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## Forward and Up: An Exploration of Implementations of the Alexander Technique in Post-Secondary Music Institutions

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Music

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## ABSTRACT

Music performance is a psychophysical affair. A musician's mind and body are codependent facets of the human instrument, transforming artistic thought, expression, and unique interpretation into the sound of music. Like athletes, musicians need to be physically, mentally, and emotionally fit in order to meet the demands and challenges of training and performance. Consequently, the functioning and wellbeing of a musician's psychophysical faculties are vital to her growth and success, and any playing-related hindrances such as repetitive strain injury or performance anxiety can have damaging effects on the ability to play or sing or have a future in the profession. For over half a century, post-secondary music institutions have been utilizing the Alexander Technique to address young musicians' psychophysical coordination and playing-related challenges. This unique mind-body method teaches individuals how to move efficiently and carry out activities with freedom and ease by recognizing and inhibiting counterproductive habitual patterns. It has noted beneficial effects on posture and coordination, pain relief, and stress management, and its relevance to music performance studies is endorsed by prominent musical artists such as Yehudi Menuhin, Barbara Bonney and Sir Colin Davis and supported by the results of many studies. Despite this, how this unique method has been applied and practiced in the tertiary setting is rarely shared and discussed. The purpose of this study is to explore, describe, and compare how the Technique is implemented and instructed in selected successful post-secondary music institutions (Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Curtis Institute of Music, McGill University, the Royal College of Music, and the University of Toronto) and to document

how it impacts the development of their students. Framed as a multiple-case study, this inquiry recruited one Alexander instructor from each of the selected institutions. The data were collected and analyzed from course syllabi, course evaluations/program feedback, and instructor interviews. Although the sampling size is small, the findings demonstrate a variety of teaching settings and strategies, highlighting the strengths and challenges of each approach, and providing an informative reference for creating a new or improving an existing Alexander program for post-secondary musicians.

*Keywords:* Alexander Technique, music performance, music education, performing arts medicine, music curriculum, prevention of playing-related pain and injuries, multiple-case study, somatic education, musician's health.

## SUMMARY FOR LAY AUDIENCE

Like athletes, musicians need to be physically, mentally, and emotionally fit in order to meet the demands and challenges of training and performance. The functioning and wellbeing of a musician's mind, body, and emotions are vital to her development and success. Therefore, the training for music performance requires an education that addresses the wellness and functioning of both a student's mind and body in order to help develop his innate musical potential and prevent occupational hindrances such as repetitive strain injury and performance anxiety, conditions that can have damaging effects on music-playing skills and professional prospects.

For more than half a century, post-secondary music institutions have been using the Alexander Technique to provide this essential psychophysical education to students. This unique mind-body method teaches individuals how to move efficiently and carry out activities with freedom and ease by recognizing and inhibiting counterproductive habits. It has noted beneficial effects on posture and coordination, pain relief, and stress management, and its relevance to music performance studies is endorsed by prominent musical artists such as Yehudi Menuhin and Paul McCartney and supported by the results of many studies. Despite this, how the Technique has been utilized and practiced in the university and conservatory setting is rarely shared and discussed.

The purpose of this study is to explore, describe, and compare how the Alexander Technique is implemented and instructed in selected successful post-secondary music institutions (Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Curtis Institute of Music, McGill University, the Royal

College of Music, and the University of Toronto) and to document how it impacts the development of their students. Using the multiple-case study research method, this inquiry recruited one Alexander instructor from each of the selected institutions to participate in the study and collected data from course syllabi, course/program evaluations, and instructor interviews. Although the sampling size is small, the findings demonstrate a variety of teaching settings and strategies, highlighting the strengths and challenges of each approach, providing an informative reference for creating a new or improving an existing Alexander program in a post-secondary music institution.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Music performance is a psychophysical affair, and it requires exceptional physical and psychological coordination and stamina to achieve excellence (Parry, 2004; Wijsman & Ackermann, 2018). Like athletes, musicians need to be “physically, emotionally, and mentally fit” (Parry, 2004, p. 41) throughout their learning and performing career in order to meet the demands and challenges of music playing and performance (Árnason, Briem, & Árnason, 2018; Davis & Jahn, 1998; Rosenberg & Leborgne, 2014). Any playing-related hindrances, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, repetitive strain injury, muscle tension dysphonia, and performance anxiety can have damaging effects on the development and professional future of a musician. Therefore, the training and practice of music performance necessitates an education that addresses the functioning and wellbeing of a musician’s mind and body in addition to musical and technical instruction in order to help develop one’s innate talent without the interference of potential occupational disorders and conditions (Davies, 2019; Wijsman & Ackermann, 2018).

It is now widely understood that mind-body awareness is crucial to the training of musical disciplines, and many musicians seek techniques and methods that cultivate good posture and coordination as well as a healthy mental attitude to complement their music studies (Franklin, 2016; Neely, 2012). Music conservatories and schools have also become increasingly aware of the significance of psychophysical education and have begun to implement various

modalities to promote it on campus (Árnason, Briem, and Árnason, 2018; Chen, 2006; Mozeiko, 2011).

One of these prospering mainstream methods is the Alexander Technique (Neely, 2012; Valentine, 2004). It is an educational method that teaches individuals “to learn how to get rid of unwanted tension in the body” (Harer & Munden, 2009, xi) by recognizing and inhibiting “reactive personal habits and habitual limitations in the way they move and think” (xi). Its beneficial effects are confirmed by a growing number of studies on posture and coordination (Barlow, 1978; Cacciatore, Gurfinkel, Horak, Cordo, & Ames, 2011; Kutschke, 2010), pain relief (Fisher, 1988; MacPherson, Tilbrook, Richmond, Woodman, Ballard, Atkin, & Watt, 2015), respiratory function (Austin & Ausubel, 1992; Hudson, 2002), Parkinson’s disease (Stallibrass, 1997), stress management (Lorenz, 2002; Valentine, Fitzgerald, Gorton, Hudson, & Symonds, 1995), and learning disabilities (Maitland, Horner, & Burton, 1996). Recognizing its value and effectiveness on increasing self-awareness, improving coordination, preventing injuries, and cultivating positive mental attitude, various performing artists including musicians have begun to study this technique in order to complement and enhance their music performance endeavors (Brandfonbrener & Lederman, 2002; Franklin, 2016; Neely, 2012).

Prominent musical artists and teachers including violinist Yehudi Menuhin, conductors Colin Davis and Adrian Boult, Paul McCartney, Sting, soprano Barbara Bonney, soprano Emma Kirkby, voice pedagogue Cynthia Hoffman, and flautist James Galway have all practiced the Alexander Technique, and endorse its relevance to music training and practice (Harer & Munden, 2009; Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013; Valentine, 2004). The findings of many studies exploring the application of the Technique to various music disciplines, including voice (Duarte, 1981; Jones, 1972; Lewis, 1980; Lloyd, 1986; Hudson, 2002; Weiss, 2005), piano (Kaplan,



1994; Santiago, 2004; Yoo, 2015), strings (Chien, 2007; Kwon, 2012; Mozeiko, 2011; Richter, 1974), woodwinds (Fedele, 2003; Hohausen-Nizza, 2013; Holm, 1997), choral conducting (Franklin, 2016), and performance anxiety (Lorenz, 2002; Valentine et al., 1995) corroborated this claim, and consistently suggest that Alexander training should be integrated into the music curriculum so that students can learn to play music and perform with a healthy and vibrant mind and body (Kaplan, 1994; Neely, 2012; Mozeiko, 2011).

### **The Origin and Development of the Alexander Technique**

The Alexander Technique originated from “the need to find a practical solution to a real-life problem” (De Alcantara, 1997, p. 275), and it all began with a recurrent loss of voice (Alexander, 2001). Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955), the originator of the Alexander Technique, was an Australian Shakespearian actor. As his reputation grew as a promising reciter in the early 1890’s, Alexander began to experience frequent vocal fatigue and hoarseness, which often troubled him during performance. He consulted a medical doctor, who believed his vocal problem was caused by overuse and prescribed him with vocal rest and hydration to treat this condition. Although he was able to get some relief, the symptoms would always return the next time he performed, and he often lost his voice completely by the end of a recital. When medical intervention seemed to be ineffective in solving this issue, Alexander became convinced that his problem was not the voice itself, but rather the way he used his voice. Determined to rescue his career in the theatre, Alexander decided to conduct an empirical investigation in order to search for the ultimate solution to his predicament.

He began the process by observing his recitation in front of a mirror, and recognized that he tended to pull his head back, depress his larynx, and suck in air through his mouth, making a gasping sound right before speaking (Alexander, 2001, p. 26). As Alexander continued his

inquiry, he realized he could improve his laryngeal functioning by preventing his head from being pulled back and down. This realization led Alexander to discover that the way the head balances on top of the spine not only influenced his vocal functioning but his coordination as a whole.

As the investigation continued, Alexander began to recognize there were other tendencies throughout his body connected to his vocal malfunction, such as lifting his chest, shortening his stature, and contracting his feet and toes. He also realized it was how he responded to his preconceived idea of recitation that brought on these cultivated tendencies. In order to improve this condition, he reasoned he had to prevent these inclinations from interfering with his performance. After months of painstaking examination and experimentation, Alexander discovered that by making conscious choices to inhibit counterproductive tendencies while giving mental directions to achieve tensional balance, he was able to undo his adverse habits and allow his voice to function at its best. This procedure enabled him to not only restore his vocal functions but also improve his general coordination and wellbeing. After he recovered from his vocal impediment, Alexander returned to the theatre and enjoyed a great success on stage (Bloch, 2004).

In addition to acting, Alexander began to teach others how to improve their breathing and vocal production with his unique method, and wrote pamphlets and articles advocating what he had learned from his research. In 1904, Alexander moved from Sydney to London and within just a few years, the reputation of his method grew and he became known as “the protector of London theatre” (Gelb, 1994, p. 17). Many of the most respected performing artists of the day, including Lily Brayton, Oscar Asche, Viola and Beerbohm Tree, and Sir Henry Irving studied with Alexander to improve their vocal functioning and bodily use for stage performance.

Prominent doctors referred their patients with breathing and vocal difficulties to him and he was able to help them recover with excellent results. Their positive feedback solidified Alexander's authority in both the medical and performing arts community in England during the early 1900's (1994).

As time progressed, Alexander refined and expanded his theories. In 1910, he published his first book *Man's Supreme Inheritance*. The publication was well received and his reputation and influence continued to grow. Alexander published three more collections of writings over the course of his teaching career to document and discuss the concepts and development of his method, including his most recognized volume *The Use of the Self*, published in 1932. His unique method intrigued many intellects of the time including Nobel Prize winner Sir Charles Sherrington, playwright George Bernard Shaw, novelist Aldous Huxley, medical doctor Wilfred Barlow, and American philosopher John Dewey, all of whom became devoted pupils of Alexander (De Alcantara, 1997; Gelb, 1994; Weiss, 2005).

Urged by many of his students who desired to learn how to teach his method, Alexander founded the first teacher-training course in 1930 in London (Bloch, 2004). Since then, training courses have been established worldwide, and affiliated societies and congress of certified teachers have been formed to support and ensure the quality of teaching standard, which requires no less than 1600 hours of hands-on training to receive certification (Chen, 2006; Harer & Munden, 2009).

It has been more than one hundred years since F. M. Alexander developed his discoveries into a technique, and its guiding principles and procedures continue to promote the psychophysical wellbeing of musicians, actors, athletes and more.

### **Personal Alexander Technique Experience**

Like many other people who study the Alexander Technique, I began to take Alexander lessons because I could not find effective relief for my constant lower back pain and jaw stiffening (Temporomandibular Joint Disorder, or TMJ) with conventional treatments, such as massage, chiropractic manipulation, and drug therapy. I was an active performing soprano, and these issues affected my daily activities and performing abilities, including hoarseness and vocal fatigue. While researching alternative treatment options, I came across an online article that described how the Alexander Technique helped singers recover from vocal and body issues similar to mine. With curiosity and desperation, I called a local practitioner and booked a lesson to try it out.

The first lesson was somewhat puzzling. The teacher gently moved my head, neck, and torso around while telling me to keep thinking that “my head can go forward and up and my back can lengthen and widen.” I had no idea what she was talking about or trying to achieve. I sat down and stood up many times, and could not tell the difference between each attempt. She then put me on a table to lie down for the last fifteen minutes of the lesson. There, she again adjusted my head, neck, torso and limbs and asked me not to interfere with her doing. Without a clue of what was happening, I slowly became calmer and more centered simply by collaborating with her request. After the lesson, as I walked to the parking lot, my body felt lighter, and I was in a pleasant mood.

I was rather baffled by this unique experience. The teacher did not massage me or manipulate my body like a massage therapist or chiropractor, yet I felt more centered and had less pain. I was fascinated how simple verbal and hands-on guidance could make me feel this

way. Curious about this transformation and with nothing to lose, I decided to take more lessons to find out if this could help me with my physical troubles.

After three months of weekly lessons, my back pain and the excess tension in my neck and jaw area lessened. I recovered to a level that I could do gardening again and, more importantly, I could sing with greater comfort, ease, and freedom. Encouraged by this very promising result, I carried on with weekly lessons and continued to improve my coordination and singing.

One of the most important and useful things I learned from the Technique was the ability to make appropriate decisions for action based on logical reasoning rather than habitual preference. Alexander principles provided me a tool to examine my various tendencies and a reliable reference to determine which actions are appropriate for the intended activity and which are not. A simple example to demonstrate this is the way I sit. I could choose to slouch, a universal habit that directly contributes to lower back pain; or I could stiffen my body to hold a position that simulates what most people recognize as a good posture, which generates unnecessary body tension; or I could organize and direct my whole body to come to a tensional balance while sitting on the sitting bone without tensing the torso and limbs. In addition to physical undertakings, Alexander's principles can be applied to everyday as well as musical and artistic decisions to encourage clear thinking, creativity, expressiveness, and efficiency.

The learning process was challenging and frustrating at times, as I often had to undo what I had developed over a lifetime. This undoing was in many ways more difficult than learning something new. However, the result was consistently rewarding and exciting, and I am forever grateful that I was given a second chance as a performing musician by studying the Technique.

My Alexander learning experience also gave me a new perspective on voice teaching, which inspired me to take on Alexander teacher-training in order to pay it forward to others by helping them recover from their struggles as I did. I began training in 2007 at the Toronto School of the Alexander Technique, and after three years of full-time study, including 1600 hours of hands-on training, I became a certified Alexander Technique instructor in 2010. Since then, I have been teaching the Technique privately and in secondary, post-secondary institutions, as well as giving lectures and workshops on the subject.

### **Research Rationale**

The effects and benefits of the Alexander Technique as well as its relevance to music learning, performance, and pedagogy are well supported by many studies (Barlow, 1978; Chen, 2006; Chien, 2007; Dennis, 1987; Franklin, 2016; Holm, 1997; Kaplan, 1994; Lewis, 1980; Lloyd, 1986; Mozeiko, 2011; Richter, 1974; Valentine & Williamon, 2003; Valentine et al., 1995; Weiss, 2005). Further evidence of the usefulness and pertinence of the Technique is demonstrated by the many prominent international post-secondary music institutions and university programs such as the Royal College of Music, The Juilliard School, Curtis Institute of Music, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne, and the Schulich School of Music of McGill University that offer Alexander learning opportunities to their students. However, how the Technique is implemented and instructed to complement post-secondary music training is something that is rarely shared, discussed, or examined. Is it included in music curriculum or implemented as an extracurricular activity? What teaching strategies and settings are employed? How do institutions value the relevance of Alexander studies, and how do music students respond to it as part of their post-secondary music training? The answers to these questions could have a significant influence on the efficacy and efficiency

of Alexander instruction as well as its future development as a strong component of the much needed psychophysical education and injury prevention in current post-secondary music training. Therefore, the researcher reasoned it was imperative to explore this uncharted area in order to begin the process of bridging this gap in the literature.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research was to explore, describe, and compare how Alexander Technique is implemented and instructed in a selection of successful post-secondary music institutions/university programs, including the Royal College of Music (UK), Curtis Institute of Music (USA), Boston Conservatory at Berklee (USA), the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto (Canada), and the Schulich School of Music of McGill University (Canada). Through document collection and interviews, variations of implementations and instructional approaches were uncovered. The findings of this inquiry have the potential to provide both Alexander instructors and music educators a valuable resource to better understand and promote musicians' psychophysical health in order to help them effectively prevent injuries and enhance their musical developments. Furthermore, by exhibiting a diversity of teaching settings and strategies from a variety of institutions, and highlighting the strengths and challenges of each approach, this document hopes to provide an informative reference for creating a new or improving an existing Alexander program for post-secondary musicians.

### **Plan of Research**

#### **Research Questions**

This investigation was guided by the following questions:

1. How is the Alexander Technique implemented and instructed in each of the selected successful post-secondary music institutions?

2. What are the variations of implementations and instructional approaches among the selected Alexander programs, and how are they similar to and different from each other?
3. How do the participating instructors describe the influence of Alexander studies on the development of the music students in the selected institutions?

### **Research Procedures**

This inquiry was framed as a multiple-case study. One Alexander Technique instructor was recruited from each of the five selected music institutions to participate in accordance with Western University's Human Research Ethics guidelines. Participants were asked to supply their course outlines and/or any relevant supporting documents as well as to participate in an in-depth interview. All interviews were conducted in person except the one with the instructor from Boston Conservatory at Berklee, which was conducted via an online conferencing service (ZOOM). Each interview lasted approximately two and a half hours. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Additional questions were then sent to the participants, and their responses were received in written documents. After the data from both sources were collected, they were merged, analyzed, and compared in order to reveal the characteristics of each implementation and the tendencies and differences between them. Member checking was applied to interview transcripts as well as to program and instructor profiles.

### **Limitations of the Research**

The scope of this research is limited to documents of course syllabi, assignment guidelines, excerpts from course/program evaluations and students' observational diaries, as well as participating instructors' interviews. The cases were selected from English-speaking music institutions in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom that have an international



reputation. All participating instructors are certified to teach the Technique, and were currently teaching at the selected institutions at the time of their interviews.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms, developed by F. M. Alexander (2001), are commonly applied in the Alexander Technique to describe the concepts of his method. A brief description is provided below in order to facilitate readers' understanding of Alexander Technique literature. Detailed definitions are discussed in the Review of Literature.

#### ***The Use of the Self***

*Self* refers to the whole person, the unity of body, mind, and emotions. *Use* denotes the pattern a person uses to operate the *self*. The *use* of the *self* describes how a person habitually applies his whole *self* in movement and activities.

#### ***Doing and Non-Doing***

In the Alexander Technique, *doing* refers to a habitual, unreasoned way to perform activities, for which the outcomes tend to be inefficient and ineffective. *Non-doing*, on the other hand, is an indirect control of action. It does not imply to do nothing, but rather to not follow through with counterproductive habits in order to not disturb the coordination of reflexes.

#### ***End-Gaining***

*End-gaining* describes a situation where one's attention is focused on the end result during the process of attaining a goal rather than the process itself, through which the goal can be successfully achieved.

***Faulty Sensory Appreciation or Awareness***

*Faulty sensory appreciation or awareness* describes a distorted sensory system that is caused by the misuse of the *self*, which generates an unreliable ‘feeling’ of physical movement that is different to the actual action.

***Inhibition***

In order to carry out bodily movement through proper functioning and coordination, a conscious decision must first be made to resist the desire of performing activities in a habitually counterproductive way before the intended action takes place. F. M. Alexander addressed this process as *inhibition*.

***Primary Control***

The *primary control* addresses the dynamic relationship between the head, neck, and torso, in which how the head balances on top of the spine has a primary influence on the quality of bodily movements.

***Direction***

*Direction* refers to a conscious, mindful mental order that one projects to organize the *self* in order to accomplish intended activities with appropriate coordination.

***Means-Whereby***

*Means-whereby* sums up the teaching of the Alexander Technique. It refers to the best way that applies to accomplish the intended objective.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review outlines pertinent information regarding the instruction of Alexander Technique as well as its benefits and relevance to music performance studies. The review is presented in four sections, beginning with an elucidation of the teaching of the Alexander Technique. This includes an explanation of the theoretical framework, instructional procedures, and a description of the lesson process. The scope and significance of musicians' challenges is discussed next, followed by a presentation of various studies that previously examined the effects of the Technique. Finally, a brief introduction to the development of Alexander Technique in post-secondary music institutions is described.

#### **Alexander Technique Instruction**

The instruction of the Alexander Technique is based upon a theoretical framework of operational concepts and principles derived from F. M. Alexander's research findings and his over sixty years of teaching experience. Although there are various styles and formats of teaching the Technique, Alexander instruction is traditionally and generally taught in a one-on-one, applied-studio format with both hands-on and verbal guidance to lead a student through a set of procedures (De Alcantara, 1997; Harer & Munden, 2009; Valentine, 2004).

## **Principles and Concepts**

Alexander (2002) explained that there are four stages in the performance of any conscious muscular action.

- “1) The conception of the movement required;
- 2) the inhibition of erroneous preconceived ideas which subconsciously suggest the manner in which the movement or series of movements should be performed;
- 3) the new and conscious mental orders which will set in motion the muscular mechanism essential to the correct performances of the action;
- 4) the movements (contractions and expansions) of the muscles which carry out the mental orders.” (p. 124)

Based on the order of these steps and the findings of F. M. Alexander’s inquiry, Patrick Macdonald (2006), an early member of the first teacher-training course and later Alexander’s teaching assistant, organized Alexander’s teaching into the following five principles:

“recognition of the force of habit, inhibitions and non-doing, recognition of faulty sensory awareness, sending directions, and the primary control” (p. 86).

### **Recognition of the force of habit.**

The success of Alexander’s research began when he recognized his three counterproductive habits in recitation, which provided him clues to find out how to improve and further his investigation. He learned that in order to correct a postural deficit, the habitual patterns involved with the issue must first be identified so that the appropriate corrective measures can be taken (Alexander 2001). Therefore, the conscious awareness of actions is essential to the process of changing for the better (MacDonald, 2006; Weiss, 2005). Alexander used mirrors to observe his actions. Current instructors of the Technique frequently use mirrors

to aid their observations, but as technology has advanced, video recording devices have also become a primary tool. Some teachers are now recommending that their students film their activities in order to increase the accuracy of their examination (Kleinman, 2018).

### **Inhibition and non-doing.**

Alexander (2001) discovered he had certain habitual physical responses that were consistently connected to his way of reciting, which were interfering with the appropriate functioning of his vocal mechanism. In order to maintain the proper usage of his voice, Alexander's experiments demonstrated that he must consciously prevent these automatic interferences from happening before following through with the act of speaking. This process of preventing faulty *use* is what Alexander called *Inhibition*, the "central point" (De Alcantara, 1997, p. 47) or "essence" (Barlow in Carey, 2011, p. 33) of the Alexander Technique.

Opposite to *doing* or forcing a movement, *non-doing* is an indirect rather than direct control of action (Weiss, 2005). It does not imply that one does nothing, but rather one does not do "anything that is not right and desirable" (De Alcantara, 1997, p. 51). De Alcantara (1997) explained that "under ideal conditions – when inhibition precedes and accompanies every action – activity becomes free from excessive tension, thereby appearing effortless to the doer and to the observer" (p. 51).

### **Recognition of faulty sensory awareness.**

In his *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*, Alexander (2004) asserts:

Almost all civilized human creatures have developed a condition in which the sensory appreciation (feeling) is more or less imperfect and deceptive, and it naturally follows that it cannot be relied upon in re-education, readjustment, and co-ordination, or in our attempts to put right something we know to be wrong with our psycho-physical selves. (p. 98)

One of the difficulties Alexander (2001) encountered during his investigation was that he did not anticipate the influence of the sensory system on his actions. After recognizing that he kept doing the opposite of what he set out to do, he finally questioned the trustworthiness of his sensory mechanisms. Human organisms perceive all aspects of muscular activities through proprioception, “the awareness of movement derived from muscular, tendon and articular sources” (Neely, 2012, p. 24). This allows one to perceive spatial orientation, postural alignment, bodily movement, tension, and balance (De Alcantara, 1997; Neely, 2012). Recurrent misuse, however, creates a distorting effect on the sensory system, which consequently causes sensory feedback to become unreliable for good functioning (Alexander, 2001). The unreliability of this kinesthetic sense caused by habitual misuse is described as *faulty sensory awareness or appreciation* in the Alexander Technique.

From a teacher’s perspective, Alexander (2004) said:

The connection between psycho-physical defects and incorrect sensory guidance must therefore be recognized by the teacher in the practical work of re-education. This recognition will make it possible for him to expect a pupil to be able to perform satisfactorily any new psycho-physical act *until the new corrected experiences in sensory appreciation involved have become established* [italic original]. (p. 98)

To a learner, habitual tendencies tend to feel ‘right,’ and any corrected *use* often feels ‘wrong’ because it involves a new psychophysical experience. Thus, it is very common to experience ‘feeling wrong’ during Alexander lessons when the new and improved *use* is introduced. One must accept this change in physical sensation in order to overcome counterproductive habits and transform (Alexander, 2001).

### **Sending directions and the primary control.**

In the process of experimenting with how to eliminate the three tendencies that were associated with his vocal deficiency – pulling back his head, depressing his larynx, and sucking

in air through his mouth before speaking – Alexander (2001) noticed that when he prevented his head from pulling back, he was able to stop the sucking in of breath and the depression of the larynx. He later reflected upon this discovery:

The importance of this discovery cannot be overestimated for through it I was led on to the further discovery of the primary control of the working of all mechanisms of the human organism, and this marked the first important stage of my investigation. (p. 28)

Further examinations led him to discover that a delicate and dynamic balance exists between the head and spine, in which how the head behaves has a primary influence on the functioning and coordination of the torso and limbs.

The insightfulness of this discovery was later corroborated by the results of biologists Rudolf Magnus (1873-1927) and George Coghill's (1872-1941) research on animals' behavior (Dimon, 1987; Gelb, 1994). Coghill studied the development and physiology of *Ambystoma* (salamander), and found that the movement of vertebrates is controlled and integrated by the organization of their head, neck, and torso, in which the head directs the moving pattern of the limbs (Gelb, 1994). The findings of Magnus's (1925) research in physiology of posture also led to a similar conclusion, that the balance of an animal's head is a 'central control,' which plays an organizing role in movement and reaction. To put it simply, "the head leads and the body follows" (Westfeldt, 1964, p. 130). Alexander later modified Magnus' term 'central control,' used to describe the dynamic relationship between the head, neck, and torso, and named it the *primary control* (Dimon, 1987).

*Direction* is a conscious mental order that one projects to gain "the proper functioning of the primary control" (Gelb, 1994, p. 164). It indicates "the process involved in projecting messages from the brain to the mechanisms, and in conducting the energy necessary to the use of these mechanisms" (Alexander, 2001, p. 35). Alexander realized his habitual tendencies were a

form of misdirection of his *use*. In order to attain good *use*, he reckoned that he must send reasoned messages from the brain to direct himself how to organize the *use* of his mechanisms. This mental message can be described in words 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, p. 68). It aims to release “unnecessary tension in the neck” (p. 164), so that the head can move forward and upward in relation to the spine, following its natural direction (Alexander, 2004). With the obtainment of a free neck and forward-and-up direction of the head, “the three-dimensional expansion of the torso” (Gelb, 1994, p. 165) will naturally occur. In combination with the inhibition of habitual patterns, these three elements of the direction are to be projected “sequentially and simultaneously” (p. 68), or “all together, one after another” (Alexander, 2001, p. 42), as Alexander described it, in order to attain optimal physical functioning.

**Psychophysical unity and *use* affects functioning.**

One of the fundamental concepts of the Alexander Technique is that “mind and body are one functioning unit” (Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013, p. 291). Alexander (2001) emphasized that “the so-called ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ are not separate entities” (p. 22) because the results of his investigation and his teaching experience convinced him that mind and body cannot function optimally without one another in any conscious activities. For this reason, he argued that “human ills and shortcomings cannot be classified as ‘mental’ or ‘physical’ and dealt with specifically as such, but that all training, whether it be educative or otherwise, ie, whether its object be the prevention or elimination of defect, error or disease, must be based upon the indivisible unity of the human organism” (p. 22-23).

How one chooses to apply the unity of one’s psychophysical mechanisms is what Alexander called the *use*. He clarified that “when I employ the word ‘use’, it is not in that



limited sense of the use of any specific part, as, for instance, when we speak of the use of an arm or the use of a leg, but in a much wider and more comprehensive sense applying to the working of the organism in general” (Alexander, 2001, p. 22). He further explained that “the use of any specific part such as the arm or leg involves of necessity bringing into action the different psycho-physical mechanisms of the organism, this concerted activity bringing about the use of the specific part” (p. 22).

Alexander’s experiments demonstrated that there was a close connection between his *use* and functioning, in which the way he applied his whole *self*, the unity of psychophysical mechanisms, in the act of recitation had a direct impact on the functioning of his voice. When he prevented himself from performing his habitual misuse of the head, neck, and back, the quality of his voice improved, and when he went back to his habitual way to recite, his voice became hoarse. In his *The Use of the Self*, Alexander (2001) recalled:

In this way it was borne in upon me that the changes in *use* that I had been able to bring about by preventing the three harmful tendencies that I had detected in myself had produced a marked effect upon the *functioning* of my vocal and respiratory mechanisms.

*This conclusion, I now see, marked the second important stage of my investigations, for my practical experience in this specific instance brought me to realize for the first time the close connexion that exists between use and functioning [Italic original]. (p. 28)*

From this, Alexander (2002) realized that he had the power to choose how to use himself and have the control over the actions required in all his conscious activities. This power to choose, established upon “individual responsibility and integrity” (Gelb, 1994, p. 26) is a central concept of the Alexander Technique (Barlow, 1990; Chance, 2013; Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013).

### **End-gaining and means-whereby.**

The logical conclusion that Alexander deduced from his investigation was simple: in order to successfully speak a sentence with freedom and ease, one must pay attention to the process that brings out the best results rather than the act of speaking itself (Gelb, 1994). Nonetheless, his observations of himself and his students made him realize that the behavior of “grasping for results without thoughtful attention to process” (p. 164) is indeed a universal habit, which always results in the *misuse* of the *self* that causes strain to the human organism (Alexander, 2004). This unreasoned approach to gain an end is what Alexander called *end-gaining*.

In order to prevent this universal habitual *misuse* and allow the psychophysical *self* to function at its best, Alexander (2001) proposed *means-whereby*, “the reasoned means to the gaining of an end” (p. 41). He explained:

These means included the inhibition of the habitual use of the mechanisms of the organism, and the conscious projection of new directions necessary to the performance of the different acts involved in a new and more satisfactory use of these mechanisms. (p. 41)

In other words, the application of the *means-whereby* approach involves an “awareness of the conditions present, a reasoned consideration of their causes, inhibition of habitual or end-gaining responses to these conditions, and a consciously guided performance of the new series of steps required to gain the end” (Jones, 1976, p. 195). This sums up the teaching of the Alexander Technique.

### **The Hands-On Approach**

The hands-on approach is a unique and defining characteristic of the Alexander Technique (Chance, 2013; De Alcantara, 1997). Alexander initially taught his method with verbal instruction exclusively, however after “finding that words were insufficient to convey his

experiences” (Gelb, 1994, p. 15), he developed “a subtle process of manual guidance” (p. 15) to demonstrate his concepts in addition to oral directions. Its purpose is “not to heal or soothe, much less to make the pupil feel good, but to teach him to inhibit and direct” (De Alcantara, 1997, p. 85) by monitoring his subtle movements as well as intentions, preventing habitual wrongdoings, and helping release excess muscle tension.

### **The Procedures**

The objective of employing procedures in the learning process is for one “to meet a stimulus that puts you in the wrong and to learn to deal with it” (De Alcantara, 1997, p. 152). In other words, the procedures provide pupils the opportunities to discover and learn how to reason with their own habitual responses within a context, and they can later apply this learning experience to other activities. “The merit of the procedures,” states De Alcantara (1997, p. 88) in his *Indirect Procedures: A Musician’s Guide to the Alexander Technique*, “depends not on the pupil’s assuming a particular bodily position, but on his learning to direct on a general basis.”

The classical procedures used in Alexander lessons were developed by Alexander himself, which include *chair work*, *table work*, *the monkey*, *walking*, *lunge*, *hands on the back of a chair*, and the *whispered ‘ah’* (Weiss, 2005). They are ordinary, daily activities that do not require refined or complicated coordination to accomplish. Through these simple movements and positions, the pupils learn how to inhibit and direct in order to coordinate their *use*. The following is a description of these procedures.

#### **Chair Work.**

*Chair work* refers to getting in and out of a chair or standing up and sitting down. These are two of the most frequently performed movements and positions in daily life. Alexander himself preferred to begin with this mundane procedure because it allows the student to learn

how to inhibit in the easiest way when any stimulus to activity occurs (De Alcantara, 1997). In addition, moving from one position to the other “is an ideal way to access the fundamental coordination of the support muscles in the neck and back with the dual function of the legs for both support and movement” (Nicholls in Mozeiko, 2011, p. 264). This teaches the pupil how to sit and stand in a dynamic and erect posture without slouching and slumping. Although this procedure is simple, its application is most practical, particularly for professionals who are required to sit and stand for long periods everyday, such as orchestral musicians, choral singers, office workers, and schoolteachers.

### **The Monkey.**

The *monkey* is what Alexander called ‘the position of mechanical advantage’ (Macdonald, 2006). The procedure received this nickname due to the visual appearance of dangling arms and the bent knees during the working process. The movements involved in this procedure require the pupil to lower their height from a standing position by bending the knees forward then tilting the head and torso forward from the hip joints. It is an effective way to coordinate the functioning of the torso and legs (2006), and also allows the instructor to examine the challenges of “tension, relaxation, balance, posture, position, movement, control, inhibition, and direction” (De Alcantara, 1997, p.100). In addition to cultivating good general coordination, the *monkey* is a practical procedure to learn how to execute movements involving lowering the body, such as sitting down, washing one’s face at a basin, carrying and moving heavy objects, or picking up an object off the ground.

### **The Lunge.**

A variation of the *monkey*, the *lunge* covers a wider range of motions. The sequence of movements for this procedure begins with the standing position. Lift up either the right or left

foot, and put the heel in the instep of the other foot in a 45-degree angle. Then turn the head and torso to the same direction that the front foot is pointing. Next, lift up the front leg and allow the stature to lean forward before releasing the foot down to take a step. As the front foot lands on the floor, the head and torso should tilt slightly forward from the hip joints and the front knee should remain unlocked and gently bent.

The *lunge* is an excellent pedagogical tool to help pupils coordinate various movements. By practicing *inhibition* and *direction* through each step of the sequence, it provides them the opportunity to recognize that “these intermediate steps are important as ends in themselves” (Jones, 1976, p. 195), which is the essence of the principle *means-whereby*. This procedure can be applied to various sports and daily activities, from walking, running, fencing, and aikido, to vacuuming and mopping the floor. The close-footed *lunge* provides an excellent posture for solo musicians who perform standing up, including singers, conductors, and various woodwind and string players (De Alcantara, 1997).

### **Hands on the back of a chair.**

The purpose of this procedure is to learn how to appropriately use the upper limbs in relation to the whole body. It can be performed while either sitting on a chair or standing or in a *monkey* position. A chair is placed in front of the pupil with the back of the chair facing her, in a distance that is approximately two-third of the arm length. Before the procedure is commenced, the teacher uses hands-on and verbal guidance to help the pupil activate the *primary control*. If the procedure is practiced in a sitting position, it is necessary to make sure the pupil “sits towards the edge of the chair, on the sitting bones rather than on [the] thighs” (De Alcantara, 1997, p.122). This way of sitting enables the body to become more mobile and free to move. Once the pupil’s psychophysical coordination is active and ready, the teacher proceeds to work on

releasing unnecessary tension or muscle contractions in the shoulder area while maintaining the head, neck, and back coordination (Alexander, 2004).

The next step is to seek freedom in the arms and hands. The teacher guides the pupil to move his arms with fluidity by gently stretching them and rotating the elbows and wrists. The pupil is responsible for taking care of the *primary control* throughout the entire process. Following this step, the teacher takes the pupil's arms by the hands, one at a time, and places them on the back of the chair with the palms facing down and fingers and thumbs gently pinching the chair. The elbows are abducted (moving away from the center of the body) and the wrists are pronated (bending downward). If the *use* is not coordinated, any inappropriate muscle tension will become apparent in this state, presenting a valuable learning opportunity for the pupil to recognize his counterproductive habitual movements of the arms and hands. After renewing the directions to once again organize the *primary control*, the teacher guides the pupil with her hands to take the arms off.

In addition to improving the *use* of the upper limbs and shoulders, *hands on the back of a chair* also has a great effect on the functioning of the breathing apparatus (Alexander, 2004). When the shoulders and arms become active and free, it releases the unnecessary muscle tension in the torso, which indirectly increases the mobility of the rib cage and the abdominal muscles (Dimon, 2011; Hudson, 2002; Weiss, 2005). In essence, this procedure teaches “the ability to give *multiple directions simultaneously, and in their right order of importance* [italic original]” (De Alcantara, 1997, p. 125), which is an essential skill to improve the quality of all activities. Learning this procedure is particularly beneficial to musicians, whose careers are based on the quality of their coordination, particularly of the arms and hands.

### **The whispered ‘ah’.**

The *whispered ‘ah’* was developed to facilitate the prevention of counterproductive habitual responses to the desire of vocalizing and provides the directions necessary for achieving good coordination of the breathing and vocal mechanisms in relation to the *use* of the whole (Alexander, 2004). This procedure can be practiced anywhere, at any time, and in combination with other procedures. However, it is easier for a beginner to work on this procedure while lying down in a semi-supine position because the misuse that might be brought about by gravity, such as slouching, is not an issue in this state.

The process of this procedure begins with a gentle smile or grimace. The facial expression is pleasant and easy. While giving the mental directions for the *primary control*, the pupil is asked to gently release the jaw forward and allow it to rotate downward to open the mouth. At the same time, the tongue should rest on the floor of the mouth with the round tip touching the back of the bottom teeth. The teacher often puts a hand underneath the pupil’s mandible and above the hyoid bone to monitor the *primary control* as well as the muscle tension in the root of the tongue. During this process, the pupil is also reminded to keep breathing by allowing the rib cage to gently expand and fall without restricting the nasal passage. Upon readiness, the pupil releases the air on the exhalation to produce a nearly silent ‘*ah*’ sound with a mild whispering quality. It is important for the pupil to remember not to push the air out in order to avoid tightening in the neck and chest, which would result in the shortening of stature. When the air is expelled, the pupil gently closes the mouth by allowing the jaw to finish its rotation at the temporomandibular joint in order to complete the procedure.

Many musical disciplines require effective breath control to achieve excellence, including singing and playing wind and brass instruments, and the *whispered ‘ah’* provides a clear

direction of how to generate breath energy according to the laws of nature (Dimon, 1996; Weiss, 2005). This procedure is particularly useful for vocalists to identify and prevent their habitual tendencies that hinder the quality of their vocalization. In addition to these benefits, the *whispered 'ah'* also has a positive effect on improving performance anxiety. It can help musicians regulate their breathing and stabilize their heart rate, which indirectly calms down the nervous system and relieves anxiety symptoms (Chen, 2006; De Alcantara, 1997; Hudson, 2002; Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013).

### **Table work.**

This procedure, also known as *constructive rest* or *semi-supine position*, is “a distinguishing feature of the Alexander Technique” (De Alcantara, 1997, p. 152), and most instructors include it in their lessons. The purpose of the *table work* is to take the body out of the normal upright state, “where the stresses of life tend to develop” (Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013, p. 130) so that pupils can learn how to ‘direct’ themselves in order to stimulate the lengthening and widening of the stature without dealing with the habitual responses that can be brought out by gravity, such as slouching and tightening of the musculature (De Alcantara, 1997).

To receive instruction of this procedure, the pupil first lies on a firmly padded table in a semi-supine position. The pupil faces up with the knees bent, and the feet are laid flat on the table apart from each other to about the shoulder’s width, neither too far or too close to the pelvis. The arms are placed in a pronated position (palms facing down) with the elbows bent and away from the rib cage, and the hands are placed on the abdomen. Once the pupil is in this position, the instructor adjusts the pupil’s pelvic girdle to make sure the lumbar spine is not overarching, and places a book or books below the pupil’s head. The height of the book or books is determined based upon assessment of the proper alignment of the head, spine, and hip



joints. The head should not tilt back, which puts pressure on the back of the neck and over-stretches the throat; it also should not tilt forward and down to restrict the throat (Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013; Weiss, 2005).

By gently manipulating various parts of the pupil's body, the teacher aims to teach "how to release and direct each part on its own and in relation to the rest" (De Alcantara, 1997, p. 152). Beginning with the *primary control* direction, the teacher puts hands on the pupil's head and neck to activate the dynamic relationship between the head and spine. The next step is to work on the shoulders and arms. By opening up the shoulder and chest area with gentle hands-on manipulations, the teacher helps the pupil increase the width and length of the torso and improve the flexibility of the arms while the pupil actively directs the *primary control*. Some secondary directions are applied in addition to the *primary control* to help coordinate the *use* of the specific mechanism within the whole. The same process applies to the manipulation of the legs and feet. The pupil needs to be reminded that her responsibility is to learn how to direct herself through various movements in this procedure rather than how to 'do' these movements.

Pupils can practice the *semi-supine position* on their own after the initial instruction. It is easy to work on, and positively affects their wellbeing. Practicing five to ten minutes of *semi-supine* work can help one to disengage from the stress of life, relieve tiredness, and become centered, refreshed, and ready to resume work or activities with improved energy. It is particularly beneficial to musicians who often have a hectic practice, performance, and audition schedule. It not only enables them to reenergize quickly and improve the quality of their performance, but also provides them a strategy to prevent and heal injuries (De Alcantara, 1997; Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013).

## The Lesson

The traditional teaching approach of the Alexander Technique begins with the teacher gently placing his or her hands on the student's head and neck or torso to activate and organize the *primary control*, accompanied by 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, p. 68). The teacher repeats these directions throughout the entire lesson in addition to hands-on guidance, and the student is encouraged to actively project these thoughts in his mind, "in such a way as to combine their meaning and connotations with the kinesthetic feeling and structural sense" (Kaplan, 1995, p. 18) in order to help the student gain *conscious control* or "the ability to control the use of the body and movement" (Harer & Munden, 2009, xxvii).

*Chair work*, the *monkey*, and *semi-supine* procedures often form the basic instruction for beginners. As the students become more experienced, advanced procedures such as *hands on the back of a chair*, *whispered 'ah'* and the *lunge* are introduced to help them coordinate activities that require complex movements. Some teachers may also include instructions to address students' professional disciplines, such as dance, music performance, and various sports. There are also teachers who do not focus on the traditional procedures at all, but teach how to apply Alexander's concepts and principles to whatever activities students wish to improve (Chance, 2013; De Alcantara, 1997; Franklin, 2016). Currently, there is not a standard set for instruction, and therefore, variations of teaching approaches are expected.

According to Harer & Munden's (2009) survey that sampled many publications writing about the Alexander Technique, especially journals and articles as well as websites, most Alexander instructors' experiences indicate that it is most effective to take lessons one to two times per week, with the length of a lesson ranging from thirty to forty-five minutes. Sessions

longer than one hour tend to be unproductive. It is difficult to estimate how many lessons are required in order to achieve ideal results, as each person is unique and has distinctive habitual challenges and learning abilities (Harer & Munden, 2009; Kaplan, 1995). Habits are generally not easy to unlearn. Therefore, a small number of lessons tend to be ineffective. In order to make a fundamental change to one's behavioral patterns, Alexander himself asked his pupils to commit to forty lessons, and most contemporary teachers recommend between thirty to forty weekly or bi-weekly sessions (Harer & Munden, 2009).

### **Variations of Teaching Approach**

There are generally two teaching approaches applied in the Alexander Technique: the 'traditional' approach and the 'application' approach (Franklin, 2016). The instruction delivered with the traditional approach tends to follow the procedural framework described in the previous sections on a one-on-one teacher/student basis. Teachers of this approach usually do not focus their instruction on specialized activities, such as playing an instrument, singing, or sports until students' general *use* demonstrates a noticeable improvement. Some teachers do not even consider other applications. Teachers of the application approach, on the other hand, tend to deliver the instruction in a group setting in addition to one-on-one lessons, use modified terminologies, and minimize or even disregard the usage of traditional procedures and hands-on guidance (Chance, 2013; Franklin, 2016). Instead of emphasizing *inhibition* and *directions* through typical procedures, they pay more attention to how students coordinate themselves in whatever activities they wished to partake in, in order to help them gain more freedom and ease in their profession or interest. In a group setting, verbal communication and observation become the primary strategies, and hands-on instruction is consequently diminished or abandoned due to the student/teacher ratio (Chance, 2013).

There are various opinions and arguments within the Alexander community in the matter of ‘traditional’ approach versus ‘application’ approach and group work. Practitioners of the application approach, in a broadly generalized sense, believe there is no reason to limit the instruction for beginners to only include the traditional procedures developed by Alexander. Rather, it is practical and beneficial to directly help students better coordinate the movements required in the activities of their interest with clear intention and awareness (Franklin, 2016). Many also find that verbal guidance and observation with minimal hands-on instruction can serve the purpose of the Technique. Therefore, they consider group work to be an appropriate means to teach the Technique.

The opposition, however, argues that when Alexander discovered his vocal problem was caused by the misuse of the whole *self*, he realized the ultimate solution to this local issue was to improve the coordination of the whole rather than working on the vocal challenge itself (De Alcantara, 1997). Many practitioners of the traditional approach believe that working immediately on activities that require complex and intricate coordination, such as playing musical instruments, is a “risky proposition” (p. 87). This makes it difficult for students to change their fundamental misuse, the underlying source of all shortcomings, because there is a higher level of *end-gaining* involved when focusing on specialized activities. In addition, Alexander (2004) found that words alone cannot efficiently reestablish a student’s sensory reliability. Hands-on instruction is a key element in changing one’s ever-persuasive faulty sensory awareness, and development can only be attained through individual teaching and learning.

To date, investigations into the teaching of the Alexander Technique to musicians tend to focus on the effects of individual lessons, and the efficacy of group work is often overlooked.

Since many post-secondary music institutions offer the Technique as an academic course and frequently deliver the instruction in a group or even large class setting, it is necessary to explore this type of teaching approach in order to further improve the functionality and efficiency of Alexander instruction in higher music education.

### **Musicians' Challenges**

The success of a musician's career is based on the quality and agility of their physical movements as well as their mental attitude. Unfortunately, postural deficits, musculoskeletal disorders, and performance anxiety are pressing issues in the field of music performance, which have caused many talented musicians to not fully develop their potential or even end their career prematurely (Ballenberger, Möller & Zalpour, 2018; Chan, 2006; Chien 2007; Kaplan, 1994; Matei, Broad, Goldbart & Ginsborg, 2018; Parry, 2004). Indeed, the results of numerous studies on the physiological and psychological challenges of music performance have revealed some serious concerns.

Caldron, Calabrese, Clough, Lederman, Williams, & Leatherman (1986) discovered that 57 percent of the 250 participating musicians suffered from various musculoskeletal conditions, and 37 percent of them had to resource medical intervention for treatments. Fishbein, Middelstadt, Ottati, Strauss, & Ellis's (1988) landmark study surveyed 2212 musicians from the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians. The results revealed that 76 percent of the participants reported at least one medical disorder that impeded their ability to perform, including stage fright and anxiety, in addition to physiological challenges.

In 1997, the Fédération Internationale des Musiciens conducted one of the most comprehensive surveys to date, sampling fifty-seven international orchestras to investigate various factors that might influence musicians' development and career, including physical,

psychological, as well as educational issues (James, 2000). The results revealed that close to 60 percent of the participants suffered from neck, shoulder, and back pain while playing within the past year. 34 percent experienced pain more than once a week, and approximately one-fifth of the surveyed population reported that they had to stop performing for some period of time due to severe pain.

Recent studies revealed this prevalence has not improved (Davies and Mangion, 2002; Leaver, Harris, & Palmer, 2011; Steinmetz, Scheffer, Esmer, Delank, & Peroz, 2015). Ackermann, Driscoll, and Kenny (2012) surveyed 377 members of Australia's professional orchestras, and discovered that 84 percent of the participants reported pain or injury that interfered with their ability to play, and 50 percent had current musculoskeletal pain or injury. The rates of mental health problems, such as performance anxiety and depression were also reported to be high in the same population (Kenny, Driscoll, & Ackermann, 2014). The results from Leaver, Harris, and Palmer's (2011) inquiry of British elite orchestral musicians also demonstrated a high rate of playing-related pain and injury. 86 percent out of the 243 respondents reported having pain in the past twelve months, mostly in the neck, lower back, and shoulders. Based on these compelling evidence, it is clear that musicians have been suffering for their art, and are continuing to do so.

The late physician Christopher B. Wynn Parry (2004), a founding member of the British Association for the Performing Arts Medicine who had more than forty years of experience with treating and rehabilitating musicians, found that many of these aforementioned issues are preventable. He believes that musicians' education "should be sufficiently geared toward identifying and preventing these problems" (p. 42), and asserts that education of posture and body awareness such as the Alexander Technique should be brought to the forefront of music

training in order to help students develop appropriate and effective strategies to overcome the problems and challenges related to the demands of music playing and performance. The results from various studies corroborated this notion (Árnason, Briem & Árnason, 2018; Schoeb & Zosso, 2012; Wijsman & Ackermann, 2018; Zander, Voltmer & Spahn, 2010), and also revealed that the study of Alexander Technique has a positive influence on music teaching approaches (Chen, 2006; Hildebrandt & Nubling, 2004; Kwon, 2012; Lewis, 1980, Neely, 2012).

### **Research on Alexander Technique and Music Studies**

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the benefits and influences of the Alexander Technique in health and wellbeing, and the findings demonstrate its positive effects on postural improvement (Barlow, 1978; Cacciatore et al., 2011; Kutschke, 2010), chronic pain relief and management (Lauche, Schuth, Schwickert, Lütke, Musial, Michalsen, & Choi, 2016; Little, Lewith, Webley, Evans, Beattie, Middleton, & Sharp, 2008; MacPherson et al., 2015), and respiratory function (Austin & Ausubel, 1992; Austin & Pullin, 1984; Holm, 1997; Hudson, 2002). Its relevance to music studies and pedagogy also received examinations in the disciplines of voice (Duarte, 1981; Englehart, 1989; Lewis, 1980; Lloyd, 1986; Hudson, 2002; Mingle, 2018; Neely, 2012; Weiss, 2005), keyboard (Kaplan, 1994; Santiago, 2004; Yoo, 2015), strings (Barton, 2005; Chien, 2007; Kwon, 2012; McCulloch, 1996; Mozeiko, 2011), woodwinds (Copeland, 2007; Fedele, 2003; Hohausen-Nizza, 2013; Holm, 1997; Ross, 2018), choral conducting (Franklin, 2016), as well as performance anxiety (Lorenz, 2002; Valentine et al., 1995) and music learning/teaching experiences (Chen, 2006). The results of these studies, although mostly experiential and some empirical, do provide convincing evidence to support the relevance of applying Alexander Technique to music training.

Alexander's pupil, Frank Pierce Jones<sup>1</sup> (1972), was one of the first who attempted to provide objective evidence of the effect of Alexander's work on music performance. He conducted an experiment to investigate how the head balance influences the quality of voice production. He made recordings of a singer when she was singing in a habitual mode as well as in an experimental mode, in which her head balance was guided by the Alexander principle. The singer reported that she was able to sing with more ease, and her breath management and resonance demonstrated noticeable improvements under the experimental conditions. A panel of expert musicians was brought in to evaluate her recordings, and their reports supported the subject's claim. A spectrogram analysis also confirmed an increase in the singer's richness of overtones and the virtual disappearance of breathing noises in the experimental recordings.

Kaplan (1994) interviewed six pianists who studied the Alexander Technique, and the results revealed that Alexander lessons are not only effective for improving pain and discomfort, releasing excess muscle tension and managing stage fright, but also provides an excellent model for injury prevention. Most of the participants firmly believed that Alexander education is fundamental to piano studies, and should be incorporated into music curricula.

Lewis (1980) surveyed 70 voice teachers in New York State and recognized that there is an agreement between the Alexander concepts and three widely accepted principles of voice teaching:

“1) Body functioning improves when counterproductive habits are inhibited.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Pierce Jones (1905-1975) was an American professor of psychology at Tufts University. He became an Alexander teacher in 1945, trained by F. M. Alexander and his brother A. R. in Boston, Massachusetts. Between 1949 and 1972, he conducted a series of experiments at Tufts University, using electromyography and EMG equipment to study the influence of the head-neck-back relationship on movement and how the conscious mind activates anti-gravity reflexes. A summary of his research is collected in his book *Freedom to Change [Body Awareness in Action]* (1997 [1976]).



2) One must develop conscious awareness of counterproductive habits in order to change these habits.

3) Developing conscious awareness of a specific habit increases one's general level of kinesthetic awareness." (p. 1)

She also inquired about these voice teachers' efficacy in identifying habitual misuse in the head, neck and torso that causes vocal deficiency, and discovered the ones with Alexander training are far more likely to recognize coordination issues than teachers without an Alexander background. The study concluded that by helping singers become aware of and prevent excess tension in the neck and back region, Alexander lessons are enormously beneficial to singers and instructors of voice.

By helping three students change their perpetual interfering habits in cello playing through the Alexander principles, Kwon (2012) conducted three case studies to examine the subjects' improvements in tone production, left hand efficiency, left and right hand coordination, as well as the general *use* in playing the cello. After only five weekly lessons with the integrated approach, all three students demonstrated noticeable progress in the specified areas. The results of this study provided empirical evidence to the benefits of the Technique in cello study and teaching.

In order to understand the impact of the Alexander Technique on managing stress, Valentine, Fitzgerald, Gorton, Hudson, and Symonds (1995) conducted a mixed-methods research to evaluate its experiential and behavioral effect on music performance in high and low stress situations. Twenty-five music students from various musical disciplines were randomly assigned to a control group and an experimental group, and fifteen Alexander sessions were administered to the experimental participants. The subjects' self-report and blind adjudicating

measurements were applied to cross-examine the participants' physiological and mental responses in both a high stress situation (an audition or recital) and a low stress situation (class performance, judged by instructors and peers) before and after intervention. Compared to the control subjects, the experimental group in the low stress situations exhibited improvements in overall musical and technical quality, heart rate regulation, self-rated anxiety, and positive attitude to performance. However, there were no significant changes in the high stress conditions.

The outcome of Mozeiko's (2011) mixed-methods study presented both quantitative and qualitative understanding of the effect of the Technique. Fifty-one female upper string players who had no prior Alexander experience were randomly assigned to a control group (n = 26) and a treatment group (n = 25). By comparing pain, executive skill function, wellbeing, and awareness prior to and after administering twenty Alexander lessons to the treatment group, the participants' self-report demonstrated significant improvements in awareness and executive skill function in the treatment group. Six selected participants from the treatment group also participated in a case study, and the collected data provided evidence of improvements in all four categories. The convergence of both qualitative and quantitative data demonstrated positive effects in awareness, executive skill function, and pain relief, while results for wellbeing were inconclusive.

Although the results of various studies in the Alexander Technique exhibit some inconsistency, there is sufficient scientific as well as experiential evidence to validate its effectiveness in improving posture and respiratory function, reducing excess tension, pain, stress, and elevating the efficiency of music learning and the quality of performance (Valentine, 2004). In addition to these benefits, many instructors and students of the Technique also reported

improvements in mental attitude, such as confidence, happiness, and patience (Chen, 2006; Kleinman, 2018; Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013). These convincing evidence are strong motivators for post-secondary music institutions and programs to make the study of Alexander Technique widely available to their students.

### **Alexander Technique in Post-Secondary Music Institutions**

The history of the Alexander Technique in post-secondary music institutions traces back to the 1950's when Dr. Wilfred Barlow<sup>2</sup> (1925-1991) was invited to conduct an experiment at the Royal College of Music to investigate the effects and relevance of Alexander learning to music studies (Kleinman, 2018; Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013). The results were astonishingly successful, and the College immediately began to provide lessons to their students. Over the next sixty years, the Alexander program at the RCM developed academic studies in addition to private lessons to promote their students' health, wellbeing, and musical excellence. The current practice of its Alexander program is part of this inquiry, and the findings are illustrated and discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

Recognizing its value and effect on music studies, many international prominent music institutions have since developed Alexander programs and/or courses to complement their students' music learning, performance, as well as to promote injury prevention, including the Juilliard School, the Curtis Institute of Music, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne, the Eastman School of Music, the University of Toronto, and National

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<sup>2</sup> Medical doctor Wilfred Barlow trained with F. M. Alexander from 1938 to 1945. In addition to his medical work, he taught the Technique and helped his wife, Marjory Barlow, Alexander's niece, run a teacher-training course in Albert Court, London. In 1958, Barlow co-founded the Society of the Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT) with Marjory and Joyce Wodeman. He published many letters and articles in medical journals to support Alexander's work in addition to his *The Alexander Principle* (1973), one of the most recognized publications about the Alexander Technique.

University of Arts in Taiwan, among many others. However, how the Technique is implemented and taught to aid and complement music studies is currently underexplored. By investigating the Alexander implementations in several successful international music conservatories/university programs, the current study hopes to enrich the existing literature on the integration of music training with the Alexander Technique.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this literature review was to provide background information about the instruction of the Alexander Technique, including its operational concepts, principles, and procedures, as well as the benefits and pertinence to music studies. The findings of numerous research reveal that musicians are suffering for their art and experiencing various playing-related musculoskeletal pain and injuries and mental health issues, which imply that the education of psychophysical awareness and injury prevention may be lacking in the current music training tradition. Many studies on the effects of an Alexander Technique intervention have provided strong evidence to support its essential value in music learning, performance, and pedagogy. Some internationally renowned music institutions have been offering Alexander learning opportunities to their students for over half a century as they recognize the necessity and significance of taking good care of students' instruments – their minds and bodies. Despite this, the literature on how this unique method is implemented and instructed in the tertiary environment as well as its efficiency and practicality is sparse. The current study aims to shed some light on post-secondary Alexander teaching strategies and its effects in order to not only elevate its level of functioning, but also inspire and offer other music educators another option to promote much needed health, wellbeing education and injury prevention in music performance studies.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to discover, describe and compare how the Alexander Technique is implemented and instructed in selected post-secondary music institutions, and how it influenced the development their students. The inquiry was guided by the following questions:

1. How is the Alexander Technique implemented and instructed in each of the selected successful post-secondary music institutions/programs?
2. What are the variations of implementations and instructional approaches among the selected Alexander programs, and how are they similar to and different from each other?
3. How do the participating instructors describe the influence of Alexander studies on the development of the music students in the selected institutions?

Utilizing the case study research approach, qualitative data about the implementation and course designs of the Alexander Technique in the five selected music institutions, as well as their Alexander instructors' teaching experiences with post-secondary music students were collected, analyzed, and reported in order to answer the research questions. The premise of the inquiry was limited to prominent English-speaking tertiary music conservatories/university programs, including Boston Conservatory at Berklee (USA), Curtis Institute of Music (USA), the Schulich School of Music of McGill University (Canada), the Royal College of Music (UK), and the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto (Canada), and the participants were limited to

certified Alexander Technique instructors who are currently teaching at the aforementioned institutions. Their knowledge about the implementations and the teaching experiences with tertiary musicians were collected through document analysis and in-depth interviews with optional observations to fulfill the purpose of the study.

### **Methodological Approach Rationale**

This inquiry was framed as a multiple-case study. Case study is a research approach that is typically used to explore and describe the functioning and/or development of a particular event, program, individual, or policy (a “case”) and the interrelationship with its contextual conditions from multiple perspectives in order to understand the complexity and particularity of the situation under study (Creswell, 2007; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006). This methodology provides an empirical research strategy that utilizes a variety of investigative resources such as interviews, observations, documents and records, physical artifacts, and surveys to collect either qualitative (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) or quantitative evidence or both (Greene, 2007; Yin, 2014) to allow the researcher to “see beneath the surface of the situation into personal meaning” (Zach, 2006, p. 6) and “take the reader of the research into the world of the subject(s)” (p. 5). Within the qualitative research paradigm, case study is frequently applied in sociopolitical investigations, and has developed a significant following in educational research and evaluation to explore and understand “the experience of curriculum innovation” (Simon, 2009, p. 13) due to its strength in explaining how a program or system functions and why it succeeds or fails (Simon, 2014; Yin, 2014).

According to Creswell (2007), there are three variations of case study method: the single instrumental case study, the intrinsic case study, and the collective or multiple-case study (p. 74). The single instrumental case study aims to examine and illustrate an issue or challenge within

one bounded case, whereas collective or multiple-case studies intend to investigate and explain a phenomenon through multiple cases, giving the inquirers the ability to demonstrate various perspectives on the issue under investigation (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). The evidence collected from multiple cases is often considered to be more convincing than single cases, and the results tend to be regarded as being more robust (Yin, 2014). In comparison to single instrumental and multiple-case studies, the intrinsic case study focuses on the examination of the case itself, such as evaluating a specific program or studying a particular event because it exhibits a unique or extraordinary situation (Stake, 1995). By considering the intent of the current study and the characteristics as well as the focus of each case study approach, a multiple-case study framework was reasoned to be a suitable and appropriate method for carrying out this inquiry.

## **Research Procedures**

### **Cases and Participants Selection**

The cases and participants were selected through purposeful sampling in order to collect information that can best illustrate the research issues under examination (Creswell, 2007). The “cases”, defined as Alexander Technique programs, were chosen from a pool of tertiary music institutions/university programs with an international reputation that are located in English-speaking countries, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, and are currently offering Alexander learning opportunities to their students. The recognition of excellent music institutions was based on the researcher’s educated understanding. As a professional musician who has studied, performed internationally, and taught for more than twenty-five years, the researcher’s professional knowledge and experience demonstrates merits in identifying the reputations of various music schools.

This inquiry was designed to explore the research questions from Alexander instructors' perspectives. The reasoning for this choice was that instructors are in position to provide direct and insightful information on the design of course syllabi, teaching strategies, students' responses to courses/programs, and the reception of the Technique in their respective institutions. Their reports and testimonies may yield rich data, which is important to qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995).

The research plan was to (a) study no more than two Alexander programs from each country, and no more than six in total, and (b) recruit one Alexander instructor from each selected music institution to participate in the study. When a program has multiple instructors on staff, only one would be recruited to participate. In addition, the participants are required to be certified Alexander Technique instructors.

The insertion of these criteria for the cases and participants selection was intended to (a) create a manageable boundary for the study (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014); (b) observe successful practices and learn from their experiences; (c) establish the credibility of the research study by ensuring the qualification of the participants; (d) present points of views from multiple perspectives; and (e) reveal the geographic prevalence of the Alexander Technique in various English-speaking regions.

## **Recruitment**

Online research was conducted to search for potential cases and participants. By cross-referencing Canadian (CanSTAT), American (AmSAT), British (STAT) and Australian (AUSTAT) Alexander Technique societies' websites and various English-speaking music institutions' webpages, eight potential institutions were selected. The identities and contact information of the potential participants were also discovered during the same research, with the



exception of two institutions that did not list their Alexander teachers' names and contact information online. The researcher contacted these two schools, and the instructors' email addresses were released to the researcher after the purpose of the inquiry was explained.

After the potential participants were identified and their contact information was collected, an invitation and introduction to the research study was sent to them via email, as well as a Letter of Information and Consent, in which the purpose of study, research procedures, confidentiality issues, and participants' rights were all explained in detail. Five out of the eight potential participants accepted the participation invitation by signing the consent form, and agreed to all research conditions including the use of audio recordings, both identifiable and unidentifiable quotes, and the disclosure of real names in the dissemination of the research. The rest of the invitees either declined or provided no response to the invitation. All recruitment documents and procedures involved in this study were approved by Western University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board on August 29, 2017. The research approval and the entirety of the Letter of Information and Consent are listed in Appendix A and B.

### **Data Collection**

*Table 3.1 Forms of data collection*

	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Observations</b>
<b>BOCO</b>	Course syllabus; excerpts from course evaluations	Online video (ZOOM); home offices	N/A
<b>Curtis</b>	Students' testimonies	In person; participant's home office	Direct observations
<b>McGill</b>	Program feedback	In person; participant's home office	N/A
<b>RCM</b>	Course syllabi; excerpts from	In person; participant's home	Direct observations

	students' journals	office	
<b>U of T</b>	Course syllabus; excerpts from course evaluations	In person; participant's work office	N/A

Interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts are the four basic types of data gathering strategies utilized in qualitative inquiries (Creswell, 2007; Simon, 2014; Yin, 2014). The current study collected data primarily through document collection and in-depth interviews. Direct observations were not mandated in the original research protocol; however, they were applied on two occasions. The participants from Curtis and RCM invited the researcher to observe their classes and lessons. Acting upon participants' goodwill, the researcher believed the integrity of the ethics protocol would not be affected, and therefore accepted their invitations and later went on sites to observe their teaching.

#### **Role of the researcher.**

Researchers are the primary research instruments in qualitative studies because they are the ones who gather and interpret the information (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2010). Their backgrounds, expertise, values, experiences, and orientations inarguably have significant influences over the research process and outcome. Therefore, it is imperative to disclose the aforementioned information from the outset so that the readers recognize the researchers' positions and potential biases that impact the studies (Merriam, 1998).

I am a performing soprano, voice teacher, and a certified instructor of the Alexander Technique. I hold both bachelor and master's degrees in voice performance with additional graduate studies of vocal pedagogy, anatomy and physiology, and speech science. I have performed internationally in recitals, concerts, and opera productions and have been teaching voice for the past twenty-five years. In addition, I have been teaching the Alexander Technique

since 2010, offering individual lessons, group classes, workshops, and master classes primarily to musicians of various disciplines and actors in both private studio and post-secondary institution settings.

My Alexander and university level teaching experiences as well as my professional music background makes me uniquely qualified to conduct this inquiry. These qualifications enabled me to review the documents with a critical eye and prepare pertinent interview questions that could facilitate the elucidation of Alexander program implementations and instruction. It also allowed me to provide empathy during the interview process, which helped me develop a close connection with the participants that encouraged them to express their opinions and beliefs without hesitation.

My learning and teaching experiences in both music and the Alexander Technique also posed a certain level of bias in the study. I am an advocate for incorporating mind-body methods such as the Alexander Technique into post-secondary music core curriculum because I believe it forms the foundation of a musician's basic training. Taking this into account, I was conscious of my personal beliefs and assumptions, and made a specific effort to maintain a neutral stance throughout the entire research process in order to stay true to the participants' opinions and strengthen the objectivity of the inquiry.

#### **Document collection and analysis.**

In conducting case study research, the use of documents plays a significant role in any data collection. It helps researchers corroborate evidence collected from other sources, and also enables them to make inferences and find clues for further investigation (Yin, 2014). After the consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher, each participant of the study was asked to supply the current course outlines (if available), any documents that may support and/or

complement the syllabi, and course/program evaluations or feedback. The purpose of this procedure was twofold: first, to gain a general understanding of each implementation, and second, to develop universal as well as personalized probing questions for each interview. A brief narrative was established to describe each Alexander course in order to achieve the first part of the purpose. This process was limited to Boston Conservatory at Berklee, the Royal College of Music, and the University of Toronto, where the Alexander Technique is taught as an academic course. Later, a comparative content analysis was performed on course structures, teaching strategies and objectives in order to identify similarities and differences. The results of this process provided pertinent information on the development of potential organizational categories in addition to probing interview questions.

In order to protect the privacy of participants, a secure method of document collection was employed. A password-protected dropbox was created for each participant on OWL, a Western University secure online learning and research management system, where the researcher and participants could securely store and exchange confidential files. Participants were asked to supply their course syllabi and supporting documents by uploading them to their individual dropbox on OWL. The researcher was the sole individual who had access to all document files, and the participants' access was limited to their own account and dropbox only. The participants from Boston Conservatory at Berklee, the Royal College of Music, and the University of Toronto submitted course syllabi and supporting documents, whereas McGill University and Curtis Institute of Music submitted only program feedback because their Alexander instructions are not structured as an academic course.

## **Interviews.**

Interviews are a critical source of case study data collection because most case studies investigate human affairs or behavioral occurrences (Yin, 2014). Interviews provide opportunities for researchers to obtain information when they were unable to observe themselves and gain insights into the cases under examination from multiple perspectives and experiences (Stake, 2010; Simon, 2014). For the current study, interviews were applied as the primary research instrument for data collection. A sample of the interview protocol is included in Appendix C.

After the documents were collected and analyzed, a semi-structured interview protocol was created, which aimed to collect both demographic and program specific information with a combination of closed- and open-ended questions. Next, each participant was contacted via email to schedule an interview at an agreed-upon time and location. In-person, online video, and telephone interviewing formats were offered to the participants; however, in-person interviews were encouraged. The researcher believes the face-to-face format can help facilitate the establishment of a personal connection and trust with the participants, which would more likely make them feel confident and free to express honest and genuine opinions without hesitation (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014). All participants granted an in-person interview except one who chose to be interviewed via ZOOM Video Communications, an online video conferencing service.

All interviews were conducted in a private setting with a natural conversation format, and each one lasted between two to two and a half hours. The researcher travelled to Toronto (Canada), Montreal (Canada), Philadelphia (USA), and London (UK) to conduct in-person interviews. The interview in Toronto was conducted in the participant's office at the University

of Toronto, and the rest were conducted in participants' home offices. For the online video interview, the researcher and the participant were located in their own home offices. At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of study and the basic structure of the interview were explained, and at the end of each interview, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and generosity for sharing their knowledge and experience. The researcher also asked for the opportunity to inquire follow-up questions if needed, and all participants granted this request.

The in-person interviews were audio-recorded by the researcher with QuickTime Player on her password-protected laptop computer, and also with Voice Memos on her password-protected iPhone as a backup recording device. The online video interview was both audio and video recorded by the participant with the recording function provided by ZOOM. A copy of the audio recording was forward to the researcher after the meeting. The purpose of audio recording was to collect responses with accuracy as well as enabling the researcher to review the interview sessions whenever necessary. Handwritten notes were also taken to jot down any observations or impressions of the interviews that might provide ideas for further probing questions as well as analysis. After each interview session, the recordings were immediately uploaded into the corresponding participant's data archive folder on the researcher's laptop. The entire interview process commenced on November 30, 2017 and completed on February 15, 2018.

The interview recordings were transcribed into Microsoft Word by the researcher, and each participant was sent a copy of their own interview transcript via OWL for member checking in order to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions (Creswell, 2007). Repeated and incomplete words and phrases were omitted for a better reviewing condition. Researcher's notes were inserted at the sections where contents required clarification, and the participants were asked to provide corrections and/or adjustments directly next to those unclear statements with a different

colored font, highlight, or by using the review function provided by Microsoft Word. They were also advised to indicate any comments that they wished not to be included in the research dissemination.

After the corrected and approved version of transcripts had been received, a cross-checking procedure was performed to ensure that each participant had answered all the interview questions and to locate any issues that emerged from one case that were not addressed in other cases. Additional follow-up questions were formed for each case based on the results of the crosschecks and sent to the participants via OWL. Participants' responses to the additional questions were later collected and added onto the database.

### **Observations.**

It was reported at the beginning of this section that direct observations were used at Curtis and the RCM after the corresponding participants graciously extended an invitation to the researcher. It is important to note that these two visits were approved by the institutions. The students were not interviewed and their identities were not collected in order to protect their identity and privacy and preserve the integrity of the research protocol. Before each class or lesson, the participants introduced the researcher to the students and also asked for their permission for observation on the researcher's behalf; observations took place only after the students granted the request. Handwritten notes were taken during observations to record the instructors' teaching approaches and how they utilize the Alexander principles to help students solve music playing-related issues. The information gathered at these two Alexander programs was later utilized to corroborate the data collected from document collections and interviews and inform the analysis of these two individual cases.

## **Data Analysis**

The data generated by qualitative inquiries are often in large quantities (Patton, 2002). A systematic process is required to organize the materials in order to allow researchers to effectively manage, study, and make sense of the gathered information. In general, qualitative data analysis consists of the following procedures (Creswell, 2007):

- 1) preparing and organizing the data for analysis,
- 2) reading through the data and taking notes,
- 3) describing and classifying the data to establish patterns, and
- 4) interpreting and making sense of the data.

The current study followed these guidelines to analyze the data collection.

A database was established for this study in order to facilitate the organization and management of the data collection (Yin, 2014). Both paper and digital file folders were created for each participant upon receiving the documents. Subfolders were also set up to sort and store the various forms of data. As the analysis progressed, more folders were established to categorize the information across cases. An annotated bibliography of the documents along with a study journal was also created in order to keep track of the research process. The establishment of a database not only increases the accessibility of collected data but also strengthens the reliability of the entire research (Yin, 2014).

The interview transcripts, relevant documents, and study journal were read and reread in order to first, gain an impression of the cases as a whole, and second, understand each case in detail. While reading the transcripts and journal, memos were inserted in the margin of the text with short phrases to jot down the researcher's impressions of the data, questions, ideas, and reminders for follow-up (Saldaña, 2014). This procedure allowed the researcher to become more



familiar with the database and develop deeper impressions about each case as well as the interrelationships between them.

A descriptive coding procedure was applied to each case to categorize the various forms of data and index the basic contents for further analytic tasks (Saldaña, 2014). The data corpus of each case was organized into three sections based on the research questions, and each section was classified according to the sub-questions. A narrative was generated to describe each case in detail based on this organizational structure, in which both excerpts of participants' original statements and the researcher's interpretations were included. Creswell (2007) asserts that making a detailed description of the case under investigation and its setting "plays a central role" in case studies (p. 151). This procedure was particularly essential to the current study because its purpose was to discover and describe the practice of the selected Alexander Technique implementations and its influences. These detailed descriptions were later developed to form in-case reports – Alexander Technique Program Profiles.

Cross-case synthesis was applied to examine the cases collectively. Yin (2014) states that cross-case synthesis is particularly relevant when a case study consists of two or more cases. This analytic technique examines each case individually following a replication framework, and aggregates findings from across all the cases. He suggests that word tables can be used as a strategy to summarize, categorize, display, and compare the data from individual cases according to some uniform framework. This procedure enables researchers to identify the differences and similarities among the cases, which is often the purpose of conducting multiple-case studies (Creswell, 2007). The current study used word tables to exhibit the data summaries and to compare the issues and phenomena that emerged from each case in an attempt to demonstrate different perspectives on the matters under discussion.

## Trustworthiness

In order to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness of qualitative studies, Creswell (2007) suggests eight strategies to validate research process and findings.

- 1) Spend a prolonged time in the field with participants and conduct persistent observations in order to determine what information is salient and relevant to the study.
- 2) Use multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and/or theories to triangulate and corroborate various evidence.
- 3) Use peer review or debriefing to provide an external check of the research procedures.
- 4) Apply negative case analysis to revise, refine, and confirm the emerging themes by searching and discussing elements that present negative or contradicting information.
- 5) State researcher's bias that may influence the inquiry in the report.
- 6) Use member checking to give the participants an opportunity to review and validate the credibility of the findings and interpretations.
- 7) Use rich and detailed descriptions to present the research in order to demonstrate explicitness and ensure the transferability of information.
- 8) Use external auditors or consultants to assess the accuracy of both the process and the results of the research.

He recommends researchers engage at least two of these procedures in any given qualitative studies (2007).

*Table 3.2 Applied research validation strategies*

<b>1. Prolonged time in the field/persistent observation</b>	
<b>2. Triangulation</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>3. Peer review/debriefing</b>	
<b>4. Negative case analysis</b>	
<b>5. Researcher's bias</b>	<b>x</b>

<b>6. Member checking</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>7. Thick descriptions</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>8. External auditors/consultants</b>	

This inquiry employed four of the recommended strategies.

### **Triangulation.**

The current study collected data from multiple sources, including document analysis and interviews with optional direct observations. Triangulation was applied to corroborate the information gathered from all forms of sources.

### **Bias report.**

The researcher's qualifications, experiences, beliefs, and biases are disclosed in this document. As the key research instrument in this study, the researcher understood her background and assumptions have a significant impact on the investigation process and interpretations. Therefore, it was important for the researcher to clarify her stance from the outset in order to inform the readers about what might have influenced the study.

### **Member checking.**

The interview transcription, program profile, and participant's professional bio were sent to each participating instructor for review, correction, and approval. This procedure was intended to make sure participants' voices were appropriately presented in the final report.

### **Thick descriptions.**

Thick descriptions were used to describe and explain the purpose of the inquiry, the research process and findings so that readers can understand the cases under study in detail.

### **Identifiable Information Disclosure**

In order to appropriately share and credit participants' opinions, contributions, and achievements, the researcher asked for participants' permission to disclose their names, titles,

associated institutions/programs, as well as personal, identifiable and unidentifiable quotes in the publications and/or presentations of this study. This request was indicated in the Letter of Information and Consent. Participants were informed that if they prefer to be unidentified, they can still participate in the study and the researcher will respect their privacy and assign them an alias in the published text. All participants gave permission to this disclosure by signing the consent form.

## CHAPTER 4

### ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE PROGRAM PROFILES

This chapter presents a detailed description of the implementation and instructional approaches of each selected Alexander program. The profile of each case is presented under four categories: Program Development, Course/Lesson Description, Program Strengths and Areas to Improve, and Alexander Technique Impact. In Program Development, the historical background and the current development of the implementation are illustrated. In Course/Lesson Description, the structure and instruction of the course(s)/lessons are explained. Program Strengths and Areas of Improvement are reported next according to each participating instructor's self-evaluation. Finally, the perceived positive influence of Alexander studies on musicians' training in the selected institutions is described in Alexander Technique Impact.

The detailed information about each implementation was generously shared by the participating instructors: Debi Adams (Boston Conservatory at Berklee), Ariel Weiss (Curtis Institute of Music), Lawrence Smith (Schulich School of Music of McGill University), Peter Buckoke (Royal College of Music), and Nancy Sicsic (Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto), whose professional biographies are included in Appendix D.

#### **Boston Conservatory at Berklee**

Founded in 1867, Boston Conservatory is the oldest performing arts institution in the United States. Known for its multidisciplinary learning environment and innovative programing,

the Conservatory offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs in theater, dance, and music studies. Its internationally acclaimed teaching faculty, supported by numerous performance opportunities, have produced many notable figures in various performing arts, including singer Barbara Cook, baritone and voice professor Andreas Poulimenos, singer and actor Katharine McPhee, and voice actor Rachael MacFarlane. Merged with Berklee School of Music in 2016, the Conservatory is now known as Boston Conservatory at Berklee (BOCO) to provide its nearly 900 students from over twenty-five countries one of the most inclusive performing arts programs in the world.

### **BOCO Alexander Program Development**

The Alexander Technique first became available at Boston Conservatory in the late 1990's. Joining the Conservatory in 2002, current Alexander Technique program manager Debi Adams believes the implementation was at its primitive stage when she came on board. There were two courses available; one for music students and one for dancers. Since then, a structured program has been developed, which currently includes academic courses in the music and dance curricula in addition to a summer intensive program and a teacher-training course.

The music department provides one Alexander elective course to their students, and the dance department offers a compulsory Alexander course for the sophomore dancers as well as an advanced, elective module for the junior and senior dance students. In 2012, an Alexander teacher-training course was established. This program is open to anyone with previous Alexander experience who wishes to become an Alexander instructor. Currently, there are thirteen trainees in the training course. Its graduates are eligible to apply for Alexander Technique International's (ATI) teaching certification in order to become an associated teaching member.

The Alexander Technique Summer Intensive is held in June every year, offering two one-week sessions of lessons, various workshops and master classes. This program is open to BOCO's students as well as the general public who are interested in learning the Technique to gain freedom and ease in daily as well as specialized activities, such as playing music, sports, and acting. Both the teacher-training course and the summer intensive program are developed by Debi Adams.

### **BOCO Course/Lesson Description<sup>3</sup>**

Included in general music studies, one introductory Alexander course is offered as an elective option for credit. It is a half-year module administered in both terms, available to both undergraduate and graduate level students across all disciplines. Alexander program manager Debi Adams is the sole instructor for this course. She teaches four sections of classes each term to accommodate the popularity of the course.

The maximum enrollment for this course is forty-eight, and the section size is limited to twelve. The instruction is delivered twice a week, and each class is one hour in length. Adams reported that the enrollment is always full, and there tends to be a waiting list every semester. She also explained that students are permitted to take this course multiple times. Although she tries to keep the class size at twelve in order to ensure the manageability of instruction, she occasionally accepts one or two more students into a section if there are returning students in the mix.

According to Adams, the objective of this course focuses on the theoretical concepts of the Alexander Technique as applied to the performing musicians. It aims to help students make

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<sup>3</sup> In order to present a fair comparison, the current investigation focused on BOCO's implementation in the music department and the extracurricular learning opportunities offered to the music students through the Wellness Division and the teacher-training course during the school year.

self-discoveries in order to understand how the process of their investigations will lead them to improved performances, whether that be better tone, better relationship with their instruments and the audience, or reduced performance anxiety. Ultimately, Adams expressed that she wants the students to embrace the fact that *use* determines function.

This course does not follow a specific outline for weekly instructions because Adams' experience has taught her that flexibility is a crucial element in teaching the Technique. She maintains that it makes better sense to discuss the principles and concepts of the Technique based on what is appropriate for the students of each section at the moment of the class rather than following a rigid and uniform course schedule. The result of this approach is that each section may have a different focus of study each week. However, Adams explained that she does choose a few specific days to work on the same topics or procedures with every section, such as *table work*, for which she brings in three additional instructors to give each student ten to fifteen minutes of one-on-one table lessons. In short, each section receives identical instruction but in a different order in order to best serve the students of that specific group.

Through lectures, class discussions, group activities, and master classes with occasional hands-on instruction, the musicians of this course study the principles and concepts of the Technique and examine its application process as it relates to their daily activities as well as music playing and performance. Reading materials are also assigned in order to complement their in-class learning. Kleinman & Buckoke's (2013) *The Alexander Technique for Musicians* is the chosen text, which offers valuable information on how to utilize the Technique to improve musicians' psychophysical coordination in addition to theoretical explanations.

All students of this course are expected to maintain an observational journal. Adams explained that a large portion of Alexander's work depends on self-awareness. By observing and



documenting their musical activities, students can begin to learn to recognize their own habitual patterns, and this understanding enables them to make appropriate changes in order to improve their *use*. Submission of four diary entries is required throughout the term to monitor students' progress in stages. Each entry must answer specific questions pertaining to the Alexander discussions presented in the reading material as well as in class, and students are also encouraged to record additional observations and analyses to enrich their learning during this process. Each student receives a letter grade at the end of the term, and the course counts for academic credit. The assessment includes class attendance/participation, journals, and a final reflection paper. Each component has equal weight towards the final grade.

As mentioned earlier, students are allowed to participate in this course multiple times, which provides an opportunity for further in-depth studies. The returning students attend classes with the beginners, however, they are expected to examine a wider variety of Alexander publications and accomplish a higher level of observational assignments. Although the teaching objective is not specified for the in-depth studies, based on the course requirement, it is reasonable to assume that it aims to help students acquire a deeper understanding of Alexander's teachings and develop a higher level of observational skill in order to better improve coordination and further enhance their music training.

In addition to the curricular study, BOCO also provides extracurricular Alexander learning opportunities to their music students through the teacher-training course with trainees, who offer free private lessons and small-group classes in order to fulfill their practicum requirements. Interested students can sign up to participate and receive six sessions of forty-five minute to one-hour instruction. At the end of the course of lessons/classes, the participating students are required to give feedback to the trainees in order to help them improve their

pedagogical skills. The music students can also sign up for private lessons provided through the Wellness Division. Two complimentary sessions are available to each participating student in each semester and the lessons are taught by certified Alexander teachers.

### **BOCO Program Strengths and Areas to Improve**

As the manager of the Alexander Technique program, Debi Adams takes pride in what they have accomplished for BOCO's Alexander establishment. She attributes a big part of their success to the administration's strong support. Furthermore, she believes that the strength of their program as a whole is its accessibility, where students have both curricular and extracurricular opportunities to study the Alexander Technique. However, Adams shared her frustration over the fact that the theater division has not yet developed an Alexander course in their curriculum. Although theater students can receive instruction through the Wellness Division and the teacher-training course with the trainees, she asserts that they would greatly benefit from a specific course to address their issues as actors.

In order to further improve the Alexander programming within the music department, Adams suggests creating a drop-in clinic during the jury and recital season, the most stressful time of the year when there is a higher rate of injury occurrence and anxiety issues. By doing so, the students would be able to gain the support they need to solve their immediate problems. With these improvements, Adams believes BOCO's Alexander Technique program may become even more effective in promoting students' health awareness and injury prevention in addition to enhancing their studies in the performing arts.

### **BOCO Alexander Technique Impact**

Debi Adams has witnessed many of her students benefit from studying the Alexander Technique in addition to their music studies. They gain better control over their instruments,

which enables them to play with comfort and ease and brings confidence and productivity into their daily practice and performance. They also learn to become more aware of the relationship between their actions and their surroundings. This awareness facilitates the development of a collaborative skill that is required in playing in ensembles. Most importantly, students learn to take responsibilities for their actions by studying the Technique. They gain the understanding that they are responsible for taking care of their body and mind in order to bring about long-term mental and physical health as performers.

The following statements describe how some BOCO course participants responded to the study of the Alexander Technique. These excerpts were extracted from the course evaluation, provided by participating instructor.

Initially I wasn't sure I knew what Alexander Technique was at all. I wasn't even really prepared to take it that seriously. But as we progressed through the course I began to understand the importance of Alexander Technique in both my practicing and my everyday life. Before, I was constantly sore from bad posture and awkward practicing, but now I feel flexible and comfortable.

[This] course has genuinely left a positive impact on the way I approach my craft and has left me a better person for it.

I love everything about this class. It's a great way to start the day.

This class should be mandatory for all musicians for at least one semester.

This class is amazing. It saved me from serious injury and I have made enormous progress on my instrument as a result.

Based on these comments, these music students learned to a) prevent injury by improving posture, b) enhance music playing and practicing, and c) cultivate positive attitude by studying the Technique. It is also suggested that there is a necessity to provide training such as the Alexander Technique to post-secondary musicians.

### **Curtis Institute of Music**

Founded in 1924 by Mary Louise Curtis Bok, the Curtis Institute of Music (Curtis) is considered to be one of the most prestigious music institutions in the world. Established to provide exceptionally gifted young musicians an opportunity to become the best in the field, Curtis offers merit-based full scholarships to all their students. Its renowned teaching tradition and excellent learning environment have produced numerous significant figures in the musical arts of our times, including composers Leonard Bernstein, Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem, pianists Lang Lang, Yujia Wang, and violinist Daniel Heifetz, among many others. Offering various degree and diploma programs from undergraduate to professional level in composition, instrumental, and opera, the Curtis Institute of Music limits its enrollment to 175 students in order to provide music training of its finest.

#### **Curtis Program Development**

As part of the student wellness resources, the Curtis Institute of Music has been offering Alexander Technique instruction to their students since the mid 1990's. According to Ariel Weiss, one of the three current Alexander teaching members at Curtis, the Technique is implemented as an extracurricular activity, and the program offers forty-five weekly lessons to a student population of approximately 150 throughout the school year. Students of all disciplines in various programs are eligible to apply, and the admission is on a first come, first served basis. Individuals who wish to take lessons are required to sign up at the beginning of the school year and commit to a full year of weekly lessons; applications can be repeated every year. The costs for instruction are included in students' scholarships.

Weiss explained that students are able to choose their instructors. If they do not have a specific choice, one will be assigned to them. Each instructor is given a roster at the beginning

of the school year, and the details of lesson time and location, either on or off campus, are arranged between the instructors and the students. Alexander instructors at Curtis are independently contracted teaching staff members, and Weiss usually takes on twenty to twenty-five students each year depending on the number of requests.

#### **Curtis Course/Lesson Description<sup>4</sup>**

All instructions are weekly half-hour private lessons, in which Weiss provides coaching with verbal and hands-on guidance to cater to each student's individual needs. The researcher observed some of her lessons at Curtis, and noticed that she always begins the lessons with a short conversation with the students to find out how they are doing, what projects they are working on, and how they have been dealing with any challenges they may be facing. They discuss the procedure options, and proceed with the lessons following students' choices. There were some students who wished to work on specific musical passages that had been troubling them; some students wanted to work on how they could sit in a chair with a better posture in order to cope with long rehearsal hours; and some who were simply exhausted from too many music commitments and asked to receive some *table work* to refresh themselves. Whatever activity they wished to do, Weiss always found a way to help them do it better with the Alexander concepts.

Weiss explained that her teaching objective is to help students reveal their habits by exploring and experimenting with their movements during various activities. She approaches the lessons like a treasure hunt to help students find their own ways to improve counterproductive habitual patterns in order to attain better coordination. She also emphasizes the importance of

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<sup>4</sup> The report presented in this section reflects the participating instructor's own teaching approach and objective, which does not represent the other two program instructors' styles of instruction.

cultivating a safe and trusting environment for her students, which is always a priority in her teaching.

### **Curtis Program Strengths and Areas to Improve**

Curtis' Alexander program provides its participants weekly instructions in a private studio setting. The strength of this approach is that it allows students to receive consistent lessons to address their individual challenges with the instructor's full attention. Although the benefits are sound, Ariel Weiss opines that this arrangement can be further improved to better accommodate their students. She explained that every Curtis student has a challenging academic and performing schedule, and asking them to commit to a full year of weekly lessons can at times be impractical for these extremely busy young musicians. In addition, there are only forty-five slots available, leaving more than two-thirds of the student population with no access to the complimentary lessons. Furthermore, the first come, first served application policy sometimes cannot accommodate students with injuries if they fail to apply in time or develop injuries halfway through the year. These conditions indicate a lack of accessibility and flexibility in the current programming. Weiss believes these limitations can be improved by implementing a combination of private sessions, workshops, master classes, and group classes with drop-in options, which can provide a wide variety of learning opportunities to a larger portion of the student population without increasing the budget and also take the students' pressure off from committing to a full year of lessons.

### **Curtis Alexander Technique Impact**

One of the observations Weiss made during her tenure at Curtis is that many of her students had never learned how the body functions before they began to study the Technique. This lack of education in body functioning and awareness may explain why injury rate is

alarmingly high among performing musicians. By studying the Alexander Technique, Weiss' students learn how to prevent repetitive strain injuries by obtaining good coordination. Her teaching experience demonstrates that students with injuries tend to recover quickly after intervention, and students who suffer from performance anxiety have also made significant improvements in reducing the level of this condition. The Technique has helped many of her students become mentally and physically more agile and receptive, which is an essential quality for achieving sensitivity and expressiveness in music playing and performing.

The following statements explain how the study of Alexander Technique has influenced their developments as musicians. These excerpts were selected from Curtis graduates and current students' testimonials, provided by instructor Ariel Weiss.

[Alexander lessons] helped me develop better breathing technique and posture for performance ... [also] helped me establish good habits and positive mindset.

I have realized how much movement can impact my mind, and how moving freely helps me think freely. I used to be terrified of performing, but now I am able to embrace it with free movement.

[Alexander Technique] really changed my playing and stage presence for the best.

As a result of several years spent [taking Alexander lessons], I am a stronger, more structurally aware player, and feel better armed with the tools and techniques I need to make it through issues not only in my playing, but in my career as a whole.

I used to get frustrated when practicing, and think that my arm would always hurt in this passage because it was difficult. But now I have different practice techniques [to] help me be more efficient.

Alexander Technique has been a huge part of my learning experience at Curtis, and I'm very grateful to the school for making it available to us.

These musicians reveal that the study of Alexander Technique help them a) obtain freer movement, b) increase body awareness, c) decrease the negative effects of performance anxiety,

d) cultivate patience, e) improve stage presence, f) improve posture and breathing, g) prevent injury, h) foster positive mindset, and finally, learn problem solving strategies.

### **Schulich School of Music of McGill University**

The Schulich School of Music of McGill University (McGill) is internationally known for its exceptional level of excellence in academic and performance studies as well as in research. Established in 1904 as McGill Conservatorium of Music, the Schulich School of Music currently offers more than forty-five undergraduate, graduate, and professional certificate programs in various music genres and disciplines, including opera, orchestra, jazz, historical performance, contemporary music, composition, as well as sound recording and music technology to a community of more than eight hundred musicians. Many of its alumni have moved on to enjoy international careers in music, including composer/song writer Burt Bacharach, artistic director at the Curtis Opera Theatre Mikael Eliason, soprano and voice pedagogue Joan Patenaude-Yarnell, soprano Suzie LeBlanc, jazz composer Darcy James Argue, and countertenor Daniel Taylor.

### **McGill Program Development**

Alexander Technique instruction is currently available to the students at McGill in two capacities; one is self-sponsored instruction, and the other is a subsidized program, wherein the school pays for a portion of participating students' lesson costs. For the self-sponsored instruction, first introduced in 2012, the Schulich School provides an Alexander studio on site to make the Technique accessible and convenient to the students who are interested in taking lessons. Alexander instructor Lawrence Smith is responsible for advertising and scheduling, with some promotional assistance from the Student Life and Learning department; and participating students are fully responsible for the costs of lessons. The feedback for these



lessons was overwhelmingly positive, which encouraged the administration to initiate a subsidized program in the fall of 2017 to address musicians' psychophysical and music performance related issues.

All students registered at the Schulich School are eligible to apply for the subsidized program, and forty students who demonstrate physical and financial challenges are approved for each term. The teaching responsibilities are shared between two Alexander instructors including Lawrence Smith. The school administration is in charge of student selection and registration, and the instructors are responsible for managing the teaching schedules, lessons logs, and collecting the portion of lesson fees paid by the students.

The subsidized program began as an experiment. A survey was conducted at the end of the first term, and the participating students expressed much enthusiasm and desire to continue with their Alexander education. With this strong support, the program was approved to continue, and many students reapplied in addition to some new applicants.

### **McGill Course/Lesson Description<sup>5</sup>**

When the subsidized program was first established, each participating student received four lessons per term. This lesson allocation has been increased to six in 2018/19 based on its overwhelmingly positive reception. All instructions are given in a one-on-one setting, and each session is thirty minutes in length. Smith approaches the lessons with hands-on instruction through traditional procedures such as *chair work* to help students recognize and inhibit their habits in order to improve their posture and restore their psychophysical functioning.

Smith explained that he does not usually teach musicians the application of the Technique in regards to music playing in lessons, particularly during the early stages of their

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<sup>5</sup> The report presented in this section reflects the participating instructor's own teaching approach and objective, which does not represent the other program instructor's style of instruction.

Alexander learning. He believes it is crucial to observe how music students function without their instruments first, because their neutral upright posture is inevitably what will support music playing or singing. In addition, music performance requires complex, delicate, and accurate coordination, which, Smith reasons, is difficult for students to change because the stakes are too high. Therefore, he feels it is more productive to work on students' habits when they are not playing. However, he does occasionally instruct more experienced students with their instruments in lessons when they solicit advice on specific coordination issues.

### **McGill Program Strengths and Areas to Improve**

Lawrence Smith believes the strength of the subsidized program is that it provides private lessons. Every person has their own habitual patterns and challenges. This instructional setting allows instructors to pay exclusive attention to students' unique issues and at the same time, enables students to learn at their own pace in a private and confidential environment. However, Smith expressed that the current lesson allowance of six half-hour lessons per term is inadequate for students to learn anything substantial from the Technique. Many participating students shared a similar sentiment in their program feedback, although they also expressed deep appreciation for the lesson opportunities and financial assistance.

In order to develop an effective Alexander program, Smith suggests that the school further increases the number of lessons for each participating student in the next stage of the experiment. Ultimately, he hopes the school will add Alexander instruction to McGill's standard music curriculum in the future so that more students will be able to have access to the lessons without having to pay extra costs for something that is fundamental to their music training. The subsidized program was confirmed to continue in 2019/2020, although there were no reports to confirm if any changes would be made for next year by the closing of the inquiry.

### **McGill Alexander Technique Impact**

Since the establishment of the subsidized Alexander program in 2017, Smith has noticed improvements in his students' posture and coordination after merely six half-hour lessons per term. They have also become more open and perceptive, which enables them to maximize their physical, mental, and artistic expressiveness in music playing and performance. The participating students have given overwhelmingly positive feedback to the program, which encouraged the school to increase the lesson allowance from the initial four to the current six per student per term.

The following excerpts exhibit some of the program participants' feedback on how the study of Alexander Technique support and complement their music training. These statements were provided by instructor Lawrence Smith.

Through the lessons, I was able to learn how to stand and how to perform with neutral posture, which allowed me to release the tension I was carrying unconsciously.

This [technique] has helped me to prevent stiffness and soreness through long hours of practicing in rehearsals, and I am grateful.

I have gained an increased physical comfort in my own body through improving the alignment of my spine.

I noticed a drastic improvement in my tone quality and air support, achieved largely due to this new knowledge of what proper posture should be.

In addition to my physical comfort, I feel this improved posture will make me appear more confident and comfortable while I perform.

I now understand the importance and many benefits of being mentally focused and present in performance.

Through the discovery that I am unconsciously reacting negatively to my own playing, I was able to begin to work to undo that habit and play without constant self-judgment.

The lessons helped to develop my confidence in performing, as well as the ability to play in a neutral and relaxed state without unnecessary inhibitors such as tension and poor breathing working against me.

[It] helped me to start to “reset” my body and rid myself of several unconscious and harmful habits.

Alexander Technique should be included in the curriculum for a Master’s degree. The physical strain that is put on the bodies of musicians in their advanced degrees is felt, seen, and heard. We have to practice and perform for hours per day, and there should be some kind of safety net in place to ensure that we are using our bodies safely to prevent injury.

These comments reveal that the study of the Technique enabled the students to a) experience good coordination and posture, b) alleviate pain and increase physical comfort, c) release tension, d) increase body awareness, e) prevent injury, and f) increase positivity, confidence, and mental readiness for performance. There is also a voice that supports integrating Alexander instruction into the music curriculum.

### **Royal College of Music**

Founded by the then Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) in 1882, the Royal College of Music (RCM) is recognized as one of the world-leading music conservatories for its superior music training. It has produced many significant figures in western classical music of the twentieth century, including composers Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, soprano Dame Joan Sutherland, baritone Sir Thomas Allen, and conductor Sir Colin Davis. Offering programs of study from the undergraduate to doctoral level, the Royal College of Music currently has approximately 840 students from more than sixty countries.

### **RCM Program Development**

The Alexander Technique instruction first became available to the students at the Royal College of Music in the mid 1950’s. It began as an experiment in the voice department, inspired by voice professor Joyce Wodeman’s personal success with the method, in which fifty singing

students received thirty-seven Alexander lessons in addition to their vocal training over a period of three months (Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013). The outcome of the experiment was overwhelmingly impressive, compared with a control group from the Central School of Speech in London. The voice professors at the RCM gave the highest praises to the Technique in their evaluation report, and concluded that “this approach is the best means we have yet encountered for solving the artist’s problem of communication and should form the basis of his training” (Barlow, 1978, p. 192).

Encouraged by this successful result, the College decided to offer Alexander lessons as an extracurricular activity to the students who demonstrated physical challenges in music playing and performance. Forty hours of lessons per week were made available to students, which were all delivered in a private setting, and three Alexander instructors shared the teaching responsibilities. Alexander teacher and RCM’s Alexander program director professor Peter Buckoke reported that the current allocation of teaching hours is approximately thirty-two hours per week.

Peter Buckoke joined the string department at the RCM as a double bass professor in 1989. When one of the Alexander teaching staff members retired, Buckoke took over his teaching duty and began to instruct the Technique in addition to the double bass. The following year, Buckoke approached the College about the possibility of implementing an introductory course of the Technique as part of the core curriculum. In order to convince the administration, he proposed a new experiment as a continuant of Dr. Barlow’s research, to evaluate the usefulness of an introductory course of study. Ten randomly selected students participated in this project, and their feedback was “embarrassingly positive,” said Buckoke. This successful outcome earned the support from the degree planning committee, and an introductory course of

the Alexander Technique for all first year undergraduate students was established in 1991. With the support of students, teaching staff, and the College administration, many other modules have been developed over the years in addition to the introductory course.

### **RCM Course/Lesson Description**

Currently, there are four levels of Alexander Technique studies plus one refresher course at the Royal College of Music, ranging from Level 4 to Level 7. Level 4 is designated for all the first year undergraduate students, and BMus2 is a refresher course for all the second year students. Level 5 is for both third year and fourth year undergraduates, and Level 6 is designed for fourth year students who have completed Level 5 in their third year. Level 7 is a graduate course, offering both advanced and introductory studies in order to accommodate the students' various levels of Alexander experience.

In addition to academic courses, private and semi-private non-degree lessons are also offered to address students' individual needs as part of the tradition started in the 1950's. All students registered at the RCM are eligible to apply, but only the students who are most in need of lessons will be considered. Interested students must submit an application to state their reasoning for participation to the program director for approval. Once the application is approved, students will be assigned to an appropriate instructor and commit to weekly half-hour lessons for the entire academic year. Reapplication is required for returning students due to the high demand of these lessons, and the costs of instructions are included in tuition. In order to accommodate the large number of students and teaching hours, four Alexander teachers including professor Buckoke are engaged to share the teaching responsibilities.

**Level 4.**

Embedded in the *Level 4 Professional Portfolio* is a one term compulsory Alexander Technique course for all the first year undergraduate students to promote musicians' health awareness, wellbeing, and the understanding of the learning process in a series of ten weekly half-hour classes. In order to provide as much individual attention as possible to each student, all classes are instructed in a small group setting with five students in each group. The purpose of this level is to “give students an impression of the potential of studying the Technique” (Kleinman & Buckoke, 2013, p. 282) by introducing its fundamental elements, including Alexander concepts, procedures, basic knowledge of human structure and functioning, as well as how to recognize personal habits that impede the coordination of mind and body. Through lectures, class discussions, hands-on instruction, and observational journaling, this course demonstrates useful strategies to help students improve their various habitual patterns in order to prevent stress, injuries, and performance anxiety arising from the demands of performing.

**BMus2.**

*BMus2 Alexander Technique* is a mandatory refresher course of the introductory study. Included in *Level 5 Professional Portfolio* for the second year undergraduate students, this refresher was established recently to bridge the gap between Level 4 and Level 5 Alexander studies. The teaching format, objectives, and approaches remain the same as Level 4, however the number of classes is reduced from ten to five. One noticeable difference from Level 4 is that BMus2 requires the use of video recordings to document the self-observational journal, exploring the applications of the Alexander principles to instrumental/vocal techniques and practice routines. Buckoke explained that they encourage their students to use the video recording function on their smart phone devices to film themselves during lessons and practice

sessions because it can help them accurately identify habitual tendencies so that they can generate appropriate strategies to solve their problems.

### **Level 5, Level 6, and Level 7.**

Level 5, Level 6, and Level 7 Alexander studies are structured in a similar manner: all three levels are a full-year, lecture/seminar based academic elective course, and the instructions are all delivered weekly in a small group setting with six students in each class. The teaching approaches are also similar, utilizing discussions, class activities/experiments, research projects, as well as written assignments to examine the common purpose of these courses: the application of the Alexander Technique to music performance related activities, such as practice, rehearsal, and audition. Level 5 and Level 6 are intermediate and advanced studies, designed for undergraduate students who have previous Alexander knowledge and experience, whereas Level 7, a graduate course, accommodates both advanced and introductory levels of students.

Level 5 is available to both third and fourth year undergraduate students. The content of this course focuses on acquiring a deeper understanding of Alexander's theoretical framework, improving self-observational skills, and recognizing the connection between habitual challenges and solutions. By learning how to identify each other's playing tendencies in class and generating remedial strategies based on Alexander concepts, the Level 5 study aims to help students cultivate an efficient and effective approach to music practice and performance activities.

Level 6 is the continuation of Level 5, available to the fourth year students who have completed the Level 5 training. The objective of this course focuses on the practical applications of the Technique to music performance in the context of auditions, managing performance anxiety, music expression and communication, collaborative performance, and music pedagogy.



By creating many simulated situations, such as a mock audition, chamber music sessions, and instant review of in-class performances, students are encouraged to apply their Alexander knowledge in the most interactive and practical way.

The participants of this course are also required to conduct a collaborative research project to investigate the current performance challenges that are experienced by their fellow musicians at the school. They are expected to formulate a questionnaire, and survey at least ten percent of the student body for a valid outcome. Once results are identified from the gathered data, the students write an individual essay to discuss possible solutions to the identified challenges from the Alexander perspective. This project aims to enable the students to fully integrate their theoretical knowledge with practical experience.

The instruction of Level 7 is delivered one hour each week over fifteen weeks. In addition, all students receive two hours of individual tutorial, which may be used to experience more one-to-one Alexander instruction, receive coaching for auditions, or work on any areas of their music or Alexander training that require assistance. This course aims to help graduate students learn how to utilize Alexander knowledge to improve both their pedagogical skills and performing abilities. The students are required to present a video including footage of their own as well as others playing with commentary to demonstrate their knowledge of the Alexander Technique in comparison to treatises written about the study of their individual instrument, in order to contrast the similarities and contradictions of the psychophysical advice provided by both disciplines. They also must conduct a research project to study the significant challenges experienced by their peers in the same discipline, and submit a written document to present their solutions for the specified issues based on the synergistic understanding of their own instrument and the Alexander Technique.

A new Master's degree in Music Education has been developed in 2018 at the RCM. The Level 7 Alexander course is now an optional module in the music education graduate curriculum. Currently, there is one violin graduate student who has opted for this course. He plans to integrate Alexander's ideas into his teaching approach and take this new method back to his country of origin.

### **RCM Program Strengths and Areas to Improve**

The Royal College of Music has a long and strong tradition with the Alexander Technique, which is deeply embedded in their college tuition. Alexander program director Buckoke believes the success of their program is achieved by recruiting Alexander teachers who know how to work with musicians in a way that is interesting, engaging, and exciting. The fact that their teaching members are all professional musicians and performers makes their program particularly strong. Their expertise in both the Alexander Technique and music studies has earned the complete trust of the administration, music professors, and students.

To build upon the well-established Alexander Technique program at the RCM, director Buckoke expresses his desire for further development to create a Level 8 module for the second year of the graduate studies, which may serve as a preparatory course for Alexander teacher training. If possible, he would also like to establish a teacher-training course at the College in order to develop a complete Alexander education for musicians.

Professor Buckoke has been discussing with Dr. Jenny Henley, the area leader in Music Education, the possibility of recruiting Alexander teachers with a music background to obtain a Master of Music Education degree, specializing in the Alexander Technique for musicians. The program would focus two-thirds of the courses on Alexander Technique and the rest with general and music education studies. Proposal of this potential program of study is receiving

enthusiastic support from the institution, and Buckoke believes this will be an exciting development for the integration of Alexander Technique and music education.

### **RCM Alexander Technique Impact**

Peter Buckoke asserts that learning how to move in an accurate, reliable, and refined way is what every musician aims to achieve. He has observed that by studying the Alexander Technique, many students have become significantly more capable of attaining this goal, which enables them to play with ease and comfort. They have also learned how to take care of themselves under various circumstances and to communicate musically with an audience without their habitual psychophysical blockages.

The following excerpts describe how Alexander studies influenced some RCM students' music learning. These statements were extracted from their observational diaries and research papers by the researcher, which are collected in Buckoke's (2013) publication *The Alexander Technique for Musicians* and on his personal website [www.alexandernow.org](http://www.alexandernow.org) under the heading of 'RCM Student work'<sup>6</sup>.

[The Alexander Technique] has improved my focus because I learned to focus on not just one thing at a time, but thinking about body and music at the same time.

By taking Alexander lessons I learned to be more aware of misuse. As a result, instead of playing in a way that develops repetitive practice with bad habits, I decided to make the choice to get rid of all the unnecessary stiffness.

The Alexander Technique does not have a quick solution that will guarantee an immediate end to the negative impact of performance anxiety. But it does provide very useful methods that with time and thought can alter the approach to a concert platform.

After putting the Alexander Technique ideas into focus during my practices and everyday life, I've come to really believe that these are some of the most

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<sup>6</sup> Although the names of these students are disclosed in Buckoke's publication and website, their identities are not revealed in this report in order to harmonize with students' anonymous feedback from other Alexander programs under study.

important techniques that even non-musicians can use to improve their wellbeing and body awareness so that they can get the most out of their movements with the least tension and stress caused.

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.

It has helped me learn about my body and how to manage my movements naturally so that I'm not forcing bad habits that affect my music making.

To summarize, RCM's students believe their Alexander education enabled them to a) improve wellbeing and body awareness, b) avoid adverse habits, c) improve attention span and performance anxiety, d) generate positive and constructive mindset, e) obtain problem solving strategies, f) learn to take responsibility for mind and body, and g) learn to respond appropriately to life and music activities.

### **Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto**

Globally recognized for its interdisciplinary research and innovative, transformative professional training, the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto is one of Canada's largest and most prominent university-based music programs. Offering undergraduate, graduate, and various professional training studies in performance, education, musicology, composition, music theory, and ethnomusicology, the Faculty of Music presents more than six hundred concerts and events a year to complement students' learning and enrich its community's cultural experience. Its commitment to the highest standard of excellence in music education has produced many leading figures in the field of musical arts, including tenor Jon Vickers, soprano Barbara Hannigan, composer Mychael Danna, soprano Adrienne Pieczonka, violinist Geoff Nuttall, conductor Julian Kuerti, and baritone Russell Braun.

## **U of T Program Development & Course/lesson Description**

The Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto has included the Alexander Technique in their curriculum since 2007. Embedded in the graduate performance studies, the Technique is implemented as a half-year elective course, available to students who are registered in the graduate degree as well as equivalent professional training programs. The participants of this course receive instruction once a week in a two-hour class, which is delivered in a large group setting with a maximum enrollment of fifteen students. Currently, this course is offered in the fall term. However, up until 2017/18, this module was made available to students in both fall and winter terms. Alexander teacher Nancy Sicsic has been instructing this course since it was established in 2007, and she also offers private lessons on site with additional fees.

The purpose of this course is to introduce the basic concepts of the Alexander Technique and how they are relevant to musicians' development, as well as to demonstrate how they can be applied to music performance practice. The course syllabus is structured around Alexander principles and procedures. By incorporating various group games and performance activities into lecture and class discussions, the instructions aim to not only illustrate Alexander's theoretical framework and its application to music playing, but also foster teamwork spirit and engage students to utilize the Technique in a fun and supportive environment. Due to the size of the class, the use of verbal guidance is emphasized, and the traditional hands-on instruction is applied whenever possible to clarify the students' understanding.

In order to enhance students' in-class learning, two research projects and an observational journal are included in the course requirement. The purpose of the journal is to motivate students to pay attention, record, and question various situations and experiences in their lives. Sicsic explained that music students are often told by their teachers and coaches what to do and

how to do it, but rarely take time to reflect upon their responses to the various instructions and opinions they have received. She applies this practice as a means to inspire her students to evaluate their actions and reactions consciously and constructively so that they can learn how to make reasoned choices for their future endeavors.

The research projects are designed to help students generate Alexander-based strategies and learn how to utilize them to improve coordination and solve various problems they encounter in life. For this first project, students are required to learn how to juggle as a group. This fast-paced activity is an excellent way to practice movement, coordination, awareness, breathing and *inhibition of end-gaining*. Afterwards, the students give an oral report reflecting on their learning process and discoveries with appropriate Alexander terminologies.

Using ‘juggling’ as a metaphor, the second assignment requires the course participants to examine their daily and performing life events and discuss how they can apply their Alexander learning to improve the ‘juggling’ situations in their lives. Sicsic expressed that her goal is to present the principles of the Technique clearly and offer practical examples of applications so that music students can develop a collection of reliable and systematic strategies to improve their musical and daily life.

### **U of T Program Strengths and Areas to Improve**

The current Alexander course is limited in accessibility; it allows only fifteen graduate students per year to receive instruction, and undergraduates cannot participate. However, the Faculty makes private learning opportunities available to any interested students on site by offering Sicsic a designated studio space at the Faculty, where she has full-time access to provide Alexander lessons. Sicsic explained that the benefit of this arrangement is giving students the flexibility to control their lesson schedules and also save their time from traveling off campus for

lessons. The disadvantage, on the other hand, is the financial burden. This is particularly challenging for music students who often have to pay for additional coaching and rehearsal sessions as well as instrument maintenance; it sometimes prevents them from taking consistent Alexander lessons. For this reason, Sicsic encourages the Faculty to consider increasing curricular instruction so that more students can benefit from learning the Technique without financial concerns.

In order to further develop the current implementation, Sicsic suggests that the administration create a module for undergraduate students. She reasons it will not only benefit more students but will also enable them to cultivate good *use* in the earlier stage of their music training, which is more proactive than trying to correct undue habits after they are developed. With regards to the current course, she believes the class length is too long, which tends to be unproductive and inefficient. In order to better utilize the total amount of instruction hours, she proposes to increase the class frequency to twice a week and decrease the class duration from two hours to one hour so that students can gain more opportunities to experience the Technique. Sicsic believes this arrangement will allow students to better embody their learning and therefore elevate the efficiency and effectiveness of the course.

### **U of T Alexander Technique Impact**

The Alexander Technique teaches individuals how to obtain better *use* and avoid adverse habits, which is the key to preventing injuries. Sicsic has noticed that when her students increase their body awareness and improve coordination, they become happier and more confident about themselves as a person and as a musician. This result also helps them develop a good collaborative relationship with others.

The following excerpts were extracted from the course evaluation, supplied by the participating instructor, describing the ways that the study of the Alexander Technique enhances these students' music education.

This course is extremely useful for musicians. The Technique is a practical way of not only paying close attention to what and how we're doing with our bodies, but also a way of helping ourselves to free our muscles and utilize our energy into the music we play.

This course was very useful to my performing, and my improvement was commented upon by multiple coaches and my practical instructor.

I will continue to learn about this topic, and this is thanks to the great experience of finding a better and easier way to perform with my instrument.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of this class was the prerogative to "work on yourself", in a constructive non-judgmental environment. I believe that there should be an extension of this course where individual lessons are offered.

I benefitted greatly from this course... It is related to everything I am doing in school and in life.

Alexander Technique was invaluable to my progress as a musician, physically & mentally, this term. The ideas that were shared among classmates and teacher were eye-opening and felt, if anything, that course could have been a full-year course study.

This is a very valuable course for all performance students, and I would recommend making it a mandatory part of the performance program.

Great course – I am impressed that it is a part of my Masters degree. It is refreshing to see what I consider to be a major priority actually *be* a priority to a university. Bravo.

By studying the Alexander Technique, these music students learn to a) move with freedom and ease, b) improve body awareness, c) cultivate confidence, and d) increase efficiency in music playing. Some acknowledge this method teaches them a practical living skill, and some believe Alexander studies should be considered a priority in tertiary music training.



## CHAPTER 5

### PARTICIPANTS, PROGRAM COMPARISONS AND INFLUENCE

This chapter presents participant information and cross-case comparisons of the five selected Alexander programs as well as the influence of Alexander learning on music students' development in order to address the second and third research questions:

- What are the variations of implementations and instructional approaches among the selected Alexander programs, and how are they similar to and different from each other?
- How do participating instructors describe the influence of Alexander studies on the development of music students in the selected institutions?

The contents of the chapter are illustrated in three sections: Participants, Program Comparisons, and the Influence of Alexander Studies on Musicians' Development. Word tables are used to summarize each category and demonstrate the tendencies and differences between programs.

The first section examines participating instructors' professional background and their personal experience with the Alexander Technique. The purpose of this presentation is to establish the validity and the relevance of participants' statements to the study, as they are the primary source of data for the current investigation. The Program Comparisons examine the variations as well as the similarities and differences of the programs under study. It is elucidated under two categories: Alexander Technique Programs History and Development and Implementation and Instruction Variations. The first category reviews the collective history and

development of the selected Alexander establishments, and the second illustrates the types of implementations and compares teaching approaches, settings, and objectives within each type. The last section of the chapter, the Influence of Alexander Studies on Musicians' Development, displays the impact and benefits of Alexander education on post-secondary musicians' training and growth. This report is based on both participants' teaching experience and a selected group of students' learning experience.

### Participants

*Table 5.1 Background information of participants*

	<b>BOCO</b>	<b>CURTIS</b>	<b>MCGILL</b>	<b>RCM</b>	<b>U OF T</b>
<b>Instructor</b>	Debi Adams	Ariel Weiss	Lawrence Smith	Peter Buckoke	Nancy Sicsic
<b>Total Years of Teaching</b>	27	30	30	30	13
<b>Years of Tertiary Teaching</b>	17	30	7	30	13
<b>Professional Membership</b>	ATI	ATI	CANSTAT	STAT	CANSTAT
<b>Other Professional Background</b>	Pianist	Dancer/ Choreographer	Stage Actor	Double Bassist	Pianist
<b>Motivation of Study</b>	Enhancing artistic development	Enhancing artistic development	Pain and injuries	Pain and injuries	Pain and injuries

### Personal Experience with the Alexander Technique

#### Motivation of study.

All participants appeared to be introduced to the Alexander Technique through their teachers, friends and/or colleagues in the performing arts. Some of them began Alexander studies because they were struggling with pain and discomfort, and some of them wanted to enhance their artistic and pedagogical development.

*Experiencing pain and injuries.* Peter Buckoke took Alexander lessons because he developed acute pain in his neck, shoulders, and back when he switched from playing the cello to double bass and decided to increase his hours of practice.

... I got into a lot of trouble. I started to get pain. It got to the point where I thought maybe I couldn't carry on because after half an hour of double bass playing, I'd be in such a state... I was distracted by the pain in my neck, in my shoulders, my back. It started to affect my vision, and the lines and dots would move and bounce on the page. Even though I was determined to play through the pain, I couldn't, because I couldn't read the music anymore.

After being introduced to the Alexander Technique, Buckoke's condition was dramatically improved after a series of lessons, which enabled him to continue with his music studies. "It turned the corner for me... and I was very grateful."

Lawrence Smith was a stage actor, specializing in physical theatre and corporeal mime. He decided to study the Technique because he was suffering from various conditions and injuries in many parts of his body.

By the age of thirty-two, I was diagnosed with cervical arthritis, two herniated discs, chronic bursitis in knees and shoulders, torn patellar tendons in both knees, chronic tendonitis on deltoids, chronic tendonitis in my wrists, arthritis in all my fingers, and there was no future in continuing the theatre work I was doing. I had wrecked my posture by positioning myself, the contrary of what I would need to do with Alexander Technique study – restore posture by un-positioning.

After years of tightening, holding, and positioning his body for theatrical effect, Smith had to stop performing and touring due to his injuries. The study of the Alexander Technique helped him undo his holding and tightening patterns, which not only restored his body functioning, but also changed his outlook on life, helping him become a more open and receptive individual.

While studying piano performance in university, Nancy Sicsic developed migraine headaches and excess muscle tension, and often experienced agonizing pain when she practiced

the piano. Her then husband suggested that she took some Alexander lessons while they were visiting Vancouver.

I took a series of ten lessons. Following these ten sessions, I never got those [migraine headaches] ever again. ...The lying-down [table work] was a little painful at first. But I did it. One thing I took away was that the sessions were strange but wonderful. ...I remember telling my teacher that my back was starting to feel like it was falling into place.

Encouraged by this promising result, Sicsic continued with her Alexander lessons when she later relocated to Vancouver. By taking lessons regularly, Sicsic was able to improve her performance anxiety and confidence issues in addition to her physical pain and discomfort.

***Enhancing artistic development.*** Ariel Weiss was introduced to Alexander Technique through a dance teacher while she was studying dance in college. Although not experiencing any particular physical pain or discomfort, she pursued Alexander lessons because she wanted to improve her dancing.

... I was curious [about Alexander Technique]. [A teacher] was teaching a large group of people, and he helped me balance on one leg, and it worked. I just thought that was amazing! I did not understand how he got that to work, but it certainly wasn't how I was trying to balance on one leg. He had my curiosity, and I really wanted to improve my dancing. I went out to Lincoln, Nebraska that summer to study with [a master teacher] because I wanted to be a better dancer.

The study of Alexander Technique enabled Ariel to improve coordination for her dancing in a way that the dance technique could not. It also taught her to be patient, one of the most important lessons she has learned in life.

Debi Adams was drawn to the Alexander Technique because she discovered her approach to piano playing and teaching was similar to some aspects of the Alexander principles. "It all made sense," she said, after she had a conversation with an Alexander teacher.

I was already doing to some degree what Alexander had discovered for himself. I had been on my personal quest to figure things out. I didn't have the

understanding of the primary mechanism being the organizing principle for our coordination. So I was putting out fires by relaxing over here, and relaxing over there, and not looking at the system as a whole. But I had already realized how much excess tension was interfering my playing. So, it was a very easy conversation [with this teacher], and she was the first person to make me realize that I was participating in what was causing my pain and that I could have something to do with it.

After a short period of lessons, Adams recognized a higher degree of freedom in the movement of her head, neck, and limbs, which made a noticeable change in her piano playing. As she continued to study, she became calmer and more confident on stage, which gave her freedom to bring spontaneity and sensitivity to her performance. Most importantly, Adams learned how to reason and how to let go of negative reactions to life situations.

### **Impact of the Technique.**

Every participating instructor passionately stated that the study of Alexander Technique has changed his/her life for the better. They have learned how to reason and how to take responsibility for their actions and wellbeing. They have also discovered the value of being patient and having respect for themselves as well as others. They described how Alexander studies have impacted their lives:

*Adams.* It would be easy for me to say the most profound influence was the piano playing, because without it I wasn't able to play, really. But I think the way it influenced my relationships with people is probably more profound. I think the degree of reflection that I do in my life is very much the product of studying AT, almost like a birds eye view, witnessing how you are moving through life.

*Weiss.* I came to the Alexander Technique to learn some patience. I am not a very patient person by nature, and this process of unfolding, and to understand *means-whereby*, not just how my head moves but how I approach responding to stimulus in my life. It is something that continues to be quite rich in the way it unfolds for me.

*Smith.* I'm going to be sixty-seven, and nothing bothers me. Not my neck, not back, not my knees, and I run barefoot. I have no joint problems. None! I sometimes shake my head and wonder that nothing hurts! I can swim, and I can do everything. That's the Alexander Technique! ...I don't think there is

anything that it hasn't improved in my life. Ironically, one of the things I have most difficulty with is speaking, the most primary thing that Alexander talked about. ...It's amazing to be able to apply it to all these difficult sports, and I still have throat tension. ...It's ongoing work, and it gets better.

**Buckoke.** Massive impact! I used to not respect myself, and I used to drink too much alcohol. I used to push myself to the absolute limit all the time. ... I used to smoke cigarettes. I wasn't organized. I just wanted to have as much fun and excitement as possible. When I started to look at what I was doing to myself, I [realized] that it was my responsibility to make sure I had a mind and a body that will be available for use for hopefully a long life. Then I started to change my behavior. I became more aware of what I was doing to myself. I realized it was stupid to smoke, and I cut down on my drinking. I started thinking about the food I was eating. ... It seems like I was a totally different person, totally different attitude to looking after myself. It's the same with personal relationships. I used to be irresponsible about my personal relationships. Then I realized I was going through the same pattern again, again, and again. So I thought it was actually possible to choose to behave differently in a relationship. ... It took me a long time to take personal responsibility, and I feel now that I'm closer to taking responsibility for the way I behave. So that was a pretty dramatic change.

**Siesic.** It has helped me to become a much better presenter and public speaker. I don't think I could stand in front of a class if I hadn't had all these lessons. It has helped my stage fright and nervousness to an eighty percent improvement; it was very crippling before. It changed how I taught piano completely, and changed my enjoyment of the teaching process because I could take care of myself during lessons and [figure out] why students have problems and how to help them. ...I love teaching so much more than I ever did.

Although each participating instructor had different motivations to study Alexander Technique, they all greatly benefited from their learning and had a life-transforming experience. Whether to restore their body functioning or to enhance their artistic development, these instructors ultimately learned to take responsibility for their actions by looking after their body and mind so that they could live a healthy and fulfilling life. Inspired by their own transformative experiences, they all decided to become a certified instructor, and have been devoting themselves to pay forward what they learned from the Technique to others.

## Professional Background

The participating instructors are active teaching members of the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT), the Canadian Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (CANSTAT), and Alexander Technique International (ATI), and they demonstrate an average teaching experience of twenty-six years. Among them, two have been teaching the Technique in post-secondary institutions for thirty years, and another two have approximately fifteen years of tertiary experience. Most participants maintain a private studio in addition to tertiary teaching, and some of them also serve on the faculty at various Alexander teacher-training courses, training the next generation of Alexander teachers. All participants have been invited to lecture, present workshop to introduce the work of F. M. Alexander, and teach master classes at various music and Alexander institutions, conferences, and organizations. This indicates that their expertise is valued and appreciated by both the Alexander and music communities.

All participants exhibit a strong background in the performing arts. Three of them are active performing musicians, and the other two had careers in dance and theatre. This fact indicates that music institutions tend to recruit Alexander instructors with professional profiles in the performing arts, and music performance background seems to be preferred.

Participants of the study unanimously assert that any Alexander teacher can be helpful to musicians in some ways. In fact, non-musician Alexander instructors' lack of musical knowledge can sometimes provide a fresh and objective outlook on music students' challenges.

As performing musicians, Adams and Buckoke described their experience:

*Adams.* People who are not musicians may have some objectivity to what we are doing. I used to have a student who is a clarinetist, and I remember asking her once, "Would you prefer taking AT lessons from a clarinetist?" And she said, "Oh no! Because you ask me why I do [certain] things, and a clarinetist wouldn't think to ask that question." So sometimes being outside of the group is a good thing.

**Buckoke.** To be honest, some of the most useful double bass lessons I've ever had came from [an Alexander teacher] who is not a musician. She is really small, and there was me with this huge instrument. She would give me fantastically useful, insightful lessons because she knows *use*. So the way I see things now, any Alexander teacher can be really useful to any musician.

From non-musicians' perspective, Weiss and Smith shared their experience and opinion:

**Weiss.** I used to be very apologetic and think it was such a disadvantage. Over time, I see more the advantages... I am coming in with a very different language, and I'm coming in with a different set of eyes, and a different perspective. I recognize that I don't *end-gain* in the same way, and I don't have any preconceived notions of what that music is supposed to be or how you supposed to do it. I don't have any "shoulds" about the music. I'm just responding, and in a way, that's enormously helpful to my music students.

**Smith.** I think it is an advantage in a way for me that I am an AT teacher and not a musician... I feel I can really teach the Technique to my music students without confusing it with instrument or vocal techniques. Also, I am able to stay out the domains of the very qualified music professors at McGill and to support their teaching rather than to seem to try to correct it.

However, instructors with professional music profiles do have certain advantages. They can communicate with music students in a relatable language and also provide empathy to young musicians' learning process. In addition, their musical expertise and experience in the industry do lend more credibility to their advice. Adams, Buckoke, Sicsic spoke from their experience.

**Adams.** I can speak their language. I can talk to them about their jury because I played hundreds of juries myself. I can talk to them about how they relate to themselves just in the moment before the performance begins because I do that myself. I think it lends some credibility to what I do.

**Buckoke.** Musicians are more likely to listen to musicians because they can 'talk the talk.' So when [my Alexander teacher] started saying stuff about playing my instrument, she used the wrong words as far as I was concerned. I had to reframe what she was telling me, and then I could make use of the information. The great thing about being a musician teaching Alexander is you can talk the talk, and immediately the musicians think, "Oh yeah, this makes sense. They know what they are talking about." The more experience someone has learning the lexicon the musicians use the better.



*Siesic.* I understand the life they are leading, and I understand the pressure. I can talk in musical terms to them, like phrasing and breathing in terms of how we use ourselves. Being a working professional musician gives me a clear sense of their belief system and also the musical ear to diagnose some issues.

Weiss agrees that not being able to communicate with her music students in musical terms is one of her challenges as a non-musician Alexander instructor.

I really wish I knew how to read music right around now. It would be very helpful. Because I know exactly where I heard it but I have no way to reference it. It's just inefficient of me when I try to describe an ascending or descending, or where the part that changed... I do my best to articulate, but I really wish I had the skills.

Participants' testimonies imply that it is helpful for non-musician Alexander instructors to obtain a certain level of knowledge in music playing and singing. It can facilitate the fostering of trust and the development of better communication with students, which ensures the effectiveness of instruction. For Alexander instructors who are also musicians, it is important and wise to refrain from having preconceived notions about how music should be played in order to avoid giving them advice that might cause confusion.

### Program Comparisons

#### Alexander Technique Programs History and Development

Table 5.2 *Alexander programs history and development*

	<b>Program History</b>	<b>Original Establishment</b>	<b>Current Establishment (as of 2018/19)</b>
<b>BOCO</b>	Since late 1990's	Courses for dancers and musicians	An Alexander program that includes academic courses (Music & Dance degree programs), a summer intensive program, and a teacher training course (extension education programing)
<b>CURTIS</b>	Since approx. 1995	Private instruction for 45 students	Same as the original establishment
<b>MCGILL</b>	Self-sponsored: 2012; subsidized: 2017	Self-sponsored program	Self-sponsored program & subsidized program; lesson allocation increased from 4 to 6 per student per term

<b>RCM</b>	Private instruction: mid 1950's; Academic courses: 1990	Private lessons	An Alexander department that includes academic courses all through the degrees and non-degree instruction (private & semi-private lessons)
<b>U OF T</b>	2007	Academic course in graduate studies	Same as the original establishment; course availability is reduced from two times a year to once a year

The collective history of the Alexander Technique at the five selected post-secondary music institutions can be traced back to the 1950's when the Royal College of Music first made Alexander instruction available to their students. Its American counterparts, Curtis and BOCO, began to introduce the Technique to their students in the mid and late 1990's. In comparison, the two Canadian institutions have a much shorter history with the Technique; U of T's implementation was established in 2007 and McGill introduced the self-sponsored program in 2012 and the subsidized program in 2017.

Among them, three (RCM, McGill, and BOCO) demonstrate progression in the development of their programs. The RCM's Alexander instruction began as an extracurricular activity, offering approximately forty hours of private lessons a week. Today, sixty years later, the College has fully integrated the Technique into their music tuition by developing a comprehensive program that includes both academic courses and non-degree lessons, allowing almost every student an opportunity to receive the much-needed psychophysical education in tertiary music training. This Alexander program continues to evolve. Its next development will focus on how certified Alexander teachers can address musicians' issues. This growth was the result of continuing examination and experimentation with the program that demonstrated the efficacy and usefulness of the Technique, as corroborated by increased enrolment, musical progress of the students, and positive student feedback.

McGill's Alexander program also has expanded since its inception. It began in 2012 as self-sponsored and by 2017, the program was subsidized by the school, which indicates a strong confidence in the Technique. Much of this expansion can be credited to the overwhelmingly positive and appreciative feedback from students. Many of them expressed that Alexander studies greatly complemented their music training and should be included in the curriculum. One student asserted:

Alexander Technique should be included in the curriculum for a Master's degree. The physical strain that is put on the bodies of musicians in their advanced degrees is felt, seen, and heard. We have to practice and perform for hours per day, and there should be some kind of safety net in place to ensure that we are using our bodies safely to prevent injury.

Their enthusiastic responses encouraged the school to not only continue with the program in 2019/20 but also increase the lesson allocation from the original four to the current six per participant per term. However, the long-term plan for this implementation has not been determined.

The Alexander Technique program at BOCO continues to expand, and is deeply embedded in its performing arts education as a whole. According to Debi Adams, the Technique is well respected at BOCO because many teaching and staff members have Alexander experience and appreciate its pertinence to performance studies.

It is very highly regarded... They all love the Alexander Technique. I have had colleagues in my training course and the summer intensive course. I have dance teachers who have asked me to come in to their classes to observe their classes and listen to their language. So it is everywhere!

The program began in the late 1990's with two classes in dance and music divisions, and currently, several modules for dancers and sections for musicians have been added to the curricula in addition to the development of a summer intensive program and a teacher-training course. Furthermore, the Wellness Division also provides lesson opportunities, making the

Technique widely available to their students. It is clear that the effect and relevance of Alexander education to musical/performing arts studies are appreciated and valued by BOCO's students, faculty members, and the institution.

It is interesting to discover that some of the administration stakeholders at BOCO, McGill, and RCM have personal experience with the Alexander Technique. Judging by the active expansions of these three programs, it is reasonable to assume that these stakeholders recognize that Alexander learning is valuable and relevant to post-secondary music performance studies, and thereby support and encourage the continuing development of Alexander programs.

Curtis and U of T's implementations, on the other hand, have not demonstrated any advancement in development since their original establishment. According to Ariel Weiss, Curtis' Alexander implementation has been maintaining the same structure since she joined the teaching staff in 1998, continuing to provide private instruction to forty-five students per year. Nonetheless, this indicates that the students and the administration stakeholders recognize the value of Alexander instruction to musicians' wellness and development and are dedicated to continuing the program.

Although the current arrangement of private lessons has the advantage of addressing individual issues, Weiss has a suggestion that may help to expand and improve the program in the future.

I think creating a combination of group classes, workshops, master classes and private sessions would be more cost effective, reach a wider section of the student population, and in the end more efficient and effective. For instance, I am very interested in helping students with how they coordinate in the dynamics of playing in a group, such as chamber music, which is difficult to address in a private lesson. Topics such as sitting with support or managing performance anxiety could be easily addressed in group-sessions and benefit the entire student body.

U of T's Alexander course has unfortunately been affected by budget cuts and a reduction of provincial government funding. As a result, this module has been reduced in 2018/19 from being offered in both terms to one term only, despite the fact that it has been well received and supported by students. Some students testified:

I benefitted greatly from this course... It is related to everything I am doing in school and in life.

This course is extremely useful for musicians. The Technique is a practical way of not only paying close attention to what and how we're doing with our bodies, but also a way of helping ourselves to free our muscles and utilize our energy into the music we play.

Alexander Technique was invaluable to my progress as a musician, physically & mentally, this term. The ideas that were shared among classmates and teacher were eye-opening and felt, if anything, that course could have been a full-year course study.

Great course – I am impressed that it is a part of my Masters degree. It is refreshing to see what I consider to be a major priority actually *be* a priority to a University. Bravo.

This is one of the challenges for government-funded institutions. Courses reductions and cancellations are inevitable if they are not considered to be core curriculum. Sicsic expressed that the upside is the Faculty of Music continues to support Sicsic's private teaching on campus by providing her full-time access to a studio space, which is often a privilege in many institutions. Although interested students are responsible for the costs of lessons, this arrangement enables them to receive instruction on site without spending extra time to travel off campus for lessons.

### Implementation and Instruction Variations

Table 5.3 Implementation types

	Implementation Types
<b>BOCO</b>	(Music) <b>Curricular:</b> academic course <b>Extracurricular:</b> Wellness Division and Alexander teacher-training course; private lessons/small-group classes

<b>CURTIS</b>	<b>Extracurricular:</b> Student Wellness Resources; private lessons
<b>MCGILL</b>	<b>Extracurricular:</b> Student Life and Learning; private lessons
<b>RCM</b>	<b>Curricular:</b> academic courses <b>Extracurricular:</b> private/semi-private lessons
<b>U OF T</b>	<b>Curricular:</b> academic course

The Alexander programs under study exhibit two types of implementations: curricular and extracurricular. Among them, BOCO and RCM include both types of programming. The curricular implementations, BOCO, RCM, and U of T, tend to establish the Technique as an academic study and deliver the instruction in a group setting. The extracurricular implementations, BOCO, Curtis, McGill, and RCM, tend to be embedded in student life or wellness resources. The instruction in this type of implementations has the tendency to be given in private lessons, except RCM, which also offers semi-private lessons and BOCO, which provides small-group classes in addition to individual instructions.

### **Curricular implementations.**

*Table 5.4 Variations of course structure*

	<b>BOCO</b>	<b>RCM</b>	<b>U of T</b>
<b>Level of Study</b>	Introductory and advanced option	Introductory and advanced	Introductory
<b>a. Introductory Study</b>	Elective	Embedded in a larger course/Mandatory	Elective
<b>b. Advanced Study</b>	Elective	Elective	N/A
<b>Section</b>	4	Level 4 & BMus2: 22 Level 5, 6, 7: 6.	1
<b>Maximum Enrollment</b>	48-50/semester; 96-100/year	Level 4 & BMus. 5: 110 Level 5: 30 Level 6 & 7: 18.	15/term; 30/year (up until 2017/18)
<b>Eligible Participants</b>	Undergraduate and graduate degree/diploma programs; mixed enrollment	All degree/diploma programs	Graduate degree/diploma programs
<b>Instructors</b>	1	3	1

*Levels of studies.* The Alexander instruction within the selected curricular implementations exhibits two general levels of studies: introductory and advanced. RCM and BOCO offer both levels of learning, and U of T provides introductory study exclusively. Among the introductory modules, U of T's course is the only one that limits the enrollment to graduate students. Instructor Nancy Sicsic recognizes this issue as a major limitation of their program. She asserts that "an undergraduate course should be implemented [at U of T] as it can help prevent harmful habits from being further ingrained." The implication of this statement resonates with the findings uncovered by other research (Chen, 2006; Mozeiko, 2011), reasoning that it is necessary to introduce psychophysical education to musicians as early as possible in order to foster good coordination, which is the best approach to prevent the formation of adverse habits.

Although both RCM and BOCO provide introductory and advanced learning, how they structure the studies as a whole demonstrates differences. RCM's studies are structured in a systematic and linear manner. The first and second year undergraduate students begin with introductory studies, Level 4 and the refresher BMus2, and the third and fourth year students can opt to continue their Alexander education by taking Level 5 and Level 6 courses. Each level is more academically challenging than the previous one.

Level 7 is a module for the graduate students. It accommodates both experienced and novice students "because nobody else does Alexander in the way we do," explained Buckoke, and "you get some students who don't have the experience" in the mix. In order to enable experienced students to further develop their Alexander training and the new ones to become familiar with the Technique, the course participants are grouped into different classes based on the levels of their Alexander knowledge.

Unlike RCM's approach, BOCO's course is open to both undergraduate and graduate students and can be taken multiple times. This mixed enrollment creates a unique learning environment that includes participants of various ages and levels of Alexander experience. Instructor Debi Adams explained: "Alexander Technique learning is not linear." Therefore, she believes that there is no reason to design courses based on students' Alexander levels. Although she appreciates the advantage of the systematic approach where the instructor does not need to repeat the introduction to Alexander concepts, ultimately, the diversity of experiences is preferred for Alexander learning because "insightful ideas from the experienced students and the freshness of a new perspective from the newbies" can be shared and exchanged in every class to enrich each student's Alexander experience.

These two approaches represent two different ways of learning and teaching, and each one is advantageous in its own way. RCM's systematic approach allows students to learn and progress in an organized and consistent manner, and it also facilitates course design and instruction. In comparison, BOCO's mixed-experienced arrangement enables classmates to get insightful knowledge from the advanced students and fresh ideas from the novices. In addition, this approach has practical values. It provides students opportunities to further their Alexander education if the institution does not have available financial means to implement multiple levels of courses. However, it might pose certain challenges for class management and teaching strategies if the class size is too big.

Both levels of courses are implemented as elective studies, except RCM's Level 4 and BMus2, which are a mandatory degree requirement for first and second year undergraduate students. This finding strongly suggests that Alexander instruction is considered by RCM to be a fundamental element in tertiary musicians' training, and it also raises the question whether or not



all post-secondary musicians should study the Alexander Technique. The participants of this study agree that it is not necessary to make Alexander learning compulsory; however, they believe it is important to make it available to students as an option because it can greatly benefit students' development as musicians. Peter Buckoke testified:

If we didn't need it, there would be no point... I don't think everybody should be made to take Alexander lessons all the time, but it would be really interesting if an institution was set up with the basis of education being the Alexander Technique, because to play instruments and to sing, you have to use your mind and body. The idea of developing coordination between the mind and the body... moving your body, changing the shape of your body is being a musician. Understanding how to do that in a more accurate, reliable, refined way is what every musician is trying to do. Alexander Technique facilitates exactly what you need as a musician... Learning comes from change, and understanding how to facilitate change is something that Alexander helps you with.

***Course objectives and deliveries of instruction.***

*Table 5.5 Variations of course objectives and deliveries of instruction*

	<b>BOCO</b>	<b>RCM</b>	<b>U OF T</b>
<b>Length of Study (Introductory)</b>	One semester	Level 4: 10 weeks; BMus2: 5 weeks	One term
<b>Length of Study (Advanced)</b>	One semester	Level 5: full year; Level 6: full year; Level 7: full year	N/A
<b>Course Objectives (introductory)</b>	To examine the basic concepts of Alexander principles, to develop self-awareness skills, and to explore the application of the Technique to music playing and performance		
<b>Course Objectives (Advanced)</b>	N/A	To gain deeper knowledge of the Technique, to obtain higher observational skills, and pay specific attention to how to apply them to music learning, practice, collaboration, audition, and pedagogy	N/A
<b>Teaching Strategies</b>	Lecture, activity, in-class discussion, hands-on and verbal	Lecture, activity, in-class discussion, hands-on and verbal	Lecture, activity, in-class discussion, hands-on and verbal

	instruction, reading, and writing observational journals	instruction, and various assignments, including observational journals, project/presentation, & research essays	instruction, project/presentation, & observational journals
<b>Instruction Setting/ Class Size</b>	Large group/ Between 12 to 14 students per section	Small group/ L4 & BMus2: 5 students per section; L5, 6, 7: 6 students per section	Large group/ Up to 15 students per section
<b>Hands-On Instruction</b>	Minimal: administered when possible	4 to 5 minutes per person per class	Minimal: administered when possible
<b>Class Frequency</b>	Twice a week	Weekly	Weekly
<b>Class Length</b>	1 hour	L4 & BMus2: 30 mins.; L5, 6: 75 mins.; L7: 1 hour	2 hours
<b>Course Outlines</b>	Flexible/go with the flow	Predetermined	Predetermined
<b>Assessment</b>	Participation and assignments/letter grade	Assignments/percentage grade; exception: L4 – pass/fail	Participation, presentation, and assignments/percentage grade

*Introductory course objectives.* The course objectives at the introductory level exhibit consistency across all four introductory modules, including RCM's BMus2. The general goals for this level are to examine the basic concepts of Alexander's principles, develop self-observational skills, and to explore how to practically apply the Technique to music learning and performance. However, Sicsic has eliminated the component of practical application to music performance due to students' resistance to performing in class. She is uncertain what exactly has caused this inclination, but suspects it might be related to the fact that participants are graduate students. "They are teaching and they are professionals," she explained. "It is hard [for them] to let their guard down." This is another reason that Sicsic advocates introducing the Technique to musicians as early as possible in their development because they tend to feel less pressure in

exposing challenges and weaknesses, which is an important step in the process of making improvements.

*Advanced course objectives.* The general learning goals for all the advanced courses under study include acquiring a deeper understanding of Alexander's theoretical framework, developing a higher level of observational skill, and learning how to better utilize the Technique to enhance music studies. RCM's Level 5 also emphasizes the recognition of the connection between habitual challenges and solutions. Level 6 and Level 7 exhibit specific attention to the practical applications of the Technique to music performance in the context of auditions, managing performance anxiety, music expression and communication, collaborative performance, and music pedagogy in addition to the general goals.

*Class size.* The modules under examination exhibit two class sizes. BOCO and U of T have a class size of twelve to fifteen, and the RCM places five or six students in a class depending on the level of study. The benefit of the large class is it can engage many students at once. It is ideal for examining the theories of Alexander's principles and allows course participants to understand the Technique from a variety of perspectives. From a practical standpoint, the larger class is also more cost-effective for the institution. The small-group class, on the other hand, has the advantage of providing students more hands-on guidance and personal attention, which facilitate the process of changing counterproductive habits. Both Adams and Sicsic acknowledged that it is challenging for them to provide hands-on instruction on a regular basis due to the size of their classes. Buckoke, in comparison, is able to give more one-on-one time to students by having a class that is half of BOCO and U of T's size.

*Length of study, class duration, and class frequency.* The selected introductory courses demonstrate a similar length of study. They last one term or semester between ten to twelve

weeks. However, the class duration and frequency exhibit noticeable dissimilarities. BOCO's instruction is administered twice a week and each class lasts one hour. U of T provides weekly classes, and each meeting is two hours. Although these two courses demonstrate identical total hours of study, how they utilize their instruction time is different.

Sicsic expressed that her current class duration of two hours is not ideal for an Alexander Technique course, particularly at the introductory level. Her experience indicates that students tend to become less engaged when the class time lasts more than one hour. She reasons that learning the Alexander Technique is similar to learning an instrument, and too much information at once may overwhelm students and cause them to become frustrated and less receptive. Rather, more exposures over time to the Technique can facilitate students' learning by frequently reminding them to increase awareness of themselves and their environments in order to make appropriate choices for their actions. By decreasing the class duration to one hour and increasing the frequency of instruction to two times per week, a module that is similar to BOCO's arrangement, Sicsic believes that her students will benefit more within the same amount of instruction hours.

Similar to U of T, the RCM's introductory study also provides weekly instruction. However, each class lasts thirty minutes, exhibiting a class duration that is much shorter than BOCO and U of T's designs. Buckoke's experience demonstrates that it is possible to cover the basics of Alexander principles and procedures within a half-hour, and his students' positive feedback provides a strong support for this claim.

Other than the length of study, these three courses exhibit discrepancies in class size, class duration, and class frequency. Currently, there is no literature available that examines how these variants affect the effect and efficiency of Alexander group instruction. Future

investigations in this area are suggested as the results may provide valuable information on how to effectively and practically implement Alexander instruction as an academic course.

*Teaching strategies.* The teaching strategies applied in both levels of studies exhibit a similar approach. All sampled courses utilize lectures and discussions to examine Alexander's life and discoveries and employ various activities and games to demonstrate and explain Alexander's theoretical framework. All three curricular instructors find that games and activities are particularly useful for introduction purposes.

Traditional hands-on guidance is also applied. However, the usage of this teaching approach is infrequent or eliminated at times due to the size of the class. All three instructors reported that they tend to apply hands-on whenever is possible, particularly for beginners, in order to quickly engage their attention and immediately help them establish a visceral connection between the Alexander principles and actions.

Writing observational journals is another commonly used teaching strategy among the selected courses to develop students' observational skill, particularly for introductory studies. Each instructor demonstrates a different approach. Adams uses specific questions to guide students' journal writing. She explained that the purpose of this approach is to help students clarify their understanding of the principles and also learn how to observe their individual habitual patterns. They are required to submit the diaries periodically so that the instructor can monitor each student's progress and provide appropriate guidance when misunderstandings occur.

Buckoke provides a guideline for the observational journals. The Level 4 and BMus2 students are expected to document their observations for the last two weeks of the course in order to demonstrate their appreciation of the Technique as well as the awareness of their individual

counterproductive tendencies and the correctional strategies that they have developed over the course of their study. The students of BMus2 are required to document observations with video recording devices such as smart phones. “We encourage them to use technology in their practice, particularly video, so they can accurately see and hear what they are doing,” explained Buckoke.

Along with the journal, students of Level 4 and BMus2 are expected to ask a question in class at the end of the course. Buckoke elucidated that how students ask a question implies their level of understanding:

Asking good questions is really a great way of learning. We encourage students to see that is a skill that they can develop. They have to ask a question that shows their level of Alexander knowledge. If they ask a question like “Can you apply Alexander Technique to teaching your instrument?” You say, “Well, actually you could’ve asked that question before the course.” They might say, “I understand I need to have freedom in the *primary control* so my head can rebalance, but when I put my head on my chin rest, it fixes my head in that position. So what position should I be in?” So what you’ve got there is: I heard the lesson, I understand the head should be free to move, and now I’m thinking that it’s okay it doesn’t move, so which position should I have it in? What you have done is shown a certain academic level of knowledge but you haven’t really understood what the *primary control* is about and the need for the head to be rebalancing even when you play the violin with the chin rest. You see, how you give yourself away by asking a question.

Sicsic does not provide guidelines or instructions on what to observe for journals. “I am annoyingly vague,” said Sicsic. She explained that is because graduate level students have been told exactly what to do by their music teachers and coaches for a long time. It is time they begin to learn how to think for themselves and examine what works for them and what does not. “I want to get them from a place of unknowing,” proclaimed Sicsic, “and that is where Alexander wants us.”

*Assessment.* All curricular modules under study require assessment. The assessing

criteria for introductory courses generally include attendance, class participation, and various assignments, including observational journals, research projects, and essays to satisfy the academic requirements. RCM's assessment for Level 4 and BMus2 is unique. It uses the aforementioned Alexander question to evaluate students' learning in addition to observational diaries. U of T's module and RCM's advanced studies also use research projects and presentations to assess students' developments.

All courses assign a final grade, except RCM's Level 4, which is a module of pass/fail. Adams and Sicsic believe pass/fail is more appropriate for Alexander studies because the idea of trying to get a good mark may instigate competitiveness and create an environment for *end-gaining*, which is against the spirit of the Technique. Buckoke holds a different opinion. "What we are looking for is the thinking of the person, and not trying to give a mark for an English essay," he explained. If students can demonstrate a "good, logical, accurate application of Alexander principles, and make personal connections, that's a good mark; if people misunderstand the principles, then they don't get a good mark." Buckoke used to feel uncomfortable assigning marks for Alexander studies, but he is "very comfortable with it now" after seeing positive results from their students.

#### **Extracurricular implementations.**

Among the five selected institutions, four provide extracurricular Alexander instruction to their music students. Curtis and McGill provide exclusive extracurricular lessons, and BOCO and RCM offer non-degree learning opportunities in addition to curricular courses. U of T does not provide any extracurricular Alexander activities.

*Program structure.*

Table 5.6 Variations of extracurricular programs

	<b>BOCO</b>	<b>CURTIS</b>	<b>MCGILL</b>	<b>RCM</b>
<b>Embedment</b>	Wellness Division & Teacher-training course	Student Wellness Resources	Student Life & Living	Alexander Technique Program
<b>Costs for instruction</b>	Inclusive	Inclusive	Subsidized – students: 1/3 of the cost, institution: 2/3	Inclusive
<b>Application and Eligibility</b>	All registered students. Wellness: every term; first come, first served. Training course: N/A; pain and injuries	All registered students. Once a year; first come, first served	All registered students. Every term; proof of conditions	All registered students. Once a year; proof of conditions
<b>Maximum Enrollment</b>	Varies, depending on the availabilities of instructors	45/year	40/term	Varies; 32 hours/week for 2018/19, depending on the availabilities of instructors and the school's enrollment as a whole
<b>Available Instructors</b>	Varies	3	2	4

*Embedment and instruction costs.* The extracurricular Alexander programs under study tend to provide instruction through wellness resources or student living services. RCM is an exception; the extracurricular learning activities are included in its Alexander program. BOCO's situation is also unique; its extracurricular instruction is provided through both Wellness Division and the Alexander program (trainees' practicum at the teacher-training course). In addition, instruction costs are generally inclusive among the selected programs, except McGill, which currently subsidizes two-thirds of the lesson fees. These findings indicate that the selected



successful music institutions recognize the Alexander Technique as a beneficial resource for students' health and wellness, and also suggest that student living or learning services may be able to provide necessary funding to support the establishment of extracurricular Alexander program and/or learning activities.

*Application and eligibility.* The selected extracurricular Alexander programs are all open to students who are registered in their respective schools, although each has implemented an application process to select participants in order to accommodate limited availabilities. Curtis and RCM require yearly applications. If approved, students will commit to a full year of instruction. The benefit of this approach is that it provides consistency to students' learning and gives them ample amount of time to change counterproductive habits. BOCO's Wellness Division and McGill, on the other hand, require students to apply every term. This method enables more students to experience the Technique. The instruction provided by BOCO's teacher-training course is unique. This service is part of teacher trainees' practicum, and it does not insist on a strict application procedure. However, participants are strongly encouraged to attend all scheduled lessons/classes and have to agree to provide feedback at the end of the study.

Two types of qualifying policies are exhibited. McGill and RCM approve applications based on students' conditions, and the ones who demonstrate pain and injuries take priorities. Curtis, on the other hand, puts students on the roster based on a first come, first served policy. BOCO uses both policies; the Wellness Division is first come, first served, and the teacher-training course considers students' conditions.

The advantage of condition-based approach is that it enables students who suffer from pain, injury, and anxiety issues to address their challenges without delay so that they can pursue music studies with their full potential. The benefit of first come, first-served is that it

demonstrates fairness and allows students with strong interests in the Technique to have a fair chance to receive instruction. The downside of this policy is that it can be impractical if it does not have enough flexibility to accommodate students with injuries. Ariel Weiss testified that tertiary music students are constantly under pressure to perform their best in various musical situations, and injury rates are particularly high during special events when they are required to rehearse for long hours. Therefore, it is practical and important for Alexander programs to address this issue. “I have been advocating quite strongly that I want anyone who’s injured to move to the top of the list,” said Weiss, so that injured students can recover quickly in order to continue with their musical pursuits.

***Deliveries of instruction and lesson objectives.***

*Table 5.7 Extracurricular lesson objectives and instruction deliveries*

	<b>BOCO</b>	<b>RCM</b>	<b>CURTIS</b>	<b>MCGILL</b>
<b>Instruction setting</b>	Wellness Division: private lessons; teacher trainees’ practicum: both private lessons & small-group classes	Both private and semi private lessons	Private lessons	Private lessons
<b>Course of Study</b>	Wellness Division: 2 sessions per term; teacher-training course: 6	Full year	Full year	6 sessions per term
<b>Lesson Duration</b>	45 mins to 1 hour	30 mins.	30 mins.	30 mins.
<b>Lesson Frequency</b>	Approx. every 6 weeks	Weekly	Weekly	Approx. every 2 weeks
<b>Lesson Objectives</b>	Wellness Division: N/A; teacher-training course (twofold): pedagogical training for trainees and helping participating students to obtain better coordination	To help students sort out their individual psychophysical coordination issues in order to make improvement in their music studies	To help students obtain better coordination in various activities with a focus on playing music and preventing injuries	To help students learn about basic <i>use</i> and posture by restoring their reflexes and voluntary movements

	in various activities			
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*Instruction setting.* In the selected extracurricular implementations, Alexander instruction is primarily delivered in an applied-studio setting. All programs offer one-on-one lessons. In addition to individual instruction, RCM provides semi-private options and BOCO's teacher-training course offers small-group classes.

*Lesson/class duration, study period, and lesson frequency.* The majority of the extracurricular programs under examination provide Alexander lessons/classes that last thirty minutes, except BOCO's instruction time, which ranges between forty-five to sixty minutes depending on instructors' preferences. These variations of lesson/class durations fall within the range recommended and practiced by most Alexander teachers, which is between thirty to sixty minutes (Harer & Munden, 2009). These programs also demonstrate a variety of approaches in study period and lesson frequency. Curtis and RCM exhibit similarities in this category; their program participants receive weekly private lessons throughout the entire school year. BOCO's Wellness Division provides two lessons per term, meaning that each student receives instruction approximately every six weeks. McGill currently offers six individual lessons each semester, and the lesson frequency is approximately every two weeks. BOCO teacher-training course's arrangement is unique; the study period is not specified. Each participant receives six lessons and/or classes, and instructions take place at agreed upon times.

This finding raises the question about what number and frequency of lessons are considered sufficient for Alexander private instruction. All participating instructors agree that the answer to this question is determined by each student's learning ability, attitude, and the unique challenges they are facing. Some students demonstrate improvements after two or three lessons and others require a long time to make noticeable changes. What needs to be kept in

mind is that habits are tenacious and generally difficult to unlearn. Therefore, a small number of lessons without consistency tend to be ineffective. In order to help students make a fundamental change to their behavioral patterns, Alexander himself asked his pupils to commit to forty lessons, and most contemporary teachers recommend between thirty to forty weekly or bi-weekly sessions (Harer & Munden, 2009).

*Lesson objectives.* The common lesson objective exhibited in the selected extracurricular programs is to improve students' general psychophysical functioning and coordination. The noticeable difference identified is the application of the Technique to music playing. Most participating extracurricular instructors include this element in their teaching, except Lawrence Smith, who prefers to focus on restoring students' basic *use* and posture. He occasionally relates the instruction to music activities when experienced students request it.

Buckoke and Weiss articulate that in their experience, most music students come to take Alexander lessons because they wish to become better musicians. In addition to improving general functioning and coordination, students desire to learn strategies that can help them overcome music learning and performing challenges. By addressing music playing/performance related issues through Alexander principles, students get to experience the integration of music learning and playing with the Technique and also acquire a practical tool to aid their future endeavors.

Smith holds a different point of view. He reasons that any music playing-related issues are manifestations of general bad *use*. Therefore, it is more productive to help students make fundamental changes in the general *use* rather than a specific *use* such as music playing. In addition, playing instruments and singing require complex and accurate coordination, and it is particularly challenging for Alexander beginners to change habits in this context when *end-*

*gaining* is at its highest level. Furthermore, Smith believes Alexander instructors should not interfere with students' music instruction given by their professors. It may create confusion if the application process is perceived as a contradiction to music instructors' advice. For these reasons, Smith prefers to focus on improving students' general *use* rather than a specific *use* in music playing in the post-secondary environment, and only reserves the application to music playing for mature and Alexander-experienced students if it is requested.

### **Private lesson versus group class.**

Both settings of private lesson and group class are used to deliver Alexander instruction in the five selected music institutions. The following section examines the strengths of each format in order to illuminate how they facilitate Alexander learning.

*Table 5.8 The strengths of private lessons and group classes*

	<b>Private Lesson</b>	<b>Group Class</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	Provides a safer learning environment, more personal attention and hands-on instruction opportunities; generates stronger interest in learning; facilitates faster and deeper transformation	Facilitates the development of observational skill and the self-awareness; generates peer support; fosters collaborative spirit; cost effective

One of the strengths of private Alexander instruction is that it provides a safe and trusting environment for learning. Both Debi Adams and Ariel Weiss pointed out that the Alexander Technique is a process of self-discovery. In order to help students discover their counterproductive tendencies, the sense of feeling safe and secure must be cultivated in lessons/classes so that they are willing to divulge vulnerabilities and reveal weaknesses. Private lessons have the advantage to foster this important element of Alexander instruction faster than group class because most people tend to hide their true feelings about certain issues in front of others, either consciously or subconsciously. Therefore, when teaching the Technique in a group

setting, it takes more effort and care for instructors to create a safe and non-judgmental environment so that students will not only trust the teacher but also their peers.

*Adams.* People may feel safer in a private lesson divulging their vulnerabilities than in a class. We can create a safe environment in the group, but safety may feel stronger in a private lesson.

*Weiss.* In any learning situation, it is always a priority to make a safe environment for students. In a group situation, this is more complex and challenging to manage, and the dynamics must be prepped to be inclusive and supportive at all times.

In addition, private lessons allow students to receive more personal attention and more hands-on instruction opportunities to work on individual issues. Nancy Sicsic stated:

The advantage of a private lesson is less distraction. You can really focus on your particular needs, your particular *use*, and get so much hands-on, giving you that experience you cannot give yourself... People can go through a shift and a change by taking a course, and I hope they do. But it's more likely to happen at the private lessons.

Lawrence Smith emphasizes that Alexander Technique is defined by its hands-on approach. It is effective in helping individuals change adverse habitual patterns because “the only way to break through habits is through direct contact.” Peter Buckoke’s experience also reveals that hands-on facilitates the process of change, which generates a stronger interest in learning the Technique.

In individual lessons, students get more hands-on. The advantage is that instructors don’t need to fill them up with so much information because with the hands, you can engage someone’s attention. They become interested and excited about it because they find that they get results straight away. They feel different dramatically, and so they get interested.

In contrast, a group class can engage multiple students at once to examine the theoretical framework of the Technique, where they can also share personal experiences and generate interesting discussions. Weiss pointed out, “There is a lot of information about our structure and how it functions best about breathing, about sitting that can be shared in a group class. It’s not cost effective to teach that individually.” In addition, group learning enables students to receive

feedback and support from other class participants, which sometimes, according to Adams, is more comprehensive than what instructors can provide in private lessons. She opined:

There is a particular kind of learning that happens in a group, and you can't get that in a private lesson. It is much easier for me to watch somebody else and realize: "They really don't need to pull their head back and down when they do that!" But it's hard for people to see that for themselves. So, when they observe what somebody else does, they might wonder: "Wait a minute, I might be doing the same thing, and maybe I can look at myself differently." Plus, you get the feedback from the group. It's not me, the instructor, telling them it sounds so much better when they change. I don't tell them anything. I let their peers tell them... Learning in a group is sometimes more comprehensive.

Sicsic views it the same way, and her experience also reveals that group classes can facilitate the learning of being non-judgmental and the realization that change is possible. She explained:

When you see that other people also have challenges, you realize you are not alone, and that helps you understand the importance of being non-judgmental a little faster. We may have poor *use* but it doesn't make us poor people. Poor *use* is just a habit and a choice at the moment. But choice can be changed. When students see a transformation in others, it's easier for them to get the idea that change can happen. This is the advantage of group class.

Participating instructors' collective teaching experiences suggest that both individual lessons and group classes are influential in Alexander learning in their own ways. Individual lessons enable students to receive exclusive personal attention and more hands-on guidance, which have the advantage of helping students effectively break through counterproductive habits and embody transformation faster. In contrast, group classes can engage multiple students at once and provide more learning opportunities within the same amount of budget. In addition, this teaching format facilitates the establishment of a collaborative learning environment where students can learn from one and other, getting a type of support that teachers cannot provide. Some participants suggest that a combination of teaching formats may be more practical and beneficial to both music students and institutions because it can reach a larger portion of the student population and also allows for personalized learning opportunities.

## The Influence of Alexander Studies on Musicians' Development

Table 5.9 The influence of Alexander studies on musicians' development

	INSTRUCTORS	STUDENTS
<b>BOCO</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gain better control of instruments</li> <li>2. Increase comfort level while playing</li> <li>3. Add confidence and joy to practice and performance</li> <li>4. Enhance collaborative/ensemble skills</li> <li>5. Stay healthy as performers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve posture and prevent injury</li> <li>2. Enhance music playing and practice</li> <li>3. Cultivate positive attitude</li> <li>4. Applicable to both music studies and daily life</li> <li>5. Necessity to tertiary music training</li> </ol>
<b>CURTIS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prevent repetitive strain injury</li> <li>2. Shorten recovery period when injured</li> <li>3. Decrease performance anxiety's negative effect</li> <li>4. Enhance technical skills and artistic expressions</li> <li>5. Foster better collaborative/ensemble skills</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Obtain freer movement</li> <li>2. Increase body awareness</li> <li>3. Decrease the negative effects of performance anxiety</li> <li>4. Cultivate patience and improve patience</li> <li>5. Improve posture and breathing</li> <li>6. Prevent injury</li> <li>7. Foster positive mindset and learn problem solving strategies</li> </ol>
<b>MCGILL</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prevent injuries by obtaining the basic good <i>use</i></li> <li>2. Enable the body to become open and receptive</li> <li>3. Maximize physical and musical expressiveness</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Obtain good coordination and posture</li> <li>2. Release tension, alleviate pain, and increase physical comfort</li> <li>3. Improve posture and prevent injury</li> <li>4. Increase body awareness</li> <li>5. Increase positivity, confidence, and mental readiness for performance</li> <li>6. Should be included in music curriculum</li> </ol>
<b>RCM</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gain better understanding of music instruction</li> <li>2. Facilitate the process of improving</li> <li>3. Become comfortable when playing and capable to look after oneself in all situations</li> <li>4. Learn how to communicate musically with an audience</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve wellbeing and body awareness</li> <li>2. Change adverse habits</li> <li>3. Improve attention span and performance anxiety</li> <li>4. Generate positive and constructive mindset</li> <li>5. Obtain problem solving strategies</li> <li>6. Learn to take responsibility for mind and body</li> <li>7. Learn to appropriately respond to life and music activities</li> </ol>
<b>U OF T</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Obtain better self-awareness</li> <li>2. Prevent injuries</li> <li>3. Learn to collaborate with others</li> <li>4. Become more confident</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learn to move with freedom and ease</li> <li>2. Improve body awareness</li> <li>3. Cultivate confidence</li> <li>4. Increase efficiency in music playing</li> <li>5. A practical living skill and a priority in performance studies</li> <li>5. Should be mandatory and should include individual lessons</li> </ol>



## Instructors' Experiences

The participating instructors described how the study of Alexander Technique benefits musicians' training and development based on their teaching experiences:

**Adams.** They can gain better control over their instruments. They can reach a much higher level of comfort in playing, and add joy to their day-to-day practicing. They can enhance their ensemble relationships, and learn how to stay healthy as performers for a long, long time.

**Weiss.** Alexander Technique benefits students by preventing repetitive strain injury and helping them recover when they are injured. It also helps students manage performance anxiety and to break through technique blocks and plateaus. Perhaps most importantly, the Technique helps musicians unleash expressivity and the mental/physical agility to collaborate with colleagues and communicate with an audience.

**Smith.** The hours that a musician spends practicing can multiply what might have been small postural faults into full-blown injuries. By studying the Alexander Technique, detrimental injuries can be prevented. Also, in order to maximize one's expressiveness, one needs to allow one's body to be open and receptive. This is very much the work of Alexander Technique lessons.

**Buckoke.** Everything that a musician is asked to do can be more clearly understood after absorbing the Alexander principles, so it is a catalyst in the learning process. Musicians can find a way to be comfortable when playing and can look after themselves in all situations. They can understand how to implement a non-Alexander teacher's advice and understand how to communicate with an audience by removing habitual psychophysical blockages.

**Sicsic.** By studying the Alexander Technique, musicians can get a better sense of self in performance. It helps them prevent injuries and also learn how to establish good working relationships with others.

Peter Buckoke describes the Alexander Technique as “a catalyst in the learning process.”

He explains that “learning comes from change, which is the only way we can improve.

Understanding how to facilitate change is something that Alexander helps you with.” This statement sums up the role of Alexander studies in musicians' development.

The collective teaching experiences of the participating instructors demonstrate that the study of Alexander Technique facilitates musicians to improve their body functioning and

psychophysical coordination. The effects of this improvement are tremendously influential. It enables them to play with comfort and ease, prevent repetitive strain injuries, enhance technical and collaborative ensemble skills, manage the negative effects of performance anxiety, become more receptive and expressive, and bring clarity, confidence, productivity, and joy into their learning and performance. This process also teaches musicians to take responsibilities for their actions and understand that it is their choice to take good care of their body and mind so that they can fully commit themselves to develop their innate musical potential.

### **Music Students' Experiences**

The collected excerpts of music students' course evaluations, observational journals, and feedback to the selected courses/programs reveal that the study of Alexander Technique has effectively helped these students improve posture and coordination, release unnecessary tension, and increase the level of comfort while playing as well as self-awareness. In addition, they testify that their Alexander education has not only enhanced their music learning and performance, but also provided them a practical living skill to deal with various life situations. Some students believe Alexander studies are vital to tertiary music training. They are grateful to their institutions for providing them the learning opportunities, and strongly recommend it to be included in standard music curriculum.

The following statements from students describe how Alexander studies have positively influenced their music development in the selected Alexander programs. These descriptions were organized in the last chapter in such a way to illustrate each program profile. In this section, these anecdotal evidences are considered collectively, and are presented in a thematic organization in order to demonstrate the positive effects these students have experienced by studying the Alexander Technique.

**Improve posture/coordination/self-awareness/tension issues.**

Through the lessons, I was able to learn how to stand and how to perform with neutral posture, which allowed me to release the tension I was carrying unconsciously. (McGill)

Before [studying the Technique] I was constantly sore from bad posture and awkward practicing, but now I feel flexible and comfortable. (BOCO)

By taking Alexander lessons I learned to be more aware of misuse. As a result, instead of playing in a way that develops repetitive practice with bad habits, I decided to make the choice to get rid of all the unnecessary stiffness. (RCM)

It saved me from serious injury and I have made enormous progress on my instrument as a result. (BOCO)

[It] helped me develop better breathing technique and posture for performance. (Curtis)

This [technique] has helped me to prevent stiffness and soreness through long hours of practicing in rehearsals, and I am grateful. (McGill)

Working with Alexander Technique helps me notice finer physical, emotional and mental tension or gripping that I can begin to let go of. (RCM)

I have gained an increased physical comfort in my own body through improving the alignment of my spine. (McGill)

I have realized how much movement can impact my mind, and how moving freely helps me think freely. I used to be terrified of performing, but now I am able to embrace it with free movement. (Curtis)

I learned how to move and breathe while doing the least physical work possible, allowing greater relaxation which helped to develop a more consistent airflow.” (McGill)

It helped me to start to “reset” my body and rid myself of several unconscious and harmful habits (McGill).

It has helped me learn about my body and how to manage my movements naturally so that I’m not forcing bad habits that affect my music making... (RCM).

After putting the Alexander Technique ideas into focus during my practices and everyday life, I’ve come to really believe that these are some of the most important techniques that even non-musicians can use to improve their wellbeing

and body awareness so that they can get the most out of their movements with the least tension and stress caused. (RCM)

### **Enhance music practice and performance.**

I noticed a drastic improvement in my tone quality and air support, achieved largely due to this new knowledge of what proper posture should be. (McGill)

This course was very useful to my performing, and my improvement was commented upon by multiple coaches and my practical instructor. (U of T)

In addition to my physical comfort, I feel this improved posture will make me appear more confident and comfortable while I perform. (McGill)

[Alexander Technique] really changed my playing and stage presence for the best. (Curtis)

“I now understand the importance and many benefits of being mentally focused and present in performance.” (McGill)

It has improved my focus because I learned to focus on not just one thing at a time, but thinking about body and music at the same time. (RCM)

The lessons helped to develop my confidence in performing, as well as the ability to play in a neutral and relaxed state without unnecessary inhibitors such as tension and poor breathing working against me. (McGill)

The Alexander Technique does not have a quick solution that will guarantee an immediate end to the negative impact of performance anxiety. But it does provide very useful methods that with time and thought can alter the approach to a concert platform (RCM).

Through the discovery that I am unconsciously reacting negatively to my own playing, I was able to begin to work to undo that habit and play without constant self-judgment. (McGill)

I used to get frustrated when practicing, and think that my arm would always hurt in this passage because it was difficult. But now I have a different practice technique help me be more efficient (Curtis).

I will continue to learn about this topic, and this is thanks to the great experience of finding a better and easier way to perform with my instrument. (U of T)

This course is extremely useful for musicians. The Technique is a practical way of not only paying close attention to what and how we're doing with our bodies,

but also a way of helping ourselves to free our muscles and utilize our energy into the music we play. (U of T)

**Develop a practical living skill/learn to take responsibilities.**

I benefitted greatly from this course... It is related to everything I am doing in school and in life. (U of T)

I am a stronger, more structurally aware player, and feel better armed with the tools and techniques I need to make it through issues not only in my playing, but in my career as a whole. (Curtis)

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 (RCM).

[The Alexander] course has genuinely left a positive impact on the way I approach my craft and has left me a better person for it (BOCO)."

Perhaps the most rewarding part of this class was the prerogative to "work on yourself," in a constructive non-judgmental environment (U of T).

**Include Alexander Technique in the curriculum.**

Alexander Technique should be included in the curriculum for a Master's degree. The physical strain that is put on the bodies of musicians in their advanced degrees is felt, seen, and heard. We have to practice and perform for hours per day, and there should be some kind of safety net in place to ensure that we are using our bodies safely to prevent injury. (McGill)

This [Alexander Technique] is a very valuable course for all performance students, and I would recommend making it a mandatory part of the performance program. (U of T)

Alexander Technique was invaluable to my progress as a musician, physically & mentally, this term. The ideas that were shared among classmates and teacher were eye-opening and felt, if anything, that course could have been a full-year course study (U of T).

Alexander Technique has been a huge part of my learning experience at Curtis, and I'm very grateful to the school for making it available to us. (Curtis)

This [Alexander] class is amazing. This class should be mandatory for all musicians for at least one semester. (BOCO)

By comparing both participating instructors and selected students' experiences, there is an agreement that the study of Alexander Technique has positive influences on musicians' development. They both affirm that the cultivation of good *use* is essential to music studies because it enables musicians to fully develop their innate potential and talents. By studying the Technique, these music students appear to have learned to use their body in an efficient way, which has allowed them to not only play with comfort and confidence but also refined their technical skills and artistic expressions. They have also understood that their mental attitude and body functioning are co-dependent, constantly affecting each other. In addition, they have realized it is their responsibilities to look after the wellbeing of their body and mind as a whole, and the Technique provides them a useful and practical tool to take care of themselves in various life situations. Based on their comments, many of these students appreciate that their institutions provide them an opportunity to receive Alexander instruction, and some of them firmly believe the Technique should be incorporated into post-secondary music education.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

*“The real solution of the problem lies in the wide acceptance of the principle of prevention instead of ‘cure’, and the realization at long last, that the most valuable knowledge we can possess is that of the use and functioning of the self, and of the means whereby the human individual may progressively raise the standard of his health and general well-being.”*

F. M. Alexander (2001, p. 20)

### **Research Summary**

Music performance is a psychophysical affair. A musician’s mind and body are codependent facets of the human instrument, transforming artistic thought, expression, and unique interpretation into the sound of music. Therefore, the functioning and wellbeing of a musician’s psychophysical faculties are vital to the quality of the music produced, and any hindrances such as faulty posture, repetitive strain injuries, or performance anxiety can have damaging effects on the ability to play and perform, jeopardizing one’s professional future and livelihood. Many tertiary music institutions are increasingly aware of the severity of musicians’ challenges and have implemented various modalities to address their students’ physical and mental wellbeing in addition to technical and musical instruction.

One of these prospering mainstream methods is the Alexander Technique, an educational approach that has been incorporated into post-secondary music curricula and/or extra-curricula for more than half a century. This mind-body method teaches individuals how to release excess muscular tension by recognizing and inhibiting counterproductive habitual patterns of thinking

and movement so that they can carry out musical and commonplace activities efficiently with freedom and ease. Its positive influence on musicians' training, development, and prevention of playing-related pain and disorders has been supported and corroborated by music pedagogues, performing artists, students, and many studies for over one hundred years. Despite this, the approaches of instruction, course structure and results of the teaching of the Technique in tertiary music programs has never been collectively examined and documented until this study.

In order to bridge this gap in the literature, this study aimed to explore, describe, and compare how the Alexander Technique is implemented and instructed in selected post-secondary music institutions/programs, and how it influenced the development of their students. The monograph further aims to provide practical information to Alexander instructors and music institution stakeholders in order to better utilize the benefits of this holistic method, both for existing programs of study and for institutions that are interested in implementing the Technique.

### **Methodology**

Considering the empirical, contextual, and comparative nature of the research purpose, the format of qualitative multiple-case study was chosen to frame the investigation process. This research strategy enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue under study from multiple perspectives in order to increase the objectivity, trustworthiness, and robustness of the findings. The present investigation was guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the Alexander Technique implemented and instructed in each of the selected successful post-secondary music institutions/programs?



2. What are the variations of implementations and instructional approaches among the selected Alexander programs, and how are they similar to and different from each other?
3. How do the participating instructors describe the influence of Alexander studies on the development of the music students in the selected institutions?

Five instructors were recruited to participate in this study, representing five Alexander programs selected from a pool of prominent English-speaking post-secondary music institutions. The selected programs include Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Curtis Institute of Music, Schulich School of Music of McGill University, Royal College of Music, and the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto.

Document collection and interviews were used as the primary instruments to gather data. Course syllabi and relevant documents such as assignment instructions and/or course evaluations/program feedback were collected. These documents provided an accurate and reliable source of evidence. One in-depth, semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant. This procedure allowed participants to describe and explain their programs and teaching in detail, and also gave them an opportunity to expand on the research questions. A database was created to facilitate the organization and management of the data collection, and a descriptive coding procedure was employed to categorize and index the various forms of data. The strategy of thick descriptions was used to develop a profile for each case, and cross-case synthesis was applied to examine their similarities and differences. Triangulation, member checking, and bias reports were exercised in order to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness of the process and findings of the investigation.

## **Participants**

The participants of this study are Alexander veterans at the top of their field who demonstrate a rich history of teaching musicians. They are active teaching members of the Society of teachers of the Alexander Technique, the Canadian Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique, and Alexander Technique International, and all of them have been invited to lecture and present the work of F. M. Alexander at important conferences, organizations, and institutions. Their many years of experience and professional qualifications establish the credibility and validity of their opinions.

The participants' collective learning experience reveals that Alexander education can be life-changing. From being able to recover from various physical injuries to improving coordination and dexterity to gaining confidence and learning to take responsibility for their actions, these instructors have all greatly benefited from their studies in both their professional and personal lives. They all became certified teachers because they recognized the value and significance of the Technique, and deeply believed it was important for them to pay forward what they gained from the Technique to others.

## **Summary of Findings**

### **Program history and developments.**

Among the five selected Alexander programs, the Royal College of Music has the longest history with the Technique. It can be traced back to the 1950's when the voice professors at the College evaluated the Alexander Technique as "the best means we have yet encountered for solving the artist's problem of communication and should form the basis of his training" (Barlow, 1978, p. 192). The American establishments under study (BOCO, Curtis) began to

offer Alexander instruction in the mid and late 1990's and the Canadian institutions (McGill, U of T) followed suit in the 2000's.

Both the RCM and BOCO have created a specific division to oversee the implementations of various Alexander programing. The RCM has developed academic courses for all of their degrees in addition to private instruction, and BOCO has established a teacher-training course as well as a summer intensive program in addition to various academic modules for music and dance departments. Curtis and McGill's Alexander instruction is embedded in wellness resources and student living services, and U of T has created an academic course that is included in the graduate studies.

### **Implementations and instruction.**

The Alexander programs under study exhibit two types of implementations: curricular and extracurricular. Three of the selected schools demonstrate either curricular implementation (U of T) or extracurricular (Curtis and McGill). The other two institutions, BOCO and RCM, offer both curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities. The curricular implementations tend to establish the Technique as an academic course or courses, and the extracurricular implementations tend to be embedded in student life or wellness resources.

### ***Curricular implementations and instruction.***

*Levels of studies.* All of the curricular programs under study (BOCO, RCM, U of T) implement the Technique as an academic course or courses, and two levels of course study were discovered: introductory and advanced. RCM and BOCO provide both introductory and advanced studies, whereas U of T offers introductory study exclusively. All courses under examination are implemented as electives, except RCM's Level 4 and BMus2, which are a mandatory degree requirement for first and second year undergraduate students.

*Course Objectives.* Course objectives at the introductory level exhibit consistency across all introductory modules under examination. The general goals for this level are to examine the basic concepts of Alexander's principles, develop self-observational skills, and to explore how to practically apply the Technique to music learning and performance. The learning objectives for advanced modules also demonstrate similarities, including acquiring a deeper understanding of Alexander's theoretical framework, developing a higher level of observational skill, and learning how to better utilize the Technique to enhance music playing, performance, and pedagogy.

*Length of study, class duration, class size, and class frequency.* The introductory courses (excluding RCM's refresher module) demonstrate a similar length of study, with classes lasting one term or semester between ten to twelve weeks. However, class size, duration and frequency exhibit noticeable differences. BOCO's instruction is administered twice a week and each class lasts one hour. U of T provides weekly classes, and each meeting is two hours. RCM also delivers instruction once a week, but each class lasts only thirty minutes. BOCO and U of T's class size is twelve to fifteen, whereas RCM demonstrates a smaller class size of no more than six.

*Teaching strategies.* All sampled courses, both introductory and advanced, utilize lectures and discussions to examine Alexander's life and discoveries and employ various activities and games to elucidate Alexander's theoretical framework. The participating curricular instructors also favor the practice of writing observational journals because it provides students a tool to document and analyze their thinking and response patterns to stimuli. It also facilitates an examination of how Alexander's concepts can be applied to complement music learning and performance, as well as managing life related problems. In addition to writing journals, RCM now asks students to document observations with video recording because it has the advantage of

enabling students to accurately see and hear the process and effect of their actions. Traditional hands-on guidance is also applied in all modules. However, the usage of this teaching approach tends to be infrequent or even eliminated at times, particularly in larger classes, due to the imbalance of teacher-student ratio in a group setting.

*Assessment.* Alexander studies in the selected curricular programs require academic merits. Attendance, class participation, and various assignments, including observational journals, research projects, and essays are commonly used to assess students' progress. All modules assign a final grade at the end of the study, except RCM's Level 4, which is pass/fail.

***Extracurricular implementations and instruction.***

*Embedment and instruction costs.* The extracurricular Alexander programs under examination tend to be embedded in student wellness resources or living services. RCM is an exception, as both their extracurricular and curricular studies are managed by their Alexander program. In addition, extracurricular instruction costs are generally inclusive among the selected programs, with the exception of McGill, which currently subsidizes two-thirds of the lesson fees. These findings indicate that the selected successful music institutions consider the Alexander Technique to be a valuable resource for students' health and wellness, and also suggest that student living or learning services may have the potential budget to support the establishment of extracurricular Alexander program and/or learning activities.

*Application and eligibility.* All extracurricular programs under study have implemented an application process to select participants in order to accommodate limited availabilities. Curtis and RCM require yearly applications, while BOCO's Wellness Division and McGill require students to apply every term. There are two types of qualifying policies. RCM and McGill approve applications based on students' physical complaints. This approach enables

students who are experiencing pain, injury and anxiety issues to address their challenges without delay so that they can pursue music studies with their full potential. Curtis adopts a first come, first served policy. The advantage of this method is that it demonstrates fairness and allows students with strong interests in the Technique to have a fair chance to receive instruction. The downside of this policy is that it does not have enough flexibility to accommodate students with injuries. BOCO practices both, which allows students with interest and/or conditions to take lessons and not be limited to one or the other.

*Delivery of instruction.* Applied-studio is the primary setting for instruction delivery in the selected extracurricular implementations; all programs offer one-on-one lessons. In addition to individual instruction, RCM offers semi-private lessons and BOCO's teacher-training course provides small group classes. In terms of length of study and lesson/class frequency, RCM and Curtis provide weekly lessons throughout the entire school year to approved applicants. McGill currently offers six lessons per term, and BOCO's wellness division allows two sessions per semester and six sessions with trainee's practicum. The duration of a single lesson/class ranges between thirty minutes to one hour. Private lessons are either thirty or forty-five minutes and group classes tend to be one hour long. These variations of lesson/class duration fall within the range recommended and practiced by most Alexander teachers, which is between thirty to sixty minutes (Harer & Munden, 2009).

*Teaching objective.* The shared teaching objective exhibited in the selected extracurricular programs is to improve music students' general psychophysical functioning and increase the efficiency of their movement. Most participants often include the application of the Technique to music playing in their instruction in order to help students develop Alexander-

based strategies to overcome music learning and performance challenges, except one participant who tends to focus on the traditional procedures exclusively.

### **The impact of Alexander studies on musicians' development.**

Based on the documentation and interviews undertaken for this research, the collective teaching experience of the participating instructors and the learning experiences of a selection of their students strongly demonstrate that the study of Alexander Technique has a positive and beneficial impact on musicians' development. After the completion of these courses/lessons, both the participants and their students affirmed that psychophysical education and the cultivation of good *use* is essential to music studies because it facilitates the coordination of the mind and body, which forms the very foundation of music playing and performance. The Technique enables musicians to fully develop their innate potential and talents without counterproductive hindrances, such as postural deficits, musculoskeletal disorders, and performance anxiety.

By studying Alexander's method, the responding students reported that they learned how to use their body and move in a more efficient way, which has allowed them to not only play with comfort and confidence but also enabled them to refine their technical skills and artistic expressions. They came to understand that physical functioning and mental attitude are inseparable, constantly influencing each other. In addition, the students discovered that it is their responsibility and in their best interest to take care of the wellness of their psychophysical health, and their Alexander studies have given them practical and effective tools to do this. Many of these students expressed sincere gratitude to their institutions for providing them an opportunity to receive Alexander instruction, and asserted that the Alexander Technique should be incorporated into post-secondary music education. Most importantly, several students wrote that

the study of the Alexander technique was a life changing experience that will continue to guide them throughout their musical studies, performances, and everyday life.

Although these students' testimonies cannot represent the opinions of the entire Alexander student population in the selected programs, their positive and enthusiastic appreciation for the relevance of the Technique to their musical development strongly suggests that the Alexander Technique should seriously be considered as a musician's basic training in post-secondary music studies.

### **Emergent Issues**

The following is a discussion of several issues that have emerged from the findings of the study.

#### **1) One-on-one versus group settings.**

Traditionally, the Alexander Technique is taught in a one-on-one setting, with a significant hands-on component. Because of the nature of an institutionalized academic environment, both practically and economically, this is not always possible. The application of a personalized teaching technique in a larger scale context is one of the key issues to be considered when putting together a program of study.

The findings of this investigation reveal that both applied-studio and group settings are used to deliver Alexander instruction in the five selected programs. Each approach has its strengths and challenges. Applied-studio has the advantage of allowing students to receive exclusive personal attention and more hands-on opportunities to address their individual habitual issues, which enables them to obtain a visceral understanding of the Technique as well as a faster and deeper transformation. In addition, this setting fosters a trusting and honest learning environment faster than group classes, as students are more willing to divulge vulnerabilities and



reveal weakness. However, this approach of instruction may require more available instructors and a higher budget in order to generate a greater level of accessibility in institutions.

Group instruction can engage multiple students at once and reach a larger portion of the student population, which has the advantage of being more cost effective. One potential advantage is that students can receive feedback and support from other class participants, which can be valuable and effective. The challenge of this approach is providing adequate individual attention and hands-on opportunities to students, key elements that may even be eliminated if the class size is too big.

The potential elimination of hands-on instruction is a concern as this teaching approach is a defining characteristic of the Alexander Technique, developed to facilitate the elicitation of a pupil's reflex response of the *primary control* in movement (De Alcantara, 1997; Dimon, 1980). Alexander's (2004) own teaching experience demonstrated that it was challenging and ineffective to help someone change the habitual response by using verbal guidance alone. Therefore, it is vital and beneficial to preserve as much hands-on work as possible, particularly in a group setting, in order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of instruction.

Based on the findings of this investigation and personal experience, the author posits that a small-group setting (five to six students) is a reasonable and practical option that allows for multiple students in a class, while keeping the class size small enough for the instructor to utilize hands-on instruction and give personal attention to individuals. The RCM currently follows this system, with five or six students partaking in half hour introductory classes. By contrast, U of T's course accepts a maximum of fifteen with a class length of two hours. One possible scenario would be to break this larger class into smaller groups of people, and decrease the length of each

class to thirty minutes. In this manner, more students can be accommodated in the same length of time, and more personal instruction can be provided.

Some participants suggest that a combination of teaching formats is more practical and beneficial to both music students and institutions because it can reach a larger portion of the student population while allowing for personalized learning opportunities. Ultimately, each school must evaluate what is best for their program based on a number of factors including budget, the size of the student population, and the number of teachers available.

## **2) Alexander instructors' musical background.**

The inquiry discovered that all participants have a professional background in the performing arts. Three of them are performing musicians, and two had careers in dance and theater. This finding indicates that music institutions tend to recruit Alexander instructors with professional profiles in the performing arts, and music performance background seems to be preferred. Nonetheless, the instructor's music or artistic background is not necessarily a factor for teaching musicians about musical performance.

According to Frank Pierce Jones (1975), music/performance background does not affect the potential effectiveness of an Alexander teacher's instruction to musicians. In a lecture that he gave at the School of Music, Indiana University in 1975, Jones explained:

It may not seem logical to go to an Alexander teacher who can't sing or play an instrument and expect to learn something about musical performance. It isn't illogical, however. The reason is that an Alexander teacher is concerned with unlearning rather than learning---with non-doing rather than doing, with subtracting rather than adding.

The Alexander Technique is a method for getting rid of unwanted habit patterns that interfere with smooth performance---not just musical performance but any performance. It is a method for looking into a microscope or painting a ceiling or playing the violin without getting a stiff neck; for playing the piano or shoveling the snow or working at a desk without low back pain; for listening to a lecture or playing a familiar piece of music without mind-wandering.

For a performer, the technique is a method for using kinesthetic cues---the sensations of tension, effort, weight and the like---in order to organize his field of awareness in a systematic way, so as to take in the whole of what he is doing instead of just a part, and to accomplish what he aims to do without unwanted side effects<sup>7</sup>.

However, the preference for engaging teachers with a musical background is understandable. As professor Buckoke said in his interview, “musicians tend to listen to musicians,” and a professional background in music does bring credibility to an Alexander teacher’s work with music students. Although any Alexander instructors can help musicians in some ways, a certain level of understanding in music playing and singing does facilitate the fostering of trust and communication with students as well as their music professors. Therefore, it would be helpful for teachers who are not musicians, or who have limited knowledge of psychophysical coordination that directly relates to music playing/performance, to pursue some professional development in this integrated field in order to increase relatability to students and instruction efficiency.

*Freedom to Make Music* is an excellent resource for people interested in further developing these skills. This annual summit in New York City is designed for both musicians and Alexander teachers. Created and produced by Ariel Weiss, one of the participating instructors of this study, and Ann Rodiger, an Alexander Technique trainer who has more than thirty years of teaching experience with musicians, this conference primarily features an international gathering of Alexander instructors who are also professional musicians. By sharing both their learning and teaching experiences, this event aims to help musicians find freedom and ease in their playing through the Technique, and also gives informative advices and strategies to

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<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from the website *The Complete Guide to the Alexander Technique*.  
<https://www.alexandertechnique.com/articles/jones1/>

Alexander teachers and trainees on how to effectively help musicians with their playing and performance.

Alexander teachers with music profiles have the advantage of understanding music students' strengths and challenges, but it is still important for them to acknowledge that students have their own music professors, whose instructions cannot be contradicted. The Alexander teacher's responsibility is to support and complement music training rather than replace it. Therefore, instructors who are also musicians must refrain from having preconceived notions about certain instrumental/vocal approaches or how music should be played in order to avoid giving advice that might cause confusion.

### **3) Professional development for academic teaching.**

The findings of this study indicate that the Alexander Technique has been implemented as an academic course in post-secondary music institutions. Its instruction tends to be delivered in a group setting and also has academic requirements. Alexander instructors will most likely be expected to give lectures, design activities, develop course syllabi and assessment guidelines, and also grade assignments, when curricular instruction is entailed. For those who do not possess post-secondary teaching experience but wish to teach the Technique in this setting, there are some professional development opportunities available to assist Alexander instructors to develop these teaching skills.

One of the resources is *The Developing Self Education Training Course*. Founded by two innovative expert Alexander teachers, Sue Merry and Judith Kleinman, who have more than twenty years of Alexander teaching experience in schools and colleges, this London-based postgraduate program trains certified Alexander instructors and third year teacher trainees how to teach children and young adults in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. In 2019, this

course became available in New York City and San Diego of the United States. In addition, Kleinman (2018), the co-author of *The Alexander Technique for Musicians*, recently published *Alexander in Secondary and Tertiary Education*, a practical guide to instructing the Technique in both secondary and tertiary institutions. This volume presents various teaching strategies as well as syllabus samples and course handouts to provide Alexander teachers some useful ideas on how to develop interesting, creative, and comprehensive Alexander learning modules.

#### **4) Budgetary resources and options.**

One of the challenges of implementing the Alexander Technique is the allocation of available funds. This inquiry discovered that wellness and student living services may be possible resources to provide financial assistance for Alexander establishments, as the purpose of the Technique aligns with the mission of these services. In addition, McGill's subsidized program demonstrates a viable option for institutions with a limited budget. Instead of offering inclusive instruction, the school subsidizes two-thirds of the lesson cost and the participating students pay for one-third. Although it is not entirely inclusive, it is affordable for students and allows the program to reach out to a larger portion of the student population.

For institutions that have more significant budgetary concerns, making a studio space available on campus to a private instructor providing self-sponsored lessons/classes can be a good compromise. Time management is one of the biggest challenges for post-secondary music students. In addition to academic studies, they need to practice, rehearse, and prepare for lessons and various audition and performance events. If a student is interested in studying the Technique, but instruction is not available on campus, they may be discouraged to pursue lessons. Although students may be responsible for the cost of instruction, they will be encouraged by the convenient availability of lessons and can at least save time and travel expenses.

### **Recommendation for Future Studies**

Several future investigations are recommended to further explore this research subject and its related areas.

- 1) The current research uncovered how the Alexander Technique is implemented and instructed, as well as how it influences the development of music students in the selected tertiary institutions from the instructor's perspective. All data were collected from the participating teachers, including the selection of students' testimonies related to their Alexander learning experience and program feedback. As a result, the objectivity of this portion of the evidence may be limited by participants' own biases. Future inquiries are suggested to collect data directly from music students in order to gain firsthand information on how they value Alexander studies as part of the tertiary music training.
- 2) The current investigation discovered that the three introductory Alexander courses under examination exhibit discrepancies in class size, class duration, and class frequency. Currently, the literature that references how these variants affect the effects and efficiency of Alexander group instruction and learning is scarce. Future investigations in this area are suggested, as the results may provide valuable information on how to effectively and practically implement Alexander instruction as an academic course in post-secondary institutions.
- 3) The current study is limited to Alexander implementations within English-speaking countries, including Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Several participating instructors disclosed that they have been invited to teach Alexander Technique to professional as well as tertiary musicians outside the English-speaking regions, including Japan, China, Germany and other European countries. Future studies

might consider a) conducting a similar qualitative research design by sampling programs that are established in Asian, Australian, and European post-secondary music institutions and b) using the findings from this investigation as probes to collect quantitative data from an international tertiary music population in order to gain a global understanding of how the Technique is practiced to complement post-secondary music training.

- 4) Currently, Alexander Technique teacher-training is an under-investigated area, and the data on how various courses structure their curricula and their approaches of instruction is limited. The lack of this information may affect the consistency and quality of teaching standards, hindering the future development of the Technique in an institutionalized setting. A quantitative study is recommended to survey the available teacher certification programs in order to gain a panoramic understanding of the current environment of Alexander teacher-training. The results from such a study may provide the Alexander community valuable information on how to further develop Alexander pedagogy.
- 5) The majority of the participating instructors stated in their interviews that because Alexander developed his work in the early twentieth century, the current Alexander terminology is outdated. This may have a direct impact on the impression, reception, and prevalence of the Technique to present day students. Studies are suggested to examine how Alexander's theoretical framework relates to modern scientific facts and language, and to present a comprehensive recommendation for the modification of obsolete and archaic Alexander terms so that the principles and concepts of the Technique can be clearly and effectively communicated with the general public in the current age.

### Final Thoughts

Many musicians are not aware that when they come to play 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 [that] allows [it]<sup>8</sup>.

Ashok Klouda, cellist (RCM)

During her interview, Debi Adams mentioned that in her experience, most of her students come to study the Alexander Technique because they are in some kind of trouble. This is not surprising. The results of numerous studies have raised serious concerns for musical artists' health and wellbeing, from playing-related musculoskeletal pain and injuries to mental health issues, such as performance anxiety and depression. Clearly, musicians do suffer for their art, and they desperately try to find ways to solve these problems so that they can continue to follow their passion and dreams. F.M. Alexander himself went searching for a solution when his recurrent loss of voice prevented him from pursuing his career as a professional Shakespearean actor and reciter.

We live in a society where people tend to seek physical and mental health solutions only *after* they have been hurt or imperiled. Yet performing arts medicine experts and researchers assert that many if not most playing-related injuries and conditions are avoidable with *preventative* rather than reactive actions, and that prevention should start at the early stages of music learning before harmful habits begin to develop and fester into years of misuse.

Conventional music education tends to focus on the development of technical and artistic skills while paying insufficient attention to the cultivation of basic *use*, the proper functioning of a musician's 'primary instrument'. There is no doubt that this tendency has contributed to the

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<sup>8</sup> Excerpted from Kleinman and Buckoke's (2013) *The Alexander Technique for Musicians* (p. 9).



high rate of music playing-related injuries and anxiety conditions among performing musicians. The Alexander Technique, one of the most appreciated and valued mind-body approaches practiced by musicians, addresses this issue by facilitating the good *use* of an individual's mind and body and inhibiting counterproductive habits that get in the way of musical success.

The encouraging news is that many prominent tertiary music education programs have already recognized the importance of fostering good psychophysical functioning and coordination to enrich music performance studies, and there is a growing number of music institutions beginning to employ various mind-body modalities such as the Alexander Technique to complement musicians' training, enhance their performance and wellbeing, and proactively prevent injuries and other problems. The major stumbling blocks to the widespread inclusion and ongoing success of these methods in music institutions are lack of awareness and apathy.

Like myself, the five participants in this survey had their lives changed when they began Alexander training. In turn, these teachers had the opportunity to introduce the Technique to the next generation of students, many of whom encountered similar significant transformations of their personal and artistic lives. When one has had a strong positive encounter with this method, there is a fervent desire to pay it forward and spread Alexander's work.

Indeed, of the cases under study that demonstrated active expansion of their Alexander implementations, a number of their administrative stakeholders were reported to have personal experience with the Technique. Judging by the ongoing development of these programs, it is reasonable to assume that these stakeholders consider Alexander learning to be valuable and relevant to post-secondary music training, and therefore support and encourage the continuing advancement of Alexander instruction.

On the other hand, the cases that exhibit either no progression or downsizing, did not provide a similar report. In institutions where the Technique is little known or understood amongst the stakeholders, there tends to be apathy. This can be exhibited by lower budgets for the program, higher student to teacher ratios, limited instruction accessibility, or less promotion for the available courses and lessons. Teachers at these institutions often have to fight to be noticed, and their programs are not always given the opportunity and means to develop and grow beyond a rudimentary level.

To institutions that currently have a limited Alexander implementation or wish to establish a new program, the advice from the participating instructors and this author is to “go all the way!” The reality is that a single course that accommodates ten or fifteen students per year is not going to address the issues of the overall student population. Although one course may be a good starting point, it would be prudent to nurture the program and allow it to evolve and flourish in order to make a meaningful impact on students’ learning and development at the institution. An effort from the administration to fully incorporate psychophysical education such as the Alexander Technique into the curriculum with active promotion and dedication would indicate leadership. If music students are not informed about the pertinence and importance of this training, how can they know that it may be something they want or need?

It is concerning that there are institutions that do not include the Alexander Technique or other mind-body methods in their programming at all because they are unaware of the relevance and benefits to their students. Further work is necessary from both the Alexander community and major tertiary institutions to continue to raise awareness of the significance and value of psychophysical education to musicians’ development.

To be fair, not everyone needs the Alexander Technique nor is it for everyone. Like learning an instrument, this is an endeavor that requires discipline and commitment in order to best achieve transformation, especially in the early stages when there is a lot to learn and bad habits to undo. This does not always sound appealing to today's young students hoping for a quick fix at the speed of downloading an app. But for those with a little patience and desire for improvement, the Technique can provide remarkable results, as testified by some of the participants' students' comments:

Alexander Technique should be included in the curriculum for a Master's degree. The physical strain that is put on the bodies of musicians in their advanced degrees is felt, seen, and heard. We have to practice and perform for hours per day, and there should be some kind of safety net in place to ensure that we are using our bodies safely to prevent injury. (McGill)

This [Alexander] class is amazing. This class should be mandatory for all musicians for at least one semester. (BOCO)

This [Alexander Technique] is a very valuable course for all performance students, and I would recommend making it a mandatory part of the performance program. (U of T)

As one of the first studies of its kind, this inquiry revealed how the Alexander Technique is implemented and instructed in post-secondary music institutions. Although limited to a small sampling of cases, this investigation uncovered a variety of effective models and teaching approaches, formats, and strategies being practiced today. Most importantly, this research discovered that despite some differences in teaching styles, the students' collective learning experience demonstrates that this psychophysical approach of education has a strong positive impact on tertiary music students' training and development. It is hoped that the findings will help schools currently offering the Alexander Technique continue to refine and improve their curriculum, and to inspire other institutions to incorporate the instruction of this method into

their music programs, making it widely available to music students for the betterment of their self, their performances and their art.

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APPENDICES



## Appendix A: Western University Research Ethics Board Approval



Research Ethics

### Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Kari Veblen

**Department & Institution:** Don Wright Faculty of Music\Faculty of Music, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 109485

**Study Title:** Learn From the Best: An Exploration of the Alexander Technique Teaching Modules and Approaches in Successful Post-Secondary Music Programs

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** August 29, 2017

**NMREB Expiry Date:** August 29, 2018

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		2017/08/16
Recruitment Items	Email Script	2017/06/15
Recruitment Items	Reminder Email Script	2017/06/15
Recruitment Items	Additional Recruitment Email Script (forwarding version)	2017/08/16
Letter of Information & Consent		2017/08/29
Instruments	Research Instrument	2017/08/16
Instruments	Interview Questions	2017/06/15

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

  
Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

EO: Erika Basile \_\_ Grace Kelly \_\_ Katelyn Harris  Nicola Morphet \_\_ Karen Gopaul \_\_ Patricia Sargeant \_\_ Kelly Patterson \_\_

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## Appendix B: Letter of Information and Consent



### Letter of Information and Consent

**Project Title:** Learning from the Best: An Exploration of Variations of the Alexander Technique Teaching Modules and Approaches in Successful Post-Secondary Music Programs

**Document Title:** Letter of Information and Consent

**Principal Investigator + Contact**

Dr. Kari Veblen, PhD, Don Wright Faculty of Music, TC 210  
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**Additional Research Staff + Contact**

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Western University, Canada



#### 1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in a research study about successful integration of post-secondary musical performance studies with the Alexander Technique. We invite you to participate because you are currently teaching the Alexander Technique in an elite English-speaking music program.

#### 2. Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to uncover and examine how successful post-secondary music programs integrate the Alexander Technique into their performance studies curriculum. Alexander Technique (AT) is traditionally and preferentially taught in a one-to-one setting with verbal and hands-on guidance. However, it is financially and physically challenging for music programs to offer weekly individual instructions to a large body of students in performance studies. Therefore, to implement such a unique discipline that is founded upon individuality and requires certified instructors to teach in an environment that also demands academic standard, the following

## Appendix B continued

question must be addressed: *In order to accommodate a large number of participants within a limited amount of time, space, budget, and qualified teaching staff, how can the conventional teaching approach of the Alexander Technique be transformed to satisfy the higher education curriculum standard as well as the needs of students as musicians, and still maintain the integrity of its teaching?* By exploring the strength of various teaching modules and approaches, the findings of this research aim to provide Alexander Technique teachers and music program administrators the building blocks to effectively implement and integrate an Alexander Technique module into post-secondary music education.

### 3. How long will you be in this study?

It is expected that you will be involved in the study for approximately 12 months, and there will be no anticipated study visits during your participation in this study.

### 4. What are the study procedures?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to supply your current course syllabus and/or any documents that support or supplement the course outlines via OWL, a Western University secure online server. A non-Western password-protected user account as well as a document Dropbox will be set up for you so that confidential files can be stored and exchanged securely with the researchers. You will also be asked to participate in one telephone, online video (Skype and/or FaceTime) or in-person Interview, which may last between 60 to 90 minutes. You may also be asked follow-up questions about your interview and course outlines at a later date via OWL, and you have the option to answer the questions via OWL or telephone. This process may take between 30 to 60 minutes to complete. You will be asked for permission to allow your interview be audio-recorded for the purpose of collecting your response with accuracy to avoid misunderstanding and/or misinterpretations. If you prefer not to have your interview recorded, you may still participate in the study, and interview notes will be taken by hand and/or word processor (researcher's personal password-protected laptop). Please be advised that video recording will not be made.

### 5. What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

## Appendix A continued

### 6. What are the benefits of participating in this study?

The information you provide will benefit the Alexander Technique community, post-secondary performance studies, as well as the performing arts as a whole.

### 7. Can participants choose to leave the study?

You can withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed, please let the researcher know.

### 8. How will participants' information be kept confidential?

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. Your name, titles, personal quotes, as well as associated institutions/programs will be collected for contact and research purposes. While we do our best to protect your information, there will be no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your name, titles, and associated institutions/programs may allow someone to link the data and identify you.

All information collected during this study will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside the study. While we do our best to protect your information, there will be no guarantee that we will be able to do so. If data is collected during the project, which may be required to report by law, we have a duty to report. The researcher will keep any personal information about you in a secure and confidential location for a minimum of 5 years in accordance with the University of Western Ontario's Human Research Ethics guidelines. A list linking your study number with your name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from your study file.

In order to appropriately share and directly credit your opinions and achievements, we would like to obtain your permission to disclose your name, titles, personal quotes, as well as associated institutions/programs in publications and/or presentations of this study. If you want to be identified, please let the researcher know by checking the appropriate boxes in the consent form. Copies of your interview and comments will be

**Appendix B continued**

boxes in the consent form. Copies of your interview and comments will be sent to you via OWL for approval prior to the dissemination of research, as well as a copy of the published text. If not, we will respect your privacy, and an alias will be assigned to you in publications/presentations.

**9. Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

**10. What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your employment status or academic standing.

We will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

**11. Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have questions about this research study please contact Mei Lee at [REDACTED]

If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics [REDACTED]

**This letter is yours to keep for future reference.**

**Appendix B continued****Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Learning from the Best: An Exploration of Variations of the Alexander Technique Teaching Modules and Approaches in Successful Post-Secondary Music Programs

**Document Title:** Letter of Information and Consent.

**Principal Investigator**

Dr. Kari Veblen, PhD, Don Wright Faculty of Music, TC 210  
Western University, Canada

**Additional Research Staff + Contact**

Mei Lee, DMA candidate, Don Wright Faculty of Music, TC 408  
Western University, Canada



I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research

YES  NO

I consent to the use of personal, identifiable quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES  NO

## Appendix B continued

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES  NO

I agree to have my name used in the dissemination of this research

YES  NO

### CONTACT FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Please check the appropriate box below and initial:

I agree to be contacted for future research studies

I do NOT agree to be contacted for future research studies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date (DD-MMM-  
YYYY)*

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Person  
Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date (DD-MMM-  
YYYY)*

### Appendix C: Participant Interview Protocol

<b>Participant #:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>		<b>Time:</b>	

#### INTRODUCTION

Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, thank you very much for participating in this research. This interview will take approximately two hours to complete. Before we start, do you have any questions or concerns?

#### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

A. Basic personal/professional background of the participant	<p>Possible probes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where were you born and grew up, studied, and/or worked?</li> <li>2. What do you do in your spare time? What are your hobbies?</li> </ol>
B. AT learning experience (pre-training)	<p>Possible probes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When did you first encounter the Alexander Technique?</li> <li>2. What motivated you to study the Alexander Technique?</li> <li>3. What was your first impression of the Technique? Please describe your first lesson.</li> </ol>
C. AT teacher-training experience	<p>Possible probes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What motivated you to pursue AT teacher-training?</li> <li>2. How long had you studied the Technique before you entered a training course?</li> </ol>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Where and when did you receive your certification, from which training course?</li> <li>4. How many years of lessons did you take before you began to train?</li> <li>5. Please describe your training course experience.</li> </ol>
<p>D. AT teaching experience: private practice</p>	<p>Possible probes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When and where did you begin your AT teaching practice?</li> <li>2. Do you currently have a private AT practice in addition to institutional instruction? If yes, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are the demographics of your students?</li> <li>b. What motivate them to take AT lessons?</li> <li>c. What teaching formats do you offer? Group classes, individual lessons, workshops, lectures, and/or master classes?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Have any of your students moved on to a teacher-training program?</li> <li>4. Have you ever taught at a teacher-training course? If yes, where do you teach, and what was your role/responsibility?</li> <li>5. What is the Alexander Technique? How do you usually introduce this work to others?</li> <li>6. Please describe your teaching approach and lessons objectives.</li> <li>7. What is your teaching philosophy?</li> </ol>
<p>E. AT Teaching experience: post-secondary</p>	<p>Possible probes:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When did you begin to teach AT in post-secondary institutions?</li> <li>2. When did you begin to teach AT at the current institution?</li> <li>3. Do you teach at other post-secondary institutions?</li> <li>4. Please describe your teaching approach and objectives, if they are different to your private teaching.</li> </ol>
F. Other teaching/performing experiences	<p>Possible probes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are you trained in another discipline in addition to the Alexander Technique? If so, what is it? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Where and when were you trained for this discipline?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Are you currently teaching your specialized discipline in addition to AT? If yes, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How long have you been teaching this discipline?</li> <li>b. Are you teaching it privately or at academic institutions, or both?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
G. AT impact: personal transformative experience	<p>Possible probes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did the study of the Technique change your attitude towards living?</li> <li>2. Did the study of the Technique change the way you learn and teach your specialized discipline?</li> <li>3. How do you apply the Alexander principles to your daily and specialized activities?</li> </ol>
H. Teaching experience with musicians	<p>Possible probes:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How would you describe musicians? Are they different to your non-musician students?</li> <li>2. In general, what are musicians' strengths and challenges?</li> <li>3. How do you usually conduct AT lessons for musicians?</li> </ol>
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### PROGRAM INFORMATION

<p>I. Program/course general questions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please describe the development of your AT implementation.</li> <li>2. Please describe the structuring of your program/course. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible probes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How many AT instructors are there at your program?</li> <li>b. Are you a full-time teaching member or part-time contracted instructor?</li> <li>c. What is each instructor's responsibility?</li> <li>d. Is your Alexander program a stand-alone department or is it embedded in a larger division?</li> </ol> </li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Have there been any challenges for you to teach AT in a large institution? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If yes, what are they, are they improved, and how?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p>J<sub>A</sub>. Program/course specific questions: curricular</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is this course compulsory or offered as an elective?</li> <li>2. Is this course an undergraduate or graduate</li> </ol>

	<p>course, or both?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. What is the length of study?</li> <li>4. What is the class frequency?</li> <li>5. What is the duration of each class?</li> <li>6. What is the maximum enrollment number, and what is the average actual enrollment number?</li> <li>7. Are students allowed to take this course repeatedly?</li> <li>8. What is the class size?</li> <li>9. What are the teaching objectives and strategies?</li> </ol>
<p>J<sub>B</sub>. Program/course specific questions: extracurricular</p>	<p>Possible probes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do students know about the lessons?</li> <li>2. Do you offer individual lessons only, or do you also offer master classes, group classes, and/or workshops?</li> <li>3. What's the duration of each lesson?</li> <li>4. Are lessons available to the students of performance studies exclusively?</li> <li>5. Are lessons compulsory or by choice?</li> <li>6. Is there a selection process?</li> <li>7. What is the financial arrangement?</li> <li>8. What is the current accessibility of your program?</li> <li>9. Please describe the process of a typical lesson?</li> <li>10. If you were asked to develop an Alexander program, how would you design it, and why?</li> </ol>

	11. How is the program received?
K. Professional memberships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What professional organizations do you belong to?</li> <li>2. Do you participate in and/or host professional development activities?</li> </ol>
L. Additional questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you conducted research in the field of AT?</li> <li>2. Have you presented AT lectures/workshops at conferences and/or symposiums?</li> <li>3. Have you been published?</li> <li>4. Do you have anything else you'd like to add or comment on?</li> </ol>
Closing	Thank you very much, Mr./Ms. _____ for your time, wisdom, and participation, and I have learned so much from you. I hope you will allow me to contact you if I have questions about your statements today.

## Appendix D<sub>1</sub>: Instructors' Profiles I

### DEBI ADAMS Boston Conservatory at Berklee

*“The Alexander Technique is an investigation into how you do what you do and in what ways you might be interfering with your best Use. It is the trust that when you let go of the interference as Alexander said, “...the right thing does itself.” It is a technique that accompanies your instrumental technique. It empowers you by clarifying that you are making choices constantly—perhaps sub-consciously, no matter how unfamiliar they may be, are always available to you.”*

A native of Providence, Rhode Island, Debi Adams is an Alexander Technique International (ATI) certified Alexander instructor, and holds both Master of Music and Bachelor of Arts degrees in piano performance from Boston University. She currently serves as the Alexander Technique program manager at Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where she teaches an Alexander course for musicians and a rehabilitation class for injured dancers as well as directing a teacher-training course and an annual summer intensive Alexander program.

Debi is also a lecturer and presenter in demand. She is frequently invited to share her expertise in both music and the Alexander Technique by various conferences, organizations, and music festivals. She also serves as a faculty member and guest lecturer at several Alexander training schools in the United States and abroad to train the next generation of teachers. In addition to her busy teaching and presenting schedules, Debi continues to perform regularly in a piano duo, *The Well Tempered Pianist* with pianist Mike Serio. She also finds time to publish articles on the integration of music learning and performance with the Alexander Technique.

Debi began her journey with the Technique when she discovered that her method of trying to improve her piano playing issues was similar to Alexander's approach to finding a

solution for his vocal problems. While taking lessons, she realized the tendonitis that had previously developed in her wrist was caused by her own misuse; therefore, she had played a significant role in her hand injury and pain. The study of the Technique helped her recover from this career-damaging condition and also improved her piano performance and teaching. Most importantly, the Technique taught her how to reflect upon her actions and take responsibility for her choices, which had a profound influence on her relationships with people.

Inspired by her personal and professional growth with the Technique, Debi decided to undertake teacher-training so that she could help others with what she learned from this method. She completed her qualification training at the Alexander Technique Center of Cambridge in Boston, and became a certified instructor in 1992.

Debi Adams is an active member of Alexander Technique International, Music Teachers National Association (USA), and Massachusetts Music Teachers Association. When she is not working or performing, she enjoys reading, practicing piano, and spending time with her beautiful family.

## Appendix D<sub>2</sub>: Instructors' Profiles II

### ARIEL WEISS Curtis Institute of Music

*“The Alexander Technique is a process of self-discovery. It’s a very helpful tool for self-awareness in order to discover unwanted habits that interfere with our best functioning, and a way to constructively aim ourselves to feel and function at our best.”*

Ariel Weiss has been teaching the Alexander Technique since 1988. She is an Alexander Technique International certified instructor, and holds a Master’s degree in Movement and Dance from Wesleyan University. Currently, Ariel teaches at Curtis Institute of music, a post she has maintained since 1998, in addition to her active private practice. She also serves on the faculty at the Philadelphia School for the Alexander Technique and has guest-lectured at various teacher-training program in Toronto, Canada and Tokyo and Osaka, Japan.

A sought-after presenter, Ariel has given numerous lectures, workshops, and master classes to professional development courses and events, including World Voice Day, *Grand Rounds* at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, the *Freedom to Act* conference in New York City, and Santa Fe Opera’s Apprentice Program for Singers. She has also been engaged to teach Alexander Technique at the University of the Arts, Allentown College (the current DeSales University), and Pig Iron School. In 2016, Ariel co-founded *Freedom to Make Music* in New York City. This annual international conference focuses on the application of F. M. Alexander’s work to music performance and pedagogy, and its programming has been well received by professional musicians, music students, and Alexander instructors from around the world.

Ariel was first introduced to the Alexander Technique during her undergraduate dance studies. She became actively involved with the Technique after she met a teacher who explained



and demonstrated the concepts of the Technique to her in a clear and direct manner that instantly engaged her curiosity and improve her balance. By studying the Technique, Ariel not only learned how to achieve better coordination for dance and various activities, but also came to recognize the ability to choose how she responded to various situations. This learning experience had a significant influence on her professional as well as personal life, which inspired her to pursue teaching-training so that she could share Alexander's work with others.

Ariel was a graduate of the Alexander Foundation in Philadelphia (currently known as the Philadelphia School for the Alexander Technique), and became certified in 1988. She is an active member of ATI, the Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals, and the Alexander Technique Teachers of Greater Philadelphia. When she is not teaching or presenting, Ariel enjoys West Coast Swing dancing and attends her Curtis students' performances, which brings her much pleasure and inspiration.

### Appendix D<sub>3</sub>: Instructors' Profiles III

#### LAWRENCE SMITH Schulich School of Music of McGill University

*“I think the point of Alexander Technique is to have a body that responds to external forces, [such as] gravity, air pressure, [and] sound. It is a method for altering learned behavior to restore reflex posture. I don't think it is easy to do, but [the concept] is fairly simple. Frank Pierce Jones said it is a matter of coordinating reflex and voluntary action so that reflex [can] support voluntary and voluntary doesn't disturb reflex. It is not much more complicated [than that].”*

Lawrence Smith is a member of the Canadian Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (CANSTAT). He completed his teacher-training at the Institute for the Alexander Technique in New York City, and became a STAT (the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique) certified instructor in 1989. He has been maintaining an active private practice in Montreal since his relocation from New York in 1999, and also serves as a teaching member of the Alexander subsidized program at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University.

A former professional stage actor, director, playwright, and a competitive runner, Lawrence's students include professionals from various backgrounds, and many of them are accomplished musicians, dancers, and athletes. His expertise and experience in the integrated fields of sports, performing arts, and the Alexander Technique have led him to give lectures, workshops, and master classes at various institutions and organizations, including University of Quebec, Memorial University, McGill University, the International Competition for Strings at the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the International Alexander Technique Congress, and the American Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique.

Lawrence began his Alexander studies after he endured many injuries from performing extensive corporeal mime productions. By learning the Technique, he realized it was his tenacious habit of holding and tightening his body that had caused these injuries. After a brief period of lessons, Lawrence noticed a dramatic change in his body, and he was able to let go of much of the unwanted tension. Inspired by this transformative experience, Lawrence soon decided to undertake teaching-training. He was accepted into the Institute for the Alexander Technique in 1986 and has been teaching the Technique since the completion of his training.

Lawrence enjoys reading, running, and researching Alexander Technique and science related topics in his spare time. He also maintains an online blog, and contributes many articles to share his ideas and research findings.

#### Appendix D<sub>4</sub>: Instructors' Profiles IV

### PETER BUCKOKE Royal College of Music

*“The Alexander Technique is a way of looking at what it is to be human. You are looking at how you respond to the things that are happening in your life. It is a technique, and there is a collection of principles. You can bring those principles into play with the various things that happen in your life... It’s all about looking at your reactions to the situation, clarifying your thinking, and understanding where consciousness is appropriate.”*

Peter Buckoke teaches both Alexander Technique and the double bass at the Royal College of Music. Currently serving as the director of the Alexander Technique department, Peter has been an integral force in developing and integrating Alexander studies into both undergraduate and postgraduate music curricula since he joined the RCM in 1989. His expertise in both music and the Technique has taken him around the world to present in many conferences and institutions to advocate the integration of these two fields. His most recent engagements include an Alexander presentation and master classes at the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing and an intensive course for graduate students at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

In addition to his teaching and presenting engagements, Peter maintains an active performing career. He is a founding member of the award-winning The Schubert Ensemble of London, with which he performs regularly, and has made many recordings under the labels of Chandos, and Hyperion. He also frequently collaborates with other local chamber groups, including the Nash Ensemble, London Handel Players, and various string quartets.

In between teaching and performing, Peter finds time to write articles and books to share his music and Alexander experiences. He co-authored *Alexander Technique for Musicians* with his wife, Judith Kleinman, another distinguished double bass player and Alexander instructor.

This volume has been reprinted several times since its first publication in 2013, and has become one of the standard textbooks for Alexander courses in many music institutions.

Peter began to take Alexander lessons because he was experiencing agonizing pain while playing the double bass. He was spending many hours a day trying to master this new instrument after he had switched from playing the cello at the beginning of his tertiary training. His rigorous routine did not bring him success, but rather caused him pain in the neck, shoulders, and back, to the point that he could not read the music while playing. After physiotherapy, massage, and various exercises had failed to improve his condition, he took on the Alexander Technique. It effectively helped him alleviate the pain and enabled him to resume his musical pursuit. At the height of his performing career, Peter decided to become an Alexander teacher, as he was inspired by how the Technique had changed his life. He completed his teacher-training at the Ribeaux Centre for the Alexander Technique in London and became a certified teacher in 1989.

Peter Buckoke is a member of the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique, Musicians Union (UK), and National Associations of Further and Higher Education. In his spare time, Peter looks after several colonies of bees and enjoys playing golf with his colleagues and friends.

## Appendix D<sub>5</sub>: Instructors' Profiles V

### NANCY SICSIC Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto

*“The Alexander Technique is a practical method of self-exploration and re-education that enables one to become more and more conscious of their thoughts, physical actions, responses, and their consequence in daily life.”*

A native of the state of New York, Nancy Sicsic has been teaching the Alexander Technique and applied piano at the University of Toronto since 2007. She holds a Master's degree in piano performance with honors from Rice University, and completed her Alexander teacher-training at the Vancouver School for the Alexander Technique. Before she relocated to Canada in 1990, Nancy had taught piano pedagogy at several tertiary music institutions, including Rice University and Frostburg State University in Maryland.

In addition to her university instruction, Nancy maintains an active private practice teaching both piano and the Alexander Technique. She is also frequently invited to lecture piano pedagogy and give Alexander workshops and master classes by music festivals, conferences, and universities. In between her teaching and guest-lecturing engagements, Nancy enjoys a dynamic performing career. She has given numerous concerts and recitals across Canada and the United States as both a solo and a collaborative pianist. She has also coached and accompanied professional and community choirs. Equally talented in organ, Nancy currently serves as the music director at Westminster United Church in Orangeville, Ontario.

Encouraged by a fellow pianist, Nancy had her introduction to the Technique while she was visiting Canada. She had a series of ten lessons, and her preexisting migraine headaches never returned after these sessions. Impressed by the result, Nancy committed to regular lessons

after she relocated to Vancouver. By studying the Technique, Nancy was able to effectively improve her postural issues. Most importantly, it helped her manage her short attention span and performance anxiety that had had a negative effect on her development as a performing artist. When a teacher-training school established in the Vancouver area, Nancy immediately decided to enroll in the course because she desired to help others like herself with what she learned from the Technique.

Nancy has been an active teaching member of the Canadian Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique since 2006, and maintains an active private practice teaching both piano and the Alexander Technique in Toronto and Orangeville, Ontario. When she finds time between her teaching and performing schedules, Nancy enjoys painting, swimming, running, and planting flowers in her beautiful garden.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

<b>Name:</b>	Mei Lee
<b>Post-secondary Education and Degrees</b>	<p>Western University London, Ontario, Canada 2014-2019 DMA</p> <p>University of Toronto Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2007 Advanced Certificate: advanced graduate study in Voice Pedagogy and Vocology</p> <p>University of Toronto Toronto, Ontario, Canada 1996 MMus.</p> <p>University of Toronto Toronto, Ontario, Canada 1991-1995 Bachelor of Music in Performance with Honours</p>
<b>Certification</b>	<p>Certificate in teaching the Alexander Technique for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels The Developing Self, New York, USA 2019</p> <p>Alexander Technique Teaching Certification The Toronto School of the Alexander Technique Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2010</p>
<b>Professional Affiliations</b>	<p>National Association of Teachers of Singing 2004 – present</p>



Canadian Actors' Equity Association  
2004 – present

Canadian Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique  
2010 – present

**Honours and  
Awards**

Western Graduate Research Scholarships  
Western University  
2014-2018

Don Wright Graduate Entrance Award  
Western University  
2014

Paul H Mills Scholarship, outstanding in Voice Studies  
University of Toronto  
1995

National Association of Teachers of Singing Competition  
Ontario Chapter, University 3<sup>rd</sup> year women, winner  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
1993

**Related Work  
Experience**

Music Instructor/Consultant  
Elton Academy (High School)  
Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada  
09/2019-present

Alexander Instructor  
Western University  
2015-2018

Teaching Assistant  
Western University  
2014-2018

Alexander Instructor (private)  
Toronto & London, Ontario, Canada  
2010-present

Guest lecturer/presenter  
Voice and Alexander Technique  
Various Universities and Secondary Institutions  
Canada, Taiwan  
2010-present

Chorus member  
Canadian Opera Company  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2004-2011

Voice Instructor (private)  
Toronto & London, Ontario, Canada  
1996-present

Vocal Performing Artist, Soprano  
1990-present