

Personal Communication

Bodywork: Tuning the Instrument of the Soul

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Abstract

Instrumental musicians are among groups of professionals who are at high risk for overuse injuries, including pain, fatigue, loss of range of motion, as well as loss of endurance and fine motor control.¹ Factors contributing to overuse injuries include, but are not limited to, ergonomic errors and posture misalignment due to poor fit between instrument and musician, heavy instruments, as well as repetitive strain due to prolonged daily practice and/or performance.¹ Massage therapy may target musician specific injuries by focusing on relaxing restrictive, overused muscles, enhancing circulation, and improving range of motion by increasing length of fascia and muscles, and breaking down adhesions.¹ The following article describes the innovative work of Dorothy Stein who has developed novel approaches in massage therapy that have been applied with musicians of all disciplines.

Keywords: *acupressure, manual therapy, deep-tissue massage, musicians, over-use injury, posture, realignment, rolfing.*

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Dot Stein, famously known as “‘Dr. Dot’- the rock n’ roll masseuse,” literally rocks and rolls, rakes, doughs, and even bites her rock star clientele back into performance-ready shape. Backstage, on tour, or in the office, Dr. Dot has been performing massage therapy for over 3 decades, developing a unique therapeutic approach to treating musculoskeletal conditions inherent to her clients’ physically intensive professions. Using massage techniques like the ‘Mick Jagger’ on Mick Jagger, or the ‘Spider Walk’ and ‘Rolling Pin Method’ on clients ranging from Lady Gaga to Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Dr. Dot has combined her passion for music and massage to encourage relaxation, release chronic tension, and promote both physical and emotional health and well-being. With every even stroke, on *The Strokes*, and professional finesse with hip-hop artists like Lord Finesse, Dr. Dot and her team of masseurs tailor each massage to address underlying physiological conditions common among musicians, including tendonitis [1], Trigger Finger/Thumb [2], Myofascial Pain Syndrome [3], and strained vocal cords [4], all of which respond well to bodywork.

KG: For the readership unfamiliar with your background, could you please recount how your experiences and interests growing up paved the way for massage therapy?

DD: I began pursuing my craft at age 5! Music and massage were a family ritual, so at a young age, my hippie parents taught me various massage techniques, and regularly took me along to concerts, all of which left an indelible impression on me. In fact, I went to my first concert at age 2, which headlined singer-songwriter Melanie. Before age 12, I saw numerous Grateful Dead shows as well as Frank Zappa. I became a passionate music fan and knew that as I grew older I would have to find my own way into shows for free, without compromising my integrity. I began to use bodywork as a way to get into shows and meet my musical heroes, my mentors. I performed my first backstage massage on Def Leppard when I was only 15, trading massages for concert tickets and eventually ended up seeing more than 3,000 shows for free. Ultimately, the hobby evolved into a profession starting in 1994, with Charlie Watts from the Rolling Stones as my first paying customer. Charlie insisted I had to start charging if I wanted to be taken seriously, and I ended up going on three consecutive paid tours with the Rolling Stones. I eventually went to massage school and got licensed, all while growing my star-studded clientele and assembling a like-minded, worldwide staff of over 1,000 ‘Dot Bots,’ all of whom I vetted and approved.

KG: You went to massage school to become a licensed masseuse, so how did you earn the name “Dr. Dot?”

DD: Frank Zappa gave me the nickname in 1988, when I was still massaging him and his band for free as a barter to see every sound check and show. He called me “the Doctor,”

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International Association for Music & Medicine (IAMM).

"Doc" and then eventually "Dr. Dot," as I was healing them after long, physically demanding rehearsals and performances. Now my roster of clientele includes hundreds of celebrated rock stars and celebrities, including Sting, Steven Tyler, Mick Jagger, Robert Plant, AC/DC, Blondie, as well as Jay-Z, Pharrell, Rihanna, Mariah Carey, Justin Timberlake, Kanye West, Russell Crowe, Paris Hilton, and many more clients with fast-paced, and often long, physically intensive schedules.

KG: Considering most of your clients are instrumental and vocal musicians, have you observed musician-specific (occupational) conditions, which respond well to manual therapy?

DD: Musicians need a strong, thorough massage with concentrated pressure, that's why my Dot Bots and I are referred to as 'the pit bulls of massage.' Drummers benefit most from deep-tissue massage as they are always knotted up and stiff from continual impact and muscular contractions, leading to over-use injuries. Relieving tension deep within the musculature and realigning deeper layers of the muscles promotes greater range of motion, and improved circulation. Guitarists are typically sore on the one shoulder supporting the guitar strap; keyboardists' hands and fingers need serious attention due to potential repetitive stress injuries. This in turn can put a strain on the affected muscle group, resulting in limited movement, tense muscles, and pain, so muscular therapy can get to the root of the condition, increasing flexibility, reducing swelling and stiffness, and even releasing endorphins while boosting serotonin and dopamine levels. I also focus on the throat, jaw, and neck, which harbors muscle tension. I use the "Mick Jagger Method" for singers – where I squeeze their lip (muscles) together. Singers benefit from this technique because their lips get very tired and squeezing them will help them loosen up.

KG: Do you consider posture as part of your treatment modality?

DD: I do analyze posture and make suggestions if needed, but in general, poor posture forces some muscles to be overworked, while others to weaken. Slouching can press down on internal organs, and in turn effect digestion, as well as breathing, which can effect singing. After all, breathing efficiently while singing involves proper posture, which enables deeper, fuller breaths. Massage can relax and loosen the muscles made sore by poor posture, and reinforce healthy movements, and promote natural posture.

KG: What are some traditional massage techniques that you use?

DD: I developed my own technique over the years, considering I started as a very small child working on my parents and their hippie friends. In terms of a more traditional approach, I would say a very strong, flowing Swedish massage, with acupressure and Rolwing, on a case-by-case basis. I would

like to note that Rolwing is not a massage technique, but rather an alternative medical approach that utilizes holistic soft tissue manipulation, to improve posture, alignment and range of motion by loosening connective tissue. It's different from deep-tissue massage in that Rolwing focuses on the entire structure, rather than specific areas of concern. Many Dotbots on my team are trained in acupuncture and Reiki, all of which along with traditional massage have been shown to decrease cortisol in the body, improving mood, and encouraging rest and recovery [5-7].

KG: What are some massage techniques unique to you, Dr. Dot?

DD: *Spider Walk:* I "walk" up the back with my fingers, rolling the skin as I go in one fluent motion, which in my opinion, looks and feels like a big spider walking up the back.

Pizza Dough Method: I stand at the patient's side, with both hands wide open, I twist the core of the body in between both hands in a kneading motion, very firmly, like I would pizza dough.

Bite Method: I must preface by saying that the bite technique is my most controversial, as no one else does this, but it is the celebrity favorite. Naturally, I first ask the client whether they are comfortable with the technique and may like to try it. Without adding any oil, I methodically bite the whole back in a very fluent motion section by section, avoiding any bones. I take big bites, obviously not firm enough to break skin, but firm and deep enough to grip and "tenderize" the back muscles, warming them up for the more traditional massage that follows. The masseter muscle is after all the strongest, based on its weight.

Rolling Pin Method: Put both forearms on the patient's back, with elbows just an inch away from the spine. Go north towards the head with one elbow; at the same time, move towards the buttocks with the other elbow and then drag them both back together in the middle. Once again, it's important to avoid bone on bone.

The Rake: Make your hands into a "rake" form and keep them like this, very stiff. Rake the back from top to bottom. This takes a lot of strength when done correctly, but feels wonderful.

KG: Do you use essential oils as part of your massage therapy?

DD: Yes, I use my brand of Dr. Dot Massage Oils, which are an invigorating, high performance and multi-purpose oil available in three different scents to accommodate every occasion: Jasmine to energize; Lavender to relax; The House Lounge fragrance for a sexy and seductive night. With 96% of high quality of eco-certified Argan Oil the skin will be hydrated and moisturized during the massage. Yet, unlike other massage oils, Dr. Dot Massage Oil will not leave greasy residues on your skin, but will be absorbed within minutes after application. Generally speaking, it's very important to use massage oil with multiple purposes and tastes. I'm a

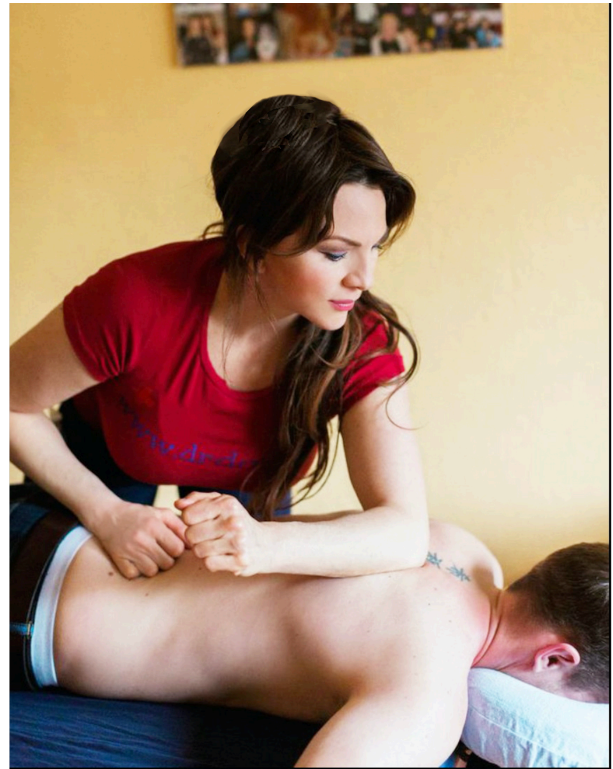
mother of a 4 year old, and on top of that I run a business with more than 1,000 employees, so I know that time is a very precious commodity. You don't want to juggle 20 different body care products for each area of the body, but rather find few high-quality options that can benefit the whole body. Using a cheap cream or lotion will ruin a massage as it will ball up constantly and potentially annoy the client as well as the therapist. If you cannot afford a high end oil or cream, use grape seed oil with a few table spoons of baby oil-gel to thicken it up.

KG: What qualities should a client look for in a massage therapist?

DD: Experience, strength, dependability and most importantly, clients should be able to FEEL if the therapist loves their job, or not. A warm, strong, silent, relaxing experience that leaves them feeling rejuvenated. Clients should expect a quiet therapist. There is nothing worse than a chatty one, as the experience can be counterproductive for both client and therapist. To make the experience most productive, it's important to inform the therapist of the primary intention of the massage, for instance to reduce anxiety, or seek relief from an injury, and together design a strategy to achieve your goals. It is the massage therapist's responsibility to ensure comfort, even something as simple as making the room warmer to accommodate a patient's comfort, since cold muscles are tense muscles.

KG: Is literal hands-on experience sufficient to be a skillful, qualified massage therapist, or is formal training important?

DD: In the USA, formal training is very important. Only in the USA are massage therapists required to have a license, which makes me question the integrity of this requirement, and begs the question whether it comes down to money. I do believe everyone should go to school and study the anatomy and learn all there is to learn about massage. But do I believe people need a license on top of massage diplomas and credentials? No, I think it is nonsense, but I only hire people who have the qualifications their state requires. I have Dotbots all over the world so I know the USA is the only one strict about licensing. It is so irrational: let's say a therapist goes to school in Maryland and gets her diplomas and license, etc. Then she moves to Boston. She has to go through the training all over again to get a MA state license. This is how each state earns money off of the massage therapist. I personally find it to be very frustrating and unfair. I have had amazing massages from Native American Indians as well as Chinese therapists who never went to any classes, and I have also had unexceptional massages from therapists who hold massage licenses in multiple states. What it comes down to ultimately is a passion for healing through bodywork, and ensuring that the experience is restorative to both the client and massage therapist.



Myofascial Pain Syndrome

Myofascial pain syndrome is a chronic pain disorder. It is characterized by pressure on trigger points (the sensitive points in your muscles) that cause referred pain in other parts of the body.



Cause

Myofascial pain syndrome usually occurs after a muscle has been repeatedly contracted through repetitive motions. Muscle pain is common, but you are at an increased risk for myofascial pain syndrome if you have a lot of stress & anxiety or if you experience a muscle injury. These things can make you more likely to develop trigger points.

Symptoms

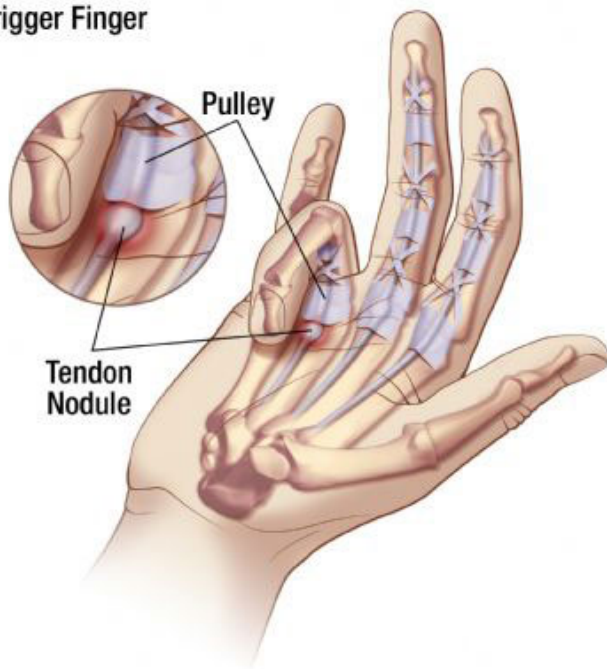
- Persistent or worsening pain
- Deep and aching muscle pain
- Tender knot located at the muscle

Treatments

- Physical therapy
- Pain medications
- Stretching
- Massage
- Heat therapy
- Trigger point injections

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Trigger Finger



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Biographical Statements

Karina Gordin received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Tufts University, and a Master of Science from Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. She has specialized training in research and editing, and writes for both peer-reviewed and commercial health publications.