Improvisation:

THE HISTORY OF UNPLANNED NOTES IN STRUCTURED MUSIC
Agenda

- Thesis
- Definition
- Three main points
  - Middle Ages
  - Renaissance
  - Baroque
- Summary
- Questions
I argue that improvisation did exist in the medieval period, and will seek to show certain ways in which it was evident and how it developed in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.
Definition:
The creation of planned music built upon a structure in accordance to each time period.
Middle Ages

Discant – 14\textsuperscript{th} century

- Consonant intervals over a melody
  - Fostered improvisation with the voice
  - Planned improvisation was praised
Example 1, Excerpt from *The Art of Counterpoint*
Middle Ages

Instrumentalists

- Played as voices
  - Improvised
Renaissance

15th Century Counterpoint
- Consonant intervals over a tune
  - Improvisation was practiced

Faburden
- Influenced by improvised counterpoint
Example 2, Quam pulchra es
Renaissance

16th Century Counterpoint

- Improvised polyphony in church
Example 3, Excerpt from *Li introiti fondati sopra il canto fermo del basso*
Renaissance

Performers

- Liberty to interpret unwritten music
- Added embellishments
  - Cadence
Example 4, Excerpt from Breve et facile maniera d’essercitarsi a far passaggi
Renaissance

Performers

- Improvised over repeated bass pattern
  - Dancing
Example 5, *Passe e medio*
Baroque

Counterpoint

- *Ex centro* sound progression
- Emphasized thirds and fifths
Example 6, Excerpt from *Orfeo* (reduction of the outer voices)
Baroque

Basso Continuo

- Performers improvised over basso continuo
- Accompanist improvised alternate harmonies
Example 7, Excerpt from The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass: As Practiced in the 17th and 18th Centuries
Baroque

Ornaments

- 18th century orchestras
- Cadenza
Example 8, Excerpt from Sonata in F Major
Baroque

“Free ornamentation”

- Improvised variations or melodies
- Improvisations based on compositions
  - Stimulated creativity in compositions
Example 9, Openings of the sarabandes of Kuhnau and Bach
Summary

Improvisation was founded on structure and existed in the medieval period and developed in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.
Questions?