

HEALING NEEDLES

THE ANCIENT CHINESE SCIENCE OF ACUPUNCTURE CAN HELP MUSICIANS DEAL WITH THE PRESSURE POINTS IN THEIR CAREERS, EXPLAINS FRANCES TURNER

session, you might be given an individually tailored series of movements to target the same channels and points used in the acupuncture treatment and give you a direct tool to help you on a daily basis. This is rather like doing acupuncture to yourself; it is particularly important for a musician since it can be worked into a practice or concert preparation routine and help you address the underlying tensions that might be responsible for the pain. I also use massage and healing as tools for balancing the flow of *qi*, both of which are done with an awareness of the channel network.

Acupuncture is not generally painful although there can be a sensation when the needle connects with the *qi*. Side effects, if they occur at all, are short lived. It is possible to feel temporarily more pain after a treatment – especially if you have never had acupuncture before – but typically if this occurs it will last a day at most and is followed by a corresponding improvement. This can be compared with taking exercise having done none for a year – if you begin to move the *qi* in an area where it is not accustomed to move, it soon lets you know! The art of treatment is to help you to move your *qi* at a pace you can tolerate. Needling can cause minor bleeding or slight bruising which, if it occurs, is completely painless in my experience.

Treatment with acupuncture is cumulative and can be approached in various ways. A typical initial course of treatment would be once a week for four weeks followed by an evaluation of progress and mutual decision on how to proceed. In the case of an acute problem more frequent sessions might be recommended or, alternatively, monthly treatment might be used as a preventative. Sometimes a problem is cleared up after one or two treatments and some people

Photos: courtesy of British Acupuncture Council

As a violinist and healer, I have spent my professional life working out how artists can keep themselves in balance in order to perform effortlessly. This applies to performance in any field but is acutely relevant to musical performance because of the exacting nature of the skill and the particular stresses musicians face.

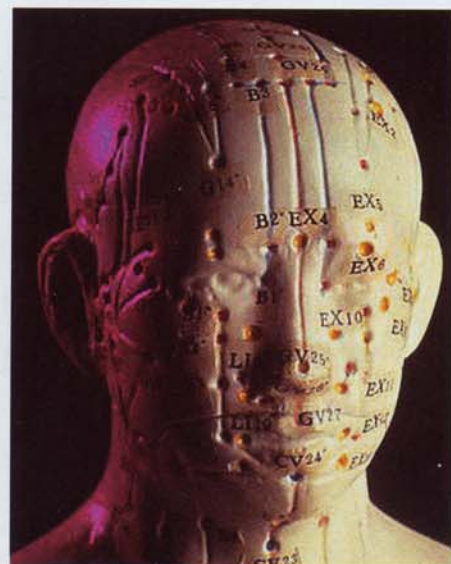
By working on each person individually, it is possible to identify where their stresses are coming from and to give them tools to catalyse change. Having gone through such a process myself, I know some of the things involved in releasing tension – and it can involve addressing problems on the physical, mental, emotional or spiritual level. An holistic approach is vital for lasting healing and some of the most effective tools include the ancient healing art-science of Chinese medicine: acupuncture and herbal medicine.

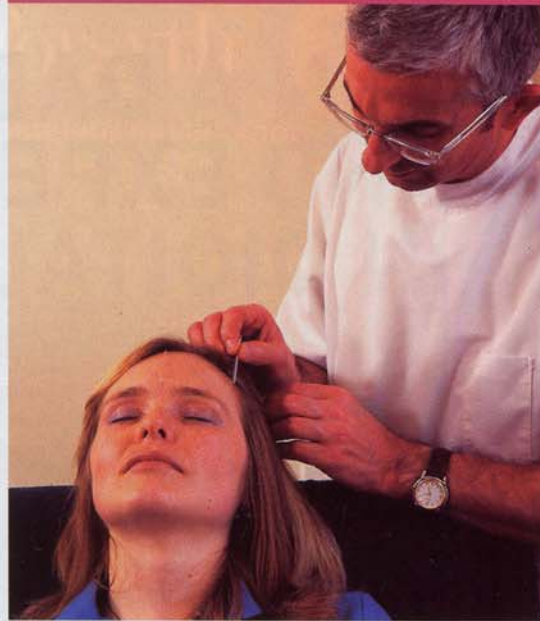
Based on the concepts of *qi*, *yin* and *yang*, Chinese medicine offers a systematic way of

looking at a person as a complete system in which an imbalance in any part affects the rest. *Qi* is simultaneously the material stuff of life and the energetic motive force for life. An understanding of the way *qi* moves in the body allows us to identify particular points or areas where it can be accessed, and where inserting a very fine needle can have most impact on shifting towards health in the most effective way.

One part of the body is connected to the whole via a network of channels and patients are frequently amazed that a needle inserted in one place might be felt in quite another. Needling regulates the flow of *qi* in the channels. It can be used locally to relieve pain, tension or specific symptoms, or generally help address the reasons for the symptoms and the pattern of effects the problem has had on the whole body.

In addition to acupuncture, I use a system of rotation movements. During a treatment





prefer just to come for a session when they feel in need of a boost. Expect an initial consultation session to last about an hour, with follow-up treatments of between 30 and 60 minutes.

Among the people I have successfully treated within the music field are two professional violinists (although, for professional reasons, they have to remain anonymous). One of them was experiencing severe pain in their left shoulder.

'I had been to the doctor who had not been able to identify what was wrong and was put on an extremely long waiting list for a physiotherapist,' he explains. 'Having physical problems as a violinist means you cannot earn a living and also suffer stress

when not able to play. I had no idea exactly what acupuncture was and had no preconceptions. I found it to be a strange sensation like a current flowing round an electrical circuit. Acupuncture helped free my circulation and improved my shoulder so I am now able to play my violin without pain.'

Acupuncture is not a panacea for all ailments but it can successfully be used to treat many performance-related issues. If a problem is needling you, needles themselves could point to a solution. ■

Frances Turner is a qualified acupuncturist who works at London's Highgate Health Centre (0208 348 5553) and in Friern Barnet (0208 368 4314)

ACUPUNCTURE – THE VITAL STATISTICS

A HISTORY OF ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is believed to have been practised by the Chinese and other Eastern peoples for some 2,500 years.

The earliest account of acupuncture was *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (300 BC), the first authoritative work on the use of acupuncture and one that provides the theoretical foundation for acupuncture today. Springing from the Daoist philosophy of change, growth, balance and harmony, the text outlines the principles of natural law and the movements of life: *yin* and *yang*, the Five Elements, the organ system and the meridian network along which acupuncture points are located.

Acupuncture practice was developed and refined over the centuries. During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Chinese herbalist Li Shi Zen published a 50-volume *Compendium of Materia Medica* as well as a study of the Pulse and the Extraordinary Meridians.

With the increasing influence of Western ideas on Chinese culture from the mid-17th century, acupuncture declined in popularity and it was not until the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949 that interest in the science was revived nationally. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), with the persecution of surgeons and doctors practising biomedicine, traditional Chinese medicine was given new opportunities to develop.

Today, acupuncture is used far more extensively in China than in the West.

In Britain, serious study of acupuncture did not begin until the 1950s.

WHAT IT COSTS

The cost of acupuncture treatment will vary according to the amount of treatment you require. Prices vary geographically so you'll probably pay less in the north of Scotland than on Harley Street. An initial diagnostic session (lasting anywhere from 40 minutes to an hour and a half) will probably cost in the region of £40-£80. Subsequent sessions will cost anywhere from £15 to £75. You can expect to notice a change within five sessions.

FINDING A PRACTITIONER

There is no government legislation in the UK covering acupuncture, which means anyone can provide treatment. To ensure your safety, find a practitioner accredited by the BACC (*see below*), which sets common standards of education, ethics, discipline and practice and whose members are covered by medical malpractice and liability insurance.

BACC's members have completed a training of at least three years in traditional acupuncture and biomedical sciences and carry the letters MBACC after their name. Their details are published in an annual *Register of Practitioner Members*.

A copy can be obtained by sending a cheque for £4.50 to the BACC office. Alternatively, BACC will post or fax a list of your local practitioner members free of charge.

CONTACTS AND COURSES

UK

British Acupuncture Council, 63 Jeddo Road, London W12 9HQ; tel: 0208 735 0400; fax: 0208 735 0404
info@acupuncture.org.uk
www.acupuncture.org.uk

US

The American Academy of Medical Acupuncture (AAMA) based in Los Angeles exists to 'promote the integration of concepts from traditional and modern forms of acupuncture with Western medical training'.

You can search AAMA's website for practitioners in every US state or consult your doctor for advice.

AAMA, 4929 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 428, Los Angeles, CA 90010; tel: (+1) 323 937-5514; fax: 323 937-0959
www.medicalacupuncture.org

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Additional information courtesy of BACC