

Art of Improvisation Staff



Mary Knysh



Mary E Knysh is the founder of *Rhythmic Connections* (www.rhythmicconnections.com), an innovative company advancing education, health, and creative development through inclusive music circles and music improvisation. *She is a* professional musician, innovative educator, international author and has been an innovator in the field of music improvisation for 30+ years.. Mary is a cutting edge workshop facilitator with a specialty in education; trainer and consultant who uses music as a means for personal and organizational transformation through creativity, leadership and non-verbal communications. Mary is highly recognized for her work in education as well as her innovative senior programs including *Music for Wellness*, *Drumming Up a Better Brain*, and *Music Alive*. Her programs offer inspiring music experiences and movement activities designed to enhance physical and cognitive function, create connection and optimal learning while building a strong sense of community. An international teacher/trainer with the Music for People organization, Mary is also an Orff Schulwerk clinician and teaching artist for the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts, Young Audiences of NJ, and New York BOCES. Mary travels throughout the United States, Europe and Asia offering conference presentations, clinics, teacher-trainings, performances and workshops. Mary received the 2022 New Jersey Governor's award for excellence in arts education and is an endorser for Rhythm Band, TOCA percussion and Peripole Music.

[Watch Mary's Educational Programs Video](#)

David Rudge



Dr. David Rudge taught Free Improvisation at the State University of New York at Fredonia for over 20 years where he founded The Improv. Collective, a performing ensemble dedicated to free improvisation for self-expression. He now leads clinics and Playshops in the US and internationally for all ages. (www.NoWrongNotes.com) As an improvising violinist involved with the Human Potential Movement, he has performed with such musicians as Paul Winter, Paul Horn, Arthur Hull, Don Campbell, and David Darling. Since its inception, David has been involved with *Music for People*, a nonprofit founded by Grammy-winning cellist David Darling. David serves on its teaching staff and is the Director of its Musicianship Program. (www.musicforpeople.org) For over 30

years he has taught free improvisation in such diverse settings as Oklahoma State University, Connecticut, SC, NY Public Schools, the Kiental Center in Switzerland, the Tenri Cultural Center in NY City, *Strings without Boundaries*, the American Fiddle Camp, Charles Castleman's *Quartet Program*, the North Carolina School of the Arts, and has conducted orchestras for David Darling and Jon-Luc Ponty. For many years he has collaborated with acclaimed dancer/choreographer Terry Beck on numerous projects as composer, performer, and co-facilitator.

Director of Orchestras and Opera at SUNY Fredonia for 25 years, he also conducted symphony orchestras and operas on five continents to critical acclaim. (www.davidrudge.net) Dr. Rudge was a member of the College Music Society's Task Force on the Undergraduate Music Major, and co-author of its published document entitled *Transforming Music Study from Its Foundations: A Manifesto for Progressive Change in the Undergraduate Preparation of Music Majors*, which advocates strongly for including Improvisation in the curriculum of college music programs, and is committed to sharing the art of improvisation with everyone.

Alina Plourde



Dr. Alina Plourde has recently moved to Madison, Wisconsin. She is a teaching artist with the Overture Center's Lullaby Project, helping families create and record original songs for their babies, and also works as an Outreach Coordinator at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Music. Alina is an oboist, and as well as freelancing as an orchestral player, she performed recently with the Klezmer group Tsuzamen. Alina is currently pursuing a degree in Music Therapy from Alverno College in Milwaukee, where she is excited to be exploring improvisation in the context of music therapy. Before relocating to Madison, Alina taught oboe at Syracuse University, taught elementary music at the Montessori School of Syracuse, played with a number of local orchestras, and was a founding member of a professional chamber music group specializing in improvisation. She has Level II Orff training, and has taught and directed at a Music Together center. Alina holds bachelor's degrees in music performance and music education from the Eastman School of Music, and a master's and doctorate degree in oboe performance from the University of Illinois.