

The Official Newsletter of the Global Listening Centre



# The Top 25



# Outstanding Women Listeners in the World 2021



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*"Listening is the beginning of prayer"*  
-Mother Teresa  
**The Angel of Listening**



*Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Nobel Laureate*



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One of my heroes, the great Peter Drucker, said, "The leader of the past knew how to tell. The leader of the future will know how to ask."

All of the leaders that I coach manage to be knowledge workers. What is the definition of a knowledge worker? Someone who knows more about what they are doing than their boss does. When we lead people who know more about what they are doing than we do, we cannot just tell them what to do. We have to ask, LISTEN and learn. There is no point in asking if we cannot listen. There is no learning if we cannot listen.

The leader of the future will be a great listener!



**Dr. Marshall Goldsmith**  
**Advisor, Global Listening Centre**  
**No. 1 Leadership Thinker in the World**

## A Message from the Executive Editor

Dear Listeners (or in this case readers),

I write to you today acknowledging that this is my last issue as editor. It has been a wonderful experience, serving as executive editor for this important and enlightening international newsletter. Working together, we have established *The Global Listener* as a newsletter that is respected by scholars and educators worldwide as an outlet for important research and commentary that has never been needed more than it is now. As executive editor, it has been a challenging assignment, one that has been enormously gratifying, and one that has been an extraordinary learning experience for me. I am deeply in debt for all of the wonderful contributions made by our members, and by our staff, without whose support this newsletter would not be possible.



Professor Rebecca Day  
Babcock, Ph.D.

I am pleased to share our announcement of **The Top 25 Outstanding Women Listeners in the World 2021 (25 OWL2021)** in this issue, and I want to thank the GLC's Chief Global Strategist, Mr. Sardool Singh, for initiating this important project. While any such list can never claim to be perfect, and most certainly not complete, we do hope that this activity will help to emphasize to the world the significance and power of listening. This list was compiled through a thorough and vigorous selection process. We used various means to gather nominations, including recommendations from members and outside faculty and business people, as well as a social media campaign. We made sure that the slate of nominees represented truly exceptional listeners, global in their representation, and with various vital fields included. The highly reputed members of the nominating and selection committees have done an excellent job in choosing a strong inaugural cohort, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committees for their efforts. It was far from an easy task, and it took months to choose the top 25 OWL2021. I hope you agree that they have selected an incredible list of exceptional listeners, and will join me in congratulating all of the individuals who have been chosen. Although things are improving here in the United States, this global pandemic has recently ravaged many cities in the world. How important is listening as we support our friends, neighbors, colleagues, and even total strangers as we fight through to the end of this world crisis.

In this issue you will find an interview with Donde Plowman, the Chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; an article on "Listening and Mental Health" by Michele Nealon, the President of the Chicago School of Professional Psychology; and "Listening Sewa", a very important article by our Past Vice Chair, Dr Michael Purdy, in this present pandemic crisis. We also feature several other timely articles on listening. Finally, Shahin de Heart, a well-known painter from Germany, has graced us once again with her visual representation, in oil on canvas, of the art of listening. Also, thanks to Carlota Barros for creating such a beautiful hymn and video on "Give Me a Listening Heart". Our heartiest thanks go out to Shahin de Heart and Carlota Barros. I hope you find information and comfort in this issue. Please share this newsletter with colleagues, students, and friends all over the world. Our newsletter is in a true sense a Global Listener as it listens to happenings all over the world and, in the future, we hope to publish the newsletter in several other languages, or at least feature articles in languages other than English. It is about time that we listen in all of the world's beautiful languages.

Again, I salute all the established listeners winners of the 25 OWL2021.

*"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."* Mother Teresa

### Listening Transforms Lives.

Yours in listening,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca Day Babcock".

Rebecca Day Babcock  
William and Ordelle Watts Professor, UTPB  
Executive Editor, *The Global Listener*

## The Top 25 Outstanding Women Listeners in the World 2021



**Amina J. Mohammed**

Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, is known worldwide for her voice defending human rights in Africa and for her fight against hunger. She has been crucial in developing ecosystems underpinning human health, wellbeing, livelihoods, jobs, and sustainable growth. In all her roles, from Nigerian Minister of Environment to the fifth Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina J. Mohammed has dedicated her life to solving poverty, guaranteeing more education and protecting the natural environment. To this end she has deployed her listening abilities to ensure that balanced and fair decisions will enhance people's lives.



**Anat Saragusti**

Anat Saragusti is a notable Israeli journalist and social activist. Saragusti's entire career is testimony to her listening capabilities. It is these that led her to a journalistic achievement early on in her career and a milestone in the history of Israeli journalism and freedom of speech—the first Israeli interview with Yasser Arafat. Ever since, Saragusti listens and translates her listening to action in the form of war photography, documentary filmmaking, and activism in the areas of civil rights and social justice for women, minorities, and Palestinians.



**Angela Merkel**

Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, has dedicated her life to politics, assuming a humanitarian leadership, with full respect for human rights and better living conditions on a sustainable planet. Because she genuinely cares about peoples' voices, as the President of the European Council, she fought to bring Europe into unity and to become a place where living means security, justice, and democracy. In foreign policy Merkel has emphasized international cooperation, strengthening transatlantic economic relations, playing a crucial role in managing the global financial crises, and solving the European debt crisis.



**Danielle Ofri**

Danielle Ofri, who possesses outstanding listening skills to people and their needs, is one of the foremost voices in the medical world today, shining light on healthcare and speaking passionately about the doctor-patient relationship through her writings, Ted Talks and presentations. She was selected for Best American Essays (twice), Best American Science Writing, The McGovern Award from the American Medical Writers Association, and the 2020 National Humanism in Medicine Medal from the Gold Foundation.



**Dilma Vana Rousseff**

Dilma Vana Rousseff, first woman President of Brazil, made history defending Brazilian democracy, gender equity, eradication of racism, and socio-economic conditions. Under her presidency, Brazilian society listened to social movements, treated women with dignity, supported families, respected children and elderly people's rights and supported education. She challenged the status quo and improved justice, healthcare, and security nationally, and internationally. Victim of torture and conspiracy, she showed herself to be a brave, honest, and sensible person, who dared to listen to the multitude of voices of the Brazilian people and beyond.



## Fatou Bensouda

Fatou Bensouda, a Gambian Lawyer, was the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, a legal adviser, and a trial attorney at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. She also served as the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Gambia; and through the implementation of independent and impartial hearings, investigations, and prosecutions of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression, Bensouda showed exceptional courage in listening skills understanding and caring for victims, fighting for justice for men and women.



## Gagandeep Kang

Gagandeep Kang, researcher, best seller author, leading Indian medical doctor, and public policy and health system expert, is a Professor in the Department of Gastrointestinal Sciences at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, India. Previously she was executive director of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Faridabad. As a global listener, she offered to the world solutions to viral infections in children, sanitation, and water safety. She was the recipient of several prestigious awards, and in 2019, she became the first Indian woman to be elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society. She is a key contributor to rotavirus epidemiology and vaccinology in India which saved millions of children.



## Graça Castanho

Graça Castanho, professor at the University of the Azores, Portugal, is an international innovative education leader, author, activist, researcher, and public servant with exceptional listening skills that inspire her into action. Rooted in her bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and two postdoctoral degrees (from Harvard and Lesley University, USA), she built up an extraordinary career as a Projects' designer, the Government of the Azores Head of the Communities, and the Education Counsellor at the Embassy of Portugal in Washington DC, demonstrating strong commitment to education and the well-being of so many in Europe, Africa, and the Americas.



## Jacinda Kate Laurell Arden

Jacinda Kate Laurell Arden, a role model of active listening and supporting human rights, is currently the New Zealand Prime Minister after being reelected in 2020. Considered by Forbes list as one of the most powerful women in the world in battling the global pandemic and viewed as one of the best politicians in modern times, praised and endorsed worldwide, she has demonstrated outstanding listening skills through the aftermath of the Christchurch mosque shooting and directing the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Jill Biden

Jill Biden, a caring education leader and a committed college professor at Northern Virginia Community College, USA, is the current First Lady of the USA. During her life, she pioneered social and humanitarian initiatives and advocated for community colleges, military families, refugees, immigrants, children's rights, and the education of women and girls. Through her actions in the USA and abroad; she advocated for empowerment and human dignity for every one and has shown that indeed she is an exceptional listening woman that inspires true leadership.



## Linda Eneix

Linda Eneix is a leading researcher worldwide, in the field of listening, studying ancestral phenomena of communication through listening practices from the prehistoric era that help to understand the human journey to western civilization. Her innovative studies on megaliths, music, and the mind allow her to listen to experts from diverse fields as they listen to each other. She discovered that even the most ancient ritual and ceremonial spaces were created with good acoustics characteristics, flooding people's brains with endorphins and impelling them to listen.



## Maria Tipo

The skill to listen to oneself is one of the most precious gifts for a musician. And if it is deep, it becomes proportional to listening to others and the world around us. This has been the main demand the extraordinary Italian pianist Maria Tipo made of herself. This virtue has allowed the international audience and her selected group of disciples to learn from her listening the infinite range of nuances of musical language. This is only possible to people who have created silence, to hear and penetrate the souls of composers and their own inner self with art and enthusiasm. Tipo represents a clear example of a listener to the highest messages contained in a musical score, giving voice and eloquence to it. She is also a model of coherence in the teaching of the forgotten art of listening as a vital element for human beings.



## Melissa Beall

Melissa L. Beall spent her entire academic career finding better ways to teach listening and then sharing her knowledge of the complexities of the listening process. Her listening classes were very popular as are the workshops she presents for schools and businesses. She has presented convention sessions, keynote speeches, and plenary sessions throughout the world. Some of her unique experiences include conducting curriculum week-long summer workshops for and with teachers in Charlotte Amalia, U.S. Virgin Islands. In these workshops, Dr. Beall provided activities, exercises, and ideas teachers can adapt to and for students and/or colleagues their own classrooms. In short, Dr. Beall is deeply involved in all things listening: research, teaching, and promotion. Professor Beall promotes listening across the globe.



## Michele Nealon

Michele Nealon, President of the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, has shown leadership in her profession and in her extensive humanitarian work, which has had a global impact. Nealon's unique leadership perspective as a licensed psychologist and CEO also prioritizes human-centered connection and collaboration grounded in the values of service and inclusion. Her qualities as a listener lead her to emphasize the importance of seeking out and understanding all perspectives. Dr. Nealon skillfully promotes the importance of listening in speeches she gives and through blogs she publishes in the national media and on her university website. Nealon's career success is a classic example of a trailblazer with all the qualities of an exceptional listener.



## Naomi Oreskes

Naomi Oreskes is a critical listener, and a listener who listens to know how to challenge those who deny science, and particularly climate science. She is well known for her use of historical scholarship to take on climate change deniers. Oreskes advocates for values-driven science, and science reportage in her new book, *"Why Trust Science?"* promoted in the *Harvard Gazette*. She was named the Henry Charles Lea Professor of the History of Science. This honor is a fitting recognition for a defender of the pursuit of scientific knowledge in our times. Oreskes was also prominent at Davos, Switzerland (January, 2018), where she moderated sessions on "Climate, Energy, and Technology." She also moderated a session titled, "Climate's Two Degrees of Separation" where former Vice President and environmental activist Al Gore was one of the panelists. In 2018 she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in History of Science, Technology, & Economics.



## Patricia Davidson

Patricia Davidson, became the Vice Chancellor of Wollongong University, Australia, after serving as the Dean of Nursing at Johns Hopkins University, USA. She is a global leader in nursing, health care, and advocacy, highly respected for the excellence of her studies and outstanding listening skills by the people in her organization, peers, and patients. Recently she received a Consortium of Universities for Global Health Distinguished Leader Award, and currently serves on the International Council on Women's Health Issues and on the Board of Health Care Services for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in the United States. Patricia is a top leader in the field of Listening in Healthcare.



## Renee Fleming

Renee Fleming, whose recognitions include seventeen Grammy nominations, four Grammy awards, the National Medal of Arts Award, the Chevalier de al Legion d'Honneur, and performer at Nobel Prize ceremonies and the Super Bowl, is an unparalleled lyric soprano who epitomizes the art of both performing and listening. Whether on the stages of the world's most famous opera houses or performing on concert stages with singers, accompanists, or orchestras, her ability to listen to her collaborators makes her among the most outstanding musicians of our time. In addition to her world-renowned musical artistry, her many years of dedicated humanitarian charity work demonstrate her ability to compassionately listen to the needs of others and respond with an abundance of empathy and support. She is an excellent listener, and because of her musical and listening talents, audiences around the globe love to listen to her.



## Shahin de Heart

An Iranian-German painter, Shahin de Heart's abstract-figurative paintings capture our attention for many reasons. She views herself as a listening bridge between the Orient and Occident, East and West, and classical and modern genres of art. Herein lies the dilemma of the postmodern world: How can cultures be transversed successfully when both traditional and modern paradigms are often perceived as opposites? The answer: By effective listening. We surely agree. In her pursuit of bridging people and cultures, she finds the key lies in finding commonalities in such universal archetypes as the primordial mother earth and the ancient continental drift to promote international cooperation. Through cooperative action to replenish clean water, restore the fragile ozone layers, and promote health for endangered species, she expresses hope using images that build bridges to bring people together again. Through her evocative art Shahin proclaims a powerful message to the world to seek healing and restoration. To her, listening becomes art.



## Sister Helen Prejean

Sister Helen Prejean is a Catholic Sister of St. Joseph who has devoted her life's work to the abolition of the death penalty. She has served as spiritual advisor to several death row inmates and through this work listening to the inmates, she was inspired to share their stories and the story of the death penalty in America. Her book, *Dead Man Walking*, brought issues of the death penalty to the public eye and was made into a movie, a play, and an opera. Her other books are *The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*, published in 2004; and *River of Fire: My Spiritual Journey*, published in 2019. She continues to speak, listen, and work against the death penalty. According to her website, "Sister Helen continues her work, dividing her time between educating the public, campaigning against the death penalty, counselling individual death row prisoners, and working with murder victims' family members." She is 82 years old.



## Sonia Valdivia

Sonia Valdivia is a sustainability leader worldwide. She has worked and led the scientific community from different parts of the world to be more familiar in measuring the sustainability performance of products, services, and organization towards a more sustainable production. She has inspired and led organizations and researches in assessing the three pillars of sustainability, improving performances, and finding consensus on trade-offs. Moderating and leading discussions toward consensus on the topic of sustainability makes her one of the scientific references in sustainability in the industrial and scientific world. Her skill as a listener and promoter of listening makes her ability to reach the goal of sustainability a reality. Her role listening to the needs of the planet makes her critical to the global environment.



### Tetsuko Kuroyanagi

Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, a hugely popular actress, media personality, and author in Japan, is also well-known for her humanitarian work as a UNICEF Ambassador aimed at aiding vulnerable children. Her first book *Totto-chan: The Little Girl at the Window* which quickly became Japan’s greatest of bestselling works, centers on a progressive schoolmaster who excels at the art of listening. It is this gift of his that makes Totto-chan, a troubled first-grader from another school, feel right at home in her new school. The book is now translated into 35 languages. The schoolmaster actually was a real person who taught Kuroyanagi and who became her template for the ideal educator. Inspired by his exceptional caring as a teacher and her UNICEF work, Kuroyanagi established the Totto Foundation, dedicated to the education of the hearing-impaired. The consummate conversationalist, honed by her hosting a record-setting talk show that saw her interview guests that included Queen Elizabeth II and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, she could confidently involve herself in hot spots across the globe, earning her in 1987 the first UNICEF Child Survival Award. For her humanitarian work, she was also a

recipient in 2003 of the Order of the Sacred Treasure, the highest civilian award by the Emperor of Japan.



### Thuli Madonsela

Thuli Madonsela describes her role as Public Protector to the Venda chief’s paternal aunt known as the makhadzi, a non-political figure who "gives the people a voice while giving the traditional leader a conscience." She was one of the contributors in drafting the constitution of South Africa and she is responsible for the “Secure in Comfort” report (report on state spending) and the “State Capture” report (revealing governmental corruption). In order to be able to fulfil these roles, she had to listen to a variety of points of view and assess fairly what she heard, while giving a voice to people who are usually not listened to. Some of these people were vulnerable due to their positions as informants. She took a massive risk to her safety and her career by entertaining their testimony. She made sure that the nation heard the testimony, despite corrupt politicians and their cronies threatening her life. She currently holds the position of Chair in Social Justice at Stellenbosch University.



### Ursula Van der Leyen

Ursula Van der Leyen is the first woman President of the European Commission, elected in 2019, and a prominent geopolitician and physician from Germany. Her caring global vision and her effectiveness in communication as an active listener and speaker enhances her impact and popularity in promoting resilience, understanding, partnership, trust, and global well-being. In addressing the pandemic, she listened and pioneered policies that went global beyond the European boundaries. She indeed is making a difference in the world.



### Yihong Gao

Yihong Gao has contributed significantly in her research in English teaching and learning and multi-cultural activities at Peking University in China and the world. Besides her academic achievements, she has been engaged in volunteer social services in psychological consulting and listening in hospice care with her verified skills of listening, which has helped hundreds of students and patients go through their dark days. She is an outstanding listener on campus and a great socio-linguist in the world as Vice President (2003-2008) and President (2008-2010) of the Chinese Sociolinguistic Society, Vice President of China English Teaching Research Association (2007-2017), Deputy Secretary-General and Secretary-General of China Intercultural Communication Research Association (1995-2003) and a Member of the Professional Committee of Life and Death Science and Life and Death Education of Beijing Cancer Society (2019- ).



### Zuraidah Mohd Don

Zuraidah Mohd Don is a prominent academic at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, and has done distinguished work at the Malaysian Ministry of Education in English teaching policies and research. Her accomplishments have contributed to changes in education in Asia, especially the university’s “third mission” to the local community in early education. Her research is centered on language and listening and the implications for education and students. As a professor she has listened to many different voices in accordance with five principles: Practicality, Relevance, Quality Assurance, Viability for Stakeholders, and Equity. These ensure the necessary support for education and students from less privileged backgrounds.

## Listening and Mental Health



Dr. Michele Nealon, Psy.D.,  
President  
The Chicago School of Professional  
Psychology

Decades from now, 2020 will be remembered as the year when much of life stood still. As we struggled under the weight of a worldwide COVID-19 crisis, and the related economic and social consequences that accompanied it, a second pandemic took shape: a mental health pandemic. It is this second challenge to our collective health that is likely to outlast even the most lingering effects of the Novel Coronavirus, and that portends a generation of psychological struggles.

Make no mistake; depression was already far too prevalent in our society. According to the World Health Organization 264 million people globally—more women than men—are affected by depression, making it a primary cause of disability around the world. For those already struggling with this insidious illness, matters only became worse as the COVID-19 crisis worsened, while thousands of others embarked anew on their own mental health battles. Although the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) acknowledges distinctions between mental health conditions and mental illness, it addresses the levels of mental health disorders as one, reporting that one in five of us—both in the U.S. and across the globe—experiences such an illness each year. Such illnesses can be situational, or they can be lifelong. Half of lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75% of cases by age 24.

We all know about mental health issues. We have friends, family, or coworkers who have suffered the debilitating hopelessness and loss of motivation that are telltale indicators of depression. But how many of us “listen” when symptoms are described, when a loved one shares their fears and uncertainties, or when a colleague continually calls in sick?

Are we starting to listen now? Are we attempting to truly understand the challenges facing so many of those around us? Too often, mental health illness comes wrapped in an invisible shroud of stigma. We equate it with weakness, or worse, with a detachment from reality. We don’t understand it, so we’re afraid of it.

The psychological phenomenon known as **confirmation bias** is an all-too-common obstacle that prevents us from absorbing the full implications of mental health illness or accepting the breadth and depth of the affliction facing friends or loved ones. People are prone to believe what they want to believe. As a result, even as we seek out information on mental health, telling our-

selves that we are doing our best to educate ourselves, we unconsciously filter the facts that are presented, dismissing those that contradict our preconceived beliefs, and shaping our interpretation of those facts in ways that reinforce what we already “knew” to be true.

As we slog our way through the viral pandemic that has upended our lives, we must open our minds to the blight of mental health issues—depression, unchecked anxiety and addiction, to name the most common—that surround us, and that represent a plague layered onto another plague. We must be aware of our tendency toward confirmation bias and be willing to accept realities that challenge our long-ingrained thoughts.

In other words, we must **listen**. We must focus our minds on the words being spoken by those around us, and the true implications that accompany those words. We must refrain from thinking ahead to our response, our doubts, our rebuttal. We should prepare ourselves to ask questions, questions that deepen our understanding, and allow us to absorb and accept facts that challenge our preconceived ideas.

When we truly listen, we begin to understand. When we understand, we can prepare ourselves to intervene. And when we do intervene, we can effect change—change in our personal lives or in the lives of those we care about, change in how we run our business or refocus the work of our organization. Listening prepares us to fine-tune our responses to mental health issues in ways that can bring about needed change.

- We will be prepared to act and respond in ways that are person-centered, focused on the individual rather than the illness.
- We can ensure that we are inclusive in our responses, understanding the challenges faced by all with whom we interact.
- We can avoid the use of derogatory language to describe mental health illness and take the lead in eradicating the use of inaccurate and harmful terminology that perpetuates the accompanying stigma.
- We can work to understand the cultural differences that determine how individuals perceive and react to mental health issues in their families, and how willing they are to accept help.

We have a long road ahead of us. While vaccines offer a long-awaited light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel, the ravages of mental health conditions that emerged or worsened during the pandemic will require a much longer effort. We can all be part of the solution—a solution that begins with listening.

## Using the “P-A-C-T”: How Understanding the Preferred Listening Styles of Others Can Enhance Communication During the Global Pandemic



Prof. Richard West, Ph.D.,  
Director (Academia),  
Global Listening Centre.  
Past President  
National Communication Association

### Overview

Our interpersonal exchanges with others, even in the best of times, are typically dynamic and unpredictable. Regardless of whether it’s a professional, personal, or impersonal relationship, discerning how to accurately interpret meaning is sometimes a challenge. Perhaps you may have a conflict with a colleague who has ridiculed a family photo on your desk, which happened to someone I know. In your family, you may struggle with how to communicate an unexpected illness to another family member. Even during every day encounters such as in the grocery store, you may find it stress-inducing to tell a store manager about the way you were treated by an employee. In each of these challenging communication situations, for communication to be successful, meaning requires the co-creation of meaning with the other person.

Creating accurate meaning is central to the communication process, as well as a key objective when listening to others. Many people already know it, but listening attentively and responding appropriately are hallmarks of skilled interpersonal communication. Listening is a cooperative connection with another person, demonstrating that a receiver is equally responsible for creating meaning in a conversation. Ultimately, listening is an essential dialogic imperative; without quality listening, our interpersonal communication suffers. While most people may *think* they are good listeners, the reality is that most people can take steps to enhance their listening skill. Various circumstances and events—regardless of relationship type—influence the listening process.

### The Pandemic and Listening

In every culture and country, there is perhaps no other state of affairs that affects our ability to listen effectively than the current coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). The World Health Organization reports that every country in the world has evidenced cases of COVID-19, resulting in nearly ninety million cases worldwide with total deaths approaching two million people. This insidious international pandemic has had a devastating effect on every aspect of our economic, cultural, politi-

cal, educational, and relational spheres including how we communicate with others.

Our ability to listen effectively and appropriately to others during this pandemic can be both a source of comfort or a trigger for conflict. One way to consider the intersections between the pandemic and our human relationships is to examine four research-based listening styles. Considering how we might adapt our listening style can help us enhance our relationships even during this world-wide pandemic.

We speak and listen to address a variety of needs. On a practical level, we may need to listen to medical messages, assess the message’s efficacy, then determine whether or not to alter our behaviors because of COVID-19. In our relationships with friends, family, colleagues, and romantic partners, the additional conflict-producing stress that results from anxiety and fear calls on us to listen with both greater compassion and accuracy. We live in a world where unintentionally communicating disinterest or disrespect may leave lasting emotional scars. In our socially distant, mask-wearing environment, with the increased potential for relational conflict, as well as the unprecedented need for comfort and affirmation, being an effective listener is more important today than ever.

Listening is not as simple as just looking at someone while the other person talks. Listening is a dynamic and transactional process comprised of acknowledging, responding, recalling, and evaluating a message. Each of these listening goals are present as we communicate with a variety of different types of people in a multitude of situations. Understanding a person’s precise listening goal, as reflected in their preferred listening style, can result in an improved meeting of meanings and enhanced communication.

### Styles of Preferred Listening

To fine-tune our listening skills, let’s examine four listening styles. A listening style is simply the preferred way a person listens to others to achieve their goals. Each of the four listening styles can be summarized with a one-word label—**People**, **Action**, **Content**, and **Time**. During these challenging times, we need to be aware of the “P-A-C-T” as we listen to others. Being aware of the listening style of our communication partner can enhance our ability to adapt to their needs and goals, which may enhance the overall quality of our relationships with others.

### **People-Centered Listening Style**

When we listen with empathy and compassion, we are *people-centered listeners* (PCL). Imagine, for example, the times that this style of listening has taken place with a first line medical responder. How a nurse, physician, EMT, or other medical expert comforts a sick or dying COVID-19 patient is critical to the recovery process. But you need not be a medical provider to use a people-centered listening style. When you learn that someone you know has COVID-19, such a situation calls for focusing on the relational needs of the other person. In addition, PCLs are needed in families where the very young struggle to understand why they can't be with their friends or grandparents. A compassionate parent takes into consideration their children's feelings, not just during this pandemic, but at all times.

### **Action-Centered Listening Style**

*Action-centered listeners* (ACL) prefer to have messages that are organized, efficient, and focused on the critical pieces of information. Action-centered listeners want are seeking what they can do to address their needs and solve their problems. This style of listening assumes that others will tailor their messages to avoid extraneous detail. Action-centered listeners typically question assumptions underlying the conclusions presented by others. As we consider this virus, the ACL are those individuals who prefer to receive messages that help them to make clear and informed decisions on their behaviors. The ACL is frustrated with ambiguous messages—say from a governor who says, "Let's ease up on the shelter-in-place restrictions"—while COVID-19 cases escalate in their state. The action-centered listener is looking for verbs—the specific action that should be taken to manage the problem.

### **Content-Centered Listening Style**

Preferring factual information—devoid of most emotions but attending to the credibility of the message—is the style of *content-centered listeners* (CCL). The CCL may play the “devil’s advocate,” meaning they challenge the language of a message. These listeners are not hard to find in this pandemic. We find many CCLs openly challenging medical messages, even some daring to call the pandemic a “hoax.” We find others feeling that political leaders should have no say so over business owners. In these cases, while somewhat extreme, CCL believe that the source and message credibility are in question and that the actual existence of the virus is fabricated. Content-centered listeners prefer facts and evidence to support conclusions.

### **Time-Centered Listening Style**

A fourth style of listening concerns time constraints; *time-centered listeners* (TCL) prefer to listen to short, efficient, and concise messages. Many healthcare workers, for example, need to make immediate health-related decisions. They don't have the luxury of time to leisurely process information. Perhaps a physician must decide the next step with a patient whose blood-oxygen levels are rapidly dropping. Or, within a more intimate setting, consider the family member who is confronted with the decision to discontinue a loved one's ventilator use because the patient is dying. Both of these circumstances will involve TCL who have little to no time to deliberate the various angles of the decision. Or, a friend or family member may feel overwhelmed and believes they need to take immediate action to address fears and concerns. The time-centered listener is motivated by the need for efficiency and brevity.

### **Conclusion**

Regrettably and sadly, despite the myriad vaccines, COVID-19 will continue to scourge the globe. From the most medically advanced society to areas of the world where marginalized communities have little to no medical access, COVID-19 has taken hold of our countries, cities, and communities. The virus has also etched its influence upon the broad range of relationships in our lives. Whether one's listening style is person-, action-, content-, or time-centered in nature, COVID-19 has ushered in new ways of considering how people listen to others during one of the most difficult eras in world history.

One significant way to increase your effectiveness as a listener is to consider the preferred listening style of those with whom you speak. Good listeners are other-oriented, not self-focused. To enhance your ability to listen to others during these times of stress and anxiety, consider what you can do to meet the needs of your communication partner. Remember the PACT.

PEOPLE: Does the person you are listening to need empathy and social support?

ACTION: Is there a need for request or action or direction?

CONTENT: Is the other person seeking information?

TIME: Is there a need for efficient listening?

Being a good listener may not be a substitute for a vaccination in eradicating the pandemic, yet it is a practical way to inoculate others from fear and anxiety and improve your own listening health.

*“Listening destroys pains and sufferings.” — Guru Nanak*

## Listening as Basic to Serving (Listening Seva, Part 2)



Prof Michael Purdy Ph.D.,  
Past Vice Chair,  
Global Listening Centre

**C**hallenges: feed the hungry, respond to crises and disasters, deal with recessions. Listen.

In a previous article, [“Listening as Service”](#), we have explored how we can serve others through safe, effective and compassionate listening: “Listening is built around and is supported by the other essential human behaviors: trust, care, curiosity, reason, and patience.” That article was about the individual listening to serve others. As quoted from that article:

Service leadership is very important in our organizations, communities and governments. But listening is particularly important as the conduct critical for modern human civilization.

This article takes up where that article left off and explores how organizations and institutions can serve by effective listening, listening that attends carefully to the needs of communities and even whole countries. This article is about nonprofits, but also governments, foundations, and other institutions that provide service to humanity. It is about organizations like the Bangla Sahib Gurudwara in New Delhi—in the name of Sri Harkrishan Guru—which is providing seva in the form of free oxygen cylinders to COVID-19 patients in the midst of an acute shortage of oxygen for patients.

Much like startups, nonprofits survive on funding for cash flows. They need the resources to serve others, and to be most effective in serving others there must be listening. What works on the largest scale is equally important on the local level as we desire to help family and friends.

There are many ways to serve, but to serve well requires listening.

Not only does listening give us the information we need to serve well, listening is also a basic means to economic survival and the spiritual growth of self and other. In the larger sense (national and global) various groups such as NGOs, religions, governments, and other institutions provide service to people in need around the planet.

For instance, who would have thought that Sikhs had set up a community kitchen (a langar) in Queens Village? Inside a low, brick-red building, the Sikh Center, in Queens Village (New York), a group of about 30 cooks has made and served more than 145,000 free meals in just 10 weeks. Anyone, Sikh or not, can visit a gurdwara and partake in langar. With the biggest free kitchens—like the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India—serving more than 100,000 people every day.

Catholic Charities as another example has been launching pop-up pantries in communities of need in these times of a devastating pandemic.

On the border with Ethiopia and Sudan, the UN has been helping refugees escaping the military offensive in the Tigray region of Sudan. Although the Sudanese are Muslim, some have been reaching out to help the mostly Christian Ethiopians. What motivates the Sudanese to open their ears and their village to these strangers? What is the source of their compassion and how are they able to listen and hear the needs of strangers? What makes some people empathic and open to hear the needs of another? What are the conditions that require that we care and reach out?

We know practically that there are many situations where listening is not only essential, but really critical. Above we have cited a few examples of some of the larger issues of listening in order to be of service and solve some of the most important problems in our modern world. But how does one get the commitment, the compassion to listen? That is a crucial question to ask. How do you or I or an or-



Justin Trudeau PM Canada doing Langar (Free Kitchen) Sewa in Golden Temple with his family. (Photo taken : mensxp.com)

ganization come to listen so that we know what to provide?

Listening, with our ears on the ground, close to the needs of those served, is always unique in some way; individuals differ, “one size fits all” doesn’t work very well. The people and the community’s needs do have some generality, but through listening engagement we also hear differences of culture, geography, local flavor, and the special needs of the community. Indeed, we want to respond and help by being responsible, but that requires listening, —our special use of listening and not generalities or opinions of others not in touch with those in need—how can we know how to respond if we haven’t listened to the others needs and concerns and situation?

Another case is Oxfam, a service-oriented non-profit organization that listens. In fact, listening is in their depiction of their mission. On their website Oxfam states: We focus on activities which directly address community perceptions. Our teams go out and meet people. We take the time to listen and discuss what needs to be done: “To fight COVID-19, we must listen to the communities.” They emphasize that teams pay attention to people’s feelings, their way of perceiving the disease, their questions. Oxfam knows that it is important to be aware of where their attention and response is focused. It must be on the people and situation that most matters.

A different example from politics, is that of Mario Draghi, who was head of the European Central Bank during darkest days of the Great (global) Recession. With the EU he managed a financial crisis. It is said that he served by listening first: his *modus operandi* was “more in listening and less in talking.” Now he serves as the leader of Italy in a time of pandemic.

First, regardless of the organization—service, government or other—to be effective it must have leaders, and workers at all levels who listen to know what is needed in any situation. Without listening there is no way to know the needs of those many who are suffering in the world today.

Second, it is a necessity to listen, as heartfelt attention, in tune with the others, and in a responsible manner. Such behavior requires reflection so that we may

realize compassion, empathy, a cool head, imagination and wonder, through being circumspect and curious. One should be a careful listener open to consider all circumstances and potential consequences—how can we make the world better? How do we acquire, learn, bring that to the fore, shift to that vibe, attune ourselves in that way? We need each other. Tendencies to listen with one’s own ego driving the listening does not work well. Get out of your “shoes” and stand for a moment in the shoes of the other. Treat others as you would like to be treated. These are rules, but how do we take them up? How do we adopt and carry out the weight of these behaviors? What moves us to change?

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation ran their efforts from Seattle for many years, but lately discovered that moving their work to centers to Africa was much better as those closest to the problems were more attuned and could be empathetic and listen better to the needs of the small cities and villages where development and support was needed. Also, on the Gates Foundation website we find goals such as, “We strive to be a respectful and fair partner to our stakeholders.” This respect requires listening to be effective on joint projects with local partnerships. Of course, not every NGO or support organization is refocusing its energies as is the Gates Foundation. But many are rethinking how they decolonize their efforts.

We must take some institution of ethics and adhere to its dictates. We need some guides and guardrails for listening communication and action.

So much is organizational, but in the final hour listening is as much an individual act as an organizational imperative. As above so below, or as for organizations, so for the individual. As we have implied, organizations are made up of individuals and those individuals must listen at work, but also in their personal lives. In the end, life goes better with listening.

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*“It is the disease of not listening...  
That I am troubled with.” — William Shakespeare*

## Listening to Each Other in a Challenging World

Andrew Wolvin, Ph.D.,  
Honorable Director,  
Global Listening Centre.



Around the world, the polarization and radicalization of groups who have lost faith in their fellow humans is increasing. We are seeing a troubling rise in generalizations and manipulative propaganda that encourage dehumanization of our fellow human family members. Stuck in our silos and connecting primarily through technology during COVID-19, we have diminished opportunities for meaningful interactions and conversations which serve as short- and long-term reminders that we are communities that thrive on differences of thought and commonality of values. Instead, we are able to (and encouraged to) stay in our physical and virtual bubbles, significantly limiting our connections to our neighbors. Single dimensions of complex identities have shifted would-be friends into presumed enemies.

As we began 2021, these trends erupted into violent scenes, blazing fires, gun shots, scaling of walls and much more. In January, thousands of protesters turned violent and physically threatened elected democratic leadership in the United States (Bredemeier, 2021). As NPR observed, “a group this large defies generalization” (NPR, 2021). In February, similar anti-election sentiments resulted in a successful coup in the country of Myanmar in Southeast Asia where anti-coup protester injuries and fatalities are mounting. Chaos, which the United Nations quickly condemned, could threaten the stability of the entire region and lead to war (UN News, 2021). The on-going protests in Senegal led Alioune Badara Cissé to warn “we are on the verge of an apocalypse” (BBC, 2021).

These events are widespread. They reflect a desperate need to step back and consider how to center our society on active listening skills. As we deal with political unrest, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, economic distress, and racial injustice, it’s understandable if we want to just hide out. But hiding out and not reaching out to secure our own communities in non-violent discourse will assist in our own downfall. We have a human need to connect with others because we



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are inextricably interconnected to each other and our environment. So what do we do now?

Let’s reset to establish a more civil global society. We are poised as listening leaders across fields to help reimagine and recraft a more peaceful and positive global community. The world needs us to help our communities rediscover the beauty and value of listening and learning from each other.

A civil foundation begins with active listening, a dimension of human communication that is too frequently ignored, dismissed, or reduced to hearing. But to truly engage as an active listener requires one to be willing to listen, to concentrate, and to allow the other person to share their message before providing an appropriate response.

Clearly, it’s a challenge to be an active listener. We need to work to listen with empathy, to understand the other person’s point of view and why. This can be difficult. You have to set aside the typical response of “Yes, when I...” and instead let them fully elaborate the point or concern that they are expressing. Reinforcing verbal and nonverbal responses to encourage the person to elaborate can be especially productive. Indeed, your responses can lead them to listen to themselves and, in the process, find a resolution to the problem or a recognition of how the point of view may not be the most productive stance.

Active listening also extends to critical listening. When listening to persuasive messages, we have a responsibility to understand the person’s message, to recognize our own bias, and then to assess the acceptability of it. Is it true? Is it factual? Is it ethical?

The pioneering listening researcher, Ralph Nichols, always stressed that “The most basic of human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them” (1980). Now more than ever, our world today depends on it.

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## A Sacrifice to be Remembered by the World Forever

Sardool Singh’s saintly mother passed away years ago because people who could have saved her had poor listening practices. This tragedy was a turning point in his life. Realizing the importance of listening, a marketing expert in the pharmaceuticals sector, Sardool was determined to create a platform through an international organization in which scholars well-recognized in their fields would collaborate globally to promote knowledge on listening. The Global Listening Centre (GLC) was born: an association that now consists of numerous members from many countries and several continents. Founding the GLC was not easy. To breathe life into the center and pursue his mission, Sardool has often worked into the small hours of the morning and started again at dawn by working with members across time zones. He also has traveled to many places to make vital connections. For more than 20 years he has been promoting listening and the last ten years were of full-time work, which compromised his job, family, and health. He funded as much as he could with his wife. His wife, Tejinder Kaur, an active member, has been fully supporting this mission since the beginning. In addition to his selfless service, Sardool is a married father of two daughters. He and his wife have ensured that their daughters receive the best education possible and that they have been encouraged to pursue their academic goals. Both daughters have completed their Masters in Science and are preparing for higher studies.



Mr. Sardool Singh  
Chief Global Strategist and  
Director  
Global Listening Centre

Sardool devoted the best years of his life for this very important cause. He can look back on his accomplishment with well-deserved pride. Today, this dynamic association spreads the word through scholarly publications, popular blogs, and lectures by prominent speakers, all dedicated to the cause of empathic listening and peace-making. Sardool Singh thanks all educators who have helped him for their support, most especially the American professors who have supported him from the early years in which the GLC’s foundations were laid, and even now that the center is well established. When asked about his contribution, Sardool said that “all credit goes to the educators and leaders in GLC who are making a significant contribution in this field for the betterment of the world and from whom I get the guidance, support, and motivation.” In the joy of giving and hard work, he finally responded with a quote from Guru Gobind Singh, “Einehee kee kripaa kae sajae ham hai(n) nehee(n) mo so gareeb karor parae” (meaning : It is through their contribution that I have attained this status, otherwise there are millions of unknown mortals like me ). No person has performed such selfless service to promote listening in the world as Sardool Singh. His listening sewa (selfless service) is incomparable. Today, the Global Listening Centre is one of the most important organizations globally, promoting a noble cause. His contribution is transcendent in a critical time, where Listening is more than necessary and the main instrument that could inaugurate dialogues, agreements and harmony in our planetary relationships.

Thank you, Sardool. The world will remember your highly noble and selfless service in promoting Listening.

### Successfully fulfilled the huge responsibly of 250WL2021 Project

**Vice Chair**

**Project in Charge**

(The Top 25 Outstanding Women Listeners in the world 2021)



Dr Monica Broome  
MD, FACP, FAACH, FAMWA



Prof. Colette Mazzucelli  
MALD, EdM, Ph.D.  
President (Academia) Global Listening Centre

## Honoring Our Members



**Katherine van Wormer, Ph.D.**, is an international scholar and professor emerita in social work from the University of Northern Iowa where she taught social work for over 25 years. During that time, she co-authored 15 books on topics mostly related to various forms of oppression, such as *Confronting Oppression*, *Restorative Justice*, *Restorative Justice and Social Work and Social Welfare: A Human Rights Foundation*. Van Wormer has been a peace and civil rights activist since the 1960s. Her favorite publication is a collection of personal narratives that relates to her earlier involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and growing up in the segregated South. It is *The Maid Narratives: Black Domestic and White Families in the Jim Crow South* (LSU Press). The theme of listening shines through this book.

Her contribution is immense and we are so honored to have her in our organization. Your contribution is immense and we are so honored to have you in our organization.

**Helen Meldrum, Ph.D.**, is an associate professor of psychology at Bentley University in Waltham, Massachusetts. Meldrum has a particular strength in teaching “teaching skills,” having facilitated many train-the-trainer programs in the US, Canada, Europe, and Israel. Meldrum received her doctorate from The Hiatt School of Psychology and Education at Clark University in Massachusetts and a master’s in Counselling and Consulting Psychology from Harvard University. Her articles, interviews, editorials and reviews have appeared in many publications, including *USA Today*, *The Wall St. Journal*, *BBC World Radio*, *The International Journal of Clinical Leadership*, *The Physician Executive Journal of Medical Management*, and *Encyclopedia of Health Communication and Integrative Medicine: A Clinician’s Journal*. We are so proud and honored to have you in our organization.



**Jo-Ann Rolle, Ph.D.**, is the Dean of the School of Business at Medgar Evers College. Dean Rolle has extensive executive leadership experience in higher education, as well as corporate and federal government operations. In 2015 she was awarded recognition by the *Network Journal* as one of the 25 most influential African American Women in Business. Dean Rolle’s background includes working in multiple US Federal agencies, academic institutions, IBM, and consulting. In academic institutions she has been responsible for academic leadership, academic programs, and student affairs. She has launched multiple undergraduate and graduate degree programs. She has taught courses in economics and entrepreneurship. Her skill set includes higher education administration, developing and leveraging strategic partnerships, innovation creation, small business development, disadvantaged business development, and staff development. At Medgar Evers College, Dean Rolle launched the Entrepreneurship & Experiential Learning Lab (EEL) in the fall of 2015. Since the EEL launch, Medgar Evers College teams have studied entrepreneurship in ten countries, published in excess of ten papers, initiated eight international agreements, and in 2016 coached the first woman to win the CUNY-wide SmartPitch competition. Dean Rolle is sought after internationally as a keynote speaker on entrepreneurship and economic development. Your contribution is immense and we are so honored to have you in our organization.

**Grace McCarthy** is Professor, Ph.D., MBA and Dean of the University of Wollongong Business School in Australia. Recognised as an exceptional teacher, McCarthy has been awarded an Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching and Learning, as well as university awards for teaching and research supervision. Grace teaches and researches coaching, leadership, entrepreneurship, and education, bringing together what she has learned from many years in industry as well as her years in academe since completing her Ph.D. in leadership. When she moved to Australia, she was inspired to learn about an Aboriginal Australian approach to deep listening, called *dadirri*, which Aboriginal people have used in trauma healing for thousands of years.



Grace has seen the power of listening in defusing conflict and unlocking human potential. She says it is important to listen with our hearts as well as our heads, listen not just to wait our turn and then try to convince the other person of our position, but listen to truly understand the other person’s perspective. There is a thirst in our organisations and our communities to be heard. If we genuinely listen to others, we can build on their ideas and together we can make the world a better place. We are so proud and honored to have you in our organization.

## Outstanding Listeners Interview



Interview of Dr. Donde Plowman, Chancellor of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (*left*).

Interviewer Dr. Sally J. McMillan, Director (Global Strategy & Corporate Listening) Global Listening Centre, Professor of Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (*right*).

**McMillan:** Thank you for talking with us about listening. Please share with us why listening is important to you.

**Plowman:** It's so basic because without knowing what people are thinking about and what is on their hearts and minds leaders don't know what to do. These jobs are way too complex for the leader to really know what the path forward is on so many different dimensions. If you think about higher education right now, it just feels like we've got a complex path. Public universities have to secure our funding every year. We have an unclear path about how we're going to re-envision ourselves to be more modern and more driven around customer needs. When I first took this job, I spent a semester doing a listening tour. I started holding office hours. And I was surprised at how much it helped me quickly get a sense of what the campus pulse was. I was trying to listen, through the structure as well, but also setting up opportunities to listen outside the structure. It was a little unnerving. At times I would hear things in office hours that I wouldn't have known about otherwise, and then I would call a dean and say, "Some kids came over today, and they were upset about a professor." I told him it's up to the dean to address college business, but I just wanted to let him know what I'd heard. I'd also hear from the faculty and staff. It was really helpful to me. I could quickly learn about what people were worried about happy about, and so on. I think listening is crucial.

**McMillan:** Let's transition to the topic of social media and social media listening. In the context of advertising and marketing, social media listening is becoming a very important strategy. In the context of higher education, does social media provide you with a listening tool?

**Plowman:** It provides a way to listen to "noise." What you do with that noise is something else. Unfortunately, I think social media is used just to talk—or scream.

Last fall we were in midst of having to make some big changes in football, including the head football coach and others in the football program, and an NCAA investigation. There's a very active group of alumni on Twitter who really wanted an answer from me about what we were doing. Why are you doing this? Don't do this, do this. And in those early weeks I couldn't respond to anything—and I still can't talk about that investigation. My not speaking back on Twitter infuriated some of those alumni. There is an expectation out there that that people are listening on social media and quickly responding. I asked my team to get me some social media listening metrics because it felt like I was just getting overwhelmed with pressure from social media. But it turned out it was only about 30 different people who were originating all those messages. Five or six of them were the most vocal. I have 10,000 followers on Twitter. It's hard to discern what they all are thinking. So listening is hard. I think you end up in an echo chamber on social media and you have to remember that. You have to be really careful about what it is you're hearing, you know. Social media complicates everything. I still use it, even though there's a lot of risk with that. I use it to share the brand of UT, share the values of UT, share what we're trying to build, share the spirit of what this place is. I use it more for speaking than listening. I do listen through it, but I'm not sure what I'm hearing a lot of time.

**McMillan:** Do you personally read your Twitter feed?

**Plowman:** Yes. I do read it personally. Sometimes my team will say, "Don't read it, it's not nice." I think it is reflecting everything else that has been going on in society. Vitriol. Divisiveness. Every now and then I'll look up a particularly nasty comment. It's not always the case, but many times posters don't even use their own names. One had only a single follower. It tells me something. I don't like how people use social media to say such ugly things that they would never say to a

person's face.

**McMillan:** Social media listening tools can also help with picking up on some of those less-dominant things—help you hear a bit more nuance of what people are saying in social media.

**Plowman:** Yes, the engagement metrics are very interesting. Since COVID-19, we have been doing virtual alumni tailgates. And out of that came over a million engagements. Social media is not just about shouting. But it does require us to learn new ways of listening and gauging what's really important. I'm hungry for that kind of data. Another way that I use social media to listen, is, I follow a lot of people—thought leaders in higher education, presidents, and so on. That form of listening helps me to know what others are thinking about solving the big problems that higher education faces.

**McMillan:** You've touched on the idea of social media as a tool for speaking rather than listening. Could you expand on that a bit? Do you see that to be the case in higher education?

**Plowman:** Oh, yes. I was just reading something about a president who was fired at another university. Part of the pressure around firing him was created just because of news that gets out so quickly on social media. And I think some of it is dangerous because it sets an expectation for immediate response to things. If you didn't take the action that the people who are tweeting want, then it looks like you haven't responded. You may have taken an action. But you may just have a different vision about what is the right action. And then sometimes it's tricky to know how much to put out there. In some ways it sounds like a crybaby, but these jobs are getting harder and harder because of social media, and there is this kind of mob mentality that takes over. All of a sudden, it can feel like there's a crisis. I just don't ever want to be making decisions where it feels like I just gave in to a mob on social media. I know some higher education leaders are just leaving social media. I understand the desire to do that. Social media can influence your judgment. But that doesn't feel like the right answer. Just because you aren't reading it doesn't keep the fury from developing. And a part of the community can be very upset. They're still upset, but if you weren't on social media, you wouldn't know it. It would still be true. And it does bleed over, and I mean you're going to find out.

**McMillan:** Yes, there are multiple examples of social media elevating something that is a concern for a small group of people and making people believe that it is a "crisis."

**Plowman:** Everything's politicized now, everything. And everything can become a weapon that just further divides us. Pick a topic and it can become a weapon even if it affects a tiny percent of the population – everyone has an opinion. And opinions are often used to divide us. As a leader I am charged with the well-being of all students, faculty, staff, yet often there are conflicting needs and opinions. How does a leader decide what to pay attention to, what to act on? If one person is suffering, that's not a good thing. What is the leader's responsibility around one person? Or let's consider the one student who feels that in a classroom they were stereotyped or marginalized. That is significant to that student, as it would be to me. And it's significant to the institution, yet at the same time, the leaders have to weigh what that means in the total context of dealing systematically with issues like discrimination and marginalization. These are hot button topics.

**McMillan:** You have talked about how you did a "listening tour" and how you use social media for listening. Could you talk a bit more about other tools you use for listening?

**Plowman:** I just got off a call with the deans and the cabinet. Listening carefully to the members of my team is critical. It includes looking at people's body language and eliciting responses from people. I start every cabinet meeting with an agenda item for reflection. I start with a question. It may be something as simple as, "What accomplishments to you feel best about this week?" or, "What went wrong last week that this group can help you with?" or, "What great thing happened over the weekend in your family?" I like to get the group warmed up and move to a slightly more personal level where people might be slightly more prone to talk and speak up. It's hard on Zoom, but it's important for building a culture of shared leadership. We are all in this together. Also, when I do performance evaluations, I ask my team members, "What do you need from me this coming year?" I try to end most meetings by asking, "What do you need for me to be able to do what you just talked about?" Leaders need to ask questions and listen carefully to the answers. I guess in the old days we call that active listening, right?

**McMillan:** Right!

**Plowman:** I think as a leader, sometimes you do things that really have a functional outcome; there are other things you do that are more symbolic. Ever since I was a dean, I've always held office hours. The truth is, over the years, a very low percentage of students or faculty use the office hours, but they love the idea that it's there. It's like sending a message that I'm here to lis-

ten. I'm inviting them to walk in and tell me whatever they would like. I'm not necessarily going to give the answer they want, but they like to know that they have a leader who is willing to listen.

**McMillan:** The willingness to listen is a powerful message in itself.

**Plowman:** When I first started office hours here, there would be a long line of people waiting to see me. And then, with time, the demand for it decreased. Then with COVID-19 what we found was they did come to Zoom office hours. And then, once we came back to campus, I decided to do office hours part-time here on campus and part-time on Zoom. But no one came to the on-campus hours at all. The technology for meeting and listening is changing. We have to make sure we are meeting people's needs with tools they are comfortable using.

**McMillan:** How could higher education play a role in improving listening in contemporary society?

**Plowman:** I think we need to teach our students how to listen. They need to understand that dialogue is not

just shouting on social media. They need to learn to disagree and civilly listen to different points of view. They need to understand that disagreement doesn't mean that the other person is evil or something. Shouting on social media feels like there is no opportunity to really talk. We need to teach students how to have respectful, meaningful dialogue. I feel like in the first year, we need to get students in a course and talk about civil discourse, freedom of speech, and respect. Because if we don't teach them those things, they're going to leave here and become people who scream at each other. We can't solve all the problems in our society, but higher education has a platform. We need to start reflecting on what's going on in society and provide an opportunity for personal growth. We need to insist on respectful interaction and open dialogue on campus. We need to stop dividing people into "camps" – faculty vs. administrators, students vs. staff, etc. We need to model that behavior. Our students can begin to change the world. I don't know all the answers for how to do that. But I am committed to do working to make it happen.

**McMillan:** I look forward to seeing what you do.

## Definition of Listening

In today's global environment, the power of listening is crucial. Given the immense challenges that currently face the world, only global listening seems capable of uniting humanity for the purpose of meeting these challenges.

The Global Listening Centre views listening as a global, multimodal process that underlies effective interpersonal and intercultural relations. Listening is part attitude, marked by genuine respect and regard for all; part skill, enabled by specific verbal and nonverbal behaviors; and part physical, driven by a host of physiological, sensory-motor, cognitive, and affective functions.

Combined, these elements shape the perceptual lenses through which humans interpret and strive to understand themselves, colored by each individual's cultural background. Global listening helps create conditions that allow others to confer freely and have mutual understanding. Although global listening per se does not always lead to agreement, when people are truly attentive and respectful, problems and grievances are much more likely to be dealt with collaboratively and harmoniously, thus helping to foster trusting relationships. Global listening offers the means to meet needs in human relations—personal, organizational, intercultural.

## Global Listening Centre seeks new members

In this spirit, the Global Listening Centre hopes to provide an international forum that brings together practitioners and scholars alike, whether basic or applied in endeavor, with the aim of encouraging multidisciplinary collaboration by which to bridge the theory and practice of the study of listening as a primary medium for the understanding of our fellow human beings. Professionals are hereby invited from the various disciplines, from the physical and biological to the social and humanistic, to join us in collaborative spirit for advancing forward the listening sciences and in so doing contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious world.

Write to : [info@globallisteningcentre.org](mailto:info@globallisteningcentre.org)

## What Chairs Say on Listening



Richard Halley, Ph.D.  
Past Chair, Academic

In today's academy there is a significant segment of the student body that does not want ideas expressed that they disagree with. This is counter to the ethic of the academy. Efforts must be made to teach such students the value of an open mind and listening to alternative ideas. Only when we listen carefully to all ideas can we be able to be certain those ideas we hold are arrived at through careful, rigorous thought.



Lance Strate, Ph.D.  
Chair, Academic

We often trace the origin of European academics to Plato and Socrates, and refer to the method they employed as dialogue. We tend to think of dialogue as a form of speaking, when in fact it is entirely dependent upon listening. Indeed, dialogue only begins in earnest when we are willing to listen to one other. Likewise, public speaking only works when there is an audience to address, so much so that it is the audience that motivates and necessitates the speech, rather than the speaker. With the rise of the mass media over the past century, and especially through the dominance of the electronic media, there has been a sudden realization that we need to study and try to understand audiences. Not surprisingly, listening too, in all its myriad manifestations, has emerged as a major and highly significant area of inquiry and scholarship. We understand now that understanding listening is fundamental to understanding what it means to be human.



Glenda Balas, Ph.D., M.B.A.  
Senior Vice President, Research

The theories and scholarship of listening cross many disciplines, including sociology, philosophy, communication, gender studies, clinical practice, and rhetoric and composition. For the philosopher Heidegger, speaking and listening were seen as not oppositional, but rather as integrated parts of the same process. Similarly, theorists of language and discourse find listening to be of primary importance as we disclose our realities to one another and thereby create common ground and cross-cultural dialogue. John Dewey's work in democracy studies relied upon active and informed listening as individuals came together as a community to promote the common good. The scholarship of healing looks to listening as a best practice in the relationships among physicians, counselors, nurses, and patients. And finally, communication scholars identify listening as one of four primary components of the communication process, equal in importance to speaking, writing, and reading. This short summary of some of the listening scholarship speaks to the broad and integrated role listening plays across disciplines.



Gayle Pohl, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President, Education Policy

In education, active listening is used to empathize learning. In the classroom, active listening means students are focused on deep listening. It is a sign of respect for all in the room and, most importantly, for the student themselves. For the educator, active listening means creating a positive classroom culture, improved teaching and learning, better professor-student relationships, student-centered learning, and the freedom of expression in an open learning environment.



Danielle Ofri, MD, Ph.D., D Litt(Hon), FACP  
Honorable Director, Healthcare Listening

Most medical technologies do only one thing in only one way. Compared to these, listening is a highly sophisticated and flexible technology. It allows us to make hundreds of different diagnoses, it allows us to assess treatment efficacy, it helps us prevent medical errors, and it enables us to establish trust with our patients—all with the simple act of listening.



Robert B. Petersen, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President, Listening in Science

Science is grounded in objectivity and the testing of theory, but science is also a community of scholars who practice these goals, and as a community they are grounded in communication and especially listening. Science itself progresses not only by the accumulation of data and the testing of theories and hypotheses, but also by scientists listening to one another, listening attentively to gain knowledge and understanding, and listening critically to evaluate the methods, assumptions, findings, and conclusions of others. The empirical method is based largely on observation, but is importantly supplemented by listening to the objects and subjects under investigation; listening to colleagues, policy makers, and the public; and perhaps most importantly, listening to one's own sense of curiosity, and ethical judgment.

Progress in science depends on the repeatable and reliable exchange of information. While a significant amount of training in the sciences emphasizes the accurate and skillful presentation of data, progress in the sciences is equally dependent on clear access to that information. Consequently, we would be well served by training our students in active listening to promote efficient transmission of data and clear understanding of information as we promote dialogue across the greater community of the sciences.



Helen Meldrum, Ph.D.  
Chair, Healthcare Listening

What does the practice of listening in health care involve? The many levels of meaning expressed by an patient are likely to be fluctuating and subtle. Understanding or addressing all of them, especially in the immediate moment, is not possible. So practitioners decide to focus on particular aspects of meaning in their listening. This selection process is a powerful instrument in the hands of a clinician because it shapes and creates the very nature of the dialogue.



Alan Enrich  
Chair, Listening Disorders

Listening is one of life's great pleasures. There are many listening disorders and barriers to listening that have to be understood so that we can all communicate better with the understanding that although we take our ability to listen for granted, we all don't have the same ability. Hearing loss, auditory processing disorders, depression, ambient noise, and speaker understandability issues limit the ability of many to listen and enjoy the world around them.



Daniel Levy  
Chair & Director, Music & Arts  
Internationally renowned pianist

Listening to inspired music is an active path that guides us to our inner self and allows us to discover our true roots in sound as the source of knowledge and wisdom of the world and the universe. All the answers to the essential questions of existence are in harmony with music as a model for all our activities, relationships and professions, and daily lives. Listening to classical music is an essential practice in life that allows us to learn to become more human.



Jo Ann Rolle, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President, Business

How do we learn and grow as individuals or organizations? In a recent poll the majority of respondents answered the question in a triad of steps: watch, listen, and adapt. In a global society that is transforming faster than any of us can adapt, it's paramount that we embrace the stillness by absorbing the nature of our humanity. Technology innovation is an enabler—not the driver to our post-pandemic destiny. Watching, listening, and adapting is good business. The “better” normal will differentiate those who will drive the future of human and machine co-existence. They will be the entities that accelerate change through the artful skill of rapid and cost effective re-visioning of products and services yielding innovations and rewards we may not dream of today. It starts and stops with listening. Listening to the pain of complex unsolved problems. Listening to diverse and multi-discipline teams. Teams that in the future yield improved global solutions for an inclusive humanity.



Ivar Fahsing, Ph.D.  
Senior Vice President, Listening in Law

A better recognition in the global law and security sector of something as elementary as listening might help us put into practice fundamental democratic principles such as rule of law, equality, dignity, and respect. Such a move will probably also help us towards a richer access to and understanding of the information we need in order to keep our societies safe and free. Therefore, all public servants should listen more than they talk.



Jonathan H. Westover, Ph.D., MPA, AFCIPD, SFHEA  
Chair, Corporate Listening

Listening in a corporate setting goes far beyond just hearing. It requires mindfulness, attentiveness, awareness, and focus. An effective listener both sees and is with those they encounter, with the goal of finding ways to help and empower those around them. Additionally, listening is a foundational concept and is central in servant leadership theory, which posits that the effective leader is the humble leader, the leader who is motivated most by lifting those around them. Effective listening is a leadership competency and capability and absolutely essential to leading successful, sustainable, and healthy organizations.



Marzia Traverso, Ph.D.  
Chair, Environmental Listening

The vast majority of the people of the planet recognize how important and urgent it is for societies, governments, and their politicians, to listen to the ecosystem and nature. Such listening is the only way to learn what we must do to save the Earth. If we listen with our heart, we cannot deny that to save our planet we must act today. We cannot postpone acting to reduce our impact on climate. We cannot postpone changing our impact on many other physical aspects of our planet. We must listen with our heart and soul. The planet and nature's scream in requesting our attention and must be a priority for us all.



Hassan Abbas, Ph.D.  
Chair, Technical Listening

If we listen to historical incidents in the world of engineering, we can avoid repeating the same mistakes. For example, lessons learned (listened) from space shuttle Columbia's accident in 2003 help today's NASA engineers propose and develop safe practices. If we continue developing our listening skills with openness and without prejudice, we will progress and flourish for the better, making the world a safe and better place for all.



Kirk Hazlett, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Chair, Ethics Committee

Listening is a non-negotiable element of ethical thought and action. One cannot formulate organizational processes and policies without first soliciting opinions of those who will be affected by your actions. As the familiar cautionary statement goes: "Stop. Look. Listen."



Ms. Kay Lindah, CLP  
Chair, Spiritual Listening

Spiritual listening is embodied listening; we become a listening presence to all of life. It could mean listening to yourself, to the still, small voice within, where we connect with our inner wisdom. It could mean sensing the divine spark in others as we listen with respect, compassion, and empathy. It could be opening yourself up to the universe in a new way and listening for the possibility of a spiritual dimension to creation. Spiritual listening is often sourced with our five senses—sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch, as well as our intuitive sense. It can happen when communing with nature, or witnessing one of the arts. We can notice spiritual listening in the mundane of everyday life—when we wake up to what's right in front of us in the present moment, recognizing the sacred nature of all life. Another name for spiritual listening could be heart listening. "When you listen with your soul, you come into rhythm and unity with the music of the universe" John O'Donohue.

## GLC Workshops

The Global Listening Centre offers world-class workshops and programs on effective listening skills. All GLC programs are conducted by our elite and distinguished professors and global leaders in the broad area of listening. Each program is designed to provide the participants with the skills necessary to listen more effectively and increase organizational productivity

We offer workshops for:

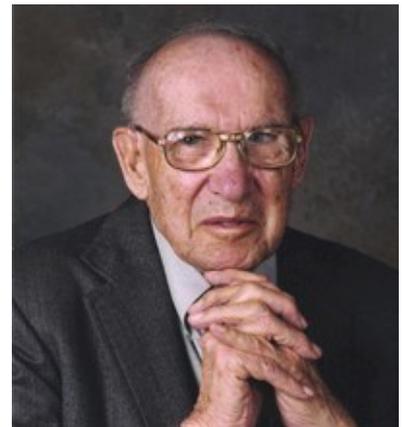


- For more information, contact and id: [info@globallisteningcentre.org](mailto:info@globallisteningcentre.org).

### Quote for management from Sir Peter F. Drucker

"Top management will have to develop an organ for 'listening,' so that it knows what the worker and middle management want to be informed about, and why they do not understand what to top management is so simple and clear. Similar 'ears' will have to be grafted onto middle management and the worker."

*The New Society* pg. 214



### Give Me a Listening Heart



Our member Carlota Barros, musician, has a diploma and master's degree in law but her career, across Switzerland, USA and Portugal goes along with her devotion to music and humanitarian missions. She studied music in the Azores, Lisbon, and Boston at Berklee, composed dozens of songs in Portuguese and English, organized concerts and participated in international projects such as the Portuguese Non-Governmental Organization for Development "WACT" project in São Tome e Príncipe and her contribution with the Hymn of Happiness for United Nations. Her dream is to contribute to happiness and justice around the world through unforgettable songs and efficient listening.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to Carlota Barros for creating a wonderful hymn, a video on *Give Me a Listening Heart*, for the Global Listening Centre.

## Others



File photo: Global Listening Members respected globally. Professor Ray T. Donahue being offered bouquet/felicitated by Pro Vice Chancellor University of Calcutta. Professor Ray T. Donahue presented on Journalism and Listening.

## The Great Professor Sarajit Basu in Memoriam



Late Professor Sarajit Basu  
Ph.D., FIE, FIICHE;  
Humboldt Fellow,  
UNIDO - Consultant (MBST)

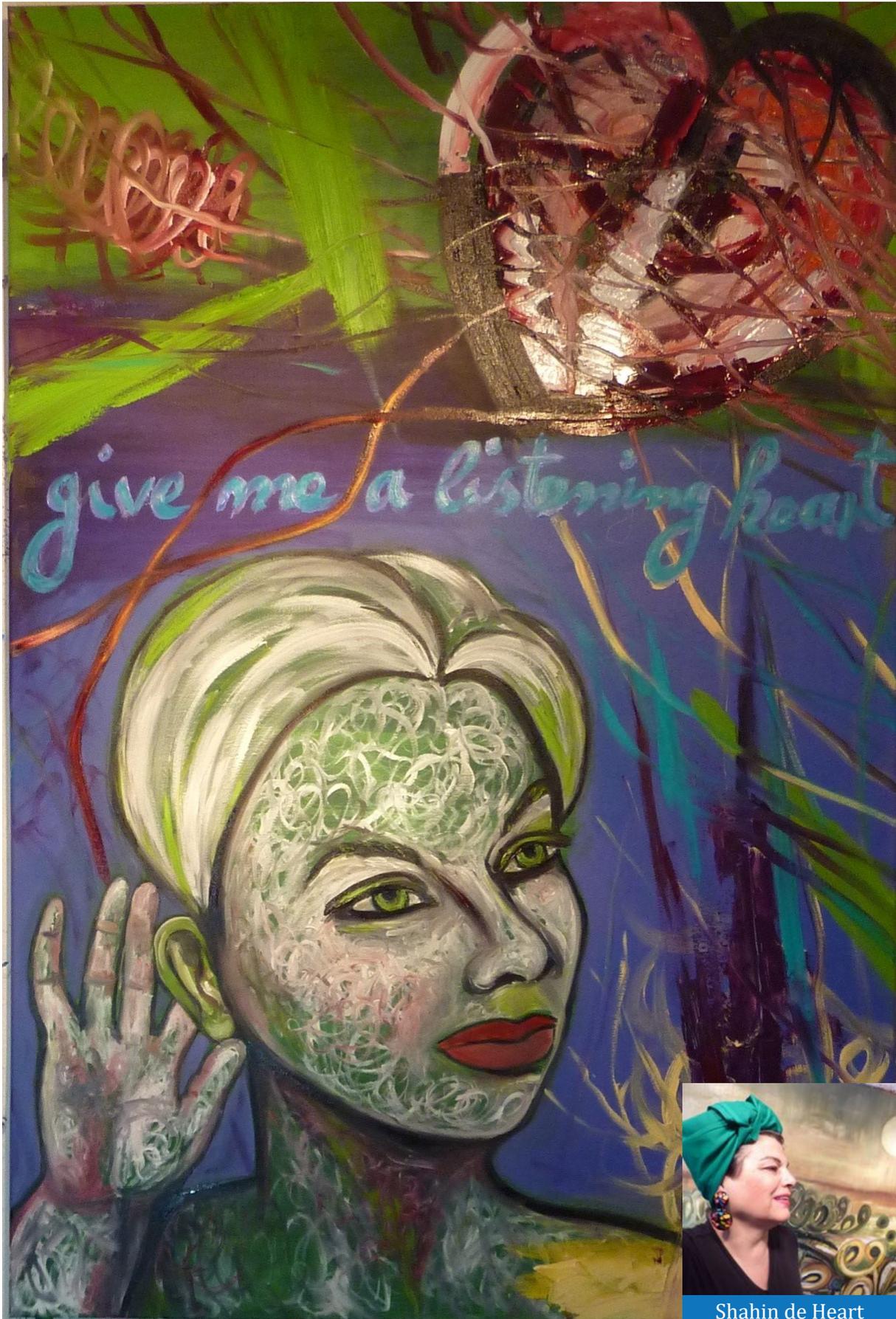
We mourn the loss of Dr. Surajit Basu, a member of the governing body of the Global Listening Centre, who passed away on December 25th, 2020. Dr. Basu was one of India's most respected figures in the field of engineering and a man of highest integrity. He earned a Ph.D. from the Indian Institute of Technology Mumbai, and conducted post-doctoral research in Germany as a Humboldt Fellow at the Tech University, Darmstadt (1972-73) and Tübingen University (May-Oct 1981). Prof. Basu was a faculty member at IIT Mumbai for 33 years and held positions as an United Nations Organisation expert/scientist, a visiting professor at universities around the world, and was a member of the expert panel for India's Prime Minister's TCH Mission of Drinking Water (1998-2002). As a technical listening expert, Prof. Basu has included the importance of listening, and taking action based on listening, in his many public lectures, addresses, and presentations on the environment, healthcare, lifestyle, and disease. Like many of today's great scientists, Dr. Basu believed that we are quickly headed for environmental, industrial, agricultural, and human health disasters if our governments and authorities do not listen and act immediately. Needless to say, the world needs more individuals like him, and all of us at the Global Listening Centre will deeply miss the wisdom and contributions of our Honored Member, Prof./Dr. Sarajit Basu.

## Ascona Music Festival



Our honorable director, the pianist Daniel Levy, will be celebrating the musical genius Beethoven at the [Ascona Music Festival](#), which aims to reach a worldwide audience through highly original content focusing on the figure of Beethoven, **a true beacon for music lovers**. The Festival explores Beethoven's music and teachings through the composer's life experiences, which point to **deep listening as a sure way to knowledge, freedom and harmony in the world**.

**GIVE ME A LISTENING HEART** exclusive painting designed and presented to the GLC by the world famous painter Shahin de Heart from Germany. Shahin understands the power of listening and contributes to the GLC .



Shahin de Heart

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For more on listening visit : [www.globallisteningcentre.org](http://www.globallisteningcentre.org)

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