

The Female Voice

J Abitbol

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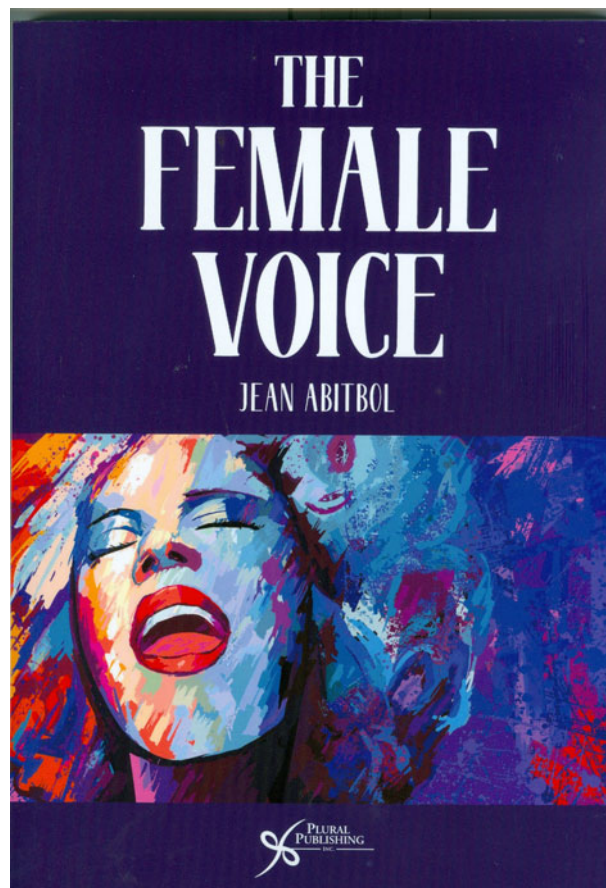
Dr Jean Abitbol is fondly remembered in the North East of England for his annual contribution to our laser course. He would sacrifice the joys of Paris for the obvious pleasures of Middlesbrough, and he did always add that certain 'style' to the proceedings and course dinner. I have, however, never forgotten the one catering disaster, which subjected him to a culinary experience not inflicted on any Frenchman by the British since the prison hulks of the Napoleonic Wars. He forgave us.

Plural Publishing does offer a vast range of books on voice disorders, as is so well demonstrated by a Google search for 'Plural Publishing voice'. I try to concentrate on reviewing only those with a general rather than subspecialist interest, and, so, have presented but a small fraction of the output in this journal.

The introduction captures the flavour of the book, telling us that 'If the man is the Spartacus of the voice, Athena is the woman where the voice is the instrument between emotion and reason' or, later, 'As a ship on the waves of the sea of life, the voice will travel through the wind of the hormones and emotions'. I am convinced this would have read even better in the French language.

The text is very thought-provoking, ranging from the evolution of voice ('Eve's mitochondria') through the hormonal effects associated with puberty, the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and the menopause, each meriting its own chapter. The sacrifice of the castrati and their resulting vocal prowess is covered in detail, as is the challenge of gender reassignment and the voice. There is much here of basic science, whether the simultaneous cytological changes in vocal fold epithelium and that of the cervix, or the central pathways for language and voice. Phonosurgery is very much the province of Dr Abitbol, and there is many an illustration of laser endoscopy. The emphasis is holistic, however, with chapter titles such as 'Madame, keep your voice fit' or 'The female voice and seduction', quite irresistible.

A book of this title hardly needs a review, as the content is self-evident, but this is an excellent read for any laryngologist.



It carries an oft-repeated message to any surgeon, however. True wisdom is often the gift of knowing when not to operate, as the most technically successful outcome does not always lead to patient satisfaction. Many an anecdote illustrates this, and reminded me that there is a certain art, indeed theatre, to voice work, beyond any other subspecialty in our field of work. It is an excellent and inexpensive read.

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