

The Golden Age of Non-Idiomatic Improvisation

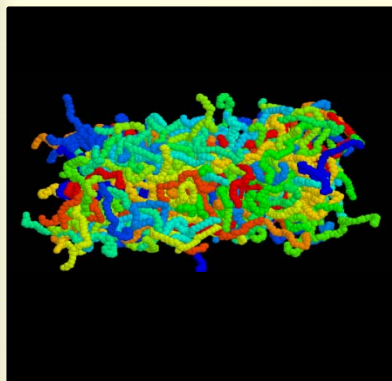
FYS 129

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David Keffer : molecular-level materials modeler



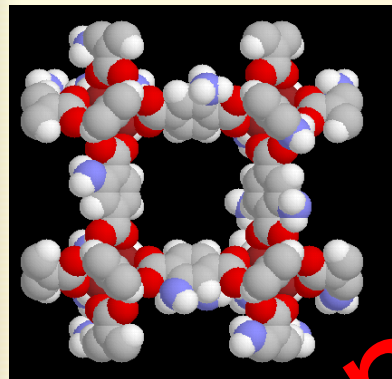
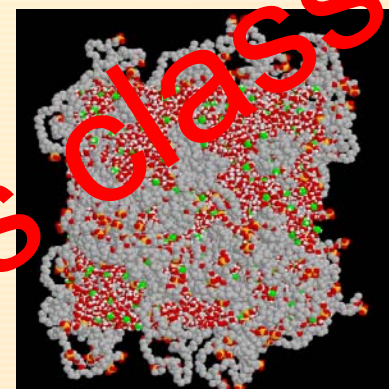
Apply molecular simulation to develop structure/property relationships



polymers at equilibrium and under flow (PE, PET)

polymeric materials

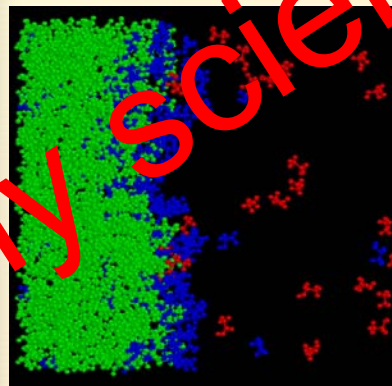
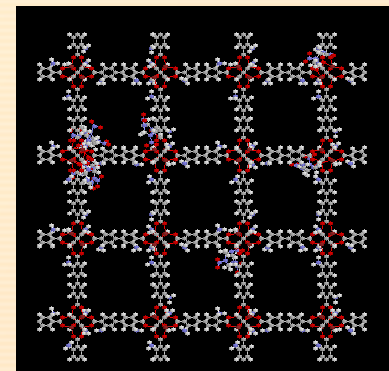
polymer electrolyte membranes (PEMs) in fuel cells



hydrogen sorption in metal-organic frameworks (MOFs)

nanoporous materials

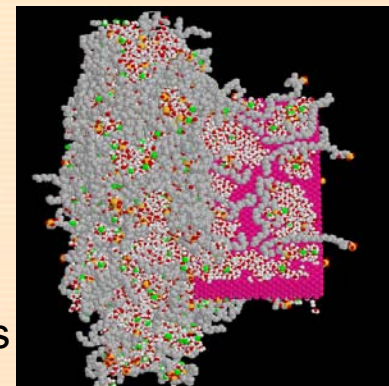
Sensing of RDX, TATP and other explosives in MOFs



near critical vapor-liquid interface structure

interfacial systems

fuel cell electrode/electrolyte interfaces



Only science slide in this class!

What is Non-Idiomatic Improvisation?

Improvisation is the practice of acting, singing, playing musical instruments, talking, creating artworks, problem solving, or reacting in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one's immediate environment and inner feelings. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improvisation>)

id·i·om

5. a distinct style or character, in music, art, etc.: the idiom of Bach. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/idiom>)

Improvised Music: There are several idioms that routinely invoke improvised music including jazz, rock, flamenco, and classical Indian music.

Nonidiomatic Improvisation is music played outside any conventional idiom.

Musicians defining Improvisation

Improvisation is not knowing what it is until you do it,
composition is not doing it until you know what it is.

Derek Bailey

From “Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation” by Ben Watson,
Verso, London, 2004, p. 440.

I don't know who said: “A real improviser is someone
who prepares for being unprepared.” That's exactly
how it is, it's so true. He's ready for anything.

Joëlle Léandre

Solo. Conversations with Franck Médioni, Joëlle Léandre, kadima collective, 2011,
p. 66.

Does non-idiomatic improvisation now have a well-defined style?

From a philosophical point of view, any improvised music outside a conventional idiom is non-idiomatic improvisation.

In this course, we will listen to many sorts of non-idiomatic improvisation, that are seemingly unrelated to each other.

One historic class of non-idiomatic improvisation, European Free Improvisation, is now sufficiently established to be identified as its own idiom. (So I guess it is not non-idiomatic anymore.)

The European Free Improvisation Site is a portal to and resource for this music.

<http://www.efi.group.shef.ac.uk/>

Can you have an organized lecture on non-idiomatic improvisation?

This class is heavily dependent on discussion and input from the students.

It is not to be an exercise in which the instructor regurgitates information to the students.

If the discussion needs to be prodded, the instructor will provide some potential starting points.

The students will also be provided with a set of “improvised lecture” cards, which can be used to stimulate, redirect or otherwise tamper with the lecture.

Like any experiment, the outcome of this class is unknown. There is no guarantee that this course will be a success. It depends on what everyone (instructor and students) bring to it.

How This Course Works

1. Each week one hour of music listening is assigned.
2. At class, we discuss any aspects of the music.

What is the purpose of this course?

As you will hear, I don't think anyone taught me how to read poetry or even why I should feel it necessary to read poetry at all, though some assured me that, without poetry, not only my life but everyone's life would be less worthy. At times I believed this; worse still I've said such things to undergrads who were trying to get their degrees in nursing, business administration and hay-seeding.

--Philip Levine

from *A History of My Befuddlement*

The Judith Lee Stronach Memorial Lectures on the Teaching of Poetry

The University of California, Berkeley, 2009, p. 1.

The purpose of this course is not to convince you to become a devotee of non-idiomatic improvisation.

The purpose of this course is to get you thinking about avenues and motivations for creating in unconventional directions.

What is the teaching technique employed for this class?

“Self-education in any shape...is preferable to a system of teaching, which professing so much really does so little for the mind...How much better...is it for the active and thoughtful intellect...to eschew the college and university altogether, than to submit to a drudgery so ignoble.”

--Robert Frost

taken from *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*

by Peter J. Stanlis, ISI books, Wilmington, DE, 2007, p. 200.

I hope only to stimulate your own critical thinking processes.

Do I have an inspirational quote for the course?

Through-out that winter [ca. 1945-6], which was a bad winter, I worked in a road gang for the Post Office telephones, and that's fucking hard work, and anyway, hanging off a bloody telegraph pole when the temperature's about ten below zero is not a lot of fun when you're up there for about four hours, especially after you've dug the hole that you put the telegraph pole in. That's what I did: dug a hole, put a telegraph pole in it and climbed up the fucker. That kind of experience puts everything into focus. I can't think of playing any kind of music that's worse than that. Delivering milk was not a bad job for my purposes: you get up in the dark, you go out, do it, finish by ten or eleven in the morning and practise all day if you can keep yourself awake. From that kind of thing comes the realisation that if you have the opportunity to do something that means something to you, it's absurd to be putting your main energies into something else. I knew I couldn't do it, I knew I couldn't push back this barrier of ignorance – both musical and in other ways – unless I did it exclusively. I wasn't entirely clear what I wanted to do, but I knew I couldn't do it part-time.

Derek Bailey, interview 1997

From "Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation" by Ben Watson, Verso, London, 2004, p. 30.

Alternative Inspirational Quote

My whole life story is really a strenuous attempt to push back this colossal ignorance I've always carried around with me.

Derek Bailey, interview 1997
From "Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation" by Ben Watson,
Verso, London, 2004, p. 55.

Alternative Alternative Inspirational Quote

Stupidity was always my ace-in-the-hole,
I could always play that.

Derek Bailey, interview 1997
From "Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation" by Ben Watson,
Verso, London, 2004, p. 37.

My whole life story is really a strenuous attempt to push back this colossal ignorance I've always carried around with me.

Derek Bailey, interview 1997
From "Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation" by Ben Watson,
Verso, London, 2004, p. 55.