Only 25 years ago, laryngology and laryngeal surgery mainly dealt with life-threatening conditions of the larynx, particularly those related to airway obstruction and laryngeal cancer. Endoscopic biopsies for diagnostic purposes, open laryngeal surgery to resect laryngeal tumours and tracheotomy for airway relief were the principal laryngeal procedures at most Ear, Nose and Throat departments throughout Europe and the world.

In the meanwhile, research into laryngeal anatomy and physiology, technical advances and pharmacological progress have provided us with an abundance of new insights into the basic laryngeal functions – protection of the lower airway during deglutition and voice production – and therapeutic options. During the same period, our attitude towards health and medical care has changed considerably. While cure was the only ambition of most medical and surgical interventions in the past, the preservation and improvement of physical function is now an equally important issue. Individuals in today’s developed societies depend on communicative skills rather than on physical work, and laryngology has become a major medical subspecialty dealing with communication disorders.

Clinical pioneers, some of them are contributors to this textbook, have developed a wealth of new endoscopic and surgical techniques to improve the voice, to recover deglutition, to restore a laryngeal and tracheal airway and to treat cancer without sacrifice of laryngeal function. Refined diagnostic tools, to assess structural changes (endoscopy and imaging) or functional impairment (voice analysis) are available to identify both the origin and the consequences of laryngeal disease, and to direct symptom-related surgery. Different surgical traditions throughout the countries of Europe have developed into different solutions for clinical problems. This diversity of opinion and practice is part of this book. Each chapter reflects the personal experience and clinical skill of the contributing author. Differences in opinion may occur, and not all dilemmas in laryngology have been solved so far.

This textbook has been written to lay out the basic principles of contemporary laryngeal surgery from a European perspective. The description of these fundamentals of laryngeal surgery will not replace surgical atlases or detailed descriptions of individual laryngeal procedures. By providing context and perspective, the chapters of this textbook are meant to supply the reader with the fundamentals of laryngeal surgery.
The editors hope that this textbook may serve as a basis for future research, for discussion among laryngologists and as a source of inspiration to our readers.

We express our gratitude to Springer editors, who made this book possible, to the contributors to this project, and to our fellows, students and families.

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Mont Godinne and Klagenfurt

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