



Beyond the Clinic and Research Walls

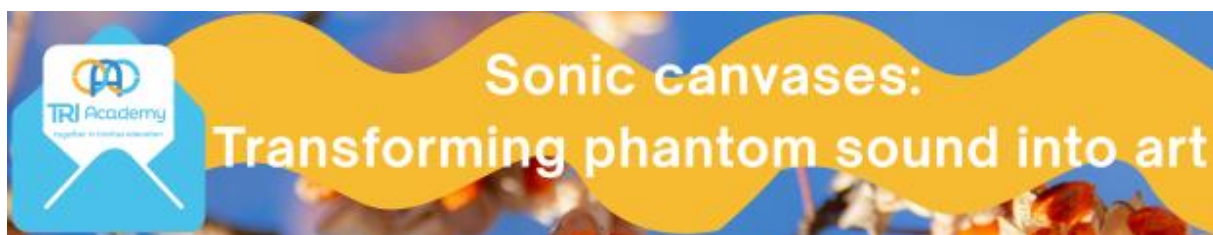
A lighter edition exploring art, movement, and community as part of life with tinnitus

Dear readers,

This edition of the newsletter takes a different direction. Rather than leading with findings or trial updates, we wanted to pause, look up from our work, and reflect on something that doesn't usually fit into a research agenda: the lived experience of tinnitus beyond the clinic and the research setting.

Our field asks hard questions. We push to understand mechanisms, to design better interventions, to translate findings into care. That work matters enormously. But tinnitus also exists in the park on a Tuesday morning, in a gallery on a rainy afternoon, on a dance floor with friends. It travels with people through seasons, through mood, through all the texture of an ordinary life. This edition is for that side of things.

It also arrives at a timely moment: the 20th TRI Conference is approaching in Berlin this September 16-19, under the theme "Jump the Wall." While that phrase speaks to breaking down academic silos, we are taking it a little more literally, jumping the walls of the laboratory to explore how nature, movement, and creative expression intersect with the tinnitus experience. We hope you enjoy the change of pace.



Sonic canvases: transforming phantom sound into art

Our understanding of the auditory brain doesn't only happen through data, sometimes it happens on a canvas. Research in neuro-aesthetic frameworks suggests that creative expression can meaningfully alter the emotional distress networks associated with chronic phantom sound. When engaging in art-making, the brain's default mode network (DMN) is actively recruited, and cognitive load shifts toward visual and tactile execution, a process associated with reduced ruminative attention toward internal noise.

Key reference: Thoma, M. V. et al. (2013). "The effect of music on the human stress response." PLOS ONE, 8(8), e70156.

A compelling artistic exploration of tinnitus can be found in “*Sound Off*”, a 2024 art competition run by the Hashir International Institute’s Public Involvement program, in collaboration with the World Hearing Centre and sponsored by MED-EL. Artists from across the world submitted work exploring life with tinnitus, hyperacusis, and misophonia. One standout piece, UK artist Eleanor Ponte’s “*From Earth to Sound...Living with Tinnitus*”, weaves the letter “T” into trees and open ground, a quiet visual reminder that the sound is always present. Ponte has written about learning to sit with her tinnitus rather than fight it, through walks and swims in nature, a sense of calm she now carries into the rest of her life with the condition.

Key reference: [From earth to sound ... living with Tinnitus | Tinnitus Clinic](#)

Similarly, the UK-based project *The Hidden Noise* partnered visual artists with audiologists to create *Tinnitus Maps*, watercolours, installations, moving-image works, and artist publications that translate the experience of internal ringing into shared visual forms. By externalising tinnitus through art, the project aims to broaden cultural understandings of the condition, moving beyond familiar narratives and creating new ways to communicate its diverse and deeply personal experiences. Nina Thomas draws on her own sudden hearing loss and subsequent tinnitus to explore themes of loss and memory, while Fern Thomas imagines a world in which humans become receivers of the invisible frequencies of the natural world; from the singing of stars to the movement of seawater through stones, reframing inner sounds as something that can be experienced as meaningful rather than solely distressing. Together, these works suggest that making tinnitus visible may help reshape our cognitive relationship with it, loosening its power to isolate.

Key reference: [The Hidden Noise: Tinnitus and Art — OVADA](#)

The same thread runs through music and dance; composer Daniel Fishkin turned his own tinnitus into “*Composing the Tinnitus Suites*”, built around a hand-made instrument called the Lady’s Harp. Halifax musician Seth Smith made “*Constant Interruption*”, an album built from sounds inspired by his tinnitus. Choreographer Taylor A. Young explored the condition through movement in “*Tinnitus: Embodying the Ghost of Sound*”. And in New Zealand, composer Ewan Collin’s “*Tinnitus of a City*” was a finalist in NZTrio’s Composing Competition in Auckland.

Key references: [Composing the Tinnitus Suites: 2016 | The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage](#); [Halifax artist hopes new sound project will help others with tinnitus CBC News](#); [Tinnitus | Embodying the Ghost of Sound | Composing Competition – NZTrio](#)

These artistic perspectives remind us that tinnitus is more than a symptom to be measured or managed. It is a deeply personal experience that people interpret and respond to in very different ways. For researchers, they raise important questions about how creativity, meaning-making, and self-expression might influence the way tinnitus is perceived and lived with. Have you or someone you care for found a creative way of engaging with tinnitus? If you're a person living with tinnitus, or a clinician who has heard stories from patients, we'd love to hear about experiences where tinnitus became a source of artistic expression, inspiration, or new ways of understanding, rather than only a source of stress. Your stories could help inspire new research into the many ways people adapt to life with tinnitus. [You can submit your input here.](#)

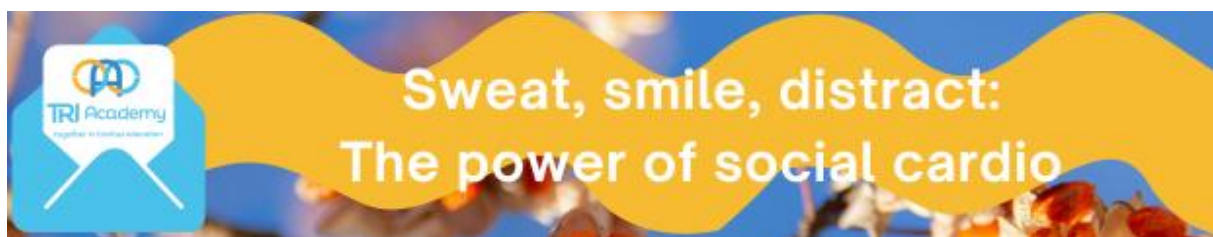


The rhythm of relief: the science behind silent discos

Picture a packed dance floor, except everyone's wearing headphones, and each person has their own volume dial in hand. For many living with tinnitus or hyperacusis, that small bit of control is the difference between staying home and joining in. Loud speaker systems routinely output 90–105 dB LAeq, well past the point where sustained exposure starts to risk hearing damage. The "silent disco" model offers an alternative for this.

Key reference: Sørensen, R. et al., (2017). "Preferred listening levels – a silent disco study." Proceedings of the International Symposium on Auditory and Audiological Research, Vol. 6.

By placing volume control directly into participants' hands, silent dance communities allow for real-time auditory self-regulation. People can lower the level, take a break, or step out without leaving the social environment entirely. It's a practical reminder that a sensitive auditory system shouldn't mean missing out on shared joy.



Sweat, smile, distract: the power of social cardio

If you're looking for a natural way to quiet the mind this summer, the outdoors is proving to be a significant tool. Stress and anxiety don't just feel bad, they're known to make tinnitus feel louder and harder to tune out, through changes in attention and hormone levels that researchers are still mapping out. Aerobic physical activity seems to help with several of these factors at once, though it's one piece of a much larger picture, not a replacement for clinical care.

Cardiovascular exercise is well known to lower stress hormones and boost mood. For some people with tinnitus, that seems to translate into the sound feeling less intrusive, not because the sound itself changes, but because the nervous system has a bit more slack to work with.

Key reference: Boere, K. et al., (2023). "Exercising is good for the brain but exercising outside is potentially better." Scientific Reports.

Community run clubs, hiking groups, and "Walk & Talk" sessions combine the physiological benefits of cardiovascular exercise with effortless distraction via outdoor scenery, natural environmental masking (wind, birdsong, rustling leaves), and the social engagement that draws the central nervous system out of hypervigilance. Sometimes the most effective addition to the tinnitus toolbox is a pair of sneakers, fresh air, and a friend — not instead of other support, but alongside it.



Events

20th TRI Conference 2026

September 16–19, 2026 · Berlin, Germany

Hosted by the Tinnitus Center at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. This year's theme, "*Jump the Wall - Discover and Uncover Gaps,*" challenges the field to break academic silos and connect across disciplines. The opening ceremony on September 16th sets the tone, no rigid slide decks, just a live musical welcome by harpist Anna Paulina Teichmann.

The social programme includes an outdoor "Get Together" in the historic open-air Hörsaalruine at Campus Charité Mitte. Come for the science, stay for the community.

www.tinnitus-research-initiative-2026.com

Save the Date

21st TRI Conference 2027

September 15-18, 2027, Washington DC, USA

Local Organizer: American Tinnitus Association

As we move through this stretch of the year, we hope this edition serves as a small reminder that progress in this field is not only measured in the trials we design or the papers we publish. It is measured in the lives people are able to reclaim. The science we do ultimately exists in service of someone who wants to go for a run without dread, or spend an evening out without worry, or simply feel less alone in what they're carrying. That is worth keeping in sight, even when the work pulls us deep into the details.

We look forward to seeing many of you in Berlin in September.

