

# EXCHANGE

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## Keynote Address 11th Annual AGM Spanish Point, Ireland October 19-23, 2003

*Rosa Luisa Rossi*  
*ATI Teaching Member, Switzerland*

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Alexander Technique colleagues and friends of the Alexander Technique, I welcome you to the 11<sup>th</sup> ATI General Meeting and Conference here at Spanish Point in Ireland.

I would like to tell you a story about the extension of our potential.

While I tell you the story I am giving you an activity to do:

Please put on this pair of paper glasses and look throughout the room—expect to see the unexpected. . . and then pass them on to your neighbor.

*[Ed.: As the glasses passed around the room, we each were startled and charmed to see little hearts floating before our eyes in swirls of color.]*

And now. . . imagine. . .

. . . A 14-year-old young teenager, sitting in front of the television, holding a big bag of potato chips from which she grabs from time to time some chips, while watching any kind of movies. . .

Deep inside of herself she feels strongly unhappy. . . from time to time she becomes aware of this feeling and she asks herself: Is that all that life can offer?

10 years later. . . she is working in a normal job, going out with friends, trying hard to enjoy a normal life as so many others do. . . but still, deep inside of herself, she doesn't feel satisfied. . . What is lacking. . . ?



### ATI Vision and Mission

To establish an open means of global communication for people to discuss, apply, research, and experiment with the discoveries of F.M. Alexander.

To foster the use of the F.M. Alexander Technique in social and environmental interrelationships.

To create a vital organization whose structure and means of operation are consistent with the principles of the F.M. Alexander Technique.

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## From the Chair

*Cathy Madden*

*Chair, Alexander Technique International*

At each Annual General Meeting, people talk about what they like about being together. Something I hear each time is that people enjoyed being with a group that was “so nonjudgmental.” What I have been in awe to realize is that that seed of “nonjudgment” is something that was planted at the founding of the organization. We wanted to begin a new organization constructively; we wanted to be able to respect differences and similarities in points of view so we designed the structure of our organization to embrace different points of view. We decided to use Formal Concensus in our business meetings because it gave us a way to continue to be nonjudgmental in the decision-making process necessary for running an organization.

As I grow with this organizational “nonjudgment,” I see it reflecting the process that F.M. Alexander gave to us. To hear all ideas, I find myself “analyzing the conditions of use present” for all the points of view I hear. Rather than rushing to “reason out a means-whereby,” I pause to gather all the information. Since I am only one of the many people doing this, each person is listened to deeply from many points of view. The lovely thing is that we aren’t an organization in which there are no dissenting opinions—we do have opinions, some of which we are passionate about, some of which clash. And through all our work, we insist on our passion for “nonjudgment.”

In a passage from Chapter 25 from the *Tao Te Ching*,<sup>1</sup> there are some questions that remind me of the successes of nonjudgment in our organization:

*Do you have the patience to wait  
till your mud settles and the water is clear?  
Can you remain unmoving  
Till the right action arises by itself?*

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# EXCHANGE

*ExChange* is published three times per year by Alexander Technique International (ATI), the purpose of which is to promote and advance the F. Matthias Alexander Technique. *ExChange* is designed to disseminate information regarding the Technique to ATI members and the public.

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## Three Little Words: Further Thoughts on Marketing the Alexander Technique

Glenna Batson, PT, MA, mAmSAT  
ATI Teaching Member, North Carolina, USA

The question of how to market the Alexander Technique in this post-postmodern, New Age, Information Age, Matrix Reloaded world has sparked a number of interesting articles in *ExChange*, including those by Matthews (Vol. 10, No. 2, June 2002) and Horsman (Vol. 10, No. 3, Oct. 2002), and in *ASAT News* by Bartner and Vineyard (Issue 44, Spring 1999). While we Alexander teachers are confident that we are privy to a sublime experience bridging the physical and metaphysical, marketing the work poses major challenges.

At the request of teachers who recently graduated from the Institut Alexander Bewegung in Linz, Austria, I had the chance to offer a workshop on building a website presence. The teachers had wanted to find a way of presenting themselves as a unified body, both on the Internet and in print. The focus of the workshop was less on identifying “target” markets and marketing strategies, and more on establishing a sense of identity in bringing AT into the Information Age. I had one and a half days to help them come up with a way of describing the work that would help distinguish themselves and, at the same time, stick to principle.

Our charge was to come up (without endgaining) with three words—and only three words—that placed the group uniquely, yet solidly, in the work. Much as Alexander came up with three words (means-whereby, inhibition, and direction), these teachers were to capture the essence of Alexander’s principles in three words that made sense, literally and figuratively, for an educated, psychologically savvy, German-speaking audience.

I decided that three words would need to carry the necessary “punch” for Web surfers. The information highway (and the advertising world, in general) likes brevity—no scrolling or excessive text. “Tun Sie nichts!” (“Do nothing!”) says the ad at the bus stop, beckoning me to go to a tropical resort. Although I can’t betray the three words the teachers evolved in this brief time, suffice it to say that they were contemporary equivalents of means-

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## Alexander Technique International

For membership information, please contact Bérengère Cusin at the address below or by email at [ati-usa@ati-net.com](mailto:ati-usa@ati-net.com).

ATI membership: \$55 (\$30 for trainees) per year. Teaching membership: \$120 per year. Membership includes a subscription to *ExChange*. Subscription to *ExChange* alone, \$35 per year. Please send check or money order in US funds to:

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## Keynote Address

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She starts to read books about the meaning of life—this is her deepest interest—and she starts to learn, for example, how to prepare Japanese flower arrangements.

Through continuous application of Yoga exercises she realizes how her body becomes flexible and beautiful.

She experiences that if she is sticking to her decisions and continuously is renewing her thoughts, and is giving her heart's desire into them—she can make her ideas and goals become reality. And she knows that what she is able to do, everybody else is able to also, if they do what she does.

She starts to share. . .

Being 34 years old, she is living a most intensive life, has just started to train for her third profession, and has begun to realize that to be responsible for her own actions and to meet and accept challenges in life is the source for her potential to expand.

Let's wait here and take some moments.

Please remember your own development, remember some moments in your life, when you experienced the extension of your potential. . .

Let's also remember some moments in the development of ATI, when we experienced the extension of ATI's potential. . .

—the moment of its foundation

—the challenges during the starting time

—the time when the Formal Consensus Process started to be integrated.

And now, the story continues...

In the Alexander Technique she feels at home and is enriched by enormous learnings...

She is mostly inspired by the sentence of Francis Bacon, which F.M. Alexander used in the beginning of the introduction to his "Evolution of a Technique": *"My purpose. . . is to try whether I cannot in very fact lay more firmly the foundations, and extend more widely the limits of the power and greatness of man."*

She easily can accept F.M. Alexander's conception, namely, that it is impossible to separate "mental" and "physical" processes in any form of human activity, *and* she begins to realize that to study the use of herself was not reduced to the study of the use of her body only.

As Mr. Alexander says: *"I wish to make it clear that when I employ the word 'use,' it is not in that limited sense of the use of any specific part, as, for instance, when we speak of the use of an arm or the use of a leg, but in a much wider and more comprehensive sense applying to the working of the organism in general."*

So, by the time she allows herself to think of an organism in its psycho-physical-spiritual unity in the widest sense of the meaning and experience, what an enormous impact this extended idea has on her life.

She continues to experiment with the principles of the Technique in her everyday life. But it takes her a while to understand that *she is not asked to do some exercises or to learn to do something right, but to get able to meet a stimulus that always puts her wrong and to learn to deal with it.*

She learns *that inhibition is a movement of a conscious re-direction of misdirected energy, which allows—if so desired—a constructive change to take place.*

*More and more she continues to experience* that her use really affects her reaction and functioning in all activities and that this is a universal constant in living.

And one day, while re-reading *The Little Prince* by Antoine de St. Exupéry, she makes a most important discovery—she realizes, that almost all those dark and heavy clouds around her heart had vanished and her heart had opened up. She understands the Little Prince when he says: “*We truly can only see with our heart— the essential is not visible to the eyes.*”

This was the story.

And now, let's come back into reality.

One day, while I was walking along Massachusetts Avenue in Boston, I read a big advertisement saying: “*A person's mind, once touched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.*” Isn't that sentence also true while meeting people and new circumstances?

Therefore, I invite you to enjoy the sharing of our potential during this time here at Spanish Point:

—let's learn from each other's growth and development

—let's enjoy the workshops, the business meetings, and the playful time in between

—let's acknowledge the connectedness with all our ATI members and Alexander Technique colleagues throughout the world and

—let's remember their growing potential.

And last but not least:

I invite you to acknowledge life as a continuous movement into all directions—especially into the directions of forward and up! ☺

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**It's what you learn after you know it all that counts.**

**John Wooden**

## Three Little Words

*continued from page 3*

whereby, inhibition, and direction. They embodied Alexander's principles, yet conveyed the thrust of more recent scientific and societal trends. Are you curious yet?

The means-whereby, inhibition, and direction provided the springboard for my teaching the workshop. First, we inhibited trying to get to the words right away, but rather took time doing hands-on exchanges while discussing and establishing the needs of the group. What had they already done that was successful, had momentum, and readily distinguished their way of working while placing them squarely in the commonality of the Alexander tradition?

My strategy for zeroing in on three words was to help them formulate and condense their mission. Everyone needs a "mission statement," which ideally should be no more than one sentence long and understood by anyone age 12 and up.<sup>1</sup> I thought the three words might emerge readily within a statement like: "I believe in \_\_\_\_\_ in order to do \_\_\_\_\_ for the benefit of \_\_\_\_\_." For marketing purposes, these words were designed to speak to a wide audience by both filling and creating a need. Since Alexander Technique speaks best through experience, however, it is easy for marketing practices to succumb to various pitfalls. These pitfalls, however, provided important insights towards forging a new language of Alexander.

### **Pitfall #1: Language as the Interpreter of Somatic Experience**

A body of work that has no barriers when "translated" through the medium of touch, becomes full of cumbersome stumbling blocks when language becomes the medium of communication.

During our hands-on exchanges, we brainstormed and wrote down a list of phrases that described the work. Sentences flowed freely, yet few carried the potency of a "brand name"<sup>2</sup> that crystallized the essence of the work. The teachers' statements were often too long, so that the message became a ponderous list of lengthy and lofty off-putting adjectives. Many sentences they generated buried themselves in a deep hole of inaccessibility.

Alexander's language is English, not German. It would be curious to consider what terms Alexander would have selected had he been German-speaking! These teachers had the double duty of learning the English terms for Alexander's principles, translating them into German, and then reconstituting stilted and clumsy phrases into more deft, accessible terms that spoke more directly to their experience. This is a complex process of assimilation and accommodation.

Words that are difficult enough in English, such as Conscious Constructive Control, acquired either a reductionist or inflated tint when translated. The word *Kontrolle* in German, for example, connotes a more mechanistic meaning. My list of buzzwords and slogans that carried punch in English, like "turn a reaction into a positive response," easily became inflated in translation.

German words such as *Entdeckungsreise* (process of discovery) or *Inneswahrnehmung* (sensory appreciation), while appearing captivating to English speakers for their implied comprehensiveness, were strangely inadequate for the task of describing the Alexander principles.

In the end, however, a few gems surfaced from the initial list of sentences that could help us to continue to hone the process. The atmosphere became charged as we approved of the few words that made sense personally, yet didn't compromise the principles.

The next logical step in the process was for each teacher to greet someone in the group as a stranger new to the work, and respond to the question: “What is the Alexander Technique?” with three simple, spontaneous sentences. The main constraint of the exercise was to use inhibition, pausing between each sentence and during moments of dis-ease in trying to come up with the three sentences. The program was:

1. Approach
2. Pause
3. Greet
4. Pause
5. Say first sentence
6. Pause
7. Say second sentence
8. Pause
9. Say third sentence
10. Goodbye.

Everyone found every element of this exercise difficult. It was hard to stay present, keep eye contact, be personable, and make a nonverbal connection with the “stranger” while delivering the three sentences simply and succinctly, without saying too much or too little. With practice, however, communication began to flow more organically.

## **Pitfall #2: The Body Trap of Puritanism and Narcissism**

AT is taught as a body discipline in the West, where “the body” carries the weight of historical Puritanism and narcissism. The body assumes value when it is disciplined, “correct,” and achieving. Bodies are to overcome bad habits and rid themselves of habitual tensions and parasitic movements. Finding poise is truly an art when many live at the extremes of body support—total collapse (slump) on one end, muscular overdrive on the other. It’s easy to reduce the work of Alexander to biomechanical efficiency, correct alignment, or neuromuscular therapy when using “the body” as the focal point.

It’s hard to get across that we are touching a student’s “attention,” not their body, per se, when we use our hands. Most people equate Alexander Technique with postural training. I, for one, will sing hallelujah when, upon announcing that I teach the Alexander Technique, people don’t stiffen in response, get defensive about their posture, and try to correct themselves.

The teachers realized this problem readily and avoided any of the common terms that one sees associated with body training methods: efficiency, effectiveness, alignment, etc. On the other hand, the teachers tended to explain the work from the vantage point of their own experience, thus falling into the trap of narcissism. While avoiding the reductionism of postural control, they fell into the trap of inflated, personal feeling. Their own feelings, metaphors, and personal visions of the work—while beautifully poetic—did not carry the significance of the “universal constant in living.”

At this point, another “assignment” would bring them further along in the process. We returned to chair work. Classical chair work has always represented a kind of “spiritual bootcamp” for me—rigorous, existential, testing the powers of inhibition. To free themselves of being “correct” in teaching a chair lesson, and, at the same time,

## Three Little Words

to use Alexander's principles powerfully, they were asked to teach a chair lesson as a game.

Through games, curiosity, discovery, and pleasure provided the leverage for getting in and out of the chair.

This took all the effort out of teaching the lesson. It was OK to look stupid, do it badly or "wrong." Moreover, while conditions remained respectful, the teachers became almost superfluous, as the students took over the job of self-organizing themselves. The lessons taught themselves. (The right thing does itself.) By the end of this exercise, the group had evolved their three words. They felt seen and validated, and our goal had been reached.

### Alexander, Inc.

To incorporate means to unite closely so as to form one body. "In-corporating" the Alexander Technique might mean to consider the body as "our general medium for having a world,"<sup>3</sup> a world where the universal constant in living is founded in pleasure, joy, and responsiveness—three little words with big impact.

### Endnotes

1. Laurie Beth Jones. *The Path*. New York: Hyperion, 1996.
2. Matthews. "So It's Like Yoga?" *ExChange* (Vol. 10, No. 2, June 2002).
3. Merleau-Monty, M. "The spatiality of the lived body and motility." In Spicker, S.F. (ed.). *The Philosophy of the Body: Rejections of Cartesian Dualism*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970. ☺

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### ***DIRECTION*** calls for contributions to two future issues:

**Education Issue:** AT in Education and AT as Education...Linking AT with other education systems. What are the power and ethics issues in the teacher-student relationship? How does language influence how we teach, and are there limitations? Student education, the Educare model in UK, and where AT has come since the "little school." An interview with a veteran trainer of the AT, plus much more. Issue Editor: Marcus Sly

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**Deadline: September 30, 2004**

**Communication Issue:** Details to be announced.

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**Deadline: March 30, 2005**

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## From the Teaching Studio: A Student's Report on "A Technique for Musicians"

*Rachel White*  
*Student, Wellesley College, MA, USA*

The pamphlet "A Technique for Musicians" by Frank Pierce Jones was a great summary of everything we've been discussing in [our voice] lessons. I also appreciated the references to other forms of music. For example, thinking about the pianist who was exerting unneeded energy, and actually working against himself, helped me to form a clearer picture of inefficiency in general. I can now take that and use the analogy to understand how I work against my own actions while singing.

In the second essay, the author wrote about habits. Part of me has always thought that practicing to the point where I know a piece by heart, and can perform without thinking is a good sign. I did it all of the time while in marching band in high school because there were so many aspects of the performance to take in at once. Pierce however points out that while this works for some people, it can put performers at a disadvantage. Without awareness nothing can be changed. I think about this now and I find that I completely agree with Jones. If you're not aware of what is going on around you, it isn't possible to react. You'd have a hard time interacting with the audience and I feel that it would be especially hard to keep the emotional level of the performance up. While performing purely out of habit it would be hard to access the emotions needed to have a lively performance. Everything would eventually become rather static.

Finally, as in the case of the pianist mentioned earlier, Pierce pointed out a few analogies in the second essay of the pamphlet that were especially helpful to me in thinking about the organization of awareness. For example, while I know that I tend to "set" myself before singing, I had a hard time grasping exactly what was happening because my old habits kept me from seeing what I was doing. The example of sitting at a red light and prepping the body to hit the gas, however, gave me a concrete example that I could relate to. Although I still might try to set myself before singing, I can relate it back to setting up to push the gas pedal. I know what I have to do to relax in that situation and now I can employ those same techniques to relax before singing.

I'd recommend that everyone read this pamphlet. It really cleared things up! ☺

*7th International Congress of  
the F.M. Alexander Technique*

*16-22 August 2004  
Oxford, England*



For more information, please visit the Congress website: [www.atcongress.net](http://www.atcongress.net).

# **Practicing Detachment: A Short Introduction to the F.M. Alexander Technique for Buddhist Practitioners**

*Chodo Mike Cross  
Alexander Technique Teacher*

## **Practice of Detachment in Alexander Technique**

*The fact to be faced is that the human self was robbed of much of its inheritance when the separation implied by the conception of the organism as 'spirit,' 'mind,' and 'body' was accepted as a working principle, for it left unbridged the gap between the 'subconscious' and the conscious. I venture to assert that if the gap is to be bridged, it will be by means of a knowledge, gained through practical experience, which will enable us to inhibit our instinctive, 'subconscious' reaction to a given stimulus, and to hold it inhibited while initiating a conscious direction, guidance, and control of the use of the self that was previously unfamiliar.*

*I suggest that only those who become capable of translating into practice what is involved in the procedure just described can justly claim to have experienced detachment in the basic sense.*

*—F.M. Alexander, *The Universal Constant in Living*, 1946*

## **Practice of Detachment in Zazen**

In Buddhist sitting practice, called zazen in Japanese, the given stimulus is the instruction to sit upright. The formal instructions for zazen laid down by the founder of Zen Buddhism in Japan, Zen Master Dogen (1200-1254), centre upon the command "Just sit upright. Do not lean to the left, incline to the right, slump forward, or arch backward."

For most of us, the instinctive reaction to this stimulus is to stiffen up or to brace, fixing the joints and holding the breath in the process. The more clearly we see it, the more possible it may be to inhibit this reaction, along with the false attempts at self-organization that are its offshoots.

To initiate a conscious direction of the use of the self that was previously unfamiliar may involve the wish to sit upright without fixing, keeping all the joints as open and free as possible, beginning with the sub-occipital joint where the head sits on top of the spinal column.

This process requires trust, because it entails opening up to the unknown, abandoning the false security of holding and fixing. Again, it requires clarity, especially in regard to timorous responses to the stimulus "Just sit upright."

## **The Secret Is in the Preparation**

An ideal way to develop this clarity and trust, and hence an ideal way to prepare for zazen, is to practice Alexander's procedure of inhibition and direction in sitting and standing, under the guidance of an AT teacher. Having experienced how conscious inhibition and direction make for a freer use of the self in rising from a chair, thereafter, to counter any tendency to stiffen in zazen, we can simply think of sitting 'as if to stand.' The secret is not in the movement of standing but in the readiness to stand. "The readiness is all." Therefore, even with legs crossed in lotus, it may help to think of being able to pivot freely, 'all in one piece,' on the sitting bones, so that the head being released forward and up, against the back lengthening and widening, could lead us up into standing.

To sit like this is, in the words of Nelly Ben-Or, “to allow directions for their own sake—rather than just in preparation for a movement.” With words like these, and with hands that put real meaning into the words, a teacher of the Alexander Technique can point us to the essence of the Buddhist practice of just sitting. To quote Nelly again, “The aim is clarity and simplicity—everything else falls away.”

### Learning Clarity in the Moment

[Alexander arrived at] *the only place, and the only moment in time, where change could begin, or where he could have any control over the habitual patterns of misuse which were dominating everything he attempted to do. This place, or this moment in time, was the instant that a stimulus to activity reached his consciousness.*

—Marjory Barlow, 1965 F.M.A. Memorial Lecture

The stimulus “Just sit upright” tends to trigger a stiffening reaction which, if practiced, becomes a habit that feels familiar and right. As we endeavor moment by moment to shed this habit and to transcend this feeling, the clarity of our consciousness of stimulus and response is greatly enhanced by freedom from ulterior motives or extraneous wishes. As F.M. noted, “People that haven’t any fish to fry, they see it all right.”

“The aim is clarity and simplicity—everything else falls away.” (Nelly Ben-Or)

### Learning to Trust New Means

*In learning the Technique, the pupil must learn to stop doing, to leave himself in the hands of the teacher, neither tensing nor relaxing. Further, any emotional involvement in trying to learn what to do, or in what is going on, should be avoided. The best results are gained when a pupil can dissociate himself from what is happening, as if standing on one side watching someone else being taught.*

*Alexander named the opposite of this kind of behavior ‘end-gaining,’ i.e., the desire to bring about the end in view however wrong the means might be. He demonstrated that the quality of means employed brings about the kind of end arrived at, and that poor means invariably bring about a mediocre end. He showed that if a new kind of result was wanted, a new set of means would have to be used.*

—Patrick MacDonald, *The Alexander Technique As I See It*

## Practicing Detachment

### Learning to Let It Happen

*Non-doing is, above all, an attitude of mind. It's a wish. It's a decision to leave everything alone and see what goes on, see what happens. Your breathing and your circulation and your postural mechanisms are all working and taking over. The organism is functioning in its automatic way, and you are doing nothing. If you're going to succeed in doing nothing, you must exercise control over your thinking processes. You must really wish to do nothing. If you're thinking anxious, worried thoughts, if you're thinking exciting thoughts that are irrelevant to the situation at hand, you stir up responses in your body that are not consistent with doing nothing. It's not a matter of just not moving—that can lead to fixing or freezing—it's a matter of really leaving yourself alone and letting everything just happen and take over.*

*This is what we're aiming at in an Alexander lesson, and if we're wise, and we understand, it's also what we aim at in our own practice of non-doing. It is something that requires practice. Like most other things in life, it isn't something that you can achieve by simply wishing to do so, by just thinking, 'Well, I will now leave myself alone and not do anything.' Unfortunately, it doesn't work out like that. The whole process requires a lot of practice, and a lot of observation. Out of this process a tremendous lot of experience is to be gained. . . .*

—Walter Carrington, *Thinking Aloud* ☺

*Reprinted (with author's revisions) by kind permission of the author from <http://www.zafu.net/whatswrong.html>.*

For the last twenty years Mike Cross has been a disciple of the Zen Master Gudo Nishijima, with whom he co-translated Master Dogen's *Shobogenzo*. He became a Dharma heir of Nishijima Roshi in 1998, and is currently the Director of the Middle Way Re-education Centre, in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, England. A former member of STAT, he qualified as a teacher with Ray Evans and Ron Colyer, also in 1998. His wife Chie Cross is an AT teacher and current member of STAT. For the past ten years, he has sought to apply in Buddhist sitting practice Alexander's principles of inhibition and direction, believing them to correspond to the 3rd and 4th of the Buddha's four noble truths.

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### From the Chair

*continued from page 2*

It is elegant to watch right actions emerge from business meetings at the AGM, from committee meetings, from conversations on the Interchange, and in Board meetings. I find such joy in these moments—all of our ideas are made greater.

Best wishes to all for the New Year! ☺

1. Autry, J., and S. Mitchell. *Real Power: Business Lessons from the Tao Te Ching*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998, p. 26.

# **My Search for the Artist, Musician, and Teacher Within: The Coordinate Movement Program**

*Heidi Evans, MAT*

## **My Background**

I never thought of myself as an injured pianist. Certainly, I've never been diagnosed by a medical professional. Looking back, I remember many years of playing with pain and numbness, but at the time, I considered these normal effects of practicing. I was wrong. Pain and numbness are the result of improper technique and incorrect use of anatomical principles of movement.

I think that most of the problems I have experienced with technique at the piano have stemmed from my own misinterpretations of technical instructions given to me over the years by many teachers. These teachers themselves demonstrated good technique, but I believe they lacked specific vocabulary in anatomical terms, falling back upon euphemism and allegory, which are inherently open to misunderstanding.

My attempts to achieve correct technique resulted in feeling tense and awkward. My tone was harsh and abrasive, and I would often feel pain after practicing. My fingertips would feel bruised, my back would be slumped by the end of my practice sessions, and my shoulder blades and forearms would be tight and sore. I was not motivated in any way to practice, and did the bare minimum to keep my weekly lessons from being a disaster, relying on sight-reading and memorization. These skills did not serve me well in performances and I performed poorly on more than one occasion, developing performance anxiety.

Still motivated by a desire to learn, I found myself at an audition at Portland State University. I felt afterward that it had not been a resounding success. . . I knew my scales and arpeggios were not up to the standards of the Masters program. I was hesitant to commit myself to any program because of my past experiences, despite my desire to learn and improve. The two professors at my audition, Harold Gray and Mary Hall Kogen, were fortunately able to see my frustration and my desire to learn, admitting me to the Master of Arts in Teaching program.

For two years, my piano lessons with Professor Gray proceeded well and I was slowly letting go of my need to control every movement, and its resulting frustrations. Because I had been playing with tension for many years, he recommended that I attend workshops given by faculty from the Taubman Institute of Piano in New York, and lectures by Barbara Conable on Body Mapping and the Alexander Technique.

The first lecture I attended by Barbara Conable was immediately helpful. She demonstrated the anatomical alignment of the hand, wrist, forearm, upper arm, and shoulder blade, and gave us the opportunity to experiment at the piano. In the Chopin *Étude*, Op. 25, No. 11, I was not correctly using these principles of movement, causing my discomfort. I also learned about the flexibility of the sternoclavicular joint (the collarbone to the breastbone) and was shocked to discover that it was a part of the arm! I studied anatomy and physiology during my undergrad years but had yet to bring my knowledge to understanding.

## **Portland State University's Coordinate Movement Program**

The last year of my graduate program was the first year of the Coordinate Movement Program, conceived by Professor Lisa Marsh, and co-taught by Professor Barbara Conable. I jumped at the chance to take the once-a-week, three-hour class in the fall term. I had one initial concern before classes began. I wanted to learn concrete

facts and see immediate improvement in my playing but was concerned that it would be a touchy-feely, New-Age type of class. The first few minutes of class set my mind at ease.

We began with sharing our stories about pain and frustration in our playing, and then participated in a lecture on the alignment of the hand, wrist, and arm. How does one participate in a lecture? Our participation was through movement and palpation of the muscles, bones, and joints, exploring the full range of motion available and determining which motions were specifically useful at the piano and refining our body map to include this new knowledge. The body map is our internal representation, “map,” of our muscles, joints, and bones, as we understand them. Some body maps include drastic errors, which result in incorrect movements, and pain.

Each week, we studied a different part of the body, for instance, the legs, all their joints, their use at the piano, and the incorporation of the legs into our body map. As we practiced that week, we made a point to be aware of the legs, whether or not they were tense, how they were used in the pieces we were working on, and the best position for using the pedal. At the end of the week, we turned in a progress report on how we were coming with the incorporation of the legs into the body map of a pianist. I found that I made regular progress except during finals weeks, when I was under a lot of stress. The class discovered that this was universal during all finals weeks, and we talked about how to cope during stressful situations, without injuring ourselves further. I should have guessed—it involved more slow practice, more body awareness, and self-protection during this time.

Self-protection includes eating, sleeping, and exercising regularly, and avoiding unhealthy and stressful activities such as cramming, staying up late to write that paper, and skipping meals when time was running short. We learned how great concert artists are fanatical about self-protection as a necessary part of a performing career.

I found a certain comfort in knowing that other pianists had experienced the same frustrations and pains as I had experienced. I was greatly encouraged to observe Professor Marsh at the piano, because she had completely retrained her technique over the last few years and her movements were fluid and her tone was singing. I gained a respect for those who are willing to go through the process of retraining because the first quarter can be frustrating, when only one thing at a time is getting fixed. In the second and third quarter of Coordinate Movement, when more of the concepts began coming together, progress was faster and more rewarding for me.

As my rate of progress increased throughout the year, so did my level of excitement for my instrument. I couldn't wait to try each new concept I was learning in my next practice session. My tone improved, becoming warm and resonant. I was able to let go of performance anxiety through my new-found understanding of "Inclusive Awareness," which is the awareness of one's whole body including emotions, of the instrument, the space, and the audience. I began to look forward to performing, with opportunities becoming more frequent as my graduate recital approached.

Towards the end of the third term, the class discussed what it means to be a musician and how that fits into our lives with the other roles we choose for ourselves. We came up with three terms that have stayed with me, one of which changed the focus of the entire class: artist, musician, and teacher. Interestingly, none of us was willing at first to accept this label of artist, even though making music is inherently artistic! As I began to *value* myself as a musician, artist, and teacher, I *became* a better musician, artist, and teacher.

My attitude towards practicing the piano has so fundamentally changed that I now consider every minute I spend at the piano to be a joy and privilege. I will deepen and strengthen the knowledge I have gained in this course through further study and movement. The first ten minutes of my warm-up routine is spent in non-playing activities such as putting all joints through their full range of motion, exploring the inner workings of the instrument, and constructive rest. What I would have considered to be a waste of my time a few years ago, I now enjoy: playing slow scales to take the measure of the piano's sound, and evaluating each motion for maximum freedom and flexibility. These slow scales are followed by faster scales, chord progressions, improvisation, and arpeggios.

Being part of a collective learning group has been such a rewarding experience that I recommend this experience to every pianist with whom I come in contact. This class is beneficial to all pianists, whether injured or not. A deeper understanding of anatomy can only help technique, and this class is a place to safely incorporate knowledge, without fear of misunderstanding or judgment. ☺

For more information about the Coordinate Movement Program please contact Lisa Marsh by email: [L88marsh@comcast.net](mailto:L88marsh@comcast.net) or telephone: 503-227-6699, or visit the website at: [www.pianotechnique.org](http://www.pianotechnique.org).

Heidi Evans, pianist and teacher, graduated from Walla Walla College, Washington, in 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music. There, she taught in the Piano Preparatory Program for three years under the direction of pedagogue Debra Richter. In June 2003, Ms. Evans graduated with a Masters of Science in Teaching Music from Portland State University. She studied piano with Professor Harold Gray, and trained in pedagogy with Professor Mary Hall Kogen. During the last year of her degree, she enrolled in the Coordinate Movement Program, co-taught by Professors Lisa Marsh and Barbara Conable. This program teaches anatomy and movement principles, as well as Body Mapping and Inclusive Awareness, which is awareness of the entire body, the instrument, the audience, and the performing space. Ms. Evans includes these concepts in her private piano studio.

# **My Experience Teaching Alexander Technique at Princeton**

*Gary Adelman*

*ATI Teaching Member, New Jersey, USA*

This fall I had the good fortune of teaching the Alexander Technique to the Princeton University Women's tennis team. Assisted by a private grant, with the help of ATI, and a lot of persistence, a long-time dream of mine came true. The Princeton tennis team has traditionally been one of the strongest contenders in the Eastern Conference, and this year's team has a lot of depth and talent. Because of the high calibre of players on the team, I approached this opportunity with a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement.

My background in Alexander Technique is as follows: I completed a three-year teacher-training course at the Alexander Technique Center at Cambridge with Tommy Thompson in 1992 and spent an additional year training in Israel at several schools in Tel Aviv. I have had a private AT practice for the past ten years and more recently have begun to specialize in working with tennis players. This is because I played five years of professional tennis after college and because I have taught tennis for the past 20 years. Also, I love the game of tennis.

I found my experience working with the Princeton team very gratifying. I was able to learn from the students at least as much as I taught them. Their enthusiasm for the game and for life is infectious and whenever I found myself getting too serious or felt what I was doing was overly important I would see a big smile or hear a giggle or laugh and remind myself to relax, lighten up, and have fun. In retrospect, this openness to life and the ability to have a good time were what I needed to learn from the experience.

The prospect of working with the team initially presented some concerns for me. First, I wondered how the women would receive the work. Would they feel okay about being touched by an older man that they did not know, using a technique with which they were completely unfamiliar? Would they have the patience needed to experience the lesson? Would they even be interested in what the technique had to offer them and would they be willing to apply the principles on- and off-court?

Curiously, my concerns were largely unfounded. First, because they were told that I had been a pro tennis player and am a tennis coach, this gave me credibility with the team members. Secondly, because I explained that the work might reduce their effort level and could prevent and alleviate some of their injuries, many became interested. Thirdly and most importantly, I received a tremendous amount of support from the head women's tennis coach, Louise Gengler. Louise was well aware of the numerous AT and tennis lessons I had given to her mother, Jeanne, for many years. She also knew that her mother's tennis game improved significantly with my input. Jeanne's strokes smoothed out, tension disappeared from her face and body, and she learned to play with an ease and economy of motion. She also became a top senior player in the US. Because of my positive experience with her mother and because she had experienced benefit when receiving some hands-on work from me, Louise was a believer and committed herself to supporting me and my work with the team.

The team is composed of 13 players. Because practices were only two and a half hours long, five days a week, I wanted to work with each player several times a week. I did not have the time to give a typical 30- to 60-minute lesson. Instead, I resorted to giving short 10- to 15-minute "turns" to each woman, working with each individually two to three times a week. A short turn, as opposed to a longer lesson, was preferred by players as it allowed them a longer on-court playing time. The tennis court itself became my classroom and it was here that I worked with the players. I often would take a chair and place it on the side of the court to do some traditional chair work. Time permitting, I might follow this with a few minutes of "shadow stroking," which is stroking with a

## Looking Back on AGM 2003

### Postscript

And some time make the time to drive out west  
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,  
In September or October, when the wind  
And the light are working off each other  
So that the ocean on one side is wild  
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones  
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit  
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,  
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,  
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads  
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.  
Useless to think you'll park and capture it  
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,  
A hurry through which known and strange things pass  
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways  
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

Seamus Heaney

## **. . . And Forward to AGM 2004!**

### **Alexander Technique International Annual General Meeting** **The Unique Qualities of ATI** Oxford, England, August 13–15, 2004

This year's AGM will be a celebration of the unique qualities of ATI. The AGM will include workshops on formal consensus and a lively business meeting agenda, as well as plenty of time to meet with each other. It is scheduled directly before this year's International Congress in order to maximize our exchange of ideas with each other and the greater Alexander world.

The AGM is scheduled to begin on Friday, August 13th at 1:00 pm. The meeting will end on Sunday evening, August 15th. Checkout time for St. Edmund's Hall is 11:00 am Monday, August 16th.

Here is some information for you as you plan your travel. We have secured St. Edmunds Hall in Oxford for our conference and lodgings during the AGM. We will be offering half-board accommodations, which includes breakfast and lunch. Tea and coffee is included in the morning and in the afternoon, as well. Dinner will be on your own. The per-person prices are:

|                           |                          |        |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| Room only (without bath): | single                   | £46.22 |
|                           | double (two single beds) | £43.22 |
| Ensuite (with bath):      | single                   | £53.42 |
|                           | double                   | £50.42 |

The residence hall is student accommodation in an old university. There are only about 12 rooms with private bath (all others have shared bath), so first come, first served!

St. Edmund's Hall is in the centre of Oxford. There are plenty of shops and cafes in the near vicinity so there is plenty of opportunity for less expensive food in town. These prices are reasonable and the quality should be very good.

Information about registering for the AGM and for accommodations will be provided as soon as it is known.

The International Congress is making separate arrangement for accommodations. If you are attending the Congress, you will need to move from St. Edmund's Hall to wherever you plan to stay for the Congress on Monday. All arrangements for the duration of the Congress must be made through the Congress organization. Their website is [www.atcongress.net](http://www.atcongress.net).

**Come help celebrate the unique qualities of ATI in Oxford this summer!**

## Teaching AT at Princeton

*continued from page 16*

racket without hitting a ball. As the player would go through the stroke I would put hands-on and at the same time offer verbal suggestions. I might also work with their lateral movement, monkey position (called “ready position” in tennis), or have them do a split-step (a hopping move performed by players before each stroke). Some of the time I spent watching and helping them with their use while they were hitting live balls. Every couple of weeks I tried to fit in a table turn off-court to improve their ability to inhibit and to undo.

At the semester's completion I gave out a questionnaire with a few brief questions. Overall the responses were very positive. In response to a question about how they benefited from the work, players reported improved relaxation, better posture, more power, greater body expansion, feeling more efficient, more ball control, smoother and more fluid strokes, and more pleasure and enjoyment. In answering a question about off-court benefits, players reported improved posture, less tension, more awareness of how they carried themselves, and greater ease. Suggestions to improve their experience included more lessons, more verbal suggestions and explanations, and more on-court work with a live ball.

Because of the quality of my experience working with the team, I am continuing my work with the team members in the spring semester and hope that the work will continue to benefit them on- and off-court. ☺

Gary encourages any other teachers who have worked with tennis players or athletes to contact him to share their experiences, teaching ideas, or suggestions. He can be reached by email at [garyadelman@earthlink.net](mailto:garyadelman@earthlink.net) or phone at (609) 430-4710.

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*At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless.  
Neither from nor towards. At the still point, there the dance is.  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity.  
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards.  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point  
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.*

T.S. Eliot, from “Burnt Norton,” (*Four Quartets*)

## HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM ATI!

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### Worldwide Offices of Alexander Technique International

*continued from page 20*

#### Norway

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Alexander Technique International (ATI) is a worldwide organization of teachers, students, and friends of the Alexander Technique created to promote and advance the work begun by F. Matthias Alexander.

ATI embraces the diversity of the international Alexander community and works to promote international dialogue.

### About the Alexander Technique

Experience of the Technique has led to praise from George Bernard Shaw, Aldous Huxley, Prof. John Dewey, Sir Charles Sherrington, Julian Bream, John Cleese, Robertson Davies, and many others. It is taught at the Juilliard School of Performing Arts in New York, and the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and the Shaw Festivals in Canada, Boston University, Brandeis University, and many other centers.

Olympic-level athletes have similarly used the Technique to improve their performance, as have leading golfers and business people. Medical studies have shown the Technique to be as effective in lowering blood pressure as the normally prescribed beta-blocking drugs. Other studies have shown significant improvement in respiratory function.

The common factor in all of these aspects of life is that how we are using ourselves—the way we do things—affects the result we get. The Alexander Technique is a means of improving that use. It has been called a “pre-technique” that people can apply to furthering their own special skills and activities. It is also essentially a preventive technique with which we can learn to improve and maintain our health.

The individual is the focus of the Alexander Technique. We are all unique, with different bodies, different experiences, and different problems. We go about the process of change in different ways and at different rates. For these reasons, what happens in an Alexander Technique lesson depends very much on the needs of the student at the time. In the basic sense, though, you will learn an attitude of not trying to gain your ends at any cost, and, at the same time, how to prevent your harmful habits that cause unnecessary stress and restrict your capabilities. Obviously, since what you are changing are patterns built up over many years, a permanent change will not be brought about overnight. However, the person who learns to stop and take time, to think constructively about how he uses himself in everyday life, will find that this simple procedure can have far-reaching results.

Further information about the Alexander Technique can perhaps best be gained from a teacher near you (see list at right for the nearest ATI office for teacher listings, or visit [www.ati-net.com](http://www.ati-net.com)), as your changing experiences through lessons are the only real way to understand the nature of the work and what change is possible.



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