



Audio Engineering Society – New York Section

NEWSLETTER – MEETING NOTICE

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Tuesday April 13th, 2010

Join us for a Meet & Greet at 6:30pm
Presentation at 7:00pm

NOTE: Alternate Venue

**New York University
Steinhardt - Music Technology
35 West 4th Street - 6th Floor
New York, NY
between LaGuardia Place and University Place**

Advise Building Security that you are attending the AES Meeting

Hearing Conservation Workshop

Host: **Doron Schachter**- Interval Music

Presenter: **Benj Kanters** - Associate Professor and Associate Chair, Audio Arts and Acoustics
Department, Columbia College, Chicago IL

The Hearing Conservation Workshop offers a new approach to promoting awareness of the ever-increasing problem of noise and music-induced hearing loss.

This program is specifically targeted to students and professionals in the audio and music industries, using the same language and principles as those governing audio systems, music and acoustics.

The workshop is a two-hour presentation, including images and animations reflecting the latest in hearing research. It is divided into three distinct but interrelated units.

- **Hearing physiology**, providing a basic understanding of how the ear translates acoustic energy (via hair cell transduction) into what we perceive as sound.
- **Hearing loss**, examining the mechanics of noise-induced loss.
- **Hearing conservation**, examining currently accepted noise exposure limits and, ultimately, what can be done to protect hearing. We look at everything from the latest developments in "high-fidelity ear plugs" to concert in-ear monitoring systems, both of which are finding a high degree of acceptance in the professional audio and music performance industries.

The Workshop has received funding from corporations and foundations that understand the value of this initiative. This enables us to offer the workshop at no cost to the host institution. Our goal is to make it easy for schools and other institutions to bring this important message to their constituents.

Additional information is available at www.heartomorrow.org

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MEETING REPORT

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Department, Columbia College, Chicago IL



L-R: Doron Schachter and Benj Kanters Audience at NYU's Steinhardt-Music Technology Center

Tuesday's workshop was especially aimed at students, and so was held at the Steinhardt-Music Technology center of New York University. About 40 people attended, including both students and veterans of audio engineering, filling a multi-media classroom adjacent to one of the center's recording studios.

Most of the material presented by Professor Kanters was not new, but it was unusual to find such a wealth of information about the functioning of human hearing and the various issues associated with hearing loss and hearing conservation, all in the same presentation. I have not seen a better exposition of the remarkable structure and performance of the human ear--its wide bandwidth, dynamic range and ingenious solutions to real life demands. And, as he celebrated the capabilities of the ear, Prof. Kanters addressed the contrasting neglect of sound and hearing in our culture.

"We take better care of our feet than we do of our ears. We know enough to use sunglasses to protect our eyes from the sun, but do we use earplugs to protect our ears from excessively loud sound? It's OK to use glasses to correct our vision, but wear a hearing aid...." and the social reaction is very different. In a visually-oriented culture, we are experiencing an epidemic of noise and music-induced hearing loss.

An example: the widespread use of earbud-style headphones with iPods while riding the subway. The problem is not anything inherently bad about earbuds or iPods--both can be used with perfect safety in suitable situations. But earbuds offer little or no isolation from outside sound, and subway cars frequently have sound levels in the vicinity of 95 dBA. The iPod user turns up the music to be heard over the ambience, which requires levels 3 to 6 dB louder than the noise. The resulting total level cannot be tolerated for very long without hearing loss.

Prof. Kanters gave a detailed description of the mechanics of noise-induced hearing loss. He then examined currently accepted noise exposure limits (the OSHA limits are, in fact a compromise with industry, and will need updating). Finally, he looked at what can be done to protect hearing, including the latest developments in "high-fidelity" ear plugs and concert in-ear monitoring systems. And again, Prof. Kanters made the point that seriously addressing the problem of hearing loss requires a cultural shift in our society regarding the importance of sound and hearing in our lives.

Throughout his presentation, Prof. Kanters encouraged the audience to ask questions, so the evening often took on the character of a running dialog, making the usual "question period" unnecessary.

Report by Robert Auld