



BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

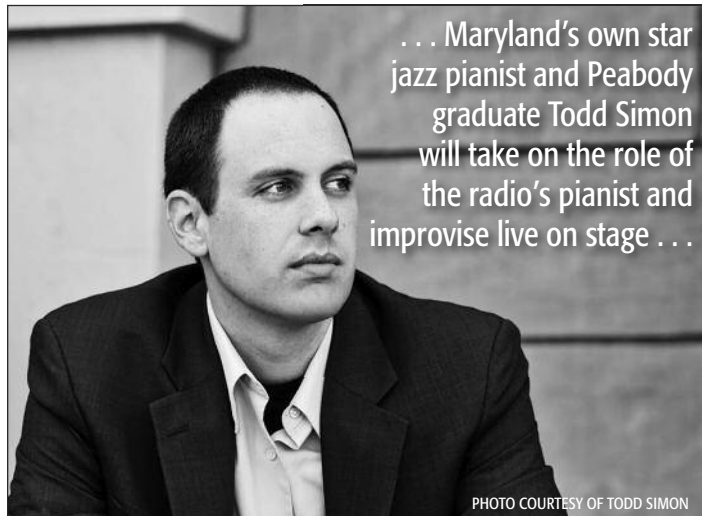
May 2015

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Dramatic Moments for Improvisation

By Monica López-González

Film, jazz and improvisation may sound like a familiar combination. But contemporary theater and live solo musical improvisation is new territory I'm paving for both musicians and dramatists alike in my search for new ways to study the live spontaneous creative process and usher in a new wave within the theatrical experience. New intelligent technologies are emerging every day and the demand to make them more human-like is only rising. As a cognitive scientist, I believe that we can be more effective with new technologies when we understand and model how spontaneous adaptations evolve. As a writer and director, I'm fascinated by music's universal capacity to suggest and express emotion. What can we learn about creativity by combining scientific and artistic methods to analyze real-time musical improvisation in a theatrical setting where complex audiovisual, emotional and narrative situations unfold?



... Maryland's own star jazz pianist and Peabody graduate Todd Simon will take on the role of the radio's pianist and improvise live on stage ...

PHOTO COURTESY OF TODD SIMON

Last year saw the world premiere of La Petite Noiseuse Production's theatrical production of *The Final Draw*. In that production a jazz pianist transformed dialogue and scenes into musical language. This project revealed that the improviser was immersed in a constant feedback loop among ideas inspired by the unfolding narrative, his own novel musical ideas, and previously developed ideas; all this occurred

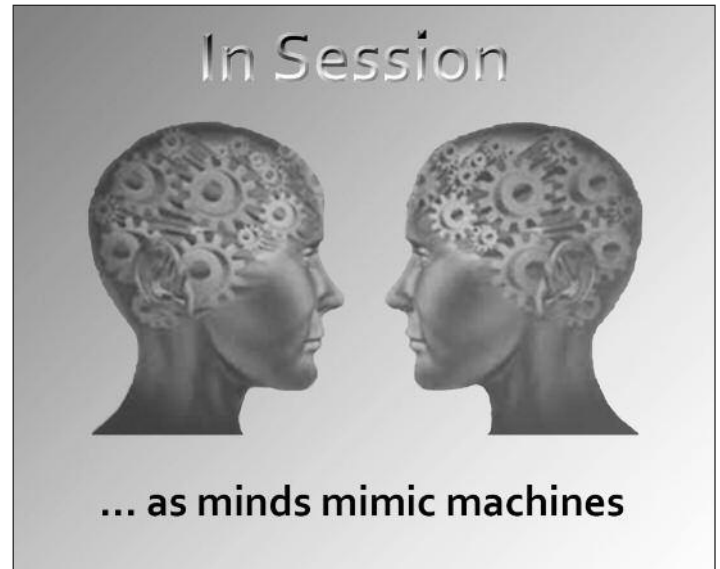


IMAGE COURTESY OF MONICA LÓPEZ-GONZÁLEZ

without the improviser's being able to rewind and revise his composition.

Continuing my exploration of the endless possibilities of musical improvisation on stage, this May and June sees the theatrical world premiere of *In Session*, a new one-act play I wrote and will direct. Set in a therapist's office, *In Session* focuses on the intimate conversation between a therapist and her client (a plastic surgeon) while a pianist improvises live through the office's radio. In a twist of fate where minds mimic machines and reality turns into illusion, the therapist and client inadvertently switch roles. Maryland's own star jazz pianist and Peabody graduate Todd Simon will take on the role of the radio's pianist and improvise live on stage during every performance in reaction to the characters' words, emotions, narrative, and body language! *In Session* premieres May 29th through June 14th at the Swirnow Theater in the Mattin Center of the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Campus, complete with scenery and lighting, and cabaret style on June 19th and 20th at Germano's Piattini in Little Italy. To view schedule of shows and buy tickets visit www.lpnproductions.com.

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