

ACAT Is Making A Joyful Noise

DEAR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES,

AN EXTRAORDINARY EVENING IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN! IT IS TIME TO MAKE "A JOYFUL NOISE." ON APRIL 25, 1994 AT 8 P.M. AT MERKIN CONCERT HALL AT ABRAHAM GOODMAN HOUSE, ACAT IS HOLDING A BENEFIT IN CELEBRATION OF OUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY - A GALA IN HONOR OF OUR WORK, OUR INSTITUTION, AND OURSELVES.

A remarkable and diverse group of performing artists are celebrating with us and on our behalf. All are students of the technique, some are teachers. Among them are cellist Evangeline Benedetti, violinist Fiona Simon, and violist Dorian Rence of the New York Philharmonic. Also joining us are Nadine Asin, flutist with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Tony and Obie Award winning actress Marian Seldes, Elena Batman (a lead on Broadway in *Phantom of the Opera*) and *Mannekriana* (Marianna Rosett and Ken Bichel), a two piano duo who are currently recognized as "the most important improvisational team of their generation" will create music especially for this evening.

Our host for the evening is Andre Gregory of *My Dinner with Andre* fame. Aside from his unique contribution to theater and film, Andre has studied with not one, but two of ACAT's founding members, Judith Leibowitz and Deborah Caplan. In addition, a surprise celebrity from Juilliard's Drama Division will be joining us.

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The performance will be followed by a festive reception catered by Tom Vasiliades. Tickets are \$75 for the performance, \$100 for performance and reception, and \$150 for performance, reception, and a lesson with a member of the ACAT faculty. Of course, all donations for less or for more will be most gratefully accepted.

You will receive your invitations in March, but you can order tickets directly from ACAT as soon as the end of January. Get your tickets early by mailing your check (payable to ACAT) to:

American Center for the Alexander Technique
129 West 67th Street
New York, N.Y. 10023
Attention: Benefit Tickets

Don't wait! Merkin Concert Hall is a small house.
The number of seats is limited!

We look forward with great anticipation to seeing you on the 25th!

Jane Kosminsky
Chairperson, Benefit Committee



Notes From the TCP

by Kim Jessor

This year, we have begun exploring a new way of organizing our curriculum at ACAT, which is proving to be quite exciting. Each day of the week has a specific focus: Monday is Procedures Class (monkey, lunge, and hands on the back of the chair), Tuesday is Chair Work, Wednesday is Table Work, Thursday is Activities (application work), and Friday is Voice. While most of this material has been covered in the past, it has not been organized so systematically. It was up to the discretion of each teacher to choose what they would work on each day. Some material, such as activities and voice, has not previously been covered in great detail.

I have found this structure most helpful. Having a narrower focus for each class enables me to work more with repetition and go into much greater depth. I can do this secure in the knowledge that on other days, other things are being taken care of. I had never before been challenged to spend 10 consecutive weeks on whispered ah and voice. Consequently, I am exploring this material more in my private practice, with interesting results. I have gone back to the anatomy books for a better understanding of breathing and the vocal mechanism. This has led me to an even greater appreciation of F.M.'s brilliance in devising this particular procedure.

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“My sense is that everyone is enjoying and learning from this...”

Notes From the Chair

by Lori Schiff

Happy birthday to and from everyone who had been involved with ACAT since 1964. We're 30 and we're proud to have grown through three decades of training, providing information to the public and encouraging interest and research in the Alexander Technique.

We have had the privilege of having had five fine directors of training and many wonderful teachers on all levels of the training course faculty. Without the influence of every student, teacher, administrator, and Board member that passed through our rooms (and those currently involved), ACAT would not be the strong institution that it is today.

Thank you!

Our first lecture in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary was very successful. We had an audience of approximately 100 people with varying levels of Alexander experience - about half had no experience with lessons or classes. The presentation by Debby Caplan, Judy Stern, and Jack Stern was enlightening and drew questions from the audience about the relationship of physical therapy to Alexander, what kinds of people would doctors recommend for Alexander Technique lessons, and what

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Closing dates: April 1,
August 1, December 1

Editor:

Sheldon Berkowitz

On Teaching: Musings on the Psychophysical

by N. Brooke Lieb

In my teaching I find I am working with Alexander students on material that I habitually assumed was in the arena of therapy - emotional material. Asking myself how what I do differs from psychotherapy has stimulated me to continually clarify what it is I am teaching, and what impact our work has on physical, emotional, and intellectual ways of being.

This article began as a response to a conversation at a faculty meeting regarding the fact that we have brought in psychotherapists to consult with our community.

I would like to show how effective, powerful, and appropriate our work is - as it stands - when emotional material presents itself. I feel we already have excellent tools to deal with the situations that came up which led us to seek consultation.

What am I teaching?

As an Alexander Teacher, I teach people to be conscious of how they behave physically, intellectually, and emotionally.

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Students develop a level of awareness that allows them to become more proactive in their behavior. As students begin to see how they may be creating a compression pattern by pulling the head back and down, they are able to use conscious awareness to change that state.

That is an example of how a student can use the principles of awareness, inhibition, and direction to create a new possibility. Head forward and up is a state of awareness to respond newly in the moment.

The longer I teach, the more I am convinced that the Alexander Technique is not just an application for improving movement. It is a tool to help us change how we think, respond, feel, and experience ourselves and our environment.

Expectations and teaching

When I was in my teacher training, one of my classmates requested that our training include specific instruction to deal with psychological issues that might come up with our students. At the time, I felt that to theorize what might come up, and the possible strategies for dealing with it, could create a set of expectations in us when we were teaching. Expectations might cloud our teaching the principles of the Alexander Technique. We might be watching for examples of what we'd been told to expect to start showing up in our lessons.

If I had been told to expect transference and counter-transference as a matter of course, I might interpret certain behavior as proof of those phenomena. (When we hold a belief, we will always find evidence for it. If I believe I must exert a certain level of muscle force to stand up from a chair, I won't be inclined or able to find another way to move without first being conscious that I hold it as a belief and then inhibiting it.)

My interest during training was to develop expertise in dealing with material that came up in the context of the Alexander Technique – not through a psychological model.

Personal experience

A clear example of how I use the Alexander Technique to deal with emotions is something that happens to me every time I teach a lesson. I tend to pull my head back and down, continuously having to redirect my primary control.

I also make judgments and assessments about how I'm doing, how my student is doing, and whose fault it is throughout the lesson. Those thought patterns are habits, just as pulling my head back and down is a habit. What matters is that I am aware. I can inhibit and direct to focus on being in the moment with myself and my student. Redirecting in this way comes from awareness. I feel frustrated when my student pulls back and down. Feeling frustrated for me is a habit tied in with judging back and down as bad. Again – I have the tools of the Alexander Technique that give me access to see what I was doing and how I was thinking that generated the feeling of frustration.

My feeling changes when I choose to inhibit. Then, I am able to bring my student into an awareness that they are pulling back and down so they can choose. I am not suppressing my feelings, I'm just not responding in my habitual way to frustration. I can recognize it and choose how to respond by staying in the moment.

When a student becomes emotional

I do not direct my lessons toward emotional material, but when it comes up I work with it. One reason emotions are also called feelings is because we feel them physically. By virtue of that fact, I think they are in the domain of the Alexander Technique. Emotions are not merely thoughts we have in our intellect. There are physical qualities to them. They are of the body/mind.

I had one student who became very frustrated during her third or fourth lesson. She said "I'm resisting you. My neck isn't freeing." I asked her "When you say you're

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"I do not direct my lessons toward emotional material, but when it comes up I work with it."

Ah, Hamlet!

by Victoria Hyatt

"I had missed the beauty and depth of Shakespeare altogether. This class changed everything!"

Over this past summer, I went to London to take the Carringtons' Teacher Refresher Course and Glynn MacDonald's Voice and Breath Class. I had no idea what to expect from Glynn's course, but I imagined that we would spend the week doing the Whispered Ah ad infinitum. This terrified me since I had always struggled with the "Ah." However, I remembered back to Glynn's impressive presentation on Breath at the Congress in Engelbeg, and I knew there was something there that I wanted to explore further.

We did spend some time doing straight whispered Ahs, but more of her course was devoted to the voice work. Because F.M.'s modality was Shakespeare, and it was his voice loss during his career reciting Shakespeare that ultimately led him to discover the Technique, Glynn chose Shakespeare as her vehicle for teaching the voice work.

I was assigned a speech from Hamlet. This was a play I had never read, and up until that point had had no interest in. Prior to this course, my feelings about Shakespeare had been the product of poorly taught courses in high school and college. I had missed the beauty and depth of Shakespeare altogether. This class changed everything!

As I learned my speech, and as I listened to my classmates recite theirs, I began to really know the text and I finally understood the poetry of his work. It struck me very deeply and I found myself compelled to know Shakespeare better.

I also made incredible discoveries about the way that I come across to others through my

voice. Glynn encouraged me to speak fully and not apologize for myself with my voice. It was terrifying, and I did not recognize my own voice when I was successful, but the feedback I got was most encouraging. I still think about what she taught me and try to put it into practice.

When I returned to New York, I got to know Hamlet better through watching a video and by reading the play. In reading the play, it appeared to me that Shakespeare must have known something about use, habits, and inhibition, as this speech from Act III, Scene 4 shows. It takes place in the Queen's bedroom immediately after Hamlet has stabbed Polonius. Hamlet expresses how he feels that she should now proceed in her relationship with the king.

*...That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil,* is angel yet in this,
That to the use** of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery
That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence; the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either (master) the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency...*

Perhaps F.M. got some of his ideas indirectly from William Shakespeare! §

*habit

**"The general meaning of this phrase may be: 'Custom, a monster that consumes all sense, is therefore like a devil in suggesting evil habits.'" Parenthesis indicate a word that has been lost and has instead been inserted by the editors.

Footnotes from 1992 New Folger Library Edition.

***Gatherings from a Dancer's Journal*, by Carolyn Bilderback.
Magic Circle Press, 1992. Reviewed by Jean Rashkind**

"One at a time and all at once" was Alexander's instruction for applying his verbal directions. To help elicit the "all at once" experience, teachers often impart visual images to the student, and students often invent their own to describe an

essentially kinesthetic experience. The use of image is the theme of Carolyn Bilderback's recent work, *Gatherings from a Dancer's Journal*. Bilderback, who studied Alexander Technique with Judy Leibowitz,
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is a dancer, choreographer, and teacher. She founded the Carolyn Bilderback Dance Theater in 1968, and is a professor at the Union Theological Seminary, teaching courses in movement and imagination.

The book consists of selections from her writings during the mid-1960's through the mid-1980's. The bulk are journal entries presented in random chronology; interspersed are teaching notes and short essays.

The journal entries bring us into the mind of the artist observing and experiencing daily life. Like a poet, she translates deeply personal states into images we can all recognize: "Intensely fragile, broken and lacy-edged like one of those hand-built clay pots pushed to the thinness of paper – that's how I feel today." Her concerns are also political and social. She poignantly evokes the lives of the city street's unknown:

I heard a man calling out in the street. I went to the window and looked out. "I am my father's son!" he cried. A modern-day Hamlet! though in his soiled cowboy clothes hardly Hamlet in appearance! I watched him as he pointed down the street crying out over and over, "I am my father's son! I am my father's son!" and then unaccountably his cry changed to "I want to be my father's son! I want to be my father's son!"

Bilderback's class notes illuminate her fascination with the teaching process. While Alexander teachers strive for simplicity, Bilderback revels in complexity of image as a means to elicit movement. She often develops her themes from natural phenomena. From *Further Fire Themes*:

"Still another fire theme is *Conservative House Burning Down*. This one should not be used as a follow up, but rather as the main improvisation for a given class.

In Conservative House Burning Down, each student is both house and fire. I ask the student to first establish the house and then have the fire start in some part of the house: basement, living room, porch, bedroom, storeroom, study-wherever. And as the fire burns, to let the house show how it feels about being destroyed."

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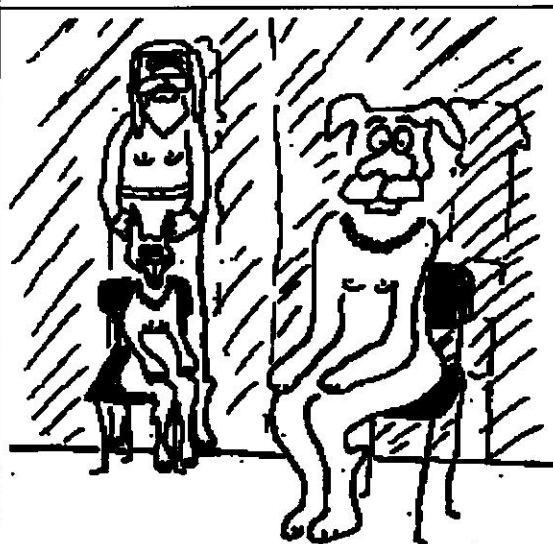
(Notes from the TGP, continued from page 2)

In my Activities Class we followed a kind of developmental progression from crawling to walking to running, including a field trip to Central Park on a glorious fall day! We have gone up on toes, taken the spine through its range of motion, and related the principles to Yoga. We also covered such daily activities as opening and closing windows and doors with direction, and applied the technique to playing musical instruments and writing.

Each teacher addresses these themes in individual ways. Because each term the sequence of subjects covered will change, the students get to experience different faculty approaches to the same material. My sense is that everyone is enjoying and learning from this, and there is the freshness of bringing a new organization to the essential principles of the work. Given how much exploration of the unknown takes place in training, I feel that it is helpful for the students to have an outline or overview of what will be covered.

The revised structure lays a foundation that is based on the classic teaching of the Alexander Technique. This gives each student the freedom to innovate, experiment, and ultimately find their own style. The essence of learning takes place, as always, in the moment, in the process occurring between teacher and student while working with awareness, inhibition, and direction. §

"The revised structure lays a foundation that is based on the classic teaching of the Alexander Technique."



The Alexander principle always remains the same, but the mechanics may differ from student to student.

by Ray

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(On ...Psychophysical, continued from page 3) resisting me, do you mean you don't want to free your neck even though I'm asking you to, or do you mean you want to free your neck but it isn't free?" She said "Well, I think I want to free my neck, but obviously subconsciously I don't want to or I would."

I told her I was interested in her conscious wish. She said her wish was to free her neck. I told her the Alexander Technique was working with her conscious thinking. I offered the possible explanation that what her muscles knew as neck free in her last lesson was no longer the same place; and that releasing contraction in a muscle is a skill that one learns. I also told her that the concepts of resistance and subconscious were not concepts we were working with in the Alexander Technique. She then experienced her neck as free, and I found her head moved much more easily on the end of her spine.

Another student came for a lesson and during the table work, she began crying and telling me about some difficulties she was having in a relationship. As she lay on the table crying, she said she was sorry to be feeling this way since she looked forward to her lesson so much. Working on her while we talked, I told her it was fine with me for her to feel sad and cry since that was truly present for her. I also pointed out to her how balanced and integrated she was as these emotions were present. The Alexander Technique is available to help us be more present. It doesn't require a certain state of mind or that we ignore emotions or physical states.

I also worked with a student who was physically abused as a child. She enjoyed the work but felt it could not be a part of her everyday life. She said it felt too dangerous to get out of a chair or walk upstairs without pulling her head back and down. She needed to look up to feel safe and was under the impression that in order to do the Alexander Technique she had to tip her head forward. I asked if I had said anything to specifically lead her to believe she had to tip her head forward when using the Alexander Technique.

She said there was nothing explicitly stated, but that was her impression. I told her this was an opportunity for her to look at where that belief came from, and to gain access to how her thinking works. I also showed her how she could get in and out of a chair with her head looking back and up. I explained that forward and up is not a position in space, but an internal relationship between the head and torso.

Psychology and Alexander Technique

Psychology uses terms such as transference, subconscious, and resistance. They are often used as though they are the "truth," although they are actually theoretical constructs to explain certain kinds of observable behavior. As an Alexander teacher, I have a different way of framing the same set of behaviors. Behavior that psychology might label as transference or resistance, I might see as habit patterns of the whole self. What psychology might call the subconscious, I might see as an undeveloped level of awareness.

The tools I teach to bring those behaviors under the conscious control of the individual are awareness, inhibition, and direction. I am interested in giving my students access to their thinking. We learn to recognize that we pull our heads back and down. We develop skills to inhibit pulling down, and instead send directions. Then, we can have a choice. We can change our state of being.

In closing

I recall that more than one of my trainers told me I could handle anything that came up in a lesson by staying with the principles of the Alexander Technique. I find this to be so. Staying with those principles when I deal with difficult situations in my personal and professional life, I find solutions that are new and more creative than my habitual responses. In fact, responding habitually would preclude my finding a new solution.

"The Alexander Technique is available to help us be more present. It doesn't require a certain state of mind or that we ignore emotions or physical states."

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I want to encourage us, individually and as a profession, to explore how the Alexander Technique can be effective and sufficient in dealing with the material that our students present – even material which we typically think belongs in the domain of therapy. I welcome discussion and hope that my colleagues also discuss these ideas as we continue to discover how the amazing principles of our work provide a wealth of possibilities to meet the challenges of our teaching and our lives. §

(Dancer's Journal, continued from page 5)

Animals is another prevalent theme: one essay is entitled *Animals, Birds, Insects, Mollusks*. Topics for this theme are: *Animals as Metaphors, Animal Interactions, Animals as Guides, Guardians, Faithful Companions, Animal Transformations, Fantastic Animals, An Animal as an Image for a Character, Animals Pretending to be People, and Animal Meditations*. It is the primal that inspires Bilderback, be it in nature, myth and fairy tale, or movement itself.

While the Alexander Technique is certainly not the focus of this book, Bilderback hon-

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(Dancer's Journal, continued)

ors Judy Leibowitz and acknowledges the importance of the technique in her life:

“Aspects of my dance The Diamond Cutters spring from Alexander experiences. Those times during a lesson when Judy stops for a moment to look at me, to see me as truthfully as possible in order to cut me free. That way of seeing must be very similar to the way a diamond cutter studies his stone before cutting it in order not to impose a false order on it.*”

**For me it has been more than an important tool in changing my body alignment, it has given me a new vision of my body and the body. Its concepts are far reaching. It profoundly influenced the “technical” areas of my teaching. It has been one of the central forces in my life that inspires me to continue on my own path.*

For the Alexander teacher, this book is worth perusing, if for no other reason than that it helps to distinguish our work from the work of the artist. Where the domain of our work is the “use of the self,” the artist works in the domain of the imagination. §

“... it has given me a new vision of my body and the body.”

(Notes from the Chair, continued from page 2)

would be required to get insurance companies to cover costs of Alexander lessons.

This lecture raised close to \$1,000.00 for the Judith Leibowitz Fund, and we are looking forward to the next in this series, a presentation by Michele Arsenault. This will be on *Moving to Learn*, the curriculum she has developed for teaching children sci-

ence through the principles of the Alexander Technique.

Please join Michele on January 24, 1994 at the Ann Goodman Recital Hall, 129 West 67th Street, at 8:15 PM to hear about this innovative approach to teaching children, and come to the Benefit Concert on April 25, 1994. Bring your friends, relatives, and students! §

Just A Note From Your Editor

You may have noticed a slightly new format to the ACAT News. It's not a finished product, so please indulge me as I learn more about newsletter design. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all, trainees, teachers on the faculty, and the membership at large, to submit your thoughts on all aspects of the technique. There's room here for many points of view, and I urge you to consider giving some of your accumulated

wisdom away. Actually, I implore you to! Or else I'll be forced to hunt you down, and badger you into writing something for me. Come on, don't make me beg, it would be far too maudlin. Only your submissions will keep me from writing this kind of column again, so get on the stick. Or else it'll be just like PBS during pledge week. Consider yourself forewarned.—Ed.

A Dog In Training



Going out on a walk took on new meaning for Max.

News from the Center

Kathy Miranda (ACAT, 1990) knows the good and bad of free press. She was featured in an article about body-work in the *Bergen County Record*, but she was misquoted. She claims that she did not say "We teach you how to hold yourself..."

Brooke Lieb (ACAT, 1989) is taking prerequisite courses to apply to a Physical Therapy program.

Judy Stern (ACAT, 1987) will be giving a 6 hour lecture to the Back Pain Society in Boston, Mass. The Society will announce this workshop in their newsletter which reaches 80,000 people.

Jean Rashkind has opened the *Soho Center for the Alexander Technique*, located at 225 Lafayette St. (corner of Spring Street), Room 500. Jean plans for this beautiful, new space to be used in many ways, including Master Classes for Teachers and as a teaching space for group or private lessons. She hopes this center can promote the A.T. by making it more available. All feedback and ideas would be welcome. Contact Jean at (212) 941-5490 days, or (212) 255-9710 evenings, for more information.

Co-op for Sale: Small, quiet studio on West 57th Street between 9th and 10th Avenues. Owner asking \$19,000 cash - must sell. Please call (212) 643-9322.

Congratulations to Posie Green on her move to Boulder, Colorado.

Library - Check out the copy of our new videotape of F.M. with commentary by Walter Carrington. It's very interesting.

Idelle Packer (ACAT, 1979) is studying for a degree in Physical Therapy at Columbia University.

On Oct. 3rd, Sam Reiser addressed the Men's Group of the Mid-Westchester YMHA on the benefits of the Alexander Technique in the health maintenance of people as they grow older. In addition to the talk, an English video was shown, entitled *Perspective—Posture and Pain*. This featured, among others, Dr. Wilfred Barlow and Chris Stevens. Dr. Paul J. Rosch, President of *The American Institute of Stress*, invited Sam Reiser to deliver a paper on the Alexander Technqiure as it relates to relieving pain and stress. The paper will be presented at the *Sixth International Montreux Congress on Stress* to be held in Montreux, Switzerland on February 21st, 1994.

MaryJane Findley will be leading an *Entrepreneur's Coaching Program* beginning in February. This 3 1/2 month course teaches you to articulate and realize the breakthrough results that you are committed to. Free introductory evenings will be held January 26, February 7, 9, and 16. Call MaryJane for further dedtails at (212) 678-5450. §

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