

Tomatis

“It is no coincidence that the ear is shaped like a question mark,” according to Alfred A Tomatis. **Victoria Aitken** explores the mystery that spawned a therapy.

A friend of mine told me about a course of ear training called Tomatis Listening therapy that she had just completed. I didn't realise by taking my friend's advice to embark on a course of Tomatis would change my life. I am a singer and after reading about the Tomatis Effect, it made total sense to me, namely that what you cannot hear, you cannot sing.

The start of the course involved taking a listening test. The initial assessment showed a graph of how I was listening. My listening patterns fell short of what Tomatis considered to be the Ideal Listening Curve, but I was assured by Ella Williams, founder of the Listening Centre, that this could be improved upon. During the course I met various others and not everyone was a singer. I asked Ella, what areas does Tomatis treat? she explained, “The list is long as auditory perception is at the heart of communication, movement and is a big generator of electrical energy to the brain.” Her list included speech delay, behavioural problems, hyperacusis, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, vertigo, stroke, ADD, stuttering, dysphonia, vocal production, musicality, language learning, attention, memory and concentration and confidence.

The course comprises daily two-hour sessions on 13 consecutive days, followed by a 3-6 week break; then another seven consecutive days, followed by a break and finally, another seven consecutive days.

The Theory

The ear is the first fully formed organ in the foetus and at four and a half months, it is fully functioning. It transmits sonic energy via the mother's voice to the child. Tomatis believed this energy to be vital to the child's development as it actually invigorates it's desire to communicate. This is why a journey back to the world of high frequency sound as experienced in the womb is an essential and profound part of the course.

Ella likes to call it the “Joy Factor”. It is when people experience a great sense of knowing and connection, coupled with energy flow and vitality. Ella explains, “Poor auditory processing is due to slow, imbalanced analysing and decoding of sound. The reason for this is the under-performing response of

the muscles of the middle ear. Tomatis therapy works on and strengthens these muscles, which then allows quick and accurate deciphering of sound, i.e good listening.”

Results

It wasn't long before I started noticing subtle but tangible changes of mind, body and spirit, some of which I had already invested quite a lot of effort trying to shift in the past. Suddenly at parties people would come up to me and say, “I don't know what you have done but you are radiating.”It really had not only a profound effect on my voice but also the way I look.

It also had a knock-on effect on my dyslexia. I've been labelled dyslexic for most of my life, and reading has been a form of torture. I was so much slower to read and to tell the time than other children my age.

Despite the diagnosis, there was little treatment available. But doing Tomatis changed many things for me. Being Dyslexic can effect your self- confidence, it feels a bit like floating around in space, but now my life feels it is taking on more clarity and focus. I feel more self-confident.

Many dyslexics end up singing or following creative paths - so as well as having my dyslexic habits relax, my voice has got much better. I can now sing on pitch and my voice has more resonance, range and evenness. I've also found other health benefits including improved posture, and I seem to have better co- ordination, more balance and feel more centred.

It's hard to put into words but I generally feel a greater awareness, both spatial and in the core of my being. I feel more connected and have a more expanded consciousness. Each time after leaving a session, I realised my visual world improved, too. I could see brighter colours and had a greater depth of perception. It's amazing how much your life can change once your ears are tuned.