



East Bay Chapter:Newsletter October 2025

Chapter E-mail: Info@HearingLossEB.org

Chapter Address: PO Box 2266,
Alameda, CA 94501

OCTOBER MEETING: October 11:

Saturday, October 11, 2025 “Captify, Captioning Glasses”

Featuring: Tom Printskey, CEO, founder of Captify

Tom Printskey was born with bilateral hearing loss. Tom has long searched for better ways to follow conversations. While studying at Stanford University, he was committed to finding a solution – not just for himself, but for the 1.5 billion people worldwide with hearing loss. His latest innovation, Captify, uses augmented reality and AI [Artificial Intelligence] to deliver smart glasses that provide real-time captioning, helping bridge communication gaps across hearing and language barriers.

- **9:30 a.m.: Social and Refreshments**
- **10:00 a.m.: Presentation (Zoomers can join at 10 am)**
- **11:30 a.m.: Complimentary Pizza**

**Location: Kaiser Permanente, Fabiola Building,
3801 Howe St, Basement Room G-26,
Oakland, CA.**

FREE PARKING is available across the street at the Kaiser parking structure.

Please come to the in-person meeting to meet the speaker, meet others who have hearing loss and enjoy complementary refreshments.

The meeting is available both In-Person and Virtual (Zoom).

Please register at: www.HearingLossEB.org by 5 PM, Friday, Oct. 11, 2025

Questions? Info@HearingLossEB.org

HAAA-EB posts our newsletters to the California State Association webpage and a link on our website. **VOLUNTEER! Contact us to let us know you are available!** Check out our website at: <http://www.HearingLossEB.org/> Contact us at: Info@HearingLossEB.org

Coming Soon:

- **November: Courtney Austin @ UCSF, Emotional effects of hearing loss and coping with hearing loss in adults.**
- **December: Dr. Susanah Storm, Blue Sky Hearing – What’s new with hearing loss**
- **January, 2026: Brooke Barry, @ UCSF, Spotify research group — Sound and music perception**

NOTE: If you have old hearing aids you no longer use, you may donate them. Drop them off at a meeting and we will make sure your hearing aids get new life for someone else. Also, bring any hearing assistive technology items you no longer use that you may have (such as a Roger Pen or??) to a meeting to see if anyone at the meeting can use them.

MEETING NOTES: *"Hearing Loss and Music; Pathophysiology and Treatment of Sensorineural HL and Their Effects on the Perception of Music"*

At our Sept 13, 2025 HAAA-EB Chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Dr. Gabriel Liboiron-Cohen, audiologist from the Berkeley Hearing Center, and longtime operatic singer. Dr. Liboiron-Cohen gained his Doctor of Audiology degree from the University of the Pacific and his Master’s degree in Operatic Studies from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (2014). He’s now a clinical audiologist with extra certification and specialization in tinnitus and sound tolerance.



Nevertheless, he says that he unrealistically spent many years of his life thinking he was going to be a famous opera singer. But the realities of life on the road and the need to support a growing family soon motivated him to become an audiologist. Although it was hard to give up his childhood dream, he acknowledged that his career as an audiologist has turned out to be one where “. . . *the change I make in people is much more palpable when people are properly fit with hearing devices, and communication with loved ones becomes possible.*”

Based on his strong background in both audiology and music, he proceeded to give an excellent presentation about hearing loss and music perception, which included a description of ear anatomy; tonotopic cochlea, timbre, pitch perception, and envelope; cochlea to brain connection; prevention, treatment & hearing aid programming for musicophiles as well as career musicians as patients.

- **Anatomy of the Ear:** Initially, Dr. Liboiron-Cohen explained that in order for us to understand how hearing loss (HL) affects the brain, we need to know how a healthy ear functions at the peripheral nervous system level. So first he went ahead and explained how the outer ear and middle ear make up the conductive system of the ear.
 - ✓ **Outer Ear:** As sound enters the ear, the acoustic energy of disturbed air particles hit our ear drums at different times depending on our head position, thereby helping us to localize from which direction sound is coming. The outer ear includes the external auditory meatus or ear canal up to the tympanic membrane or ear drum. The lateral one-third is cartilaginous and is the only part of the ear that creates ear wax.
 - ✓ **Middle Ear:** This part of the ear is made up of the ossicle chain of very small bones, the malleus or hammer which attaches in the middle, and the stapes or stirrup which attaches most medially and is lodged into the cochlea. The ossicle chain, along with the foot plate of the stapes, act as a piston. The middle ear adds sound pressure and volume to the input signal as the external sound which was originally acoustic energy is converted into mechanical energy.
- **Tonotopic Nature of the Cochlea:** The cochlea is tonotopically organized. The footplate of the stapes is attached to the oval window membrane in the cochlea, The piston action of the ossicle chain causes the oval window to displace the very salty liquid called endolymph inside. The wave of endolymph rushes through the cochlea and displaces the tectorial membrane where the hair cells are lodged. The wave results in a shearing motion of the hair cells. which then opens doors in the side of the cell. As endolymph comes rushing into the cell, it depolarizes the cell, sending an electrical signal to the brain. This occurs hundreds of thousands of times a second.,
 - ✓ **Hair Cells:** There are 2 types of hair cells:
 - **Inner Hair Cells:** These hair cells tell the brain you are hearing a sound.
 - **Outer Hair Cells:** These hair cells function to provide us with the quality of sound, pitch, timbre and the fine information about what we hear.
 - ✓ **Tonotopically Organized Hair Cells:**

In the normal cochlea, the hair cells are tonotopically organized. That is, they are organized from high to low, similar to a piano. Depending on the amplitude of the wave at the oval window as well as the phase of the sine wave entering the ear, different portions of the cochlea will be stimulated.
 - ✓ **Damaged Hair Cells” Effect on Music Perception**

However, if you have damaged hair cells and are experiencing hearing loss, your musical perception of different pitches, chords, instruments, words or phonemes may be heard differently by you.

When you have hearing loss, you are missing information or it may not match what you learned as a child or younger person, so your brain is not able to tap into

your library of envelopes of familiar sounds and other information; hence, it slows down your processing, and may affect your perception of music.

✓ **Types of Hearing Loss:** There are 3 types of hearing loss (HL):

- **Conductive HL:** Conductive HL may be related to either the outer or the middle ear. It may be simply due to ear wax packed up against the ear drum, impeding the vibration of the ear drum. In theory, the auditory nerve is healthy. Oftentimes, there is a medical remediation of removing the ear wax blockage so the sound can get to the auditory nerve and perhaps increasing volume for hearing aid (HA) candidates.
- **Sensorineural HL:** Typically, sensorineural hearing loss (SNHL) is due to auditory nerve damage. This type of HL may be the result of an attack by a virus, damage from excessive noise, or ototoxic medications (e.g., chemotherapy) or even aging.
- **Mixed HL:** This type of HL is both conductive and sensorineural HL combined.

➤ **Cochlea to Brain Connection:** The brain stem functions much like a train station for auditory input. As such, it filters out background noise, starts to take binaural information, figures out from where it is coming, what it is, and also where it should go in the brain. Our brains sort out and understand sound in what's called envelopes. Different impulses make phonemes and develop your mental lexicon in early childhood. As you initially develop speech, your auditory cortex on the left side builds a library of phonemes, words, and syntax rules along with other things.

✓ **Untreated Hearing Loss, Cognitive Decline and Music Perception:**

When you have untreated hearing loss, neural plasticity may allow some vital auditory information to go to parts of the brain which are not designed for it while shifting away from the auditory cortex where it belongs, instead going into the frontal lobe and parietal lobes of the brain. Since our working memory is only 20-30 seconds, you may be remembering mismatches while filling in the blanks, getting information as it is still coming in, and thereby working harder than a person with normal hearing to achieve basic speech understanding, and perhaps taking away from your cognition.

Therefore, the decision to not treat a sensorineural hearing loss (SNHL), whether a career musician or simply someone who enjoys music, may impact one's auditory processing of pitch, melody, timbre, harmony, mix, and challenging performing spaces \

➤ **Prevention and Treatment:** According to Dr. Gabriel Liboiron-Cohen, "*Auditory processing of any kind is a whole brain event and prophylactic treatment is vital to preserving musical enjoyment.*"

Fortunately, some of this lost auditory processing information can be reversed and sent back to the brain's temporal lobes with the use of hearing aids (HA's). In fact, HA's are the only viable treatment for SNHL in humans. Up to a 55 dB HL, one's brain activity

can be reversed back to the auditory cortex where it belongs by rewriting of a parallel pathway up to the auditory cortex via the use of HA's.

- **Hearing Aid Programming:** Your audiologist has the important job of programming your hearing aids so you can optimally depend on your HA's to adequately hear and communicate, even with hearing loss. Dr. Liboiron-Cohen clarified that the 2 temporal lobes of the brain handle different tasks. For example
 - ✓ **The Left Temporal Lobe:** Includes the auditory cortex (here binaural information is localized, deciphered, and funneled out of background noise, pushing it further down the auditory pathway; the location of the word center, syntax, grammar, vocabulary, speech production, organizing/storing long-term memory.
 - ✓ **The Right Temporal Lobe:** Where we process prosody (the lit & melody of speech), facial recognition, pattern-cognition, special navigation, learning & attention.

Your audiologist has to carefully apply their specialized training and skills in programming your HA's when setting up and properly adjusting them. This requires utilizing the patient's latest hearing test results to accommodate the individual's auditory functioning in both the left and right temporal lobes while taking into account their degree of hearing loss.

- **Musical Training:** The treatment options currently available for those living with SNHL may seem somewhat limited to HA's. Yet, the availability of musical training is another option for many of us, and is especially necessary for professional or career musicians. Since there is a clear correlation between the development of the temporal lobes and corpus callosum, musical training clearly augments inter-hemispheric communication and thereby creates many advantages for people throughout a lifetime, even those with hearing loss. In other words, musical training may be quite beneficial to longevity.

Wrap-Up; In wrapping up his fascinating presentation on "Hearing Loss and the Perception of Music", our guest speaker Dr. Gabriel Liboiron-Cohen was able to combine his strong educational background in both audiology and operatic studies with his extensive experience as a clinical audiologist and longtime singer. Although he acknowledged that it was difficult to give up his childhood dream of becoming a famous opera singer, his career as an audiologist has, indeed, ". . . *fed my ambition to transport people into a different and better quality of life.*" Meanwhile, he said that he has continued to work with a diverse client base at the Berkeley Hearing Center, which includes some career musician patients and many more patients who simply like to listen to and enjoy music. He's quite happy that with his educational and experiential background, he is in a unique position to help all of his patients in a more comprehensive way.

Dr. Liboiron-Cohen then thanked us for the opportunity to share his expertise in hearing loss as it relates to the perception of music. He then proceeded to open up the remaining time for questions and comments from audience members regarding today's topic. Most of the dozen or so questions and remarks from the audience were about their personal hearing loss situation and how it has affected or changed their own perception and enjoyment of music. In each case, Dr. Liboiron-Cohen responded briefly while referring them to relevant resources.

Finally, Dr. Liboiron-Cohen invited anyone who needed further information or had more questions, to reach out to him at the contact information provided below. Lastly, the HLAA-EB Chapter

leadership reminded everyone that the policy of the Chapter is to not endorse any service, product or person that may have been mentioned or discussed during the current presentation, discussion or follow-up Q & A session.

For More Information/Questions: Call: 510-841-0681; Email: Gabriel@berkeleyhearingcenter.com

~ Kathy Fairbanks

Did you notice? The Steering Committee has changed to the Board of Directors. The current Board members are listed below. This month, we are asking if you would like to nominate yourself to be a part of the Board. We are always looking for new talent to enhance our Board. Please fill out the following nomination form which when you hit the Submit button will be sent to us. Alternatively, fill out the form on the next page and send it to info@hearinglosseb.org. You may also bring it to the general meeting on October 11. Your nomination form will be given proper consideration.

Use this link to access the form:

<https://forms.gle/qwVYLSjW1efLQNhh8>

Try this link. If it doesn't work, you can fill in the form on the next page and copy and paste it into an e-mail. You can also notify us at info@hearinglosseb.org that you need a copy of the form. Alternatively, you can fill out the form at our next meeting, October 11. Also, Linda Gee will be including the form in her blast.

Current Board of Directors:

President: Len Bridges

Vice President: Peter Townsend

Secretary: Linda Gee

Treasurer: Len Bridges

Director of Technology: George Chin, Sr.

Director of Membership: Connie Gee

Co-Director of Programs: Robin Miller

Co-Director of Programs: Verna Dow

Co-Director of Newsletters: Nancy Asmundson

Co-Director of Newsletters: Kathy Fairbanks

Director of Publicity: Marlene Muir

Director at Large: Jay Mumford

Consulting Legal Counsel: Gerald Niesar

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services: Audrey Spinka,

Board Member Self Nomination Form 2026



The HLAA East Bay Chapter is governed by its Board of Directors. Each year, the Board invites chapter members to serve a two-year term. The Board meets monthly to plan and conduct chapter business, except in July when it takes a break.

Prospective Board members must submit this completed application form by Saturday, October 11, 2025. This allows current Board members sufficient time to review submissions and approve nominations for the new slate of Board members at the November Annual Board meeting. Thank you for your interest in serving the members of our chapter.

Name:

E-mail:

Phone Number:

Are you currently a paid member of the chapter? Yes ___ No ___

Do you have personal experience with hearing loss, either your own or through someone close to you? *

I have hearing loss ___

I know others who have hearing loss ___

Are you currently involved in any business or professional activities related to the hearing health care industry that would prevent you from serving as a Board member? If yes, please provide details. *
Your Answer:

Are you currently related to any Board members in a way that should be disclosed? If yes, please provide details. *

Your answer:

What inspired your interest in serving on the board? Please explain:

What unique perspectives or skills would you like to bring to the Board?

Any Questions and Comments

We need your help! Can you volunteer? Contact us at: info@hearinglosseb.org

Here is a list of volunteer positions we are seeking to fill:

- **Zoom Assistant** - Assist George Chin, Sr. to run Zoom, cameras, and PA/Audio Loop during in person/hybrid meetings.
- **Camera Operator** - Use a remote control to operate our 2 cameras for in-person Zoom meetings.
- **Volunteer Coordinator**: Contact people who said they could volunteer and tell them about volunteer needs. Recruit for those positions.
- **Outreach Coordinator**: Organize a table for our chapter at various street fairs and other venues. Set up the table. Recruit volunteers to help with the events. Reach out to people who participate in our meetings. Let people know about our chapter.
- **Just want to help?** All of our committees need helpers! All volunteers are welcome! Contact us and we'll help you figure out what would be a good fit for you.

HLAA SF/East Bay Leaders

The Board of Directors:

Contact us at: info@hearinglosseb.org

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JOIN HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (HLAA) – THEY ADVOCATE FOR YOU!

hearingloss.org Membership is now open to all of our valued supporters who help fuel our mission and change the lives of people with hearing loss. **Everyone who gives is now an HLAA member, helping to amplify our HLAA voice, and fulfill our important mission— together!**

COST OF MEMBERSHIP: The HLAA national office had consolidated the donation and membership processes. Presently, anyone who donates as little as \$1 would become a member of the national HLAA. Additionally, with a donation of \$45 annually, individuals have the option to receive a hard copy of the Hearing Life magazine from the national office.