

**LEARNING AND TEACHING HEALTHY PIANO TECHNIQUE:
Training as an Instructor in the Taubman Approach by Therese Milanovic**

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Submitted by Judith Ammann

"I was diagnosed with de Quervain's tendonitis ...in my first year studying at Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University shortly after my eighteenth birthday. The prescribed six weeks without practice seemed like an eternity. Little did I suspect there would be another 9 years of struggle ahead."

So begins the document of Therese Milanovic's personal suffering with PRMD (Playing-Related Musculo-skeletal Disorder). After brief experience with the Taubman's Approach, Milanovic's had some relief from her pain. She bravely decided to leave her career behind and go to New York for 3 months of intense study of the Taubman Approach at the Golandsky Institute. This book is a detailed account of her lessons, her frustrations with herself in diary form, her anger with past teachers, her questions and where they led her.

In spite of advances in understanding of the human body in the last century, technical knowledge of playing one's instrument has been passed down largely unquestioned over the generations. We teach the way we were taught....unfortunately we thought that pain is sometimes a sacrifice one makes for one's art.

Dorothy Taubman (1918-2013) was 20 years ahead of her time. In the 1960s, there was very little discussion about musician injuries. Dorothy Taubman formulated her approach to teaching by analyzing her own technique and that of virtuoso musicians around her and by observing and helping those musicians who were willing to admit that they were in pain. Very broadly speaking, her approach is based on an understanding of the physiology of the body and what is "natural" as opposed to "historically accepted". She developed an approach that led many gifted musicians to effortless and brilliant technique, and more importantly, prevented and actually cured fatigue and pain from playing-related injuries. Leon Fleischer (a PRMD sufferer) is quoted as saying, "Dorothy is absolutely extraordinary in her intuition of when you have pain, where it is you are doing something wrong and how you can get rid of it".

Taubman did not keep organized her notes and resources so, sadly, many of them await organization and publication. There are recommended DVDs but there is strong recommendation to seek out a Taubman teacher, in person.

This book by Milanovic discusses every aspect of PRMDs – Playing-related musculo-skeletal disorders. She covers how and why they occur (and surprisingly, it is not "overuse", it is often "misuse" by stretching the hand out of natural positions). There are excellent drawings to illustrate the arm, hand, fingers. She discusses postures, alignment, key-bedding, teaching children, teaching injured students, emotions – and the list could go on. There are dozens of pages showing new fingering options so that stretching, crowding and twisting can be avoided. The diary entries are honest and show Milanovic at her most vulnerable. She was brave to share them and they are fascinating to read.

I cannot think of a single colleague who would not enjoy this book. It's almost 600 pages should not be a deterrent – 50 of them are Bibliography. I will incorporate the information in my own practicing and in my teaching. It would be the perfect gift for anyone who aspires to virtuosic playing of an instrument. It should be required reading in college music curriculum. It will inspire you!