

Musicians Health

Body Mapping

How to improve the quality of your movement in your playing and singing

BY RUTH KASCKOW

Editor's Note: This article is continued from Kasckow's article "Body Mapping: Reduce injury and improve performance by changing your mind's perception" published in our September 2013 issue.

Look at any YouTube video of a musician and turn off the sound. What do you see? Movement. Sometimes the movement looks fluid and graceful. Other times it looks awkward and tense. Chances are when you turn on the sound the fluid and graceful musician will sound better than the awkward and tense musician. The quality of your movement does affect the quality of your sound and music-making. By learning Body Mapping you can improve the quality of your movement in your playing and singing.

All of us have body maps, or perceptions of how our body is put together and designed to move. Some are accurate and some are not, but one way or the other, our body maps always guide how we move. You can learn to identify your body maps and determine whether they are accurate or not. To start, think about any tension you might feel while playing your instrument. Is it your hand, your arms, your back, your neck, your throat, or your shoulders? Any of these problems may be occurring because of inaccurate body maps.

Let's try this out to explore your body maps. Look at your left hand pointer finger palm facing towards you. Notice the crease close to the tip of the finger and feel the movement associated with it at the joint. You can touch or palpate it as you move it. Notice the second crease and feel the movement at the joint. Notice the third crease at the palm and feel the movement. Is there movement at the third crease? Turn your hand

around palm facing down and observe and feel the actual joint. Move your finger at the actual joint. Some of us assume that the joint is at the third crease, trying to move at a joint that doesn't exist causing tension and distorted movements. This is considered an inaccurate body map or a misperception of the joint. If you've always perceived your joint at the third crease, the next step is to consciously correct your body map and refine your movement at the actual joint.

You can start the process of exploring movement by asking yourself questions about your bones. How big is the bone? Where does it start and end? What does it do? What does it look like? Ask yourself about the joints. Where are the joints? Does the joint allow a bending motion or a rotating motion? Where is the movement coming from? Observe yourself playing or singing to discover what your body is doing.

You can also become more aware of your sense of kinesthesia. Kinesthesia is your sense of movement that tells you the quality of your movement and where you are in space. Proprioceptors are your movement sensors, located in your joints and muscles that continuously and automatically communicate directly with your brain. Becoming more acutely aware of your kinesthesia helps you identify, correct and refine your body maps.

To get an idea of how your sense of kinesthesia works, try this out. Raise your right arm up so you can't see it. Even though you can't see your arm, you know exactly where you are in space. Try clenching your fist and releasing it. Move your fingers. Wave back and forth. You know the quality of your movement and where you are in space because of kinesthesia. Ask yourself questions. Am I tense? Is this easy? How does it feel? Can I release the tension? Do I

know where I am in space? Do I feel like I'm in balance or am I holding up with extra effort? As you're playing or singing you can learn to be aware of when you are tense or off balance, and how to release the tension or come into balance.

In addition to your own movement explorations, there are plenty of resources available to help you discover your body maps. Learn about anatomy with anatomy books, the internet, and classes. Compare what you learn with how you perceive your body. Further your exploration by observing yourself in the mirror and videotaping while playing or singing. Read body mapping books written for musicians. Take mind-body classes (Yoga, Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, etc.) to improve your awareness and understanding. The website www.bodymap.org is an excellent resource to learn more about the practical and scientific reasons for Body Mapping, Andover Educators, Body Mapping Workshops and lessons, and many books and articles to read.

You can be the musician who looks great and sounds great in performance. Through conscious effort you can correct and refine your body maps so you can move in harmony with your body's design. Exploring and observing your movement while using additional resources will help you change your body maps. That way you can play and sing without excess tension, and enjoy ease, fluidity and freedom in your music!

— Local 47 member Ruth Kasckow (BA, MFA) is a flutist, flute teacher, and licensed Andover Educator in the Pasadena area who teaches Body Mapping. Contact Ruth at rkasckow@flutemuse.com. Always consult a health professional first regarding any musculoskeletal problems involving pain and injury.

Multiple-Card AFM Member Rebate

AFM members who belonged to three or more Locals throughout 2012 can petition the International Secretary/Treasurer for a "rebate equal to the per capita dues received by the Federation" for that member's membership in each AFM Local in excess of two.

According to Article 8, Section 7(a)(ii) of the AFM Bylaws, the rebate is only available to members who held simultaneous memberships in three or more Locals for the full calendar year. Members will not be given rebates for dual memberships.

Under the rebate program, membership in a base of two Locals must be established in order for a member to qualify for a rebate. The International Secretary/Treasurer's office has determined that a musician's membership in his or her "Home Local" and the subsequent Local of longest tenure shall be designated as the two base Locals. The

Secretary/Treasurer's office will then rebate the appropriate per capita dues for membership in the third Local and any other Local(s) beyond three to which a member belonged for the entire 2012 calendar year.

To petition for a Multiple-Card Member Rebate, members should fill out the form below and return it to the Secretary/Treasurer's office together with copies of all their paid-up 2012 membership cards, receipts of canceled checks for annual dues from all Locals, or a letter from each Local stating that the petitioner was a member in good standing of the Local for all of 2012.

No rebates will be issued until the Secretary/Treasurer's office verifies that petitioning members held continuous membership and per capita dues have been paid in three or more Locals for the full prior year of 2012. Rebates will be issued after Jan. 1, 2013.

PETITION FOR AFM MULTIPLE-CARD REBATE

Under the terms of Article 8, Section 7(a)(ii) of the AFM Bylaws, I am hereby requesting a rebate of 2012 Per Capita Dues paid to the Federation.

Send this form to: American Federation of Musicians, Secretary/Treasurer's Office, 1501 Broadway Suite 600, New York, NY 10036

Name: _____
(First) (Last)

Social Security or Social Insurance #: _____

I belonged to the following Locals for the entire 2012 calendar year:

Local: _____ Local: _____
(Number) (Number)

Local: _____ Local: _____
(Number) (Number)

Local: _____ Local: _____
(Number) (Number)

Please include with this petition copies of all paid-up 2012 membership cards, receipts of canceled checks for annual dues from all Locals, or a letter from each Local stating that you were a member in good standing of the Local for all of 2012. Allow six to eight weeks to process your rebate.