



Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain

By Oliver Sacks

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Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain By Oliver Sacks

Music can move us to the heights or depths of emotion. It can persuade us to buy something, or remind us of our first date. It can lift us out of depression when nothing else can. It can get us dancing to its beat. But the power of music goes much, much further. Indeed, music occupies more areas of our brain than language does—humans are a musical species.

Oliver Sacks's compassionate, compelling tales of people struggling to adapt to different neurological conditions have fundamentally changed the way we think of our own brains, and of the human experience. In *Musicophilia*, he examines the powers of music through the individual experiences of patients, musicians, and everyday people—from a man who is struck by lightning and suddenly inspired to become a pianist at the age of forty-two, to an entire group of children with Williams syndrome, who are hypermusical from birth; from people with “amusia,” to whom a symphony sounds like the clattering of pots and pans, to a man whose memory spans only seven seconds—for everything but music.

Our exquisite sensitivity to music can sometimes go wrong: Sacks explores how catchy tunes can subject us to hours of mental replay, and how a surprising number of people acquire nonstop musical hallucinations that assault them night and day. Yet far more frequently, music goes right: Sacks describes how music can animate people with Parkinson's disease who cannot otherwise move, give words to stroke patients who cannot otherwise speak, and calm and organize people whose memories are ravaged by Alzheimer's or amnesia.

Music is irresistible, haunting, and unforgettable, and in *Musicophilia*, Oliver Sacks tells us why.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best of the Month, December 2007: Legendary R&B icon Ray Charles claimed that he was "born with music inside me," and neurologist Oliver Sacks believes Ray may have been right. *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* examines the extreme effects of music on the human brain and how lives can be utterly transformed by the simplest of harmonies. With clinical studies covering the tragic (individuals afflicted by an inability to connect with any melody) and triumphant (Alzheimer's patients who find order and comfort through music), Sacks provides an erudite look at the notion that humans are truly a "musical species." --*Dave Callanan*

From Publishers Weekly

Sacks is an unparalleled chronicler of modern medicine, and fans of his work will find much to enjoy when he turns his prodigious talent for observation to music and its relationship to the brain. The subtitle aptly frames the book as a series of medical case studies—some in-depth, some abruptly short. The tales themselves range from the relatively mundane (a song that gets stuck on a continuing loop in one's mind) through the uncommon (Tourette's or Parkinson's patients whose symptoms are calmed by particular kinds of music) to the outright startling (a man struck by lightning subsequently developed a newfound passion and talent for the concert piano). In this latest collection, Sacks introduces new and fascinating characters, while also touching on the role of music in some of his classic cases (the man who mistook his wife for a hat makes a brief appearance). Though at times the narrative meanders, drawing connections through juxtaposition while leaving broader theories to be inferred by the reader, the result is greater than the sum of its parts. This book leaves one a little more attuned to the remarkable complexity of human beings, and a bit more conscious of the role of music in our lives. (Oct.)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Perhaps, renowned author Oliver Sacks's insight into neurological curiosities gives him a key to reviewers' criteria. His nine previous books, including *Awakenings* (1973) and *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985), have all seen widespread critical and commercial success. And critics agree that *Musicophilia* is a fine addition to Sacks's oeuvre, even though it differs somewhat from his previous works: instead of focusing exclusively on other people's disorders, Sacks, an amateur pianist, indulges in some self-examination (one reviewer sees a link with his autobiographical *Uncle Tungsten*), including his own fleeting experience with amusia, a disorder that causes music to sound like sheer clatter. Luckily, it didn't affect his ear for fine prose and provocative storytelling.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Wanda Matthews:

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Veronica Roberts:

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Nancy Jackson:

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Nancy Jackson:

Often the book Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain has a lot of knowledge on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of help. The book was authored by the very famous author. Tom makes some research just before write this book. This particular book very easy to read you can get the point easily after looking over this book.

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