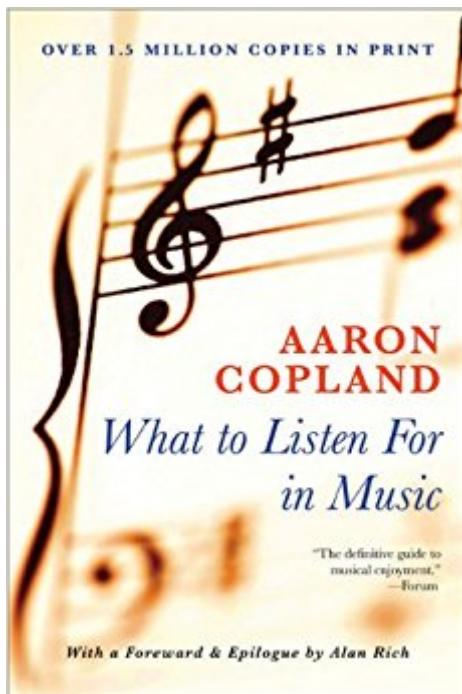


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# What To Listen For In Music



## Synopsis

Now in trade paperback: "The definitive guide to musical enjoyment" (Forum). In this fascinating analysis of how to listen to both contemporary and classical music analytically, eminent American composer Aaron Copland offers provocative suggestions that will bring readers a deeper appreciation of the most viscerally rewarding of all art forms.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a reprint of the enormously popular 1957 edition of Copland's guide to music. There is no new text by Copland, only a new introduction by composer William Schuman, which is more an encomium to the "Dean of American Music." In large measure, the book owes its success to its simple, jargon-free language and engaging style. One wishes, though, that Copland might have added an assessment of the musical scene of the past 30 years. The bibliography has not been updated and is thus virtually useless, with the most recent entry 1955. Nonetheless, the book remains an excellent guide for the novice. Larry Lipkis, Moravian Coll., Bethlehem, Pa. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Aaron Copeland is, of course, one of the greatest American composers. His input about music is scholarly and welcome. He does not lose a layman in technical jargon, music notation, or advanced music theory. For that I am grateful. The book introduces music and its structures in a steady progression. In the end I became lost. But I hung in there until the end. I think the subject really does need a format like Bernstein's Young People's Concerts where you hear a sample of the items they are discussing. But, for a book, this one is pretty good. I especially like the section where he discusses composition using the varied characteristics of the orchestra.

I am surprised it took me so long to discover this book, as it is so well written and so useful for better understanding the ways to enjoy concert music. I really did not know Copland was so articulate and good at writing. I can perceive a successful effort on his part in order to clearly explain something as abstract as music. This is not a book that will provide the reader with all that is needed to completely own this art form. However, it is a book that should be read by anyone that intends to grasp more enjoyment out of serious concert music. His point of view on many aspects of the music appreciation practice are very valuable. Throughout his discussion, he manages to present many useful tips that help the reader to better concentrate on what is important on any piece. In his book, Copland mentions many examples of pieces to make his point, and I guess one has to be familiar with those works in order to get it. However, here and there I found mentions of examples for which I am not familiar with, and even then, I could very well understand what he was trying to say. He does not assume that the reader is very knowledgeable about music and at the same time, he does not write as if the reader was stupid, as some of the books from the series  
"For Dummies" series do. I highly recommend this book to better learn about appreciating music from the humble words of a great composer who is caring enough to make his reading enjoyable.

This is a TERRIFIC book about music for music laypeople -- those of us who love music but don't know much about it, who want to learn more in order to enjoy it more. There is lots and lots written about music history, what composer wrote when and who influenced whom. But there isn't that much that I have found about the music itself which really helps me understand what is going on in a particular piece. Copland does this, by taking the reader through the building blocks of music. He starts with what he calls the four elements: rhythm, melody, harmony and tone color. Then he

proceeds to musical texture, to musical structure, and then to five fundamental forms: sectional, variational, fugal, sonata, and free. After this, he concludes with brief surveys of opera, film music, and what was then contemporary serious music. Each chapter is followed with a list of suggested pieces of music to listen to. The book's advanced age has remarkably little impact on its usefulness, except for the fact that the "listening lists" refer to old recordings. The book first appeared in 1939 and was revised in 1957; the Signet edition that I read has a short chapter on music since Copland. Copland was a teacher of music as well as a composer, and it shows -- I would love to take a class for which this was the text. This book does, however, demand lots of effort, and lots of listening, at least for us "I don't know much about music, but I know what I like" types. What Copland wants the listener to do is go beyond pure sensuous enjoyment and use his or her brain to follow the music as it unfolds -- to listen, not just hear. Doing this requires listening again and again to pieces he discusses. Like some other reviewers, I wish very much that some kind person would put out a CD (or set up a website) with the specific passages Copland cites, as well as his broader listening list. Even without this, however, I have learned a great deal from this book. I expect to learn more, since I will be reading again and again as I listen. I doubt that the book would be nearly so useful to people who already know a lot about how music works, but for the groundlings, Copland's book is masterful

Recommended by a friend, this is a very clear, easy to follow book for anyone who likes or loves classical music and wants to get even more enjoyment out of it. As a musician myself it is very interesting to hear one of America's finest composers talk about music in a way that demystifies the listening process. To paraphrase Mr. Copland, people have no trouble going to the theater and then discussing how they felt about the performance with little or no background in the dramatic arts, yet people who go to classical music concerts are not sure they are qualified or educated enough about music to "understand" or form and opinion about it. This book teaches the reader that "I don't know anything about music" doesn't mean you can't enjoy it. By applying the information in this book one can potentially learn to hear more by becoming an active listener, which in turn increases understanding and enjoyment.

Ever since I took a Music Appreciation course at a community college in my home town back in the Summer of 1967, I have been fascinated with classical music. I still refer to the text book today from time to time. Aaron Copland's book really gets into the nuts and bolts of how music is created for us laymen. For me, it represents the main resource for the understanding of music theory and comprehension. I would recommend this classic work for anyone who is truly serious about the

subject.

I haven't finished reading this, but so far what I have read is very good. I am very experienced in classical music, so I was more interested in seeing how he communicated ideas rather than expecting to learn much that was new. The material is organized very well. It is also quite readable, and his explanations are not too technical for the layman.

It is non-fiction and a primer in understanding classical music. Excellent

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