

# The Healing Nature of Sound

## by Rian McGonigal

There are countless research studies done in the last 2 decades, confirming the healing power of Sound.

Coming from a family of storytellers, and being one myself, I know the power of stories to open the heart and sparkle the imagination.

Clifford Chi writes: "Even without the modern neurological research that proves storytelling is the best way to capture people's attention, bake information into their memories, and forge close, personal bonds, humanity has always inherently known that people crave and seek out great stories almost as much as food and water."

Instead of giving you more facts, I would like to leave you with a story... a powerful story, that revealed the healing nature of Sound to a young classical guitarist at a time when such concepts were unheard of, and changed and redirected his life forever.

This story was written by my husband and Sound Mentor, to whom I owe everything I know about the magical power of Sound.

"My first experience with the healing nature of sound came in my mid 20's playing classical guitar in a very nice French restaurant in Media, Pennsylvania.

One evening, a party of six came in with a little girl about three years old. The adults were her parents, aunts and uncles. Their waiter was Sid, who was also a neighbor and friend to them.

I started out with some Italian Renaissance lute pieces. The waiters and staff were all familiar with my repertoire and would hum along with the melodies. Sid brought the orders to their table and everyone was enjoying the food, wine, conversation and music.

I began to play the guitar transcription of the First Cello Suite by Bach. It has seven movements, and most of them given titles of dances of the time: Allemande, Sarabande, Minuet, Gigue.

Toward the end of the first movement, the little girl got up and started to dance around the restaurant. People rarely brought very young children there, and everyone was charmed with the child's spontaneity.

I couldn't take my eyes off her. Her joy was captivating. She would sense the different tempos and various movements and create new dances. Then, during the "Sarabande", the slow fourth movement, she came up to the guitar and started to reach for the strings. I looked over to the family, hoping they would stop her before she got too close. The family didn't move, they were all transfixed on the child. She came so close that I had to stop playing and smile at her and tell her nicely not to pull the strings. At this point her mother came forward and picked her up. She looked at me intently and said "Thank You". I smiled and saw that all the adults at the table were smiling and nodding at me. I looked up and Sid, who had also stopped what he was doing, and was looking at me. He pointed his finger at me and smiled. I thought "Yes! WE are all enjoying the little girl dancing."

I continued the suite and the little girl swung and danced around a pole which supported the ceiling, just a few feet in front of me. The family finished their dessert. As they left, each looked at me, smiled and said "Thank You!". I closed my eyes to each of them and bowed my head to say, "You are Welcome". But something seemed to be puzzling about all this.

It was time for my break. I put on the break music in the office and went into the kitchen.

Sid came in, leaned on the sink, folded his arms and stared at me with a sweet smile while nodding his head. I said "What?"... And what were all those intense "Thank You's" from those friends of yours with the little girl? He paused and said, "That little girl is deaf". Then he just raised his eyebrows and stared at me. It took a moment for me to say "Wow!". I looked at him as it sank in.

We both stood quietly. Something had happened that had never happened to me before and may never happen again, but it affected me so deeply that I can never play Bach again without thinking of that night, and the little deaf girl dancing."

Rian is currently working on his book describing his journey with therapeutic music & sound, from the little deaf girl dancing, to designing and directing the music & sound therapy programs for two major cancer treatment centers.