

Richard Einhorn

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June 27, 2011

Mr. David M. Rubenstein, Chairman

Mr. Michael M. Kaiser, President

Maestro Christoph Eschenbach, Music Director, NSO and Kennedy Center

Ms. Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

2700 F. Street, NW

Washington, D.C. 20566-0001

Dear Mr. Rubenstein, Mr. Kaiser, Maestro Eschenbach, and Ms. Siegel,

I am a composer who was honored to have the National Symphony Orchestra perform my evening-long piece, *Voices of Light*, at The Kennedy Center in 2001. A year ago, I suffered a sudden, severe, and irreversible hearing loss. I am now entirely deaf in one ear and have only 30% of my hearing left in the remaining ear.

Until I attended the performance of *Wicked* at The Kennedy Center Opera House on June 17, which included a temporary hearing loop installation, I was quite certain I would never be able to enjoy live music again. However, the sound from the loop system was so good that I feel compelled to ask you to seriously consider installing permanent hearing loops in your theaters. That evening was, *by far*, the clearest, most enjoyable performance I've attended since my hearing loss. It meant so much to me to sit in a concert hall and, for the first time in a year, actually enjoy a live performance again.

What enhanced that experience was the fact that I did not have to wear any kind of cumbersome listening device to use the loop system. I simply switched my hearing aid to the proper setting. Not only was the technology extremely easy for me to use, but it was so unobtrusive that I never felt embarrassed or self-conscious: no one could see that I required assistance to hear.

I urge you to consider hearing loops for your theaters not only from my perspective as a composer but also as someone who has been deeply involved in professional audio. I have produced numerous CDs with artists such as Yo-Yo Ma (including a Grammy-winning recording), the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and many others. While I can no longer produce, I have enough remaining hearing and enough experience with different assistive listening systems to make comparisons between them.

While the high quality I heard was due in great part to the excellent sound system installed at The Kennedy Center and to the exceptional mix created by the sound engineers, I believe the loop system itself had much to do with the clear sound. By contrast, I went to a major American opera house this past fall and was provided with an assistive device that was large and cumbersome to use. The first receiver I was given did not work and I returned it for a second one. The sound mix at the opera was excellent, but the sound I heard from the assistive device was prone to dropouts, static, and other problems. It was far removed from the happy experience I had had at The Kennedy Center.

Hearing loops are so convenient for hearing aid wearers to use because most modern aids already contain the inexpensive technology, called a "t-coil," that is needed to access the loop's signal. Thus, a music-lover with hearing aids simply flips a switch on the device to activate the t-coil - that's all. It is much simpler to use than any of the FM or infrared systems I'm aware of and there are no receivers to check out and then return at the end of a performance.

Another very important reason to install loops: there is no need to wear bulky devices that call attention to a hearing impairment. Hearing loops and t-coil technology treat the hearing impaired with dignity: it is as close to invisible as assistive listening technology can get today. According to experts I've consulted, there will be no comparably elegant technology available to hearing aid wearers for a long time to come. Bluetooth, for example, requires too much power and is built into no currently available hearing aid.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. At the recent Hearing Loss Association of America convention, I was assured both by major manufacturers and independent experts that music-level sound quality is achievable in most large concert venues via hearing loops. This means that many serious music lovers whose hearing is impaired, either by age or disease, will surely benefit from this technology.

Because I know that The Kennedy Center has made a major commitment to assistive services, and has done an absolutely superb job, please consider hearing loop technology for permanent installation. I, for one, can't wait to have such a wonderful evening again as the one I had at The Kennedy Center. There is so much music, by the National Symphony and so many other great ensembles and artists, that I would love, once again, to hear live.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Einhorn".

Richard Einhorn