

Book Notes

Mental Practice and Imagery for Musicians

By Malva Freymuth (Boulder, CO, Integrated Musician's Press, 1999, softcover, 101 pp, \$14.95).

In *Mental Practice and Imagery for Musicians*, Malva Freymuth offers us a book about the importance and usefulness of mental practice and the use of imagery in the performing arts. It is a practical guide to learning how to practice efficiently and lessen the risk of injury. The book concerns itself with why mental practice is important and offers the exercises and techniques to do it.

The author describes the process of creating mental images of the sights, sounds, and sensations of playing an instrument. The musician then engages in the physical activity of playing, during which he or she tries to approach these mental ideals. Then a mental review of the physical practice takes place, during which the musician assesses the various aspects of his or her playing.

There is scientific evidence to support the anecdotal beliefs and recommendations that mental involvement in practice and performing can lead musicians to peak performance in a way that resembles the methods of successful athletes. These mental representations influence the nervous system and affect the body's per-

formance. Mental practice can enhance the musician's ability to receive sensory feedback while playing and also allows physical rest, during which vital mental work can take place.

The conclusions drawn by Ms. Freymuth and her advice to musicians and teachers ring true on many levels. Experience with injured patients, colleagues, and ourselves as performers supports the contention that lack of ability to engage in mental practice as separate from physical playing can lead to injury, exhaustion, and ineffective practice.

The music world should welcome this type of information. The principles of sports psychology are well known and recognized as integral to the training regimen of successful athletes. Learning that musicians can employ similar techniques with similar results should be welcome news to those of us who perform and who treat patients. This guide will be useful to musicians of every level as well as to those who teach and coach them.

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