

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

WIRED FOR SOUND

Those Sour Notes May Be Your
Hearing Aids

Stephen O. Frazier

Digital hearing aids can, indeed, change some sounds, making them slightly sharp or flat.

With my electronic piano I can play Chopin's Polonaise or Beethoven's Appassionata with wrong notes just like Vladimir Horowitz did. He was forgiven those occasional wrong notes because of his astonishing technique and the unparalleled beauty of his sound. I also play occasional wrong notes, but often they're the right ones that only sound wrong. I also hear "wrong" notes when attending concerts, especially when they perform a piano concerto—my favorite musical form. Curious as to what was causing these obviously errant sounds, and suspecting that it might be my hearing aids, I set out to solve this problem.

My research found that digital hearing aids can, indeed, change some sounds, making them slightly sharp or flat. [Musicians Clinics of Canada reports](#)¹ that the hearing aid industry calls this phenomenon "frequency transposition" or "frequency shifting". It is especially common in the higher frequencies. The MCC says hearing aids now have a setting called "frequency compression" that can be turned on or off. It comes into the picture when amplification settings are not optimized for music.

Hearing aids are primarily designed to enhance speech, not music, which has a [much wider range](#)



[of frequencies.](#)² When hearing aids compress these sounds, it can alter how music is perceived, making some notes sound 'off.' [Hearing Review](#)³ explains how frequency compression can cause high notes to sound lower and low notes to sound higher. Even amplification across different frequencies can lead to pitch distortions. Digital hearing aids may not only distort or alter the sound of music but also lower the intensity more than necessary, making some notes inaudible or unpleasant.

For many hearing aids, this problem can be addressed by a visit to an audiologist, especially if the devices have a "music" setting. [Hearing Tracker reports](#)⁴ that "Some hearing aids, aided with AI (such as Phonak's AutoSense 5.0), "are smart enough to adjust settings based on the environment—even including a music setting." They go on, though, to recommend having a dedicated setting or "memory" specifically for music⁴. It may minimize distorted frequencies and can also amplify frequencies important in music that are above or below those used in speech. Frequency shifting can be further enhanced with recorded music as opposed to a live performance, because the compression applied to recorded music, which is already

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¹ https://www.musiciansclinics.ca/publications/THE_PROBLEM_WITH_FREQUENCY_COMPRESSION_AND_MUSIC.pdf

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-29801215>

³ <https://hearingreview.com/hearing-loss/patient-care/evaluation/10-questions-about-frequency-compression->

⁴ <https://www.hearingtracker.com/resources/optimizing-hearing-aids-for-music>

WIRED FOR SOUND

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people with hearing loss

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15 Mar Meeting 10:00 AM To Noon—on Zoom**What Is Auracast and How Can It Help Me Hear Better?**

Richard Einhorn was among the first people to publish an article about Auracast in the United States. He will provide an accessible overview of how Auracast works and its potential as an assistive listening technology. He will also discuss a highly successful demonstration of Auracast that took place during Richard's recent sold-out concert at Lincoln Center.

Richard is an award-winning composer, music producer and former Chair of the HLA National Board of Trustees. After experiencing sudden hearing loss in 2010, Richard leveraged his background in audio and music technology to develop unique solutions to hear better in restaurants, at parties, and in other challenging environments. He consults with hearing health companies and has served on the Advisory Council of the National Institute for Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD).



We have fond hopes of resuming hybrid meetings (in-person and Zoom), perhaps next Fall, but we need help in setup, handling the meeting and tear-down. We also want 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 one of the board members (listed on the left). You may also use the chapter email: HLAAbq@gmail.com.

compressed during production, can further [distort the sound](#).⁵

The [University of Iowa published a paper](#)⁶ addressing some of the problems encountered when listening to music using hearing aids. Among the points made for listening to recorded music:

- ✓ Use an equalizer to increase or decrease the volume of higher and lower frequencies.

- ✓ Turn down the volume on the music player and turn up the volume of your hearing aids.

- ✓ Use Bluetooth to stream music to your hearing aids rather than relying on the built-in mics.

- ✓ Listen to recorded music without hearing aids, using high-quality headphones instead.

For live music they recommended that you:

- ✓ Borrow and use an assistive listening device, so the volume setting on your hearing aids isn't too high resulting in distortion.

- ✓ Have a remote control for your hearing aids and adjust the volume when the music is too loud in order to avoid distortion.

- ✓ Try a different setting (memory) on your hearing aids to see if the music sounds better there.

Now, with a better understanding of how hearing aids can alter music and knowing how to address those issues, you can enhance the listening experience. By optimizing settings and seeking professional advice, one can enjoy the beauty of music and encounter fewer, if any, sour notes.

Staff writer Stephen O. Frazier was trained as a Hearing Loss Support Specialist by the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). Previous writings by Steve can be read at www.sofnabq.com and he can be reached at hlaanm@juno.com.

Managing Tinnitus: There ARE Options

Adopted from Feb 4, 2025 blog by Shari Eberts on LivingWithHearingLoss.com⁷ (with permission)

While there is no cure for tinnitus. Many options exist to help ease the burden.

A Case Study: How Managing Tinnitus?

Maybe you have hearing loss and also tinnitus. It may sound like a screech or more of a buzz. You find the tinnitus more distressing than your hearing loss, and you are terrified because it's getting louder. A few times the ringing has been loud enough to block out other sounds, including speech.

Searching for ideas on the internet, you have trouble parsing through fake herbal remedies and false claims to identify workable strategies that might help. But when you ask your doctor or hear-

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ing care professional about it, they say you just need to get used to it. There is nothing that can be done. But that is not the case. While there is no cure for tinnitus, there are ways to ease its burden.

Meditation Changed my Tinnitus Story

I've had tinnitus almost as long as I've had hearing loss. For many years my tinnitus was problematic, rearing its loud and ugly head at seemingly random times. It reminded me of the sound a fluorescent light makes as it comes on—a pop followed by a high-pitched hum of varying volumes

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⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-29801215>

⁶ <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/iowaprotocols/music-and-hearing-loss/hearing-aid-ha-and-music/hearing-aid-ha-pages-ha-users-and-family/tips#:~:text=Adjust music players to fit your unique hearing,adjusting the volume, even as the music plays.>

⁷ <https://livingwithhearingloss.com/2025/02/04/managing-tinnitus-there-are-options/>

and durations. Today, I am one of the lucky ones. My tinnitus flares up in the winter as temperatures cool but remains under wraps most other times. I credit yoga and meditation for the improvement.

I first meditated during a yoga retreat in Colorado. Each morning, we meditated with the monks. They showed us how to sit and how to breathe in a beautiful meditation space. After a few days, each time I would meditate, my tinnitus would melt away. I've been meditating ever since.

Coping Mechanisms for Tinnitus

While there is no cure, there are ways to ease its burden. Miracle herbs or supplements found online may tempt you, but most are too good to be true. I recommend trying these proven methods to help manage your tinnitus.

1. Masking the sound

One way to reduce the impact of tinnitus is to mask it with other sounds. Ambient noise through hearing aids can help mask unwanted ringing. Some come with a tinnitus setting that can be programmed to offset the specific tone of your tinnitus. Playing quiet music in the background or using white noise machines can also help mask tinnitus.

2. Meditation and mindfulness practices

Tinnitus can be stressful, and stress is also known to bring on tinnitus. Mindfulness practices can break this vicious cycle with a calmer outlook.

Meditating sounds hard, but sit quietly for 10 minutes in a restful posture and you are doing it. Counting breaths is an easy way to stay focused and present. Count 1 on the inhale and 2 on the exhale up to 100 and then start again. Patients can also use a mindfulness app for guided meditations. Even if the tinnitus remains, these moments of relaxation are likely to help you better cope with the frustration, lessening its impact on your life.

3. Peer support

Sharing traumatic experiences with others in the same boat is therapeutic. You feel less alone, and you may also learn techniques to ease the emotional strain. There are many Facebook groups for people with tinnitus, but their quality may vary. Try to find a few reputable ones and try them out.

4. Cognitive behavioral therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) uses relaxation, discussion, and problem-solving skills to change the way a person responds to negative stimuli. It was developed for mental health applications, but it can work for tinnitus too. CBT aims to retrain your emotional response to tinnitus, reducing its impact on your daily life. The tinnitus may not go away, but your reaction to it lessens. CBT is often conducted one-on-one with a trained professional, but apps are also available when individual counseling is not possible.



school. She was told to sit up close and they would turn the volume on the PA up. She should have asked “what is the assistive listening system in place at the school.” She would have learned that, whatever was or wasn't there, the Senator's team brings in their own single speaker and wireless mics, and doesn't connect to the assistive listening system moving quickly from venue to venue. Needless to say, the Town Hall was not accessible—even the Senator had trouble hearing! Participatory democracy means being there and hearing there! Advocate every time by asking for the assistive listening system.

Loop People, Loop Places

Ginevra Ralph

Participatory Democracy? How?

Legislators across the country are avidly conducting community “Town Hall” conversations. Typically these are held in low-cost “public” spaces, such as high school auditoriums or community colleges. Recently, a Loop Oregon member asked what accommodations she could expect for her hearing loss to hear the Senator at the local high

Thanks to those listed below for their generous donations.

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