

# ROLFING® and MUSICIANS

## Interview with ROLFER™ Elmar Abram

D: How did you come to Rolfing?

A: I studied Musica Sacra at the Bolzano Conservatorium. Later I studied Guitar. Increasingly, certain problems began showing up while playing. Particularly frustrating, was that despite even my teachers' belief that I was musically very talented, I was unable to express my musicality through the instrument.

I suffered increasingly from tension and rigidity in my hands and fingers, which utterly prevented that lightness and ease of performance, as I myself needed to hear it. My teachers were unable to help me further. Through sheer willpower I continued, only to suffer within a short time from painful inflammation of the joints. Trying many methods and forms of therapy with limited success, I succumbed and finally gave up. For quite some time I made no more music, in between times though certainly trying again with the guitar and other instruments.

By great good fortune, many years later my path crossed that of an elderly pianist who really seemed to understand something of this problem. He had an approach to change my way of playing which made immediate sense to me. One day he brought me Ida Rolf's book; it was like I was struck by a thunderbolt.

I allowed him to treat me; subsequently I underwent the entire Rolfing series with a certified Rolfer. The joy of creating music slowly returned to me. The inflammation in my joints eventually disappeared completely and the true cause of these problems became increasingly clear to me. Thus I became a Rolfer and have dedicated myself since this time to solving these kinds of problems.

D: What are the typical musicians' ailments?

A: As in my case, all kinds of inflammations of the hands and fingers; neuritis, dystonia, tension and pain of the neck and shoulders, back pain ...

D: How can you concretely help musicians?

A: My former unhappy situation and the fact that I could completely recover and solve that condition, and study it in all its facets, gave me the opportunity to know and understand the problem profoundly!

I work as a Rolfer in order to optimize the musician's structural situation and to dissolve through that muscular contractions and rigidity, which with time otherwise become acute.

Additionally, after that basic preparation, I'm able to bring each musician with his instrument individually and very specifically to a free and easy playing. Best case result: hindrances that may arise between the impulse (from its emergence in the brain) and its arrival at the instrument are completely removed. By retaining lightness, softness and openness of the hinges, especially at the wrist, it's as if a channel is opened, through which the impulse arrives directly into the instrument. Such playing transforms the sound as it were magically; it becomes warm and intense...

D: What do you mean by fluid and economic movement?

A: Fluid economic movement does not find obstacles or hold-ups on its path and is optimally coordinated. This is the case when the articulations involved are not densified, not slowed down by excessive and uncoordinated muscle contractions; the applied force to execute a certain movement should not particularly exceed that which is necessary!

Everyone has the unmistakable – in reality truly mistakable – feeling, that the force he applies for any particular movement conforms to exactly the minimum required. Applying less than the customary force bestows the feeling of completely losing control over the movement. In reality though, this is exactly when the movement begins to become fluid and economic – with all of its wonderful and welcome side-effects!

D: How do you teach that kind of fluid, economic movement?

A: A basic principle of Rolfing is the keystone of that teaching: A movement should begin not with a contraction, but with a **de-contraction**.

The musician learns to „know“, to perceive his own weight, for example that of the arm, shoulder, wrist etc.; learns to let the weight rest through the fingers on a backup (e.g. on the piano key or finger board), let it hang from the backup and then to move it from that resulting position.

D: Should then a musician travel across all Italy just to be rolfed by you?

A: Not necessarily! My fellow Rolfers may also well help musicians within the context of a good Rolfing process.

Clearly though, my sessions are specifically tailored to address the individual and often complex problems of musicians - focal point being movement education and fine motor skills.

Musicians can certainly also come to me after having received Rolfing®, in order to refine the techniques specific to their own instrument. Over the years I have worked most instruments, also for example drums, accordion, zither...

D: A special suggestion to musicians?

A: Musicians of all countries: HAVE FUN !!!