

making the face plate that fit over his mouthpiece and extended laterally to cover the adjacent cheek and support its underlying muscles. Mossblad emphasizes the rapid institution of appropriate medication, instituting

muscle exercises early in the course of the palsy, and making early instrument modifications—three aspects of treatment that were critical to his recovery and amazingly early return to professional-level playing. These principles

are pertinent for all wind musicians who develop Bell's palsy, although a degree of ingenuity will be needed to fabricate the appropriate face plates for different instruments.

## Book Notes

### **Passionate Practice: The Musician's Guide to Learning, Memorizing, and Performing**

By Margaret Elson (Oakland, CA, Regent Press, 2002, 105 pp, \$19.95, softcover).

The author of this book is both a musician and psychotherapist, and she brings the sensibilities of both to the task of providing this guide to learning, practicing, memorizing, and performing music. This book's aim is to help the performer learn the techniques of conscious practice and performance by integrating exercises in sensory perception, kinesthetic awareness, and creative visualization as a way of improving focus and concentration. These methods are designed to make the process of learning music, practicing, and performing more enjoyable and fruitful. By learning to identify and manage the distractions and anxieties that can impact the practice and performance environment, the performer can channel these potentially negative forces into a source of positive energy.

Although she writes specifically for the pianist, the author's techniques are easily extrapolated to other instruments and to singers, actors, and dancers. Essentially, these are the skills needed to develop good practice and performance habits, regardless of the instrument or performance style. The book is structured in such a way that the student is led through the process of preparation, practice, and performing, respectively. A few different techniques and exercises are offered for each task, but they are designed to build on the preceding ones. The book concludes with a review of the different aspects of the creative personality and how these can be unleashed to produce a more artistic and passionate performance. The author reminds us that growth and discipline in one aspect of

our creative lives often lead to positive change in other, seemingly unrelated areas. Anyone who performs or teaches performers knows this to be true.

The book is short, and perhaps by necessity the descriptions of the exercises and techniques are brief and to-the-point. This is the type of work that is best taught experientially and I can envision how this likely works best in a workshop or private session. Having said that, the descriptions are simple and easy-to-follow for anyone who wants to introduce themselves to these precepts. Those interested in developing cleaner, more-focused practice habits with the ability to block out the "chatter" of daily distractions will find these an agreeable way to start. In this reviewer's opinion, if one is truly crippled by performance anxiety, more intensive personal work is probably needed, and the author's prescription for overcoming that may seem simplistic to some.

Depending on one's needs and background as a student and performer, the ideas put forth in this book may seem new and interesting; others will recognize them as similar to those put forth by sports psychologists, performance consultants, and more enlightened teachers. I am reminded of the excellent *Power Performance for Singers* reviewed in this journal previously (June 1999). *Passionate Practice* is a shorter and simpler addition to the literature of performance psychology, but it may be enough for those who are looking for a brief introduction to the concepts.

SUSAN B. ARJMAND, M.D.  
*Department of Family Medicine*  
*Rush Medical College*  
*Chicago, Illinois*