

THE PERFORMER'S VOICE, 2ND EDN

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I was not too sure this book would appeal to me. This feeling only increased when, on opening its box, I was showered in polystyrene beads. I thought it would be a worthy tome, but highly specialised, and I was not too sure whom I could call upon for a review. The old principle runs 'If you want a job doing' etc. So, although my musical tastes are more The Grateful Dead than Grand Opera, and my only attempt at singing is at West Ham United away matches, I thought I would see what it had to offer.

This is a large book (463 pages and almost too big for my flatbed scanner, with thousands of polystyrene beads in my packing). Despite a multi-author content, there is a consistent style throughout. That style is wonderfully informal, frequently witty and, I now realise, the overriding message is that dealing with 'The Performer's Voice' is best left to the experts!

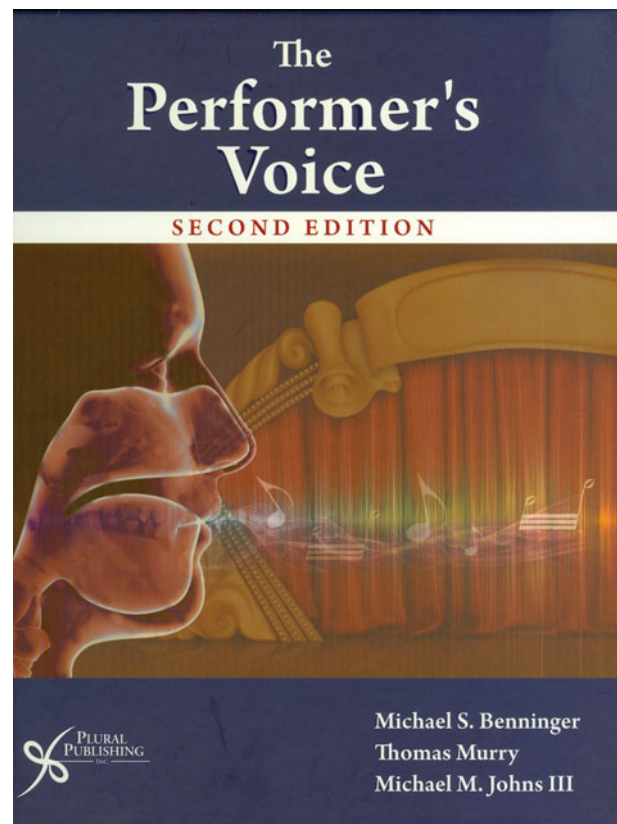
At random, I started on a chapter entitled 'Normal Voice Maturation; Hormones and Age'. I read sub-headings such as 'Puberty Can Take a Wrong Turn' or 'All is Sweetness and Light Between the Lunar Cycle and the Solar Cycle'. By now I was totally hooked, and I can now distinguish the post-menopausal Modigliani woman from the Rubens woman. (Do not ask, read the book.) The author turned out to be (it had to be) Jean Abitbol, who, for years, contributed to the faculty of our local laser course.

This style set the pattern for many chapters. 'Vocal Emergencies' is superbly illustrated (as is the book throughout), and I did enjoy reading the subsection entitled 'The Black Bag'. It brought back memories of an early evening call to a local countryside luxury hotel to pronounce a well-known singer as unfit to do so... I expected to see the handsome chap on the cover of several of my wife's compact discs, but instead was greeted by an apparition from 'The Walking Dead'. The bag was never opened.

Online Only Paper

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I feared this book was aimed at a niche market, but it actually makes an excellent laryngology-in-general textbook. The skill here has been to provide detailed coverage of analysis and management of the professional voice, even if, again, the message is 'not for the occasional laryngologist, seeking use for an idle microscope and laser'. Appropriately, the final chapter is entitled 'Medical-Legal Implications of Professional Voice Care'.

This is a neglected subject, very well covered in very easily readable text. This book is highly recommended.

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