

eyes closed playing

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Ears and hands have more awareness when eyes are closed. When we play everything eyes closed, we're speaking language of sound and feel. We're "into the music" in a different way when sight is absent. The expressive life of a single ringing tone fills our mind.

We enjoy eyes closed **listening**, as we maximize our natural ability to learn "by ear". Eyes closed listening guides eyes closed playing. We find our new pieces come together sooner, and our old pieces become more fluid. We get into a different world, feeling the sound, and we notice new things in the music, with our ears and hands the primary guides.

The piece's pulse, the swing of its beat, the timing of each note, the sail through its length, the placing of its endpoint, also, the breath in its tones, life in its melodies, effects of the harmonic kaleidoscope, pull of counterpoint, the experience given to us by the form, of home, travel, activity, repose, and of relief...of conversations, and discovery, of climbing, marveling, flying, falling, tumbling, landing, settling... and much more, we "feel the music", and hear it *differently*.

As soon as we start to listen to a piece, to learn to play a piece, we start to close eyes. My students quickly come to love it, and even when I haven't asked, they play ears open, hands aware, eyes closed. Once they experience the joys of this way of playing, they return to it.

Infinite visual distractions gone, we focus on the world of the music, making it our own, taking it into ourselves, and letting it take us away. We can learn to find all the notes by spacing and feel, like people who are blind do. We can too. Hands learn to know their instrument and its sounds.

Ears wake up where eyes rest.

Body and mind remember well when allowed this experience with each piece, in the learning, the consolidating, and mastery processes. The music grows into our memory. It's a pleasure to play and listen eyes closed. It becomes easy, and brings us into the flow of the music in special ways. Our learning is memorization. We're playing "by heart".

Shin'ichi Suzuki said, "Tone has a living soul". "You *become* tone." Eyes closed, we merge with the life of the music.

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