BODY MAPPING:
Enhancing Musical Performance through Somatic Pedagogy

Heather J. Buchanan, PhD
Professor of Music & Director of Choral Activities
Montclair State University, NJ
Licensed Andover Educator
buchananh@mail.montclair.edu

KEY POINTS:
• Quality of movement is essential for musicians and it must begin with childhood instruction. Regrettably many musicians do not see themselves as “movers” and the results are problematic, as illustrated by research statistics.

• Musical performance is a complex, multi-modal skill. Long-term practice of an instrument (including singing & conducting) causes changes in the brain.

• Musical movement results from body maps – specific neural networks in the brain.

• Musical performance is demanding. Use of inaccurate, repetitive movement results in either diminished performance capabilities or injury.

• Body Mapping definition: The conscious correcting & refining of one’s body map to produce efficient graceful, coordinated, and effective movement.

• Body Mapping (BMG) is a self-inquiry somatic (mind-body) educational technique developed specifically for musicians. It teaches the importance of understanding the neurophysiological connections in the human body leading to freedom of movement.

• Four principles in the teaching of BMG: i) cultivating an accurate & adequate body map; ii) training movement; iii) training the relevant senses; iv) training attention

• Everything in our body is connected. Tension in one area will rapidly translate to others, impeding quality of movement and the resultant musical sound.

• When you correctly map balance, you will notice how easily you recover ease of movement, and reduce tension and distortion in your body.

• Medical conditions are not inherent to singing/playing/conducting. They result from the biomechanical approach taken to performance by the musicians. Hence we must change the paradigm and training musicians about movement directly and ensure they see themselves as movers. This must begin with the youngest musicians so they can maximize their technique and remain free from pain and injury.
BODY MAPPING RESOURCES:

- **Move Well, Avoid Injury: What Everyone Needs to Know About the Body** by Barbara Conable & Amy Likar. Andover Productions, LLC. [DVD]


- **What Every Violinist Needs to Know About the Body**. Jennifer Johnson. GIA Publications, Inc. 2009 [Book]


- **What Every Trombonist Needs To Know About the Body**. David Vining. Kagarice Brass Editions. 2008 [Book]


- **Body Mapping for Flutists**. Lea Pearson. GIA Publications, Inc. 2006 [Book]


- **What Every Pianist Needs to Know About the Body**. Thomas Mark. GIA Publications, Inc. 2003 [Book & Video]