

# How to Listen to What You Hear

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McCormick Place, W187

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## A. Identifying Critical Listening Issues

- a. Conductors tend to hear what they want to hear rather than what's actually being said
- b. People who are so familiar with the score that they have preconceived ideas of what will cause problems
- c. People who are so familiar with their favorite recording that they conduct along to this recording in their mind without listening in real time
- d. Are we listening to the percussion section as an integral part of the ensemble?
- e. Do your students understand their listening responsibilities, and do you hear what they are "saying" to you in rehearsal?

## B. How do we determine and realize the composer's intent?

- a. Composers are trying to take the listener on an intended musical journey, it isn't random, and the conductor's job is to convey this message to the performers and the audience
- b. Have a complete understanding of the score through study and historical research
- c. Think like the composer when preparing to rehearse - research the form, structure, voicing, inspiration, musical gestures, and compositional devices

### C. Exercises to Improve Your Listening

- a. Conduct without beating time, which will allow you to focus more on listening
- b. Listen to recordings of your performances and rehearsals *without* video. When you watch a video of you conducting, you're not thinking about the music, you're paying attention to what you look like
- c. Listen *for* specific things, not *to* specific things - use isolation of parts to help here
- d. Spend rehearsal time listening only to percussion to determine if they are playing with the correct implements, and ask for different mallets/cymbals/triangles if you do not like what they are currently using
- e. Challenge yourself to listen to what doesn't immediately attract your attention

### D. Evaluating Your Progress

- a. This isn't only about changes you recognize in yourself, but about changes you notice in your students' performance
- b. Checklist - at the end of the day, are you noticing these things more than you used to?
  - i. Rhythm, intonation, expression, etc.
- c. Take two or three different recordings (even one where you're conducting), and compare and contrast them to see what you notice about each performance
  - i. Listen for the specific things you might want to pay attention to in rehearsal
- d. As your ability to listen critically improves, you will be able to articulate why you like certain performances better than others
- e. We have a unique opportunity to tell the story behind each piece we rehearse and perform!