

How to Use Your Knowledge of Alexander in Teaching a Musical Instrument

Is the primary control in order?

Are they balanced? Forwards/backwards, side to side

Where are the hips in relation to the head and feet?

Are they breathing?

Can you hear the breathing?

Can they see the room around them?

Is there a visual habit?

Body map the playing of the instrument

Does the sensory awareness seem to be accurate?

What is happening in the face?

Does the hand lead the arm?

Can you imagine the hands doing less?

Are the feet really on the ground?

To improve you have to change

You almost always need to stop doing one thing to do another

Is 'end-gaining' the game or the 'means whereby'?

Could 'hands on the back of a chair' help?

Could the 'whispered ah' help?

'Semi-supine'?

Ask them to play 'it' again pretending it is easy

Ask where they think the problem is – then suggest they think about the primary control/ breathing/ balance/ panoramic vision, rather than what they said

Demonstrate and notice what they pick up on

Suggest they look at something else, unless it was brilliantly perceptive, in which case they should try to copy you

Keep suggesting they look at something else until they notice what they need to change then they should try to copy you

Get them to give you a lesson/suggestion, (you mimic the problem you are trying to help)

Discuss structure of practice

Suggest a practice diary, two sides of the page, one side: How long and what they plan to practice, the other side: how long and what they did practice.

Ask if they are comfortable

Tell them it will feel comfortable when it is going brilliantly

Ask, 'is there any noticeable pressure or effort in your body?'

Simply suggest they experiment with doing less until whatever it is doesn't work

Get them to tell you what is going to happen when they play through the next passage. You will probably hear something useful!

If they predict problems, ask if they imagine that it could be different/ what would need to happen to make a difference?

Ask where the tongue is

Encourage a release in the sub-occipitals so the head has a tendency to nod or tip slightly forwards

Think of the head, click the fingers and say up

Make sure the abdomen is moving with the breath

Encourage less focus on the music

Are the knees free? (Kato Havas says, 'all rhythm comes from the knees')

Get the student to speak or walk around the room while playing, if that is practical

Can you see a blockage in their energy? Ask how they feel 'there'

Have fun