

# A Conversation with Gary Burton

By Elman + Perez-Trujillo

**G**ary Burton is a jazz vibraphonist, composer, and jazz educator. Burton developed a pianistic style of four-mallet technique as an alternative to the prevailing two-mallet technique. He has been heralded as an innovator and his sound and technique are widely imitated. He is also known for pioneering fusion jazz and popularizing the duet format in jazz, as well as being a major figure in music education due to his 33 years of teaching at the Berklee College of Music, and his many years of service as executive vice president of Berklee.

Gary has recorded over 60 albums and won 7 Grammy Awards. Beginning in the 1960s, when he was still a teenager, Gary has performed with almost every major jazz musician.

Gary wrote a wonderful autobiography titled *Learning to Listen: The Jazz Journey of Gary Burton: An Autobiography* that was published in 2013, and is available through [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). The book won the Best Book of the Year 2014 award from the Jazz Journalists Association.

The videos below are organized by topic and run between 30 seconds to 6 minutes. Tap on any video.



## INTRODUCTION

– 1:02 min.



## SEIZE THE MOMENT

– 5:20 min.

Where did you grow up? What was your first exposure to music? How did you become passionate about jazz?



## WORK HARD

– 1:12 min.

According to Malcom Gladwell in his book “Outlier,” many people who are great in their fields got a very early start and put in 10,000 hours of practice before others. You seem to fit that description.



## INFLUENCE OF CRITICS

– 4:09 min.

What are the primary sources for jazz criticism, and how do they influence you?



## CRITICAL THINKING

– 3:10 min.

How does music criticism differ from other forms of criticism?



## CREATIVITY & FLEXIBILITY

– 3:18 min.

At what point does the music take over and tell you what to do, and you wind up surprising yourself?



## COLLABORATION

– 2:38 min.

Describe the collaborative experience in jazz.



## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

– 5:38 min.

What kind of risks and challenges have you overcome over the course of your career?



## SKILL DEVELOPMENT

– 4:34 min.

How did you acquire the skills to manage a band?



## LEARN FROM THE ARTISTS

– 1:11 min.

How did your green new manager become an astute evaluator of talent?



## TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

– 0:52 sec.

What do you look for in an agent?



## INFLUENTIAL CRITICS

– 1:27 min.

What's your opinion of critics Bob Blumenthal and Fernando González?



## EXCELLENT WRITING

– 0:34 sec.

What was it like to write your recent autobiography?