

EXCHANGE

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Skill and Success: The Careers of Nelly Bly and F.M. Alexander

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“Energy rightly applied and directed will accomplish anything.”

Nellie Bly

“In the present state of the world, it is evident that the control we have gained of physical energies, heat, light, electricity, etc., without having first secured control of our use of ourselves is a perilous affair. Without the control of our use of ourselves, our use of other things is blind; it may lead to anything.

“If there can be developed a technique which will enable individuals really to secure the right use of themselves, then the factor upon which depends the final use of all other forms of energy will be brought under control. Mr. Alexander has evolved this technique.”

Professor John Dewey

Nellie Bly was a remarkable woman. “The best reporter in America,” wrote the New York Evening Standard when she died in 1922. She was a pioneer in investigative journalism. She feigned insanity and got herself committed to a lunatic asylum to expose its horrors in print. She circled the globe faster than any live or fictional character. She designed, manufactured, and marketed the first successful steel barrel produced in the United States. And she was the first woman to report from the eastern front during World War I.

With no help from anyone, and with only a few months’ previous experience working for a newspaper in Pittsburgh, she managed to break into journalism in New York in 1887, at a time when there were very few women reporters and a strong belief among newspaper people that women should only be assigned stories about cooking, society, and the like. Within a year of arriving in New York, she became one of the best-known journalists in the city.

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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

*Catherine Kettrick
ATI Chair*

In consequence of the unreliability of his sensory impressions, man's interpretation of his own and other people's experience in living is too often faulty and illusive, and he is liable to arrive at false conclusions, and to form erroneous judgments, especially where the motives for his own and other people's behaviour and general activities are concerned.¹

As I write this, Israeli and Hezbollah armies are still fighting in Lebanon. People are killing each other in Iraq. And children all over the world are saying, "But he hit me first!"

Although many religions may say: "Do to others as you want them to do to you," it seems people tend to "Do to others as they did to me, only more so."

Some recent research supports this idea. Sukhwinder Shergill² and colleagues at the University College, London asked pairs of volunteers to try to touch each other with only the amount of force that the other person used to touch them with.

Volunteers put their left index finger on a plastic support. A lightweight lever was placed on top of each volunteer's finger. The lever was attached to a force transducer, which is a machine that can apply an exact amount of force.

A researcher started the experiment by using the force transducer to put an exact amount of pressure on the first volunteer for three seconds. This volunteer then had to touch the second volunteer's finger using that same exact amount of pressure. Then the second volunteer responded, then the first one did again, and so on. The force transducer let the researchers measure how much force each person was using.

Volunteers tried to use the same amount of force, but they on average they used 38% more pressure than the first person used when touching them. As the experiment continued, the volunteers used more and more force. What started as soft touches became hard pokes.

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The most interesting result of the experiment is that each volunteer believed that he was giving back exactly what he received, but that the other person was increasing the force, which left the first volunteer no choice but to respond with more force himself.³

Volunteers responded this way because our brains perceive the force we receive as stronger than the force we produce. So to make the force “equal” we use more force, which leads our partners to use more force, which lead us to use more force, and....

Alexander believed that using his Technique would allow us to develop an accurate sensory register. Perhaps the best we can do is an awareness that we are probably wrong, and the skill to inhibit our first response.

Endnotes

¹ Alexander, F.M. *Universal Constant in Living*, 1941, 1986, Centerline Press, p. 119

² “Two Eyes for an Eye: The Neuroscience of Force Escalation.” *Science* 301, #187, 11 July 2003.

³ The researchers also did an experiment where volunteers touched themselves with the “same” amount of force. The volunteer had their left index finger on the plastic mold. The force transducer gave the finger an exact amount of pressure. The volunteer then had to put that same amount of pressure on their own index finger using their right index finger. Again, they misperceived how much force was used, and put more force on themselves than the machine had put on them. ☹

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Skill and Success

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How did she accomplish this?

She did it by “applying and directing” her energies skillfully. She knew that she wanted a career in journalism and she proceeded in a skillful and systematic way to accomplish this.

She began by tricking an editor into granting her an initial job interview—quite an achievement in itself. She then made a career of creative self-invention, in the best sense of the phrase. She had a strong instinct for a scoop and knew exactly how to handle herself in tricky situations where, at times, her life was in danger. She also had a keen sense of what would sell, and so made a speciality of jailhouse confessions of accused murderers.

At around the same time that Bly was achieving success in the world of journalism, halfway around the globe another talented individual was learning how to “rightly apply and direct” energy within himself in order to overcome a serious obstacle he was facing.

F. Matthias Alexander, a talented Australian actor and reciter, was having problems with his voice during performances. Doctors and vocal coaches were unable to help. Desperate to continue his career, he embarked on a systematic program of self-examination that not only produced a solution to his vocal difficulties, but eventually became the basis of what today is called the Alexander Technique.

Like Bly, Alexander had a passion for his chosen career. And like Bly, he had the ability to remain focused on exactly what was needed to achieve success. Neither one let obstacles, disappointments, or temporary failures to get in the way of what they wanted.

Neither Bly nor Alexander had much formal education. Bly relied on her energy, wits, and instinct to achieve success. So did Alexander. The Technique that he developed is a systematic, well-thought-out approach to improving human functioning. But it is no way complex or mysterious—sometimes it’s been characterized as “applied common sense.” And no prior training is required for those who want to learn the Technique for themselves.

Bly’s legacy lives on in the successful careers of today’s many women reporters, news analysts, and TV anchorpersons, and in the investigative reporting techniques she helped pioneer.

Alexander’s legacy can be found in a Technique that is today taught by thousands of teachers around the world. It has been widely used for over a century by people from all backgrounds to improve their performance skills

and to free themselves from stress-related aches and pains by learning how to rightly apply and direct their thoughts and energies to improve their physical functioning.

The careers of Bly and Alexander demonstrate how, with the systematic application of disciplined intention and practice, a single individual can have a huge impact on the lives of many others.

Resources

“Nellie Bly—Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist” by Brooke Kroeger, Times Books, New York, 1994. The opening quote can be found on page 85.

The Website “Nellie Bly—The Best Reporter in the World” can be found at www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/386/nellie.html

The Use of the Self by F. Matthias Alexander includes a detailed account of the self-exploration process that led to the Alexander Technique. It can be purchased at The Alexander Technique Bookstore (US and Canada) at www.alexandertechnique.com/books and The Alexander Technique Bookshop (UK) at www.alexandertechnique.com/books. Information about the Dewey-Alexander connection can be found at www.alexandertechnique.com/articles/dewey. General information about the Alexander Technique is available at www.alexandertechnique.com.

Robert Rickover teaches the Alexander Technique in Lincoln, Nebraska and in Toronto, Canada. His website, The Complete Guide to the Alexander Technique at www.alexandertechnique.com is a comprehensive source of information about the Alexander Technique. ☺

Ed.: This article is the seventh in an occasional series intended to provide ATI members with articles they can reproduce or adapt to promote the Technique and their teaching practices. Permission is granted to reprint these articles, provided authors and the ExChange are credited. Your suggestions and submissions are highly welcome!

Heads From Tails: A Study of the Alexander Technique Applied to the Erick Hawkins Approach to Modern Dance

Michelle Nance

Background

The Erick Hawkins Dance Technique,¹ developed by American modern dance pioneer Erick Hawkins (1909–1994), asserts: “inefficient postural alignment leads to overwork in the surrounding muscles. If the overworked muscles let go, the bones are left to find another, more efficient placement” (Celichowska, 2000). At the time of Hawkins’ initial investigations in the 1950s, he was at the forefront of integrating scientific knowledge of the body and its use with formal dance training. Similarly, the Alexander Technique, a body re-education process developed by Australian actor Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869–1955), encourages one to notice patterns of muscular tension and allow them to release, finding a natural poise and length in the body. At the time of Alexander’s findings, this idea of freedom in the body contradicted the widespread belief that muscular tension was necessary to attain proper posture. In order to fully understand either approach, both the Hawkins and Alexander techniques require a committed embodiment of their respective principles, a yielding to the innate efficiency of the natural state of the body, and an alert consciousness while engaged in activity.

The following essay is an effort to examine these two practices in terms of identifying the value of employing both in modern dance training, as well as the daily usage of one’s body. In addition to my own experiences and research in both techniques, I draw heavily upon interviews and telephone conversations conducted with Nada Diachenko of Boulder, Colorado and Cynthia Reynolds of New York, New York in 2004 and 2005. Both women are currently Alexander practitioners who also performed and taught with the Erick Hawkins Dance Company for a combined 26 years.² I will discuss the nature, origin, and applicability of both the Alexander and Hawkins’ techniques, and how students of either method could benefit from applying both approaches to dance training, teaching, and daily life.

PART I

Alexander and Hawkins: The Journey to Healing

The two men began their explorations independently, Alexander during the late 19th century and Hawkins during the early 20th century, and on different continents. Both reacting to physical injuries which inhibited their abilities to practice their respective performing arts, they embarked upon their own journeys of self-observation and study to find healing.

Early in Alexander’s acting career, he was afflicted by vocal hoarseness that affected his ability to recite text on stage. The medical help he sought at the time advised him merely to rest until recovered. After failed attempts to cure his ailment with rest, he decided to seek out a cure on his own. He speculated that the problem stemmed from the way he was using his voice when performing. Having no vocal problems in normal speech, he decided to observe himself with mirrors as he was reciting theatrical text. Michael Gelb explains in his book, *Body Learning*: “As he started to recite, he noticed three things: he stiffened his neck, so causing his head to retract; he depressed his larynx unduly; and he sucked in breath with a gasp” (Gelb, 1994). This observation led Alexander to seek out a way to avoid the misuse he noticed in the mirror. Soon, he was able to train himself to successfully circumvent the pulling back of his head, which improved the functioning of his larynx and quality of his voice. He concluded that his ‘manner of doing’ was impacting the quality of his performance. Further experiments with correcting himself led to the realization that when his stature was lengthened, he achieved the best vocal quality. This lengthened state was possible only

when his head was allowed to be 'forward and up' off the top of the spine. He applied these discoveries to gesturing, standing, and walking, and found that his movements appeared more integrated and less effortful (Gelb, 1994). Cynthia Reynolds further explains in a telephone conversation on 13 February 2005:

So that is really what Alexander discovered: that if you're going to use something in a heightened way (which performance is) you'd best be doing it with nature. It is not to just go with what you want because of your personality, or because of a brainstorm, or a great idea.

Similar to Alexander's motivations, Erick Hawkins was inhibited by his own injuries from past experiences, which led him to become deeply interested in finding a different way to approach body usage in dance training. Cynthia Reynolds describes Hawkins' path to recovery:

What Erick met in his artistic lifetime was the potency of distortion. In the ballet world, the distortion was towards an ideal: the ballerina on the pointe shoe, which comes from an aesthetic of the super-real. [This ideal was] to get us out of the industrial revolution, to get us out of the darkness of real life. The distortion of ballet was to actually go away from what was humanly embodied. [Furthermore], Martha Graham's³ distortion was to find an expression of the psyche, the emotional life that she felt so passionately as a woman alive in the 20th century. [During this time] with so much turbulence, so much industrial change, war, and technology, [Graham looked] to mythology [for] archetypes of feminine goddesses, [in an effort] to find an embodiment for that truth which was both feminine and emotional. Erick respected [Graham's artistic journey] enormously, but it also hurt him deeply on a physical level; and I think it embarrassed him on a psychological level. [Hawkins] wanted to really settle back into the nature of this beautiful instrument: [the body]. [This concept] was very out-of-step with where art was going at the time of his working. [Hawkins] had to listen to himself, to Zen, to the spiritual teachings of the Native American cultures, which supported men in art, men in spirituality, and men in harmony with nature. I think it's that sensibility which made Erick in his art-form less interested in stunts, distortion, and sexuality. [He was] interested in the kinds of stories that were teaching stories. He had a very high ideal of what art could be. Erick took the time to stop when he left Martha [Graham]. [It was] a very sad time, a grieving time. [It was a time of] stopping and taking assessment of where he was, what he wanted to do, and how he would proceed. That [process] didn't happen in a heartbeat; it didn't happen overnight. It was a long period of self-study, self-reflection, and psycho-therapy (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

Heads From Tails

Therefore, motivated by the desire for self-healing and bodily harmony, both Hawkins and Alexander set forth in discovering very simple, yet profound principles about the use of the body. Based on the sciences of anatomy and kinesiology, careful observation, and deep sensory awareness, both innovators contributed a unique approach to the fields of somatics⁴ and dance.

PART II

What Is the Alexander Technique?

Developed in the early 20th century, the Alexander Technique is “a simple, practical method for improving ease and freedom in movement, balance, support, flexibility, and coordination. It enhances performance and is therefore a valued tool for actors, dancers, and musicians” (Mizenko, 2003).

The Alexander Technique entails a series of private lessons with a certified Alexander teacher. These sessions include gentle hands-on guidance and verbal instructions by the practitioner, while the student performs simple actions such as sitting, standing, walking, speaking, and lifting. Each lesson slowly re-educates the student’s restrictive postural habits embedded deep within the nervous system, replacing them with an *inhibition* of habitual muscular tension. Inhibition is “a matter of consciously refusing to respond in a stereotyped manner, so that true spontaneity can manifest itself” (Gelb, 1994). Thus, if the mind can inhibit a habitual physical reaction, then the body’s innate organization will naturally produce a more efficient, less strained alternative. In order to accomplish this, the Alexander Technique employs verbal directions such as: “Allow the neck to be free, to let the head go forward and up, so that the back may lengthen and widen” (Gelb, 1994). With such directions and hands-on guidance by the practitioner, the student learns how to inhibit habitual patterns, finding a healthy alternative that corresponds with his or her natural sense of ease.

While emphasizing inhibition, Alexander simultaneously identified the relationship of the head and neck as the *primary control* for the organization of the rest of the body. Primary control refers to a primitive hierarchy found in all mammals, in which the freedom of the head/neck relationship impacts the spine’s length and performance. This relationship of the head, neck, and torso in turn determines the level of efficient functioning in the coordinated whole of the body (Gelb, 1994). Alexander noticed in himself and others a common tendency to pull the head back and down, causing compression at the top of the spine. When this compression is released by allowing the head to balance freely, the spine naturally lengthens, improving the performance of the entire body. This identification of primary control, which can be experienced when one first inhibits habitual responses, is the central concept that identifies Alexander’s work as truly profound and unique.



What Is the Erick Hawkins Technique?

During the middle of the 20th century, modern dance pioneer Erick Hawkins began developing a new approach to dance training, employing principles from kinesiology and the then new mind/body study of *Ideokinesis*. His aim was to discover and promote the most efficient, injury-preventive dance technique possible. Ideokinesis is defined in Julie Grinfeld's 2002 article, "The Idea of Ideokinesis":

The term *ideokinesis* was coined by Dr. Lulu Sweigard, a researcher at the Dance Division of The Juilliard School in New York. In her classic and influential book, *Human Movement Potential*, Sweigard writes that Ideokinesis, or *imagined movement*, is 'the idea of movement occurring within one's body in a specific place and direction, but not being voluntarily performed.' Sweigard continues her definition by explaining the literal meaning of the term *ideokinesis* and by suggesting that any attempt at voluntary control of alignment is actually inefficient" (Grinfeld 2002).

The Hawkins technique is most commonly taught via group lessons in a traditional dance studio environment. The class entails a series of exercises performed sitting, lying, standing, and moving through space that allow for and promote (among other concepts) deep sensory awareness of dynamic bodily alignment, strength and initiation from one's center of gravity in the pelvis, as well as ease in the joints and superficial muscles. Hawkins' approach utilizes Ideokinesis as a central tool for coaxing the nervous system to 'let go' of excess tension, permitting freedom in the joints and superficial muscles. This freedom then allows for the unrestricted flow of energy to form shapes and movement pathways, while permitting the core muscles of the pelvis and spine to initiate the movement. "By momentarily disengaging the body from *doing* the movement, there is the potential to visualize an ideal form of the movement, devoid of the mover's own idiosyncratic movement habits" (Celichowska, 2000). Thus, inherent in the technique is the discipline to 'get out of one's own way,' allowing the body to return to a more organic state before sending it new images and directions for the creation of dance movements. The classes require the student to be attuned to his/her body's sensations and responses while engaged in movement. While there are some Hawkins teachers who provide limited 'hands-on' guidance during class, the bulk of the direction is verbal and image-based. Erick Hawkins' focus on the human body's most efficient and free expression, together with the initiation of movement from the body's center of gravity located in the pelvis (Celichowska, 2000), is arguably one of the most innovative concepts in the history of dance technique.

PART III

Corresponding Principles: Interviews and Conversations with Nada Diachenko and Cynthia Reynolds

Both Hawkins and Alexander established specific vocabularies with which to discuss and teach their respective principles. They were interested in the natural poise of the body: how one could return to living in harmony with its design. Though both men chose different terminology to reflect their findings, many of the central ideas are similar. The following discussion compares three crucial corresponding concepts that are found in both the Hawkins Technique and the Alexander Technique: (1) "Inhibition" and "De-contraction," which both address *letting go* of habitual tension patterns; (2) "Directing" and "Think/Feel," which emphasize the use of thought and conscious self-guidance in action; and (3) "Lift" and "Lengthening," which illustrate the natural results of (1) and (2). The following material is extracted primarily from interviews and conversations with Nada Diachenko and Cynthia Reynolds conducted in 2004 and 2005.

Heads From Tails

1) Letting Go: Alexander's "*Inhibition*" and Hawkins' "*De-contraction*"

Undoing is a major tool ... respecting that it's not so much 'what else to do' as it is 'what to take away': what *not* to do. In that way, they [Alexander and Hawkins] share a similar affinity (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

As discussed earlier, Alexander's concept of *inhibition* involves a preemptive choice to *not* react to stimuli with an inefficient habitual pattern. "So I think what Alexander was after, was just getting the organism to be free and organized, and back to where it used to be without all the interference. Take away the habits, [and] then do anything you want. It's not that you have to do things a certain way" (Diachenko, interview with author).

In the same way, Hawkins used the term *de-contrast* to indicate a softening of bodily tension and a return to a balanced condition.⁵ "A *de-contracted* muscle is a muscle that has released its tensile state. If the muscle is healthy and sensitive to neural commands, a contraction originating from this more naturally *de-contracted* state has more potential power than a similar activity originating from an already tense muscle" (Celichowska, 2000). A common isinterpretation of *de-contraction* is that the dancer is expected to achieve virtuosic movement without contracting his or her muscles, leading to a collapse of dead weight into gravity. On the contrary, Hawkins intended for the dancer to have control over the location and degree in which muscular contraction is applied. The *de-contraction* of unnecessary muscles for the given movement only takes place when the dancer has achieved the ability to initiate and support movement from the strong core muscles of the pelvis. The dancer does not allow himself to collapse into gravity with the *de-contraction*. Rather, by engaging the deep muscles of the pelvis for support, the superficial muscles are permitted to *de-contrast*, lengthen, and engage as needed for the particular movement's required level of effort.

Both *de-contraction* and *inhibition* are the results of an instinctive 'state of being' in humans. In observing a healthy infant sitting upright, one will notice that his head is balanced on top of his spine, his spine is lengthened, and his joints are free and responsive. This innate sense of poise is a natural phenomenon that occurs before the child has *learned* less efficient bodily patterns through environmental, societal, and cultural influences.

Though the Hawkins and Alexander techniques each place emphasis upon the importance of 'letting go,' the method in which each approach the concept is unique. Cynthia Reynolds identifies the difference:

In Erick's idea of *de-contraction*, his yielding and his letting go, he allowed the limbs to come back to the mid-line in a kind of soft flexion, and to wind back up into almost a fetal [position]. The primary curve was the fetal curve: the 'non-doing' took him back into that [curve]. And in Alexander, I felt more permission to [practice] 'non-doing' out in open shapes, and by [the] use of opposition. [With] the head against the spine and the limbs against the back, I felt more permission to 'come out' [without] collapsing back in. Erick used that [coming back in] and I'm grateful. If your arm is out in space: to move that arm most quickly, [you] would allow it to *de-contrast* through center and then take it out somewhere else. But in Alexander, I learned that I could release and maybe not let the elbow collapse. I could release at the shoulder, and I could still move that arm in a different way, not having to go through all the joints" (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

Thus, in both techniques, the idea of 'letting go' or 'non-doing' is prevalent as the first step in organizing the body. Alexander coined the term 'inhibition,' while Hawkins used the term 'de-contrast.' Both were searching for a way to consciously acknowledge and dissipate chronic tension held in the muscles, replacing it with a state of neutral freedom from which to make mindful movement choices.

2) Thought and Conscious Self-Guidance: Alexander's "Directing" and Hawkins' "Think/Feel"

With the Hawkins and Alexander techniques, once one has learned to *inhibit* or *de-contract* unfavorable patterns, one is ready to consciously guide the nervous system to an alternate response. In taking a moment to acknowledge and stop the inefficient pattern, the mind can then make a choice as to how to respond to stimuli. Alexander called this concept 'directing,' where the mind steps back from the situation and provides a practiced set of directions, encouraging the body to take action in a new, organized manner. The Alexander teacher gives the student these directions (such as: 'allow the neck to be free') until, with time and repetition, the directions become the new blueprint instilled in the student.

Similarly, Hawkins was interested in utilizing the mind's power and sensory awareness to make conscious choices as to bodily use. He employed the term 'think/feel' to describe the connection of the mind/body in action. When the mind is alert to the infinite choices involved in executing movement, and the body is sensitive to its sensations, the whole organism can then make a conscious choice for the path of least resistance. Where Alexander's *directing* is more straightforward, in terms of following tangible commands, Hawkins' *think/feel* is coupled with creating metaphorical mental images (rather than literal directions) to communicate with the mind/body. Cynthia Reynolds compares Hawkins' and Alexander's terms:

Erick [Hawkins] was very, very passionate about sensory awareness, and it's a primary tool in the Alexander work: being able to feel what's going on. Erick coined the term *think/feel*. We don't use that term in Alexander, but our whole *directing* is very much about being able to *think* your body energetically in flows, or in oppositions, or in space in certain particular ways. So the thinking, as a tool, is a similarity (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

Nada Diachenko elaborates on the way Hawkins utilized conscious thought:

So, the correlation is there: that ease, freedom, and lightness when you work with less tension. If you allow the image to help organize that system, it still goes down to [your] thought. I think one thing that was unique about Erick's work, and why I still use those forms, [is that] inherently built into the form he's asking you to actually think 'up.' And so to direct yourself up and away, to not collapse or compress down into the joints; even if you wanted to create a different kind of appearance in the [movement], you could still do it with a little more spaciousness and consciousness. With Erick's work, the actual movements lend themselves very well to thinking about the body, because he

Heads From Tails

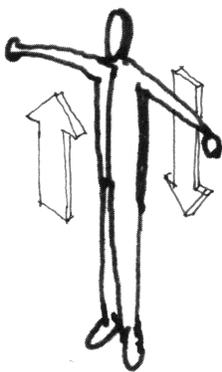
developed the technique that way. So it's very easy then to take it a little step further, in terms of enhancing that [Hawkins' technique], with some of those concepts of Alexander (Diachenko, interview with author).

Thus, both Hawkins and Alexander utilized the simple tool of conscious thought to replace inefficient patterns with new harmonious ones. Alexander used the term 'direct' to describe the role of thought in his process, while Hawkins used 'think/feel' as a way of connecting the mind to the body's intelligence. While Alexander's approach is very straightforward in terms of specific directions provided by a teacher, Hawkins' use of verbal cuing from the teacher is based on images and metaphors.

3) The Results: Natural Poise through Hawkins' "*Lift*" and Alexander's "*Lengthening*"

Once a student understands how to first let go of harmful patterns, and then to consciously respond with healthier alternatives, there is an inevitable outcome in the way the body feels and functions. Hawkins referred to this result as 'lift,' while Alexander called it 'lengthening.'

Hawkins used the term *lift* as an integral part of his technique. He had a very specific definition in mind that without proper explanation or knowledge of the complex human structure might be interpreted as a strong muscular action in which the torso is 'pulled up.' This misinterpretation could lead to a series of reactions, including: hyper-extension in the ribcage, lifted shoulders, holding of the breath, tightness in the lower back, and stiffness in the neck. In an effort to correct some of these common errors found in most dance training that emphasizes a 'lift' away from gravity, Hawkins called for an active alertness in the core muscles of the pelvis and spine (specifically the ilio-psoas group) to initiate *lift*. When the superficial muscles are free, an active, integrated core will naturally provide a 'lift' of the torso off the legs, allowing for freedom in the joints and ease in movement. Again, when one observes a small child, this idea of 'lift' is quite evident. Babies and young children have not yet succumbed to inefficient holding patterns. Their superficial muscles and joints are free as they sit and move, creating a natural poise, length, and buoyancy throughout the body with little effort. Hawkins attempted to regain this poise with mental imagery such as the following:

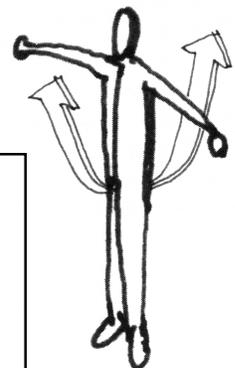


'Up the front and down the back.'

This image elicits an active 'lift' along the front of the spine and release of the often tight muscles of the lower back.

'Teeter Babe' or 'Jolly Jumper'

This image of a baby bouncer supporting the pelvic floor allows the torso to be lifted with ease in the legs.



Both of these images encourage awareness of the deep muscles of the pelvis, together with a *de-contraction* of unnecessary superficial muscles. The result is a *lifted* sensation along the front of the spine without producing excess tension in the back or extremities.

Similarly, Alexander's term *lengthen* describes a natural result in the spine which occurs after one has inhibited inefficient patterns in the superficial muscles. However, Alexander's *lengthening* is produced without muscular initiation in the pelvis, but rather a simple 'letting go' at the top of the spine (head/neck relationship) to trigger the primary control. In spite of the usefulness of both applications, the tendency when one hears the terms 'lift' and 'lengthen' may be to actually *do* something, to consciously place oneself in a distorted alignment to achieve the 'look' of the desired outcome. This *doing* would then contradict the central principles of both techniques. Nada Diachenko explains how Alexander's lengthening can serve Hawkins' approach to lift:

So the *lift* becomes something more physical than we need to be doing. But I would associate the concept of what Erick was trying to get us to do (by thinking of the spine and pelvis lifting) with the Alexander thought of coming into the full *length* of your torso. That lengthening of the torso, following the lead of the head, helps bring you up out of your legs. But if you only lift the pelvis off the legs, what's going on with everything above? So you could be very much energetically [lifted] but it's [as if] somebody's sitting on your head. So, when the neck is free to let the head come forward and up, the entire spine and pelvis is going to follow. And when [Hawkins teachers] use images of 'balloon head' or those kinds of things, that's getting at that [concept of the neck being free]. So if you just *think* the image and let your head ease up, most likely you'll start to get a little bit more of that primary control (Diachenko, interview with author).

As a result, if one could understand how to connect to one's primary control, more freedom and length in the whole spine would emerge. This length and freedom would make it easier to gently engage the core muscles of the pelvis, yielding the dancer's sense of 'lift' off the legs.

In summary, the three central concepts of letting go, conscious thought, and the resulting natural poise of the body, are beautifully articulated in both the Alexander and Hawkins techniques. Both approaches identify terminology in which to express and teach the principles, encouraging the student to experience a revitalized sense of harmony and balance in the mind/body, void of restrictive, unconscious tension patterns. Further, the two techniques, with their complementary principles, could greatly enhance and inform one another when studied and practiced simultaneously.

Heads From Tails: The Question of Initiation

Consequently, with both techniques, once one learns to first 'let go,' and then to 'direct' or 'think/feel,' one is able to reach a state of 'lift' or 'lengthening.' When examining the hierarchy of control in the two approaches, however, there exists an apparent contradiction as to what part of the body initiates movement once the organism is free. Hawkins identified the *lift* as originating deep within the pelvis, while Alexander identified the ease of the head on the top of the spine as the initiator of *lengthening*. To resolve this issue and allow for the practice of both approaches without contradiction, one could think of the Alexander Technique as a precursor to the application of any other muscular initiation or activity. Jennifer Mizenko explains in her article, "Shall We Dance? Ballroom Dancing and the Benefits of Alexander," how primary control can aid in the movement of the body's center of gravity:

If we only move our head and not our pelvis will we go anywhere in space? Certainly not, but in order for the pelvis to be free to shift clearly, the head must be free from pulling down so that there is ease and freedom throughout the entire body, which allows the pelvis to move freely" (Mizenko, 2003).

Nada Diachenko reiterates this idea:

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I can have a lot of choices, but before that, it's almost a 'pre-initiation.' I check that I can come into my full length and my freedom. [I] have a more neutral state from which to come, because when [I'm] lengthened, the muscles in the front and back of the body are in balance. I could incorporate initiating with the pelvis [by] first sending my head up. The overall movement that I'm doing can still be initiated from there [the pelvis], but it's done with better organization: having more of my full length and ease in my body. So, I could [execute] a head-initiated movement, but not be free in my neck at all. [But] wouldn't I feel better, wouldn't it might be easier if I did it having a little bit more ease. So the freeing of the neck isn't just about freeing the neck, it's about also stimulating that basic mammalian organization of the whole spine (Diachenko, interview with author).

Further, Cynthia Reynolds describes how an initiation could begin anywhere in the body once one's primary control is functioning:

I think of Alexander as being a *pre-technique*. In other words, you can apply it to anything else you want. So, you could initiate in your big toe, you could initiate in your finger, you could initiate in the small of your back, [or] you could initiate in the pelvis. But preliminary to all of that, you want to be mindful of releasing the head off the top of the spine, because the spine works [best] in its length design. So Alexander's idea of simply allowing that head to have poise before you move through the pelvis, or through the tail, or the arm, [will serve you] better. And there again, Alexander is kind of a pre-technique (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

Therefore, Alexander identifies the head/neck relationship as the primary control for the organization of the body, while Hawkins identifies the pelvis as the prime initiator for movement. These two seemingly conflicting ideas are easily resolved when one accepts the proposal of *primary control* as a precursor to conscious choices about movement initiation. Further, when one understands that the head and pelvis are connected via the spine, one would ideally want to integrate both end-points for the optimum wellbeing. Cynthia Reynolds illustrates the complementary relationship of the pelvis and the head:

I think the different hierarchies (the one from the pelvis and the one from the head)... complement each other. It's the spine between the pelvis and the head that both of them [Alexander and Hawkins] honor so much, and I think helps link them together as it helps link us together (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

PART IV

Teaching the Principles: Class Structure, Guiding the Student, and Repetition

The philosophical and practical compatibility of the Hawkins and Alexander Techniques is clear. Both stemmed from a desire to heal and maintain the mind/body relationship according to its most natural design. Both incorporate the key concepts of shedding excess tension and guiding efficient postural patterns through conscious thought. Both approaches yield results of increased length in the spine and freedom in the joints. The following is a look at how Nada Diachenko and Cynthia Reynolds incorporate the principles of both techniques into their dance classes and private Alexander lessons.

1) Class Structure: Letting Go and Moving Out

A typical Hawkins technique class begins seated on the floor while repetitive looping and spiraling actions of the pelvis and spine are performed. The class then practices rolling and flexing exercises while lying on the floor in order

to tune into the body, warm up the joints, and discover pelvic integration without having to deal with gravity in the upright position. The class culminates with standing exercises in the center of the room, followed by traveling movement phrases through space.

Likewise, an Alexander lesson may start with simple actions like sitting and rising from a chair: finding easy transitions with uncomplicated movements while waking up the primary control. Next, there is time to lie on one's back on a table, while the practitioner gently encourages (via verbal directions and touch) the limbs to lengthen away from the spine. Finally, the student may return to an upright position, practicing walking, squatting, or other simple movements with his/her new sense of direction and length. Nada Diachenko explains how the structure of a Hawkins class lends itself to the same sort of inhibiting that one strives for in an Alexander lesson:

I think the Alexander principles tie in very well [to any technique]. But Erick's class has it built in to be thinking about principles: to be aware of what you're doing while you're doing it. That is a key factor: giving people time to notice, to observe, to be able to inhibit some of their patterning while they're [lying on the floor and] not having to deal with gravity and complex movement (Diachenko, interview with author).

This approach to dance technique class is truly unique in that the emphasis is *not* placed on achieving a certain stylistic appearance (though there does exist a specific 'Hawkins look' when executed correctly). Rather, the emphasis is placed on a deep sensory awareness and analysis of *how* one approaches the movement. In a Hawkins class, more value is placed on how deeply the student, for example, senses the crease of the thigh socket, than whether or not the student memorizes and executes a long, complicated dance phrase.

An Alexander lesson also emphasizes the student's responsibility to deeply sense the subtleties of his/her body use. Rather than 'showing off' one's ability to execute a movement with lots of energy and effort, a deep tuning into one's sensations and a simplification of one's responses is encouraged. These ideals are deceptively difficult for most individuals to understand and execute in our day and time, when the overriding societal values of "more is more" and "no pain, no gain" are constantly supported and reinforced.

2) Hands-On/One-on-One vs. Verbal Imagery/Group Instruction

Because the expectation of most dance technique classes is to produce some sort of stylistic movement in a correct way as interpreted by the instructor, the dancer generally has very little time to carefully tune-in to his/her body and inhibit habitual patterns. Though a Hawkins class is one of the most inviting dance environments, in terms of providing a structure that allows for

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such tuning-in, many dancers cannot override their own desire to 'do it right' and achieve the movement quickly. This is why practicing the Alexander Technique can be such a valuable supplement for a dancer's career. Cynthia Reynolds describes her own journey as a student:

Erick would say: "Just do the movement. Don't do all that extra work that you're doing." But to me (as a very ambitious and passionate student of Erick's work, who wanted so much to get into his company, and to do his work beautifully), that's a huge end-gaining component (we call it 'end-gaining' in the Alexander work). I really could never *let go* enough to stop, and for a moment put my ambition to achieve that elegant movement aside long enough to really come back to myself and take the time that I needed. So a key thing for me is that the Alexander work is most traditionally, most classically taught one-on-one. While we say it is *education* and not therapy in Alexander, the one-on-one attention and not having to produce a movement in time, in rhythm, and on command [was beneficial]. To take the time I needed to unwind with a teacher's expert eye, and a teacher's expert touch, and a teacher's care about my use above all other things was an enormous gift to me. It allowed for a deeper unraveling that I couldn't come to in the dance studio. So for me, the 'in-road' to the deeper stripping away was through Alexander. And it's something that Erick did [(his own unraveling)] with the Ideokinesis (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

So, even in a Hawkins technique class, which allows time for deep sensory awareness, the student may not be able to let go of his/her own self-imposed expectations of performance. The one-on-one attention of an Alexander lesson could offer the student a more in-depth reiteration of useful directions and images for the nervous system, allowing for a true breakthrough and actual change in the body, which in turn could be practiced in the dance class and other activities. Nada Diachenko outlines the benefits she observes in her own students at the University of Colorado–Boulder who participate in Hawkins technique classes in addition to Alexander lessons:

I would say when I did that experiment with students who had my Alexander class, and were simultaneously taking it with [Hawkins technique], that their awareness was just so much greater. And I would say one of the biggest results would be the habits that they became aware of. The daily technique practice, the Hawkins work, would be giving them a way to bring in that information [from the Alexander lessons], so they could be working with that in the class. The advantage also is having had the individual [Alexander] lessons, I [could] just come by and say: 'see if you can just let the ribs go.' [The verbal reminders in the dance class] had a different meaning than if they had never been brought out of their patterns [through the Alexander work]. Additionally, I would know their patterns and I could quickly do a little directing in class. I think one of the biggest things I saw [was] more integrated [and] whole movement happening quicker. And that was very satisfying to see (Diachenko, interview with author).

3) Repetition

Another key teaching concept that is crucial to presenting and discovering the principles of both the Hawkins and Alexander work is repetition. Nada Diachenko illustrates:

If you're going to make a change in the nervous system, there has to be enough repetition. And so the fact was that in Erick's [classes], where we had a *technique*, it meant that you did, like in ballet technique, the same things everyday. There might be some variation on them, but we [in Hawkins] always do our 'bounces,' and our 'quarter-turns,' and the 'pelvic lifts,' and the 'boomerang legs.'⁶ So you have that structure to always check-in [with yourself, rather] than if you only did that every once in a while. It's not going to make the same imprint in your system...because at some point you do have to slow down and get people to [have awareness]. I know

some people are used to having teachers where the warm-up changes a whole lot, or they do a lot of different things every day and that's fine. [This sort of class] gets your brain stimulated to be able to pick up things quickly, but it doesn't do the same kind of thing for changing your neuromuscular way of working. I think that's why the [Hawkins] dancers, if they did it long enough and really understood it, [realized that] it takes repetition. That's why in the Alexander Technique, it's so challenging. It takes that repetition of getting out of your habit and doing very simple things before you do complex things (Diachenko, interview with author).

Cynthia Reynolds remembers Erick Hawkins discussing the repetition of the principles in everyday life:

Before I got into the company, I remember going into his [Hawkins'] office and saying: "Erick, am I ready to be in the company yet? I so want to be in the company." And he'd say: "Now Cindy, I heard you walk into this room. You're still too heavy on your legs. You've got to practice what you want in your dancing in your everyday life."

And that's another way in which Alexander and Hawkins are similar: in Alexander...you can use it in absolutely everything you're doing. And if you're not practicing in your daily life, you're really not getting very far in habituating the work (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

Furthermore, because the class/lesson structure of both approaches encourages time for deep sensory awareness, one could easily apply the principles of each simultaneously. A student with exposure to both approaches may be better equipped to access a freer, more expressive, organized body in a shorter amount of time. Likewise, a teacher's ability to communicate with and guide his/her students is greatly enhanced by studying and applying both techniques. Cynthia Reynolds describes how the Alexander work has made her a better Hawkins teacher:

And I'll say as a teacher, trying to teach the Hawkins [technique], having the Alexander consciousness gives me a lot more tools to try and help people find what we're looking for in the Hawkins [work]. I feel like it has sharpened my eye: I look for different things. My hands-on skills are so much more refined and tuned-in (Reynolds, telephone conversation).

Nada Diachenko also confirms that the Alexander Technique has enhanced her ability to teach dance:

And so it just made my eye a million, million times sharper because I can see in a different way; [I can see] the underlying stuff (Diachenko, interview with author).

Although the Alexander Technique is traditionally taught one-on-one, while the Hawkins classes consist of group instruction, both allow for a structure in which the student is able to reflect through sensory awareness, make changes via imagery or hands-on directions, and reinforce those changes through repetition. Clearly, for any dance student or individual seeking concrete change, applying the principles of both approaches simultaneously could result in an even deeper understanding than just considering one approach. Additionally, experience in both could enhance one's ability to coach students.

Concluding Thoughts

Erick Hawkins and F.M. Alexander were undoubtedly two great contributors to the advancement of mind/body studies, enhanced physical performance, and general well-being. Both reacting to physical injuries with a deep curiosity and passion for discovering the body's most finely tuned condition, they embarked upon their own paths to self-healing. Through time and careful study, both Hawkins and Alexander yielded unique approaches to working

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with the human body. This allowed for the dissemination of their findings through systematic *techniques* which can be beneficial for performers and non-performers alike. Moreover, the conjoined practice and teaching of the techniques together can reinforce and promote ease and efficiency in everyday actions as well as performance activities. When the Alexander Technique is applied to the Hawkins Approach to Modern Dance, the student has the potential to deeply enhance his/her understanding of both techniques and the optimal use of his/her body.

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Additional World Wide Web Source

<http://www.somaticsed.com> (5 April 2005)

Endnotes

¹ Erick Hawkins never intended for his approach to be referred to as *his* technique, considering it instead a normative, or generic, theory of movement that could be discovered by anyone who investigated the body. For clarity's sake, however, many refer to his approach as the "Erick Hawkins Technique" when discussing his body of work.

² For more information on Diachenko and Reynolds, see their biographies at the conclusion of this article.

³ After a time of dancing with ballet choreographer George Balanchine, Erick Hawkins went on to become the first male dancer in the modern dance company of Martha Graham. He danced for and was romantically involved with her until he left the company and started his own company and school circa 1951.

⁴ Thomas Hanna, Ph.D. (1928-1990), created the word "somatics" in 1976 to name the many approaches to mind/body integration. (www.somaticsed.com)

⁵ It is this author's opinion that the term 'de-contract' was a direct response to the concept of 'contraction,' which so strongly defines Martha Graham's dance technique, and which led to Hawkins' physical and psychological injuries during his career in her company.

⁶ For more information on the specific exercises of the Hawkins Technique, refer to Renata Celichowska's eloquent book and companion video: *The Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique*, 2000.

Biographies

Michelle Nance is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre & Dance at Texas State University–San Marcos. She holds a MFA in Choreography and Performance from the University of Colorado–Boulder and a BESS (Bachelor of Exercise Sports Science) in Dance Education from Texas State University. Since 1991, she has been a fervent student and teacher of the Erick Hawkins Technique, and served as Assistant School Director for the Erick Hawkins School of Dance in New York, NY from 1996–1998. She began her studies of the Alexander Technique with Nada Diachenko in Boulder, CO in 1999, and continues to be curious about the depth and breadth of Alexander's work and its application to dance training. In addition to creating new works for the students and faculty at Texas State, Michelle is also an active choreographer and performer with REALMdanceproject of Austin, TX and her own collaborative touring endeavor, Interstate Dance Company. She may be reached at: mnance@txstate.edu.

Nada Diachenko holds a MA in Choreography and Body Therapies from New York University, and a BS in Dance from University of Maryland. In addition to being an Alexander practitioner, she is also a CMA (Certified Muscular Therapist). She is a Professor at the University of Colorado–Boulder, Graduate Director of the Somatics Track, Director of University of Colorado's Contemporary Dance Works, and Chair of the Roser Visiting Artist Committee. Professor Diachenko has 40 years of experience teaching dance to students from three years old to seniors. She spent 20 years teaching in New York, including ten years at New York University and eight years at the Erick Hawkins studio. During that time she conducted many residencies with her own dance company, and gave workshops in injury prevention around the country. She has taught at numerous colleges and universities, including James Madison, Princeton, Vassar, North Carolina School of the Arts, University of Texas at Austin, Texas State University, College of William and Mary, Case Western, and Virginia Commonwealth. She has also taught in England, Denmark, Germany, and the Czech Republic.

Cynthia Reynolds is an Alexander teacher who integrates her performance experience as a dancer with the Alexander Technique. She performed as a soloist with the Erick Hawkins Dance Company for 18 years, in New York, throughout the United States, Europe and the Far East. Her dancing has been labeled "poetic" by Anna Kisselgoff of The New York Times, "warm and expansive" by Deborah Jowitt of The Village Voice. For the last eight years Ms. Reynolds has been teaching the Alexander Technique on the faculty of the Actors Studio Drama School MFA program at the New School University. Ms. Reynolds is also on the faculty of the American Center for the Alexander Technique (ACAT)—the oldest and largest Alexander Teacher Training program in the USA—training Alexander teachers. She graduated from ACAT in 1987. She also earned a post-graduate Certificate from Rivka Cohen in 2000, an internationally recognized master AT teacher, with whom she has been studying since 1987. Ms. Reynolds maintains a private practice in Manhattan, where she teaches the Alexander Technique to singers, dancers, actors, and the general public. In the summer she teaches on the island of Tinos, Greece, and has taught workshops in Athens, London, Vienna, Copenhagen, Prague, Seoul, and at colleges and universities across the United States, including several American College Dance Festivals. She has been on the faculties of the University of Maryland and Hunter College, the Alvin Ailey/Fordham University BFA program, and at New York University in the Program of Dance Education from 1988–2002. Her teaching was the subject of a feature article in Dance Teacher Magazine (September 2001). Her teaching is also featured in Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique, a video documenting the technique of Erick Hawkins, created by Renata Celichowska in 2000. She has a B.S. degree from SUNY–Brockport. ☺



Book Reviews

What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body

Barbara Conable

Andover Press, 1998

ISBN 0-9622595-5-1, approx. 102 pages (unnumbered), B&W illus., ppbk.

\$21.50 www.bodymap.org

Body Mapping for Flutists: What Every Flute Teacher Needs to Know About the Body

Lea Pearson

Flutibia, 2002

no ISBN, 103pp., B&W illus., ppbk. \$20 (to be re-released by GIA Publications later this year; price TBA)

What Every Pianist Needs to Know About the Body, with supplementary material for organists by Roberta Gary and Thom Miles

Thomas Mark

GIA Publications, 2003

ISBN 1-57999-206-4, 155pp., B&W illus., ppbk. \$29.95 (Companion video, 2 hrs. 5 mins., \$24.95)

What Every Dancer Needs to Know About the Body: A Workbook of Body Mapping and the Alexander Technique

Robin Gilmore

Andover Press, 2005

ISBN 978-0-9622595-7-9, 116pp., B&W illus., ppbk. \$21.50

reviewed by Andrea Matthews

In the last issue of *ExChange* (Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2006), I interviewed Barbara Conable about her work in Body Mapping and as the founder of Andover Educators, a group of musicians (some of whom are also Alexander teachers) trained to teach body mapping to other musicians, with an eye to preventing injury and improving performance. In addition to *How to Learn the Alexander Technique: A Manual for Students* (Barbara Conable & William Conable, 3rd ed., Andover Press, 1995), *The Structures and Movement of Breathing: A Primer for Choirs and Choruses* (Barbara Conable, GIA Publications, 2000), and *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body*, other

instrument- or activity-specific volumes have appeared, and more are on the way. Anticipated this year or next are those for singers, oboists, violinists, and even hammered-dulcimer players!

Because one generally can't just go to the library and look these books over before buying them, I thought starting with a focus on their format and what's in them would be helpful (see Table 1, pp. 22-23). I believe at least one of these books (if not more than one) should be in every Alexander teacher's library, but choosing which one best suits one's needs or tastes can be tricky. I have it easy, of course—I have them all. If you're not feeling so flush or enthusiastic, some choices must be made. Ordinarily, you might want the most general one, if you routinely teach non-musicians as well as musicians, or a range of instrumentalists. On the other hand, one of the more instrument-specific volumes may have the most in-depth or wide-ranging information, which you will then have to "translate" for your other students.

Personally, I hope that Ms. Conable won't let her original volume lapse in favor of the subsequent books as originally intended, but will rework it, perhaps as *What Everyone Needs to Know About Body Mapping* (and hopefully tone the visuals down, as I discuss below). It would be extremely helpful for Alexander teachers at least to have a single volume to turn to and to recommend to students who are not musicians, especially newly minted teachers who may not have extra cash to invest in many books. A children's version might also be handy for elementary teachers and Alexander teachers working with young children in and out of schools. Should *What Every Musician...* go out of print, however, *How to Learn the Alexander Technique* is still an excellent introduction to both Alexander Technique and basic concepts of Body Mapping—two for the price of one, as it were.

Meanwhile, we have the current crop of books to survey. All the other books discussed here draw directly or indirectly on information that appears in *How to Learn the Alexander Technique*, *What Every Musician...*, and *The Structures and Movement of Breathing: A Primer for Choirs and Choruses*, as well as the individual authors' experiences of training as Andover Educators with Ms. Conable, as performers, and, in the case of Robin Gilmore, training as an Alexander teacher.

As with all such books, the reader will benefit from repeated readings, along with experiential work with the information they contain. Helpfully, they each contain suggested activities for gaining the sort of experience needed to make the information part of your reality, which must happen before you, as a teacher, can really convey it effectively to your own students.

Fair Warning

Once you read these books yourself, you may disagree intensely with some of what I'm going to say here (but that's the nature of reviewing!). Hopefully you'll take it all as a challenge to read the books again even more carefully and come to your own conclusions. Lest any of my comments upset the authors, let me say right off that I appreciate and applaud the important, painstaking work they've put into these books (and video). All of them have strengths that far outweigh any of their limitations. For me, however, one major aim in reviewing for the *ExChange* is to identify books that not only are of interest for teachers (which all of these certainly are), but that I feel comfortable recommending directly to students with a minimum of preamble or caveats. I find the latter sort of books to be quite rare.

A general comment before we plunge in: none of the books has an index, which makes quick searching difficult. Most of the books, however, do have detailed contents pages, which helps (see Table 1).

Book Reviews

What Every Musician... (Conable)

1. Info (about 6-hour course, using the book, concept & origin of Body Mapping, AT)
2. Head & neck
3. Spine
4. Torso
5. Legs
6. Brain & Movement
7. Body Mapping
8. Arms
9. Hands
10. Breathing
11. Supporting the Instrument
12. Head
13. Primary Control

Table 1. *Comparison of Tables of Contents of Body Mapping Books*

What Every Flutist... (Pearson)

1. Intro
2. How to Use This Handbook
3. Body Mapping
 - a. What is a body map?
 - b. How the body map affects movement
 - c. How to change the body map
4. Primary Control
5. On Attention and the Senses
 - a. The kinesthetic sense
 - b. Inclusive attention
6. Support and Balance
 - a. Bones and muscles
 - b. Support for standing
 - c. The places of balance
 - i. The AO joint
 - ii. Balance of the head
 - iii. The leg
 - iv. The feet and ankles
 - v. Knee joints
 - vi. Hip joints
 - vii. The architecture of the pelvis
 - viii. The spine
 - ix. The pelvic cavity
 - x. The lumbar spine
 - d. Sitting
 - e. Use of the torso as a whole
 - f. Balance of the arm structure
7. Arm Structure
 - a. The four arm joints
 - b. The three rotations of the arms
 - c. Forearm rotation
 - d. The shoulder region
 - e. Muscles of the torso
 - f. Picking up the flute
8. Hands
 - a. Joints of the hand
 - b. The wrist
 - c. Use of the thumb
 - d. Hand position
9. Head and Neck
 - a. Embouchure
 - b. Tonguing
 - c. The jaw
 - d. Using the eyes
10. Breathing
 - a. The structures of breathing
 - i. Diaphragm
 - ii. Lungs
 - b. The movement of breathing
 - i. Pharynx
 - ii. Ribs
 - iii. Lungs
 - iv. Under the dome
 - v. Abdominal wall
 - vi. Gluteal muscles
 - viii. Pelvic floor
 - ix. Movement of the spine
 - x. Review of the movement of breathing
 - c. Support for breathing
 - d. Summary
11. How to Integrate This Work Into Teaching and Playing
 - a. Helping students with their maps
 - b. Helping with practicing
12. Glossary of medical terms, Resources, Bibliography

What Every Pianist... (Marks)

1. Basic Concepts
 - a. The Problem of Injury
 - b. Finger Orientation
 - c. The Movement Approach
 - d. Quality of Movement
 - e. The Kinesthetic Sense
 - f. Training Attention
 - g. The Body Map
 - h. The Body Map vs. Intellectual Knowledge
 - i. Feeling Embodied
 - j. Kinesthetic and Musical Imagination
 - k. Brainwork
 - l. How to Use This Book
 - m. Lessons
2. Mapping the Structure
 - a. Supporting and Delivering Weight
 - b. The Skull
 - c. The Spine
 - d. Spinal Movement
 - e. The Pelvis
 - f. The Upper Leg
 - g. The Lower Leg
 - h. The Foot
3. Mapping the Places of Balance
 - a. Posture vs. Balance
 - b. Downward Pull
 - c. Recovering Balance
 - d. The Head on the Spine: The AO Joint
 - e. The Balance of the Arm Structure: Shoulder Joint
 - f. The Lumbar Spine
 - g. The Hip Joint
 - i. Sitting
 - ii. Going from Standing to Sitting
 - h. The Height of the Bench
 - i. The Knee Joint
 - j. The Ankle Joint
 - k. Mapping the Interrelation of the Places of Balance
4. Mapping the Arms and Hand
 - a. The Whole Arm
 - b. The Sternoclavicular Joint

- c. The Shoulder Joint
 - d. The Elbow Joint
 - i. Bending
 - ii. Rotation
 - e. The Three Rotations of the Arm: Summary
 - f. The Wrist
 - g. The Hand
 - h. Use of the Thumb
 - i. Movement of the Fingers at the MCP joints
 - j. Phalangeal joints
5. Mapping Muscles
 - a. The Back
 - b. The Hand
 - c. Curled Fingers
 - d. Thumb Orientation and Ulnar Deviation
 - e. The Forearm Arch
 - f. Suspension of the Arms
 6. Mapping Breathing
 - a. Location of the Lungs
 - b. Movement of Breathing
 - c. Breathing with the Phrase
 7. Mapping the Piano
 - a. The Piano Map
 - b. Mapping the Point of Sound
 - c. Mapping Listening and Space
 8. Additional Concerns of Organists
 - a. Mapping Movement for Organists
 - b. Technique Issues and Gestures
 - c. Specific Balance and Movement Concerns
 9. Injuries and Retraining
 - a. Four Causes of Injury
 - i. Co-contraction
 - ii. Awkward Positions
 - iii. Static Muscular Activity
 - iv. Excessive Force
 - b. How Injury Develops
 - c. Tendonitis
 - d. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
 - e. Dystonia
 - f. Cure of Injury
 - g. Why Many Pianists Do Not Recover
 10. Conclusion, Further Reading, Authors' info

What Every Dancer... (Gilmore)

1. Intro
2. Kinesthetic Sense
3. Naming Our Actions
4. Body Mapping
5. Getting Started
6. The Head
7. The Spine
8. The Pelvis
9. The Abdominal Muscles
10. The Psoas
11. Legs
 - a. The Hip Joint & Upper Leg
 - b. The Knee
 - c. The Ankle
 - d. The Foot
12. Arms
 - a. The Sternoclavicular Joint
 - b. The Shoulder Joint
 - c. The Elbow
 - d. The Wrist
 - e. The Hand
13. The Ribs & Breathing
14. The Organs
15. The Neck in Detail
16. Imagery
17. Say What?
18. Activities (workbook section: activities repeated from first half of book)
19. Resources
20. About the Author

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About the Books

All these books are in an 8 ½" x 11" format, but the presentation varies greatly from book to book, ranging from the cartoonish to the sedately informative. I'll discuss the books in the order of their publication.

Barbara Conable's *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body* (WEM) is spiral bound. It lies flat for easy use and has a glossy, durable paper cover, large type, and profuse illustrations. The contents are listed in a spiral of subject icons on the contents page (which I read backwards at first, perhaps because the last, but central icon was "Primary Control" with an eye-attracting photo of FM). These subject icons appear instead of page numbers in the book, which I found to be an annoying feature.

This volume has less actual text than the later volumes, especially relative to the number of drawings, in keeping with its aim of being "a primer, by the classic definition, a small book of elementary principles" (WEM, "About this book"). Much of the design appears to draw on "Mind Mapping" concepts (Tony Buzan, via Michael Gelb), a system that may be very useful to the visually oriented note-taker or writer, but which I find tiresome and too vague in terms of conveying specific or unfamiliar concepts to readers. To be honest, the overall effect is extremely visually "loud" and distracting, with numerous silly exhortations, italics, bold type, and exclamation points. I owned the book for some years before actually being able to read the whole thing through because of this, and I found it particularly frustrating because I know how revolutionary and important getting acquainted with Body Mapping can be for a student. Suggestion: put white tape or labels over any text or graphic that you find superfluous or irritating. When it finally dawned on me to do this, I found the book much more pleasing to work with.

As I noted above, Ms. Conable told me she intends to discontinue this volume once all the other body mapping books are available, but I would urge her to reconsider, if the book could be redesigned to tip the balance more toward straight information over whimsy or cheerleading, and the pages numbered for easy reference in teaching. The book could then function even more as a succinct primer, or the freed-up space could be used to supply more facts. The general nature of the book is useful to teachers and students of Alexander and other disciplines, especially if they are not musicians or dancers to whom the other books will be specifically aimed.

The contents of the book can be seen in Table 1 (in the column headed WEM), and these subjects form the core (with variations as to order and detail) of the other books. The particulars of functional anatomy involved in the book (and the courses) can't be conveyed here, but again I urge readers to

find a teacher, or a workshop in which to explore them. Just as with Alexander, the full impact of experiencing these simple, but precise concepts in action cannot be anticipated or learned just by reading, and arguably a very high proportions of our “use issues” turn out not to be due to bad “habits” as such, but to mismapping of our structure.

Lea Pearson's *Body Mapping for Flutists: What Every Flute Teacher Needs to Know About the Body* (WEF) is also spiral bound, with clear plastic over the cardstock title page and back cover—a nice “copy-shop” production. It opens easily and lies flat, but it's not as durable as the others for transport and heavy use if you like your books crease-free!

Design-wise, WEF has a pleasing clarity and balance of text with illustrations. It leaves room for making notes of your own, but not too much, and the type is reasonably large. The layout is reminiscent of the Cornell note-taking system, with a column on the left highlighting subject headings and icons for ideas of note (exercises, teaching tips, definitions, etc.). Illustrations include grayed-out, but clearly outlined, photos of flutists in action. Many other illustrations are reproduced from WEM. It's perhaps not the most esthetically pleasing of the volumes, but the design is certainly adequate for the purpose. Ms. Pearson told me by email that GIA Publications will be re-releasing the book this year with more exercises and illustrations, and if Thomas Mark's book is any indicator of GIA's work, the redesigned version should be highly satisfactory.

Of the post-WEM books, WEF probably follows most closely the model established for the Body Mapping courses. Notable additions by Ms. Pearson include insights from Liisa Ruoho, a prominent flute pedagogue; a much earlier appearance of Primary Control in the discussion, which Ms. Conable saved for last in WEM (especially interesting, since Ms. Pearson is not an Alexander teacher); information on balance and support influenced by her work with Bill Conable; a more detailed look at the role of inclusive attention and kinesthesia; extra attention to areas of concern to flutists (e.g., embouchure, jaw, arms, breathing); and a section on how to use this information to help students and one's own playing.

By the way, I had the pleasure of attending a one-day Body Mapping workshop given by Ms. Pearson in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and I can highly recommend her as a presenter. The workshop was lively, interactive, and well paced, and her supporting visual materials were well designed and added a lot of value to the experience. The workshop attracted many non-flute players, and worked equally well for them; Ms. Pearson punctuated her presentation with effective demonstrations as she worked with a harpsichordist, a singer, various wind players, and others.

Thomas Mark's *What Every Pianist Needs to Know About the Body, with supplementary material for organists by Roberta Gary and Thom Miles* (WEP) can be purchased with a companion videotape. The book is a solidly bound paperback with a glossy cover, and lies reasonably flat when opened. Its two-column layout and relatively large type make for easy reading; the illustrations are clear and of very good to excellent quality. I would say the book has the most professional feel of all the volumes, perhaps due to the publisher, a well-established music-related publishing concern. The video comes in a solid case with the same cover art as the book.

Mr. Mark told me by email that his approach to presenting the Body Mapping information differs from WEM in a few ways, particularly in being aimed at the verbal (rather than just visual) learner. It draws on his own study of anatomy books, his experience of recovering from injury through study with Ms. Conable, and the piano pedagogy of Dorothy Taubman (though the book is not about piano technique per se, or the Alexander Technique, either).

Being the longest of all the books, with the densest text, WEP offers more detail about many of the issues covered in the other books. Additionally, Mr. Mark gives special attention to issues of special interest to keyboard players, such

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as balance (especially for organists, who also use their feet extensively to play) and dealing with benches, and greater detail about causes of injuries and how body mapping can help players recover from and avoid future injury. Very intriguingly, he includes a section on mapping the piano and its production of sound. This reduces the temptation on the part of players to attack the keys with excessive force, and ties in their field of attention with kinesthetic and aural listening, which profoundly affects coordination and musicality. The experiential effect of this latter idea can be quite a surprise to performing students.

The accompanying video, while not inexpensive, adds much to the experience of reading the book. When one considers that it covers a great deal of what happens in a six-hour workshop (in condensed form), while allowing the viewer to repeat any section at will, the price seems pretty reasonable. My feeling is that the best approach is to read the book through, and then watch the video, stopping as necessary to conduct Mr. Mark's suggested movement explorations. Then re-read the book in light of your experiences with the video, leaving plenty of time to pause and ponder. This in a way replicates the experience of a workshop with its group activities, but in a totally personalized timeframe.

Topics covered in the video are: Structures and Places of Balance, Sitting at the Piano, Hands and Arms, and Breathing (especially in its relationship to freedom of the arms). One felicitous phrase repeated from the book particularly caught my ear: "Balance is a place from which movement is easy."

I hope that GIA will re-release the video on DVD in the near future (it would be very handy to be able to go right to specific sections), but the video is quite adequate in terms of production—simple and straightforward. It is interesting to note (although he did not remark on it) that his piano bench was resting on two boards, evidently to allow his legs to release out at a better angle from his hip joints (he does discuss bench elevation in the book, though). At times I wished Mr. Mark had had a full-length skeleton to demonstrate with, but the spine and arm-structure models did the trick pretty well. For someone who's not a video performer by trade, he rose quite well to the challenge of presenting complex information without notes. I was occasionally distracted by the shallowness of his breathing, which made me feel a bit anxious, and his speech seemed a tad choppy (carefully avoiding "ums" and "uhs" may have contributed to that), but I was able to get used to his style and follow his presentation well enough. The importance of the information, and clarity with which he conveys it, greatly outweigh any minor deficits.

Robin Gilmore's *What Every Dancer Needs to Know About the Body: A Workbook of Body Mapping and the Alexander Technique* (WED) is also a paperback with a glossy cover and attractive photos front and back. Its design is pleasing; the type is a little smaller than in the other books, but quite readable. Light grey strips appear down the side of each page for note-taking. Personally, I think they'd be better as empty boxes where the reader could make notes and read them more easily than against the grey background. Alternately, if those strips went away all together, perhaps the type could be larger (which my over-40 eyes would appreciate!) or more information could be added. Suggested activities for exploration appear in their own darker grey boxes in the body of the text; these activities are reprinted at the end of the book reprinted in larger type, in workbook style, with a great deal of blank space for notes. At first this seemed just redundant to me (and at \$21.50, having only 68 pages of original text seems steep), but it does make the exercises handily accessible for review and practice, and even posting on studio walls. The anatomical illustrations are cleanly reprinted from David Gorman's *The Body Moveable*, and there are well-reproduced photographs of Ms. Gilmore herself illustrating various points.

The format of the book and Ms. Gilmore's approach to presenting the Body Mapping information is somewhat different from the other books; she is drawing more on her years of study with both Barbara and Bill Conable, her

background as an Alexander teacher herself, and her understanding of the kinesthetic learning style of dancers, than on the Body Mapping course format itself. In fact, the book is intended as an experiential workbook not just for teachers (which seems to be the primary audience of the other books), but for dancers themselves, and one more explicitly based on the Alexander Technique. This has certain advantages to Alexander teachers as a possible text for students.

Ms. Gilmore adds to the mix a discussion of the organs (including their role in supporting the torso and in breathing); more detail on neck musculature; more emphasis on Alexander principles, but with minimal jargon; and an excellent discussion of why imagery works, and how to translate suggestions by teachers/coaches into concepts and responses that don't "contradict anatomical reality" (WED, p. 64) but facilitate clarity and ease of movement.

Concern #1: Shall We Gather at the Inhale?

In terms of unreservedly recommending the books for all students, I do have some concerns about a couple of central assertions of the Body Mapping course and all the books. One idea that I'm not yet completely convinced about is gathering and lengthening of the spine as tied to breathing. In *How to Learn the Alexander Technique*, the Conables discussed the idea of a lengthening of the spine during exhalation. In general this seems reasonable to me; AT points out that the natural response to gravity is a general lengthening of the spine toward the head, and setting off a downward pull or compression is to be avoided. (Also, to my eye, the ribs' excursion downward during exhalation might tend to move the vertebrae where they meet, at their facets on the body of the vertebrae and also on the transverse processes, in an upward direction.) In the time between that book and publishing *What Every Musician...*, Ms. Conable was convinced by further study that the spine also gathers as the torso widens during inhalation. She credits Don Zuckerman (dancer and AT teacher) with this observation, and notes his demonstration of it: If you lie prone over a physio-ball or large pillow, your head will appear to move closer to your ribs (or torso) as you inhale and move away as you exhale. She sees this as analogous to a cat gathering itself before leaping, and finds it an important antidote to any Alexandrian tendency to overlengthen that might arise because of an idea of *continual* lengthening. Additionally, she says, for the spine to be able to lengthen, it "must" go through a gathering phase, and that must occur on the inhalation, as the spine clearly lengthens on the exhale. It seems only logical.

One problem I have with this: if you lie over a pillow and inhale, a *straight* line between head and tailbone might be slightly shorter but then again, if the torso is widening and deepening (like a balloon, another example Ms. Conable cited in an email to me), it is pushed upward from the ground,

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further rounding the spine. This rounding would actually *maintain* the length or perhaps even increase it, even as the head is being pulled off the ground. If the head is actually being pulled toward the torso, perhaps the poise of the head is yielding to the pull on the sternocleidomastoid muscle from the slightly compressed chest, rather than acting as a mooring for that muscle to suspend and slightly raise the rib cage in front. This could happen because a strong uprighting response is not needed in this prone position, so the head is passively drawn backward as the spine moves upward into rounding. When one is vertical but at rest, or in certain activities, something like that might also happen, but to insist that the spine must “gather” in some way on inhalation in *all* activities may be counterproductive, especially if students get the idea, however mild, that they need to *feel* it happening.

The drawing of the spine in the “Breathing” section of *What Every Musician...* (no page number) shows the proposed movement as adding ~0.375” evenly distributed over a 5” spine. The drawing doesn’t claim to be to scale (it just shows a detectable difference in a small drawing), but if it were, I would expect a difference of nearly 2.5” in my spine between my inhalation and exhalation. I don’t think even Ms. Conable expects this. So the drawing, though elegant, could be misleading to the naïve reader.

Trying to devise a way to observe the proposed movement in the absence of a partner, I stood with my back to a door, facing a tall mirror, and observed the movement of my head. I had to put a piece of blue tape on the door so I could see anything happening at all. When I breathed in a casual, ordinary manner, I noticed perhaps the faintest diminution in height (on the order of a centimeter at most) as I inhaled, indicating perhaps a tendency of everything not otherwise dynamically lengthening away (head, cervical spine) to be drawn downward indirectly by the muscles engaging to raise my ribs.

When I breathed to sing, however, I was much more dynamically, even athletically, stabilized throughout my system, and there was no downward movement whatsoever of my head, though it remained completely available to move. I did sense a more pronounced releasing back and down of my lumbar spine from the inside, as my diaphragm displaced organs downward on the inhalation, away from my head released up and over the top of my spine. This movement is beautifully discussed by Ms. Gilmore in her section on the internal organs and breathing (WED, especially the activity on p. 59). All this becomes so subtle as not to admit of a clear gathering *or* lengthening, but seems more about the need, in this particular activity at least, for an overall poise throughout.

In singing, the breathing process is naturally adapted for maintenance of length and expansion (in an elastic manner) throughout the inbreath and sung phrase, since the singer not only *uses* her instrument, but actually must

create it fully and rapidly on the inbreath, in terms of laryngeal suspension, oxygen intake, and appropriate rib excursion. Ideally she doesn't have to do that anew for successive phrases, but establishes a baseline engagement of her system with her first breath before singing a song or aria, and then retunes it at subsequent breaths if any loss or distortion of tonus creeps in during a given phrase. The muscles that accomplish those tasks require stable, but not stiff, opposition or grounding at the spinal core (i.e., an anchoring that doesn't yield to their action) in order to work quickly and precisely. The more "athletic" the genre of singing (opera, particularly Wagnerian opera, being the most athletic), the more this would be the case, in my opinion. Perhaps more casual, or popular style, singing would appropriately involve (or at least accommodate) more yielding to the "gathering" phase Ms. Conable proposes. Similarly, many instrumentalists would have a wider margin for gathering on the inhale than singers or even wind players. Also, the idea that there is a need for free breathing and any spinal movement as all while playing is often so revolutionary for them, that any possible imprecision in the concept is of negligible consequence, at least for quite a while.

Based on my experience, however, the last thing I want on an inbreath for singing is for my spine to gather downward, interfering with the precise and energetic poise of my larynx created by muscles anchored at my head, sternum, spine, scapulae, and on down through the diaphragm to my legs. I don't want my students getting the idea that there is a downward movement in inhaling to sing either—it's all I can do to get them energized and at the same time lightly suspended as the breath turns from inhalation to phonation, so that no throat-constrictor muscles engage to make up for any lack of laryngeal poise. (This is one reason I would hesitate to just hand these books to a student.)

In no way am I advocating a stiffness or overlengthening; however, someone convinced of the gathering/lengthening idea might suspect that I'm simply "doing" something extra and unnecessary to remain at full length on the inhale, actively resisting the gathering phase. Short of a personal demonstration of my singing, there's not much I can do about that. I would point out, however, singing is neither ordinary breathing nor digesting, the two primary functions of the apparatus in question; instead it is a secondary use of the mechanism that voluntarily engages reflexes for a completely different purpose. Any engagement of throat-constricting muscles (i.e., swallowing muscles) must be inhibited while the inhalatory musculature remains engaged, or compensatory effort must ensue. (For more on this, see the works of Cornelius Reid.)

As such, singing seems to have its own particular demands for poise and "tuning" of its instrument, and for singers (and perhaps wind players as well) the gathering/lengthening hypothesis may need to be adapted. Mr. Mark notes (and I believe he's quoting Ms. Conable) that we can be "sharp" (rigidly upright) or "flat" (collapsed) or "in tune" as we sit and stand; I think the metaphor applies equally to the poise of the laryngeal mechanism. In any event, we can probably agree that spinal elasticity and resilience are needed for the singing athlete (as for other musicians), and that the spine needs to be allowed to do what is needed to accommodate the demands of each activity with maximum buoyancy and efficiency.

The other books in fact seem a little less forceful on the gathering idea than *What Every Musician...*, though they all propose it as fact. In any case, one certainly can't go wrong inviting one's students to have a greater kinesthetic awareness of what's happening in the spine, and of *allowing* movement to happen there.

Concern #2: The Rest of the (Structural) Story

I also feel strongly that leaving the postural muscles essentially out of the picture, in favor of the idea that the bones alone, particularly those of the spine, are "weight-bearing" (or occasionally, and probably more accurately, "weight-

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delivering”) gives the reader an incomplete story of how we right ourselves. To be sure, the books mention “postural reflexes” operating in the body, but with no detailed context or sense of how they fit into the story of support—not even a clear sense that they act on muscles! If anatomical information is important, even if (especially if!) you’re not to “do” anything with it, I’m simply not comfortable leaving the muscles and their weight-suspending synergy with the bones out of the story, not when there is a clear and meticulous narrative of that synergy already in the Alexander literature, from the very man whose drawings grace some of these books. I urge all who are interested in Body Mapping to read David Gorman’s “In Our Own Image” series in *Looking at Ourselves* is thus an important complement to these texts (the series is available from LearningMethods.com, in paperback or as a download, I believe). Then the source of our resilience and buoyancy in stillness and action—and why our inherent instability is not only necessary but desirable—becomes abundantly clear. We *can’t* balance our bones over each other—even if we could hold perfectly still, they are not shaped in such a way as to balance; because of this, the stretch reflexes of our muscles are constantly being stimulated to catch us, thus restoring us to poise.

Of course, it would take a little longer to incorporate the muscle part of the story into a Body Mapping course, and one doesn’t have to *do* anything to activate that support, but to me it’s just not enough to say, as Ms. Pearson does (echoing WEM): “What is the major function of bone? To support the body....What is the major function of muscles? To move bones. Muscles do not hold bones together—connective tissue does....If muscles are being used to support the bones, their mobility is compromised.” (WEP, p. 23) The bones as they are shaped, with their various angles and curves, simply cannot be stacked up in any sort of stable balance on their own. In fact if your connective tissue is all that’s holding you together, you’re in trouble, because that webbing is only a safety net, a last resort. If it comes under constant tension, it will overstretch and even tear away from the sheathing around the bones to which it is anchored. Now, not all muscles are involved in balance (especially to the point of compromising mobility), but I think a more nuanced version of the facts would be helpful.

Of course, no Body Mapper is really suggesting you should throw yourself solely onto the mercy of your connective tissue. The underlying, but unstated, idea must be that you don’t need to *concern* yourself with these matters muscular and reflexive. However, just hinting once or twice about mysterious “postural reflexes” or “core support” without reference to how muscles work with bones to create that support doesn’t do the job for me, at least with all the emphasis then falling on “weight-bearing” by bones. Even Ms. Pearson seems uncomfortable with that gap; in her book, she goes into some detail about a natural force matching and opposing gravity, from the earth’s surface, called the Normal Force, providing the support for our bony structure. This is true, in that the surface of the earth prevents gravity from drawing us down into the earth, with a force matching the force of gravitation. However, it is not making our bones stand upright—we would experience the Normal Force just as much if we fainted and collapsed in a heap on the ground (probably all the more forcefully!). What stands us up is our intention to stand, which sets the response threshold of our reflexes, which in turn are stimulated by the instability of our bones (in particular the offset of our skulls on our spines) pulling on our deep spinal and other postural muscles, causing them to contract and restore our balance—infinitesimally small adjustments being made on a continuous basis. We cannot find a place of balance and keep it; we must constantly lose our balance in order to have it constantly restored to us. *That’s* why it’s so important that we let our heads be free on our necks and not “do” our standing. (Interestingly, Erick Hawkins’ image of the “Jolly Jumper” discussed by Michelle Nance on p. 12 of this issue captures the difference in buoyancy between thinking of the pelvis as a keystone of an arch with the legs (i.e., weight-bearing) or more as part of an overall suspension system.

Finding A Hip Joint

Speaking of the pelvis and hip joints, a smaller quibble I have with the books is the method(s) they suggest for finding one's hip joint, which is such a critical spot to map. They suggest either no method of palpating it at all; a curiously vague triangulation among the anterior iliac crest, the pubic bone, and the greater trochanter; or even a rivet on your jeans, if you wear them. The accompanying illustrations of the pelvic structure are clear, but I find that few readers can make the translation from what they see to the experience of finding the joint in their own body, and it seems a very curious lapse in books specifically about the need for precise body mapping.

My suggestion as a better approach is one I learned years ago (from which Alexander teacher, alas, I can't recall): find the crease that appears in your pants as you sit. With your index fingers trace that line from the top at the front of your pelvis on both sides, down and in toward your pubic bone. The joints are about 2/3 of the way toward the pubic bone on either side. (You'll feel muscle under your fingers, and then a dip inward—the joint is just about there.) It may not be perfect, but it's far more precise than the approaches mentioned in the books. It makes a huge "aha" difference in students' understanding when they allow the bending to happen from there.

Even if mapping is improved, a little fuzziness can lead a student to resort to "doing" to address remaining problems. For example, in the WEP video, the ability to squat is suggested as a diagnostic for tight hamstring muscles that may need "gentle stretching" to accommodate easy sitting; in my experience, any difficulty in squatting that would affect *sitting* results from an incorrect idea of the location of the hip joints themselves, and/or a "map" of the leg and pelvis that sees pelvis as the top of the legs, and not as the bottom of the torso. Although Mr. Mark clearly shows and demonstrates the proper mapping in the video, I was surprised when he included the "stretching tight hamstrings" suggestion, since it's the sort of idea that students tend to latch onto as a way to avoid real re-mapping. Certainly, stretches can be generally beneficial, and even vital as a warm up for athletic activities involving high impact or wide ranges of motion. For simple sitting, however, I'd be more likely to say to a student, "you may think some muscles are tight and in need of stretching, or others are weak, but keep refining your map. If you get used to bending where the joint actually is, sitting and moving will be much easier."

Some Further Reflections

As an Alexander teacher I have some concerns about the Andover Educators that I would like to share with ATI members. I don't mean my comments to

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be at all mean-spirited, but to be a wake-up call. First of all, I think it behooves all Alexander teachers to become completely fluent with the ideas in the Body Mapping books and courses as a critical part of the knowledge base of their teaching, and then to think carefully and be able to articulate what is the “value added” by the Alexander Technique in private lessons and/or in institutional teaching. I believe we are naturally in competition with Andover Educators. Not that there isn’t room for everybody, and not that it can’t work to our benefit in the long run—but it will be important to wake up to the challenge.

At the moment, there aren’t that many Andover Educators, but the model that Ms. Conable has put together is focused on, and highly marketable to, one important segment of our potential market, musicians and music schools. The knowledge base it presents is compact, and the fairly consistent (as well as expandable and adaptable) format has great appeal as a marketing device. Ms. Conable feels she has built in quality control by insisting not that candidates be Alexander teachers, but instead accomplished musicians and instrumental teachers who then assimilate the course’s information at their own pace and become certified when they demonstrate their ability to teach the six-hour course. As revolutionary as the effect of learning Body Mapping may be to an individual, the course definitely fits well into the current academic intellectual and budgetary paradigms. Furthermore, while the information in the course clearly benefits from its origins in the Alexander Technique, one can clearly see the potential for Andover Educators to move the public in the direction of seeing Body Mapping as central, institutionally affordable, and straightforward, pushing Alexander aside as a nice, complementary, but rather vague system of bodywork for additional study. This may not be Ms. Conable’s intention; she clearly wants to reach as many musicians as possible (all of whom are in need of injury prevention), and the course format with its tight focus and clarity helps greatly in that aim.

Additionally, as more non-AT-trained Andover Educators go out into institutional settings, what they say (with the best will in the world) about AT may push us aside, or even misrepresent the Technique. We all know how easy it is to throw around AT terminology without really being precise, giving readers an incorrect impression of what AT is about. Here is just one example, from Mr. Mark’s book. Bear in mind, Mr. Mark trained directly with Barbara Conable, who is considered a senior AT teacher; he didn’t train as an AT teacher, and through no fault of his or Ms. Conable, this is the sort of thing that winds up in print or said in workshops.

To free the neck it is vital to map it correctly.... You can palpate the different superficial muscles of your neck. Lie down on the floor and massage your neck gently, discovering its structure and encouraging release. Alexander teachers frequently point out that a daily routine of

this kind, which they call “constructive rest,” can, over time, bring about tremendous improvement. (WEP, p. 41)

It may seem a small issue, and I feel bad jumping on Mr. Mark for this; his book is generally excellent and it's clear he means well by bringing up this Alexandrian concept—but just lying down and massaging one's neck, though not a bad idea, is not constructive rest! We know that, but his readers may never find that out. After all, why should he talk about direction? He's not writing an Alexander book.

Even Ms. Gilmore, in her exercise labeled “Constructive Rest” (WED, pp. 63, 109) omits the element of directions per se, though she comes close: “...bring your awareness to your whole self and simply take in this sensory information. If you notice areas of tension, direct your thinking to release those parts in relation to your whole body. Be clear and simple in the messages you send. Then, without ‘doing’ anything, observe any changes.” Some teachers have a philosophical aversion to teaching “directions” per se (even FM found them problematic at times); in this case, it might just have seemed like too much detail to get into, given the scope of the book. The knowledgeable reader can fill in the gaps, of course, but others can't.

If this sort of thing creeps into the work of first-generation Body Mappers, what will those who will eventually be trained by non-AT teachers do with AT terms and concepts? Among all the informational roses of the Body Mapping course and books are already scattered such little thorns of error or confusion. Of course no book can convey all the experiential aspects of Body Mapping, and so one should definitely attend workshops or study privately with an accomplished Andover Educator or Alexander teacher who is firmly grounded in Body Mapping. But beyond this ordinary caveat of instructional books, this problem of misrepresentation is something AT teachers may want to consider before recommending the books directly to their students. With experienced students, it may not be a big concern at all—I just recommended Mr. Mark's book to a former Wellesley student pianist who I know will benefit from it; I feel she has enough experience of the Technique to take any discrepancies of that sort in stride. In other cases, one could always point out the author is Alexander-friendly, but not a teacher of the Technique.

In Summary

My recommendations then for each of the books: I think *What Every Musician...* in its current format is highly problematic because of its design, and for students, I would probably recommend *How to Learn the Alexander Technique* instead. I would also recommend all the books be followed up with a close reading of David Gorman's series “In Our Own Image” mentioned above. For teachers, however, it's worth having as a reference.

I would recommend *Body Mapping for Flutists...* to all flute teachers, to flute players, and Alexander teachers dealing with wind-instrument players of any kind (especially while we wait for future volumes on voice and specific wind instruments), as I would *What Every Pianist...* for keyboard players and their instrumental and Alexander teachers. Much of the information in the latter can also be adapted for other keyboard “players” such as computer workers and handworkers. (In some ways, *Pianist...* is my favorite of the books, both for detail and elegance of writing, but I can't fault the others on those scores either.) Mr. Mark's video could actually complement any of the volumes, even with its specific focus on pianists. The impact of seeing the concepts in action is tremendous.

I can recommend Ms. Gilmore's *What Every Dancer...* to all AT and dance teachers, and dance students because of its combination of a clear presentation of Body Mapping concepts and Alexander principles. The exploratory exercises would be of value to all of one's students, not just the dancers.

Book Reviews

I'm definitely looking forward to the release of future Body Mapping books (especially the one for singers), but there's much to consider in the ones we have already. ☺

Remembering Walter Carrington: Keystone of the Alexander Technique

Elizabeth Langford, ed.

Alexandertechniek Centrum vzw Leuven, 2006

ISBN 90-808491-2-X, 215pp., ppbk. £17.50, US \$33

www.alexandertechniquecentre.be

reviewed by Andrea Matthews

ExChange readers know of my enthusiasm for personal recollections of lessons and teachers, both as a record of the growth of the Technique and its remarkable pioneers, and as a resource of insight that one can dip into time and time again. *Remembering Walter Carrington* is no exception to the rule.

I knew already that Walter Carrington was something special, from his reputation as a first-generation teacher, from the Mornum Time Press books (*Thinking Aloud, A Time to Remember, The Act of Living*), his interviews with Seán Carey (*Personally Speaking, Explaining the Alexander Technique*), and his own writings, and from seeing and hearing him at the Oxford Congress in 2004—but reading this lovingly assembled volume of tributes and recollections gave me even more to reflect upon.

For one thing, Walter's native modesty played down his remarkable life journey. Over and over in these pages, however, his former students remark on how he not only taught the principles of the Technique, he lived them, in so fundamental a way as to make their effects seem absolutely ordinary and unremarkable—until the student thought it over later! The collective portrait that emerges is of a truly remarkable character—humorous, patient, perceptive, grounded, in-the-moment, and inhibitive in the best Alexander sense. One receives a lesson in the Technique just reading about how he conducted his life, and how deeply he affected the thinking and teaching of his students.

Such stories put me in mind of a Zen master, who quietly imparts his teachings by constant example—and indeed many of his remarks have that apparently cryptic quality, a kind of delayed fuse that leads to a sudden burst of enlightenment in the student, be it hours, days, or even years later. For example, this one to a student who was struggling with feelings of depression: “Some days I say to myself, ‘It’s raining’—and it is.” The best teachers never really stop teaching us, even after they are gone—and Walter Carrington was clearly one of the best. ☺

Well, that's just the way it is. Now let's see where we can go from here.

*Walter Carrington, quoted in Remembering
Walter Carrington (p. 143)*

*We are pleased to announce the
8th International
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*10-16 August 2008
Lugano, Switzerland*

Mark Your Calendars!

Further information will appear in the February 2007 issue of *ExChange*,
and will also be posted at: www.atcongress.com.

Worldwide Offices of Alexander Technique International

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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, Kevin Kline, Roald Dahl, 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.

The common factor in all 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 or she uses him- or herself in everyday life, will find that this simple procedure can have far-reaching results.

Further information about the Alexander Technique can best be gained from a teacher near you (see the list at right for the nearest ATI office, or visit www.ati-net.com for teacher listings), 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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