

Broadening Your Spectrum of Listening Experiences (and having a ball!)

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We recommend a wide variety of musical experiences, not as a performer, but as an actively engaged listener or observer, as excellent preparation for majoring in music. Please consider these as suggestions for enrichment: don't be alarmed, because very few college freshmen (at any college) have already experienced most of these.

Attend a concert by the nearest symphony orchestra. If it's a concert featuring a guest pianist or violinist (who will perform a concerto with the orchestra), or the program includes a major work for orchestra, chorus, and soloists, so much the better.

Balance that by going to a local coffee house and listening to some local pop musicians.

You probably like to collect CDs of the soundtracks of your favorite movies. Pick some of your favorite tracks. You probably already know how that music is used in the movie – what scenes, action, dialogue that your choice of music is juxtaposed against. Forget that for a moment, and concentrate on the music only. How does the composer achieve the desired effect? Then run the music again against the visuals – why does it work? Just for fun, you might like to conceive of interchanging tracks with other visuals, sometimes from other films. John Williams composed the scores for both *Star Wars* and *Schindler's List*. Consider putting the *Star Wars* music with *Schindler's List*, and vice versa. Why does the music “work” for the one, but not the other? Let your imagination run riot!

Attend a fully staged opera or ballet, by a professional company if at all possible. Seeing an elaborate production for the first time is a mind-blowing experience.

Balance that by attending a Broadway production on tour. You may have to travel some distance to a major city to catch *The Lion King* or *Phantom of the Opera* on tour, but you'll never forget it.

Many people's favorite popular music is that of their youth – so ask your loved ones to share theirs with you. Perhaps your parents liked the BeeGees or the Carpenters in the 1970's, or the

Beatles or the Supremes in the 1960's. Maybe your grandparents were Elvis fans in the 1950's and could loan you some CDs of the greatest hits of Elvis – or Buddy Holly or Patsy Cline or Patti Page. Are you so fortunate as to have great-grandparents living? There's a wonderful world of Big Band music of the 1930's and 40's – Glenn Miller, Guy Lombardo, Harry James, Benny Goodman – and tunes by Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, George Gershwin, and many others that are well worth knowing (in part, because of their very sophisticated harmonic progressions). As the years pass, weaker pieces of popular music are forgotten, and what remains may be rightly regarded as of classic stature. Yes, there are classics of popular music! You'll study a few – not many – in your JBU pre-performance courses.

Attend a concert by a fine college choir on tour. Much of what they sing will probably be unaccompanied. Other pieces will be accompanied, maybe even by their chamber orchestra. You'll leave with a good sense of the professionalism of a good college music department. If you can hear JBU's Cathedral Choir on their annual tour, so much the better!

Attend a song recital by a world-renowned classical singer – Renee Fleming, Kiri Te Kanawa, or the like. Performers of this caliber are not only consummate vocalists, but also very fine actors. You'll learn a lot about how fine artists project the meaning of the text to their audience, thereby communicating with their listeners and selling each and every song.

Attend a recital by a professional string quartet (two violins, viola, cello) or other small chamber ensemble. Try to sit close to the musicians so that you can observe how they communicate with each other. There's no conductor – they simply look at each other, someone lifts an eyebrow, and then they play sublimely. An absolute marvel – breathtaking.

Particularly if you are a vocalist, choose an art song or choral work (accompanied or unaccompanied) in English that you have never heard performed, copy out the text, and read it as text. Consider how you would go about writing music that would enhance the impact of this text – appropriate for this text and none other. Pretend that you are a composer who is charged with writing music for this text. How would you go about that? Then study the piece and see how the composer solved that problem to his satisfaction. You'll learn a lot about the relationship between text and musical setting.



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