

Spring Congress Talks Kick Off Series of Special Events

Congress Talks precede International Alexander Awareness Week and Master Class with Cornelius Reid

This spring ACAT has hosted three special and very successful events: the Congress Talks, Alexander Awareness Week, and a master class with Cornelius Reid (see related article on page 9).

Brown; and

The Uncommitted Hand: Knowing What You Want and What Not to Do to Achieve It with Joan Frost and Barbara Kent

Index

Report from the Chair	2
The Art of Breathing	3
Annual Meeting Minutes	4
What are you Practicing?	6
Pause and Think	8
Cornelius Reid Master Class	9
News from the Center	10

Congress Talks

On April 30 and May 1, ACAT hosted *Talks on the Alexander Technique from the Seventh International Congress at Oxford*. The Talks were very well attended and very enthusiastically received. Attendees came from as far as Denver and California, although the majority were New York area teachers. There were non-teaching attendees as well. The program was organized by Judy Stern and Joan Frost and the event coordinated by David Homan. A reception followed Saturday's workshops. The favorable response has encouraged the board to pursue further programming of this kind in the future. If you wish to be on the planning committee please call the Center (212) 644-2229.

The workshops were:

Breathing from the Soles of the Feet to the Crown of the Head with Jessica Wolf

The Lumbo-sacral Spine – What goes Wrong? with Jack and Judy Stern

The Singing Voice – Comparative Listening and Vocal Direction with Beret Arcaya

Group Teaching: Preparing the Receptive Field with Meade Andrews

Brain Basics of Touch and Direction with Lucy

Alexander Awareness Week

In contrast to the Congress Talks, which were geared towards those already familiar with the Technique, a week of fabulous activities was held in celebration of Alexander Awareness Week, June 13-19, in conjunction with AmSAT and national associations worldwide, to present our work to those curious about how it might help them.

ACAT hosted a variety of activities to introduce the public to the benefits of the Technique. Over 45 people came to lectures and had introductory lessons. The schedule for the week included:

On Tuesday June 14, a free introductory lecture/demonstration presented by Hope Martin; on Thursday June 16 a free workshop on back pain management and the Alexander Technique presented by Jane Tomkiewicz; and free 30 minute introductory lessons (with a requested donation of \$15 for the Judith Leibowitz Fund) with certified ACAT member-teachers Wednesday through Friday afternoons.

Special Thanks to Michael Hanco for helping to organize these events and thanks also to all the member teachers who volunteered their time and to trainees who helped out in hosting events.

Report from the Chair by Hope Martin

(as delivered to members at the February 6, 2005 Annual Meeting)

I'm heartened by the level of involvement and creativity of the current Board of Directors. It's been an exciting and dynamic year. Besides our very full monthly meetings where we deal with concerns of the training program and the organization, we have been actively involved in exploring questions concerning who we are, where we find ourselves and where we want to go. In November we had a weekend retreat together in the country where we had the opportunity to delve deeply into those questions as well as have some fun together. A lot of what we're working with may not yet be apparent to the membership, but it will be.

I'd like to say something about our activities, which will be presented in full detail to the membership for discussion and feedback at a future meeting:

- We are evaluating the structure of the training program to meet the changing needs of potential trainees. This includes, but is not limited to, creating an evening track so that students with full time jobs can still train. Joan will speak about this in more detail in her report.
- We are addressing the question of what it would take to turn ACAT into a more viable professional membership organization. That might include establishing the profession in the community by forming alliances with other organizations, disciplines and practices that would find the Alexander Technique relevant and increasing public awareness about the value of the Alexander Technique.
- We are looking to actively fund-raise and ultimately to establish an endowment for ACAT.
- We are expanding the post-certification offerings for the membership. We recently instituted a tenth term, taught by different ACAT faculty, which has been helpful to graduates with different levels of teaching experience.
- We are looking to significantly overhaul the ACAT infrastructure to better support the organization. Some of what we're addressing are the core jobs at ACAT, how they're defined, what the compensation is, with a view to expand the positions and number of hours worked to better meet the needs of the organization.
- Finally, we are involved in a dynamic, creative discussion about our goals and values as an organization: what are the principles that define us, how do we communicate who we are, what differentiates us from other people and institutions that do something similar? How do we take those values and goals into practical application? How does everything we do reflect our values? How do we make it all hap-

pen? Luckily we have good guidance in the process by our Board member Louis Songster who has experience with branding, advertising and working with organizations.

To make a familiar analogy, the Board is actually involved in a kind of organizational process of awareness, inhibition and direction. Awareness of where we've come from and where we're at - our strengths and our weaknesses. What are the habitual ways we get in our own way? How is our thinking limited? What are our strengths? How do we want to communicate those strengths? Only by knowing ourselves can we respond to a changing world and take the institution into the future by initiating some changes and take our institution to the future by initiating some change.

There are currently four active standing committees on the Board that meet between Board meetings. I believe that's four more than when I joined the board many years ago. I will recognize the members of those committees and say more about their activities later in the meeting. Those committees are: the Committee to Increase Enrollment; the Finance Committee; the Post-Certification Committee; and the Office Infrastructure Committee.

Our post-certification courses at ACAT have been varied and plentiful. Joan and Alex Murray were here again in the Fall to present the Dart work applied to Alexander teaching. They also taught for a day in the training program. John Nicholls has been presenting his *Carrington Way of Working* to 15 students during the year, from September 2004 through June 2005.

We have run two successful Tenth Terms, 10 weeks long, taught by Daniel Singer, Joan Frost, Barbara Kent, Alex Farkas, Kim Jessor and Judith Lakin from the ACAT faculty. Pearl Ausubel presented a post-certification series, too. It's satisfying for ACAT to sponsor these classes to be instrumental in the professional growth of our members and to magnetize such wonderful programs and teachers to these four walls.

A hearty thank you to Larry King for donating \$3000 to ACAT this year, to be applied to work study positions, and to established projects related to the Debby Caplan archives. Thank you so much, Larry!

As always I remind you, the membership, that ACAT the organization is not us, it's you. Whatever you want to see happen here will only happen with your involvement and input. So please jump in - but first, before you do, for everyone's benefit, inhibit and let your neck be free!

Thank you Larry King

Thank you Larry, for your generous \$3000 donation to the Deborah Caplan/Alma Frank Scholarship Fund. Your continuing support of the scholarship fund is an enormous contribution to ACAT, the trainees who benefit from it, and the Alexander community as a whole. Helping to enable the training of Alexander teachers is a beautiful way to celebrate Debby's legacy and her life's work, something that means a lot to all of us. On behalf of all its members, ACAT thanks you.

The Art of Breathing Post-Certification Class Returns

The American Center for the Alexander Technique is pleased to announce the second post graduate training program with Jessica Wolf in "The Art of Breathing".

Jessica will teach the method she developed that integrates Carl Stough's principles of breathing coordination into an Alexander lesson. Stough, a pioneer in the field of respiratory education, believed that, though breathing is an involuntary process, proper breathing requires considerably more attention.

Alexander teachers will explore the breath as an essential element of overall coordination.

continued on page 8

Thank You!

The Board of Directors of ACAT would like to thank the following teachers and trainees who volunteered their time in support of our first Alexander Awareness Week. Events like this would not happen if not for the generosity of our members:

Hope Martin, Jane Tomkiewicz, Anne Waxman, Michael Hanko, Sabine Heubusch, Rebecca Tuffey, Bob Bradley, Gwen Roe, Amira Glaser, Mark Josefsberg, Tara Sullivan, Daniel Singer, Bette Chamberlin, Phyllis Kubey, Sigal Bergman, Kim Jessor, Jenna Zabala, Arthur Tobias, Clare Maxwell, Vicky Roth, Suzy Perkins, Tom Weiser, Alan Bowers, Masumi Kishimoto, Christopher Beckstrom, Joan Hurley, Jana Schnitzler, Patty Llosa and Lucy Young.

Thanks to Joan Frost, Judy Stern, Jane Tomkiewicz and David Homan for initiating and coordinating the Congress Talks.

Thanks to Harvey Rosen, Donna Reid and Cornelius Reid for their effort and generosity in organizing Mr. Reid's master class.

And above all, special thanks to Michael Hanko for his pivotal role in visualizing and realizing the events of Alexander Awareness Week.

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Minutes of the 2005 ACAT Annual Membership Meeting

The meeting was held on February 6, 2005, at ACAT, 39 West 14th Street, Suite 507, New York, NY. A count of members present and holding proxies was taken and a quorum was reached. Board Chair Hope Martin called the meeting to order at 1:13 pm.

Hope proposed dispensing with reading of the minutes from last year's meeting, which had been published in the ACAT News. This motion was seconded, and the members present unanimously approved last year's minutes as published.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR. The Report from the Chair is reprinted in its entirety on page 2.

REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. Jane reported that she was reporting in her capacity as Treasurer for the corporation and as such, turned the meeting over to Harvey Rosen of the Finance Committee to present the Annual Report of Directors for the year 2003-04. Harvey summarized the report and explained that lower enrollment was the major reason that we ran at a loss last year. ACAT was running on budget for the year, although a deficit is projected once again due to lower enrollment.

REPORT FROM THE TCP DIRECTOR. Joan reported that the TCP presently has 16 candidates training: seven 8th-termers who meet at 8 am and then three 5th-termers, one 4th-term, three 2nd-termers, and 2 first-termers, all who meet at 10:30. We are now admitting trainees at the beginning of each term. The 10:30 class has been the add-on class so has become multi-level. We are becoming accustomed to accommodating many levels in one class and by and large, it seems to be working fine.

The ACAT Board is in the process of reassessing what is unique to ACAT and why someone might want to train here. As part of this effort, Michael Hanko, Stephanie Kalka and Joan Frost are beginning to revamp our catalog in the wish of making it more representative of what ACAT is about.

As part of our outreach effort, spearheaded by Stephanie Kalka and the Committee to Increase Enrollment, we held an Open House for prospective applicants on October 18th. It was the first in ten years. We are planning to have another Open House on Monday, February 21st. Our last Open House yielded an applicant whom we accepted, but who is presently in Japan trying to get a visa to come back here to study. Since 9/11 this has be-

come more difficult.

At the end of the Fall term, we lost our longtime faculty member and former Executive Director, Kathy Miranda, to Syracuse. We miss Kathy's steadfast and creative presence.

Joan has decided to step down from TCP Directorship at the end of the 2005-2006 fiscal year (Aug. 31, 2006). That will mark 15 years of involvement in ACAT's administration. Judy Stern will be ACAT's new TCP Director beginning in September 2006 and Brooke Lieb will be Associate Director. Joan will train them throughout the next school year.

ACAT will be initiating an Evening Program to begin this coming September if we have 5 candidates. Brooke Lieb will be Dean of Admissions for the program.

Joan thanked our Adjunct Faculty for being available to teaching our trainees at reduced rates. They are Pamela Anderson, Joan Arnold, Jane Kosminsky, Carolyn Serota, Lori Schiff, Jessica Wolf and new member Bill Connington.

We have compiled a list group classes taught by our faculty and volunteer faculty for our eighth- and ninth-term candidates. Some of our candidates have found it very valuable to observe and participate in these classes, held in acting programs around the city, in adult-education programs, and privately.

Every year Joan meets with candidates to go over their 3rd- and 6th-term progress reports. This fall she decided to meet with each candidate for 10 or 15 minutes regarding her or his experience of training. She found these meetings very rich, cherished the opportunity for one-on-one verbal contact, and would like to make this a part of the training each fall term.

Last May for four weeks we had a high school student attend ACAT full-time as a part of a senior project. It was a very successful experiment, and we would like to open our classes to others who wish short intensive study. Occasionally we have visiting teachers or trainees from another program attend class at our day fee of \$50. Again, we would like to explore increasing these opportunities.

Joan and Alex Murray came into our TCP in October for a full morning of Dart Procedures. Most of our Barbara Kent Fund budget was spent on this visit this year.

This term we commenced having our volunteers sign contracts when committing to eight sessions for our third-year candidates. It seems to be working well. Thanks to the efforts of candidates Jenna Zabala and Amira Glaser we have seen very little absenteeism amongst our volunteers this term. Volunteers now must become Associate members of ACAT at \$25/year to be eligible for the program. Jenna put together a beautiful binder illustrating the volunteer program, which can be used by future volunteer coordinators.

At our annual faculty retreat (we thought it was perhaps our tenth consecutive), we applied our study of Nonviolent Communication to our process. Among other things, we explored F.M.'s early breathing articles and shared what we appreciated about our classroom teaching—what are our strong suits (NVC self-appreciation).

We have been continuing with our post-certification programming. Pearl gave two workshops last April and we have run two 10-week series of our Tenth Term class. We plan to run Tenth Term again in the Spring, day and teachers to be announced. Tenth Term runs on a Monday, Wednesday, or Fridays, from 10:30- 1:30 and costs \$500/term (\$50 day, our day fee). A number of those who took it the first time repeated it the second and found it very valuable. It is now open to teachers of all levels and is still limited to six participants.

Our Board voted to offer a \$250 honorarium towards an ACAT post-certification program to any teacher who sends a student to ACAT to train. It can be used anytime during the three years that trainee is attending ACAT. This offer is effective Fall term 2004.

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE. Hope recognized the following members for service to ACAT in the preceding year: the Committee to Increase Enrollment: Daniel Singer, Ruth Diamond, Stephanie Kalka, Louis Songster; the Finance Committee: Harvey Rosen, Jane Tomkiewicz, Nick Gambino; The Post-Certification Committee: Jane Tomkiewicz, Joan Frost, Hope Martin; the Office Infrastructure Committee: Jane Tomkiewicz, Michael Hanco, Louis Songster; also Brooke Lieb, Clare Maxwell, Tara Sullivan, Mark Josefsberg, Christopher Beckstrom, and Miho Nozawa for their individual contributions. Hope said all the members of the Board have been very generous with their time and energy. A diverse and dynamic group with a lot to offer, the volunteer members of the board are: Harvey Rosen, Louis Songster, Michael Hanco, Ruth Diamond and Hope Martin. The ex officio members (meaning board service is a term and condition of their job) are Joan Frost and Jane Tomkiewicz.

ELECTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS. The

nominating committee proposed its nominations for two vacant Board positions:

Michael Hanco for an additional 2-year term. Ruth Diamond for a 2-year term of which she has already served part of a year. Both nominees were unanimously elected to their terms of service.

NEW BUSINESS. Spring Congress Talks: Judy Stern announced plans for an event to be held towards the end of April, during which certain workshops and presentations from the Oxford Congress will be repeated at ACAT as a fundraiser.

Membership Survey: Clare Maxwell outlined the results of the survey she had sent out to the membership to find out what kinds of membership events were desired. The results, which she presented in a hand-out made available to Board Members and others, indicated three areas of interest: exchanges, presentations by specific teachers, and presentations on specific topics.

Teacher Referral Procedure: Daniel Singer requested clarification as to how teachers are assigned to members of the public who call for information. Michael Hanco explained that most people are now using our website to find teachers and that the few people who still request teacher referrals by phone are mailed our Member Teacher List.

Fundraising Ideas: Christopher Beckstrom recommended auctioning duplicate library materials. Other members suggested holding an on-line auction, a book fair, and a service auction.

Organizational Values: The Board invited contributions from the membership towards their ongoing process of determining goals and values for ACAT. The following values were mentioned: Freedom to change, by Diane Bradley; Choices, Accessibility (i.e., how we formulate language about A.T.) by Beret Arcaya; Connection and communication with the corporate world by Clare Maxwell. Judy Stern raised this related question: "What in our (perhaps unconscious) core values keeps us thinking small?"

Permanent Home for ACAT: Beret Arcaya raised the possibility of finding a permanent facility for the organization, especially as the first generation of teachers leave us. A discussion followed.

The business meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Hanco, Secretary
Hope Martin, Chair

What Are You Practicing? The Application of the Alexander Technique in Music Playing

by Hsin-I Chen

To become a professional concert performer, extensive repetitive practicing is the only way to make your career successful. This formula is so accepted that every student who wants to become a professional spends many hours practicing per day, leaving little time for the rest of their life. When a student meets any technical difficulty, usually the teacher will suggest more practice in order to overcome it. Therefore, the more practice the student does, the better performance skills s/he will gain.

What are we practicing? We can divide practicing into two categories—one is the technical practice, the other is the musical practice. The technical practice includes good sitting position—both feet are grounded, fingers are placed well on the keyboard, the shoulders are released naturally without lifting them, the wrists are horizontally placed and the fingers are naturally curved. From this position the student can let the effort go through the body from hands to finger tips in order to produce sound. Students follow the practicing instruction in order to produce sophisticated tone, color and proper speed of finger movements. However, many problems occur after a long period of time in practicing and trying to maintain the correct posture. Although this machine-like practicing will strengthen the control of muscles of the whole body, it might also create stiffness of the body and mind in repeated practicing without thinking. In the end, people will practice with subconscious mind and let the subconscious muscle movement control the music.

A lot of music students and professional performers are suffering from physical discomfort and pressure when they practice and perform in public. Most of the physical discomfort comes from the misuse of the body. In order to maintain the "correct" playing position, muscle tension emerges, accumulates and brings pain and injury to performers. If they ignore these symptoms and keep practicing in this way, the muscles will suffer serious harm. Under this circumstance, the performers endure terrible discomfort, and for them, there is no pleasure at all in performing and there is no enjoyment in playing music.

Students are taught to control and to relax their muscles all the time. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of students who get injury due to the misuse of muscles while playing instruments. They seek cures from all kinds of treatments—both from the Eastern and Western medical fields. However, after they recover, they come back to the old-fashioned way of practicing and playing and then they get injured again. Therefore, many resolutions besides medical treatments such as Alexander Technique, Yoga and other physical/mental exercises are needed in order to provide musicians different training of body and mind. Among these, the Alexander Technique is most influential especially in the educational institutions. Major music schools and music departments offer Alexander Technique courses to help music students understand their body and mind and use them efficiently not only in performing perspectives, but also in all daily activities. This is important because how you use yourself in daily activities affects how you use yourself in music playing.

What is the Alexander Technique? This Technique was discovered by F. Matthias Alexander (1869-1955) more than 100 years ago when he had vocal problems while performing as an actor. He suffered from hoarseness and loss of voice, which impacted his career tremendously. After he acquired medical treatments and took rest, his voice came back and he was able him to perform again. However, the nightmare happened again and again when he went back to the stage. He realized that there must be something that caused the same problem to show up again. While observing his own posture in front of the mirror for several years, he realized that when he recited, he put his head back and down which caused a shortening of the spine. The shortening of the spine decreases the flexibility of all joints and muscles so the body functions poorly in this situation. Conversely, if the head and neck are well balanced and not intentionally manipulated, the body will function well. In other words, if a person allows his neck to be free and allows his head to be balanced on the top of the spine, his torso will follow and the organism will function well. Moreover, the Alexander Technique guides people to acquire psychophysical balance that affects the function of the whole organism through the specific use of mental activity, which has an enormous influence on the physical reaction. Therefore,

people are able to change their use though conscious control.

How can this Technique help musicians with their practice? After many years of practicing, it is not easy to change performing habits. The consciousness of thinking plays a very important role in this situation. What is the conscious thinking? According to Alexander principles, the thinking process arises from awareness, inhibition, and direction. It can help us to understand what we do to our body when we are practicing. First of all, musicians should not ignore any discomfort symptoms and just rely on the medical treatments to address the pain. When the discomfort emerges, musicians should be *aware* of it and *inhibit* the old playing habits rather than keeping practicing in the old style because the problem will not disappear when ignored. Many times people get used to the discomfort and "feel ok" about it because they accept the common adage "no pain, no gain". However, in the end, they will realize that pain and injury will limit their ability and might also destroy their career!

After being aware and inhibiting the inefficient playing habits, people have a conscious mind to think about different approaches—this mental activity is called "direction" in the Alexander Technique terminology. According to the cello teacher and Alexander Technique teacher, Pedro de Alcantara, "Directions are a *process* involving the linking up of thought to action. One of the *results* of this process is the energizing of the body. When directing is healthy, it results in a particular muscular quality that is alive, elastic, vital." For example, when playing instruments, how we consider applying the movements and efforts of our arms and hands to make the sound is the direction. Several directions can happen all together, one after the other. However, students rely too much on teacher's directions most of the time. These directions include how to deliver strength from the body to the keyboard, how to curve your fingers, how to hold your instrument, etc. If students merely imitate those actions like robots without processing them through their conscious mind, the brain will become lazy and lose the ability of conscious thinking in practicing. In order not to rely too much on the teacher's directions, students should acknowledge teachers as an aid to provide opinions and knowledge, but must not consider teachers as the performing standard or model. Therefore, to do efficient practicing, students should recover their thinking process from subconscious (following teacher's directions) to conscious thinking. If there is any discomfort or pain, it is ok to stop playing and rethink what is going on when we use ourselves. If we are not satisfied with the tone color and the sound, it is suitable to stop playing and observe if there is any misuse limiting the playing approach. When

musicians can practice instruments in this manner, they are not only training their muscular structure, but also practicing with the complete whole self.

In my own opinion, the Alexander Technique not only helps musicians to acquire efficient application of self, but also can give benefit to all educational systems. The purpose of education is not merely to provide techniques or skills of certain subjects, but it must also include how to view and use the well-balanced psychophysical self. According to John Dewey, "without knowledge of what constitutes a truly normal and healthy psycho-physical life, our professed education is likely to be mis-education...the technique of Alexander gives to the educator a standard of psychophysical health...it supplies also the 'means-whereby' this standard may be progressively and endlessly achieved, becoming a conscious possession of the one educated". Because education is life, people learn how to live through education. We can realize students' vision about themselves and the environment though their thinking habits. When students only rely on teachers' instructions without conscious thinking in performing, how can we expect them to produce attractive music on their own?

Reference:

Alexander, F. M. The Use of the Self. London: Victor Gollancz, 1985, p. 12.

De Alcantara, P. Indirect Procedures—a Musician's Guide to the Alexander Technique. Oxford:Clarendon, 1997, pp. 62-64.

Hsin-I Chen is a musician, is studying something at Columbia, and was certified by ACAT in June, 2004.

Pause and Think Before you "Do" By Amira Glaser

(Amira Glaser wrote this as a 8th term trainee as a reflection on a homework assignment for the prior week given by Joan Frost.)

In just one week my attempt at remembering to *inhibit before I start a doing* has been filled with learning. I could not have expected the surprising form this homework assignment would take on. It got off to a slow start. On the first day of the task the minute I walked out of the ACAT door (after remarking how much easier it had gotten to remember to pause as class went on) and went into the "doing" part of my day I completely forgot. It did not even occur to me until I was on the train the following morning on my way back to school. With renewed determination I set about training and then going into my workday with the wish to remember to pause. After school I'd say it lasted about two hours. I felt so easeful and happy those two hours. And then I forgot.

The next morning I woke up, made my way in the dark to the bathroom, reached for my toothbrush and ouch! had a 'stiff' neck. It was very painful, not like anything I had experienced before; I am fairly sure I had a muscle go into spasm on the medial side of my left shoulder blade. At that point I couldn't tell where the pain was radiating from, I just felt soreness and stiffness up and down my spine from about C5 to T4. My range of movement felt severely limited – and I had no choice but to remember to pause before I did anything – or I was in a lot of pain. I went to school and got loving hands-on from teachers and classmates whose intentions I trusted, and that did provide some relief. But it was in the afternoon in my private lesson with Kim Jessor that I had a breakthrough. I began to move around the pain, I had to inhibit not the movement, but the habit of how I moved. Of course! With the pain as my reminder (which maybe was a blessing since I was doing such a bad job of remembering on my own...) I spent the next 48 hours pausing and thinking and moving. Moving with the pain, continuously inhibiting, not being afraid of it or trying to fix it but relying on my use, giving myself time to remember my directions and go with them, eased the pain so now it is just sore in the one specific area to the touch. It is healing.

With the aid of my pain I made discoveries about how I use my arms coming off my back, which have changed my thinking dramatically. In the last two days as the pain has pretty much subsided, I have had a heightened awareness of stopping before I act – catching myself more frequently, even just remembering to think about it more often... I want to keep this assignment as my assignment for myself for the term (I know it should be

for life but the term at this point is much more concrete and less end-gaining) and see if I can incorporate it more and more as a preventative rather than curative process in my daily life outside of ACAT.

Thanks to Joan Frost for giving this assignment and also to Kim Jessor; and to Judy Stern for changing my understanding and relationship to pain.

...Breathing, continued from page 3

The participants will develop the sensitivity and the ability to recognize and eliminate interferences of the respiratory function. They will also refine their capacity to observe whether breathing patterns support or interfere with the primary control.

As in all Alexander work, this course will help guide teachers to deepen their understanding of their own breathing habits and then acquire specific skills to enrich their teaching. The program will begin in January, 2006. The course is comprised of four weekend workshops and fourteen individual lessons. Participants must have at least five years teaching experience.

Jessica Wolf, ACAT '77, is a member of *AmSAT*. She is also a Certified Movement Analyst from the Laban Institute of Movement Studies. For over 25 years, Jessica has been exploring and conducting research in respiratory function and breath. She was one of only a dozen people given permission by Carl Stough to teach his principles of breathing coordination. In 2002, she became the director of the first post-certification training program offered by ACAT in "The Art of Breathing".

In 1998, Jessica joined the faculty of the Yale School of Drama. She is responsible for creating the Alexander Program at the Aspen Music Festival. Other faculty appointments include The Julliard School, SUNY Purchase, Circle in the Square Theater School, Hunter College, Sarah Lawrence College and the Verbier Music Festival.

For more information, please contact ACAT at jane@acatnyc.org or Jessica Wolf at jesswolf@optonline.net

Cornelius L. Reid Master Class

By Donna S. Reid

On June 11th Cornelius L. Reid presented a master class for the ACAT community to benefit the Barbara Kent Fund. Mr. Reid is a renowned vocal pedagoguc who has written six books, some of which have been published in German, Japanese and Korean. He has given numerous master classes in the United States and Europe and his students have sung in all the major opera houses of the world, including The Metropolitan Opera of New York and La Scala in Milan, Italy.

In this master class, which was presented at his apartment on the Upper West Side of New York City, Mr. Reid demonstrated how his theories and practices coincide with those of F. M. Alexander. Central to his teaching is an understanding of how to bring about change in a non-doing and indirect manner.

Mr. Reid worked with four of his own pupils, two sopranos, a bass, and a baritone, the latter being a certified Alexander teacher. As was made clear in this presentation, the catalyst for change is the pitch, intensity and vowel pattern presented in the form of a vocal exercise. Mr. Reid played a musical figure on the piano and told the student which vowel to sing. He then asked that they clear their minds of any past experiences related to singing, think only of that figure and vowel, and sing the pattern musically with a strong rhythmic élan. He then observed what the sound was telling him as to the freedom or lack thereof in the vocal mechanism. Based on this observation, Mr. Reid would present another vocal exercise designed to elicit a freer response of the laryngeal musculature and as a result a better tone quality.

The way Mr. Reid is able to keep track of the sounds is through the dynamics of vocal registration. Every human voice naturally divides into two distinguishably different sounds that have been traditionally named chest voice and falsetto. One can recognize these two sounds in a yodel. The object of vocal training is to unite these disparate qualities so that they blend into one seamless voice. The balance between these two sounds is what Mr. Reid listens for and how he keeps track of what is happening muscularly at the laryngeal level.

The positive changes Mr. Reid was able to bring about in all of the students he worked with were obvious, even to those without any musical background. One soprano had the problem of singing some notes under the pitch. Mr. Reid's solution was not to ask the student to force those notes into tune, but to change the manner of the vocal exercise, at times the vowel, at times the inten-

sity level. As a result, by the end of the session she was singing those notes in tune and was able to sing them softly as well as full voice.

One of the pupils he worked with, a bass, was ill, with a sore throat and head cold. This was not announced until after the session was over. As Mr. Reid said, if one is to be a professional singer, the vocal technique should allow for such muscular freedom that a minor inconvenience, such as a cold, would be inconsequential. After Mr. Reid worked with this bass, he was able to sing a beautiful piano high F.

With all of the participating singers, Mr. Reid never once told them to "do" anything except to sing the exercise given. He did not say a word about how the student was breathing, nor did he ask them to "place" the voice anywhere or do anything that indicated an overt control. The type of control implemented was indirect and initiated with the student's thought. The tools of inhibition, awareness and direction (although Mr. Reid did not use that terminology) were in play throughout the entire class.

Mr. Reid's teaching style is an education in itself. He is very upbeat and uses no negatives. As mentioned earlier, he does not tell his students what to do, but more importantly, he does not tell his students what NOT to do, which he considers another form of doing. He has a wonderful sense of humor, which he interjects at the appropriate moment, and his enthusiasm for his life's work is contagious.

The class was to last one hour and a half and when it went fifteen minutes overtime, Mr. Reid was told the time had run out. His remark to that was, "Too bad! I'm just getting warmed up!" Most of the audience was eager to stay and watch him work with the final student of the day and the class finished forty-five minutes later. It is very difficult to believe that this master teacher is ninety-four years old. His energy and love of his work is equal to that said of F. M. Alexander or other master teachers who in their advanced age remain young at heart.

Mr. Reid is quoted extensively in Pedro de Alcantara's book *Indirect Procedures*, and Mr. de Alcantara also contributed the article, *An Alexander Teacher Reads The Free Voice, His Mouth Agape*, to a *Festschrift* written in honor of Mr. Reid's ninetieth birthday entitled, *The Modern Singing Master, Essays in Honor of Cornelius L. Reid*.

Donna S. Reid is a trainee in her 6th term, a singing teacher, and married to Mr. Reid.

NEWS FROM THE CENTER

Announcing the Opening of the Alexander Technique Center for Performance and Development. Tom Vasiades is opening an Alexander Technique Center for Performance and Development. It is located at 19 West 34th Street, Suite 1013, (212) 307-6695. The Center offers group classes and individual lessons to performers, people with chronic pain, respiratory ailments - such as asthma and emphysema, and to the general public. The mission of the Center is to explore the relationship of the Alexander Technique to performance and human development.

In his work Tom combines his experience as an Alexander Technique teacher, an actor and his training as a psychotherapist in Social Therapy, an approach that uses performance to reinitiate human development. He has been exploring Alexander's understanding of human development and how to advance the Alexander work and its relationship to human development. For further information or upcoming events, call (212) 307-6695. The website, which is still under construction, is www.atcpd.com.

A home for your practice: tired of teaching at home or scrambling to rent space? Settle in to my beautiful, spacious, dedicated Alexander teaching studio, located in Hell's Kitchen near Columbus Circle. Wednesdays and Fridays are available for your exclusive use - and weekends too. Call and we can discuss the details. Tara Sullivan (212) 489-7849 or TaraRSullivan@msn.com.

Save the date! ACAT Fall Membership workshops: workshop with Shelley Senter, October 15; *Preparing the Receptive Field* with Meade Andrews, November 11. Stay tuned for more info or call the ACAT office if you just can't wait.

Remember ACAT in Your Estate Planning

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