

From the Netherlands: Joke's Musical Story



Onset of hearing loss: in my early 30s, gradual progression due to DFNA21.

Device use: unilateral CI, R ear, no residual hearing in my left ear. Implanted age 57.

Musical interests: professional pianist and piano teacher, choir conductor; playing viola, recorder, guitar; listening to various kinds of music.

Initial experiences with music after hookup: my first experiences playing the piano were really confusing. Even a softly played C chord sounded like my two arms full on the keyboard. It sounded so weird.

What, if anything, has helped you to improve music listening? It took time and daily practice, playing scales and simple Bach pieces. Just by repeating, somehow without even listening, my brain finally rediscovered the sound and inherent harmonic meaning of the scale I was playing. This made it possible to better understand a piece in the same key as well. Slowly I moved on to more complicated piano pieces and to music I hadn't rehearsed before. One of my best moments after a year of CI use was playing one of Beethoven's Piano Trios with two of my colleagues. You can watch a short video of this here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4mLya-F-9I>

What is the most frustrating music experience for you? When I was young, I was happy to have very good and detailed hearing, which allowed me to make harmonical analysis just by listening to the music. Also, when conducting a choir, I was absolutely sure who was singing which wrong tone. With the CI, I cannot even match a tone when singing, although I do hear that it is out of tune. I cannot correct that without spending a lot of time comparing the sound of my voice (via the CI) with the tone I want to match. That is really frustrating!

What is something you wish were available from your audiology appointments? Sufficient time to try what a map sounds like, and playing an instrument in a normal acoustic situation---not in an acoustically poor booth. I don't like the current system of having a new mapping of the CI, going home to try it, and then discovering that the sound is really too bad to work with. I realize it is hard to communicate about the desired sounds of music, but it would be worthwhile exploring what information both the CI user and the therapist need.