



FOR PERFORMERS

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Kinesiology, Brain Gym®, Cranio-Sacral Therapy, Sound Healing, Music and Movement Improvisation

Working With Performers and Artists

I use a variety of modalities to address a variety of conditions. No two sessions are alike, and often I combine modalities to best address the needs of the individual. Issues I feel particularly equipped to work with are:

Performance-related pain, especially related to back, arms, shoulders, and cranium. I have experience with *carpal tunnel, tendonitis, dystonia, tinnitus, hearing loss*, and various *unnamed patterns of pain* having to do with the way any instrument – piano, guitar, computer, paintbrush, jackhammer – is used. I work in three primary ways:

1. *Body work to release muscle tension and realign structure*

Usually, pain means that muscles are in spasm and structure is out of whack. To address pain in any lasting way, we need to put the body back to neutral.

2. *Redesigning mechanics of movement by forming new movement patterns*

I look at the whole body as a system that expresses energy through an integrated collection of moving parts. I observe and analyze the way the moving parts of the body function together, asking questions like: What muscles are being used as the fulcrum for the joints and levers? Where is shock being absorbed? Does the movement impulse originate in the core of the body or at the peripheries? Etc. I also look at the performance environment: the height of the piano or computer keyboard. Your shoes. The noise level you habitually work in. Working with all of these factors contribute to creating a lasting change.

3. *Looking at emotional triggers.* Often, the physical manifestation of pain is related to the circumstances in which it first occurred. Just as frequently, the experience of pain *creates* a kind of anxiety and fear that won't let go, even when the physical reason for pain is gone. Through Brain Gym and other techniques, we can "repattern" the neurology to release these phantom reasons for pain.

Performance Anxiety and other emotional issues

Brain Gym is a perfect modality for these issues, both as content and as a framework to enhance your own favorite ways to integrate yourself. I work with two kinds of issues:

1. releasing trauma

Often, anxiety issues have a basis in a particular experience, or group of experiences. By “clearing” these issues, we set the stage for effective and joyful performance experiences.

2. instant integration tricks, both back- and on- stage

Brain Gym and other forms of specialized kinesiology is full of techniques to help every kind of performer. Through neurologically directed movement, we can instantly reset the anxiety button and get back to clear, effective, integrated performance.

For a personal example, read *Wizard Oil* below.

Interpretive Freedom

Writer’s blocks, feelings of not accessing your true voice, feeling in a rut, creatively – we have a variety of modalities to free the creative juices and get the real you flowing again.

Types of Issues and Modalities

Issues can arise for any reason. Sometimes, they are **physical**, born of old habit patterns, acute injury, or congenital problems. We may do **craniosacral** work to unkink the dura and get the cerebrospinal flow moving naturally again. We may identify which muscles you’re using to perform a certain task, and find others that help you do the task efficiently, without pain. We may work with **infant reflexes**, to release old movement patterns and replace them with the ease of movement we knew as babies.

Sometimes, issues are **emotional**. Working these through can involve directly addressing traumatic material, through conversation or role play. Sometimes, we work indirectly, by creating a positive experience and a new neural pattern to replace the old traumatic one. Often, we do both. Addressing emotional issues, more than any other kind, tends to run the gamut of modality possibilities – from craniosacral to musical improvisation to infant reflexes and Brain Gym and beyond. Whatever we choose to do is responsive to your own level of safety, comfort, and expectation.

Sometimes issues are related to **vision** – the difficulties of quickly refocusing between a page of music and conductor’s arm, for example. We can use a repertoire of **Brain Gym** balances specifically for addressing visual processing issues, and sometimes craniosacral therapy is also helpful.

Sometimes issues have to do with auditory processing – whether you are actually **hearing** with accuracy. **Tuning fork therapy** is a simple and powerful technique for moving cranial bones and removing blocks in the connective tissue, as well as translating hearing into neurological signals. I often use tuning forks in conjunction with craniosacral therapy to open up the hearing mechanism.

Sometimes issues are **interpretive**, and have to do with producing the sound or movement we have inside us, but can’t get out accurately. Sometimes, we are blocked, and can’t access our vision. Often, **musical improvisation** opens up avenues of self-expression and flow that can be translated to any music, any words, any visual or movement media. We can use movement improvisation in the same way.

And usually issues are a **combination** of some or all of these factors! In a single session, we often touch upon several modalities. Each individual sets a

personal goal. The individual intention is what directs the path of the session. You are in control.

How I Came Into This Work

Music and Kinesiology

I understand the varied issues of performers and artists - mostly because I *am* one. In addition to my body-mind work at The Lydian Center, I am a professional pianist, composer/improviser, recording artist, and teacher.

I came to my first real awareness of body mechanics in my early twenties through a rigorous re-learning of piano technique with Mary Sauer (pianist with The Chicago Symphony Orchestra). I had to jettison my repertoire and concentrate on strange exercises that involved things like isolating muscles, playing while sitting on the floor, and trying not to crush some magic “sphere” that she assured me was vibrating between my body and the piano. Through this strange, zen-like practice, I began to be aware of energy flow. Hawk-like, I would scrutinize every performer – on any instrument - trying to see from where *they* generated their tone, their rhythmic impulse. It got so that I could almost hear the kind of sound they would produce before they played, simply by watching their physical impulse towards the first sound. These observation skills have been honed by my later training in craniosacral therapy, infant reflexes, and kinesiology – as well as thirty years of teaching music to all ages, from infants to senior citizens, and to all levels, from the earliest beginner to the university professor.

Wizard Oil – How Brain Gym Got Me Performing Again

In 2000, I became licensed as a Brain Gym Instructor. I wanted professionally “out” of music for two reasons. First, the students that came to me seemed to need so much *more* than piano lessons. More and more, as the years went by, kids would come in with all sorts of learning and coordination issues, or intense emotional stress. And it seemed that the adult students actually needed therapy for their damaging early musical experiences, like being told just to move their mouths in the school chorus, or of having quarters put on the backs of their hands while they practiced. It was exhausting.

Second, I was disgusted with my own lack of consistency as a performer. No matter how much I prepared, I could never be sure that I wouldn’t crash and burn. The better I played, the more likely I was to sabotage myself with a thought like, “What if I were to make a mistake right now?” Of course, I always would. Although I loved performing, and was a natural at it, I couldn’t seem to stay *in* the music.

At the time, I was working as an accompanist in a private school, and one day the violin teacher tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I wanted to play a trio for a faculty recital. Before I could think, I said, “I’d love to.” I hadn’t performed in years. All my compensations had eroded away. Not only was I rusty, I was freaked out.

But this was the first time I had Brain Gym as a tool. Brain Gym is a collection of simple movements that retrain neurological pathways of habit – on physical and emotional and cognitive levels. It also provides a framework called the “balance” for setting goals and achieving them. So, as I practiced, I balanced

The dress rehearsal was awful. I couldn't hear or read the music accurately or connect musically with my colleagues. I felt like a complete amateur.

So I went home and balanced. I "repatterned" every tricky technical passage, every saboteur-like thought pattern, every stomach butterfly. And at the next evening's performance, I couldn't *make* myself make a mistake.

The "what-if?" thought started to appear from its usual front row seat of my left brain, and then a big boxing glove appeared from somewhere in my right hemisphere bleachers and knocked it flying. My page turner missed a repeat, and even knocked my music off the stand, but nothing fazed me. The ensemble was electric. We got a standing ovation.

I've never looked back. I can still get nervous before performances, and I of course need to prepare – Brain Gym makes practice more efficient; it doesn't substitute for it! But the difference is that I now know, when a performance issue arises, that I have the tools to deal with it. I am empowered.

What I Offer

What I have to give is not an assurance that issues won't crop up – they always do! But, through body-mind work in the session, and through simple, practical techniques to use on your own, I offer the security of knowing that, when an issue arises for you, it can be addressed.

Seeking help is not an admission of weakness, but a sensible awareness of our connectedness a human beings. We all need each other, at times, which is a good thing for artists, or else we'd all be in ivory towers, with nothing deep to share!

My job is to give you the tools to do whatever you most want to do. To paint the most exquisite line. To speak with authority and presence. To dance like a leaf in the wind. To make music so beautiful that all the animals will creep close to listen. To reach your full potential, both as an artist and as a person. My goal, as a practitioner, is that you achieve yours.