

“How to be a Better Musician/Detective”

CULTIVATE YOUR LISTENING/HEARING EARS

**by
Jim Walker**

1. Developing Better Ears – what am I listening for:
 - a. Correct notes (master all scales and arpeggios).
 - b. Correct rhythms (always sub-divide religiously).
 - c. Good intonation (with yourself AND with others – sometimes very different).
 - d. Sound quality (especially vibrato and control of all elements).
 - e. Musical line and expression.
 - f. Balance between you others.
 - g. Group synchronization.
2. How do I learn what is truly correct or good?
 - a. Lots of Intelligent Listening (LIVE and recordings). (Ask your teachers for recommendations of their favorites).
 - b. Lots of casual listening (all styles and genres) for the JOY OF MUSIC.
 - c. Develop favorites, especially in the sound/voice department.
 - d. Go far beyond YouTube (lots of terrible examples by well-dressed, good looking mediocre performers)
 - e. Play duets with better players (especially your teacher if possible).
3. Record yourself (audio AND video) + (Use a slow-down app to hear details).
 - a. Recording a complete practice session isn't really practical because of the time it takes to listen back.
 - b. Record specific passages to check for technical and rhythmic accuracy, sound (vibrato use), intonation, expression & dynamics and steady tempos.
 - c. Use Video to see if you really are presenting yourself as you want to. (Don't expect to enjoy what you see – most musicians hate to watch their videos. Get over it!!)
4. Play for others (not just teachers) to build performance confidence.
 - a. The only way to become more and more comfortable is to perform as often as possible. It is really a simple formula – the more you perform, the better you become. (Especially when there is “Pressure”)
 - b. The only way to become better and better is to check your motivation before you enter the stage. (Is there any joy of music in my approach to this performance? Or is it something I am forcing myself to do). If the joy isn't there, don't waste your time. Find something you are truly passionate and joyful about. Life is TOO short to be doing things which don't lead you to a better place personally.
 - c. Adopt the “NO SECOND CHANCE” rule when practicing performance/pressure techniques.

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