

Warm Ups, Cool Downs and everything in Between: String Players and the Legacy of Dr. Alice Brandfonbrener, Founder of Performing Arts Medicine

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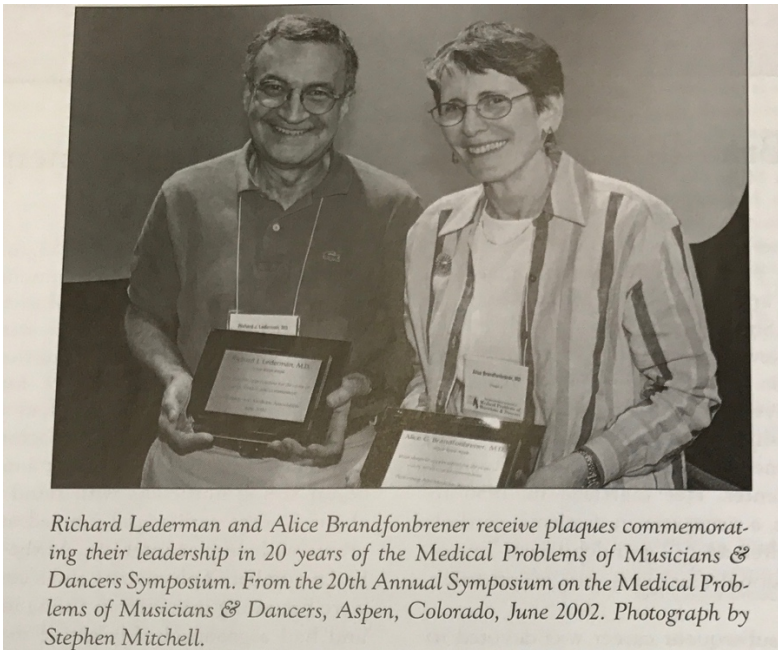
Alice Brandfonbrener, MD, with her dog Rosina in 2012.
Performing Arts Medicine Association

In the past thirty years, the number of clinics and providers specializing in performing arts medicine has grown exponentially, as has awareness among performers and teachers of appropriate use of the body, strategies for avoiding injury and resources for healing. It is widely acknowledged that Dr. Alice Brandfonbrenner (1931-2014) was among the foremost pioneers in this specialization and the move away from “playing hurt” is her legacy. Dr. Brandfonbrenner was the founder and director of the Medical Program for Performing Artists in Chicago. She helped start and was the chief editor of the first journal in the field, *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, co-wrote the first "Performing Arts Medicine" textbook and was one of the founders and the first president of the Performing Arts Medicine Association. Her work, and that of colleagues she inspired, has been of seminal importance in the quest to find better ways to use the body in practice and performance. a more holistic approach to a life-long performing career and great sensitivity concerning working conditions among employers. The warm up and cool down routines Dr. Brandfonbrenner developed along with other tools (such as Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method) can be part of a more holistic approach to a life-long performing career. She advocated tirelessly and effectively for great sensitivity concerning working conditions among employers.

Though work remains to be done, some facts of life for performers pre-Brandfonbrener are difficult to imagine now: artists ill-served by medical profession; orchestral managements unwilling to allow time for recovery; employers AND peers willing to label injured musicians naturally de-selected. Any time a teacher looks at the whole person and use of the entire body, counsels a student on healthy habits or injury prevention, refers someone to a reputable performing arts clinic, there are thanks due to Alice Brandfonbener.

Alice Brandfonbrener Timeline

- 1931- Born, Alice Gutman, New York City
- 1952- Graduated from Wellesley College
- 1957- Medical Degree from Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons; married cardiologist Martin Brandfonbrener
- 1964- After residency at Northwestern University Medical Center, moved to Albuquerque for several years, for a job for Martin; Alice worked in student health at University of New Mexico.
- 1968- Returned to Chicago where Alice worked in student health at Northwestern University, seeing, more and more, music students.
- 1971- (Until 1977) Appointed Director of Health Service, National Music Camp, Interlochen, MI (begun as a way to afford her children attending the camp)
- 1978- (Until 1985) After oldest son Mark won fellowship to Aspen; Alice persuaded Festival to create and hire her for the position of Health Service Director
- 1983- Outpatient Director of Northwestern University Student Health Service, Evanston campus.
- 1985- Same position, Chicago campus. Established the Medical Program for Performing Artists at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, one of the first such clinics in the world.
- 1983- First Aspen Symposium on the Medical Problems of Musicians; participants included Dorothy Delay, Jan DeGaetani, Harold C. Schonberg
- 1986- Co-founder and first Editor-in-chief of the journal Medical Problems of Performing Artists (first issue published article by Gary Graffman)
- 1990- Clinic moved to the Northwestern Memorial Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago; over 15 year period, saw thousands of musicians and mentored dozens of health care students from all over the world.
- 2014- May 31st, Alice Brandfonbrener dies peacefully at home, after a protracted illness.



The presenter gratefully acknowledges the generous contributions of time and insight by Amy Brandfonbrener, Mark Brandfonbrener and Professor Alan Harris.

Alice G. Brandfonbrener's Warm up and Cool-down Exercises

Warm-up exercises: prior to playing the instrument

The optimum speed of chemical reaction and metabolism is 102–103°F. Evidence suggests that speed, strength and efficiency of contractions are enhanced by a rise in temperature of muscle toward that range. The only efficient way of raising muscle temperature is by work of the muscle itself. 10–15 minutes of active exercise for all upper extremity joints is recommended.

Exercises:

1. Shoulder flexion: both arms raised overhead then relaxed to sides, 20 reps.
2. Shoulder abduction: both arms at sides raise outward and upward overhead. Then relax to sides, 20 reps.
3. Shoulder shrugs - 20 reps
4. Pinch shoulder blades together - 20 reps
5. Elbow flexion: extend-bend and straighten elbows fully, 20 reps.
Shoulder circles: arms at sides, rotate shoulders in circles. 7 reps forward, 7 reps reverse.
6. Palms up/palms down-20 reps.
7. Wrists up-wrists down-20 reps.
8. Bend wrist to little finger side, then thumb side, 20 reps
9. Spread fingers-squeeze together, 10 reps
10. Bend fingers at PIP joints and DIP joints keeping MP joints straight, as in a hook. 10 reps.

Avoid jerking motions. Perform each exercise smoothly and with moderate speed.

Cool down exercises: following performance/practice

After vigorous activity muscles may tend to cramp or experience fatigue/discomfort.

Stretching muscles their entire length, holding, and then relaxing, helps to alleviate these conditions. 10 to 15 minutes is recommended.

Hold each for a long 5 count.

Exercises:

1. Raise arms overhead, five reps.
2. Touch opposite shoulder and hold, five reps each arm.
3. Bend neck to the right, then to the left; hold each for five count. Five reps.
4. Hands behind head, elbows out to the side. Five reps.
5. Clasp hands behind hips and roll shoulders forward. Five reps.
6. Make a fist and bend wrist downward. Five reps.
7. Straighten fingers and straighten the wrist backwards. Five reps
8. Fingers spread, then relax. Five reps

Resources

Report of a study on violinist/violist set-up - <http://www.violinistinbalance.nl/>

Video interview with Alice Brandfonbrener: <https://vimeo.com/51237352>

Medical Problems of Performing Artists

(Official journal of the Performing Arts Medical Association, PAMA)

www.artsmed.org

Books

Alcantara, Pedro de. Indirect Procedures: A Musician's Guide to the Alexander Technique.

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Portland: Andover Press, 1998.

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Kearney, Nebraska: Morris Publishing, 2002.

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Sataloff, Robert T., Alice G. Brandfonbrener, Richard J. Lederman, eds. Textbook of Performing Arts Medicine.
New York: Raven Press, 1990.

Thesis

Rush, Michelle L. A Resource Guide for the Injured String Player, 2003, Florida State University

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Brandfonbrener, Alice. "The Medical Problems of Musicians." *American Music Teacher* 37:5 (April/May 1988): 11-13, 24-25.

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Jun 2005 Vol 20 No 2

Competition in the Arts: Risks and Benefits [Editorial]

Alice G. Brandfonbrener; From: Dec 2004 Vol 19 No 4

Interview with Yo Yo Ma (parts I and II) [anniversary article] Alice G. Brandfonbrener

From: *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*: Volume 20 Number 3: Page 140 (September 2005)

Encore: a second interview with Yo Yo Ma Alice G. Brandfonbrener

From: *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*: Volume 3 Number 3: Page 94 (September 1988) (free access)

Memorization: A Learned Skill or an Inborn Talent? [Editorial]

Alice G. Brandfonbrener

From: Sep 2001 Vol 16 No 3

"It's the Music, Stupid," or Why Are Performers So Conservative? [Editorial]

Alice G. Brandfonbrener - From: Dec 2001 Vol 16 No 4

Graffman, Gary. "Doctor, Can You Lend an Ear?"

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