



Listen: A History of Our Ears

Peter Szendy

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In this intimate meditation on listening, Peter Szendy examines what the role of the listener is, and has been, through the centuries. The role of the composer is clear, as is the role of the musician, but where exactly does the listener stand in relation to the music s/he listens to? What is the responsibility of the listener? Does a listener have any rights, as the author and composer have copyright? Szendy explains his love of musical arrangement (since arrangements allow him to listen to someone listening to music), and wonders whether it is possible in other ways to convey to others how we ourselves listen to music. How can we share our actual hearing with others? Along the way, he examines the evolution of copyright laws as applied to musical works and takes us into the courtroom to examine different debates on what we are and aren't allowed to listen to, and to witness the fine line between musical borrowing and outright plagiarism. Finally, he examines the recent phenomenon of DJs and digital compilations, and wonders how technology has affected our habits of listening and has changed listening from a passive exercise to an active one, whereby one can jump from track to track or play only selected pieces.

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