

Cochlear implants and the piano — Today, February 9

Feb 9	7:20 PM
Felicity B.	has entered the room
	7:45 PM
Rochelle D.	has entered the room
Rochelle D.	Hello everybody!
Felicity B.	Hi Rochelle. Where are you from? I'm in Adelaide (or close to) in South Australia
	7:55 PM
Rochelle D.	Oh wow! I'm from Florida. Can't believe I'm talking to someone from Australia!
Felicity B.	It is a long way away for sure. Do you play the piano?
	I was deaf for about 20–25 years – Totally deaf in my left ear for 30+ years though. I have bi-lateral Cochlear implants. How about you?
Wendy C.	has entered the room
Wendy C.	Hi!
	Wendy here
Felicity B.	Giddy Wendy
Rochelle D.	I used to. I'm actually into the violin right now and I've just noticed there will be a chat for violin players in March. I lost my hearing at age 12. Tried playing piano for 2 more years but lost my enthusiasm and passion because of my hearing loss.
Wendy C.	Wow Rochelle, I never knew you played piano!
	What a big surprise!
Felicity B.	Oh no doubt Rochelle. I lost my passion and it wasn't until 2015 that I got my passion back
Rochelle D.	Yeah I did.
Wendy C.	Rochelle, did knowing piano and being able to read music helped you when you transitioned over to violin?
Felicity B.	I'm practising for Grade 8 piano. The exam is at the end of march.
Rochelle D.	The chords on the piano was drowning out the melody. I find with the violin I can just hear the melody.
Wendy C.	Congrats and good luck, Felicity
	it is 11:30 Saturday morning in Australia, correct?
	8:00 PM
Wendy C.	We'll see who else shows up
Felicity B.	When playing the piano I turn my processor sensitivity way down so I can keep the bass under the treble. Yep it's 11:30 am here Saturday
Wendy C.	so you prefer not to hear the bass, but want to keep hearing the treble?
Bettina T.	has entered the room
Wendy C.	I tend to think pianist have to be able to hear both treble and pass
	Hi Bettina!
	Glad you made it in here
	You are a singer, right? Do you play piano too?
Felicity B.	No I need to hear the bass too. But my left ear is so much better than my right my teacher says my left hand was drowning out my right.
Bettina T.	Hi, I play piano and am a singer, Choral and solo. I teach piano, too.
Felicity B.	What are the issues you have with playing the piano?
Wendy C.	Felicity that is really interesting. I hear better on the left, but I gravitate toward treble notes.

Felicity B.	My piano is way, way too loud. My teacher doesn't like it at all... but I can 'turn it down' by reducing sensitivity and then I get very, very clear notes. My teacher's piano, regardless of how I set my sensitivity is muffled more and I can't get clear single notes.
Wendy C.	Is your teacher's piano an upright piano? Bettina, do you teach piano over Skype?
Felicity B.	Yes I hear better on the left. My right implant is not right. For instance with my left ear alone I can hear the gradations in the scale but with my right alone I hear more like Same, same, same, two notes higher, one note lower, then a jump to higher, higher higher
	8:05 PM
Felicity B.	My teacher's piano is almost identical to mine and upright. I also have a second teacher who is taking over from the first (who is no longer teaching) and her piano is a short upright. I do hear clearer notes on that but she has a problem with the sustain pedal not catching much of the bass notes so everything sounds staccato even though I'm using the sustain pedal.
Wendy C.	Right, it helps if you can hear gradations on the piano.
Bettina T.	I have no implant yet. Surgery scheduled for late March. Currently I play mostly pieces that don't go much in the descant, as I hear clicks only in that range.
Wendy C.	Descant is the high notes of the piano?
Felicity B.	With both ear together the scale is now pretty clear but I reckon my brain works overtime to do it. Thirds and Sixths scales can be harder to pick the error
Wendy C.	Not sure what a descant is!
davidh	has entered the room
Felicity B.	Bettina I understand the clicks on the piano. I eventually could hear no sound of the string vibrating at all before implantd.
Wendy C.	Hi David! Ok, I guess I'll introduce everybody
davidh	hello, that was strange...but
Wendy C.	David Holzman is a concert pianist living in Long Island, near New York City. He has two Cis from Cochlear. Bettina sings, and also teaches piano. She is currently awaiting a CI Felicity has bilateral CIs and hails from Adelaide Australia
davidh	correction! I have one and a hearing aid in the other, which is giving me major problems
Wendy C.	Sorry! Yes, you are what we called a "bimodel" listener
davidh	explain that
Felicity B.	David I am really interested in your cochlear experience. Oh with one hearing aid it is different isn't it. You get your 'normal' hearing and your cochlear augments that is that correct
Wendy C.	Rochelle is from Florida and plays both piano and violin. She also has bilateral CIs from Cochlear
Felicity B.	Bimodal – two different types of technology – a hearing aid and an implant
Wendy C.	(I think)
Rochelle D.	I only have one C.I in left ear.
Wendy C.	I should also add, I post transcripts of these chat in our "members-only" area.
	8:10 PM
Wendy C.	Hopefully no one has problems with that *chats David, did you say you hear the low notes of the piano better with the hearing aid, and the CI gives you the higher notes?
davidh	nothing is correct at the moment due to what my doctor calls neural fatigue. I am apparently limited especially on my very loud p;iano before my nerve in HA ear gives up and needs a rest. thus, CI is leading the show which I do not like.
Felicity B.	Rochelle can you use a hearing aid in your other ear. When I had my first implant I had no sound in my right ear so could not wear a hearing aid. In Australia where I live we could only get one implant at the time I got my first

davidh	vice versa but the range is widening
Rochelle D.	Nope...my right ear is completely "dead."
Wendy C.	But except for David everyone here has bilateral CIs, right?
	I know I do. <smile>
Rochelle D.	Not me.
Wendy C.	Oh Rochelle, so you have one CI and one HA?
Felicity B.	My piano is very loud. I counter it in two ways. (1) reduce the sensitivity on my processors (2) I've hung a quilt behind my piano to stop the sound bouncing back into the room. It's on an outside wall so the bricks were creating a bigger reverb and making it too loud.
Wendy C.	or just one CI?
Rochelle D.	Just 1 CI
Wendy C.	ok
davidh	my dr seemed to send a message that I should, but I will not give up the half an ear though I wonder if it is lasting.
Wendy C.	I love your strategies, Felicity
	that's very nice to know.
Felicity B.	I understand David. By the time I had my second CI I had been totally deaf in my 2nd ear for almost 7 years. I wish I had been able to do it sooner.
davidh	what is the danger of a loud piano? is it the same as me ie too much sound?
Felicity B.	There's no danger. We've all got the damage done!!! It's just that with a loud piano you can't hear the notes well
Wendy C.	I would assume loud piano could cause a perception of "distorted" notes?
Felicity B.	For me on my normal everyday listening my piano is so loud the sounds all roil in together. I get distortion far worse when it's loud (as you suggest Wendy)
Wendy C.	David, when is your next concert? I keep telling myself I should get myself to NYC so I can go listen to you perform :-)
	8:15 PM
Bettina T.	has entered the room
Felicity B.	I get distortion in the speech range on the piano in any case but since my left ear helps my brain puts the two together and lessens that distortion.
davidh	lately I have been taking devices out of both ears when at piano and ears are tired..it has real advantages as I learn by finger the way I used to and sensitivity and to a small degree pleasure are greater...BUT it is usually better with both IN
Felicity B.	I do have some individual notes which stand out whenever I play (usually around E/F/G above middle C) David without them in can you hear anything?
Wendy C.	Yes David, sometimes you want to develop your kinesthetic ability
Bettina T.	Losing connection, sorry.
davidh	Distortion is a major issue and it seemed that my brain was mediating pitch and colors, lately, something went backward...maybe I am playing too much
Felicity B.	My teacher made me play the other day with both processors out. I can hear nothing at all so it was like being on a treadmill as opposed to running in a park. So boring and I couldn't tell whether I played anything right or not How much do you play David?
Wendy C.	But Felicity – did she have any comments on how you played after you took both processor out?
Felicity B.	David if you turn down sensitivity can you rid the distortion? I can on my acoustic piano but not so much on my epiano Only that I played it exactly the same Wendy
davidh	what I heard for 25 years was very soft and vague but in tune and perfect pitch and I could with brain ie kinesthetic learn music...strangely it had advantages
Wendy C.	But now with the CI you have imperfect pitch although the timbre is better?
Felicity B.	David that is good. I could only hear the bass for about 5 years and then I could hear nothing so it wasn't much fun playing

	David have you tried other pianos? I spent a lot of time doing that so that I could get one which gave me good clear sound
	What is your concert David? Not that I'll be there of course!
davidh	my dr just described Sensitivity button and said that sounds reach you quicker which is very important but I need to try to find a balance between spontaneity and natural pitch drs cant really help
Wendy C.	Felicity can you name the piano manufacturer you have tried already that gave you a good tone?
	8:20 PM
Wendy C.	Do you prefer acoustic over electronic pianos?
Felicity B.	Sensitivity is the range you get sound from. So the less the range the less reverb you pick up.
davidh	I wish I could try more pianos because mine is an old 7 foot Steinway from 100 years ago and it is very loud! when I work a bit on others, I try to factor in volume but I haven't done enough to generalize other than that keeping my piano closed keeps my ears alive longer but I lose the sense of nature ie attack
Felicity B.	My piano is Yamaha – but my teacher's is Yamaha too and I don't like hers. I definitely prefer acoustic to electronic. I use the epiano when I don't want people in the house to hear me (ie middle of the night) and also when I want to record what I play. There is less distortion when I play itback.
	Wow that would be a loud piano and probably very lovely. Doing something like putting a carpet under it – a quilt over it – might be worth a try to help dampen the sound a little
	I lose that sense too when I'm playing my first teacher's piano – it is all a bit muffled.
davidh	I am performing a Brahms cello sonata and some simple chamber music...with sensitivity at three and volume at 2 I could hear most of what he played with effort...I assume that sensitivity is valuable when playing with others.
	why so quiet?
Felicity B.	I keep volume at 10 – normal but reduce sensitivity. This way I get the sound I want. Might not work for every one. I did have sensitivity at 2 but since putting the quilt behind my piano I can increase sensitivity to 4 or 5.
	I don't play with other so I can't say.
Wendy C.	David – I personally don't do ensemble music without using assistive listening devices. I am so impressed that you are doing chamber music without them.
	8:25 PM
Wendy C.	So David, please let us know when your next concert is!
Felicity B.	What settings do you use when flying on a plane? I keep volume at normal and sensitivity at 2 – this way I can hear the people around me quite clearly but the engine noise drops to a low (kettle boiling) sound. I use the same principal with my piano.
davidh	I never even knew there were, but for whatever reason I don't. I also found myself with friendly people and I did not do what I used to ie use too many visual cues. I tried to hear the music (Strauss Waltzes for quintet) and succeeded so in an unimportant concert I found myself learning and happy.
Wendy C.	I'll come up and listen if it works within my schedule
	David, if we ever get to together, I'll show you my assistive listening devices. :-)
Felicity B.	How many do you use Wendy in a concert say?
davidh	not that one...I will be giving lecture/recitals locally on hearing loss and music and I suspect that the audience will be talking about their own handicaps as they keep them hidden.
Felicity B.	I use the TV streamer to link to my electronic piano
	Where do you live Wendy?
Wendy C.	ok so David, let me know when your lecture/recital takes place. Are they noted on your website?
	I live just outside Washington DC in the suburbs of Maryland
	If David ever performs in NYC I will figure out a way to attend and support him. :-)
	Bettina, where do you live?
davidh	two were just put up www.battlemuse.com Also an essay on hearing and learning music is coming out in Sonus in Spring. I am 68 and have nothing to hold back anymore.
	8:30 PM
Bettina T.	has left the room
Wendy C.	http://www.battlemuse.com/upcoming_performances...

	that has the list of his upcoming performances
Bettina T.	North of Boston. Let's see if this posts now...
Wendy C.	Very cool – I will try to get to the March 13 performances
davidh	you all must have emotional issues including feelings about music making. I trained myself not to let emotional swings get the better of me but when hearing is bad as it is now, much joy disappears.
Wendy C.	We understand
	My earlier CI were not very good.
	I had limited ability to hear notes that were 2 octaves above middle C
	It is now better, but pitch is not 100% there.
Rochelle D.	Good point David. That's why I quit piano a long time ago. Lost my passion and joy for it. I'm trying to pick it up again but using violin because it only plays the melody.
Wendy C.	I think I can sing solfege but others have told me I'm singing half a step off
	sigh
Bettina T.	I am not a concert pianist but hope to continue to play. Will have AB EAS
Wendy C.	Very cool!
	So you will be implanted in one ear?
Felicity B.	For sure. I have my grade 8 piano exam coming up in a few weeks and some days I just can't get it right.
davidh	that sounds like me two years ago but apparently the brain did increase range. Maybe I am in a stable stage and do not realize that things are better and I will wake up one day and feel the change
Wendy C.	AB is Advanced Bionics, and EAS is electro-acoustic system
Felicity B.	I lost my passion for 20 odd years. My playing in the Beats of Cochlea in 2015 reignited my passion.
	8:35 PM
Wendy C.	You hear the upper notes using CI and the lower notes using an hearing aid. Is that right, Bettina?
	Beats of Cochlea is a musical festival for cochlear implant musicians
Felicity B.	I can't tell if I sing in tune. the exam calls for it but we've got a letter from my audiologist so I don't have to do the aural part of the exam. I couldn't name a third or an octave with any confidence.
Wendy C.	It is held every July in Warsaw, Poland
davidh	I might have been lucky that events happened one stage at a time. I was able to find a natural music in my early years which has largely carried me through though perhaps my age is beginning to show
Wendy C.	That's cool that your exam system allows for exceptions for people with disabilities. Here in the US, they aren't as forgiving
	I took an ear training exam and could identify fifths and octaves
Felicity B.	But Wendy I have to do something else to make up for it...perhaps sight read twice or something.
Wendy C.	Not sure about fourths
Felicity B.	David you do sound tired.
Wendy C.	Felicity, look at it this way, at least they will focus on what you can do not what you can't do
davidh	how much help is inner hearing to all? it is crucial and joyful for me
Wendy C.	View paste
 Bettina, are you going to MEEI for your cochlear implant surgery? (Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary)
	Developing an inner ear . . . not what you physically hear – is helpful
	Felicity, your exam is in March?
	8:40 PM
Felicity B.	There is a memory of music for me. I found that at first the piano sounded dreadful but as I played more and particularly as I got the fingering right it sounded right.

	Yes exam in March. I have't got a date yet but probably 24 or 25
Wendy C.	That's a nice description, Felicity
	Is Grade 8 the highest level?
Felicity B.	This finger memory was particularly important for scales.
davidh	that is probably the brain taking over...it will keep happening and the more you demand of your inner hearing, ie chords counterpoint colors, the more your brain will respond and your fingers will as well
Felicity B.	Hmmm. There is a Performance level, then A.Mus.A and then L.Mus.A after grade 8. when I was a kid and did grade 7 A.Mus.A was the next level but they've added two levels in the 45 years since I did Grade 7.
davidh	felicity: can you just think tonic of scale and let your wrist and fingers get you from one octave to another...that is a bit of effortless and is important
Felicity B.	There is no doubt that I hear better the more I play. I do have semitone discrimination and often within the context of a piece or a chord but since a semitone change can be right (either way) then I won't always pick up the nuances of the sound.
Wendy C.	a semitone is what we call a half-step in the US. <smile>
Felicity B.	Oh I definitely do David. I often don't really know what I'm playing note by note but my fingers take me there. I've had to re-practise scales and arpeggios and get the finger patterns working for me again. (I did every scale and arpeggio back in the day for Grade 7 - now they only require a group of scales (only about 200) instead of the additional hundreds I had to do
Wendy C.	Felicity, so after your grade 8 exam, you'll decide what to do next?
	8:45 PM
Felicity B.	Yes. I always dreamed of A.Mus.A so will probably go on. It's really a case of doing something which was denied me and proving that I can do it. I'm 66 now so not looking to be a concert pianist
davidh	That effortless quality is needed in all aspects of playing...you only get it by mental and physical sweat
Wendy C.	Good for you, Felicity
	Bettina . . . I know you sing. I need to set up a chat for singers in your group. Is Fridays is a good time for you?
Felicity B.	However, I would like to get some sort of Beats of Cochlea going over her. There is a philanthropist who has built a world class concert hall for chamber music particularly on a farm not far from here. I would love for her to get involved in something for the Deaf
Wendy C.	*in our group, I mean
davidh	I describe the joy of the effort and the minute observations of progress whenever I write...it is for me as for the reader.
Wendy C.	That's so cool, David!
Felicity B.	I have to remind myself David that I have come a long, long, long way since the days of deafness and since my first implant.
Wendy C.	Good luck Felicity. It's a matter of finding the right people to make it happen
Felicity B.	Some days I get so disheartened because my right ear plays up and it actually causes hindrance but then I have to remind myself that I can do this
Wendy C.	My personal experience running this group has been that there are folks who are content with just virtual encounters like this. A few like in-person encounters.
davidh	and you have to keep reminding yourself..I also write about the civil we and most people go thru between common sense and emotions. We must let common sense rule at least most of the time. When it is time to exult, yield to emotions.
Felicity B.	Yes wendy. I did approach Cochlear CEO but got no answer. I just got a newsletter from the complex so might put together a suggestion for her program manager
Wendy C.	So Felicity, you'll have to find folks who like in-person encounters and are Deaf musicians
	Not sure if you are aware, but we did a 3-day conference in 2015, and at one point, I didn't think we had enough individuals attending
	8:50 PM
Bettina T.	has left the room
Wendy C.	so it's a matter of finding the right facility and the right support.
Felicity B.	In Australia and near Adelaide this is possibly very difficult. I have asked Cochlear (and my clinic) for info about other musicians with Cochlear implants but again no answer. I do get from time to time, asked to talk to people who are

	musicians who are agoing to have an implant but that's a far as it goes.
davidh	Renee Oehlerking from Cochler contacted me but I have heard nothing yet...I hope they are truly interested in music
Wendy C.	yes, me too.
Felicity B.	Cochlear seems to be missing the balls with music. I've been talking to head office in Sydney for years but no one picks up on it.
Wendy C.	at least they paid for part of your trip to Warsaw
Felicity B.	I know they ran an advert of me talking about music on the ABC classic station at one stage though
Wendy C.	Advert – advertisement in American English
Felicity B.	Yes Wendy they did but it was hard work getting it. I wouldn't apply for Beats of Cochlea again and would only go if I was approached and asked to by Cochlear/the festival and they paid for me and my husband. I don't like to travel that far alone. I'm still deaf at nights and I would sleep through alarms etc.
davidh	I suppose they need to see that there is financial gain...I will be talking a bit more and I seem to find interested people who might goad Cochlear...I wish they could step a step forward but that requires pressure and more
Wendy C.	Right – MedEl in Europe and Asia is very open about sponsoring their musicians, not so much for AB. Cochlear in Europe and China appear to sponsor individuals though
Felicity B.	Cochlear more or less decided speech was what we deaf needed. They have missed that music is such an important part of life and culture. All our gatherings have music (birthday parties, weddings, funerals and lots more in between). Med-el seem to have taken the high road for music but from what I can see music is pretty much the same with any brand.
Wendy C.	Exactly
	I had problems getting AB to cover my travel to Poland in 2016.
	8:55 PM
Felicity B.	The Chinese language is musical and Cochlear needed to conquer that hurdle to take the market in China. A few years ago they were going to send me to China to play the piano but it got canned at the last minute.
Wendy C.	Everything came together at the very end.
	sorry to hear that, Felicity!
Felicity B.	I'm glad for you. I had to pay the last time and finally someone at Cochlear interceded on my behalf and paid about half.
davidh	what I try to stress is that the devices (ci plus ha) is better suited for casual listening than real work like practicing...that is asking too much as drs know nothing about 1%
Felicity B.	My audiologist more or less said I was getting the best I could and that I should go to a psychologist to accept that it was never going to be perfect.
Wendy C.	Wow
	I actually think the best CI audiologists are those who are musicians themselves
Felicity B.	BUT my right implant isn't right despite all tests showing it is. I've got the recalled implant and I was exploring reimplant but they won't do it because tests are all right. But it isn't right. I have two. I know something is wrong
Wendy C.	But finding musical audiologists is a challenge
davidh	perfect is not the right word...we have to learn to live with what we have but there is more constructive work that is doable...like unifying both sides of the head in the sound I hear.
Wendy C.	something is wrong "musically"? because you don't hear the different gradations in pitch?
Felicity B.	Wish I could find a musical audiologist. My clinic will give me a different program for me epiano but I've not had the chance to get there to try it. I wish they would come to my home and help me test my sound on my pinao
Wendy C.	Take an ipad with you. Ipad should have a piano app
	then you can tell the audiologists which pitch you have trouble.
Felicity B.	Well Wendy yes that is part of it. But I get clicks and pops, and booms and some days the sound is all out of kilter to other days. The quality of speech with that processor alone is like it comes through a thick door
Wendy C.	So sorry to here you have problems hearing with the right CI. It is an older CI, right?
Felicity B.	No. My right side is the most modern on my least deaf ear.
	9:00 PM

davidh	that ERRATIC quality is so disturbing..I assume it is my body or my brain...I see my dr next week as I will NOT be satisfied unless he explains what he can and cannot do
Felicity B.	My 30 year deaf ear with a 15 year old implant is by far the best. If I had both like that I would be hearing wonderfully.
Wendy C.	But you say " get clicks and pops, and booms and some days the sound is all out of kilter to other days. The quality of speech with that processor alone is like it comes through a thick door"
Felicity B.	Erratic is it for my 2nd implant.
Wendy C.	so this is with the left Ci or the right CI?
Felicity B.	The right one... the most recent one (7 years ago) The one with the recalled Cochlear implant internally.
Wendy C.	Ok, it's 9 pm. I'll have to stop now. Thank everyone for coming!
Felicity B.	Ok. Good playig
Wendy C.	If there is enough inteerest, I will set up another chat session in March for CI pianists.
davidh	wendy congrats to you for moderating
Wendy C.	just let me know.
	I'll just set it up and see who shows up.
davidh	good night to all
Wendy C.	To logoff - click on the Sign Out link on the upper right corner of the screen
	have a great weekend!
davidh	has left the room
davidh	has entered the room
Rochelle D.	has left the room
davidh	has left the room
	9:15 PM
Felicity B.	has left the room
Wendy C.	turned off guest access
Wendy C.	changed the room's topic to <i>February 9 chat discussion on playing the piano with cochlear implants.</i>