

Creating sound health

Monday, 21 January 2008

All of us, children and adults, are bombarded every day by noises and sounds that have deleterious effects on our nervous systems and well-being. Even when we consider our houses to be quiet, there is often a hum from the lights, refrigerator, and other electrical appliances. We have to work hard to "tune out" extraneous sounds in order to focus on conversations, our studies, or the task at hand. One practical solution to this modern problem is to create healthy sound to mask the irritating environmental noise pollution. Developed by Advanced Brain Technologies, Sound Health grew out of the work of the National Academy for Child Development (NACD) over a twenty-year period. NACD researched and experimented with many ways to create a better sound environment and Sound Health, which helps to enhance mental function and serve as a shield against sound pollution, was created. Sound Health is unique in the marketplace. Much of this uniqueness comes from the accumulated experience of the team involved in its production. We want to give you a basic idea of the main elements involved and why we believe they make Sound Health so effective.

BY A. N. JAMALUDDIN

All of us, children and adults, are bombarded every day by noises and sounds that have deleterious effects on our nervous systems and well-being. Even when we consider our houses to be quiet, there is often a hum from the lights, refrigerator, and other electrical appliances. We have to work hard to "tune out" extraneous sounds in order to focus on conversations, our studies, or the task at hand. One practical solution to this modern problem is to create healthy sound to mask the irritating environmental noise pollution. Developed by Advanced Brain Technologies, Sound Health grew out of the work of the National Academy for Child Development (NACD) over a twenty-year period. NACD researched and experimented with many ways to create a better sound environment and Sound Health, which helps to enhance mental function and serve as a shield against sound pollution, was created. Sound Health is unique in the marketplace. Much of this uniqueness comes from the accumulated experience of the team involved in its production. We want to give you a basic idea of the main elements involved and why we believe they make Sound Health so effective. Here are some of the elements that have gone into its design.

Selection is done by integrating a great deal of experience and research. Bulgarian psychiatrist Dr. Lozanov researched the effects of Baroque slow movements on learning and memory. English composer Cyril Scott wrote extensively about the effects of different composers and how their music affected the society of their day. French Medical Doctor Alfred Tomatis experimented using different composers and found Mozart was the most effective for his specific research with hearing and its affect on the brain. Dr. John Diamond has done extensive research into both the effects of listening to certain composers and the intention of the conductors and musicians performing and how this affects the energy they exude. The list goes on. I have spent over 20 years studying the effects of music on the human body and psyche. I've also performed extensive classical repertoire in various orchestras and chamber ensembles in Europe, Canada, and the US over the years. So, from this experience and perspective, we chose music depending on the desired effect of each particular album.

This element, rearrangement, is one which sets us considerably apart from most other products in the marketplace, as most other classical music products which claim to be good for learning and health are simply taken from previous recordings. We have taken select pieces and rearranged them to increase their effectiveness. Sometimes this is as simple as removing a section that really does not fit the general mood of the music. Classical composers after all, had a very different mission in mind. They needed to keep the interest of the listener in a live concert situation. We on the other hand, are often using the music as a background and therefore want to eliminate some of the sections of the music that tend to grab our attention or jolt us briefly out of the current mood. Because this music was recorded specifically for an intentional use, we had the opportunity to make changes of many different kinds, which companies using music from existing recordings cannot do.

Sometimes these arrangements go almost to the point of writing new pieces based on the original. As an example in the CD called learning, we noticed that Corelli had used a theme that was exactly like a particular birdcall in our repertoire of nature sounds. In this case, we then improvised a section on the violin to mimic the birdcall, mixed this with the actual birdcall, and then led directly into the piece where it is used as the main theme.

Another element that often comes into play is deciding when we want to engage the mind in some sort of exercise. We know from the research of Dr. Tomatis and the experience of Robert Doman and Dr. Ron Minson that it is helpful to stimulate the listener's attention by putting surprises into the recordings and to stimulate the spatial awareness of the listener by moving sounds around in the stereo mix. Again, because of our unique recording techniques we are able to suddenly move the sound of an instrument from one side of the stage to another, or have it sound as though a bird flew across the room.

One of the main problems with recordings today is the pressure the musicians are under in a recording session. This is particularly true of classical recordings where there is not a huge market place to make up for the heavy costs involved in creating the recording. This means that everyone involved is trying to be as perfect as they can, rather than as artistic as they can, much of the time. The resultant recordings, which are technically correct, often reflect this intention.

The techniques chosen to record The Arcangelos Chamber Ensemble vary greatly depending upon the needs of the

particular recording. But there are a number of criteria that stay fairly constant. Arcangelos musicians, chosen for both their technical skills and their interest in music and health, are encouraged just to have a good time playing and enjoy themselves. We want their happy, positive energy to be reflected in their performance. To prove it, we even have out-takes of their laughter! If there are some imperfections, they are taken care of in the post-production process or if they would not be noticed by the general public, sometimes they are left in. In a sense, it is often the slight imperfections that give something its character and richness.

Whenever possible we chose a beautiful, live acoustic setting to record, such as a monastery or chapel. This relaxes the players and provides a beautiful tonal quality to the recordings. These places often have a wonderful tranquil, spiritual atmosphere, which also has its effect on the players.