

# MUSIC FOR THE LOVE OF IT

October 1995



**Sheila Marshall, James Kimberly and Joan Torres in the Santa Barbara Grand Opera Company production of *La Traviata***

*A community opera company, plagued with losses, achieves artistic growth and fiscal health:*

## BACK ON THE BOARDS

*by James Kimberly*

Readers of *Music for the Love of It* may (or even may not) recall my article on a community production of 25 performances of *Damn Yankees* in 1990 in Santa Barbara, CA. As old Joe, the baseball fan who makes a deal with the devil, your author found unforgettable friendships and fulfillment. My friends kept asking me when I would do another show.

Then my own company got into a couple of big national contracts, and I found myself traveling 175,000 miles in four years. So much for show business: to be in a musical you have to stay in the same town for at least three months at a time. Then the travel ended and I auditioned for another musical. Not a musical comedy, a musical tragedy: *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi. This felt like an upgrade.

I auditioned. The creative director responded, "Not quite operatic quality for solo work. But we'd love to have you in the chorus." Hm. After being in *Damn Yankees* as the only solo-principal without an Equity card? This felt like a downgrade. But I took it.

The company producing *La Traviata* is only a year and a half old. Called the Santa Barbara Grand Opera Association, it had lost money on

**continued on page 11**

*How to recognize symptoms before they cause playing problems:*

## OVERUSE INJURIES *by Richard Norris, M.D.*

"No sort of exercise is so healthful or harmless that it does not cause serious disorders, that is, when overdone."

— Dr. Bernardino Ramazini (1713)

Overuse injuries are all too common among instrumentalists. However, such injuries are largely preventable and can often be treated through a combination of proper care and a change in the habits or activities that caused them. All musicians, from casual players to seasoned performers, should learn how to prevent overuse injuries and how to recognize the earliest possible signs of such injuries.

What is an overuse injury? It is a condition that occurs when any tissue — muscle, bone, tendon, ligament, etc. — is stressed beyond its physical limit. This can result in microscopic tears which lead to small amounts of bleeding and swelling within the injured area. While runners and dancers frequently sustain stress or fatigue fractures, musicians more commonly develop "tendinitis." Often, the painful part is not the tendon itself, but the muscle that is attached to the tendon. Thus, I use the word tendinitis to refer to injury of the muscle-tendon unit.

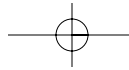
Overuse injuries can be classified as acute or chronic. An acute overuse injury occurs following a specific incident of stressing the tissue beyond its limits. An example would be a musician who learns a new phrase or trill and is determined to master it before going to bed that evening. He or she practices it for three or four hours, and then wakes up the next day with a stiff and painful hand or arm. Chronic overuse injury takes place more insidiously over a longer period of time. This tendinitis starts out as a very mild discomfort that becomes progressively more severe over the course of weeks or months.

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## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

### OUR OWN WORLD-WIDE WEB PRESENTATION

Inspired and assisted by Don Cohen's "Musical Resources on the Internet" (August, 1995), this publication now maintains a home page and several linked pages on the World-Wide Web. You can find them at <http://www.holonet.net/music/>. Our presentation includes a frequently updated page of current news that you can preview before it appears in the next printed issue. Other pages provide excerpts from back issues, a workshop listing form, subscription information, writers' guidelines and a question-and-answer column.

### WINTER VACATION WORKSHOPS

"Pacific Symphony", the sixth annual Chamber Music Workshop at Sea, will sail from Los Angeles to Honolulu aboard the Queen Elizabeth 2, January 18-23, 1996. The workshop will include three days of coaching with Joseph Axup, and unlimited free-lance time with access to an extensive chamber music library. Members of the San Francisco Opera will entertain the passengers. For information and reservations call Holidays at Sea, 800/444-8300, 1208 Fourth St., Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

Icicle Creek Music Center offers coached weekend chamber music retreats in the mountains of eastern Washington for amateur and professional musicians. Lodging and meals are provided by the Sleeping Lady Conference Center. Contact Icicle Creek Music Center, PO Box 2071, Leavenworth, WA 98826, 509/548-6247.

The Chamberre in the Sierras is a series of professionally coached chamber music workshops held at Lake Tahoe, California and organized through the World-Wide Web. Persons interested in participating may register their preferences as to time and repertoire and their playing level with the Chamberre office, which then publishes the availability of that date and repertoire on its Calendar Page. Other players browse the calendar and sign up for vacancies until a compatible group is completed. Chamberre can arrange accommodations on-line. Further information is at <http://www.wholarts.com:80/music/cs/pc.html> on the World-Wide Web, or contact WholeARTS, PO Box 2963, Stateline, NV 89449, 702/588-1329.

### ONGOING WORKSHOPS AND PLAY SESSIONS

The 92nd St. Y in New York City hosts The Senior Adult Chamber Music Players of the 92nd St. Y. Prospective members are invited to join them any Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For further information call Helen Bernstein, Director, Senior Adult Program, 212/415-5636 or Ted Baumgold, Chamber Music Coordinator, 203/325-4910.

In the Berkeley Chamber Music Workshop and Marin Chamber Music Workshop, chamber ensembles meet weekly in members' homes in the San Francisco Bay

Area for intensive coached rehearsals of classical and modern chamber music. Contact Burke Schuchmann, PO Box 217, Mill Valley, CA 94942, 415/383-2566. Tamara Loring's Baroque Ensemble Seminar follows a similar format with Baroque repertoire. Ensembles may play historical (A=415hz) or modern instruments. Contact Tamara Loring, PO Box 1297, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956, 415/663-8398.

### NEWLY PUBLISHED CHAMBER MUSIC

The October 1995 issue of *Chamber Music Magazine* includes a list of over 300 compositions published in 1994 for small groups of instruments or voices. Also, Chamber Music America's 18th National Conference will be in New York City January 12-14, 1996. Contact Chamber Music America at 545 Eighth Ave., New York NY 10018, 212/244-2772.

### EARLY MUSIC SOCIETIES

The San Francisco Early Music Society is celebrating its twentieth anniversary October 15. The lead article of its September newsletter, *Early Music News*, recounts the Society's history, attributing its success to the founders' early decision to be an umbrella organization, serving all early music groups in its area, and to represent on its board all segments of the community — amateurs, academics and professional performers, instrument builders and concert goers. Its programs include a rich assortment of evening classes and summer workshops, as well as a concert series, community outreach and assistance to emerging artists. For further information contact SFEMS, PO Box 10151, Berkeley, CA 94709.

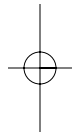
### MUSIC FOR PEOPLE NEWS

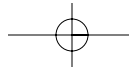
Music for People (Mfp), the improvised music network, has appointed Peter Hawes as its executive director, replacing co-founder Bonnie Insull who is still editor of *Connections*, the Mfp newsletter. Hawes' background is a music marketing and communications consultant. He also teaches drumming and improvisation and has served on the Mfp board since 1992.

David Darling, Mfp's artistic director, offers music improvisation classes this fall in Buffalo, NY, Bethesda, MD, Montreal, Qc, Cortes Island, BC, New Haven, CT, Indianapolis, IN and Boston, MA, and a teacher training class series in New Haven. Contact Music for People, 7 Middletown Rd., Roxbury, NH 03431-8703 for details.

### *MUSIC FOR THE LOVE OF IT*

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## WEEKEND MUSIC WORKSHOPS

Dates	Location	Type	Faculty	Sponsor	Address	Phone
Oct 14-15 1995	Hayward, CA	Chamber music	professionally coached	Chamber Musicians of Northern California	3313 Grand Ave. Oakland, CA 94610	510/ 452-1221
May 17-19 1996	Delaware, Ohio	Chamber music	Cavani String Quartet	Delaware Music Festival, Inc.	242 North Sinsbury Drive Worthington, OH 43085	614/ 848-3312

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some questions that readers have asked us. Additional responses and new questions are invited.

### “How can I assemble a music ensemble?”

- Get to know potential members’ musical personalities at workshops (see February issue);
- Host one-time get-togethers to try out combinations of people and music;
- Groups that last seek compatible goals: discuss goals for the group at the outset.

### “What can I do about my arthritis? Will I have to give up music?”

- Many active musicians cope with arthritis;
- Consult a performing arts clinic (see list in August issue);
- Changes of instrument or technique may help avoid stressing the affected joints (see page 8);
- Dietary changes or medications may help but can be hazardous without expert medical guidance.

### “How should I go about building a repertoire?”

- Music is a social art: decide what setting you want to play in;
- Find out what ensembles and musical styles are appropriate in those settings
- Select pieces within your technical reach.

### “How can I play more reliably from memory? I seem to learn easily, but if I miss a little chunk I get stuck!”

- Try memorizing the broad structure of a piece before the melodies and harmonies. Aaron Copland’s *What to listen for in Music* (McGraw-Hill, 1939, 1957) has a great chapter on how to recognize musical structure.

### “How can I get an audience to attend my performances?”

- Pressure! Issue direct personal invitations, reply requested, with telephone follow-up;
- Keep at it until the hall is full of your friends if necessary;
- Go to where there’s already an audience: volunteer to perform at church, parties, fairs, public celebrations and festivals.

## LETTERS

*to Susan Newell, author of The Marimbas of Island County, Music for the Love of It, June, 1995)*

Dear Susan

I enjoyed your article on the marimbas of Island County! I love marimba music and really enjoyed the marimba ensemble I heard at Northwest Folklife in Seattle in 1994. The next time I travel to the Seattle area would love to take in the Friday night jam. Do these go year around? I would love it if you could send me any more details or information on the marimba jams.

Regards,  
Ross Grotbeck  
Minneapolis, MN

*Susan Newell replies:*

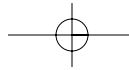
Dear Ross,

The ensemble you heard in Seattle was undoubtedly “Musasa,” Michael Breez’s group from San Juan Island. They are good, aren’t they? The Friday night jams occur about once a month at various locations in Friday Harbor, San Juan, during the fall and winter. If you want to take part, contact Michael or Osha Breez at 360/378-6629 before making a trip. They play mostly Dumi’s music, but if you don’t know it, don’t worry — Osha says, “Oh, we can always figure something out,” meaning, “Even if you don’t know the tunes they are playing or can’t carry a tune in a bucket, they can find a way for you to take part.”

Sincerely,  
Susan Newell  
Bothell, WA



Bob Hodson, Nancy Fowler, Maria Reeves and Janet Telford at Chico Chamber Music Workshop



## FROM THE HEART MY TEACHER

by Helen Spielman

As a child, I spoke the words "my teacher" casually and without thought, because I had so many: homeroom teachers, science teachers, music teachers, ballet teachers, religious school teachers. Now those special words feel sensuous in my mouth and sound beautiful to my ears. I sense a tiny inner pang of envy when I hear friends say "my guru" or "my coach," until I realize that I, too, have a special guide: my flute teacher.

From *The Listening Book* :

"Of course, all beings are [my] teachers: a tree is a teacher of treeness, a baby of babyhood; and there are wind, rocks, adversity, and strangers. But I am referring to loving

humans who lift us over the sharp stones or, with the same hands, push us headlong and caterwauling over the cliff." And: "When you are clear about what you want to learn, you will find your teacher. The two of you will meet because you are looking for each other."

I first met Brooks de Wetter-Smith at a small non-musical gathering, not realizing he was a flutist until a friend mentioned it the next day. Several years later, when I decided to improve my vibrato, I called him to schedule a lesson. Naively unaware that he was an internationally recognized virtuoso and accepted private students only by audition, I blithely sauntered into his studio, enjoyed the lesson, and casually asked him to schedule another one. (I would never, ever have had the nerve to audition had I known. And I still don't fully understand what prompted him to accept me without one.) My vibrato improved after a few more lessons, so I stopped going. During the interim, I attended a recital of his and sat in the audience, stunned. I knew in that moment that I wasn't listening to a merely good flute player; rather, here was an extraordinary musician. A few months later, with a sharpened desire to become a better flutist, I started taking one lesson a month. That gradually became two a month . . . and then three . . . Now I get in as many lessons as I can between his and my heavy travel schedules.

Being the world's expert on what's best for me, I naturally informed Brooks that I wanted to study repertoire for the most part, and forget all those scales and exercises that I had to do in my youth. He kindly and patiently responded that if I played only solos I

**"When you are clear about what you want to learn, you will find your teacher. . ."**

**I would never, ever have had the nerve to audition had I known . . .**

could learn to play them to the best of my ability, but that doing the exercises would advance my playing level. Gradually (I'm stubborn) I followed more and more of his suggestions, and his words have been borne out: I play significantly better than I did before his coaching. He knows much, much more than I about music and about being a musician. As my resistance has decreased, I have surrendered to his guidance, and have come to trust him deeply.

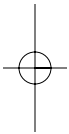
From *The Musical Life*: "I am certain that my teacher knows my heart, has known it all along, and has given me exactly what I need this very morning - the right notes with the right qualities and intensities - to further my unfolding." This very morning, Brooks and I discussed my solo concert, my first ever, that I'm planning to give six months from now. Brooks fed me information about how many minutes of music to prepare, suggested factors to consider when deciding the order of the pieces, and gave me good reasons to continue my etudes rather than concentrating only on my concert repertoire. He knows what I need.

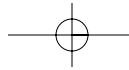
In the process of tackling the immensely difficult task of learning to play the flute, I turn to my teacher when I get lost and confused. Instead of spending hours researching how to play a particular embellishment, I can simply ask Brooks. When I can't decide which piece to perform, I can count on him for his honest opinion. After I've endlessly practiced the same blasted phrase and it still isn't smooth, I can put aside my frustration, knowing that my teacher will suggest a different approach. So much of life requires self-reliance and autonomous responsibility. What a relief that, although the work of mastering the flute is mine, I don't have to figure it all out by myself.

On the other hand, I feel vulnerable in this relationship. I'm used to feeling capable and knowledgeable, and, I've been told, I appear that way to others. In front of my teacher, I have to allow myself *not* to know, *not* to be able, *not* to have it all together. According to Stephanie Judy, "If we're to endure as musicians, our desire to make music has to be stronger than our need to appear competent. For those of us who make music out of a heartfelt desire, a lesson becomes a time of laying our hearts open. The emotional turmoil we go through may be disabling at times, but it is also a testament to the very real intensity and human significance of music itself." Whenever I

**. . . I turn to my teacher when I get lost and confused**

**". . . our desire to make music has to be stronger than our need to appear competent."**





notice that I'm looking for my teacher's approval more than I'm seeking a deeper musical experience, I realize that I've given too much power to him, and I take it back.

Nowhere has this been harder than during a performance. Although generally I'm free and uninhibited when I perform, I feel tense when Brooks is in the audience. The little girl in me who was overly criticized by her father cringes and tightens up and wants to run away. Instead of immersing herself in and flowing with the music, all she can hear are the mistakes and imperfections through Brooks' ears. This, I believe, is where my growing edge is right now. I'm working to free my inner musical child and overcome this fear. My father was too critical of me, but my teacher is complimentary and supportive, voicing corrections in a positive way. My fear, an old survival response, is no longer helpful or necessary.

Not long ago, I was given the gift of being shown that I'm on the road to success with this challenge. My adult students and I

had a seminar about performance anxiety, during which the leader asked each of us to play a piece we had never seen before, without preparation. Brooks was there, and when it was my turn to play, even though I wasn't at all pleased with the quality of my playing, I imagined, for the first time ever, that Brooks was proud of me.

Whether or not he actually was is irrelevant; a space opened in me in which the *possibility* of his pride in my playing was present. That awareness showed me that my self-esteem has indeed risen. As a musician, I am beginning to believe, truly believe, that I am worthy of pride and respect, rather than criticism and dismissal.

Again from *The Musical Life*: "When you have found your true

teacher, don't hide. Wherever he or she lives, go there, even if you have to take an airplane or hike into the wilderness." Sometimes I get nervous or insecure, but I tell Brooks about all these complexities. He looks directly at me as he listens, and I see understanding in his eyes. He's willing to talk at a more than superficial level and to share experiences regarding his own former teachers.

"My teacher" - such beautiful words, such a blessed gift. I'm aware of what an important, unique, and special role Brooks plays in my life. In conversations with friends or fellow music makers I often say, "My teacher

**... a space opened in me in which the possibility of his pride in my playing was present.**

**"When you have found your true teacher, don't hide."**

explained it this way" or "My teacher showed me how to so-and-so." When I instruct my own flute students, I sometimes hear Brooks' voice in my head or his words come out of my mouth, as I pass on the skill to play this exquisite instrument. And by confronting my own issues with curiosity and purpose, I find the strength, support, and love that allow my spirit to shine with truthfulness and wholeness as a maker of music.

**References in the order mentioned:**

Mathieu, W. A. *The Listening Book*. Boston: Shambhala, 1991, page 116  
 Judy, S. *Making Music for the Joy Of It*. Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1990, page 69  
 Mathieu, W. A. *The Musical Life*. Boston: Shambhala, 1994, page 150; page 116

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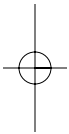


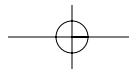
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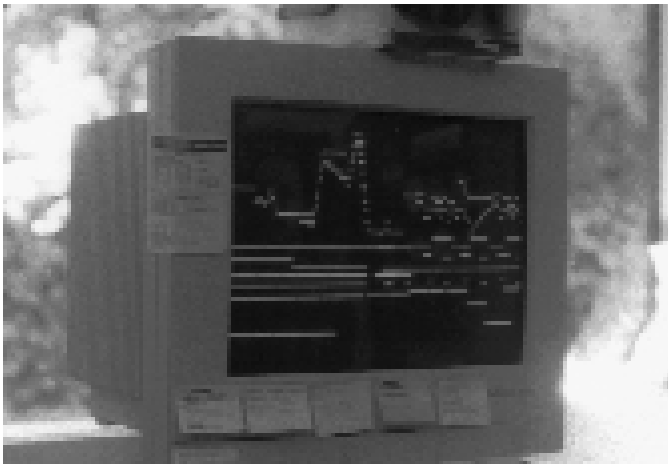


## SEEING MUSIC: THE ART OF STEPHEN MALINOWSKI

by Ted Rust

Stephen Malinowski wants people to see his music.

Twenty years ago Malinowski made a bar graph representing the score of Bach's Third Brandenburg Concerto on a roll of adding-machine paper with felt pens. Individual notes are shown as horizontal colored lines — one color for each instrument, length representing duration and height representing pitch. The result is still on his desk: a simple, clear, slightly unwieldy map of the composition. It is surprisingly beautiful, with abstract patterns reminiscent of Bargello needlework. The concept gradually evolved in succeeding years. The first idea was a machine to scroll the paper along with the music; then he conceived of using an animated film, and in 1985, he developed his first computer-driven animation. At that stage, the musical score had to be laboriously translated into numerical code. With the emergence of MIDI technology in the late 1980s, it became possible to translate the notes into computer code simply by playing them on a keyboard, and Malinowski developed his performance editing software, "The Music Animation Machine," that produces scrolling notation on a computer screen in bars of color that light up when the corresponding note sounds (photo below).



In 1990 he produced a beautiful demonstration videotape of his keyboard performances with their animated scores, using twelve examples of Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and modern music, including two short compositions of his own.\* The music notation is in the same basic format as the original paper tape, but larger in scale and synchronized with musical sound. The demonstration video contains several experiments in the use of color: in some pieces color represents separate voices, as in the original

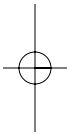
version, but in others color represents dynamic levels, motives, or textures. This videotape was created to show off the ability of Malinowski's scrolling graphic score to make complex music scores intuitively understandable. The tape is more than a demonstration however; it is a work of art in itself. Malinowski's refined keyboard playing and his elegant graphic style illuminate the music. Curiously, as the visual presentation makes the structure of the music more apparent, it seems to make the emotional content of the music more vivid as well.

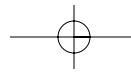
Much of Malinowski's current work is devoted to extending his visual language to represent various qualities of music more explicitly than was possible in the original format. He has turned his attention to harmony, timbre and rhythm.

Malinowski's graphical vocabulary for harmony uses a twelve-hued color wheel as a symbol for the twelve tones of a circle of fifths. A delightful property of this map is that consonances look consonant and dissonances look dissonant. A major triad falls on three similar colors in a closely-grouped triangle. A tritone — *diabolus in musica!* — becomes a pair of complementary colors slashing fiercely across the screen at each other like fire and ice. Higher-order chords show their main colorations in a coherent group, and each of their off-key tendencies flash off in contrasting hues and directions (photo below).



This color scheme works nicely in combination with the original bar graph format: each note is simply assigned both a color and a vertical position based on its pitch. This sounds redundant but isn't, because the vertical position is still needed to tell what octave the note is in and to view the melodic contours, while only color can show where the note lies on the circle of fifths. For more detailed study of harmony, the harmony can be displayed as a pie-chart, either by itself or along with the scrolling score on a second screen.





Malinowski's graphic representation of timbre, which he calls "Voice Tracker," selectively displays certain aspects of sound that are of musical interest: the frequency (pitch) of the fundamental, its amplitude (loudness), and the amplitudes of the first several partials in a harmonic series above the fundamental, as they vary in time. (We don't need to know the frequencies of the upper partials, since they are determined the fundamental. These acoustical terms are explained in "Timbre," June, 1995.)

An example of the Voice Tracker display is shown below. The fundamental is represented by a horizontal band of color, its pitch by the vertical position of the band and its amplitude by the thickness of the band from bottom to top. The harmonic series of partials are shown as a stack of bands in contrasting colors, each one thicker or thinner to represent its relative prominence in the overall blend of sound. Time stretches horizontally. Note changes, vowel changes, *portamento* and vibrato are clearly visible in the display. Voice Tracker would seem to have great potential as a tool for voice instruction and instrument voicing, once equipment to make the system fast enough to give visual feedback to the performer becomes commercially available. This representation of timbre has not been integrated with the scrolling score display.

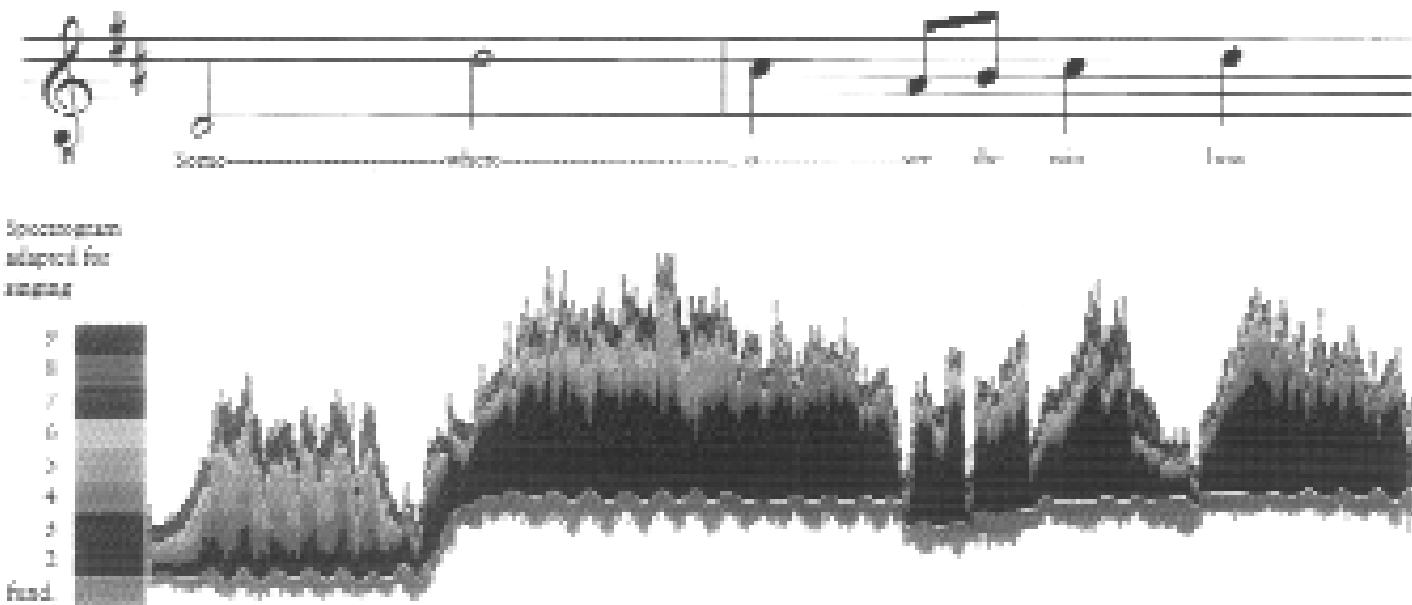
Malinowski's graphical vocabulary for meter and rhythm is still in the experimental stage. He is working with images of rotating wheels and interlocking gears to symbolize repeating and nesting rhythmic patterns.

Marketing his products has been a challenge for Malinowski, despite the sophistication of his software and the artistry of his demonstration tape. He had initially hoped the demonstration tape would stimulate other animators and software developers to work with the scrolling score concept. He has been disappointed with the response. In a tone of resignation he told me, "What people are interested in are the animations, not the software." He has sold a couple thousand copies of the demonstration tape through the eminent graphic design scholar Edward Tufte, who shows it in his seminars as an example of graphic excellence. He would like to make and sell additional tapes for use in music appreciation classes.

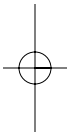
Meanwhile, the first demonstration videotape is a treasure. We can only be grateful that Malinowski is willing to throw himself into the creation of things so clear and beautiful in the world of music, and look forward to his next step in making music visible.

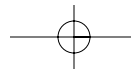
*\*Music Animation Machine Demonstration Reel, by Stephen Malinowski, 5876 Park Ave., Richmond, CA 94805. VHS, color, 40 minutes, \$25.00 postpaid.*

*Contents: D. Scarlatti, Sonata, K. 96, D major; W. Byrd, A Voluntarie: for my ladye nevell; J. S. Bach, Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1, Fugue #4, C# minor; Brandenburg Concerto #6, third movement; Chorale prelude: "Herr Gott, nun schleuss den Himmel auf"; Beethoven, Bagatelle, opus 33, #5; Chopin, Berceuse, opus 57; Etude, opus 10 #8; Fred Kasper, Palindrome Canon; Webern, Variationen, opus 27, #2; Malinowski, "Wedding" Etude; Fantasy in F.*



The vocal timbre of mezzo-soprano Lisa Turetsky as represented by Malinowski's Voice Tracker





**OVERUSE** continued from page 1

**PREDISPOSING FACTORS**

There are at least twelve general factors that predispose a musician to suffer from overuse injuries:

**1. Inadequate physical conditioning**

Muscles that are tight, weak, and inadequately conditioned are more susceptible to overuse injuries than muscles that are strong and flexible. (Physical conditioning for musicians is addressed in *The Musician's Survival Manual\** (MSM), chapter 13.)

**2. Sudden increase in the amount of playing time**

An abrupt increase in playing time is perhaps the most common cause of overuse injuries. Injuries often occur during summer music workshops when someone who has been playing one or two hours per day suddenly starts to play seven or eight hours per day. Preparing for recitals or juries, or taking extra gigs during a holiday season, can also lead to overuse injuries. When a period of increased practice or performance looms on the horizon, the best way to avoid overuse injuries is to increase practice time gradually over a few weeks.

**3. Errors in practice habits**

Musicians often report that they don't warm up at all, or consider simply playing scales or a few slow pieces to be an adequate warmup. At the very least, a good warmup includes the neck, arms, shoulders, and upper and lower back. Exercises might include slow rolling of the head, slow shoulder shrugs and rolls, side bends, and torso twists.

In general, practice sessions should be limited to about forty-five minutes, with a break of no less than five minutes to relax and shake out muscles. (One may continue to practice for several hours in this fashion.) Difficult or awkward passages should be practiced in short segments of not more than five minutes each.

**4. Errors of technique**

One of the most common technical errors is playing with excessive tension, which causes the muscles to work extra hard. This is particularly common in string players' left hands when playing *forte*. Despite the increase in bow pressure, the left hand should not have

to press down much harder than when playing *piano*. Pressing down even twenty to thirty per cent harder than necessary on the strings may have a cumulative effect, resulting in a gradual, progressive overuse injury.

Tendinitis in the left forearm, particularly of the extensor muscles (along the back of the forearm), is the most common injury I see among violinists and violists in my medical practice. Drumsticks, horns, etc., are commonly gripped harder than necessary, as are steering wheels, pens, and telephones!

Problems with excessive tension in muscle force also occur in the neck and left shoulder in violinists, often due to inadequate or improperly fitted chin rests and shoulder rests.

Motion analysis, which has been used to evaluate the technique of professional and Olympic athletes, can lead to a better understanding of bowing and fingering techniques. Motion analysis is already available in some performing arts medicine centers.

**5. Change in instrument**

Switching from violin to viola, from electric bass guitar to string bass, or to a piano with stiffer action can all predispose to overuse injuries. Whenever there is a change in instrument, including upgrading to a better instrument, the musician should back off slightly from a normal practice schedule, and build up again over the course of a week or two. The same is true when changing repertoire or teachers.

**6. Inadequate rehabilitation of previous injuries**

An important factor that is often overlooked is prior injury. The tendinitis, muscle sprain, or neck problem that has not completely resolved, but has been treated or rested just enough so that the person is able to resume playing, is likely to flare up with any additional stress. It is important to pursue therapy until the player is completely free of pain, and has fully regained range of motion, endurance, strength, and coordination.

**7. Improper body mechanics and posture**

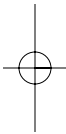
Disciplines such as yoga, the Alexander Technique, and Feldenkrais body-work are very important in correcting slumped posture or other poor body mechanics that increase the risk of injury, particularly to the neck and back. Proper posture is also important in carrying instruments. Of course, the heavier the instrument, the more problems it presents, especially for a small person. In general, it is best not to carry a heavy instrument with only one hand or hang it from one shoulder, as this creates undue strain on the shoulder and back. A better way is to use a strap that is long enough to go over the head and across the chest in order to distribute the weight of the instrument evenly. Backpacks or gig bags are available for heavy instruments. Wheels on the bottom of the case help cellists and bassists. When

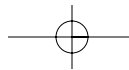
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lifting and carrying a heavy stringed instrument, it is important to observe proper body mechanics, such as bending from the knees and keeping the load close to the body (see *MSM*, chapters 5 and 6).

### 8. Stressful nonmusical activities

Refinishing furniture, pulling weeds, typing, knitting, or needlework can all result in tendinitis-like overuse problems. As with playing music, these injuries can be avoided by awareness, frequent rests, and gradual increases in the duration and intensity of the activity.

### 9. Anatomical variations

Musicians, especially string players, may experience problems resulting from anatomical anomalies exacerbated by the demands of a particular instrument. Examples are thoracic outlet syndrome (nerve or blood vessel compression at the base of the neck from an extra cervical rib), increased joint laxity, or abnormal tendon connections or insertions (see *MSM*, chapter 11).

### 10. Gender

Young women seem most at risk for overuse injuries, perhaps women's muscles are often smaller, and may therefore be more susceptible to overuse. This theory is supported by the finding that incidence of injury rises with increasing size of instrument. This should not discourage small persons from playing large instruments, but may indicate a need for better physical conditioning and practice habits.

### 11. Quality of instrument

A wind instrument with leaky valves or pads, a string instrument with a bridge or nut that is too high, or a piano that "speaks" poorly in the middle register necessitates extra or excessive force on the part of the player, with increased risk of injury.

### 12. Environmental factors

Inadequate lighting or poorly copied parts can cause eye-strain, but probably the most bothersome environmental factor is cold temperature. Playing evening concerts at outdoor music festivals in the Rockies or Berkshires towards the end of the summer or playing in stone cathedrals in midwinter can be chilling experiences! At low temperatures, nerve conduction slows, making it harder for the fingers to respond quickly. In addition, the fluid in the joints thickens, diminishing the sensitivity of the fingers. In this situation, the player needs to make sure he or she warms up adequately prior to play — a real physical warmup, not just scales. Appropriate dress is also important. Long sleeves and a high neckline may not be as stylish as a strapless gown for a female soloist, but may help avoid frozen hands. It may be necessary to wear long johns under a tux, or even thin, fingerless gloves if playing in a pit.

## SYMPTOMS

How do you know if you have developed an overuse

injury? The most common indicator is pain or discomfort. The earlier the symptoms are recognized and treated, the sooner and more completely recovery occurs. In the earliest stages, overuse injuries may be experienced as stiffness without significant pain.

## NERVE COMPRESSION

Numbness and tingling, the feeling of "pins and needles," or electric shock sensations are usually indicative of nerve compression.

Nerve compression occurs most commonly at the wrist as carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), which usually causes numbness and tingling in the thumb, index, and middle fingers. CTS can be associated with a flexed wrist position, such as when playing in tenth position or above on the violin or viola. Practicing in the higher positions for only short periods of time, if possible, will avoid irritating the nerve at the wrist.

Nerve compression in the index finger is common in flutists (left hand), bass players who use a French-style bow grip, and mallet players. This problem is often misdiagnosed as CTS by physicians unfamiliar with musicians' injuries (see *MSM*, chapter 8).

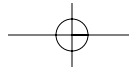
Compression of the ulnar nerve, which lies in the groove on the inside of the elbow (the "funny bone"), is called cubital tunnel syndrome (see *MSM*, chapter 7). When the elbow is bent (flexed), the canal of the cubital tunnel narrows and the nerve is stretched at the same time. The left elbow of the cellist (in the first few positions) and the right elbow of the piccolo player are particularly vulnerable due to the maximally flexed position. In the "chin strings," the rotated (supinated) and flexed position of the left arm, especially in the higher positions, also stresses the ulnar nerve at the elbow. One other factor for increased risk in string players is that the muscles, which align the wrist to play in the higher positions on violin or viola, surround the ulnar nerve at the elbow. When these muscles are working and contracting, they cause additional compression on the ulnar nerve.

Besides pain in the elbow region, symptoms of cubital tunnel syndrome include numbness and tingling in the fourth and fifth fingers of the hand, where the ulnar nerve ends; loss of coordination; and, in severe cases, muscle wasting (atrophy).

Nerves can also be compressed in the neck or thoracic outlet region (see *MSM*, chapter 4), producing similar symptoms in the hand. Electrodiagnostic testing can help pinpoint the sources of nerve compression.

## TREATMENT

Perhaps the most important treatment is rest. Depending on the severity of the injury, this may mean cutting back practice and performances, or stopping for



## OVERUSE

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a brief period of time when necessary. It is better to postpone an audition than to allow an injury to worsen.

During the period of rest, technique should be assessed by a professional, looking especially for areas of excessive tension or stress. If these are deemed significant factors by either the teacher or the physician, the musician would do well to consider a stress management program that includes biofeedback training. Biofeedback can be used for both general muscle relaxation and for playing an instrument, so one can learn to relax the specific muscle groups that may be overworking. Video feedback — watching oneself on a video monitor while working with a posture or movement specialist — is an effective tool; a permanent tape of the session can be made for further review. Alexander or Feldenkrais lessons are often helpful.

Easy stretching exercises to maintain length and movement in injured muscles and tendons are also important (see *The Musician's Survival Manual*, chapter 2), and should be preceded by gentle warmth to help relax the affected part. Stretching should be done only to the point of mild discomfort. As pain from the injury subsides, gentle strengthening exercises may be instituted. Although it is preferable to do these exercises under the supervision of an occupational or physical therapist, very judicious patients may continue at home. When the muscles being strengthened are small, it is better to proceed slowly and with caution than to risk re-injury. With forearm muscle overuse, special attention should be paid to strengthening muscles of the upper arms, chest, and trunk.

Thermotherapy in the form of ice massage and gentle heat is often effective. Heat should be applied before stretching and strengthening, with ice used afterward for five to ten minutes. Ice, rather than heat, should be used in acutely inflamed (hot) conditions. Anti-inflammatory medications such as Motrin, ibuprofen, aspirin, Indocin, and others may be used, but should never be the primary treatment. Persons with a history of bleeding or stomach ulcers should be especially cautious when using these medications.

## ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

One of the most commonly overlooked reasons for treatment failure in what might appear to be an adequate therapy program is the effect of activities of daily living (ADLs). When musicians complain of pain that accompanies ordinary activities such as brushing hair or teeth, opening doorknobs and the like, coupled with inability to play for a number of weeks, I always refer them for a session or two with an occupational therapist. During these sessions, ADLs are evaluated and modified, and adaptive equipment is introduced if necessary. For people with severe arthritis, there are

many adaptive devices that make ADLs easier on the arms and hands. These devices include built-up foam handles for eating utensils, writing utensils, hairbrushes, and razors. Levers attached to doorknobs ease opening. Jar wrenches remove lids without force; keyholders prevent pinching the key between the thumb and index finger when opening doors.

As driving can be very hard on the arms, particularly in a car without power steering or automatic transmission, one should drive as little as possible during recuperation. Musicians should avoid second jobs that require hand-intensive activities such as computer terminal operation, typing, waiting on tables, etc. Normal daily activities may be resumed gradually as symptoms subside. Meticulous attention to minimizing or eliminating the stress of daily activities on the hand and arms can make the difference between success and failure in the treatment of overuse injuries.

Surgery or cortisone injections are rarely indicated. However, conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome or tendinitis at the base of the thumb (de Quervain's disease) often respond well to injection or surgery when conservative treatment has been unsuccessful.

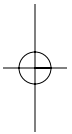
Splinting to rest the injured part is often helpful, particularly when the injury is in the dominant hand. A right-handed person with tendinitis of the right arm often has trouble remembering to use the left hand instead. To prevent use of the injured hand, the splint should come all the way out to the tips of the fingers (full-length resting splint). Care must be taken not to provoke injury in the opposite arm by the added, unaccustomed use of that side. Removing the splint several times a day to do gentle movements and muscle contractions will prevent stiffness and soreness of the splinted part. Splints custom-molded by an occupational therapist will provide maximum comfort and optimal fit. Slings should be avoided, if possible, as there is some risk of ulnar nerve compression from prolonged elbow flexion.

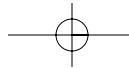
## SUMMARY

Overuse injury need not be the bane of a musician. It can often be prevented or treated successfully in its early stages, but for this to happen, increased awareness and recognition of the problem are needed. Prevention, as always, remains the best medicine.

*Richard Norris is a flutist. He is medical director of the National Arts Medicine Center in Bethesda, MD.*

*This article was previously published as Chapter 1 of The Musician's Survival Manual: A Guide to Preventing and Treating Injuries in Instrumentalists by Richard Norris, M.D., © 1993, and is used and edited with permission of the author. The book is available for \$16.95 from MMB Music, Inc., 3526 Washington Ave., St. Louis, MO 63103-1019 USA, 800/543-3771, fax 314/531-8384.*





**ON THE BOARDS**

continued from page 1

its first production, Richard Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*. Then, almost a year later, it did a superlative job on Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, and took an even bigger bath, losing \$30,000. When it picked *La Traviata* for their third production, I was now a Trustee of the Association, and fearful of a genuine fiscal disaster.

But then some extraordinary developments took place. The founder of the company announced that she was suspending her lucrative law practice to concentrate on nothing but the opera company for a year. Shortly afterward, another board member loaned the company free use of an office for an indefinite period, and the company set its sights on the best possible staffing, cast and production.

They hired Frances Ginsberg of the New York City Opera as Violetta. (One critic had called her the best Violetta in the US.) They engaged the well-known conductor Valéry Rivkin, and as director, Fabrizio Melano, formerly of the Metropolitan Opera Company. A costumier and costumes were also brought in from New York. This is not what one calls pulling in one's fiscal horns.

As a result of the executive director's enormous time and energy spent on promotion, every seat in the old Lobero Theater was sold for all five performances before opening night. At press time, officials were predicting a modest profit of \$6,000, our first. And as a result of the great staffing and production, the artistic experience was sublime. The whole company was in top voice for every one of those shows. The *Santa Barbara News-Press* gave us a rave:

"This particular *La Traviata* production is admirable, dramatic, poignant in many places, and in a number of ways manages to get a tear from the steeliest heart [sic]. It is well worth seeing — anyone in the wildly cheering, standing ovation crowd on opening night could tell you this."

Government entities have now responded favorably to our applications for grant support, and we are all looking forward to our next production. The Santa Barbara Grand Opera Association is no longer a speculative venture, but a fixture in the cultural life of a culturally crowded community. The Association is once again on the board, and I again am on the boards.

*James Kimberly sings bass and plays percussion. A professional fundraising consultant for non-profit corporations, he lives in Montecito, California.*



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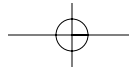
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