

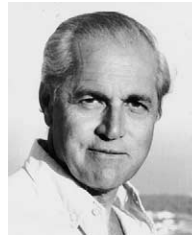


## Preface

### The musician's hand



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*Guest Editors*

The August 1990 issue of the *Hand Clinics*, entitled “Hand Injuries in Sports and Performing Arts,” was an important one. This was the first substantive publication on musicians in the English hand surgical literature—slightly more than half of the articles were devoted to musicians’ injuries. Many of these articles have subsequently been recognized as definitive. Now, more than 12 years later, an opportunity to update this information has arisen. Many of the writers who contributed to the August 1990 issue are again contributing to this issue, but this time the entire issue is devoted to the subject of musicians’ hand problems. Why is there so much interest in this topic when the vast majority of musicians’ problems are nonsurgical and most surgeons have only the time or interest to study specific surgical topics?

First, musicians can suffer coincidental trauma at home, at play, and in other accidents (eg, car accidents). The management of these injuries within the context of their musical requirements requires a high level of sophistication; in many situations it may even require modifications of basic technique.

Second, the diagnosis of nontrauma-related painful conditions in the hands and arms of musicians, which is often confused by the lan-

guage used by the musicians and by their accentuated concerns and fears, is extremely difficult. Because hand surgeons have an intimate knowledge of upper limb anatomy, they are ideal candidates for providing an anatomical diagnosis, whereas nonspecialists may dismiss a painful condition.

Third, particularly in this era of concern regarding repetitive stress injury, cumulative trauma, and overuse, the anatomical knowledge possessed by hand surgeons is invaluable in obtaining a true and realistic assessment of patients labeled as such, including musicians. Interestingly, the incidence of the specific defined conditions linked to repetition seems to occur less often in professional musicians than in the general public, with the exception of focal dystonia. Focal dystonia is significantly more common in musicians and poses a major problem in terms of its diagnosis and treatment. Hence, this nonsurgical condition is dealt with quite extensively in this issue, both from a neurophysiological and clinical perspective. It is imperative that surgeons have some awareness and understanding of the condition when examining and treating musicians.

It is appropriate that this issue of the *Hand Clinics* is one of the international series, because it is only through international cooperation and

sharing of knowledge that the very narrow speciality of musicians' hand problems will be allowed to grow and mature. Many European countries now have national organizations involved in performing arts medicine, as does the United States. Each organization functions within the socio-economic and medico-economic environment of its country, and there are now established formal links between most of these organizations. Four of the more prominent organizations and their national roles are described in the appendix to this issue.

I was honored to have been invited by Raoul Tubiana to coedit this issue. I have found the contributions fascinating, and it is my hope that the readers find them fascinating as well. I thank all

the contributors for their hard work, and I also thank WB Saunders and their editorial staff for their support and help.

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