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THE Zine

Listening



MUSIC AND ARTS MINISTRIES



CANADA AND BERMUDA

HARMONIES OF THE HEART: REDISCOVERING THE ART OF LISTENING

BY JAHRED WARKENTIN

This issue of *The Zine* will embark on an enriching four-part series focusing on music fundamentals. Our journey begins with a deep dive into the very essence of musicality - listening. Listening stands as the cornerstone of our musical journey, tracing back to our infancy when we first absorbed the world through the power of sound.

As we progress in our artistic endeavors, it's easy to let the significance of listening take a backseat amidst the clamor of refining technique and perfecting performances. However, in this edition, our aim is to encourage you to rediscover the holistic art of listening. While we naturally lend our ears to our tone, sound production, music teachers, and mentors, this issue invites you to reflect on how honing your listening skills can transcend into hearing the world Christ has set before you.

Listening is not merely a musical skill but a foundational and essential aspect of building lives in alignment with biblical teachings (see Proverbs 18:13 and James 1:19).

*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. (Psalm 116:1-2 NIV)*

Scripture beautifully encapsulates the connection between love and the act of listening, reinforcing the notion that our ability to listen reflects His attentive grace.

With this spiritual perspective, our exploration encompasses various dimensions of listening in the life of a musical Salvationist. From practical considerations, such as how composers approach listening and techniques for adjusting EQ, to contemplating the spiritual aspect of listening as a form of worship, we aim to provide a wide-ranging understanding of this art. Additionally, we delve into the profound concept of how individuals without the physical ability to hear perceive and experience listening on a spiritual level.

This issue promises a holistic examination of the act of listening, offering insights into diverse facets such as room acoustics, EQ adjustments, and exercises to broaden your auditory perception. Ultimately, our aspiration is for you to emerge from these pages with ears finely tuned to capture the subtle sounds and nuanced melodies that Christ has intricately woven into the fabric of the world around us. So, join us on this auditory adventure, where we not only listen to music but embrace the symphony set before us.

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CURATOR: JAHRED WARKENTIN

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Listening as Worship

by Phil Laeger

I'm sitting in my favorite chair in the corner of our upstairs bedroom, house to myself, mobile desk pulled up to me as I type on my laptop. My dog is asleep on her bed a few feet away from me - I can see the rise and fall of her breathing and in a few minutes, she'll be snoring. The only other sounds that I can hear are the gentle whirring of the fan above me, an occasional flicker from the lit candle, a few passing cars outside of our subdivision (it's the middle of the afternoon), and a little bit of ringing in my ears. These are some of my favourite moments. It's quiet here in my house. The kids are off at activities, my wife is at work, and because there will be many uninterrupted moments this afternoon, there is time to let everything within me fall at the feet of Jesus and allow Him to reorganize what needs reorganizing, reframe what needs reframing, and just in general, make good on His promise for the millionth time to provide "rest for my soul" as I come to Him.

To do that, to receive that rest, I have to pay attention to His promptings in my heart through the working of the Holy Spirit. I have to listen.

It has been offered by author and Baptist minister Gary Chapman that there are five primary love languages: acts of service, gifts, quality time, physical touch, and words of affirmation. These are all attested to by folks the world over, and the general gist is that you have one or two primary love languages through which you both communicate and receive love. The trick is that others often do not speak the same language, and so we must learn to be multilingual to express in another's native language(s) that they are known, seen, valued, and loved by us for their own sake.

How we learn to do that, in large part, revolves around our ability to know and understand other people - which is only possible through the act of listening.

In his book *Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard: How to Hear and How to Be Heard in Equal Communication*, pastor and author David W. Augsburger, Ph.D., writes:

"Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable."

This is at the heart of our expression of love and adoration in worship and relationship to our Father, in Christ, and through the Holy Spirit. Listening expresses a desire for the heart and thoughts of another to arise to the forefront, and a willingness to subjugate our own need to be heard (at least momentarily) for that event to take place. It is a conscious decision to submit and to place utmost importance on the person before us, and to whatever is emanating from them.

Taking this into the realm of private and corporate worship, when we listen to the Lord, we are expressing two fundamental beliefs.

Firstly, we are affirming our belief in the unseen realm; that what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. We are affirming that our fight is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers of the darkness of this world. We agree with Jesus that His kingdom is not of this world and that flesh and blood cannot inherit it. We are aligning ourselves to hear His words to Nicodemus that anything born of flesh is flesh, but anything born of the Spirit is spirit. We cannot come into alignment with Jesus and the purposes of the kingdom of Heaven if we are not paying attention to

what is going on in the spiritual realm and to the “now” and “eternal” words that God is speaking, heard only by those who have “ears to hear”, ears attuned to the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, we are affirming that God indeed desires to communicate and express Himself to us in worship; that He is still our Good Shepherd, leading and guiding us, and that indeed we can hear His voice in real time as He is speaking, primarily in Scripture but not only in Scripture. We must pay attention as we plan and pray for our services of ministry in worship and, as we go, within the services themselves. If we get to a point where we are not seeing or hearing Him, then we must slow down and remember to listen and trust that He is still speaking and leading us.

With these fundamental truths and beliefs in mind, a few questions arise that deserve our reflection as Salvationists:

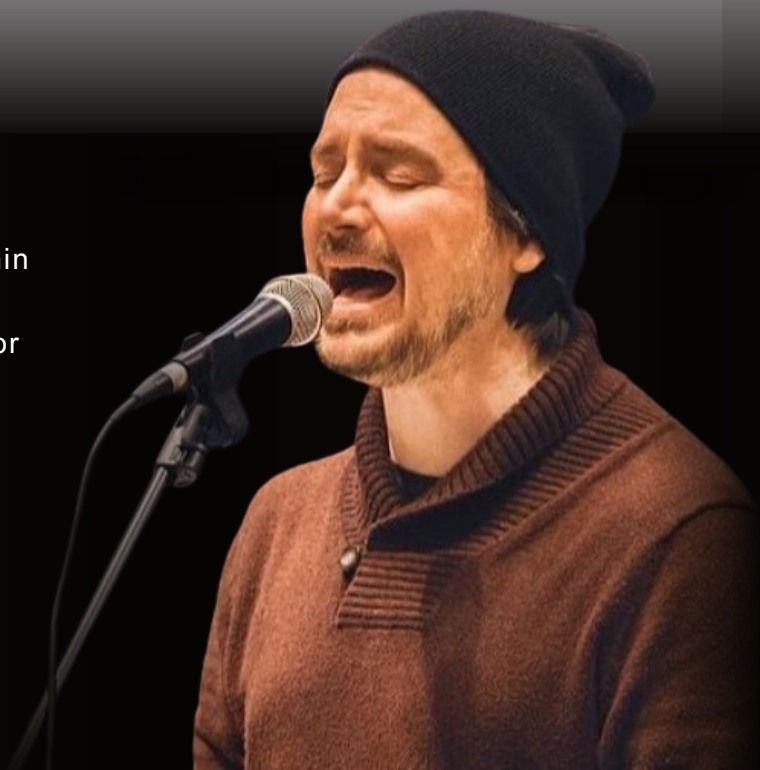
If it is true that (a) listening expresses love, and if we affirm we are (b) people of an unseen kingdom, born of the Spirit of God who (c) desire for God to make known to us in real-time His plans and ways, then: How would it look for our gathered worship services to reflect these truths?

Would we have more or fewer items in our programs? Would we have more or less time allotted for quiet reflection together? Would we allow our bodies to engage more as we shut our one mouth more and open our two ears more? Would we share the reading of Scripture across multiple people and allow silence to absorb what was just read? Would we face our fears of disruption and allow more space for encounters with the Holy One?

These are hard questions for us, especially as Salvationists, a people on the move, in action expressing God’s heart of love in tangible ways to the lost. But I humbly submit that if we get in tune with the moving, leading, vision, and voice of the Holy Spirit in expressing the heart of the Father to us in real ways in our meetings, it will renew our affection and love for the Lord and His church. And that cannot help but invigorate even further our mission in the world.

Phil Laeger is a singer/songwriter and worship leader who has been part of worship renewal within the church (and in particular within The Salvation Army) for the past two decades. He has a heart for congregational worship and to see people come into freedom through worship in Spirit and truth.

Phil, his wife Sarah, and their children live just outside of Nashville, Tennessee.



FEEDBACK

by Sean van Gulik

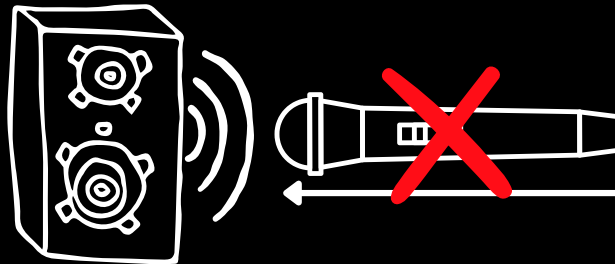
In the realm of church audio, dealing with feedback is an ever-present challenge. That unwelcome screech or hum during a sermon or musical performance can be a source of frustration. However, tackling feedback issues doesn't require a degree in audio engineering. Let's explore some practical steps to address these concerns in a straightforward manner.

What is feedback, really?

Feedback is a loop of an audio signal that becomes amplified over and over until it causes a hum, ring, or screech in your sound system. This happens when an input source (most commonly a microphone) is picking up the signal from an output (a speaker) and creates a loop.

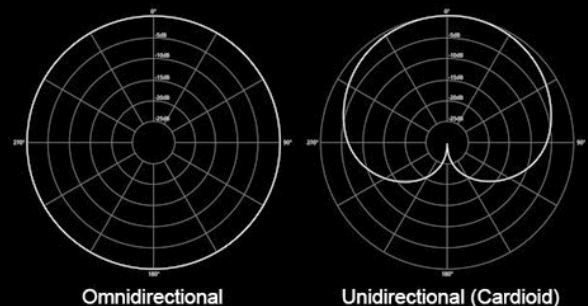
Feedback often arises from microphone and speaker arrangements, as well as room acoustics. Microphones can be sensitive creatures. Placing them too close to speakers or in the wrong spot can lead to feedback.

This diagram is an example of improper microphone and speaker placement because the microphone is pointing directly at the speaker.



Microphones have something called a pickup pattern and the pattern varies depending on the type of microphone. A pickup pattern shows which direction the microphone will pick up sound. Here are some examples of the two main types of pickup patterns:

An omnidirectional pickup pattern will pick up sound from all directions. Omnidirectional mics are prone to feedback because they pick up sound from a wider area making it harder to “hide” them from the sound of the speaker. These mics work well for picking up a lot of room sound, which is a great addition to a live stream, but not are not ideal for using for live in-room audio.

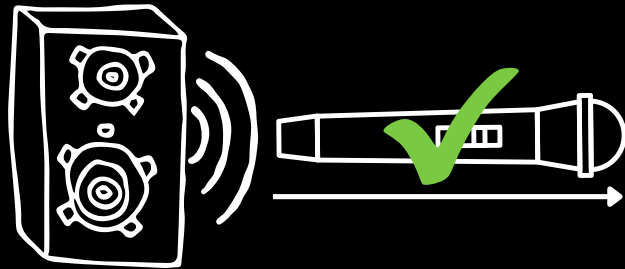


A unidirectional pickup pattern will pick up sound from one direction, usually in front of the microphone capsule. Handheld dynamic microphones (used for vocals and speaking) have a narrow cardioid pattern. This makes them ideal for in-room audio because they are less prone to feedback.

Gooseneck condenser mics (pulpit mics) are usually set up with a wide cardioid pattern. This allows for people to stand off-axis (to the side of the mic) and still be heard, as well as being farther away from the mic than you would be with a handheld mic. Unfortunately, this makes these mics more prone to feedback. However, there are some things that can be done to reduce the likelihood of feedback.

Ensure that microphones are strategically positioned, away from speakers. There's a couple of ways you can go about this. You can either place the microphone behind the speaker or point the microphone off axis from the speaker. Ideally, the mic should be pointed as close to perpendicular from the direction of the speaker as possible.

This diagram is an example of proper microphone and speaker placement because the microphone is pointing away from the speaker.



It's also important to educate speakers on basic microphone handling to prevent inadvertent disturbances like feedback and microphone handling noises. Take a moment before the service to address this with your volunteers and speakers.

Here are a few tips to share with your speakers:

- Gooseneck pulpit microphones rarely need to be adjusted. While it might seem intuitive to bend it closer to the speaker, that can cause the inner wiring of the microphone to weaken or break over time. Also, any time you touch the mic, it creates unpleasant handling sounds which could cause harm to the sound system.
- You don't need to lean into the mic, just speak confidently. You don't need to yell, but you also need to have enough volume to be heard.
- If feedback occurs, never cover the mic with your hand – that generally makes the problem worse. The cupping of your hand ends up funneling more of the sound into the microphone.
- If the handheld mic has a switch, make sure it is on before you speak.

If feedback persists, the next step is to use EQ to suppress the problem frequencies. EQ adjusts the gain of specific frequencies or a range of frequencies. Here are some steps to follow to help use EQ to remove feedback:

1. Find the problem frequencies. If you can, use a Real-Time Analyzer (RTA) to find all the specific frequencies that are feeding back. An RTA listens to the room and shows a graph of which frequencies are peaking. You can get an app on your phone that will do this for free (i.e. *RTA Audio* on iOS works well). If you can't get that to work, you can use your ears to guess whether the frequency is low, mid, or high.
2. Once the problem frequency has been identified, use the EQ to boost the gain at or around that frequency to verify that it is the right one. Then pull the frequency down until the feedback goes away.
3. There is usually more than one problem frequency. Follow these steps to keep adjusting frequencies until the sound is clear.

Note: EQ can be applied to a full mix/bus on most digital sound boards. Use your best judgement whether you need to EQ a single “problem” channel, or if the whole mix needs to be adjusted.

Using EQ to fix feedback is a balance. Every time you reduce the gain of a frequency, it changes the quality of the sound. The general rule of thumb for EQ is “less is more.”

While feedback in a church setting can be a persistent challenge, it doesn't have to be a constant headache. By identifying common issues, strategically placing microphones and speakers, utilizing EQ, and providing basic training, your church can create a more stable and reliable audio environment. Let the focus remain on the message and worship, undisturbed by the distractions of unwanted AV problems.

LISTENING

by José R

special, they say.
special because I listen?
special because I pause?
I feel like such an ordinary man
and I am so grateful for that.

I wasn't always like this.
I had goodness in me before, but I was asleep
asleep to my selfishness
and my defects.

Today I walk around and I listen to the cues of God
mistakenly I walk to and fro
but every once in a while
I hit the jackpot
and the jackpot hits me.
I get an opportunity for a conversation
I pause, as Jesus did
I look at people in the eye
I smile
and I listen
and when I can, and when it's warranted, I give.

I wasn't always like this.
I was afraid of everyone before
I couldn't let people see into me
lest they get scared and run.

Not
any
more.
God has done
and does
for me
what I cannot do for myself.

How did I get here?
I honestly cannot tell
all I know is I've been saved
one more day
from a living hell

A Time to Listen and Learn

by Marcus Venables



It's time to sit down in front of a blank score and write music. Before you can even think of the first note to put down, you hear something in your head. It is inspiration, an idea, or perhaps just the very note you had thought of. A simple "A" on the staff? It is this very process of creating music that involves the most important element: **Listening**. Without listening to what is in your mind, or to what other inspirations might be pushing you, there is nothing. Composers mostly sit alone, trying to figure out what is in their head, how to notate it, and how to make it sound good for the ensemble that might perform the piece. What is the story being portrayed? How do we support and develop composers?

As you know, The Salvation Army has a long and rich heritage, not only in music-making, but with composing as well. Hundreds of people over the years have tried their hand at putting down ideas for musicians to use. For more than 20 years, the four US territories along with Canada & Bermuda have partnered to provide the North American Composer's Forum to foster the development of emerging writers. This year, delegates and faculty made their way to the Central Territorial Headquarters in Chicago in the middle of January. The faculty is usually comprised of seasoned composers, arrangers, songwriters, as well as special guests for the weekend. For the first time, the forum included a stream for songwriters alongside the standard band and choral streams.

Time throughout the weekend is spent in united lecture sessions, practical playing sessions, and three 50-minute one-on-one tutorials with faculty members. What is the common theme throughout all of these? Listening of course. Listening to music, listening to words of advice, discovering individual journeys, and seeing how the Lord can work through music in greater ways than we could have ever imagined.

The main lectures included Andrew Blyth (Head of Music Editorial, UK & Republic of Ireland Territory) who provided a historical overview of the Music Editorial department and its mission to produce music for The Salvation Army that would equip and empower. Peter Graham, a renowned composer from the UK, led a session entitled "Masters of Suspense." He shared some of the inspiration behind his early works, and included some of his most recent works for contesting bands. Devotional times were also shared in sessions entitled "From the Composer's Heart." This gave selected faculty members an opportunity to share a particular piece or song they had written. Marcus Venables, Nick Simmons-Smith, and Phil Laeger shared their testimonies and the journey that led to writing these specific pieces/songs.

In 2008, I attended as a delegate and found the one-on-one sessions with faculty writers to be the most rewarding. This is truly a time where you can really learn and hone your skills. For the emerging composer, it is often the first time you share your creative process with someone else who understands that journey. It is a chance to hear what is important and what requires

refinement. It provides an opportunity for another writer to listen to what you have worked on and provide guidance for the next steps. At the end of the day, it becomes a way to develop mentorship amongst Salvationist writers in hopes that in the future, the emerging writer can rely on someone with more experience for help or to champion their music in the days ahead.

This year, the songwriter stream was offered concurrently to band and choral. This group of individuals are vital to the future of The Salvation Army in that they are creating relevant melodies and writing lyrics that will be sung by congregations around the world. The journey and development of songwriters now has a path forward as avenues are being developed to publish new Army songs such as *Salvation Worship*. This group of writers spent time creating songs together, discussing ways to write theologically sound lyrics, and discovering ways to find balance between simple yet contemplative songs. It was fantastic to see and hear their contributions throughout the weekend. Laura Rowsell, one of the Canada & Bermuda delegates, was able to lead her song *Take My Life* during a time of worship in the Sunday morning service. It was a wonderful moment as it was a collective prayer for all gathered that their lives and their music would be used in “*endless praise, ever only all for Thee.*”

The journey continues for composers of all ages and levels. Our ability to listen never stops. We strive to hear what is in our mind and what others are writing. We need to continue listening for trends and classics, even listening to the advice of others, whether it be good or bad advice. Most importantly, we must continue listening to what the Lord places on our hearts. To write that God-given melody, we must listen and seek His presence in our daily life, asking Him to divinely inspire the music that we write. Lord, let us hear from you today!

Delegates from the
Canada & Bermuda
Territory



SIGNS OF THE DIVINE:

Navigating the Challenges of Interpreting Spiritual Sound for the Deaf Community

by Jenn Power

I had no notes, no idea what would be spoken about beyond the sermon title, which didn't give me much, to be honest. The preacher said, "Listen" and left a dramatic pause. I had no idea where he was going, and he didn't seem inclined to continue. Was it metaphorical? Was he drawing attention to an important point? Was it a literal command to attend to auditory sound? With some hesitation I decided on option three, and signed, "Listen to a sound with your ears." Although I knew the person for whom I was interpreting loved signing worship music and could hear some sound, I was still uneasy telling a Deaf person to listen. An awkward moment later, the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah* started playing over the speakers. Nailed it.

Now, a follow up dilemma. Do I describe that this song is being played? Do I sign the lyrics? Do I even know all the lyrics? After a lightning-fast assessment of the situation, I started signing the lyrics, while simultaneously analyzing them, mentally sorting through lexical choices to communicate the content and intent of the speaker, composer, and performers. How, with two hands and zero forethought, do you adequately convey the sound of hundreds of voices rising, falling, overlapping, separating, and rejoining in crescendo? I will tell you: you don't – or at least I didn't.

It was indeed the intent of the speaker to have the congregation listen to the majesty of the composition, the joy of the voices in the choir praising the Lord God omnipotent, who reigneth forever, and ever. Hallelujah! I'm fairly confident my on-the-fly interpretation left much to be desired in the majesty department! It was not exactly an equivalent experience of reverence, artistry, and awe, and I wonder how that long chunk of time set aside for an auditory experience impacted the Deaf person in the pew. Depending on their individual experiences, personality, even mood that day, might they have felt bored? Interested? Othured?

Sitting in church listening to sermons or scripture readings about miraculous healings, knowing there are people in my church family with those same disabilities or long-term health conditions, I've often wondered if anyone else feels awkward or uncomfortable. When we don't consider the feelings of others, we end up with people being prayed over (by well-intentioned Christians) when they don't feel they need to be healed, or people

who have prayed for healing countless times with no result but disappointment, or who feel they have already been healed in spirit if not body.

In the Bible, we see Jesus spending time with people, asking questions and really listening to their answers. Before I impose my views or opinions on someone, I need to be like Jesus and be cognizant and considerate of other peoples' feelings, perspectives, and life experiences. And to realize that the words I choose to use may have unintended impact.

We have a lot of strange Christian words and phrases we may have heard so often we forget that they are, indeed, strange. Imagine going to church for the first time only to hear people talking about being "washed in the blood." That could be very unsettling!

As another example of my word choices inadvertently excluding people, I am notorious for calling everyone "guys." It never bothered me to be in a collective group of so-called guys, but when I realized some people find it offensive, patriarchal, or problematic, I made a conscious effort to change my phraseology to be more inclusive and respectful.

While interpreting, it is essential to pay attention to the impact of my word choices. My job is to share the message in a way that the recipient can receive it as intended. Often, I'll need to do some cultural or linguistic bridging. A whole sermon based on "he who has ears, let him hear," "hearing the call of God," or "listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit" – all good things but entirely unrelated to sound vibrations being understood by your brain – will require sensitive and deliberate interpretation. Having a heart and a mind that is open to what Jesus is teaching you about God, knowing the direction set before you by God, and being willing to follow that path – that's the real message. That's the "hearing" and "listening."

God speaks to us in so many ways. For me it has been predominantly non-verbal. I have gut feelings and incredible coincidences, lines in songs, books or podcasts that jump out and stay with me, unexpected comments or conversations, thunderstorms and trees, and the list goes on. God is not limited in ways to reach His children. He has resources. All of them. Listening to God isn't a practice of hearing a literal voice. It's a practice of attending to the divine, of obedience, faith, and trust, and knowing the path and walking in it.

We just have to listen. And when I **say** listen, I **sign** "pay attention."

Three Listening Exercises

Expanding Your Listening Palate

Listening to new and unfamiliar genres is a great way for us to enter the wider global and universal church community. Whether we search out new music to listen to for our enjoyment, worship, or to share with our congregation, we should seek to expand our ears to genres and worship styles outside our regular comfort zone.

Check out this worship music in a wide range of genres and styles that you may not have encountered before. What can you take away from these sounds and use in your own worship practices?



Benny Prasad
Shout to the Lord



Aradhna
Holy River (feat. Stephen Roach & Luke Skaggs)



Urban Doxology
Wasteland



New Wine
Praise Yahweh



Darla Baltazar
Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Three Listening Exercises

Ear Training

Perhaps our most important musical skill, yet one often neglected, is our ear training. The ability to audiate (hear sounds when not present) a score, play back a melody or chord progressions by ear, or notate what you hear is essential to our musical development.

Many learn music by rote and develop this skill naturally along with their instrument, while others develop the skill in lessons along with music theory and instrumental technique. No matter your skill level, you can always develop your ear through practice.

If you are training your ear for the first time, begin by developing your interval identification. Start with a major scale and differentiating between two different intervals. As that becomes easy, add more notes of the scale and eventually all the accidentals.

Next time you need/want to learn a song, try playing it by ear rather than looking up the music, chords, or tab. If this is your first time, it may take a long while but like anything, the more you do it, the easier it will become.

Check out these online resources to help develop your ear. Exercises include interval identification, chord quality/progressions, and melodic/rhythmic dictation. No matter your skill, age, or instrument, your ear can always grow and aid your musical practice.



<https://www.teoria.com/en/exercises/>

www.musictheory.net/exercises



Three Listening Exercises

Soundwalking

The idea of *soundwalking* (or listening walks for our purposes) emerged in the 1960s through the work of R. Murray Schafer, and Hildegard Westerkamp. It is described as “any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment” or “a walk with a concentration on listening.” We can develop our listening practice by using these exercises and planning intentional walks to focus on the soundscape around us.

What do you hear on your left side? What do you hear on your right?

What is sonically far and near, loud or quiet?

Tuning our ear to listen to these things can help us become more aware of what is apparent in our communities and stretch our musical skills to the extra-musical world. Walks need not be long, but long enough that you can clear your mind of anything but the noise around you. It is also suggested to plan your walks to include diverse sonic settings; include busy and quiet, large and enclosed spaces.

Pose pre-set semi-structured questions at different stopping points along your route. Ask what sounds dominated the space? What do you (dis)like about the soundscape? How do the physical qualities of the built environment impact the soundscape?

Listening walks can also be incorporated into or become a preliminary step towards prayer walks. Use your ear and the sound around you to guide your prayer and your spiritual discussion. Listening walks can help us move into a holistic musical practice that makes development of musical skills accessible to those not engaged in musical performance and makes our extra-musical environment more present to our musical ear.



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COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS



Feel free to send us your ideas, articles, videos, posters and pictures. This newsletter is meant to cover all music and arts ministry types from across the territory, and we need your help to reach every corner. Forward any information to Jahred.Warkentin@salvationarmy.ca and we'll do our best to put you in our next issue!

Maple Leaf Brass

Recent Maple Leaf Brass titles:

No. 124	Hymn Tune Arrangement	My All for Thee	(Stephen Hull)
No. 125	March	I Want to Tell You	(Jonathan Rowse)
No. 126	Hymn Tune Arrangement	Wholly Thine	(Rachel Ewing)
No. 127	Hymn Setting	Pass Me Not	(Harold Burgmayer)

<https://salvationist.ca/music-and-arts-ministries/publications/maple-leaf-brass/>