

HOW STRONG ARE YOUR EARS?

You Can Test Them Every Day



HAVE you ever been to a fair and seen the machines labelled “Test Your Strength!”? You usually have to hit with a large hammer, and according to how hard you can hit, so high will a heavy ball go up a pole. If you are strong enough to send the ball to the top, so that it rings a bell there, you get your money back!

Most of us would have to go into hard training for a long time before we could make the ball go very high up the pole, and as we should not be likely to have the machine handy to test ourselves by it, we should not know how we were getting along.

But we all have one easy bit of training and testing with which we can carry on all the time, and have a good deal of fun over it.

First of all, let me ask you, “How strong are your ears?” Oh, I expect you can hear very well—sometimes more than you are intended to!—but do you always know what you are hearing?

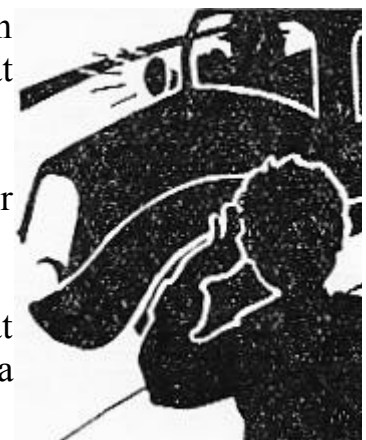
“Yes, of course we do,” you will say, indignantly, thinking I mean, “Do you know a cock crowing when you hear one, or a telephone bell or a motor horn?”

Since you are Young Musicians I expect more than that. For instance, when you hear a motor horn honk-honking, or a telephone bell ringing, can you tell the musical pitch of the note you hear?

If you can, then you have sent the musical ball of strength right up to the top of the pole. Maybe you already have that very valuable gift known as perfect pitch.

But if you cannot tell that straight off, then there is room for you to make your ears stronger by practice until you can.

And you have the machine to test yourself on quite close at hand—the piano—ready to use at any odd moment when a test should come along.



For instance, supposing you hear a motor horn honk-honking (or any other sound which sounds on definite notes), sing the sound over to yourself on the same pitch, and try to guess what it is. Then go to the piano and play the note you think it is. If

you are wrong, try different notes until you find the right one. Then sing the note again and play it, and say aloud which note it is.

We will say that it is A. (A is a useful note to get to know well, because it is a general tuning note for instruments.) Well, then, later in the day, try to see if you can sing A from memory. Sing what you think it is, and then test yourself on the piano, correcting it and singing the right note if you were wrong.

You will see that you can use this sort of test with lots of things besides motor horns, cries, bits of music you hear, bells, clocks, and so on—and you need not even wait for those.



In the same way as we play a number puzzle trick on our friends: Think of a note ; sing it; find it on the piano; change your sung note if it was wrong for the real note you first thought of. Then see how long you can remember it. You will be surprised how quickly your memory will grow, how strong your ears will become!