

The newsletter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter

# WIRED FOR SOUND

## Meandering Through a Hearing World

Linda Bilodeau, MBA, MFA

### Boost Your Hearing Ability with Music

I constantly look for ways to improve my hearing. I've taken online lip and speech reading courses, worked with a speech therapist, and spent many hours with various apps, fine-tuning how I hear in quiet and noise. I've worked with games, such as *Amptify*, which increases your ability to concentrate and hear the voices of men, women and children, as well as those speaking with an accent. Yet, of all the means I've used to work on my hearing, my favorite exercise is to listen to music.

I don't remember exactly when I became a fan of music. Perhaps it was my French grandparents, singing ballads to me in their native language or my mother's love of everything from Beethoven to Johnny Cash. But music was very much a part of my growing up years. My mother and I sang as we cooked meals or did laundry. I was a member of the church choir and always looked forward to after-school practice and singing alto in a polyphonic choir during my high school and college years.

It was then that I noticed that I had difficulty hearing lyrics. I had to refer to sheet music and memorize every word in order to keep up with the other members of our choir. At the time, I didn't think too much about my problem and thought it was just difficult for me to concentrate.

When my hearing loss was discovered and as it progressed, I began wearing aids. I found listening to music difficult. The pitch and tone of my voice changed. It occurred to me that I was having trou-



ble staying on key as I no longer heard subtle differences between G major and A major. Worse, the songs that I most loved sounded tinny and mechanical.

I went straight to my audiologist for help. Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids coupled with Artificial Intelligence (AI) allows me to stream music directly into my aids, thus improving sound quality. I wear Oticon More aids. The AI component built into the aids allows my audiologist to fine-tune high-pitched sounds, those that I have difficulty hearing.

My audiologist told me that I could train my brain to hear music more naturally, but it would take patience and practice. He recommended going online to find familiar musical pieces played by only one instrument, the piano for instance, and to listen to them over and over. He said my brain would not adjust instantly, but he assured me that I would develop a comfort level with music again.

I've been working with music for several years and seen improvement. My routine is to sing scales in various keys daily, which takes concentration.

If you are a music lover, there are several online sites that will help you better hear music. Google your favorite tune by typing in words such as, "Hey Jude, piano version only". Up will come a variety of YouTube videos that you can listen to.

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**WIRED FOR SOUND**

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P. O. Box 36792,  
Albuquerque, NM 87176  
(505)219-1962

[HLAAbq@gmail.com](mailto:HLAAbq@gmail.com)

**Home page:** [hearinglossabq.org](http://hearinglossabq.org)

Hearing Loss Association of  
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The Albuquerque HLAA Chapter is  
affiliated with the



6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320  
Rockville, MD 20852  
phone: (301)657-2248

**20 May Meeting** 10:00 AM To Noon—**Hybrid****Hearing Loss Travel Tips and Stories**

Travel season is upon us. For many of us, this is an enjoyable experience. One gets to see different cultures, see loved ones and relax. But for individuals with hearing loss, sometimes this can be hectic and bring up anxiety. For example, navigating the airports or train can be stressful. How do I navigate communication at the airport or Transportation Security checkpoint? Will I be able to hear the boarding gate announcement? Will I miss our flight? If I am traveling alone or with a group, what can I do to ensure an enjoyable and stress-free experience with my hearing loss? For May, our HLAA-ABQ's program is geared towards having a rap session of sharing practical tips on traveling with hearing loss (e.g., airplane, car, cruise, train, navigating hotels, tours, and restaurants). We aim for this program to be one of laughter, camaraderie, and a space to share stories and learn from one another on the best ways to travel with hearing loss.



These are a few guiding questions we will discuss:

- How does one travel with hearing loss?
- What are the best practices and tips for traveling with hearing loss?
- Are there laws and regulations that protect individuals with hearing loss?
- What are some ways to advocate for oneself when traveling with hearing loss?
- From past experiences, what have you learned from traveling with hearing loss?

With hybrid meetings started, the HLAA ABQ Chapter could use some help (for example, with hospitality), as well as some new blood. You already know our dedication to providing the best information, advocacy, education and support for people with hearing loss. You can ease your way into volunteering and learn how this works. Just email or see one of the board members (listed on the left) at our next meeting. You may also use the chapter email: [HLAAbq@gmail.com](mailto:HLAAbq@gmail.com).

Once you feel comfortable listening to a piece with one instrument, google the same song played with the guitar and another instrument before moving on to full orchestration. Continued practice will help you notice the nuances of notes.

If you wear a cochlear implant, you might find music a bit more challenging, but there are adjustments and specific implants that might help you. For instance, Advanced Bionics and Phonak have teamed up to supply a hearing system that I am told has one of the broadest ranges of sound in the industry and is great for musicians and lovers of music. I understand that daily listening to music is part of the rehab program that most wearers of implants undergo.

My daily scale practice has helped me concentrate and hear better. My audiologist has noticed an improvement in my word recognition scores and in my ability to hear in background noise. And though I don't sing as well as I did, I can still carry a tune.



**Amazon Smile's** donation program was discontinued in February.

## Loop People; Loop Places

*Ginevra Ralph*

### **Convincing the Youngsters**

There is no greater leader and advocate in the country for looping airports than ABQ's own Stephen Frazier. Following on his leadership coat-tails and realizing how challenging travel is for our friends with hearing loss, our local Loop Committee advocated successfully with our regional airport management and with our City Council to loop all of the ticket, gate, and rental car counters, with the main gate areas coming next as funding is gathered.

This was during covid, so not much was happening at the airport except for the installation of Plexiglas barriers. Loop Committee members paid

Recently, I read an interview with Brian Wilson, who had hearing loss in one ear. Brian developed an uncanny ability to hear music despite his hearing loss. He went on to have a productive career with The Beach Boys, writing and singing many of their top hits. He said his hearing loss helped him become a better musician as he had to focus and learn to hear music, using his other senses. He claimed to feel the music, and noticed that tunes played over and over in his brain, a condition often linked to those with severe hearing loss.

There are many ways in which to improve one's ability to hear. Consult with your audiologist for the best methods for your type of hearing loss. Keep in my mind that your brain is an adaptive organ, and with some work on your part and the right training, you can improve your ability to hear music and perhaps improve how you hear in quiet and noisy environments.

**Smith's Community Rewards** Shop at Smith's with their Rewards card, and Smith's will make a donation to HLAA Albuquerque chapter. You get your usual rewards points.

1-800-444-8081, opt. 3 to sign up or re-enroll.

The HLAAAbq NPO number for Smith's is **NC419**.

a house call to two young staffers who would be in charge of managing the counter installations. We could tell that they were managing the project but had no idea what the end result was going to be. Using a portable loop and telecoil-receiver packs with headphones on the staffers, the gate agent quietly spoke to them through the Plexiglas with the baggage belt running, children squawking, and people talking around them. They were stunned – and convinced. The young woman said, “My brother has hearing loss. What a difference this will make.” The portable loop is a fabulous teaching and demonstration tool!

Yearly dues are \$15 per household. They are due in January.

**Thanks to those listed below for their generous donations.**

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The Hearing Loss Association of America is a volunteer association of Hard of Hearing people, their relatives and friends. It is a non-profit, non-sectarian educational organization devoted to the welfare and interest of those who cannot hear well. Membership in the national organization is by annual dues, which are separate from the annual Chapter fee paid to your local chapter. National membership includes a subscription to the bi-monthly publication Hearing Life.



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P.O.Box 36792, Albuquerque, NM 87176

