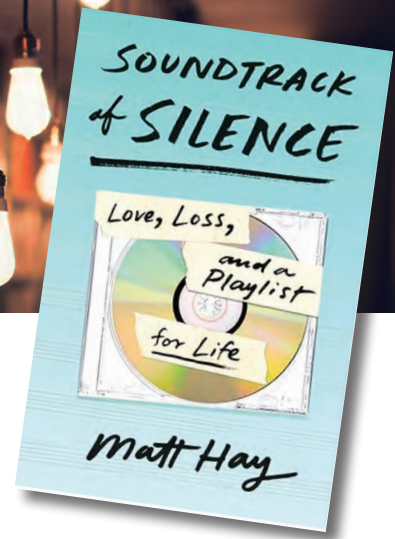


# BOOK NOOK

REVIEW BY LARRY HERBERT



## Soundtrack of Silence: Love, Loss, and a Playlist for Life

A memoir by Matt Hay

This is a hearing loss story. It's also a love story. And it's a story about the power of music to inspire and heal in the face of a life-changing medical diagnosis.

Hearing loss has many causes, but you may never have heard of a rare condition known as neurofibrosis type 2, or NF2—noncancerous tumors on the auditory vestibular nerve of the brain. Author Matt Hay shares his firsthand experience with NF2 in his poignant autobiographical journey, *Soundtrack of Silence: Love, Loss, and a Playlist for Life* (2024, St. Martin Press).

Crushed after failing his physical for West Point because of “substandard auditory acuity,” Matt attended Indiana University instead. While there, he met his future wife, was diagnosed with NF2 and learned that he would eventually lose his hearing. Powerful digital hearing aids slowed the onset of hearing loss and allowed him to successfully work in marketing post-graduation.

But his hearing continued to deteriorate.

When an MRI confirmed the tumor on his auditory nerve, Matt was immediately scheduled for surgery to remove it. As a result, he experienced partial paralysis in his legs and had to recover his ability to walk again. Finally, the day came when he lost the remainder of his hearing. Matt underwent an auditory brainstem implant (ABI)—another procedure fraught with side effects.

His partners in his long recovery were his wife and his unbounding love of music.

Throughout his story, Matt weaves in meaningful lyrics from the songs that he grew up with and feared he might never hear again. He writes that “these weren’t jingles to help move a story along...the songs were all part of my story, my life, as it happened.” He even praises songwriters in his acknowledgments: “You made some tough things more tolerable, you made confusing moments clearer, you made average days more special, and you made great times stick with me forever.”

If you appreciate the power of music and believe in the potential of human resilience to overcome adversity, you will be moved by this courageous, and ultimately inspiring, memoir. **HL**



Larry Herbert is retired and lives in Richmond, Virginia. A member of the HLAA Greater Richmond Chapter, he currently leads efforts to promote hearing loops in the community. His interest in assistive listening technology was initially sparked when he helped his father communicate via text and email. He is a graduate of the University of Virginia and can be reached at [lawrence.herbert@gmail.com](mailto:lawrence.herbert@gmail.com).



**Coming Soon!** A completely redesigned HLAA website will soon be available to better serve the increasing number of people turning to us for hearing loss information and support. Stay tuned for this important new tool!