



**CARNEGIE HALL**  
Weill Music Institute

GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS

# MUSIC OF MEXICO

**Teaching Artist Visit: Freedom and Structure  
in Improvisation**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## GUIDE TO THE TEXT FORMATTING

Throughout this curriculum, we have used different text formats to help simplify the directions for each lesson. Our hope is that this format will allow you to keep better track of your steps while you are on your feet in class teaching a lesson.

There are two main formatting types to recognize.

- 1) Any “scripted” suggestions—especially all questions—appear in “blue” with quotation marks.
- 2) Basic action headings are set in **bold italic**. (Options are in parentheses.)

Note: For CD tracks, we list the track number first, then the title.

For example:

### MEET THE ARTIST

- **Read** Celso Duarte’s Meet the Artist handout (out loud).
- **Summarize** what the artist has said (on paper).
- “Based on what we know about Celso, what might his music sound like?”
- **Play** CD Track 1, Celso Duarte’s *Cascabel*.
- “Now that you have heard the music, were your guesses right?”
- **Transition:** “Celso Duarte is an expert at working with musical freedom and structure. To get to know his work, we will need to become experts on freedom and structure.”



## TEACHING ARTIST VISIT 1A: FREEDOM AND STRUCTURE IN IMPROVISATION

**AIM:** How do our artists make the most of freedom and structure in their musical improvisations?

**SUMMARY:** Students connect their own lives with the practice of musical improvisation.

**MATERIALS:** Global Encounters Mexico CD, box, strips of paper

**TIME REQUIRED:** 45 minutes

**NYC AND STATE STANDARDS:** Blueprint: Music Literacy, Music Making; NYS Social Studies: 1.2, 2.3

### BEFORE THE CLASS MEETS: STUDENTS CREATE A MAXIM

The classroom teacher should guide and complete this activity before the Teaching Artist arrives.

- **Students generate** short phrases, observations, or maxims comprising three to 10 words. (For example, “Don’t cry over spilt milk.” “Ain’t no stoppin’ us now.” “How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice.” “If you are noble, the world is noble.” “The drum sounds better from a distance.”)
- **Write your maxim** on a strip of paper, fold it, and place it in a box.

### TEACHING ARTIST MODELS MUSICAL IMPROVISATION (5 minutes)

- **Teaching Artist plays** a tune on his or her instrument, then improvises variations of the tune in a manner that allows students to easily hear the connections between the two.
- “What have I been doing?”
- “What was written before I started playing, and what did I create on the spot? How could you tell the difference?”
- **Teaching Artist re-demonstrates** to support or illustrate any observations that students make.
- **Transition:** “Whenever musicians create music spontaneously, from their imaginations, it’s called improvisation. Not all of us can improvise on an instrument, but we can all improvise using text.”

### TEACHING ARTIST MODELS IMPROVISING ON A TEXT (5 minutes)

The Teaching Artist demonstrates in a manner that allows students to easily hear the techniques being used; text and accompaniment can be chosen and rehearsed before the lesson.

- **Choose** a text from the box.
- **Play** one of the four accompaniment tracks from the Global Encounters Mexico CD, Tracks 19–22.
- **Repeat** the text three times rhythmically along with the accompaniment.
- **Improvise** using the text, clearly demonstrating repetition, fragmentation, and extension.
- **Repeat** the original phrase three times to end.

### PHRASE:

You get what you get, and you don’t get upset  
You get what you get, and you don’t get upset  
You get what you get, and you don’t get upset

### IMPROVISATION A (repetition):

You get, you get, you get get get  
You don’t, you don’t, and you don’t don’t get  
What what what you don’t get, you don’t get—a what what



IMPROVISATION B (fragmentation):

Ya-g-g-g-g set, ya-g-g-g-g set, Et et set set whatcha up set up  
Get, g-get, g-g-g-g-g-g-g-g-get-et whatcha get-et  
Whatcha ge, wha-wha-whatcha et, d-d-d-d et et

IMPROVISATION C (extension):

What you get is what you get is what you want is what you need  
You need what you want, so you feed the need  
Do you get it? Do you got it? If you get it, will you want it?  
Who's the giver? Who's the getter? Who's got what, and which is better?

- "What did we just do?" (repeated, fragmented, extended)
- "What was the relationship between the music and the text?"
- "Was that a good or not-so-good musical choice to accompany that text? Why?"

STUDENTS PREPARE TO IMPROVISE (10 minutes)

- **Students gather** in pairs or small groups.
- **Each student chooses** one text from the box.
- **Each group chooses** a single text to work with.
- **All listen** to the four accompaniment samples (CD Tracks 19–22) twice.
- **Groups discuss and decide** which of the tracks will work best with their chosen text.
- **Groups discuss and decide** which students in the group will perform each section of the improvisation (repetition, fragmentation, and extension) and will practice while the CD plays.

STUDENTS IMPROVISE WITH A MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT (15 minutes)

- **Student volunteers perform** their texts along with their chosen accompaniment tracks, following the same model as the Teaching Artist.
- **Teaching Artist focuses work** by praising creativity and accomplishment, and by actively redirecting groups who aren't really using the techniques (repetition, fragmentation, and extension). Re-demonstrate and clarify the goal of the exercise as needed.

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION (10 minutes)

- "How does it feel to improvise?"
- "What do you think about when you improvise?"
- "Where was the structure, and where was the freedom, in the improvisations you just created?"
- "Based on what you experienced, what are the most important musical structures that make a musician's free improvisation possible?"