



# *Listening*

JEAN-LUC NANCY

TRANSLATED BY CHARLOTTE MANDELL

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**Listening** Jean-Luc Nancy , Charlotte Mandell (Translator)

In this lyrical meditation on listening, Jean-Luc Nancy examines sound in relation to the human body. How is listening different from hearing? What does listening entail? How does what is heard differ from what is seen? Can philosophy even address listening, *ecouter*, as opposed to *entendre*, which means both hearing and understanding?

Unlike the visual arts, sound produces effects that persist long after it has stopped. The body, Nancy says, is itself like an echo chamber, responding to music by inner vibrations as well as outer attentiveness. Since "the ear has no eyelid" (Quignard), sound cannot be blocked out or ignored: our whole being is involved in listening, just as it is involved in interpreting what it hears.

The mystery of music and of its effects on the listener is subtly examined. Nancy's skill as a philosopher is to bring the reader companionably along with him as he examines these fresh and vital questions; by the end of the book the reader feels as if listening very carefully to a person talking quietly, close to the ear.

## Listening Details

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## From Reader Review Listening for online ebook

### **Kate says**

My mentor gave me this book, as she knew I was interested in researching music and the experience of perceiving music. It was remarkably easy to read, and I think a real novel exploration of what it means to experience music or be in a relationship with musical sound... Nancy does an excellent job of illustrating the problems of a supposed boundary between self and other in musical perception ("listening"), as well as resisting music as a purely intellectual experience.

A remarkably quick read for theory, and a pleasurable one at that.

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### **Ayanna Dozier says**

The first thirty pages add a very generative contribution to the understanding of phenomenology as it relates to the formation of the self and the sensorial understanding of what that may mean for the self to take on on a subject that is, essentially, a subject of the subject. (Nancy 28) That is to say that the listening object only exists in relation to the listener and thus has to be interpreted in relation to not only oneself, but itself and whoever the intended receiver is. For me, the Coda nearly destroyed the density of information bestowed to the phenomenological event of listening at the beginning of the book. Nancy dances around identity politics in the first two chapters in relation to the formation of the self and possible subjectivity that could occur when listening. His argument against identity is hastily thrust at the reader amongst the last twenty or so pages with what Nazism made with the formation of the individual and their identity as being the reason why identity politics (basically) should not only be left out of the listening (experience) of sound in addition to all others arts as well. (Nancy 57) It is an argument that does not hold up when, if following Amelia Jones assertion in Seeing Differently that, "art is already always identified." (Jones 78)

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### **Aileen says**

I think I probably only understood fifty percent of this book, and it was an odd fifty percent. It wasn't understanding by chapter, or paragraph, or sentence. It was understanding by phrase. I would get the second half of a sentence, and go back to the first part again and get lost once more. I think partially that is a fault of reading in English what pretty clearly says something else (and probably something more) in French.

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### **stephen says**

i am having difficulty with this because all the problems nancy wants to address seem to follow from his insistence on dragging heidegger around more than from what he is thinking about.

in this case heidegger is a hat of meat on a hot sunny day. you think the flies are just dense where you are. taking off the hat never crosses your mind.

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### **C. Alexander Gonzalez says**

An imperative read for the studious music listener or anyone interested in the sonic arts. It's an insightful and meticulously comprehensive dive into the basis of aural perception and the relationship between sound and listener. Have a notepad and pen nearby, because you'll want to mark some of this down for future referral.

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### **Danielle says**

Despite its diminutive size, *Listening* proved to be a time consuming little work to process, and even now I'm not sure I understand everything Nancy meant to convey. His translator, however, is excellent; I appreciate her notes and explanations immensely. Without her I'm sure I would have missed some of the potential meanings in the work - ha, I'm sure I still have missed some even with her help, but every little bit counts.

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### **A.J. says**

This is Nancy on not only aural arts, but also sound and music; on what it means to hear and what it means to listen. But this is a discussion with Heidegger and Husserl on phenomenology and the subject. It is about how, as resonant spaces, we come to constitute to ourselves as listeners who not only listen the murmur of others, but also in speaking are ourselves audience to the din of our own voices.

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### **Daniel says**

Fairly inscrutable.

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### **Plain Jane says**

I read bits and parts of it for a paper I had to write, and it was simply...musical. I intend on reading the whole thing as well. Loved the way the book was divided into three parts with such beautiful titles. Will update my review after I finish reading this.

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