



# **The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation (Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice)**

*Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, George Lipsitz*

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*The Fierce Urgency of Now* links musical improvisation to struggles for social change, focusing on the connections between the improvisation associated with jazz and the dynamics of human rights struggles and discourses. The authors acknowledge that at first glance improvisation and rights seem to belong to incommensurable areas of human endeavor. Improvisation connotes practices that are spontaneous, personal, local, immediate, expressive, ephemeral, and even accidental, while rights refer to formal standards of acceptable human conduct, rules that are permanent, impersonal, universal, abstract, and inflexible. Yet the authors not only suggest that improvisation and rights *can* be connected; they insist that they *must* be connected.

Improvisation is the creation and development of new, unexpected, and productive cocreative relations among people. It cultivates the capacity to discern elements of possibility, potential, hope, and promise where none are readily apparent. Improvisers work with the tools they have in the arenas that are open to them. Proceeding without a written score or script, they collaborate to envision and enact something new, to enrich their experience in the world by acting on it and changing it. By analyzing the dynamics of particular artistic improvisations, mostly by contemporary American jazz musicians, the authors reveal improvisation as a viable and urgently needed model for social change. In the process, they rethink politics, music, and the connections between them.

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