

## Diversity and Training in Performing Arts Medicine

**M***edical Problems of Performing Artists* has addressed the needs of clinicians for many decades, providing evidence and opinion pieces on performing artists' healthcare regarding a wide range of health issues that may either affect or cause problems when performing. Traditionally, two major challenges facing the best approaches to managing the health of performing artists has been (i) limited scientific research evidence supporting preventative approaches, specific assessments and treatment methods for the vast array of conditions seen, and (ii) a lack of training programs specifically targeting performing artists' healthcare. Not only are there many important differences between general healthcare and managing the health of performing artists, but there are variations between individuals performing on the same instrument, and a vast array of styles and genres of performing arts that create very different demands on performers.

In relation to the first point, a previous lack of available scientific literature has hindered evidence-informed performing arts medicine practice; however, high-quality research has recently progressed rapidly. This edition of *MPPA* also highlights the incredible breadth of information emerging, recognising the complex and multiple health demands facing diverse performing arts domains.

Exploring in depth the experiences of a particular cultural group of performers, Sutani and Akutsu (p63) highlight the early onset of psychological symptoms affecting Japanese orchestral musicians. The authors go on to present details of the individualised experiences of these players and approaches taken in order to manage their anxiety, including transferring focus onto musical expression and the impact of years of experience. Interestingly, this study also raised the notion of a certain level of performance anxiety actually facilitating performance—a concept explored later in this edition in the letter written by clinical psychologist Patrick Gannon (p118). In his letter, the caution and complexity involved in interpreting psychological symptoms such as arousal and anxiety, and the potential positive and negative consequences of these, are neatly summarised and discussed. And in a further mental health initiative, the revised Musicians Occupational Stress Scale—MOSS—presented by King et al. (p85), designed to measure stress levels in popular music performers, shows encouraging results for a tool that may further facilitate accurate stress assessments in these artists. Indeed, in the Kuusi et al. manuscript (p92), analysing data regarding causes of death gathered on several categories of musicians in Finland, the authors propose that performance-related

stress may contribute to higher rates of death observed in their broad category of musicians versus the comparative group of church musicians.

In other contributions, we see hearing issues addressed by two authors, with Edwards (p72) presenting university pep band exposure and noise-induced hearing loss knowledge, while Rodrigues et al. (p98) focus on the noise exposures faced by secondary school music students. Alarmingly, Edwards reported that 2/3 of pep band students did not routinely wear hearing protection despite being exposed to noise levels exceeding the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's recommendations. And similarly concerning, the young music students studied by Rodrigues were ALREADY exposed to high sound pressure levels, varying depending on practice rooms, and were not aware of the risks they faced. For this group, hearing protection was not used by any of them, and such risks need to be better mitigated at an earlier age. Indeed, in the health literacy paper presented by Baadjou et al. (p105), it appears that consensus amongst experienced health professionals and music educators is that a fundamental lack of understanding of information, and how to translate this into the classroom, may form part of the reason behind poor compliance with better health practices.

In the dance papers in this issue, a fascinating case of lateral elbow symptoms arising from anconeus contusion in a young male dancer is presented (Uluc et al., p103). This reinforces the importance of assessing all potential anatomic sources of pain in performing artists. It has also been my clinical experience that the presence of an anatomical variation of the anconeus muscle, anconeus epitrochlearis, may cause unusual presentations of ulnar neuropathy-type symptoms in musicians, as reported in other literature (Erdem et al.<sup>1</sup>). In the second dance paper (p79), the effect of cardiorespiratory fitness on the 'product' of the aesthetic aspects of dance is investigated in a group of 18 contemporary dance students. Results in this group of young dancers suggest that experience may influence aesthetic competence more than cardiorespiratory fitness. However, as stated by the authors, perhaps cardiorespiratory fitness may have more indirect influences, such as being able to train at a higher intensity for longer, and suggest further research should continue on this topic.

And finally, the review of the health status of live theatre actors, by Martin and Battaglini (p108), highlights the need for far greater research into this population given the small number of articles and yet a high reported rate of

substance abuse and injuries among this population of performing artists.

To address the lack of healthcare training for performing artists, the Certificate of Performing Arts Medicine course including the D.I.V.A. (*Dancers.Instrumentalists.Vocalists.Actors.*) assessment protocol was developed to meet this need, particularly in the USA. With the endorsement of the Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA), I developed the 'Essentials of Performing Arts Medicine' intensive training course by integrating: existing scientific evidence (particularly MPPA), certification and examination requirements of organisations such as American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the American Medical Association (AMA), and extensive collaboration with senior experienced clinical specialists within the Performing Arts Medicine Organisation. This course has now been successfully running every year since 2015 at the PAMA annual conference. Many senior PAMA medical representatives including John Chong, Clay Miller, Nancy Kadel, William Dawson and Ralph Manchester (amongst others) were responsible for liaising with many national performing arts organisations as well as medical organizations such as ACSM. Christine Guphill played a crucial role in co-ordinating trainers to teach elements of the program, preparing course materials and managing the course. In addition, ACSM fellow Randall Dick, who created the Athletes and the Arts initiative ([www.athletesandthearts.com](http://www.athletesandthearts.com)) with PAMA advice and expert support, has facilitated the reach of training and education in performing arts health care into the sports medicine domain. In May 2019, a team of PAMA and ACSM experts ran the first Essentials of Performing Arts Medicine course at the annual conference in Orlando, Florida. In addition, an 'Athletes and the Arts' symposium

held during the conference was very well attended, attracting a diverse range of medical and allied health practitioners and scientific researchers to hear the multiple presentations from health experts, performing artists, researchers and educators. The first day of the course is online, and the intensive practical training session on the second day can easily be run in different locations. Additionally, since 2018, three additional specialised streams of training were added to the second day of the course to specifically meet the needs of performing arts educators and health professionals working with: vocalists; instrumentalists; and dancers (more information about these can be found at [www.artsmed.org](http://www.artsmed.org)). There is now ample opportunity to extend best-practice performing arts healthcare training this initiative in USA, and others available in various European centers.

The surge and diversity of research that has emerged in recent years on performing arts healthcare topics, has helped to refine and inform approaches to their health issues by health professionals and performing artists, whether clinicians, educators and/or researchers.

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