

# Improvisation, Composition and Creativity



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**J**erry Vivino is the sax and also the clarinet in Conan O'Brien's *Basic Cable Band*. Sometimes he plays both instruments simultaneously. Seriously! Jerry's brother Jimmy is Conan's music director and their brother Floyd is a stand-up comedian and an accomplished pianist. It is not a coincidence that 3 out of 3 Vivino boys turned out to be world class musicians and performers. When I figure this out I am going to write a book about it entitled *Organic Jam!* I don't know Jimmy or Floyd Vivino yet, but I can tell you that Jerry does not think of himself as a composer and I have not yet heard him play anything that he has identified as original. This is partly because Jerry tends to compare himself with John Coltrane. But Jerry is constantly improvising with different combinations of musicians and music, often in surprising and inventive ways. I now believe that if an improvisation is inventive enough, and if you score it, record it or otherwise nail it down, then you have an authentic original composition. In fact I think that all composition must begin with some sort of improvisation or invention, with something unexpected and spontaneous. On reflection, I can no longer clearly separate improvisation from composition in music or in many other areas of life.

I recently challenged Jerry to do something out of the ordinary with a tune that he was tired of; to bend it enough that it would be interesting *to him* again. Peter Gunn has been recorded a zillion times and sax men are asked to play it *ad nauseam*, so I suggested that one. Last week at The Baked Potato in Studio City, Jerry and the boyz demonstrated how creative they could be and I videotaped it. Search "*Jerry Vivino at the Baked Potato*" on YouTube and treat yourself to a truly mind blowing jazz improvisation! Now that it has been immortalized on the Internet *Peter's Dunn* is a composition, and Jerry is a composer. Email me for a link to the unlisted musician's cut. Let me challenge *you* in some way and we'll see how creative you can be in your own life. Trust me. Call me.

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