This book is written from the author’s own perspectives as a dancer, musical theatre performer, actress and professional singer who began her training at the age of two and, latterly, as an Osteopath specializing in the treatment of performing artists. Blending this experience and expertise, Jennie Morton uniquely draws together the physiological, psychological and socio-cultural aspects of being a performer, and views them in the context of health and wellbeing.

Illuminated with interviews with leading performers from many disciplines, the book provides detailed information on the physiological processes behind performing arts related injuries giving the reader the information to better manage their own health. Also examined is the culture of training in the performing arts and how best to prepare student performers for life in the profession.

This issue is particularly pertinent to the author, who posits that the ‘wearing of a mask’ is inherent in many performers and is sometimes seen to be a prerequisite of many performing arts professions. It is this ‘hiding behind the mask’ that is a centerpiece of the work here. She explores how early childhood experiences can influence both emotional and physiological development and how this can play a role in the creation of talent and artistry, and looks at the culture of negative/fear-based training in the arts and how this can lead to the issues of perfectionism and obsession so often associated with performing artists.

If this sounds like a science or sci-fi book – it isn’t! It reads beautifully, and is perfectly pitched for the performer and student performer, as well as those who work with and support them. Much of the Performing Arts Medicine research and literature from the medical, psychological and philosophical domains has not filtered down to those performers who could benefit from it; this book simplifies and contextualizes that research into a concise, readable and wholly practical resource.