

WENDY: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Wendy Cheng, and I'm the founder of the Association of Adult Musicians with Hearing Loss. Every November, our association hosts a webinar on topics of interest to our group. In previous years, the topics have focused on audiological ways to program hearing devices like hearing aids and cochlear implants for music. This year, we're trying something new, by focusing on the emotional aspects of dealing with hearing loss as a musician. I would also like to give a shoutout to Mirabai Knight of StenoKnight CART Services for sponsoring this event. If you're ever in New York City and need captioning services, please give Mirabai a call.

Here are some logistical details to remember, before I turn the floor over to Pat Dobbs. When Pat and Gaelen are presenting, I will mute all attendees, but there is a chat box, and you can type questions or comments into the chat box. Remember that the chat box allows you to send messages to all attendees or to individuals. Please be sure that you send comments to everyone. If you want all present to view the questions or your feedback. And after each presentation, I'll voice whatever questions there are still remaining in the chat box, and each presenter can then answer or provide feedback.

At this point, I would like to introduce Pat Dobbs. I first got to know Pat when she came to our association's conference in 2015. She performed a beautiful piano solo at our open mic event and gave a presentation about the principles of the Hearing Loss Revolution. Having majored in piano performance at Ithaca College, she knows very well the emotional challenges that comes with losing your hearing when you are a very musical person. Please help me welcome Pat. All right, Pat. The floor is all yours.

PAT: Thank you, Wendy. And I'm excited to give this presentation. I'm gonna talk about coming to terms with hearing loss, and what I really want to talk about is that there are many different levels and layers to really come to terms with your hearing loss. So I retired as a professional salesperson three years ago, and now I devote all my time as a hearing loss advocate. I give presentations, workshops, and do one on one coaching. So today I want to talk about coming to terms with your hearing loss and it's really more of a general presentation than specific about music. But it's really all the same. So here goes. Let's see. Why is this not going?

So the first thing is: Why do we have to come to terms with our hearing loss? And you know the answer. It's because of the stereotypes of people with hearing loss. And I couldn't resist this picture, where it says: But you don't look deaf! I don't know. Has anybody ever gotten that look, when you've told people that you have a hearing loss? I mean, what do people with hearing loss look like? And I think the answer is: There's a lot of stereotypes. And if you want to say what those stereotypes are through the chat button, go for it. I think we all know what they are. I'm gonna start with the one that people don't even like to talk about. Which is: Old. But I'll keep on going. Less intelligent. "Out of it." Snobs. What am I missing? There's more.

You all know what they are. None of them are positive. And actually, at the end of the presentation, I want to talk about the positives of hearing loss. But let me continue from here. The reason I'm so passionate about coming to terms with hearing loss is because it took me years to come to terms with it. I started to lose my hearing when I was 20. And I spent all of my time hiding it. So this is not a picture of me. I wish it were. But the point is: I always got a hairdo that hid my hearing aid. And if I didn't understand what people said, I bluffed. I pretended that I didn't hear them.

And bluffing -- you all know what bluffing does. It makes you isolated. It makes you not know what's going on. And that isolation leads to depression. I'm sure you all know exactly what I'm talking about. So I was lucky that, totally by accident, I happened to go to a Hearing Loss Association of America convention. And the truth is: It happened by accident. I had never heard of it, or if I had heard of it, I didn't want to belong to it. Because I didn't want to be associated with "those people". People with hearing loss. No, that wasn't me. Even though I couldn't hear! I didn't want to be associated with them. So at this hearing loss convention, by chance, I went to a presentation of Dr. Sam Trychin. Sam Trychin is one of -- I think of him as like the grandfather of the psychological aspects of people with hearing loss. As is Dr. Mark Ross. They both are. But Dr. Sam Trychin talked about how we get depressed, how we get isolated, and I was kind of surprised

that other people felt the same way. But when he said very casually that people with hearing loss bluff, I was like... How did he know that? But obviously he did. And everybody -- I could feel people -- the attendees like... Oh my God. This is a thing? I'm not the only one who does it?! And that started my evolution of coming to terms with hearing loss.

From there, when I went home, I started a Hearing Loss Association of America chapter. This was the first time that I was with a group of people that had hearing loss! It was the first time I could talk to them, we could discuss what it was like, we processed our feelings, we discussed strategies for challenging situations, bottom line, we were support for each other. It was at this time that I wrote the Hearing Loss Revolution and its Nine Guiding Principles. And to me, I had gone through a Revolution. I now knew totally how to support myself, how to advocate for myself. I totally had come to terms with my hearing loss. Or so I thought. But I hadn't. Before I keep on going, these are some of the things that I did. I no longer hid my hearing aids. I no longer bluffed. I learned strategies for better hearing. And I took a workshop from Brad, who is here. It was a HAT training from HLAA. I was so excited to learn about assistive listening devices. I didn't know anything about them. But I struggled to hear on the phone, and I learned strategies from him. I learned technical devices from him. It was one of the best workshops I ever took, and it took me to the next stage of understanding what technology could do for me.

But what I wanted to tell you about is: Even though I thought I had totally come to terms with hearing loss, I hadn't. And that's because... I had a really humiliating experience happen to me at work. When I was at my office, I did a lot of telephoning, speaking to my customers. But I had a really hard time hearing on the phone, if there was any ambient noise. Well, you know what? There was an empty office, where I could have asked for it. I could have said -- you know, it's difficult for me to hear. But I didn't. I did the best I could. When the other people in the office were talking, I didn't make phone calls. Not a very good way to use your time. And it backfired on me. Because one day, I used the phone when nobody else was there. And one of the reps came in the office, and got her messages on the speaker phone, and I couldn't hear with the ambient noise. So I asked her if she could listen to her messages on the handset. Well, when I got off the phone, she yelled and screamed at me. She said I was a selfish person. She cursed at me. She yelled so loud that the manager came in. And she said... I demand that she go to that other office. So of course, that's really what I wanted. But I didn't want it in such a humiliating fashion. And believe me, it was humiliating. Because I was escorted out. So I was really upset. I figured there was something I had to learn from this. And I think what I learned is: I really have to speak up for myself more. It's not a passive thing. You have to be proactive.

So if I had asked for that empty room up front, this humiliating experience wouldn't have happened in the first place. So I've learned that you just can't be that quiet about it. That humble about it. You have to speak up for yourself. When I went to public places, I started to ask for assistive listening devices. If they didn't work, I let them know, but whatever they did, I thanked them for having assistive listening devices, and for helping me. I started an advocacy team for our chapter, and we started to ask for captions or looping. So it took me to the next step, but there were still more steps.

Two years ago, I graduated from Gallaudet's two-year peer mentoring group. So this is a free course that Gallaudet gives for people with hearing loss. It's given online. We meet just about every week. Going over different topics. So we learn different things. We learn there's a course on introduction to audiology, there's a course on legislation, there's a course on advocacy. So we learn from each other, and we learn from the group, and we learn from the information that we were presented with. And for me, all of this knowledge was power. I know that there is the expression "knowledge is power". I'm not sure that I really get it. But I know that as I learned, I felt much more confident as a person with hearing loss. So what did I learn? Some of the things were: How to read an audiogram. Do you believe I've had a hearing loss since I was 20, and I didn't know how to read an audiogram? I learned about the different types of hearing loss. Conductive, sensorineural, mixed hearing loss. I learned about the causes of hearing loss, and I have one of the causes of hearing loss that I think a lot of people do: Nobody knows!

I learned more about assistive listening devices. Which helped me on the phone, which helped me with distance, which help me when I'm in a noisy restaurant or in a noisy environment. What a wonderful thing! I learned about auditory training. I have two cochlear implants, and usually when you get a cochlear implant, you have to relearn to hear. But auditory training was never mentioned to me. I didn't know about it. But auditory training helps your brain get stronger, so that you can hear easier. Auditory fatigue. I never knew why I got so tired. After talking to a lot of people. I thought... I just got tired easily. But we get more tired than people with good hearing, because we have to hear what we can. We have to look at people's lips and facial expression. But we also have to fill in the words that we haven't heard, and try to make the best sense of them. So it can be really tiring.

So for me, learning all of those things really just empowered me to talk to people about my hearing loss. Yeah, I showed -- I have short hair, so people see my implants, see my processors. But now I almost want people to see it, so that people ask me about it. I know this is crazy, but I have a service dog, and one of the things I love about my service dog is that people ask me what I have a service dog for, and that gives me an opportunity to educate people about hearing loss. So I've taken many steps to come to more and more terms with my hearing loss. But I still think there's more for me. I think that onion -- I think there's more layers of that onion. Because one of the most difficult situations is with a group of people where people are talking at once. I still haven't figured out how to handle that. Do I ask people to totally change their behavior and talk one at a time? And look at me when they talk? To talk a little slower or louder? Do I have the right to do that? Is it an imposition? Or do I even just drop out? I'm in a drumming class right now. It's djembes. And when the teacher isn't instructing us, people are talking back and forth. And they're talking -- more than one person is talking. Do I have the right to ask them to stop talking together, or do I have a right to ask them to please talk one at a time?

I haven't really figured it out. And I think that it's different, depending on the situation. How important it is to you. Because it's not that big a deal, that conversation only is for a short time, I haven't said anything. But when they say jokes and everybody is laughing, it's not a lot of fun. I haven't figured out... Should I laugh along with them, even though I don't know it's funny? Or should I just sit there? Anyhow, that's my challenge. I don't really know. And I wish this were more interactive, so we could talk about it.

But for right now, I'm gonna move on. There's some specific social situations that people always ask me how to deal with. Dating, meeting new people, love making, and job interviews. Well, all of these things are things we go through. Love making is the one that some people don't like talking about. But the question is: Do you keep your devices in or out? Okay, we'll move on! Job interviews. That's almost a controversial topic. We've talked about it at our meetings, and some people are adamant that you tell people up front, during the interview, that you have a hearing loss. And some people are adamant that you don't. I don't know the answer. I have an opinion, but it's really up to the person.

But what I do believe very strongly is that if you do decide to say it up front, don't make it a big deal. Don't say... I've got to tell you something. I've got a hearing loss. You need to know it up front. I wouldn't do it that way. I would do it in passing. Make it easy. If you do misunderstand what somebody said, and they catch you, say -- oh, I've got to tell you. I've got a hearing loss. That might happen from time to time. Please let me know about it. Again, this is controversial. But I think the more you come to terms with your feelings about your hearing loss, the easier it is to say it. Some people like wearing a button saying: Face me. I'm deaf. Or I have a hearing loss. I personally don't like it. I personally feel more comfortable just -- if I can't hear someone, just saying: You know, if you don't mind, I have a hearing loss. If you could help me out... But, again, everybody is different.

So... I just want to talk about the concept that the Deaf community have, called "Deaf Gain". So the Deaf community don't believe that it's a disability, that they can't hear. They consider that you have a disability, that you can't sign. That you don't know Sign Language. Their communication style is signing, and that's the way they do it. They just feel they have a different way of being in this world. But they must be doing something right, because when you say to somebody that you have a hearing loss, how often do they say:

Oh, sure. We'll get you a person who can do Sign Language? But people with hearing loss don't necessarily know Sign Language. If I'm right, of the 48 million Americans who have hearing loss, I think only 2% to 3% of them sign. So the Deaf community is doing something right.

And I think their concept of Deaf Gain is perfect. So what I did is... Hearing Loss Gain. And I would love this to be interactive. I think Hearing Loss Gain isn't quite the way to say it, because loss and gain in the same topic doesn't quite make sense, but I think you get what I'm trying to say. There are positives to our hearing loss.

So these are the things that I've written. And the first one is: To come to terms with our hearing loss, we had to become stronger in ourselves. We had to develop a sense of confidence that spreads to all parts of our life. Does that make sense? Do you agree with that? If you are able to tell people to please talk differently, you can't do that unless you have a sense of confidence that you've developed. So I think we've learned to be more sympathetic to other people with disabilities. We understand what it's like to be challenged. And we may not understand other people's specific disabilities, but at least you have a sense what it's like to have a disability. So let's see... Sense of calm about being hard of hearing. I'm not sure what that means. That's from Wendy. I'm not quite sure what that means. Maybe you'll write something. But I'll keep on going. So as a person with hearing loss... Okay. So the other thing is: We are really good listeners. We have to be! We really have to look at the person. We really have to focus on what the person is saying. Okay, number four is a little bit of a joke. But it's also true! We make great sleeping partners, if our partners are big snorers. It doesn't bother us. Noise doesn't keep us awake. But I think there's more. And it's something that I would love to develop. So if all of you have more ideas later on, I would love to hear it. Okay.

So what I want to do right now is go over the Nine Principles of the Hearing Loss Revolution. And I did this for the first presentation. Our lives define us, not our hearing loss. So the important thing about us isn't our hearing loss. It's who we are as a person. As a wife, a mother, a father, a brother, a friend. That's what's important about us. Not our hearing loss. We're intelligent, engaged, and valued in spite of our hearing loss. Sometimes we forget that. Sometimes when we don't hear things, we forget that. We almost wonder: Are we intelligent anymore? And sometimes it's hard to be engaged. Because it's hard to hear. But we still are that same person. We're still as intelligent as we've ever been. And we're engaged and valued in spite of our hearing loss. I love what you said, Brad. We're good at crossword puzzles, because we can fill in the gaps! I love it. We're the heroes of our hearing loss, not its victims. Now, I know for myself there was a long time where I felt like a victim, because I had a hearing loss, because I was challenged hearing.

Because there are situations I couldn't enjoy and didn't want to go to. But we're really not victims. We're really, in a sense, heroes, because we deal with it. It's not easy, but we deal with it. And I think I'm proud of all of us, that we're able to deal with it. We advise people what we need to do so we can hear them best. So it's important for us to say that, because people don't know, and in addition, sometimes our needs change, depending if we're tired, or the acoustics of the room or whatever -- so we need to tell people. We can't assume that they know. So we can't do that. Just a second. We're honest with ourselves and others. We don't pretend to hear what we don't hear. That's bluffing. And bluffing is the worst thing. If you think about it, you're really lying. You're agreeing to things, you're saying things that you really have no clue what you're agreeing to. So not only are you dishonest to the person you're talking to, but you're also dishonest to yourself, because you don't know what's going on. We use assistive listening technologies proudly and advocate for them in public places. So, you know, using assistive listening devices, number one, it's open. People see it. Or for the most part. Some of them are smaller. But we might ask somebody to talk in our mic. And that's taking an extra step of asking people to help us out, to help us hear better. But we also advocate for installing looping in public places. But we also ask for CART in public places. I just got my local theater to use CART for their performances. And I can't tell you how exciting it is for me. Now I can go to this local playhouse, because I can see what they're saying, if I can't hear it. But we need to use these devices, and we need to advocate for them. We see the humor when we misunderstand what people say, and are able to laugh at it. You know, sometimes we misunderstand what people say, and we get all uptight, and we feel stupid, like oh my God, how could I make such a stupid mistake. But you know what I've noticed? People

with good hearing do the same thing! And they laugh at it. So we need to laugh at it too. And if we get all upset about it, then the other person feels uncomfortable too. So the next one is: We accept with grace the hearing challenges that we cannot change. I was at a dinner party the other night. It was a long rectangular table, with people sitting on different ends of the table, cross-talk going back and forth, and there was no way I could catch anything. And I tried to figure out what I should do. Should I just sit there and act like a zombie? So I decided to just accept it. I went to the host and I said: I'm just gonna sit on the side over here. I'm having a hard time hearing. And I'll join everybody when everybody comes here. She said sure. But what happened is: Other people joined me. Because other people were having challenges as well. So sometimes you just have to accept these situations. This is what they are. At least for today. Maybe tomorrow there'll be technology that we can hear in these noisy situations with cross-talk. And lastly, we're grateful to have the courage and strength for living these principles, but really, we're grateful for being able to come to terms with our hearing loss, living with it, dealing with it, being strong about it, advocating for ourselves, advocating for others, and living the life that we were meant to have. So thank you for this opportunity to share this presentation. I've enjoyed it. If you have any questions or interest in my workshops or coaching, you can contact me at: Pat@CoachDobbs.com so thank you all so much.

WENDY: Hi, Pat! This is Wendy. Thank you so much for sharing. I would like to spend about 15 minutes for all the attendees, or even the other panelists to talk about their comments or what they were thinking as you were sharing your presentation. If you want to talk, you can click on the "raise hand" panel, and I'll make sure everyone has a turn to talk. We're not gonna type the questions, because I realized it's gonna take too long.

I have a lot of things to say, as always. So while people are thinking about it, I'll just go ahead, and I'll talk about my thoughts with regards to your presentation. As always, it was an excellent presentation. What I meant to say about a sense of calm is: I lost my hearing at the age of 9, but it didn't become very serious until I was in my mid-20s. And I didn't know whether I was hearing or deaf, and I was struggling to live in the middle, between the hearing world and the deaf world. I actually didn't feel comfortable in my own skin, as a hard of hearing person, until I went to Gallaudet University, after college, and I met other young people like me, who did not mind learning Sign Language. And did not -- who understood what it was like to be able to sit with someone face-to-face, and if you could sign, just be able to sit face-to-face, and not have to ask: Why are we sitting face-to-face? So that was important. So when I talk about a sense of calm, as a hard of hearing person, it's similar to that self-confidence you mentioned. I'm more calm about being hard of hearing than I was 30 years ago. I would say that much. The second thing I want to talk about is: As musicians, we're gonna be dealing with a lot of ensemble situations. Pat, you talked about being able to hear in your drumming class. I had to deal with a similar situation when I'm conducting my handbell ensemble at work. If I'm ringing with a handbell group. Or if I happen to -- if my viola teacher asks me to perform with other students. I know that there are times when I can't fully make sense of all the chitchat. Until the director tells me it's important, or one of my ringers really has a pressing question that she and everyone needs to know - - if I miss the chitchat, I let it go by. Because my feeling is: If it's important, my ringers will let me, the director, know.

And the second question I want to mention here is: How to disclose a hearing loss in an interview. And I think it's very difficult, if you're a working musician, to disclose that you have a hearing loss. Because most people assume if you are a musician, your hearing can't be anything besides being perfect. So I think that's something that a lot of musicians -- a lot of working musicians -- struggle with, or have to figure out another way to deal with it. So personally, that is all my comments with regards to Pat's presentation. Does anybody else want to raise their hand to talk? All the panelists, I think I unmuted them all, except for Gaelen. The attendees can type in the chat box and they can raise their hand, using the raising hand button, and I can unmute them. Okay, Nancy wants to talk. So I'm gonna allow her to talk. So Nancy, you can talk now. Let's see. Yeah. Nancy, are you there? You can talk now. Are you able to turn your computer audio on?

NANCY: Okay, let me see. Uh-oh.

WENDY: Yeah. I think the captioner can hear you. So she can go ahead and talk.

NANCY: Can you hear me now? Can you hear me?

WENDY: It's not loud enough. It should be loud enough. Try again. I had to turn on the volume on my laptop. So go ahead.

NANCY: Yeah, this is as loud as my laptop goes. I hope you can hear. Anyway, I'm a musician, singer, and I do sound and music therapy with people. I had a hearing loss that developed to a critical loss point, when I was about -- 18 years ago. And I decided to continue my career in music therapy. I have my own business. And I want to continue doing that as long as I can. But the hard part, emotionally, is that I don't know how long I will have my hearing. It's just gradually, gradually declining, due to otosclerosis and early damage from infections. And sometimes it decreases quickly. It'll drop. And then sometimes gradually. And they can't tell me why it's happening. So it's like... Nothing I can do about it. Except just wait and see, and continue to teach. I have students that come from all over the world to learn sound therapy. And so I'm just coping. Like, today I had lunch or coffee with a friend at a coffee shop, and I have these great high end hearing aids, and I could set it so that I could hear her and block out the background noise, but then I was talking too loud. And she knows me well enough that she leaned over and whispered in my ear: You're talking too loud. So I thanked her for that. Because a lot of people don't let me know that. And then I'm talking -- it doesn't sound loud to me in my hearing aids. But it actually is loud. And I'm sure this is affecting my music performances too. So that's the kind of emotional struggle that I'm having. Is, you know, maybe... When will I quit this business? That I'm doing? And then what?

WENDY: Okay, Nancy. So I'm going to advise that you talk with our second presenter, or contact her, after this. After today's webinar. Because she followed a similar trajectory to yours. She has to deal with fluctuating hearing, and I know that she has -- I will let her tell you her story. But I want to let you know that you're not alone, and part of the reason my association does these kinds of webinars is because a lot of musicians don't want to talk about these things. But I think it's important that musicians especially have the chance to deal with these struggles. Personally, I deal with the whole struggle of looking at music from the angle of someone who loves music so much. Even as a child. And wants to know... How in the world she's gonna get a music degree. But that's another story for another day. Who else wants to talk? Oh, Gaelen wants to talk. So I'm going to... Gaelen, you should be able to voice right now. Try it.

GAELEN: Yeah, can you hear me?

WENDY: Yep, I can hear you.

GAELEN: Nancy, I just wanted to say what Wendy just said. I think you'll find something in my presentation. Please ask me questions, and my email will be at the end. We have really, really similar stories, and I can appreciate what you're going through right now. The short answer -- and this is not a summarization of my topic -- but hang in there, and there is work for you, and there is a way, and you are full of all kinds of creativity and all kinds of good things, and good things are still gonna come for you, but I entirely feel the frustration and the scariness around... How loud am I? How am I being perceived? I just want to acknowledge that.

NANCY: Thank you. I'll do my singing performance first, and then I'll disclose about the hearing loss. If I do it in the reverse, people are prejudiced at what they're hearing. You know? So they say... Wow, you have a beautiful voice. Oh my gosh, this is beautiful, beautiful music. I've never heard anything like it. And I go thank you! And then I might casually, like, you know, insert that... Oh, by the way. Just as an encouragement for people that you don't have to give up when things happen in your life. Everybody has challenges. Don't give up. So that's how I cope. And in some situations, it's not relevant to tell them. I just do my performance. Right? Thank you!

GAELEN: Same here, Nancy. Often I play in public spaces like the hospital, and I may not tell anyone for the entire shift. You can't always see my cochlear implant, because of my hair. And some days, I'll leave it down. And some days, when someone compliments me, I may or may not tell them, depending on my mood. Because it's not really important to what we're doing. But I agree with you that it could be encouraging to someone else, just to have that in mind.

WENDY: Nancy, one thing you might want to know is: Occasionally, I have a chat for different groups of instrumentalists and singers. We were doing it as a text-based chat for the earlier part of this year. But we got this new Zoom conferencing interface, so next year, what I'm gonna look at is doing chat, but involving a captioner. If nobody minds. Because I think it's so much faster to voice than to type things. So that's something I'm looking at doing. So I can tell you: We have a lot of singers in our group. So you're not alone. Okay. Does anybody else have anything they want to give with regard to feedback for Pat's presentation? If not, then I'm going to let Gaelen take the floor. And let's see. I'm gonna mute her. Right. So Gaelen, you should be able to try to share your PowerPoints. See if you can do that right now. Hi!

GAELEN: Hi, I just tried to share it. Why did that fail? Let me try this again.

WENDY: You were able to share the other night.

GAELEN: I know. There we go!

WENDY: Yes, excellent.

GAELEN: All right. So good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Wendy. I really appreciate you inviting me to talk to you today, and hello to all of you that are reading or listening to this later on, after we have had this conversation on Saturday. So yeah, my name is Gaelen McCormick, I'm a professional double bass player, or at least a professional musician now, and I'm going to talk about the mindfulness tools that I have learned about over the past five or six years, and how they came into play as a performing artist.

So I just want to give you a little background. I started on the bass when I was about 13 years old. I did not actually jump in from a different instrument, which is a little bit unusual for this instrument. A lot of us got co-opted from the cello, or there were just too many trombones, and we got stuck on this instrument, but I did see a cello, and when bass was available, I jumped at it when I was 13 years old, and I honestly just fell in love with the sound of it, and frankly, it was pretty easy for me, which I didn't realize that that might be talent at the time. I just thought... Oh, who knew? Bass is easy! I'm happy to say that I'm a graduate of the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and did my grad work in Pittsburgh at Carnegie Mellon University,

I was lucky to return to Rochester and got a job with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, which as a coach and teacher and professional artist, I still think of that as a streak of luck, to have gotten that job that young, because those auditions are tremendously difficult. So this is the Rochester Philharmonic Bass Section from four or five years ago. And you'll notice something that's a little unusual, besides my purple hair, which is that I'm the only woman in the bass section. Other than my very first year, when I was on a trial basis -- there was one woman there -- the other 22 years I played in the orchestra, I was the only woman. And I bring this up, because Pat, you did a great job talking about the kinds of stresses we have in our life, as we internalize a lot of things, we don't share about the stresses that we're under or the things that we need. It was very, very important to me to fit in with this male culture and with, obviously, people who have perfect hearing. And I'm gonna get to my hearing loss journey in a moment, but I just want you to have this in the back of your mind. This is my world right here. It's a whole bunch of wonderful but smelly boys that I had to play with all the time. My career in the last four or five years, when my hearing loss became the most severe, had taken a really great turn, where I was doing a lot of teaching, I had been traveling around the country, and this picture is from a festival in the Midwest, where I was invited to come for a week and work with students, and I was really enjoying this aspect, so much that I was starting to wonder if this might be the

next aspect of my career, to move into a university professor position, and start to create more of these types of festivals and workshops.

Working with students has really been so helpful for me, as I went through my hearing loss journey, and it was something I never ever would have expected would have been the thing that probably kept me from going totally insane, when I was really losing all of my hearing, and losing the prospect of any kind of musical career. And I'll explain that in a bit, but this is just to say that: Just as I'm finally getting to the point where I think -- oh, all the things I wanted in my career are starting to come true is when my hearing started to chip away. I had been working on a series of books, which has been published through the complete decline of my hearing. They're about bow techniques, a right hand technique for the bass, and as I worked on them, it became really apparent to me that my career has gone from music to more and more and more specific aspects of music. So music to playing the bass to playing orchestral double bass, to teaching classical orchestral double bass, to students in a very specific age range, and now writing this set of books that's just for the right hand. And I thought at one point... This is incredibly specific! When did this happen to me? I'm completely loving it, at this point of my career, but I thought... This is an incredibly narrow thing I've gotten into! Now, by the time I got to the third book, and you can see a little bit of it, behind the image I have there. I really couldn't hear anything now. And I was typing all this into the software, and normally I would proofread them by having the software play it out, and looking at the original manuscript, because a lot of these are violin etudes, or sometimes cello etudes that I'm transcribing, and sometimes I can listen to them and see if I've got a wrong accidental or wrong note. And I couldn't do them anymore. And it occurred to me I was able to visually proofread them very well. It was a skill that I had acquired, that I could look at music and hear it in my head. I know it's something that musicians who have learned music before hearing loss have. I wonder if people have it when they learn music posthearing loss. But it's a little pebble on the path of: You don't have to leave music just because you have a hearing loss.

But this was a great honor to me. When I approached Carl Fischer, my dream publisher, I thought: They're just gonna turn me down. Who am I? Just this bass player who wants to do this project. But they said yes and agreed to do three books. This was one more step where I thought... Wow, my career is actually turning into something! But, you know, I'm losing lots of hearing at this point. I had lost my left ear completely, from bilateral Meniere's disease. This picture is from last summer, 2017, down at Ithaca College, the International Society of Bassists. I was very honored to host and create the under-18 division conference for them. It was a week-long workshop, and we had about 100 students from all over the world come in. By the time I'm leading this, I was bilateral deaf, and not implanted. Not deaf enough, apparently, to be implanted, and it was a strange moment to force myself to keep going. But I hadn't told any of the students. I only told my staff that I couldn't hear, and to sit in rehearsal, I couldn't understand what they were saying, I couldn't do any type of balance check or sound check. Students would come to me and want to work on their parts and say: Is that the right note? I don't know. I don't know. It was just really strange. I felt like I was presenting as a professional and a complete fraud at the same time, and I was really struggling now with... What I was gonna do with these two completely different aspects of myself. I feel like my career is just about to get to this great period, where I should be able to more or less coast for the next 20 years and produce good work and produce good concerts, and it's all eroding under my feet, but I don't want to tell anybody about that. So this is a sort of visual description of what happened to me personally with my hearing. I first lost my left ear, and so if you're thinking about this from the orchestra, you can see to my left, we have the cellos. So I lost this ear first, which is low frequency first, and then the ear just totally went. And my right ear followed suit, with the same thing, losing my low frequency. You can see it, but I just want to remind you: I am a bass player!

So I'm playing my instrument, and honestly, I'm just feeling this thing against me now, and I'm feeling whether I'm in tune. And sometimes we get up to a certain register that I can hear, but most of the time, I would say that I'm really not aware of what my pitch actually is. I'm only aware of whether I'm fitting in or not fitting in. And then just for fun, my right ear developed frequency distortion. So the note I hear is not the note being played. And that is still the case for the little window of hearing that I have in my right ear. So I would frequently think... I could match that pitch, and I would practice this at home. Play a note on the piano, and

maybe match it on my bass, look at my tuner, and see I'm wildly wrong. Or play the note on the bass and sing it with my voice, and see that... Yeah, I'm totally wrong. Play it on my bass, sing it at the same time, and I can feel that I'm wrong. That was another early clue of a way that I might start to work on being able to continue playing, through this hearing loss. Because I was damned if I was gonna tell anybody about it, and I was convinced that there was some way that this was gonna end. If you're not familiar with Meniere's disease, the hearing will bounce up and down without any warning. I could start a day hearing and end it deaf, or the other way around. It was just... Sometimes so, so maddening, to not know on any given day: Where am I gonna wind up? So my joke to myself is: Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right. Or no input to the left of me, distortion to the right. And here I am. I'm stuck in the middle with... It's just me! Who am I gonna turn to, to help me?

I started looking around really quietly for people to help me. I don't even see people with hearing aids. At that point, I can't even identify someone. Now I swear I can spot someone with a hearing aid from 20 feet and somebody with a cochlear implant from a block away, and I make a beeline to them. They're my new BFF as soon as I see them. But at the time, I couldn't find another musician to walk me through this process, and I did not want to tell my colleagues, because I didn't want to lose my job. And I thought... If there's any chance that my hearing might stabilize at some midway point, even with distortion, I knew that I would work hard enough to make that work. And I didn't want to tell my colleagues so it's worth noting that... I had a part-time job with the RPO, the Rochester Philharmonic. It's a really unusual situation here, where the first half of the strings are full-time, and the second half are part-time. I was doing a lot of extra work in other places, and there was an opportunity. Somebody retired in the full-time section, so there was an opportunity for me to take an audition, and I did have single sided deafness at that point, and I was so glad I had never disclosed this to anyone. I was so worried if that opportunity came up that I would be sort of marked, once I got to the round without a screen that they would just see me and say... Yeah, but damaged goods. Why would we want her? So I did win that job, and moved up to permanent full-time tenured blah-blah-blah. It was so great for me to have that, and I still couldn't yell out to the world: You all can do this, if you've lost your hearing! Because I still couldn't tell them I had lost my hearing. I still felt trapped in my own sort of web of deception about this, and it still felt vitally important to me to keep that secret and keep working as hard as I could.

So during this time, I've been going to a meditation class at my church, coincidentally. It's a non-denominational class, though. And we practice simple meditation tools. And this turned out to be the place where I could turn and find people that could walk me through this journey. They're not musicians. These are just people -- regular jobs. Wonderful people, though. All different kinds of ages and backgrounds. And it was truly the only place I could feel safe for a while, because I could come in and say: I'm having this... I hate to say problem... But I'm having this problem in my life, and I'm having this journey happen, and I don't want it. And they were all so... Everyone's going through something, as you all know. But you know when you're going through it, you feel like no one ever has it as bad as I do. You feel so martyred about the whole thing. So I came in, and I started really listening, and not participating too much, more than just listening to people who are losing their spouses to cancer, people who are going through their own medical and personal journeys, and I felt free, after a while, to share mine. And what I really appreciated about this group is that no one ever said... Oh, do this to fix it. Or maybe there will be a cure. Or you should go get a cochlear implant. No one ever tried to advise me that way. And in a way, that was the perfect thing for me.

What they did do was say: What do you need right now? Would you like to sit closer to the teacher? My teacher, in fact, recommended -- she started recording our meditations. Because she guides them. And she had not done that in the past. Simply so that I could play them on good hearing days at home, and now that's become her standard, which is great, for us to have them as reference recordings. Just simple things like that, on days where I could not even hear the bells. She would just tap me on the shoulder, when we were done meditating. These simple ways in which they showed me how I could start thinking about advocating for myself, and advocacy did not have to be standing up and holding a big sign. And somehow, in my mind, that's what I thought advocacy was gonna look like.

And not this kind of thing that Pat describes so well, where it's just saying: I need you to look at me. I'm deaf. And in fact, reminding myself not to say: I'm sorry I'm deaf. Because I'm not sorry about it. I didn't do anything wrong, and neither did you. You just need to know this, and this is what I need right now. And my sangha was incredibly helpful. It's just a word for supportive community. It's a term we use in our group. So it's from them that I learned many tools. I boiled it down to three that I think are the most helpful, and the ones that I would like to share with you today.

I would like to ask you to grab a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. This is not gonna be a test, I promise. But it will be helpful to what we're about to do. And it will be helpful, if you want to do this again later. All these tools are free, and already exist within you. They're not an app. They're not anything but something you can do right now.

So the first one... Three easy tools. There's that slide. The first one I'm gonna do is just follow the breath. It sounds easy, and it is easy. I'd like you to get comfortable. I'm sitting. If you're sitting, please put your feet down. Uncross your legs. If you're sitting, really feel your bottom in the chair, and if you happen to be standing, see if you can feel where your hands contact your legs. And this little acronym at the bottom is this: Feet on floor, bottom on chair, or we sometimes say bum on cushion, when we're in our class together. And what I would like you to do is breathe in through your nose, and out through your nose, not trying to control the breath, not trying to count it, or do anything fancy.

This is very, very straightforward. I want you to feel the air come in and feel the air exit for five breaths, and I'm going to be silent while I practice this with you. (silence) I'm gonna guess that everyone has finished five breaths now. What I'd like you to do is take your pen and pencil, and just write down what you noticed. There's no right answer here. Just write what you noticed. So one of the things I noticed -- I'm gonna share mine, and I would love to hear yours later, if you want to share. The air feels cool when it's coming into my nose. My shoulders are a little stiff. My house is a little noisy, which I didn't expect. I thought they were gonna be gone to a recital already. So just noticing these kinds of things, and you don't need to do anything with them, but this is just a first step to clue us in to where we are right now, and it allows you to get really grounded into your body.

Sometimes we'll do one of these in our group, where we really, really focus on the feet, or we focus on just the feeling of being connected to the chair, and being supported by something else, so that you are not actually the one taking all the energy and supporting yourself. That you can allow and rest into the ground or the chair and just be at ease that way. I chose this picture, because I feel like this is how we spend a lot of our days. Is not really in our bodies, and not really connected to the ground that supports us. And I think a lot of it has to do with some of the things that Pat said so well.

That we spend so much time trying to assess situations. Is it okay for me to ask this person to face me right now? Is it okay for me to ask the conductor to tell us where we're starting again? Is it okay for... You can fill in the blank with all the things that happen in your life. And at some point, you're so far in your head that you forget about the rest of your body, and I think it's easy to trigger a lot of stress this way.

And so just taking that simple five-breath moment to say: Where are my feet? Where is the chair? What do I notice? It's just... It can be really, really helpful to do that. What often happens, though, when you do those five breaths, is that things will arise in your head, and maybe there are some of you who just had five beautiful breaths that were just clear blue sky. I want to be you, if that's the case! I almost never have those kind of blue sky moments. I have many clouds in my sky. So I just said... Isn't that annoying? There's no real way to stop your mind. And I would never want to stop my mind. It has provided me with a lot of really cool ideas, and dumb jokes, and I'm all good with that. One of my favorite writers writes a blog called the Left Brained Buddha. Meditation is not about stopping your mind. I like to think! That's why she calls her site the Left Brained Buddha. And the chance here is that we want to get away with engaging the mind. For instance, when I'm sitting a longer meditation, I'm not gonna read these, but here's a list of things that may go through my mind in a rehearsal or a meditation, and I'll wait a moment while you read them. So I had the

feeling... Wendy sent me a note that number four resonates with her. I can't stand the fact that B, C, D, and E are all in a row, and if we're using rehearsal letters, I am hosed, and I'm gonna have to wait and see what everybody else does, and look like I had to scratch my face or something, to cover up for it.

So these are some of the things that arise. And when I look at this list, I think: Would I ever say this to a student? Would I ever say this to my husband or my daughter? I would never say this to other people, but I have no trouble letting my brain just run right over here and say these things, and then I want to get engaged and either say: I do so belong here! I am good enough! Or on a less confident day: Yeah, I totally don't belong here, and I should really just retire, or I really am terrible now. Or how would I even know if I can match that pitch? So I can really see... And I think you can see... How this is a really slippery slope. When you start to engage with these things, you can just get into a battle with yourself. And where is this gonna lead you, anyway? So this is tool number two. Recognize and accept what is. And I love this. I was gonna include a video, but in the interests of time, I'm not gonna use it today. But I will provide the link to Wendy.

It's a little one-minute video on YouTube from one of my favorite monks, who talks about meditating from anywhere, and accepting what is. I like the way he says it. It sounds so easy, but I find it so difficult to accept what is. So those thoughts that came up, if you had any of those during the five breaths, that's totally normal. Those thoughts I just had, with that match on fire, that's totally normal.

So here's our goal for tool number two. Can we have these kinds of thoughts and allow them to pass or exist? Can you say: This is how it is right now? Without trying to change it? So here's our next... We're gonna practice again. So first get yourself comfortable again. If you've crossed your legs, get yourself comfortable in your chair. Feel your bottom in the chair and your feet on the floor. We're gonna do five breaths, as we did before, just feeling the air come in. Feeling the air exit. If you have thoughts arise, see if you can say to this: This is how it is. I'll be silent, while we practice now. (silence) I'm going to guess now that maybe we have all finished our five breaths.

This is strange, doing this to my computer, and not to a room where I can see people open their eyes. Would you take your paper again, and just give yourself a moment and jot down... What are some of the things that arose for you? And you don't have to tell yourself it's true or it's false. It just is what it is. Just write down what some of them are. Maybe two or three, tops. And now that I wrote mine, I'm just gonna share one, which is: Is this going well enough? Which was followed quickly by: You don't know what you're talking about with this! It's my favorite one, that loves to come visit me. The Imposter Syndrome one.

So I want to give a musical example of how tool number two has been helpful to me, before we go on to tool number three. I was not performing anymore. This is about a year ago. I was called in to play a performance of Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*, and I had not been playing now for about seven or eight months, at all. Had not been teaching, had not touched my instrument. I had been very, very sick, on top of losing my hearing completely, in the last six or seven months. And the point when they called me in, we had a real problem with someone who was in this... It's a small group, if you don't know this piece. It's seven people. And so the bass player they had hired, there was just some problem, and they had to fire him, so now we're halfway through the rehearsal cycle, so I'm gonna have two rehearsals and two performances. I worked to find somebody else, and I couldn't, but I know this piece very well, so really in the space of about an hour, I had agreed to do this, printed off the music, and started mentally practicing. My hands were so soft, and I couldn't hear pitch. You know? I have no sense of how loud I am. So I'm about to be confronted by things that I had been trying to control, which now are so far beyond my control. How am I gonna walk on to stage? And by the way, this is on stage, with dancers. I didn't realize that we were not gonna be down in the pit, where at least people couldn't see me, and people from the orchestra came to this performance. I saw them at the first night, and was mortified. So now I'm really being confronted by... I've been trying to control the story. I haven't told my orchestra that I have this problem. In fact, when I went on leave, when my hearing completely crashed, and I went on leave, I only told the personnel managers and a couple of the bass

players who sat around me, and made them all swear to never tell everyone else on the sliver of hope that maybe my hearing would rebound and we would never have to talk about this again.

But by now, it's been seven or eight months, and I know I'm probably not coming back to this career, and I'm only stepping into this performance, because we really cannot find anybody else. I have called a 200-mile radius around Rochester, and I just cannot find anybody on such short notice. This little quote is one that really sums up, I think, the pain that I was going through, and that a lot of people go through. That things are as they are. Right? I can't hear. I'm freaking out about it. But the thing that is... Is that I couldn't hear. I still can't hear. I suffered, because I imagined differently. I suffered because what I wanted was something I couldn't have right then. I want to hear this. I want to know my pitch. I want to know what my volume is. So there's this inherent conflict. You want what's not here, or if you used to have good hearing, you want to

have that back, perhaps, and it's just not possible in that moment. To the person who was asking the question before, Nancy, when you have fluctuating hearing, like we do, that's I think even more maddening, because it's only not possible in this moment to get what you want, but you know that in a day or two, you might be able to have good hearing again, and so that's tantalizingly right in front of you, but the problem is: We always have to deal with where we are in the moment. So there's this inherent conflict. I really want to hear this right now. I really want to know what the trombone is playing, because I'm supposed to be a fifth below him, and it really pushed me to have to say: Okay, well, this is what it is. I would love to tell you that I was Buddha-like and blissful on stage. I was a hot mess, barely holding it together. I was having to ask myself over and over again: I want this. How am I gonna get it? How am I gonna find out what the trumpet is playing, if the bassoon is sharper or flatter than I am, and adjust to this, and I had to realize in that moment: I am not gonna get an answer to those questions. That's what was for me. That was the thing that was not possible in this moment, and I had to accept it.

But I tell you what: It was really transformative that when I could ground myself -- I had to sit on a stool, not a chair, so it was a little less grounding, but feel my feet, my bum on the chair, the instrument resting into my stomach, and take a few breaths every time I was not playing, and keep saying: This is what it is. And just recognize this conflict that was going on within me, about: I'm not ready to leave my career. Big lofty issues and also really small technical issues. I don't know if I'm loud enough. There were a few things I could do at that moment, like ask the conductor: You're gonna have to tell me if I'm loud. I don't know. You're gonna have to show me if it's too loud or not loud enough. I knew he had a lot going on with that score, and it was a lot to ask, but it was really, really weighing me down. So he was willing to accommodate that. So this is our final closing night picture. And ultimately, I am glad that I did it. It's kind of a neat way to have finished my career on that particular piece. It's a very, very meaningful piece to me.

Great, great group of colleagues, and I did have to just walk on stage and disclose to all of them immediately. I know this piece like the back of my hand, and I can't hear anything you're playing. Please if you need to stop and adjust pitch, just know that I cannot adjust to you. I have absolutely no way to adjust to you. While on the one hand it's mortifying as a professional musician to have to say that, I had to say to myself: This is what is. And with so little rehearsal time, that was the fastest way to get through those rehearsals. So that's my story about how to deal with the somewhat lofty way of saying: Oh, this is what is. We're not gonna sit by a stream and meditate on a lotus flower. Sometimes you're gonna be in the thick of it. How can it actually help you right now?

So grab your paper. I've got one more thing for you. We're gonna talk about... Oh yeah. Sorry, I forgot this slide. Just relax. Nothing is under control. I don't know about you, but I am a total control freak, you know? I think most of us who practice music, we are. We want to be able to make those notes come out at the right time, on the right note, exactly with the right tone. So it's hard to accept that in some ways, nothing is under control. Your hearing loss, what other people's reactions are to you, so anyway... Let's go on to: What are the physical reactions to stress? Because this third tool is gonna help us with the physical reactions. So just take a moment and write down one thing. When you get stressed out, especially in a performance situation, I want you to think of that. You're performing or having a lesson with your teacher.

What's your physical reaction that happens? I'm gonna tell you that mine, my biceps tighten up. I teach a class about taking auditions, at the Eastman School now. We have an arts leadership program. And I really enjoy working with the students on this class, and really, the class is ultimately about performance anxiety. And we get into this right away. At the beginning of our class. The three aspects of stress: Fight, flight, or freeze. And they're all coming from your reptile brain, right? From back when we were cavemen, cavewomen, cavepeople, I guess. And we need that automatic response to stress to be able to get out of a dangerous situation. So I wanted to run through some slides to think about: What does that mean, though, if you're on stage?

If I go into a flight reaction, if you're somebody whose feet get really antsy, and you're ready to run... Where am I gonna go? There's nowhere to go. And then if you're someone who is a fight person, I'm a fight person, because my arms muscle up, like I'm ready to punch someone. That's terrible for a string player. If you're a vocalist, listening to this, I would be curious to know if you have a tightening of the throat, or if you have cottonmouth. Usually the fight response is so antithetical to what you need to do, to actually make your instrument work. It's almost hilarious. Right? Our last one, freeze, it might be okay. Right? If you're in a large ensemble, it might be okay if you are freaking out, and you are just kind of quietly not making sound and freezing. But meanwhile, your stress is building about whatever it is that's triggering you at the moment, whether it's stage fright or any other kind of fright.

So at this time, you've ramped up your brain, and the automatic response to whatever this trigger is. So one of the things we can do is this simple tool with the breath. Breathing and getting more oxygen in will actually help to get us out of the stress response, and it can really calm the nervous system. I wish I could remember all the technical terms about the parasympathetic -- I'm gonna get it all wrong. You can Google it. So let's slow down and think about breathing. So I want to start again, getting ourselves into feet on floor, bum on chair, uncrossed legs. And we've done the counted breath already, where we did five breaths. This time we're just gonna stretch out our breathing a little bit.

So at any pace you want to go -- I tend to be around a metronome mark of 80, for those of you who love the metronome. I count three in, three beats in, hold for four, out for seven, so it's one continuous action that's happening. And I'd like you to do three breaths like this, and I will be silent while we practice this now. (silence) When you have finished, would you take your paper, and write out one observation? Did anything change about your body or your breathing while you were doing this? I'll share mine quickly. It's just that: My breathing got deeper, and I actually had to slow my counting down to make it work by my third breath already. So doing that kind of breathing can really help us to calm the nervous system, it gives you a moment to step back from a situation, and actively practice self-care, in a way that's not really drawing attention to yourself.

You're just doing something that's really good for you, and helping to get you out of an automatic response. I think I want to skip ahead to this. When we have the chance to be in control of what we respond to, to me, that's a real freedom. When I feel like I'm acting automatically, I'm triggered by someone who said some of the things I saw in Pat's presentation... You know, you don't look like you're deaf. My favorite one is: You're too young to be deaf. I don't even know what that means. I instantly want to -- I go into a stress reaction. I want to respond right away. I muscle up. My breathing gets shallow. And if I can just take a moment and breathe and feel the floor, I'm more likely to give a skilled answer, or choose not to answer, but to choose my response to that situation. So that's one of the reasons I want to give that tool. Wendy, I see that I've run almost out of time, so I think I can end here and take questions.

WENDY: Okay! So thank you so much, Gaelen, for that wonderful presentation. Do you want to put your contact information on the PowerPoint?

GAELLEN: Yeah, let me skip to the end. I had a couple more things to share. I'll get past that. There we go.

WENDY: I love the head wrap removal. That's cool. So anyway, this is Gaelen's email address. And I want to thank Gaelen for presenting. Because I've heard bits and pieces of your story, but just hearing from the beginning to the end was kind of dramatic. So at this point, I'm going to open up to the floor, so that if any of our attendees wants to have any remarks or observations, they can raise their hand, and I can unmute them all. I can unmute them, so they can share whatever thought they had about this presentation. Okay. But in the mean time, I was gonna say... That Gaelen and I, just while people are waiting, Gaelen and I first met through my viola teacher, Mark Pfannschmidt, in 2013. And Mark knew Gaelen had experience with hearing loss, related to Meniere's disease, and was wondering if our association could provide her with assistance. So I believe, Gaelen, you received your cochlear implant earlier this year? Is that correct?

GAELEN: I did. I got it in May.

WENDY: Oh, cool. Is it just one ear or two ears?

GAELEN: Just one right now.

WENDY: Oh, great, okay. And I guess... The new implant, it's helping you in your new job, as the program manager for the Performing Arts Medicine Program at Eastman?

GAELEN: It is helping me, and it's given me an opportunity to talk about this, and to demystify the whole idea of being a musician with a hearing loss. Because I'm in meetings, I'm on the phone, but I also still perform in the hospital by myself, and like I said to Nancy, sometimes I tell people, and sometimes I don't. But I'm very happy to be working for Eastman, and I'm proud of them too, for not sort of abandoning me, for not looking at me as damaged goods.

WENDY: Yeah, that's very good. That Eastman is so open. Yeah. Because I think... Nobody should consider musicians with hearing loss as damaged goods. We always have something to offer. We just have to figure out what we can offer. I'm going through this right now. I ask myself: I love music so passionately! What can I offer to the world? So I totally agree with you on that. Does anybody else have any comments or remarks they would like to talk about? Or questions to ask Gaelen, before we close? If not, I'm going to go ahead and say: If any of the attendees here have suggestions for other webinars they would like to see our association look at doing for next Fall, that would be great. Fred has a question. So I'm gonna let Fred talk. And go ahead. I'm gonna unmute him. So Fred, wait a minute. Yeah. So Fred... Okay, so Fred, you should be able to talk now.

FRED: Okay. Can you hear me? Okay, good. Is there going to be a repeat of this available for us? I came in late, and I was driving for a good portion of it. So it's something I would like to be able to sit through at my leisure and consider at a later point.

WENDY: You will be -- I believe Zoom, the conferencing platform, will send everybody a link to the recording.

FRED: Okay, great. Thank you.

WENDY: Do you play a musical instrument, Fred?

FRED: I play guitar. I've been playing for about 60 years, by ear, and I finally decided it was time to learn how to read music, so I've been doing that for two years now, and enjoying it greatly.

WENDY: That's great. That's wonderful. Thank you for joining us.

FRED: Thank you.

WENDY: Okay, let's see if anybody else has anything that they want to talk about. So let's see... So Nancy, do you want to say something? You're unmuted.

NANCY: Yes, I just want to say thank you to all of you for this. It's been very, very supportive. Like anything, it's so helpful to know you're not the only one.

WENDY: Okay. Let's see. Okay, thank you very much, Nancy, for your feedback.

FRED: Don't freeze on me! Oops, sorry.

WENDY: Okay. That's all right. I know, the whole thing is freezing up. So anyway, we're going to close. Oh, and Brad is asking if we are going to jam at the HLAA convention in Rochester. That's a very good question! Well, I had been talking with the staff at HLAA National, and I have been -- and the thing is, they're taking forever to get back to me. Whether they can do like they did three years ago, for an open mic. So at this point, what I'm gonna do is: If I don't get an answer from them in the next couple of weeks, I may just find a room by myself, at a different hotel, or... I happen to know -- and Gaelen can correct me. The Hochstein School of Music is a local music school. And I believe it is 10 minutes' walk. It is a 10-minute walk from the convention hotel. And I also know that the community school there, the recital hall there, has a hearing loop. I've been told it has a hearing loop. And I actually know that... I think that -- I actually know the installer, who lives in Rochester, who can verify that. So I would talk with him, and hopefully we can arrange for some kind of open mic. I don't know why HLAA National is taking forever to get back to me. But I do want to start planning for something like this, no later than January -- next January. Because there's not much time. And so registration is for the -- by the way, if you don't know what the HLAA convention is, it's the Hearing Loss Association of America. They have an annual convention, and it runs from June 20th to the 23rd of next year in Rochester. So I plan on going, because I would like to jam with Gaelen, and maybe we'll make that happen. And Brad... (sound freezing) actually, I think the call for proposals is December 1. So if Brad wants to -- Brad, you should get together with Gaelen right now, because I think the call for proposal deadline is December 1. I'm gonna try to submit a proposal for a handchime ensemble, like I did last year, and let's see what happens with that. But I think Gaelen, your presentation on stress and just your musical experience is so moving that people will relate to them right away. And I think we should do something with Brad. That would be awesome. Okay. So I think I have to close this right now. But I want to thank everybody here for being here. And please... Yeah, just put a comment on our website, if you would like us to cover something else of interest to musicians next November. Okay? Thank you so much. Bye-bye!

GAELEN: Thank you, Wendy!

WENDY: I'm gonna pause the recording. All right. Let's see if the recording will work.