Listen

by Mark Shelton

J.S. Bach took a break from his worship leader job to listen to the music of Dietrich Buxtehude. Since the invention of the phonograph was about 170 years in the future, Herr Buxtehude had not cut an album--plus he lived some distance down the road from Bach.
No problem; Bach walked to hear Buxtehude.

250 miles!

Bach was really determined to get in some listening.

Listening to music is an essential part of our musical development. Musicians invest countless hours in practicing, performing, and songwriting, but active listening often takes a backseat. There is a difference between the *passive* listening to music (while washing the car or cleaning the house) and *active* listening, which requires more focus.

For most of the people reading this article, listening to music is convenient. No need to take a 400 kilometer hike to check out a great musician. We've got Spotify, iTunes, and motorized vehicles. Take advantage of the easy access and dive into active listening.

Listen to your favorite music--with a different perspective
While listening to your preferred type of music, search for details that have escaped your notice during casual listening. Is that gated reverb on the snare drum? Does the electric guitar double the bass line on every chorus?

Listen to unfamiliar music
Venturing outside your musical comfort zone is a great way to pick up new ideas for your sonic arsenal. Classical, jazz, blues, art rock, electronica, salsa, Celtic, and klezmer! A myriad of genres and sub-styles awaits your exploration. Listen carefully to what makes each type unique.

Listen to percussion-packed music
Immerse yourself in West African drumming, percussion ensembles, marimba bands, and drumlines. The world of percussion abounds with interesting instruments and rhythms.

Listen to percussion-less music
Bask in the beauty of a slow movement from a string quartet. Study how bluegrass grooves without a drummer in the band. Listen to unaccompanied solo guitar.

Listen to live music
We listen with our eyes as well as our ears. Experiencing music in a live setting is special. Attend concerts and enjoy the beauty of the real-time moment.

Listen to virtuoso performers
Whether it's Yo-Yo Ma on cello, Wynton Marsalis playing trumpet, or Phil Keaggy picking the guitar, extraordinary musicians are EXTRAORDINARY. Listen carefully to their tone quality and subtle nuances in phasing. Hearing amazing percussionists such as Giovanni Hidalgo on congas and Glen Velez on frame drums can be an "imagination catalyst."

Listen to assigned music
Whether playing in the worship band, jazz ensemble, or symphony orchestra, study recordings of the repertoire before the rehearsal. Pay attention to how the performer on the recording phrases the part that you will be playing. Take note of spots in the music that can function as cues. Pre-rehearsal listening is a confidence builder.

Listen to yourself
Hit the record button and lay down a track of yourself playing a musical passage or exercise. Listen, critique, improve, record again, listen, critique, improve. Keep repeating until happy or exhausted. Listening to recordings of your playing is a healthy reality check.

Active listening educates and inspires. Bach was probably seeking both when he made his epic journey. My eclectic listening suggestions (see next page) will provide you with over an hour of creativity-stimulating music. You can find the entire playlist by going to Spotify and searching for Worship Musician Percussion Listening. All the recordings are available on iTunes.

I made sure to toss in some Bach and Buxtehude.

Title	Composer	Artist
Con Poder	Traditional	Salvador
Drumkit Quartet No. 1	Glenn Kotche	So Percussion
Barely Breathing	Brett Dietz	University of North Texas Percussion Ensemble
Sam's Bulgar	Sam Musiker	Dave Tarras & The Musiker Brothers
Improv	Enter The Worship Circle	Enter The Worship Circle
Suite No. 1 Prelude	J. S. Bach	Gwendolyn B. Thrasher
Foggy Mountain Breakdown	Earl Scruggs	Bill Monroe
Linear Chill	Mark Shelton	Mark Shelton
Joy	Joel Laviolette	Joel Laviolette & Rattletree
Suite in G Minor Gigue	Dietrich Buxtehude	2Guitars
Mourning into Dancing	Tommy Walker	Ron Kenoly
First Steps	Beth Shelton	Tin Roof Tango
O The Blood	Thomas Miller & Mary Beth Miller	Gateway Worship
Timba Solo	Giovanni Hidalgo	Giovanni Hidalgo
Percussion Concerto: Con forza	Joseph Schwanter	Chris Lamb & The Nashville Symphony
Jessica	Dickie Betts & Les Dudek	The Allman Brothers

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