Maslow, 2009).

Let us consider the possibility that different improvisational techniques may be based on different content and may differ in terms of the psychological states they elicit. It is worth noting that foreign researchers have

also pointed out that the type of practice can act as a moderator in the model of shaping the psychological effect of motor improvisation, however, what exactly causes this remains unclear (Horvath et al., 2025).

We believe that methods which stimulate the expression of internal desires, thoughts, and experiences, etc., and methods which involve an improvised response to an external stimulus or image, may have different psychological effects. The studied experience was obtained on the basis of the method of musical movement that involves giving a motor response to music, with the goal of reflecting the musical content (intonation), which determines the semantic basis for improvisation and the nature of the inner experience of participants.

In the field of foreign musical psychology, there are also parallels regarding the significance of perceiving musical content for a complete experience. From a cognitive psychology perspective, S. Hoffding et al. conclude that “mental surfing” while listening to music, which involves intense and selective attention, is made possible precisely due to the cognitively and emotionally rich foundation, the “framework” of the music itself, as a force that attracts (Hoffding, Nielsen, Laeng, 2024). Russian musical psychology consistently emphasizes the focus on intonational processes in music.

One of the common indicators of successful and fully-fledged improvisation, observed both in the experiences of participants in this study and dancers from other genres (Biasutti, Habe, 2021), is a state of flow. According to the well-established concept of M. Chiksentmikhaii, “flow” is accompanied by a specific organization of consciousness in which there is a unified focus of all mental energies, engagement in activity, where the individual does not perceive themselves separately from the activity and feels a sense of correctness in their actions, receiving immediate feedback. They do not feel the need for reflection or introspection, experiencing a sense of unity with the external world and transcendence of their own self, joy and pleasure (Chiksentmikhaii, 2011).

Based on interviews with sixteen dance improvisation teachers, the study captured the experience of freedom, absolute presence, increased self-awareness, and at the same time, merging with music, the audience, and the situation. In addition, an autotelic experience was observed that generated internal motivation, and an altered “spiritual” state of consciousness was noted during the process of motor improvisation (Biasutti, Habe, 2021). Another study on improvisational experiences also noted the feeling of both internal and external integration with accompanists and other dancers (Miyahara, Mirfin-Veitch, 2021).

In general, modern researchers have shown a high level of interest in the phenomenon of flow in the context of music (Tan, Sin, 2021). Flow is considered to be a form of spontaneous thinking that is characterized by flexibility and creativity. It is assumed that flow can be

conceptualized as a “self-organizing dynamic cascade of insights”, implying an insightful restructuring of a situation based on implicit learning that occurs within the zone of proximal development (Vervaeke, Ferraro, Herrera-Bennett, 2018, p. 322). This emphasizes the concept of the post-arbitrary nature of improvisation, in which experiencing the flow arises.

When considering the characteristics of unsuccessful improvisational experiences, similarities are also found with the results of other studies. For example, orientation towards external feedback, fear of appearing before an observer, and being judged by them may serve as obstacles (Horvath et al., 2025). This is particularly noted in interviews with seven dance masters from different directions, who rely on various content when creating motor improvisations — images, ideas, musical features, verbal material, physical impulses, etc., which may be pre-determined or generated during the improvisational process (Miyahara, Mirfin-Veitch, 2021).

Conclusion

The findings of the study may be summarized in the following points:

1. Cultural improvisation practices organize the process of developing the ability for free spontaneous response. Specifically, in the context of musical movement, the capacity to respond spontaneously to sounding music is enhanced.
2. The internal experience of participants in musical-motor improvisation varies in terms of overall satisfaction, significance and nature of the experience and states, and depth of comprehension of musical meanings, depending on the quality of the improvisation.
3. The study of successful improvisational experience contains a description of a specific state, which is rarely encountered in everyday life. This state combines

a complete conscious presence with spontaneous movement, allowing musical content to be expressed. The experience of subjectivity is accompanied by a heightened sensitivity to external meanings — in this case, meanings in music — as well as a sense of attunement with them, and a holistic bodily, emotional, and personal involvement. Participants have described this experience as subjectively meaningful, and it can be assumed that it contributes to the integration of personality.

4. What successful, fully-fledged improvisations in different practices have in common is a state of flow, characterized by the alignment of all mental energies, a sense of harmony with the external world, the experience of joy and satisfaction from the musical and physical activity, and the lack of need for reflection or analysis due to the feeling of correctness and coherence of one's actions. At the same time, it is a necessary condition to overcome fears, inner resistance, and focus on the content of the improvisation.

5. Due to the fact that various improvisational practices are aimed at different kinds of content, their impact on the personality may vary. Unlike methods that use music as background, which aim to express internal impulses, desires, and conflicts, or offer responses to specific musical features, the technique of musical movement creates a state of receptivity to intonation and musical meaning. This allows for a dialogue with the music and the development of the ability for self-transcendence — the discovery of meaning beyond one's self.

In the next phases of the study, it is proposed to validate the findings using an expert evaluation process, based on the already established criteria for improvisational quality.

Limitations. The study of the experience of improvisation and its significance for the personality is limited by the ability of participants to verbalize and reflect on their experiences and behaviors.

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