

Medical Problems of Musicians: Introduction and Overview

Various occupational disorders have been a subject of some medical interest for centuries.¹ Only in the last 50 years, however, has there been substantial progress in identifying and rectifying many of the dangers inherent in the environment of the worker in industry. During this time, the field of industrial medicine has become a well-recognized specialty. In the past 15 years, there has been a virtual explosion of interest in the injuries to which athletes, both professional and recreational, are prone. This has been triggered, in part at least, by the dramatic increase in emphasis on fitness and exercise in this country and by the equally remarkable rise in exercise-related disorders.² The number of monographs and journals dealing with this new field of sports medicine is now sizable.

There has also been considerable interest over the years in the afflictions of performing artists, but with few exceptions, the medical literature has largely consisted of anecdotal reports. Singer's³ monograph on the subject is a fascinating survey of the disorders affecting musicians. It relies heavily on his own extensive experience and considerable knowledge but, of course, is now more than 50 years old and does not reflect the last half century of scientific understanding. A later edition (still 25 years outdated) has not been made available in English.

In the past several years, there has been increasing attention to the medical problems of the performer, spurred perhaps by the climate of health awareness and consumer advocacy, as well as by the considerable publicity attending the afflictions of some renowned performers. This field of performing arts medicine, while still in

its infancy, seems to be emerging as a legitimate area of interest and investigation and has obvious ties to both industrial and sports medicine.

The papers presented herein were part of a symposium held in Aspen, Colorado, in July 1984. This was the second such conference in a series initiated in 1983 by Dr. Alice G. Brandfonbrener with the dual purposes of furthering an understanding of musicians' medical problems and providing an opportunity for dialogue between the providers of health care and the consumers, the musician-performers, and teachers. The 1984 Aspen Symposium focused on problems particularly relevant to wind instrumentalists and vocalists. While we could not hope to be comprehensive, an attempt was made to approach the problems from a variety of outlooks. The summaries presented in this issue of the *CLEVELAND CLINIC QUARTERLY* reflect that effort.

Dr. Louis Fine begins with a review of the oral and dental aspects of wind instrument playing from the developmental to the degenerative. Dr. Howard Levine continues with a discussion of some of the more common upper airway disorders that may be seen in wind instrumentalists. Dr. David Cugell reports on some preliminary experiments designed to investigate the patterns of lung mechanics involved in the playing of different wind instruments. Dr. Henry Claman surveys the environmental and intrinsic factors that may contribute, via allergic and nonallergic mechanisms, to problems of the upper and lower airways.

Three papers follow that are clearly unusual for a medical journal, yet all are integral to our goal of a broad perspective. The first is by Professor Arthur Benade, who is uniquely qualified

to discuss the physics of the wind instrument as it relates to the airway of the instrumentalist during performance. The second is by Professor Philip Farkas, who provides us, in an eloquent and entertaining manner, his observations and thoughts on the problems associated with brass instrument playing, based on a lifetime of performance and teaching. We are especially pleased to be able to include the delightful and scholarly article by eminent musicologist and lecturer, Boris Goldovsky. He contributes a fascinating and sobering insight into the manner in which the medical practitioner has been portrayed by the operator composer and librettist.

The final three papers return to a more traditional format. Dr. W. J. Gould utilizes his extensive experience with professional singers to review the special requirements and problems of this group of performers. Dr. Richard Nodar discusses the important topic of hearing loss with aging, stressing the inter-relationship between aging and noise exposure, obviously of particular relevance to the musician. Finally, Dr. Simon Horenstein presents a survey of the many neu-

rological and musculoskeletal disorders that may afflict the performing musician. We hope that you will find these papers both stimulating and informative.

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