

From the UK: Sarah's Music Story



Onset of hearing loss: Age 30

Device use: Unilateral CI + Hearing Aid

Musical Interests: singing and playing, now recorder and percussion, exploring new music.

Initial experiences with music after hookup: “I was terrified I would lose music before I had my CI. I had just retired and was looking forward to so many ways of playing, singing and going to more concerts. Since getting my implant, I have had a whole range of new musical experiences. My journey is not always easy. There can still be a sense of bereavement and grief that things are not as they were, but I really enjoy listening and performing again. I have gained so much by trying different things. Through sharing some of my experiences, I hope it will enthuse you on your journey too.

First: Enjoy careful listening to all the sounds that are about you as they unfold. Get into the habit of short bursts of intense listening. That might include speech exercises, environmental sounds, **and when you are ready, music.** Celebrate everything new: having a conversation, leaves rustling, the cooker timer, etc. Attending to these everyday sounds helps train your ear for the nuances you will need for music.

Second: Set personal goals for what is important to you musically. There are different aspects of music to consider.

For singing, I set singing Happy Birthday in tune as my personal goal. This has improved over time, so I can now sing with the family unaccompanied!

For listening, I chose a set of simple short orchestral pieces. The first year I got nothing. By the third year, I could begin to pick out the different instruments and enjoy them. I am still improving.

For playing instruments, joining an orchestra will not work for me. However, I hugely enjoy the occasional opportunity to play in a percussion ensemble. I get the thrill of playing music with others without having to worry about pitch. Watch bands and orchestras on the TV. That will home in on a particular instrument as you watch the instruments play.

Third: Be ready to explore! As you explore musical sounds, be open to trying new genres. I have found minimalism works well for me. I also like film music, as it is often electronic and tied to the emotions.

You may find some tips for exploration online or through your CI centre. If your CI centre has a music ‘tips sheet,’ use that. Create your own list of strategies that you have discovered through trial and error. Consider sharing your strategies with your audiologists. Audiologists are unlikely to be trained in helping people make the most of their CI for music. They might well welcome your ideas to pass on to other users. Making your own list also helps you be clear with yourself about what helps you. This might enable more nuanced tuning.

We CI users are all in this together! Good luck on your musical CI journey!”