

LISTENING FOR WELLNESS

By Pierre Sollier

Schools and offices are full of people who cannot excel because they are poor listeners. They all may have perfect hearing, but they are poor listeners. While hearing is a passive activity, listening requires desire, commitment and attention. Dr. Tomatis, a French ENT and one of the twentieth pioneer in the field of sound and music therapy developed ways to rekindle this desire to listen, and so made the lives of many people richer and more fulfilling.

Pierre Sollier's book is in a clear, understandable and complete synthesis of the work of this French ENT. Indeed, according to Léna Tomatis, Dr. Tomatis' widow, "this book is not a simple introduction, but a masterly presentation of the discoveries of my late husband". It makes fascinating reading, as evidenced by the fact that it got the IPPY Award for the best book published in 2005 in the category of psychology and health.

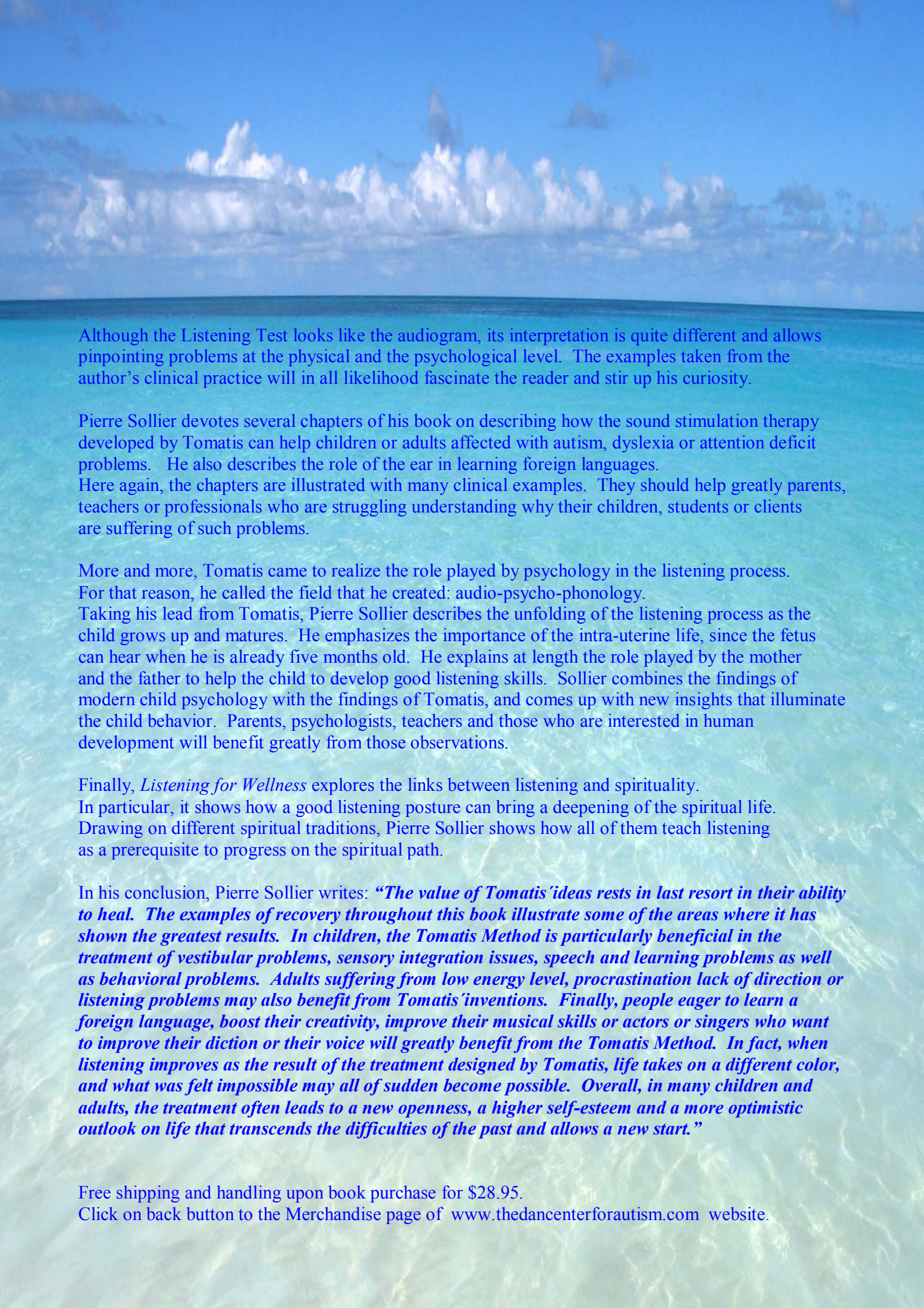
One of Tomatis' discoveries was that many learning problems originate from a poor rapport between the vestibule and the cochlea, both parts of the ear. To correct this faulty relationship, Tomatis developed an electronic device, called the Electronic Ear. It modifies music used to train the vestibular and cochlear to work in harmony. Listening to this modified music improves all the body functions, regulates sensory integration and develops better language and attention skills. As a result, one will be able to learn better and achieve results beyond expectations.

But the ear has another function: It acts as a dynamo, sending stimuli to our brain, keeping it alert, so it works optimally. Tomatis emphasizes that high frequency sounds "charge the brain", while low-frequencies tend to tire it. Thus, a good perception, a good ear, is vital to maintain the brain energized, attentive, so it can learn easily, decode language effortlessly and bring about a sense of well-being.

Listening for Wellness explores also in great details the relationship between the ear and the voice. Tomatis, the son of an opera singer, was indeed quite fascinated with that relationship. He demonstrated that the voice becomes richer and fuller when optimizing ones hearing. No wonder that famous singers (like Maria Callas) and actors (Like Depardieu) used the Tomatis Method!

Something that may astonish many readers is that the right ear performs better and faster than the left ear in processing language. Therefore it is an advantage to be "right-ear dominant". The treatment method Tomatis devised therefore nudges the right ear to become the dominant one.

Tomatis also found out that the ear dominance has a profound effect on the personality. In fact, the listening Curve of a person shows many of the behavioral characteristics of that person. In one of the most surprising parts of the book, Pierre Sollier writes an introduction to the Listening Test, a diagnostic tool developed by Tomatis.



Although the Listening Test looks like the audiogram, its interpretation is quite different and allows pinpointing problems at the physical and the psychological level. The examples taken from the author's clinical practice will in all likelihood fascinate the reader and stir up his curiosity.

Pierre Sollier devotes several chapters of his book on describing how the sound stimulation therapy developed by Tomatis can help children or adults affected with autism, dyslexia or attention deficit problems. He also describes the role of the ear in learning foreign languages. Here again, the chapters are illustrated with many clinical examples. They should help greatly parents, teachers or professionals who are struggling understanding why their children, students or clients are suffering of such problems.

More and more, Tomatis came to realize the role played by psychology in the listening process. For that reason, he called the field that he created: audio-psycho-phonology. Taking his lead from Tomatis, Pierre Sollier describes the unfolding of the listening process as the child grows up and matures. He emphasizes the importance of the intra-uterine life, since the fetus can hear when he is already five months old. He explains at length the role played by the mother and the father to help the child to develop good listening skills. Sollier combines the findings of modern child psychology with the findings of Tomatis, and comes up with new insights that illuminate the child behavior. Parents, psychologists, teachers and those who are interested in human development will benefit greatly from those observations.

Finally, *Listening for Wellness* explores the links between listening and spirituality. In particular, it shows how a good listening posture can bring a deepening of the spiritual life. Drawing on different spiritual traditions, Pierre Sollier shows how all of them teach listening as a prerequisite to progress on the spiritual path.

In his conclusion, Pierre Sollier writes: ***“The value of Tomatis’ ideas rests in last resort in their ability to heal. The examples of recovery throughout this book illustrate some of the areas where it has shown the greatest results. In children, the Tomatis Method is particularly beneficial in the treatment of vestibular problems, sensory integration issues, speech and learning problems as well as behavioral problems. Adults suffering from low energy level, procrastination lack of direction or listening problems may also benefit from Tomatis’ inventions. Finally, people eager to learn a foreign language, boost their creativity, improve their musical skills or actors or singers who want to improve their diction or their voice will greatly benefit from the Tomatis Method. In fact, when listening improves as the result of the treatment designed by Tomatis, life takes on a different color, and what was felt impossible may all of sudden become possible. Overall, in many children and adults, the treatment often leads to a new openness, a higher self-esteem and a more optimistic outlook on life that transcends the difficulties of the past and allows a new start.”***

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