

The advantages of Integrating the Alexander Technique into Children's Musical Education

Alexander Technique Essay - L6

A lot of musicians begin to learn the Alexander Technique either because they study music in an university which proposes lessons, or because their instrumental pleasure or their professional career are impeded by excess of tensions and discomfort, pains or performance anxiety.

The traditional musical education is very often punctuated by tests, exams, and grades. It causes a lot of stress for children, who are all the time told to achieve objectives and good marks. We often see young musicians gripping their instrument, stiffening their neck, locking their knees, playing very close to the stand with their eyes leading their head forward and down to the music. They could sometimes look very unhappy and uncomfortable. I know friends who only played with others after a few years of lessons. In France,



Figure 1 : Discovering the Double-Bass

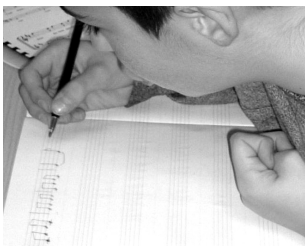


Figure 2 : Solfège Learning : as in school...

for a long time (and still in some music schools...), before they began playing an instrument children had to learn first 'solfège', in large group, sitting behind a table...

Music provokes strong and deep emotions, is full of joy, is a powerful way of expression and connects people with each other. Zoltán Kodály (who was concerned about children musical education and who we will talk

about later), even said that 'there is no complete spiritual life without music, for the human soul has region which can be illuminated only by music'.

Playing a musical instrument stimulate lots of areas in our brain¹ and exercise at the same time visual, aural and kinaesthetic memories. Learning an instrument should always be joyful, should link sound, movement, body and emotions. Love of music and curiosity should drive it.

Alexander Technique is based on principals that helps to respond to any stimulus in our life in a more conscious, poised, and coordinated way. Alexander considers we are a whole mind-body unity. Playing music is one activity in which we might use the Alexander Technique. The technique is sometimes designated as a reeducation technique that helps us to 'un-learn' harmful habits we have developed by growing up. So I believe Alexander Technique is very important for children : as they are growing and have not developed yet bad habits, it is important for them to



Figure 3 : Suzuki Cello Students

¹ <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-playing-an-instrument-benefits-your-brain-anita-collins>

develop their awareness in order to avoid them. Education would benefit a lot from it. We are going to discuss here about the advantages of integrating the Alexander Technique into children's musical education.

Children learn easily to crawl, then to walk and to talk. They learn by observing and then trying. Of course they need time to master what they are aiming for, but they don't care about getting things wrong. They just have another go, without any judgment or negative reaction². Young

children haven't had enough time to develop bad postural habits. Their Use is impressive.

They have everything to learn and to discover from their environment. John Dewey says about 'the spontaneity of childhood' that it 'is a delightful and precious thing, but in its original naive form it is bound to disappear'.³ A

child's brain contains 1 billion of synaptic connections. "And of the many hundreds of connections we create every second, the brain conserves only those which are used most frequently. This is called synaptic pruning, and it is

through this process that human beings learn and become specialised"⁴. The conserved connections are those which are the most used. In other words : "the child's everyday experiences are encoded and directly structure the architecture of the brain."⁵ Children might lose a certain spontaneity, but it is because they become specialists and experts.

Children are naturally curious and hungry of new discoveries, they initiate learning when they are well supported. Traditional schools often separate mind and body. Pupils are part of large classes and they sit all day long, are asked to not move, to sit straight and to be quiet, at an age where they need to explore all around them with all their intelligence senses. They have many exams and tests, and are told to do 'right'. All these inhibit their natural predispositions for learning.

Few alternative education methods proposes unhurried, creative and supportive learning environment where children can learn at their own rhythm according to their development, where their whole psycho-physical unity is respected. John Holt, who creates the 'unschooling' (or homeschooling) concept, believes that "children who were provided with a rich and stimulating learning environment would learn what they are

Figures 4, 5 and 6 : Beautiful Young Children Uses

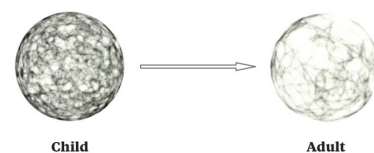
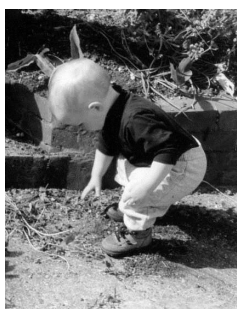


Figure 7 : 1 Billion of Synaptiques Connections



² Kleinman., Judith and Buckoke, Peter, *The Alexander Technique for Musicians*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. p.24

³ Dewey, John, Introduction : Alexander, F.M., *Man's Supreme Inheritance*. London: Mouritz, 2002

⁴ <https://www.celinealvarez.org/en/plasticity-for-better-or-worse>

⁵ Id.

ready to learn, when they are ready to learn it"⁶. Enthusiasm and autonomy in learning is also promoted by Rudolph Steiner⁷ and Maria Montessori⁸, and their aim is first that children become responsible citizen with strong human qualities to be ballast to make choices in their life and be happy. I would like to quote John Dewey about intelligence development as purpose of education : 'All interested in educational reform may well remember that freedom of physical action and free expression of emotion are means, not ends, and that as means they are justified only in so far as they are used as conditions for developing power of intelligence.'⁹

Considering musical education, Shinichi Suzuki (1898-1998) has the same purpose : "I want - if I can - to get education changed from mere instruction to education in the real sense of the word - education that inculcates, brings out, develops the human potential, based on the growing life of the child.". Zoltán Kodály and Suzuki developed two different methods, based on the same process as mother-tongue learning. (I find it interesting to notice that we often talk about music as language, it has an aural approach, there are phrases, stylistic devices, sometimes we even speak about music



Figure 8 : Suzuki Violin Students

rhetoric). They observed that all children learn their own language naturally and with relative ease. This is not an acquired knowledge but an ability inborn in all human beings. Their proposed methods were inspired by this natural learning process (which include listening, imitation, memory and play). Similar to Montessori, Steiner or Holt, these methods insist on love and joy of learning.

Children first hear a lot their parents talking and they learn to speak before learning to read. Kodály and Suzuki insist on the importance of learning music. Children listen to recordings of pieces they are going to play. They learn singing (in Kodály method) and playing before learning to read the music. Because music is an aural art, it is important to teach it with an aural approach and to develop a critical ear.

Both Suzuki and Kodály recommend an early start, around the age of 3 or 4. They also highlight the importance of parents involvement in these learning processes : the child can develop and enhance language or musical abilities



Figure 9 : Kodaly with Children

6 Holt, John, *How Children Fail*, USA: Pitman Publishing Company, 1964

7 <https://www.steinerwaldorf.org> ; The Steiner-Waldorf pedagogy is based on :
 •Is based on an understanding of the relevance of the different phases of child development;
 •Develops a love of learning and an enthusiasm for school;
 •Sees artistic activity and the development of the imagination as integral to learning;

8 The Montessori method, created around 1907 in Italia, emphasizes independence, views children as naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a sufficiently supportive and well-prepared learning environment.

9 Dewey, John, op. Cit.

through a nurturing environment¹⁰. Parents give their children caring attention and encourage them with affection and confidence.

*Figures 10 and 11 : Alexander
Hands on Children*



F.M. Alexander says : 'Give children conscious control and you give them poise, the essential starting point for education.'

His technique helps to focus, notably by making us understand the reaction process to stimuli. One learns to give oneself breathing space, in a world that is hurried and rushed, and gains the ability to feel centred and peaceful. With an 'easy attention'¹¹, one remains open, resilient, curious, able to think clearly and constructively.

Alexander Technique brings keys to rebalance ourselves physicaly and emotionally when it is needed. Flexibility and strength are developed, as connection to present. It improves co-ordination as we learn to stop doing things

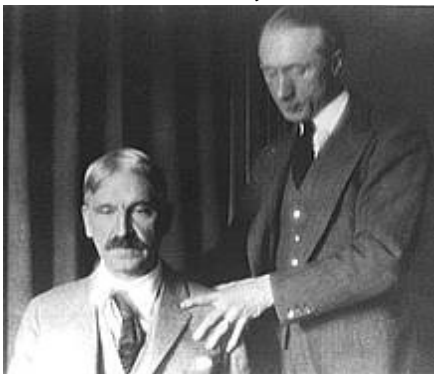
which interfere in balance. We learn that the way we are using and have used our body affects the way it works now and in the future : Use affects functioning.

Young children have a naturally good Use. When we bring them to conscious knowledge of this natural poise the Alexander Technique would be able to reinforce good Use. It gives the children skills which they can maintain throughout their education and into their life beyond. They also understand that making mistakes is part of the learning process. They do not fear mistakes and are able to control the over-stimulated fear response. We can see children's overall learning accelerates when they are connected with the source of their mind-body co-ordination¹².



In order to link education and his technique, Alexander created the 'Little School' in 1934 with Ethel Webb and Irene

Tasker, who had also been trained by Maria Montessori in Italy. In the school, children were encouraged to apply the Alexander principles during lessons and in all other activities. Nowadays it continues to exist thanks to schools like Educare small school in London¹³. I am going to talk about how they apply Alexander Principle through out the essay, because it is inspiring to transcribe it for music teaching. Applying



¹⁰ <https://internationalsuzuki.org/method.htm>

¹¹ Peggy O'Connor, in this video : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9bzdRuwRC0>

¹² <https://alexandertechnique.co.uk/education>

¹³ <https://www.educaresmallschool.org.uk>

principles of the Alexander Technique in music lessons increases whole-body awareness in young musician students, and allows them to produce, as Suzuki said, a good sound in a balanced and natural way.

Alexander discovered that mind, body and emotions are intrinsically linked and continuously affecting each other. This principal is called the psycho-physical unity. I find it interesting to notice that Rudolph Steiner also insists in taking into account the needs of considering the whole child, but in various ways : academic, physical, emotional and spiritual. In playing a musical instrument, it is important be able to see the whole picture of our body and the sound we produce (by balance, breathe, vision). Rhythm, for example, is often a neglected area of ear training.

In his method exercises Kodály encourages the students to aurally, visually, and physically be engaged. As in the Jacques Dalcroze method : students listen to the rhythm of a musical piece and its structure and express what they hear through movement. For example, note values and rhythms are represented by stepping and clapping. This approach connect music, movement, mind, and body, engage emotions, body and imagination : the all self. Kodály use the hands signs to show notes, and he uses the mobile-Do scale (or Solmisation) which characterises relation between notes rather than perfect pitch (a third will always be DO-MI). The student associates each pitch not only with a memorable syllable, but also with a specific hand motion made at a specific level. There are also little games in Dalcroze that involve the whole mind-body unity in listening : in columns of three, children need to change position according to what they hear : if it is an ascendant scale, the last child has to move to the first position of the column, etc¹⁴.

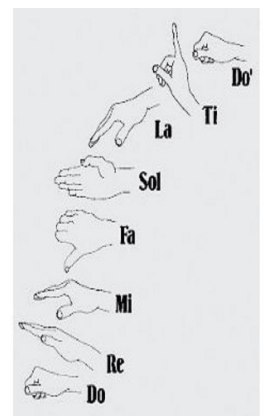


Figure 12 : Kodaly Solmisation

In all these kind of games and exercises, as in playing, we have to encourage children to notice their Use whilst they are thinking, experimenting, singing or playing.. It is important to notice the nice support of the floor, to mention the Primary Control (balance of a free head on the top of a lengthening spine) in order to help pupils maintain balance and expanded awareness.

At Educare Small School, children are told to be 'Soft and Tall', it remains them of Primary Control directions (neck free, head forward and up, back lengthen and widen, shoulders moving apart, knees forward and moving apart). We can use this in music lessons. Movements (even very little) are also useful to avoid getting fixed. I believe also being aware of all our senses is important (seeing the whole room, smelling it, hearing inside and outside, feeling vibrations...). Connecting children with

14 At 01'47 : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hX2QRoGdtlc>

their proprioceptions (the 6th sense) helps strengthen their embodiment. It is interesting that one definition of talent is 'a capacity for co-ordination' in a special activity, or the fact that one doesn't interfere with his or her balance and co-ordination¹⁵. Alexander can help children to become talented.

The size of instruments and music school furnitures have an influence in music learning. A wrongly sized instrument can cause unnecessary tensions for children. It exists smaller instruments tailored to a child smaller size, these include cellos or violins, small flutes or small harps (see picture). For the clarinet, I know there are a few options that work well : we can use a chalumeau (clarinet antecedent) as it is smaller and lighter than the normal Bb clarinet.

Another option would be, the special clarinet 'Nuvo Clarinet' in C which is very lighter but closer to the actual Bb clarinet. If children need to sit, seats are important and there is one motto : 'flat feet, flat seat' (not too big in order for children to put their feet on the floor, but not too small to avoid knees higher than hips). I find the following Alexander quote is relevant about the link between adapted furnitures and children's Alexander technique principles knowledge and awareness : 'Give a child the ability to adapt himself within reasonable limits to his environment, and he will not suffer discomfort, nor develop bad physical habits, whatever chair or form you give him to sit upon'¹⁶. Mirrors can be useful sometimes to help pupils notice their unbalanced moments.

I would like to discuss now quickly about the links between Alexander technique and executive functions, which the education sciences talk a lot about (notably being more important than the IQ). Executive functions 'are the cognitive skills which enable us to act in an organised way to achieve our objectives'¹⁷ :

We need a good **working memory**, which enables us to retain information in our memory and to organise it; good **inhibitory control**, which enables us to inhibit distractions in order to maintain our concentration and to control our impulses, our emotions and inappropriate

15 Williamson, Malcolm, 'A Handbook for Musicians learning the Alexander Technique - CHANGING HABITS: The Power of Saying No ', p.13 : In *The Pianist's Talent*, Harold Taylor wrote that what makes the piano virtuosos' ability extraordinary is not superior physical or psycho- logical make-up, but their "discovery of an exceptionally simple means which allows them to use their faculties simply and naturally." Taylor thought that so-called natural talent was determined principally by an individual's "capacity for co-ordination"

16 Alexander, F.M., *Man's Supreme Inheritance*. London: Mouritz, 2002 p.94

17 <https://www.celinealvarez.org/en/executive-functions-3-key-skills>



Figures 13 and 14 : Little Flutes for Children

Figures 15 and 16 : Chalumeau and Nuvo Clarinet, for Children



behaviours; and finally, we need **cognitive flexibility** in order to be creative and to adjust our strategies in the event of mistakes.

To learn something a child has to focus and inhibit distractions of the environment (inhibitory control), he or she needs to plan and to retain every step of the activity he or she is learning (working memory) and they have to correct inaccurate movements to improve their co-ordination (cognitive flexibility). I think Alexander technique can help in the development of inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility. By stopping, noticing the whole picture (Am I seeing ? Breathing ? Balancing ?), then choosing and directing our Primary Control when acting, we become more present, we have a clear awareness of simultaneously inner movements and outwards events. It is easier to focus on what we want and by maintaining Directions we interfere less with balance and co-ordination.

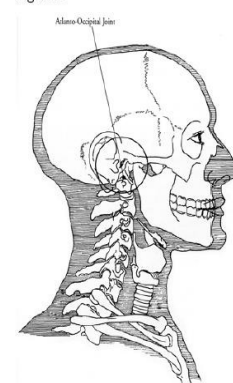
In music education, body-mapping is precious, even for young children. It clarifies what is going in a movement, helps students understand it and connect more deeply with the body. The body map is the representation of the body in the brain. However all have many misconceptions about the body. Body-mapping is the conscious identification of structure, function and size errors in the body map. 'In any case the person will *always* try to move according to how he thinks he or she's structured. {...} When there is a conflict between the map and the reality, the map will always win in movement'¹⁸. Feldenkrais work is based on the same idea : 'Individuals act in accordance with their subjective image.' Here are some important points to know about our body-map :

- The head moves freely on top of a lengthening spine from the atlanto-occipital joint, located between the ears.
- The hip joints (the top joint of the legs) are not located at the same place as the hip bones (waist). It is very useful for bending movements.
- Our sitting bones support us when we are sitting.

Pupils need teacher guidance and example. We can use anatomical models, images or a skeleton to give information and explanations. A mirror can be useful in guiding to notice that one sees can differ from what one expects to see. If the map is accurate and good, movement is good.



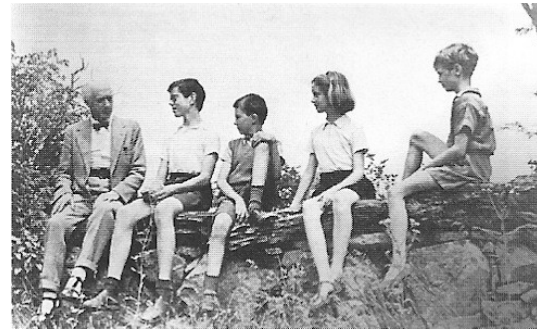
Figure 2



Figures 17 and 18 : The Atlanto-Occipital joint

¹⁸ Conable, B.H., Conable W. (1995) p.32 and p.21 'Compare to Feldenkrais' ; *How to Learn the Alexander Technique*, Andover Press, 1995. quote by M Williamson in op. Cit. p.27

As imitation takes a huge place in learning process, teachers have to be conscious that they are models¹⁹ and that their demonstrations have to be as clear, precise and accurate. Céline Alvarez, Montessori pedagogue, wrote that 'A clear demonstration, which is to say in a logical order and in silence, optimises the transmission of physical gestures. However, for the children to be able to reproduce them, the newly created brain circuits need to be reinforced; in other words, children need to see how it is done and repeat the action several times'²⁰.



We want the child become autonomous, we teach him or her procedures and principles which can help him or her to learning how to thrive independently. Children will master anything by repeating it a thousand times (like mother-tongue, so important for Suzuki). It is also true with a musical instrument. The clarity of procedures and their explanations will make every day movements

repetitions during practice more efficient and the reinforcement more positive. Céline Alvarez gives the order she finds the best and we can link with Alexander Technique : First the children have to wait their turn when the teacher shows movements, procedure. They have to stop and to choose to inhibit their desire to do (it is also a procedure we have to teach them : 'stop, think, action', they really have to be 'the boss of their body' before acting²¹) and be focused in order to remember all stages well. The objective has to be clear, and



Figures 19 and 20 : Imitation takes a huge place in learning process, Alexander and Suzuki

all movements shown must be very controlled with a beautiful Primary Control. To ensure optimal transmission of movements, she advocates silence. If the objective and the demonstration were clear enough, children should detect their errors on their own.

The teacher needs to build children relation with the instrument. The instrument has to 'come to you' (golden rule !), to avoid stiffening and pulling down. For example, there are a few exercises we can do with children at the beginning to find a balanced position of the violin and answer the question how to put a violin under a child chin without disturbing their balancing system ? : we can put the violin on the thigh, then on the head, on the right shoulders, then on the belly, and at the end on the left shoulder. Thus, there are not only one 'right' and determine tense position, but the left shoulders is one of potential other possibilities. We can also divide violin, clarinet, flute, harp... taking in three

19 Carrington , Walter ; Article : *The F. M. Alexander Technique, a Means of Understanding Man* . p. From the beginning children learn by a process of subconscious imitation and it is highly important that those in charge should present good examples of use and functioning and quiet reaction themselves.

20 Céline Alvarez, website : <https://www.celinealvarez.org/?locale=en> and book : *The Natural Laws of Children: Why Children Thrive When We Understand How Their Brains Are Wired*, Shambhala, 2019

21 Educare Small School, Alexandre principles in words for children

of four steps (1 -holding the violin vertical in front of us ; 2 – putting it on the shoulder ; 3 – turning the head). We can have awareness of Primary control in these exercises, awareness of the environment 'Could you hear the street outside ?', 'Could speak at the time you do that ?' and connection with embodiment 'Can you feel the air under your fingers when you blow this note ?'

We need to create a common language with young students and guide them to understand step by step the basic principles of the Alexander Technique . We have to establish Alexander principles vocabulary and procedures references. Gabriella Minnes Brandes, Alexander technique and piano teacher, explains : that 'we explore ways of researching the application of Alexander principles while developing vocabulary to be used by both the piano teacher and a young student.

This vocabulary allows them to express the unique and specific experience of learning to play the piano'.²² We have to define with the child the general sense of

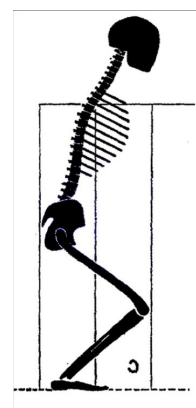
release : lengthening and expansion, being 'soft and tall'. To put words on embodied experiences is much more efficient than the reverse situation (one Kodály method motto is “Experience first, intellectualise second”, meaning that students unconsciously absorb knowledge before naming it). If children experiment being really present, aware, co-ordinated they will be able to memorise

'Waiting until you are the boss of your body'. This common language

can also be a physical language, like to put a hand on the top of the children's head to help them remember is directions. Alexander

procedures such as semi-supine (particularly in relation of efficient practice. 20minute+10minute combination, or 20minutes practice per

day for young children and then semi-supine for 5-10minutes), whispered ah, monkey or hands on the back of a chair can also be proposed first without instrument and then in relation with it. We can use shortcuts as a funny little-reminder, like the BBC ones : B for balance, B for breathing, C for See-ing.

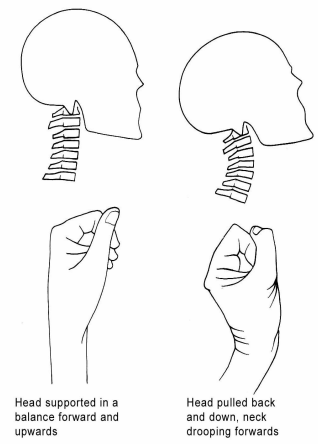


Figures 21 and 22 : Monkey and Semi-Supine, Alexander Procedures

Images , pictures, metaphors are very striking and well catchy. We commonly say that a picture is worth more than a thousand words. Especially if it is a funny and quirky one. Educare Small School uses these 'magic words' : the head is like a 'floaty balloon' and shoulders are like 'runny custard'. I remember when I was singing in choir as a child, the teacher gave us the image of 'having a smile between shoulders' or 'twinkled eyes'. Before concerts we had to be like beautiful

²² Gabriella Minnes Brandes, Ph.D. Handout for The Developing Self conference, Alexander and Education, (on-line conference, July 2020) : *The duet of piano pedagogy and Alexander Technique: Researching our practice*

foxes and have 'intense and smart eyes, silky hair, wet and sensitive nose'. I would like to quote some others I gleaned during all these years listening to lessons. Singers are always told “Take enough breath to smell a rose” (Elizabeth Schumann). I remember a fantastic violin teacher, Manuel Solans, would have images for young children for every single movement with their violin. Fingers of the left hand should let a bit of space between them and not be stuck to each others because 'they are friends, not lovers'. When it came about taking the bow, he asked children to make a shape with their hand like a beak of hawk and then to do the suction sound of the fingers sucking the wood. I heard one other teacher talking about the arch of the hand like 'the house of a snail', and asking to imagine a 'crystal violin' to avoid gripping. About pushing the bow : ' imagine you have jam on top of your nose and you want to remove it with your back wrist'. About dynamics and bow contact with the string : one can imagine a bird petting, and progress with a cat petting, a dog, a cow, a dinosaur or a dragon.



*Figure 23 : Balanced Head on the Top
a Lengthen Spine, Hands Explanation*

As we previously saw, environment is important for young children. They need attention, love, warm support, confidence. A famous quote of Suzuki is “If love is deep, Much can be accomplished”. Parents involvement in a child's music education is essential (it is one of the main Suzuki principles) to allow learning to go on every day life. To learn effectively and efficiently we need not be in a state of fear or anxiety. Secure and empathic interactions create a feeling of being supported and surrounded. Montessori recommends mixed-age classrooms. We could be inspired by that, just as children are inspiring and motivating by their elders. Suzuki uses this a lot to instil desire to play. It is this method that causes children to acquire desire. Kodály and Suzuki encourage students to perform together. To this end, Suzuki technique is based on a core repertoire used by Suzuki students across the world. They all share the same musical language. I believe the group could be a source of support and emulation. Alexander technique can also applied to playing or singing in ensembles. These situations require presence to the moment, internal and external awareness , receptivity and flexibility. Directions of primary control, floor support, breathing, vision can be used by the teacher. It is a place



Figure 24 : Playing with Others, Inspiration from Peers

where we can teach students the lazy 8, which allows them to reconnect with themselves and helps to release unnecessary tensions at moments where they are not directly involved by the rehearsal requirements.

Hands-on-work is an important part of the Alexander Technique. Touch is important in learning, as Carla Hanaford explains : 'Touch is a strong anchor in behaviour and learning. Using hands- on experiences or manipulative during the learning process greatly increases learning efficiency. Whenever touch is combined with the other senses much more of the brain is activated, thus building more complex nerve networks and tapping into more learning potential'.²³ The hands of the alexander teacher are observing and monitoring what is happening in the child's body. It is also a gentle help for balance awareness and directions for the child and it could guide him or her to release any tensions. Sometimes teachers can face faulty sensory awareness of pupils : they feel they are doing something different to what they are actually doing. Hands on is efficient in these situations and at the same time the pupils is encouraged to be away from relying on feeling, towards using his or her thinking.

Figure 25 : Suzuki Playing



We've all been taught to end-gain, that is to be more interested in the result or the end than the 'mean-whereby' one might achieve this result or end²⁴. 'We are part of a culture that is addicted to end-gaining, where most of our education is based on methods that aim for fast results and focus too narrowly on getting the 'right' answers'²⁵. Music lessons really have to be a place and a situation where children don't have to 'try hard' (to follow Suzuki language comparison : "A language has never been learned through the use of the command "study hard"²⁶, neither music !..), and is guided towards mean-whereby. In this manner, both pupil and teacher are clear to what it is they are setting out to achieve. It becomes internal (personal) and external (instrumental technique, music knowledge) research for the student who no longer needs anymore to please the teacher. If the 'how' of the process is understood, the pupil could transfer it to any other learning activity and will become more and more able to solve problems, having developed flexible and relevant strategies (it could

23 Carla Hanaford 'Smart Moves – Why Learning is Not All in Your Head'

24 'To begin with, the methods of training and education in which [my pupil] is versed have developed in him a habit of endgaining through a too quick and unthinking response to stimuli.' Alexander, F.M., *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual* . London: Mouritz, 2004 p.80 see also p.91.

25 Williamson, Malcolm. op. Cit. P 15

26 https://www.suzukimethod.or.jp/english/E_mthd112.html

be without the instrument, for example, imagine the phrase, the sound, the rhythm before playing). Educare Small School motto is : “Perfect the means and the ends will look after themselves”. It should inspire all of us when we are teaching. Teachers should also pay attention to their own tendencies to end-gain. The brain needs the ‘space between’ to process new information. Incremental learning is made short, simple and repeated a thousands times procedures. Irene Tasker writes : that “On the question of repetition, F.M. was insistent that you had to say things over and over again if you wanted them to sink in.”

I believe the teacher is only teaching the student how to learn. Teaching is about giving keys, strategies, questionings for autonomy, cultivating curiosity and enthusiasm, with the most supportive and warm guidance approach possible. Children, students, finally educate themselves by trying on their own, repeating, looking for with a shining curiosity or a deep necessity. I found relevant and reflective quotes about it:

Irene Tasker “I learned from Montessori that my function as a teacher was primarily to observe and, according to what I observed, to provide each child with material best suited to him at his particular stage, and then acting as his guide, to give him the *least help necessary* to **enable him to educate himself**.” (in Montessori schools, students learn concepts from working with materials rather than by direct instruction).

Frank Pierce-Jones, in his book aptly titled 'Learning how to learn' ‘A good student even when operating under the auspices of a teacher must always fill in between the teacher’s words of wisdom. **You cannot teach anybody anything; but you can teach them how to learn**’.²⁷

Linked to this last phrase, John Holt wrote : 'will make for themselves a better path into that world than anyone else could make for them.'²⁸

Alexander Technique specifically helps in learning how to un-do or to not do what prevents us from balance and brilliant co-ordination. One method too deeply concentrate without repeating the same bad habits is to focus on something subtle, not easily perceived²⁹, like the reassuring floor support, breathing, seeing the big picture, vibrations of the instrument through the entire body or the primary control directions... By inhibiting the habitual habits, and thinking about directions, the natural and

Figure 26 : Irene Tasker, Montessori Pedagogue and Alexander Teacher



²⁷ Frank Pierce Jones quote by B. and W. Conable

²⁸ Holt, John, op. Cit. : 'Children do not need to be made to learn to be better, told what to do or shown how. If they are given access to enough of the world, they will see clearly enough what things are truly important to themselves and to others, and they will make for themselves a better path into that world than anyone else could make for them.'

²⁹ Gallwey, Timothy, *The Inner Game of Tennis*. London : Pan Books, 1986

unimpaired co-ordination can work for us. Alexander always said : 'When you stop doing the wrong thing the right thing does itself.'.

Alexander technique can bring a lot to music education, and especially to children. It enhances ways teachers approach playing music and how they connect physical aspects with musical elements³⁰. From a young age, when they still have not developed too many bad habits, learning awareness of their whole Self, how much use affects functioning, to trust means-whereby and having Alexander procedures as tools to not-do, is very precious. I am sure this knowledge will prevent them from many harmful habits and Alexander technique in music education can increase benefits Suzuki believed in : 'My prayer is that all children on this globe may become fine human beings, happy people of superior ability, and I am devoting all my energies to making this come about, for I am convinced that all children are born with this potential'. Both Alexander technique and music learning provide skills that are transposable to anything in life.

« Children's musical education is not about making them become great professional musicians, but is about to teach them how to listen, and consequently how to be heard ».

Claudio Abbado



Figure 27 : Claudio Abbado

30 Gabriella Minnes Brandes, op. Cit.

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