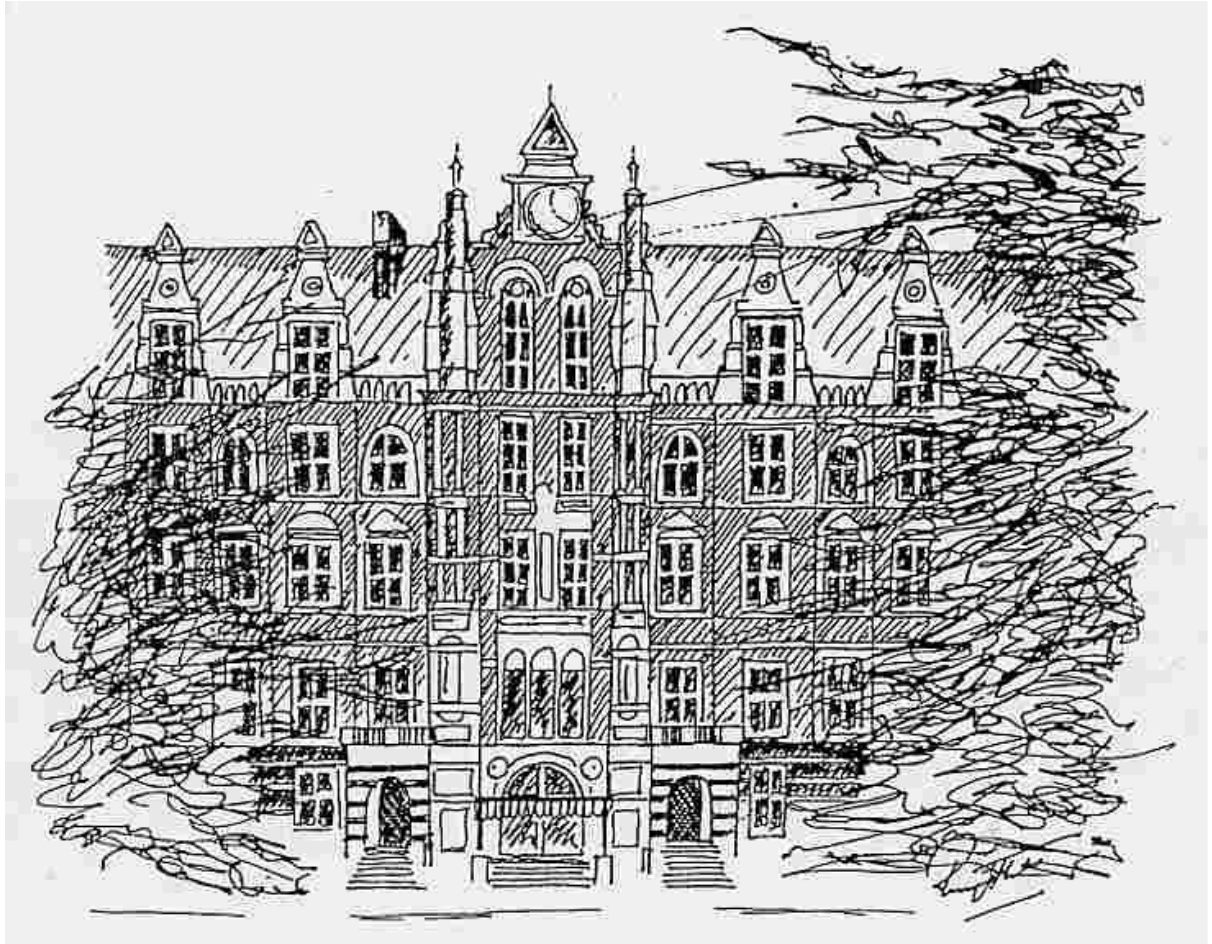


ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC

BMus(Hons) Programme 2013/2014



ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

Level 6 Option

Module Lecturer: Peter Buckoke

ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

| Level | Credit Rating | Core/Option | Prerequisite |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 6 | (i) 20 credits (ii) 30 credits | Option (Applied Skills group) | Level 5 Alexander Technique |

| Delivery | Availability | Module Code |
|---|--|--------------|
| 75-minute weekly group seminars over 22 weeks | Available each year, if taken by a minimum of 5 students | 32A36, 33A08 |

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module you should be able to

- recognise performance anxiety and know how to deal with it
- apply the Alexander technique to playing your instrument and decision making
- identify habitual emotional responses to everyday stimuli through awareness of verbal and body language
- understand how to achieve real communication and spontaneity in performance

| | |
|--|---|
| Skills Developed (<i>refer to section 6 of the BMus programme handbook</i>) | B3, D2, D3, F2, F4, F5, G1, G2 (ii), G3 (iii, iv, vii) |
|--|---|

Summary of Module

- performing to the group on video with supportive group analysis
- techniques for dealing with performance anxiety
- good use of the eyes in performance
- presentation skills for auditions and the concert platform
- awareness of the moment of choice in decision making
- exploration of the use of language and body language in communication
- a cooperative research project
- individually appropriate hands-on Alexander work from the professor

Assessment Synopsis (see 'Assessment section of syllabus for full details)

| Assessment | 20-credit module | 30-credit module | Date |
|--|------------------|------------------|---|
| collaborative research project (with one/two other students in the group) selection of a topic and exploration of issues relating to this including formulation of questionnaire for circulation among RCM student body. Individual written report produced as final outcome (2,000 words excluding appendices). | 50% | 40% | January |
| 4,000-word essay on a topic agreed with the module professor. | n/a | 40% | April |
| 2,000-word reflective report: critical evaluation of the effects of having followed the course. | 50% | 20% | Summer Term Level 6 options submission deadline |

Work at Level 6 builds on your achievements at Level 5.

At Level 6 we expect students to engage critically with the specialised knowledge covered and to demonstrate an assured command of the skills and communication involved. For further information about what we expect across the different levels, please refer to your *Student Guide*.

OBJECTIVES

This course will help you develop a deeper understanding of how you can make best use of your natural talent as a performer. You will look into the effects of habitual or automatic behaviour and develop the ability to avoid any damaging or unproductive tendencies. You will develop your critical observational capacities and the ability to give constructive advice. You will become more aware of how 'to make a good decision'. You will look at how to practise efficiently and relate practice to performance. There will be a great deal of experiential work and written work that will be inspired by essential reading and the personal experience of applying Alexander's ideas.

DELIVERY

22 weekly 75-minute lectures/seminars given between September 2013 and May 2014.

LECTURE PLAN

- Week 1: All students to be recorded on video playing 5 minutes of standard repertoire in the virtual reality performing space. The challenge of this exercise will then be discussed and possible 'Alexander' strategies considered
- Week 2: How to be in the present and so communicate with an audience. Discuss the effects of performance anxiety.
- Week 3: Three different types of 'inhibition' and 'direction'. Finding the best for you.
- Week 4: How to practise efficiently. A general discussion of present and possible strategies of structure and problem solving.
- Week 5: **Start the Research Project** - As a brainstorming group, create questions that look at the problems encountered by musicians. Complete the final documents in small groups and distribute questionnaires to RCM students.
- Week 6: Look at the 'Inner Game' principles and compare to Alexander principles.
- Week 7: Alexander's procedure 'hands on a chair'. Make connections for all instrumentalists incorporating 'body mapping' principles. Collect the questionnaire responses.
- Week 8: Look at video from Week 1 and discuss the implications in the light of this term's work. This will involve writing short critiques of each student's performance prior to discussion.
- Week 9: Discuss research projects, look at results of the questionnaires.

- Week 10: The 'art of learning'. What is the process involved? How can it be improved in each of us?
- Week 11: Performance anxiety; what is it and how to work on it.
- Week 12: Work on the use of the visual mechanism.
- Week 13: How to use Alexander in your teaching.
- Week 14: How to play from memory and how to play from music.
- Week 15: More detailed work on the use of the eyes.
- Week 16: 'How To Present Yourself' (Michael Gelb): look at implications for a musician.
- Week 17: Mock audition: all students present themselves for an appropriate job with students as panel members (with video recording). Discuss the issues that come up.
- Week 18: Breathing, the voice and Alexander's procedure; 'The Whispered 'Ah''. The effects on thinking, coordination and presence.
- Week 19: True spontaneity in performance, is it desirable and how is it possible?
- Week 20: Each student plays a 5 minute piece in the virtual performing space, (with video recording).
- Week 21: What ensemble skills are affected by Alexander work? Consider the application of these skills and the work on performance anxiety and communication with an audience. Play chamber music together.
- Week 22: Discuss the outcomes of the course and future possibilities. Each student to present about 10 minutes of self-observations using video recordings, as appropriate.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- P. de Alcantara, *Indirect Procedures* (Oxford University Press, 1997)
- F. M. Alexander, *The Use of the Self* (Centerline Press, 1984)
- M. Gelb, *Body Learning* (London, 1981)
- M Gelb, *How to Present Yourself*
- E Langford, *Mind and Muscle* (Leuven, 2001)
- P. Grunwald, *Eyebody* (Auckland: Eyebody Press, 2004)
- M. Rosenberg, *Non-Violent Communication*
- RCM Conference Papers* (Peter Buckoke 1998 and 2000)

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

NB: All coursework must be submitted via the Registry postbox. Please note the deadlines for submission. Marked work will be returned after 3 teaching weeks (i.e. excluding vacations, Audition Weeks, Performance Weeks).

| 20 credit module | 30 credit module |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• research project (50%)• reflective report (50%) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• research project (40%)• essay (40%)• reflective report (20%) |

(1) Research Project

Working initially with one or two other students in the group, a topic of mutual interest should be selected (e.g. technique, practice, communication in performance, performance anxiety) and all issues relating to this topic probed. A questionnaire should then be formulated, by the group, which allows its authors to explore, with the RCM student body, student perceptions in relation to the topic and the issues arising from this. Individually, each student will then produce a written report (2,000 words) formulating the Alexander strategies they consider appropriate for dealing with the topic identified.

Deadline for submission: 1pm, Friday 17 January 2014

(2) Written Essay

You should submit a 4,000 word essay from a list of topics that will be agreed with you during the course by your module lecturer.

Deadline for submission: 1pm, Friday 2 May 2014

(3) Self reflexive statement

2000 word critical evaluation of the effects of having followed the course - particular reference should be made to any changes in instrumental technique, practice strategies, presence and spontaneity in performance, interpersonal interactions and understanding of teaching and learning.

Deadline for submission: 1pm, Thursday 22 May 2014

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF COURSEWORK

Written assignments must be handed in using the Registry postbox. Please note the deadlines for submission. Coursework assignments must be completed and handed in by the published deadline (no extensions are offered). Failure to do so will result in the application of a capped mark of 40% which may be lifted by the Board of Examiners only after consideration of mitigating circumstances submitted in writing by the student. For further information about the Submission of Late Coursework, and about the College's policy on Mitigating Circumstances, see page 16 of your *Student Guide*).

Students missing the stipulated deadline for coursework submission should note that they have up to **one week** after the published deadline to submit work if they wish this to be marked and receive a bare minimum pass (40%). Work submitted after this one-week period will not be eligible for marking: it will be marked over the Summer Vacation, should the student fail the module and be offered a reassessment opportunity.

Coursework submitted in the Autumn and Spring Terms will be marked, countermarked and returned after three teaching weeks (ie excluding vacations, Audition Weeks, Performance Weeks). Final submissions will be marked, countermarked and returned after the Undergraduate Exam Board.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

(1) Philosophy of the Course

This course is a mixture of academic work and a voyage of self-discovery. You will work cooperatively with other students on the course, analyzing performances and creating a questionnaire for a research project. Students who are prepared to examine their thinking in a completely open minded way throughout the course will complete it most successfully.

(2) Assessment Criteria for the Research Project

Your research project will be assessed on: the quality of the questionnaire and the data analysis arising from this, the pertinence and clarity of the strategies emerging and the depth of knowledge of Alexander technique shown.

| Class | % | Description |
|-------|--------------|---|
| I | 80 and above | Quality of questionnaire and data analysis exceptional. Pertinence and clarity of strategies evolved through the project, and depth of knowledge underpinning these, outstanding. |
| I | 70—79 | Quality of questionnaire and data analysis excellent. Pertinence and clarity of strategies evolved through the project, and depth of knowledge underpinning these, excellent. |
| Ii | 60—69 | Quality of questionnaire and data analysis good. Pertinence and clarity of strategies evolved through the project, and depth of knowledge underpinning these, evident and sound. |
| Iiii | 50—59 | Quality of questionnaire and data analysis reasonable. Pertinence and clarity of strategies evolved through the project satisfactory, showing a fair degree of knowledge. |
| III | 40-49 | Quality of questionnaire and data analysis limited. Pertinence of strategies evolved through the project lack clarity and suggest only a surface understanding and knowledge. |
| Fail | 39 and below | Quality of questionnaire and data analysis unsatisfactory. There is a lack of coherence to the strategies evolved through the project, which lacks any evident understanding and knowledge. |

(3) Assessment Criteria for the Essay

Your essay will be assessed on: originality of thought and the depth of knowledge of Alexander technique shown, structure/illustrations/presentation and on quotations/bibliography/citations.

| Class | % | Description |
|-------|--------------|--|
| I | 80 and above | Outstanding originality of thought and depth of knowledge. Essay structure has outstanding clarity. An exceptional standard of presentation. |
| I | 70—79 | Excellent originality of thought and depth of knowledge. Essay structure has excellent clarity. An excellent standard of presentation. |
| Ii | 60—69 | Good originality of thought and range of knowledge. Essay structure has good clarity. A high standard of presentation. |
| Iiii | 50—59 | Some originality of thought and understanding of AT principles. Essay structure has some clarity. A satisfactory standard of presentation. |
| III | 40-49 | Limited originality of thought and limited knowledge/understanding of AT shown. Essay structure has limited clarity. A low standard of presentation. |
| Fail | 39 and below | No originality of thought and a lack of knowledge/understanding shown. Essay structure has no clarity. An inadequate standard of presentation. |

(4) Assessment Criteria for the Self-Reflexive Statement

Your statement will be assessed on: the range of personal issues it addresses, the suitability of the strategies chosen and your progress over the year.

| Class | % | Description |
|-------|--------------|--|
| I | 80 and above | Shows outstanding depth and breadth in the personal approach to using the technique, and exceptional ability in detailing the habitual responses tackled and in developing appropriate strategies. References to performing, practising and teaching extensive. |
| | 70—79 | Shows excellent depth and breadth in the personal approach to using the technique, and excellent ability in detailing the habitual responses tackled and in developing appropriate strategies. References to performing, practising and teaching wide ranging. |
| Ii | 60—69 | Shows extremely good depth and breadth in the personal approach to using the technique, and a confident, adept ability in detailing the habitual responses tackled and in developing appropriate strategies. References to performing, practising and teaching reasonably wide-ranging. |
| Iiii | 50—59 | Shows a good, or satisfactory, depth and breadth in the personal approach to using the technique, and reasonable ability in detailing the habitual responses tackled and in developing appropriate strategies. References to performing, practising and teaching apparent, though not always sufficiently followed through.. |
| III | 40—49 | Shows broadly satisfactory depth and breadth in the personal approach to using the technique, and adequate ability in detailing the habitual responses tackled and in developing appropriate strategies. References to performing, practising and teaching are limited. |
| Fail | 39 and below | Shows unsatisfactory depth and breadth in the personal approach to using the technique, and inadequate ability in detailing the habitual responses tackled and in developing appropriate strategies. References to performing, practising and teaching inadequate. |