

To Hear Again, To Sing Again: A Memoir by Ellis Douek, ENT Surgeon and Hearing Implant Pioneer

E Douek
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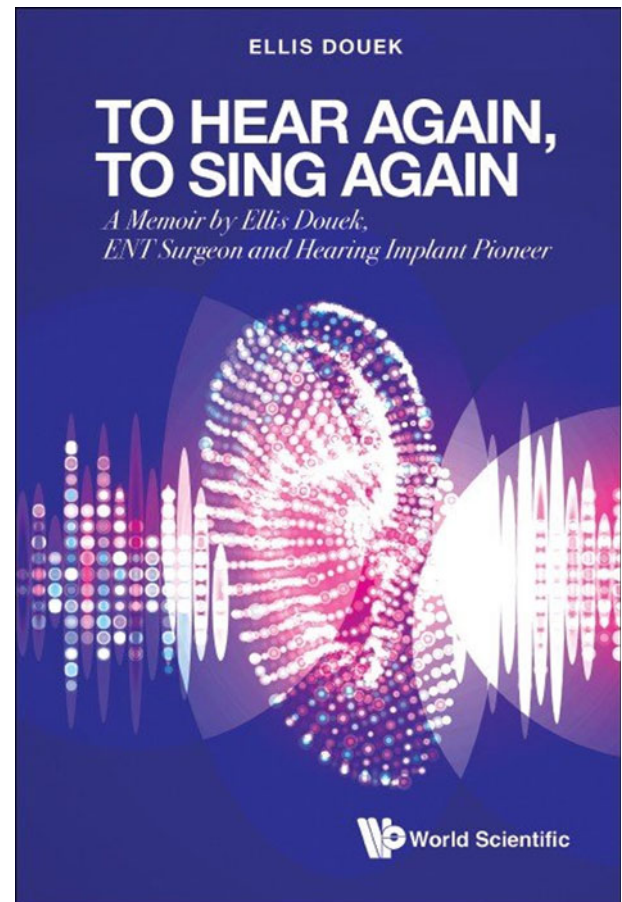
I received a galley copy, a paperback version, of this book, due to be published in late July, and I gather the final product will be in hardback format.

It is described on the back cover as a 'page-turner' and it is truly a very entertaining read. It appeals so much to any of us who worked in London or any of the 'centres of excellence' in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Ellis Douek and his work at Guy's Hospital still has a major influence on clinical practice.

Douek's description of the senior attendees at a Section Meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine, their projectionist who would invert a lidless slide carousel (I know, he did it to me), and his earliest, unsupervised introductions to surgery were all so familiar. The waitress service dining room for busy medical staff, the starched white coats and the phantom waiting lists all took me back to the late 1970s. It takes a skilled writer, such as this, to produce a text that will appeal to his contemporaries, his nostalgic 'juniors' (now mostly retired) and to the general public.

The book does of course describe Douek's huge contribution to the management of speech and language disorders in childhood, the introduction of the crossed acoustic response as a screen for deafness, tympanoplasty techniques, and, especially cochlear implantation. I had not realised he had such an interest in voice disorders; indeed, a whole chapter is entitled 'Singers and Performers', and shows how challenging these disorders can be. Douek is widely travelled, and a chapter entitled 'Kings, Emperors, Dictators and the Like' is very frank in identifying the many dubious characters involved. He proves to be a master of the short anecdote.

The book, not unreasonably, concentrates on his medical practice and international academic career, but I think it could have easily added a little more on his early life and



what sounds like a remarkable childhood. Vague snippets of background certainly suggest that. He and his colleagues held an almost legendary status to my generation, and he lists many of his trainees who have gone on to become household names.

This is a very entertaining read and it got me through a record-breaking heat wave in one afternoon.

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