

"Nina Kraus is a brilliant communicator and *Of Sound Mind* is an engaging and entertaining read." —Renée Fleming, soprano

# OF SOUND MIND

The title 'OF SOUND MIND' is presented in a stylized, layered format. 'OF' is in a simple, dark grey sans-serif font at the top. Below it, the word 'SOUND' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Each letter of 'SOUND' is contained within a vertical rectangular bar of a different color: 'S' is teal with a bell illustration; 'O' is lime green with a bird illustration; 'U' is pink; 'N' is cyan with a radio tower illustration; and 'D' is orange with musical notes. Below 'SOUND', the word 'MIND' is written in the same dark grey sans-serif font as 'OF'. To the right of 'MIND' is a green line-art illustration of a bird in flight.

How Our Brain  
Constructs  
a Meaningful  
Sonic World

Nina Kraus

# OF SOUND MIND: HOW OUR BRAIN CONSTRUCTS A MEANINGFUL SONIC WORLD

By Dr. Nina Kraus

OF SOUND MIND: How Our Brain Constructs a Meaningful Sonic World by Northwestern University professor, neuroscientist, and director of the renowned Brainvolts Lab, Nina Kraus, makes the case that the sounds of the world around us impact the development of our brains, the abilities and weaknesses we develop, and who we are as human beings.

In OF SOUND MIND, Kraus uses her thirty years' experience studying the interplay of the brain and sound to show for the first time that the processing of sound drives many of the brain's core functions. Hearing a cry or a word or a bird call or a chord brings forth different, specific reactions in each of our brains, and how we engage with those sounds, tune them up or down, in or out, is a lifelong process that changes the brain along the way.

The brain and sound each inform the other from the moment we are born through old age, Kraus writes. She describes how the vast "sound mind" is inextricably woven into our thoughts, our movement, and our feelings. She also explains how sound-brain teamwork influences our lives on a number of levels.

"Sound is an invisible ally and enemy of brain health," Dr. Kraus writes in her Introduction. "Our engagement with sound leaves a fundamental imprint on who we are. The sounds of our lives shape our brains, for better and for worse. And our sound minds, in turn, impact our sonic world, again for better and for worse. Will we be expert listeners or poor listeners? As a consequence of what we value in sound, how will we build the sonic world we live in? A holistic understanding of the biological consequences of our lives in sound positions us to make better choices for ourselves, for our children, and for society."

Among the topics Dr. Kraus writes about in the book:

- How the brain connects sound with meaning, and how our sonic memories are formed;
- Why there is more to keeping a beat than playing music or holding our own on the dancefloor. Rhythm has a deep connection to language and our biological systems, and how they function;
- How music has a profound effect on our brain's ability to process sound, and why musicians have measurably better sound minds for decades;
- Why athletes are also better able to hear specific sounds in rooms full of noise, and how their brains tune sounds in and out differently from the way musicians do;
- Why bilinguals are better able to hear and distinguish sounds throughout their lives; the effort of learning two languages gives their brains a distinct advantage in other listening roles;
- How the way the brain processes sound can lead to an accurate diagnosis of concussion or of other brain injuries, and then also play a role in the treatment;
- What strategies can be used to practice distinguishing speech in noise (the most challenging hearing struggle as people age), and why this is a critical area of study when hearing difficulties can lead to many other health problems;
- Why the increased noise of our 21st century lives takes a toll on our sound minds and nervous systems, even when the noise level is modest;
- How sound in the human world can negatively impact the natural world around us—from decreased bird song to lost whales—and why we disrupt the fabric of nature at our peril.

OF SOUND MIND will change the way we think about the sounds around us.

OF SOUND MIND can be found at your favorite book seller or visit any of these links:

[MIT Press](#) | [Indiebound](#) | [Barnes & Noble](#) | [Amazon](#)

"A startling work. Nina Kraus makes the case that the world is sound. Sound and rhythm are fundamental mysteries of the universe, and this book connects the dots."  
—Mickey Hart, musicologist and drummer, the Grateful Dead

"Kraus's enthusiasm for the understanding of the place of sound in our world is infectious. She shows us just how deeply sound, and in particular music, is intertwined in the brain with everything else that makes us who we are: how it can harm and how it can heal. I know of nothing quite like it."

—Iain McGilchrist, author of *The Master and His Emissary*

"One of the most beautiful, evocative, illuminating books ever written about how what we hear shapes who we are. I never wanted this book to end."

—Maryanne Wolf, Professor, University of California, Los Angeles, and author of *Reader, Come Home*

"Fascinating, clarifying, and personal—this simple-to-read, science-based description of hearing will change the way you listen. Bravo!"

—Gordon Hempton, acoustic ecologist and author of *One Square Inch of Silence*

"This is really a book only Kraus could write, but everyone should read. It will change the way we think about—and value—our sonic experiences. From background noise and everyday sounds to spoken word and music, it's all here and narrated beautifully."

—Daniel Levitin, author of *This Is Your Brain on Music*

"With eyes closed and not seeing, while exhaling and not smelling, we hear. Hearing never takes a break. So our relationship with sound is complicated, our brain filtering and selecting, turning the volume up and down, creating meaning and vivid memories. This is the best book I've seen about what sound is—and what sound means to us."

—Carl Safina, author of *Beyond Words and Becoming Wild*

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