

Listening!!

Sarah's copy

What should I listen for?

This is the checklist I gave each of my students. You can tailor it to your specific instrument and your musical values.

- **Tone:** Are there dead notes?
- **Phrase direction:** Does each phrase have a climax? (giving special attention to appoggiaturas)
- **Sections:** Do all of the individual phrases move toward the one climax of the whole section? Are there "conjunctions" between phrases?
- **Body language:** Do the movements reflect the phrase direction and mood?
- **Facial expression:** Do the expressions reflect the mood of the section?
- **Articulation:** Are there correct and distinct tonguings, slurs and note lengths?
- **Tone colors:** Are the colors and color changes appropriate for the moods of the piece?
- **Emotion:** Where does the mood change? Is there a recurring mood?
- **Is every note heard?**
- **Are you saying something or just playing notes?**
- **Breathing:** Are the breaths correctly placed and big enough to reach the phrase end with enough support? Is there a fast air stream for vibrant and in-tune sound?
- **Phrase ends:** Does it ring? Does the last note stay the same volume or crescendo or decrescendo? Is it full value and in tune?
- **Accents:** Do you use them as you do in regular speech to define the most important notes?
- **Nuances:** Go beyond what is marked in the music. Hold the first note of a run, lengthen with vibrato an important note, subito piano on a crescendo...
- **Intonation:** Am I watching those darn C#s and changing dynamics?
- **Vibrato:** Is it even? Does it sound like a goat? Does it vary with the moods? Is it tapered during decrescendos?
- **Rhythm:** Is everything even? Count out loud using words like huckleberry and play out the inner beats for precise rhythm.
- **Tempo:** Is it steady with changes as indicated in the music? Use the metronome to check if you slow down during the hard parts.
- **Stage presence:** Am I confident from the moment I walk on the stage?
- **Posture:** Am I standing or sitting tall and proud or am I drastically bending over for low notes or during difficult passages? Am I raising my elbows or shoulders?
- **Position:** Are the fingers close to the keys? Is the hand in relaxed position?
- **Connections:** Is there no space between notes? Does each note lead to the next with no banging?
- **Ensemble with piano:** Do I know the piano part? Do I give and take with the leading melody and cue the entrances?
- **Am I having fun?**