

# MUSICIANS' HEALTH RESOURCES

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Not too long ago, when instrumentalists experienced pain or fatigue there was no concrete body of knowledge at their disposal explaining how to deal with their coordinational problems. Too often they were diagnosed with an "overuse" problem and frequently advised to rest (although the problem recurred once they started to work again) or were subjected to needless and expensive surgery. It's nice to see new books and videos arriving that deal effectively with these matters. Here are a few:

*The Taubman Techniques* (5 videos, \$455)

The Taubman Institute, c/o Enid Stettner Medusa, NY 12120; phone 800-826-3720.

*Repetitive Strain Injury*

Emil Pascarelli, M.D., and Deborah Quilter  
John Wiley and Sons Inc. \$14.95.

*What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body*

Barbara Conable  
Andover Press  
P.O. Box 6838  
Columbus, OH 43205. \$21.50.

*End Your Carpal Tunnel Pain Without Surgery*

Kate Montgomery  
Rutledge Hill Press  
211 Seventh Ave. North  
Nashville, TN 37219. \$14.95.

The Taubman Institute, which runs a two-week piano school each summer, has issued a series of videos clearly explaining the basis of the Taubman Technique with examples demonstrated at the piano. They are presented by Dorothy Taubman's very able associate, Edna Golandsky. This is a must for anyone seeking to gain a more in-depth understanding of technique and its inherent problems.

In *Repetitive Strain Injury*, Emil Pascarelli, M.D., quotes Dr. Fred Hochberg as follows: "To treat these injuries, doctors have applied old-fashioned methods of treatment: splints, anti-inflammatories, and surgery. However, too little effort has been paid to prevention."

Dr. Pascarelli's work is subtitled "A Computer User's Guide." It can, however be extrapolated into many manual skills. He emphasizes that twisting of the wrist known as radial or ulnar deviation, or dropping of the wrist, known as dorsiflexion, very often causes serious injury.

*What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body* by Barbara Conable in book form is also a six-hour course given by "Andover Educators."

Using the Alexander Technique as a model, it effectively deals with the basics of how the joints of the body function, musculature, principles of correct breathing, posture, and so on. The book is presented, unfortunately, in an annoyingly cheerleaderish fashion with pithy "hurrah for our team" slogans at the foot of each page, such as "If your head already balances beautifully on its spine, throw a party!" It is otherwise well done, and offers specific potential causes of injury at various instruments.

The term "carpal tunnel syndrome" hardly needs introduction. It is often incorrectly used to describe any pain or disfunction in the hand and forearm. In *End Your Carpal Tunnel Pain Without Surgery*, Kate Montgomery, a woman who thoroughly understands her subject, also reminds us that general treatments such as rest, wrist splints, anti-inflammatory drugs, and finally surgery, are of little or no use in correcting this problem.

Invasive surgery is rarely the answer, as symptoms usually persist, and scar tissue, which can form after the operation, may require that it be repeated. The problem is that the basic issue of what has caused the pain or numbness has not been solved. A proper alignment of the hand and forearm is crucial to a sound and coordinated technique. When this alignment is broken, many problems can occur.

In using a twelve-step method to realign joints and restore muscles to health, Ms. Montgomery, as many letters of testimony quoted in the book attest, professes to have had great success.

The book is easily readable, sound, and a very welcome clarification of a problem that has caused such misery to millions of people.