

The Importance of Listening

BY WENDY HILL

Throughout the gospels Jesus frequently encouraged his audience to listen. ‘He who has ears, let him hear’.

For *Music for our Maker* to be successful, the student must listen daily to the CD.

Modern music methods acknowledge the importance of regular listening, and there are sound reasons for this. Many accept that learning by ear is the most efficient way to learn music. Music is sound which enters the brain through the ears, and learning musical sounds is like learning a native language. A baby in the womb hears the mother’s heartbeat as well as outside sounds. Babies absorb and copy words and sounds from their environment. We hear before we read. A newborn baby with its eyes still closed and not focusing hears its parents’ voices long before it learns to read. Therefore it is logical that learning music by hearing is preferable to learning by reading.

Traditionally reading has been considered more important than listening. Parents reading this article may have been trained to believe that reading should be the main focus when learning music. It may be a challenge to accept the shift from using ‘ear-first’ to ‘eye-first’, but many teachers are now discovering the importance of listening.

Proverbs 3:6 tells us to acknowledge God in all our ways and He will make our paths straight. By simply acknowledging God, we

gain new insights into the importance of listening. Most modern music methods are based in humanism and put man before God. These methods do not see Him as the originator of ‘ear-first’, or indeed of music itself. The *Music for our Maker* approach is different. It acknowledges God as the originator of the ear-first idea and also as the Giver of the gift of music. God is the main reason music was created—for His glory as well as for man’s blessing.

Some humanistic music methods teach ‘ear-first’ and can produce many fine young performers. Without realising it, their success is due to a Biblical concept, the ‘God said/God saw’ principle.

The God Said/God Saw Principle

In the learning process, ear precedes eye because that is how God created the heavens and the earth. God spoke, then He saw His work was good—the very act of Creation provides the principle. Because man is made in God’s image, he creates in a similar way, from ideas rather than from the physical. Man listens to the innermost

ideas in his spirit (heart). Then his soul (will, mind, memory, emotions) translates the ideas into language. The brain then instructs the body which responds by writing down ideas in words and diagrams. The non-physical ideas become materialised using God's building blocks.

Listening always precedes reading and writing. When learning a language, one cannot read or write unless one listens to the idea first. It is the same when learning music. The most efficient way is to hear the music first.

The *God said/God saw* principle is undergirded by a sequence that occurs repeatedly throughout Genesis 1. This Biblical principle has six steps as follows:

1. **God was.**
Genesis 1:1

2. **God spoke.** 'God said...'
Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29
3. **Nothing listened.** 'Now the earth was formless and empty...'
Genesis 1:2
4. **Nothing obeyed and responded.** 'And it was...'
Genesis 1:3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 19, 23, 24
5. **Nothing changed into something.** 'So God made/created...'
Genesis 1:7, 16, 21, 27
6. **God saw.**
Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31

These six steps in the Creation analogy and music learning are explained in more detail below.

CREATION	LEARNING MUSIC BY EAR
<p>1. God was and is the Word. God, the Word, is the main idea behind all creation, including music. He is the Cause of the world.</p> <p>In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. <i>John 1:1</i></p> <p>By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth... for He spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm. <i>Psalms 33:6-9</i></p>	<p>1. Music is the idea, word and subject being taught.</p> <p>If one is learning music, obviously music is the main idea and focus. Musical ideas form in composers' minds and compositions are created. Teaching ideas form in teachers' minds and methods are created.</p>

CREATION

2. **God spoke.**

As a result of God's spoken words, the whole of creation came into existence. All things visible and invisible were created, including music.

For by Him all things were created; things on heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Colossians 1:16

3. **Nothing listened to God.**

If someone speaks, we assume that someone is there to hear it, e.g. another person, or even the cat. Otherwise, why bother talking? Who or what was God talking to? Before Creation there was God and nothing, so—nothing listened to God.

4. **Nothing obeyed and responded.**

Nothing acted in obedience and according to God's instruction. After God spoke, there was a reaction.

LEARNING MUSIC BY EAR

2. **Music is played.**

As a result of the ideas of composers and teachers, music is created, played, sung, discussed and recorded for others to hear.

3. **People/students listen to the music.**

Music only gains meaning when we listen to it. Composers listen to the ideas in their minds. Teachers and students listen to pieces. Performers hear music in their minds before playing. Scholars listen to the music they write about. Everyone hears music every day.

4. **The listener obeys and responds.**

A composer obeys the thoughts of his mind and notates them. Teachers, students and performers follow the composers' written instructions. Teachers notate their teaching methods. The mind performs an act of will and decides to respond.

CREATION

5. **Nothing changed into something and grew.**

The world was created out of nothing as a result of nothing's listening, obeying and responding. God's original idea of Creation materialised. God, the original language, spoke and said, 'Let there be...' and there was! God caused the very notion of existence to exist. God used words to give life to nothing and it grew, changed and developed.

6. **God saw.**

As God created something, He saw that it was good.

Finally, God had another look at His work:

God saw all that He had made and it was very good.

Genesis 1:31

By the seventh day He had finished (Genesis 2:1-2).

The written Word, the Bible, came much later in the time of Moses.

LEARNING MUSIC BY EAR

5. **The listener changes and grows.**

Man creates out of nothing but his ideas and dreams. His mind listens to the spirit speaking its innermost thoughts. The will, mind and emotions instruct the body to respond. Ideas are expressed and materialised. Man grows and changes as he creates and builds. He gives life to his dreams as they grow and develop.

In music, molecules of air become soundwaves. A place of nothing (silence) becomes a place of full of sound because someone had an idea, then caused it to happen.

6. **People see.**

Composers and teachers look and check their work as they go along.

Composers and teachers check their final work to see if it is good and finished.

Music notation, reading and writing down teaching methods come later.

CREATION

6. **God saw (cont.)**

The Bible records and preserves in visual form what happened in the beginning.

The written Word confirms and records like a witness.

The written Word is a visual reminder of how much God cares about His creation, how He wants to communicate with His people and share His love.

LEARNING MUSIC BY EAR

6. **People see (cont.)**

Music is a visual record to preserve the composer's original idea or teacher's method.

Music notation and music method books confirm and record what originally was in the composer or teacher's mind.

Music notation and method books are a visual reminder of how the composer or teacher cares about his work, how he wants to communicate and share ideas with others.

We can see how the original idea of Creation began in one heart—God's—then it materialised. Later it was documented by Moses to be shared with other people. Likewise in music, the musical idea or teaching method begins in the musician's heart and materialises. It is notated so it can be shared with others. One idea in one heart becomes physical and touches many other hearts.

The six steps of the 'God said/God saw' principle are summarised in the following

diagram. This shows that *The Gift of Music* teaching method is essentially a heart-to-heart method with a truly Biblical foundation. Listening occupies a vital place as the third and middle of the six steps. Communication breakdown or slow progress are nearly always due to a failure to listen.

Listening is absolutely crucial to success in studying music.

A HEART-TO-HEART METHOD

STEP 1
God was



STEP 2
God spoke

Speaking

Singing or playing an instrument

STEP 3
Nothing listened

Listening

These are paralleled in the method of learning music.

Student listens to the music

STEP 4
Nothing obeyed and responded

Response: Obedience

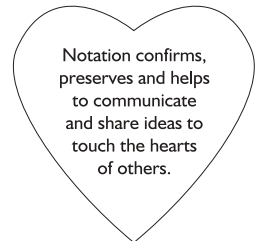
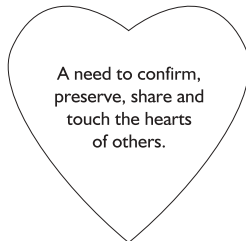
Voice or fingers/body obey instructions from the brain

STEP 5
Nothing changed into something

Changing

Learning takes place, student changes, grows and understands

STEP 6
God saw





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