

8/13/20 CI Music Hour Recap

Dear all,

We had a wonderful and uplifting session on Thursday with our guest Sandy Blake, who is a professional singer, dancer, actress, and music teacher. Sandy shared her journey to become a professional musician and the devastation she has experienced following profound hearing loss. Some of the current challenges with CI, since her activation in 2018, include the difficulties of singing in tune, even though her muscle memory still works. She discussed her rehabilitation training efforts and her current journey discovering new ways to appreciate and to find joy in music. She shared her hope in using her experience and musical skills to help others who are going through similar challenges as she did, and in continuing her effort to contribute to the science community for advancing CI research.

In a discussion, our CI group member, Lynne, shared her obstacles of appreciating new music pieces and had a question if any setting helps to listen and appreciate music better. Lynne finds that the music she had listened to before hearing loss still sounds good, thanks to her memory. New music, though, does not sound good. While Sandy does not use a special setting for music, Becky, who also is a musician and singer, uses a music setting for conducting a choir and for singing in a group. Music settings, which have less compression than normal speech settings help music sound better, as Becky mentioned. The downside, Becky explained, is ear fatigue building over time, which is more than with a speech setting. A challenge for Becky is an inconsistency in her singing performance and a difficulty maintaining tune throughout a day, which is possibly due to the ear fatigue.

We watched "[Sound of Music, Bionic Ear Laboratory](#)" which is a short video featuring Sandy and Ray's Bionic Ear Lab and listened to a [clip](#) from the 1950 musical film, "Annie Get Your Gun," which greatly influenced Sandy in her childhood. Sandy shared a recording of her singing, "[I'll Never Say No](#)" (you can find the lyrics [here](#)). This is a recording Sandy made as she rehearsed for a duet with her husband to sing at their 40th anniversary in 2018. They ended up not doing it, feeling she wasn't ready yet to hold harmony. I found this singing beautiful and moving.

I am including a [blog](#) that Sandy wrote about her sensorineural hearing loss and a few recordings of singing performances from the musical "Merlin." These recordings were made at a distance from an audience seat by Sandy's husband as personal records, but despite the imperfect quality of recording, we can get a glimpse of Sandy's sparkling persona as a performer and her powerful singing.

[Nobody Will Remember Him](#) - understudy for musical "Merlin"

[Make it Happen](#) - understudy for musical "Merlin"

[Video Excerpt 1](#) from the concert version "Merlin"

[Video Excerpt 2](#) from the concert version "Merlin"

I am deeply thankful to Sandy for her courage and for providing us a warm and inspiring time to listen to her experience. We are looking forward to more of you sharing your journeys with us and continuing the tradition that Sandy started.

Next week, our guest is Chrysa Kovach. She will return to discuss tempo and beats in a hands-on workshop where we will learn basic conducting techniques. I am including her bio at the bottom. I am very excited about the workshop!

All the best,
Juri

Chrysa Kovach



Bio of Chrysa

Chrysa Kovach is the Orchestra Coordinator for the Colburn School's Community School of Performing Arts and is currently pursuing a Master of Music degree in Community Music at the University of Southern California. Prior to her position with the Colburn School, Kovach held development and grant writing positions with the Santa Monica Symphony in Santa Monica, CA, and with the W.O. Smith Music School in Nashville, TN.

Kovach enjoys conducting and currently serves as the Principal Guest Conductor of the Music City Brass Ensemble. She is also the founder and past music director of the W.O. Smith Community Orchestra, a volunteer ensemble dedicated to presenting educational concerts and collaborating with local composers.

Kovach performs as a flutist with the Santa Monica Symphony and the Vicente Chamber Orchestra, and is a former member of the Orchesterverein in Vienna, Austria. Kovach graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2013 and was a recipient of the Blair School of Music's Richard C. Cooper Award for campus-wide leadership in music.