

Joya

The creative and performing arts

"The more I study listening, the more I come to the conviction that those who know how to listen are the exceptions."
Alfred Tomatis

The Origins

An E. N. T. specialist and the son of an Italian opera singer, Prof. Dr. Alfred Tomatis developed an interest in music and the correlation between the sounds we are able to hear and those we are able to produce, either on an instrument or with our own voice. From his observations came three laws which at the time stunned both his medical environment and the world of instrumentalists and singers.

1. One can only (re)produce a sound that can be perceived. So, if a musician/singer has lost the full perception of certain frequencies, he or she will not be able to create them.
2. If we give the damaged ear the chance of hearing correctly the singer/actor or instrumentalist will regain those lost or compromised frequencies and from then on evoke these subtle changes from his or her instrument.
3. Sufficient stimulation of the ear will provide a lasting improvement of the ability to listen to and produce sounds.

"Music is your own experience. If you don't live it, it won't come out." Charley Parker

Properly used, the voice is a great source of energy. Most actors and singers know how little fatigued they can be after an exuberant performance. When one's posture is right the whole body - not just the mind - will radiate energy. Thousands of vocalists and instrumentalists around the world have benefited from Tomatis' achievements. Gerard Depardieu once was a tongue-tied young man struggling to become an actor. "I could not complete any of my sentences" he says in his biography. "It was Tomatis who gave continuity, not just to my voice but also to my thoughts." Other celebrities who have benefited include Maria Callas, Yehudi Menuhin, Pavarotti and Sting.

The Visual Arts

"I paint as the bird sings." Claude Monet

There is a relationship between the world of sound and the world of colour. Just as the prism breaks down light and shows it as a rainbow, the cochlea in the inner ear does the same by opening up a frequential fan of sound. Although we can hear up to 20.000 Hertz, the perception of sound is clearest in a range from 16 to 16.000 Hertz and a portion of this curve is matched in the visual field.

In his Paris centre, Tomatis subjected people to filtered Mozart at different levels and asked the testees to draw while listening. He found that the choice of colour and the quality in colour tone was influenced by the music heard through the Electronic Ear. This became a useful tool in testing very young or autistic children. The phenomenon also attracted a number of visual artists and painters who wanted to explore the Tomatis Effect on their palette.

To give an example: the zone between 1000 to 2000 Hz – which determines quality of timbre for the voice – corresponds with yellow. It's the colour most of us see best. We can easily distinguish between 40 shades of yellow whereas we have much more difficulty with green. The acoustic equivalent of green lies around 3000 Hz and is much more obscure, except to the well-exercised ears of a musician. In the corresponding visual scene something similar happens. There are but a few people who perceive more than a few shades of green. After a series of sessions the French painter Aujame, one of Tomatis' clients, could easily list 50 different greens. In fact his forest paintings of the Massif Central are, according to Tomatis, "a symphony of green".

As a rule one can say that the lower frequencies evoke the darker tones, the siennas and the reds, followed by the medium ranges of orange and yellow. The high frequencies find their equivalent in the greens, then blue and indigo. So for any painter, professional or non-professional, who is interested in widening his or her spectral horizon, Listening Training could be the key.

The Third Ear

"Let your eye catch the sound; then you will finally understand." Zen Monk Tozan, 9th Century

There is a lot of Gregorian Chant in our programming. These chants stimulate the cerebral cortex and use the rhythm of natural breath. The result may be manifold, from a deeper form of meditation to a different sense of clarity and creativity. Sounds are sources of energy in many ways and on different levels. Whether it is Gregorian Chant, Mozart or an Indian Raga, music and sound have been tools for healing and worship in all cultures and throughout the ages. It is only recently however that we have become able to maximise its power through new technologies.

Chanting, singing; any vocal exercises while using the Electronic Ear and a microphone can have an uplifting effect. You'll be using a microphone and will listen through a special headset with both air and bone conduction. These active sessions - exploring your own voice from within - can be quite inspiring, but are always alternated by listening passively while (if you so choose) drawing, painting, or simply relaxing.