

## **Memorial Lecture 2014**

Alexander, Music and Education, paths to self-acceptance and self-development.

Hello, it's great to see everyone.

It's an honour to have been asked to give the Memorial Lecture.

I plan to talk about Music, Education and the Alexander Technique. Peter will help with showing the short videos and our son Abe is going to help with reading the quotes from Alexander Teachers and Music Students.

Music has so many parallels with our lives in general; our choices can make it the most wonderful, creative thing in the world to be involved with. It can also feel like the most stressful thing in the world.

For all of us, it is work in progress to feel happy with who we are, our relationships and what we are doing, where we are going.

Studying Music and Alexander over the years, it has always struck me how many similarities there are between them and the learning of them as disciplines. How they inform each other, they even have a shared lexicon of language, tone, rest, pause, flow we even, compose ourselves! Perhaps the most important word for us all to remember, but especially for musicians, is the word, 'Play'; after all, we play our instruments, we play music.

Musicians are often intelligent Alexander students because they understand the process of developing a skill. For musicians to feel confident about their playing and performing requires constant practice. There's an old joke, when a violinist was asking a street cleaner for directions in New York, "Can you tell me how to get to the Carnegie Hall?" The reply came back..... **Practise, Practise, Practise!!**

Musicians can understand the need for adaptability and ease to change alongside a need for being in control. Most importantly, in practice and performance musicians need to be present to be able to organise their awareness.

Alexander work has so much to offer to musicians, not just recognising we actually move to make a sound on our instruments but what initiates and organises our movements is our brain. It is so much about our thinking mind, our attitudes and our motivations that inform our Use, our connection to our instrument, and our development as musicians.

One of my cello-playing students, Ashok Klouda, wrote,

*Many musicians are not aware that when they come to playing their instrument, they are actually using two instruments. Their self is the primary instrument and the musical instrument is the secondary one. If one is ever to find full pleasure and comfort with playing one's secondary instrument, one's primary instrument must be working in a way, which allows that.*

As an Alexander teacher who spends quite a lot of time teaching young people at Music colleges, it was lucky that I had my first lessons when I was seventeen. It has been salutary to remember when I meet teenagers, that I didn't understand it at all, at first. I was very fortunate as there were short introductory courses at the Guildhall, where I was studying music, run by my first Alexander teacher, the very patient, Elisabeth Waterhouse. It was hugely important for me, to be taught in a group, as alongside her lessons, discussing the work with the other students, after the classes, helped me to understand it all a little more. It has been said, "the best education is a conversation".

By the end of the course, I had had some light bulb moments. Being me began to include having a body, and 'constructive resting' was an option when in pain, rather than soldiering on and doing hours and hours of habitual practice. I think I was a typical teenage musician.

We often find with young people at Music College that their initial reaction is, "I haven't got time to stop, I haven't got time to be present and I haven't got time to think and I don't do it like that." They are often preoccupied, with their mental chatter and their emotions as are we all, preoccupied with other things; boys ..... girls, food, sleep..... mobile phones!

We have learnt it's good to meet students where they are with the work, listening to what they think and to what they need. Sometimes students arrive at college never having heard of Alexander work, some have had lessons before and some arrive with a misunderstanding of what Alexander work is – that it's all about posture, standing up straight and getting it right as though they were all wrong, or its all about relaxing and being heavy and maybe losing spontaneity. Gradually their understanding develops, they tune into themselves, they make connections and they begin to make the work their own.

Here is one of our Alexander students at the RCM playing the Marimba **Video: Elsa**  
< [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QLtXzUeu\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QLtXzUeu_s) >

Perhaps one of the messages we have to pass on to the world of Education and to our students is that the work is about being easy with ourselves. It's a resource for learning, to pause, and connect to our breathing and balance. Alexander work helps to find our inner strength, letting go of the hold that fear and anxiety can have on us, the pressure the World can put us under. Helping us to find our resilience, recover our buoyancy and choose to stop and think how to be, when we can.

As teachers we exemplify and explain the work is about thinking, but maybe not thinking, as we have known it before. Seeing our thoughts not as facts but as choices that connect us to the whole of our self. As Alexander work shows us, we can't tell ourselves or other people what to feel, but we can work on our constructive thinking.

Here is a poem 'Thought', by D H Lawrence, which Elisabeth Waterhouse sent me recently.

*Thought, I love thought,  
But not the jiggling and twisting of already existent ideas,  
I despise that self-important game.*

*Thought is the welling up of unknown life into consciousness,  
Thought is the testing of statement on the touchstone of the conscious,  
Thought is the gazing onto the face of life and reading what can be read.  
Thought is pondering over experience and coming to a conclusion.  
Thought is not a trick or a set of dodges,  
Thought is a man in his wholeness wholly attending.*

It is great to think about things but not so great to worry about them. We all have enough to worry about, especially young people, at college some students are far from home, dealing with peer pressure and the stress of living in London; it's so helpful to feel the Alexander technique is there to support students.

Mainstream education and particularly musical education is usually competitive and results orientated, (the average child at school, has sat about 80 exams by the age of eighteen). Music students often have started playing when they were very young, have been involved in the grade system and have been entering competitions. Some cope with all this stimulus very well, but its touch for others. We are often told how unhappy, stressed and anxious young people are today. Alexander work can help students see that 'life isn't an emergency all the time!' There is another approach. Knowing about the 'Startle Pattern' is something very profound. It helps to give us a more reliable compass for our Use, our observation of habits, our emotional state. Once students can connect with their overall pattern of fear, or anxiety, they can begin to restore a pattern of ease, find their authentic self, their identity, their embodied mindfulness.

We are all different, individual, but we do all seem to have the startle pattern in common. All animals fix and get smaller when they are frightened or anxious.

Pain and the many negative outcomes of habitual practice with poor Use, is what some of our work is about at Music College. Injuries range from RSI, Dystonia, to tired backs and frozen shoulders as well as some students with acute emotional anxiety. To be able to understand Use and how your fingers and hands move and coordinate, how they relate to your arms, shoulders and back is vital knowledge that we have to offer musicians. The playing of most instruments is asymmetric, some instruments are large, some small, these things can pose problems. Looking at how students hold their instrument and their set-up is essential work. It's easy to wrap yourself around your instrument and not be able to unravel that pattern, even when you have put the instrument back in its case.

All instrumentalists and singers benefit enormously in terms of sound production and resonance, through improved sensory awareness and better Use of the body. This improved use leads to easy interactivity with the music, colleagues and the audience.

We are so fortunate that we can use our hands in our quiet way, touch that informs people so deeply about their Use. These days there is no one else in a Music college who is officially allowed to touch students. I think we have something important to remind everyone about 'Touch'; it is natural, and helpful in an Alexander teaching context. It is hard to imagine how we could let go of many habitual tensions without the information that touch gives us?

First study instrumental teachers are often highly gifted and well coordinated performers, but as teachers they do not have the experience of an 'Alexander Training' to unravel Use. It is vital to work in tandem with professors in a music college and create a good relationship with them. Many teachers do tell their students to be relaxed when they play but unfortunately this sometimes leads to heaviness or tension in the student. They of course want their students to do well, understand what they are saying and to be able to imitate them. This is tricky if your Use is poor and you lack confidence and the necessary coordination. We Alexander teachers are often there to facilitate the understanding of the message the Professor is giving, a catalyst for learning. We can also give the real anatomical information, for example the diaphragm is not the stomach muscles. We help students to think for themselves. Many performers do embody themselves and are able to overcome the problems that instruments can pose.

Here is an example of beautiful playing with easy and organised use. David Russell advocates use of the Alexander Technique to his pupils and refers to the Technique in his Master Classes.

This is David at the start of a Master class in Spain, where he is even able to speak easily while playing!:  
**Video: David Russell** <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA0gKdYqLTE>>

Research shows performing musicians are under the same level of pressure as jet pilots and that over 80% of them are in some kind of pain. Most suffer from stage fright regularly. There are high demands of technical skill as well as performance stress, long hours and huge competition for the work that is around. Perhaps it's beginning to sound rather like being an Alexander teacher? Some musicians drink alcohol or take Beta Blockers to cope with the stress. Fortunately some discover the Alexander Technique!

It's often thought cool to do hours and hours of practice. We encourage students to stop and lie down in semi-supine to think about their practice, and do as much constructive conscious work as possible, away from the instrument. To think about coordination, intelligent, movement and mindful embodiment in their every day life, without the big stimulus of the instrument. Guitarist, John Williams say's, "it takes 4 hours to do 2 good hours of practice."

Whilst training with Shoshana Kamanitz, who was an extraordinary and vivid Alexander teacher, we worked with my instrument but she would also put her hand on my neck, asking me to think through the music without playing the instrument; she could always tell when I got to the difficult bits. '

Alexander said, "Education in the wider sense of the word deals with the control of human reaction."

Musicians often work on scales and arpeggios in the practice room. This repetitive work can be the start of poor Use with the instrument. In music and in Alexander work we may be practising the basics for the rest of our lives. This technical practice can be used to work mindfully on presence, coordination and freedom.

Music isn't only scales; getting in and out of a chair isn't the only thing we do in life. The way we work on these forms becomes a transferable skill to take into our music making or our life in general. We make the point, "your instrumental technique is 'the way you use your mind and body. We are learning to think in activity."

Talent is a word you hear often in the music world, as though people are just good at things, but really talent is the ability develop skill. Perhaps the most important influence on learning, is being interested in what we are learning. Sometimes music students arrive at college not having really made the choice to be a musician, its just what they were good at, at school, and the actuality of devoting their whole day and life to music, might not be what they thought it was going to be, the Alexander emphasis on conscious choice can be very helpful for owning that decision.

Once that is established our relationship with getting things wrong, feeling wrong and being told we are getting things wrong, is crucial. This is tricky if we think we are always right or if we think we are always wrong. It takes quite a lot of self-confidence to be happy to be 'wrong', to feel different. Once we undo having to be right all the time or to feel the same as 'normal' all the time; we build in resilience, and a constructive attitude. Questions then start to be useful. A rigour comes into students' thinking that unravels problems. What is going well? What can I work on and develop? Can I let go of all these rights and wrongs? It's helpful to change our relationship with getting things wrong and reframe them, as a path forward. If we only played music that we can play easily and never challenged ourselves with music that is beyond our comfort zone we may not develop to our full potential.

Gradually students are building a repertoire of constructive questions in the practice room. They could ask themselves, did I lose my coordination; did I fix my Primary control before that shift? Can it be easier? Did I use too much effort or tighten my shoulders? Was I gritting my teeth, did I lose touch with the environment, was I zoning out, am I bored? Or as Baloo says in the Jungle Book, are you just "working too hard"?

Here is an extract from one of our student's self-reflexive statements at the end of his level 6 course:

"What I did not believe before, is that we change through being present and aware. The change is more difficult to achieve if we are trying to change. As the weeks went by I noticed a pleasing shift in my performing. After working on letting myself make mistakes in practice and being more present, I felt that I was taking more risks during concerts. These risks were the result of more spontaneity which I believe made my performance more exciting. Not only did others enjoy listening to me more but I enjoyed playing more because I was finding deeper layers in the music, not over-thinking, freeing myself from analysis in performance."

It is very helpful for students to make connections with all this extra effort, to their emotional space, to start to bridge the gap between their thoughts, moods and their physical response. It's helpful to identify the stimulus, is it just the activity? Is it our competitive thoughts, destructive thoughts or feeling sorry for yourself – it's good to accept these thoughts. All of us have these habitual thoughts. But thoughts are not facts and we can begin to consciously choose our thoughts, our Directions. Students need help unpacking the struggle. "Replacing ambition with curiosity."

Learning isn't all light bulb moments. Within the learning process there are many times of confusion, frustration even failure. It is impossible not to fail in life, this teaches us so much more than passing exams and success. What we achieve inwardly changes our outward reality and makes us stronger. Understanding the problem becomes part of the solution.

Its been very interesting at RCM to read the students' self-observational diaries and to notice that often confident students' diaries are full of curiosity they do have this attitude of acceptance about their negative habits and a positive attitude towards development, they are helpful and positive in their feedback to themselves and others, not in a smug way, but in a "Yes I can" way. They see learning isn't all about beating ourselves up or about beating other people up.

Gradually analysis can take the place of judgement and a deeper understanding of our habits can emerge and choice opens up. Joy and imagination can come into our learning and playing.

Meredith Page; empathetic, compassionate and powerful teacher wrote:

"I recall once gazing at a violin and being struck by the realisation that it had been a thought in some mind, long before it took form. Human love and will or consciousness had fashioned this instrument as a most exquisite means of expressing themselves. Something in the uniqueness of the shape of a violin reflects the essence of its purpose. A thighbone is the perfect impression in matter of the stresses acting on the space it occupies. If I smile or frown enough, emotion will etch itself into my face and repetitious thought will carve grooves in the fabric of my mind. How then does my body, the sum in form of all my energies, express me. Does honouring it enable me to express more?"

When we are making useful choices, applying the Principles, there are the wonderful moments when we feel that we have come home to ourselves, that we are easier, freer, more peaceful and more imaginative; for musicians, when the playing can seem to flow and work easily; at those moments we are deeply engaged in the music, communicating with our colleagues and the audience. Perhaps it is just at these moments that, rather than trying hard to get it right, we are allowing it to happen to us, and maybe we are even enjoying ourselves? These collected moments help to develop our long term sense of accepting our playing and allowing ourselves to develop into more confident, creative and carefree musicians.

Let's have a quick look at beautiful ensemble playing from some young musicians. **Video: Mendelssohn sextet.** < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjXLSafIVQ>>

As you can see, musicians have to develop the art of playing with other people, as one of my teachers said, there is no point in being the only person in an orchestra who comes in right! If you are playing a duet it's no good only listening to yourself, but its also no good only listening to the other player, we need to develop a collective tempo, pulse and pitch, easier when you are breathing freely. As musician's we work on developing the art of listening to more than one thing at a time, just like awareness of our Use.

In the context of an Orchestra, sometimes you have a tune, but sometimes you are not even playing; yet you need to be alert and ready for your next entry. If you are the Triangle player you are a very, very important person sometimes but not all of the time, it's a different role from the first violin but as essential for the collective music. Great ensemble musicians are very adaptable, understanding their changing role at any particular moment, their part in the musical form, developing the attitude of being part of the musical solution, rather than part of a problem. Again this is all easier with a free neck, easy shoulders and your feet on the ground.

In a musical performance, musicians need enough technique and coordination to convey the emotional message of the chosen work, we can hear the greatest technician in the world playing the most complicated piece ever written, but remain unmoved, conversely we can be more touched by a 5 year old!

If the music has no story or connection it can leave us cold. It is the singer as well as the song. For the communication to be great the relationship the player has to themselves and to the audience is crucial, as is the Alexander Teacher's to themselves and with their students. It is so interesting how music can change completely your mood chemistry and energy, in a similar way how the touch of an Alexander teachers hand can give direction, help us to feel more alive, more optimistic.

We can see a lot of great performing artists are exemplifying the great Use, even if they are not calling it that...? It's important to recognise that some lucky devils have kept a great integrity in their use and they are often brilliant at what they do. They transform fear into positive performing energy.

Let's look at one of our favourite pianists (who we hear had to overcome stage-fright), Vladimir Horowitz, who had great integrity in his Use - **VIDEO: Horowitz** <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS5LRRsNYZk>>

Research shows that performance is much more influenced by your emotional attitude to performance, than by how many hours of practise you have done! Stage fright is so often what music students worry about and what gets in the way of their performance. Not all of us are temperamentally suited to be performers. It's often the pressure we put on ourselves that is so hard to come to terms with, students can often relate to Ulf's Tolle's thought, "I realise that I am trying to prove to myself that I am really someone special". It's

usually better to be thinking about the music and relating to colleagues and the audience and accept how we are.

Perhaps the most important sense to keep alive is our sense of humour?

**Violinist, Isaac Stern said:** *At every concert at least one person should enjoy himself, and it might as well be me.*

The way our brains work we can have played hundreds of right notes, but it's so often the one note that was wrong that sticks in our mind. We learn to forgive ourselves. We should be prepared for spectacular playing to include spectacular mistakes. At some point we have to allow that our performance is good enough. We find a harmony between our work and ourselves. It is on-going work not to overreact to what we perceive as mistakes, we just keep going and redirect.

Musicians also need to develop the art of constructive retrospective analysis, as often there is despair after a concert or an exam that is hard to live with. Finding a resilient attitude can depend on being able to accept that we did our best at the time! Next time could be different if we make different choices. Breathing and embodiment help us to come to terms with life's ups and downs and learn from our setbacks. Alexander work can help us to deal with pressure.

Learning the music from memory can be another challenge. We tell our students that it's a good idea to learn the music before a concert! During performance is not the time for analytical thinking. Performers need adaptability of Use, coordination and energy, but most of all our ability to be consciously present in the moment, again just like everyday life. Vision work, as part of awareness on stage can be useful, not over-focussing, allowing easy panoramic vision.

Musicians can overdose on listening. Listening is more appropriate for the audience! It's good to remind musicians that conscious sensory awareness is receiving information and includes vision, kinaesthesia and proprioception as well as the other senses and to remind them that tension reduces sensation.

Gradually we re-educate and re-balance our sensory and motor systems to become more reliable. Even when our nervous system is screaming at us to go home, to run, we can begin to take charge of ourselves, breathe and stand our ground.

Let's look at someone who is very happy to stand his ground on stage. Jascha Heifetz said, "You need your technique to be 200% because you lose 100% onstage." **VIDEO: Heifetz Tchaikovsky**  
< <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFaq9kTlcaY> >

Developing a comprehensive balance takes time, no one learns the Tchaikovsky violin concerto in their first violin lesson, Alexander learning, thinking and teaching, as we know, requires patience, and learning patience requires patience.

Eventually Alexander students find their autonomy and take responsibility for their choices.

A quote from one of our students: Anna Eichholtz

*"The most crucial change in my thinking that the Alexander technique has influenced is the awareness of the fact that I am able to take responsibility for my body and mind. It is my decision how I treat my body, how I practise, how I deal with stressful times and how I respond to physical pain or psychological pressure."*

Music is not calm all the time; most of us are not calm all the time. We have to find the appropriate energy for the music.



Alexander work helps musicians understand the changing requirement of effort and energy in life and music, we can't pick up a Tuba with the same effort as picking up a Flute, some bow strokes or types of phrases do require more energy, more organisation, more direction and more opposition in Direction

It easy to see though that Performance practice has changed over the years the idea of espressivo has changed, many musicians feeling now, more is more, rather than, less is more. Some performers like to show a lot of effort and energy, interesting.

The audience want to hear the story; they hear the effect of excessive habitual movement or tension. It's great to see deep engagement without unnecessary tension but it's vital for our Alexander message not to be all about people standing still or being any less expressive, after all no one comes to hear the Alexander technique! Musicians and singers sometimes need full stature, dynamic balance, full energy and power as performers, for example, often in opera.

Let's see some powerful operatic performance: [Video: Queen of the Night](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvuKxL4LOqc) <  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvuKxL4LOqc>

Most singers go for coaching all of their working lives. Instrumentalists collaborate, rehearse and develop with conductors and directors. Many successful musicians take regular Alexander lessons as part of their Continuous Professional Development

Music and the Performing Arts educational world, is where Alexander teaching has had the strongest profile up till now. All music colleges in Britain have Alexander lessons. This work in the Music Colleges all started about 60 years ago with Dr Wilfred Barlow's experiment at the RCM. Our world has a lot to be grateful to him for.

Dr Barlow and his wife Marjory were asked to run an experiment in the singing department at the Royal College of Music. They gave about 37 lessons to each of the 50 students, in the singing department, over a period of 3 months.

The results were impressive. The RCM singing professors reported back very positively after the experiment. Here is a shortened version of what they said,

*"In each case there was a marked physical improvement, which was reflected vocally and dramatically. It was a revelation to discover that tricks of behaviour could be eliminated in a comparatively short space of time once the student learned to control his tensional balance from the head-neck region."*

*In all cases the students, since re-education, are easier to teach and can take and carry out stage directions with greater ease. The students seem to become aware of themselves in a new way.*

*The professors noted considerably improved success in an International singing competition.*

*The final thought was,*

*"In our opinion, this approach is the best means yet we have encountered for solving the artist's problem of communication and should form the basis his Training."*

The thing that we have always found so interesting about this dramatically positive feedback is, that it is not really about backache or pain, not that those things are not important, but this was about being more teachable and better at communicating with the audience... Interesting that the primary Control was seen as the Key.

Let's look at our last video, one of the greatest singers of all time, and we may notice his Primary Control, but also his communication. [Video: Pavarotti](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VATmgmR5o4)  
< http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VATmgmR5o4>

We began teaching at the RCM in 1989 and Peter immediately started to campaign for the work to be introduced to the core curriculum. Fortunately we had huge support from the Professors who were strong advocates of the work. We ran our own random experiment that discovered a great enthusiasm for the work. For us, this project at college has been about developing a good relationship with management, administration and importantly other Professors as well as working on developing our teaching.

We now have a mandatory Alexander course for all first years and courses that can be chosen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> undergraduate years. There are MA courses and PHD research going on, short courses for Postgraduate singers and instrumentalists. We are working on new courses for very advanced students so they don't run out of opportunities. We also have a non-degree programme of individual lessons for students who need lessons.

The Alexander technique, being embedded in the BMus course, means the degree is aimed at more than achieving good playing results. It expands the degree's relevance to the whole self of the Musician. This means that the RCM has a course where you not only learn how to play music at an extremely high level but also learn how to look after yourself. We think that this model would be good to develop in more tertiary educational settings.

The later courses that are available all have a lot of practical work, playing to each other in class, observing habits and use, creating strategies for change with 'hands on' and directed thinking. The courses include taking part in discussions about the Principles and Philosophy of the Technique, body mapping and some basic vision work. The course assessments include essays, reading and research work and book reviews. We have found that this 'Academic work' of writing and research has been really useful for our students. We use technology to make films for the students; they are helpful for monitoring progress and looking at coordination. All the courses include a self-observational diary or report. It soon became clear to us that the students' thinking develops and their enthusiasm for the work grows during the writing of the diary. The diaries were also very useful feedback on what students needs are and what they students were not clear about in our teaching.

This embedding of the Alexander courses into the degree has created an Alexander culture at the RCM. It is normal to see students in semi-supine on the floor of a practice room or in orchestral breaks. The Alexander room has become a place where students work on finding quiet and develop being present and their constructive thinking.

The way we see things at present:

- 1) Alexander Technique is one of the most popular options in the degrees at the RCM. We beat Chamber music into 2<sup>nd</sup> place last year!
- 2) Because it is in the degree, the funding cannot be cut. It's free for students at RCM to have lessons.
- 3) By being part of the degrees, it has given the work a higher status, less thought of as work just for 'posture' and 'pain', more about developing essential elements of musical skill and creativity.

One of the requirements for the students, on our level 5 courses, is to visit an Alexander teacher-training course. This can be fun for everyone, the musicians seeing our Alexander world and our Alexander trainees seeing theirs.

The musicians often come back from these visits with a deeper sense of how it's ok to take the work more into their everyday lives and how that will impact on their playing. They hear different voices, have different hands-on and quite a few of our students have decided at this point that they will go on to train as Alexander teachers after their musical training. I am lucky to work at a Training course where we have a tremendous sense of teamwork that makes all this possible. We are lucky to be part of the wider Alexander world where we give each other space to change our attitudes to the work and develop our ways of teaching, and we learn from our students as well as each other.

Inspired by Penny O'Connor at Arts Educational Theatre School we have introduced a mentoring scheme at the RCM. This amounts to professional development for trainees and young teachers. It means the next



generation of teachers may not have to reinvent the wheel, when it comes to working with teaching groups of musicians and actors.

Recently John Hunter has formed the 'Performing Self Group', to tap into this expertise, encouraging the development of our Alexander skills to teach performing artists. There is an MA course starting in September at Rose Bruford in Alexander and the Performing Arts, hopefully this will be the start of many more such initiatives in higher education.

It is so positive to put Alexander work into educational settings. As Dewey remarked, "Education I not preparation for life, Education is life itself."

About 15 years ago the inspirational Sue Merry who helped found Educare a primary school where Alexander thinking is the ethos, gave the memorial lecture about Alexander in Education. Much has happened since then, and there seem to be some possibilities for taking our work into state schools. Currently over 15 Music schools and Music departments in high profile public schools have Alexander lessons. Many of the music courses run in the holidays also have an Alexander profile.

It is interesting for us to hear the feedback from the head of music at Uppingham School, Stephen Williams, where they have a thriving Alexander department,

"Adolescents are on a journey of building self-esteem, whilst also finding what they can offer the world as adults. Since we began seven years ago to integrate Alexander Technique as part of our Music programme, we have seen much positive change. In a boarding school we have much opportunity to give holistic support to pupils, whatever their talent is. Alexander is an important part of that self-discovery. Our musicians find a new balance and a sense of poise in their performing; they are helped to find their voice."

These models are helping us to see how Alexander can coexist in our current primary and secondary schools. The School Chairs project is another way we are finding to connect to the students needs at primary and secondary level.

We have started a STAT Special Interest Group for Education. We are hoping to create a community of Alexander teachers involved in Education, working on finding ways to collaborate with each other and with other skills, Mindfulness, Philosophy for Kids, Osteopaths and so on. Communities of wellbeing perhaps... There is still a lot to learn in collaboration with primary, secondary and particularly tertiary education.

Much of our work at Music College and in secondary education is about students being more comfortable with themselves in everyway as a person. / Here is a note, sent to me last week, from a piano student who, at the start of her one-year Masters course, was in too much pain to play for more than a few minutes and she was also paralysed by stage fright. At the end of her course she had to play her 'final recital'.

Alexandra's quote:

*I cannot tell you how much I have learned from Alexander lessons, and how much it has helped. Many times during yesterday's recital I was thinking of being present, noticing the space, breathing, finding my feet, sitting bones and everything else. It was really something to draw me back into the present and not let my mind fear and stress.*

*I think I've learned a lot and it gives me hope in what performance means for the future. One year ago I felt there was no possible way for me to perform, to play and be a musician any longer, the last months have given me a lot of hope that all those feelings were not the end.*

*My recital went well and they liked it. I'm choosing to think about it in completely positive terms because it felt good to do it and to have it done! I felt supported and appreciated and of course got very emotional at the end... you know me.*

*It's like a new way of being and accepting myself is starting to show in front of me.*

She ended up getting a First for her recital.

So to summarize what we have to offer, Alexander work can help students fulfil their potential, overcome challenges, find what they need to work on and learn how to learn. There can be a great deal of compassion and strength, in our work.

Alexander work for musicians is about life long playing and learning, helpful paths to self-acceptance of our habits and self-development of our skills that give us the tools to be adaptable, embodied, calm, confident and creative in this ever-changing World.

I will conclude with some thoughts from Elisabeth Walker, to pay tribute to her, to her warmth and kindness and her approach to our work. When Elisabeth spoke at the Oxford Congress, she was asked, "What is the most important aspect of teaching?" We waited while she quietly, patiently thought about this. Would it be the PC, Inhibition, Direction? She replied simply, "the most important thing is the relationship with the student."

I have found this a very helpful thought. Good teachers make us feel clever and more optimistic. By having a positive relationship with them and being heard by them we learn to have a more positive relationship with ourself and what we do, and maybe with each other?

I will end with words from Elisabeth's beautiful book, which is all about Alexander Teaching, an approach to family, travel, love and life with all its ups and downs. This was chosen by Julia and Lucia to end the Memorial concert for Elisabeth, and the words have stayed with me and I have found them a useful, clear way to think about being an Alexander teacher: Here she has just finishing looking at the birds out of the window,

"I have some pupils to teach, preparing to give some lessons in the Alexander technique, thinking of the needs and interests of each individual and how I can help them think and stop doing the things that are interfering with their balance and coordination.

Teaching has been a most extraordinarily rewarding experience. Communication by touch is probably the most basic form of communication. And what is one communicating? the answer very simply is Life. This sounds a rather grand claim but every teacher will bear me out. The pupil becomes more alive, whether he is stuck in a state of collapse or stuck in a condition of over tension.

But whether the student is aware of this or not, the teacher is, and this is what is most rewarding, because one knows with absolute certainty that what one is communicating is Good".

Thank you.