



Dr Rae de Lisle

Focal Dystonia in Pianists.
A Way to Recovery Through Retraining

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rae de lisle

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in pianists

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**WITH A PREFACE BY
ECKART ALTENMÜLLER**



Rae de Lisle

Dr Rae de Lisle is currently Associate Professor and Head of Piano at the University of Auckland. Following eight years studying and performing in London where her teachers included Brigitte Wild, Cyril Smith, Maria Curcio and Christopher Elton, Rae spent fifteen years as solo pianist, accompanist and chamber musician. She performed throughout New Zealand and North America, including concertos on many occasions with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Her PhD research into focal dystonia has led to presentations throughout the world, including keynote addresses at international conferences. She is now working on a book on injury prevention in pianists.

Her teaching has produced many outstanding pianists who have excelled at international competitions, winning first

prizes at competitions which include the Sydney International Piano Competition, the Bradshaw and Buono International Competition and the Lev Vlassenko Australasian Piano Competition. She received an Excellence in Teaching Award from the University of Auckland in 2011 and in the same year was awarded the Marie Vanderwart Memorial Award for outstanding service and commitment to fostering the love of chamber music in New Zealand. She is Artistic Director and founder of the Wallace National Piano Competition and Festival and was on the jury for the 2009 Singapore National Piano Competition and the 2012 Dublin International Piano Competition. She was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2015 for services to music.



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From the preface by Dr. Eckart Altenmüller

This book deals with one of the most important challenges in Musician’s Medicine, namely a successful treatment of pianist’s dystonia with retraining, developed by Rae de Lisle.

In recent years, considerable efforts have been taken to improve treatment and to prevent musician’s dystonia. Here, Rae de Lisle has developed one of the most promising approaches to overcome the condition. Her method includes fundamental rules of physiology and the anatomy of piano playing, and historical knowledge, taking into account the previous work of outstanding piano teachers such as Deppe, Ortmann, Taubman and “re-trainers” such as Victor Candia, Nancy Byl and Laurent Boulet. She is able to demonstrate that her methodology is solid and helpful, and she can prove that her innovative way to overcome musician’s dystonia is efficient. She not only assembles intimate knowledge and decades-long experience of piano teaching and piano technique, but she is also knowledgeable in the history of piano technique and instruction, in musician’s medicine and neuroscience and, more specifically, in the brain mechanisms underlying the dystonias. Here we have a book integrating music education, historic musicology, neuroscience and the arts.

Furthermore, I would like to comment on the form of the book: with its use of integrated video clips, it is an outstanding presentation, allowing the reader simultaneously to watch all the videos of movements commented on in the text. The working principles and the progress of the patients become extremely clear and render the methodology even more convincing.

Not only treating, but also preventing musician’s dystonia is addressed in Rae’s book. With the refined physiological approach outlined here, we now have the theoretical means at hand to intervene at an early stage. Music educators reading this book will strive to create a friendly, supportive atmosphere, to introduce reasonable practice schedules, to teach ergonomic technique and to prevent overuse and pain by including mental practice and variations of movement patterns.

I wish a large readership for Rae’s wonderful book which I am convinced will help to prevent and overcome the loss of motor control in many pianists!