



## LISTENING AS A PART OF PRACTICING

BY JOSH GOTTRY

Even as a professional percussionist, I am constantly impressed, excited, and educated by recordings and live performances of all types of music, especially pieces for percussion solo or ensemble. So much so, that I am surprised how little emphasis is placed on listening by so many percussionists and percussion students. Here are some tips for implementing listening into your practice routine.

### ATTEND PERFORMANCES

Make every effort to attend percussion performances (especially free ones). Events like student recitals and percussion ensemble concerts at local universities are great places to start. Live performances not only allow you to see details of how the performers execute their parts, but should also serve as a motivator for you because of the excitement and energy involved.

### PURCHASE RECORDINGS

Purchase recordings of pieces on which you are currently working. Even if you're buying as many as 5-10 recordings per semester you avoid any unreasonable cost. And even if you only buy 1-2 per semester, you will find your collection begins to build in a fairly short amount of time. Keep in mind that many percussion recordings may not be available in your local area. If local stores don't carry and can't special order a recording you are looking for, consider websites or percussion mail order companies to expand your collection.

### MAKE TIME FOR LISTENING

Set aside 30-60 minutes a week for focused listening. Whether this involves music you own or recordings at a library or college media center, sit down and listen attentively for ideas and techniques you can implement in your own practice and performance. You also may want to make note cards with information about the recordings you listen to, in case you ever need to refer back to something. And remember to expose yourself to several different styles of music . . . each has something to offer.

### USE WHAT YOU LEARN

Whether it be copying a groove from a popular tune or a particular phrasing idea from a marimba solo, make efforts to apply the ideas you gain from listening. Sometimes there may not be a direct application, but the exposure should ideally add aspects of musicality and excitement to your own performance.



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