

Sing in a duet.
plain disagreement. In the context of improvising, an unusually high level of disagreement between participants is possible. I'd argue that this is one of its unique features. People playing together don't even need to concur in principle on what it means to improvise. In fact, there's quite a lot of variance on that point, players coming not only from very different traditions but also from very different personal points of view, expressing and engaging philosophies of improvising that are not only different but at odds.

This makes for excellent listening, just the way you could imagine it would make for wonderful people-watching. Paying attention to the various ways that consensus and dispute manifest in a given performance is akin to being on a train and listening to folks in the next row snuggle or argue. There's something electromagnetically fascinating about it.

Dispute can come from a source of underlying philosophical disharmony—two players duking it out on behalf of different standpoints. But more often it's a matter of a musician feeling a need

So open-
no rules
emerge in the music for a little contrary energy, something to allow one, as a senior improviser once told me, not to swim with the school but to bite at the feet of the others.

There's a flow. Things are moving along. This is a normal thing in improvising. The music is going in a direction, pulling all together and forward. But maybe someone pushes against the flow, either diverting it or impeding it. This is a form of subversion. And it can work by many means, not just flailing against the tide. Guitarist Derek Bailey provided a detailed description of the way that Hugh Davies once used his electronics to pervasively protract something that Evan Parker was doing beyond its logical endpoint. Just at the point of Parker's running out of breath, Davies started playing along with him, dialoguing with him, forcing Parker to either artificially interrupt the music or to continue at the expense of great personal exhaustion. It would have been like someone starting a conversation and the partner not responding a few parries in. Ever the gentleman, Parker struggled to continue, which probably gave the