

	<h1>Book Notes</h1>	

Medical Problems of the Instrumentalist Musician

Edited by Raoul Tubiana and Peter C. Amadio (London, Martin Dunitz, 2000, hard cover, 626 pp, \$150.00).

This newly published textbook is a large volume (626 pages) that covers the full range of medical problems brought on by playing musical instruments. The 32 chapters were written by 38 European and American contributors, offering more than one perspective on most of the major medical problems encountered by instrumentalists. Readers will find this work to be especially strong in the areas of anatomy and physiology, with the first six chapters covering these topics as they relate to the instrumental musicians. This sometimes seems to leave relatively little space for the discussion of evaluation and management of such problems—the 20-page chapter on “Orofacial Problems,” for example, includes only one page on treatment.

The six chapters on various aspects of instrumentalists’ repetitive motion syndromes provide an excellent review of risk factors with numerous clinical examples. Treatment is covered in some detail in Fry’s chapter on “Overuse Syndrome,” less so in the others.

Seven chapters are devoted to various aspects of focal dystonia. They are well written, and they cover the topic quite well. While this is an interesting and perplexing problem in performing arts medicine, its occurrence in “the real world” is quite rare, and letting it occupy nearly one quarter of the total chapters seems out of proportion.

The chapter on “Stage Fright” takes a very anti-medication

stance, with a heavy emphasis on the role of counseling. This seems to be at odds with the approach used in many North American performing arts medicine clinics, although it may better reflect the standard of practice elsewhere. At a minimum, it would have been helpful to mention a specific dose of a beta-blocker to use initially.

There are useful chapters on piano and violin technique. Even though they represent the approach taken by only one or two (expert) performers, they provide an excellent overview of how to play these two common instruments.

One of the last chapters contains a good discussion of the prevention of performance-related hand problems. The final chapter is on “Ergonomics.” It is fairly comprehensive, but the absence of any mention of the 7/8 keyboard for pianists with smaller hands is regrettable.

This is a worthwhile book to have in any performing arts medicine library, both for the information on anatomy and physiology and for the European view of the topics covered. Practitioners will frequently need to consult another textbook for more specific information on evaluation and management of performance-related health problems, but this book’s chapters on “the basics” will be a useful reference for years to come.

RALPH MANCHESTER, MD
*University Health Service
University of Rochester
Rochester, New York*