

# **COORDINATING MIND AND MOVEMENT**

**EXPLORING PARALLELS BETWEEN THE F.M. ALEXANDER  
TECHNIQUE AND ‘THE NEW APPROACH TO VIOLIN PLAYING’**

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Music (Performing Arts)  
at the University of Stellenbosch

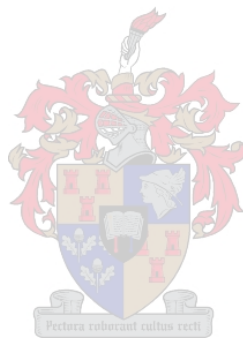
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Submitted  
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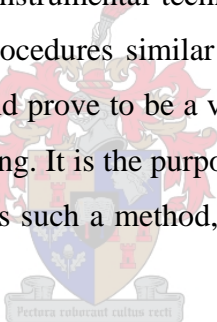
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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore parallels between ‘The New Approach to violin playing’, which was developed by the Hungarian violinist Kató Havas, and the Alexander Technique, a method known for promoting kinaesthetic awareness and mind-body coordination. The specific objectives of the study are to identify the parallels between the two methods, and to obtain a deeper understanding of the New Approach, by using the Alexander Technique as a construct through which to examine the method. The study aims to illuminate some of the reasons for the reported efficacy of the New Approach, and to point the way towards achieving unity of mind and body in an expressive violin technique.

Although the Alexander Technique is widely used and applied by musicians in order to improve their performance, problems are sometimes encountered in applying the Technique to the finer aspects of instrumental technique. A method of violin tuition that incorporates principles and procedures similar to those found in the Alexander Technique could bridge this gap and prove to be a very powerful tool in coordinating mind and movement in violin playing. It is the purpose of this study to show that ‘The New Approach to violin playing’ is such a method, and as such deserves to be more widely known.



The research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm, using a multi-methodological approach. An extensive comparative literature study of the two methods was combined with practical experience gained through regular Alexander lessons, and participation in New Approach lessons with Kató Havas and her personal representative, Gloria Bakhshayesh.

The New Approach, like the Alexander Technique, is essentially a search for awareness, especially in the relationship between the player and the instrument. The particular value of the New Approach lies in the fact that Havas combines her expert knowledge of violin technique with an intuitive understanding of the conditions necessary for the optimal psychophysical functioning of the violinist. Through organising these principles into a systematised method, Havas makes the acquisition of an expressive technique more accessible to all.

## Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie studie is om ooreenkomste te ondersoek tussen ‘The New Approach to violin playing’ van die Hongaarse violiste, Kató Havas, en die Alexander-tegniek, ’n metode bekend daarvoor om kinestetiese bewustheid en geestelik-liggaamlike koördinasie te verhoog. Die spesifieke doel van die studie is om ooreenkomste tussen bogenoemde werkwyses te identifiseer, en om ’n beter begrip van die ‘New Approach’ te verkry, deur die Alexander-tegniek as ’n raamwerk te gebruik waardeur die metode bestudeer word. Die studie poog om sekere motiverings vir die effektiwiteit van die ‘New Approach’ uit te lig, en om die weg te wys na die verwesenliking van geestelik-fisieke eenheid in ’n ekspressiewe viooltegniek.

Alhoewel die Alexander-tegniek dikwels deur uitvoerende musici gebruik word om hul spelvermoë te verbeter, word probleme soms ondervind in die toepassing van die tegniek op die fyner aspekte van instrumentale spel. ’n Metode van vioolonderrig wat beginsels en prosesse soortgelyk aan dié van die Alexander-tegniek insluit, sou hierdie probleem kon oorkom en as kragtige middel kon dien vir die koördinasie van denke en liggaamlike beweging in vioolspel. Hierdie studie poog om te illustreer dat die ‘New Approach’ hierdie kwaliteite het, en as sulks meer blootstelling aan vioolonderwysers verdien.



In hierdie ondersoek is gebruik gemaak van ’n multi-metodologiese benadering binne ’n kwalitatiewe navorsingsparadigma. ’n Vergelykende literatuurstudie van die Alexander-tegniek en ‘The New Approach to violin playing’ is gekombineer met praktiese ervaring wat verkry is deur middel van gereelde Alexander lesse, asook deelname aan ‘New Approach’ lesse met Kató Havas en haar persoonlike verteenwoordiger, Gloria Bakhshayesh.

Die ‘New Approach’ – net soos die Alexander-tegniek – is in wese ’n soeke na bewustheid, veral in die interaksie tussen die violis en die instrument. Die besondere waarde van die ‘New Approach’ is dat Havas haar gesaghebbende kennis van viooltegniek gekombineer het met ’n intuïtiewe begrip vir die optimale psigofisiese funksionering van die violis. Deur hierdie beginsels in ’n sistematiese metode te orden, skep Havas die moontlikheid om ’n ekspressiewe viooltegniek aan almal beskikbaar te stel.

## Acknowledgements

**Dr Maria Smit** – Thank you for your efficient guidance and supervision, despite a very busy schedule. While your words were few, they were well chosen and catalytic in structuring the study.

**Dalena Roux** -Your enthusiasm for and belief in this project was a great inspiration to me. Thank you for introducing the Alexander Technique to me, which not only led to the idea for this study, but also profoundly influenced my own playing and teaching.

**Yvonne Becker** - Thank you for teaching me a new way of being, with such gentleness and humour in the Alexander lessons, and for so patiently and meticulously reading through the endless pages of manuscript. I dedicate all the apostrophes in this report to you!

**Kató Havas** - I don't think anyone can ever thank you enough for designing 'The New Approach to violin playing' and thereby opening up the way to musical self-expression for so many people. Thank you for so generously giving of your time and energy, and for the interest you took in my work. I am deeply indebted to you for taking on the burden of reading through this manuscript.

**Gloria Bakhshayesh** – Thank you for sharing your wisdom in the New Approach lessons, and for your support in the arrangements for the trip to the UK. Thank you also for giving of your time to read through this paper.

**The Beau Soleil Music Centre** - Thank you for giving me the time that I needed to undertake this study, and for the financial support for the New Approach lessons.

**The City Vineyard Church** - A special word of thanks to my anonymous benefactor(s), who made it possible for me to have more lessons with Kató Havas.

**Lorna Baker** - Your listening ear and wise counsel played a significant part in helping me to complete this study – thank you.

**My parents and family** – Thank you for always being there for me.

A sincere word of thanks to the **Harry Crossley Foundation** for the very generous scholarship grant, which made a significant contribution towards the costs incurred in undertaking this study.

*Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.  
They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.  
- Lamentations 3: 22, 23 -*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Research problem and objectives

While doing a literature review for a comparative study of violin methods in 2002, I became aware of a significant resonance between aspects of ‘The New Approach to violin playing’, developed by Kató Havas, and the FM Alexander Technique. The primary aim of this research is to test this insight and to identify and describe the nature of the similarities between the two methods, as no study has yet been done to identify and catalogue such parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach.

A further objective of this enquiry is to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of ‘The New Approach to violin playing’, using the Alexander Technique as a construct through which to examine the method. This study of the New Approach, in conjunction with the Alexander Technique, could also be useful for identifying the skills and strategies needed to promote sensory awareness and kinaesthetic learning in pupils.

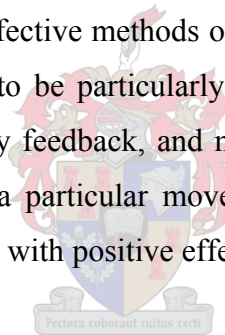
In her comparison of the violin methods designed by Havas, Rolland and Suzuki, Perkins (1995: 23) briefly refers to Alexander’s writings as having influenced Havas’s work, yet she does not substantiate this claim in any way. A preliminary reading of the literature indicates that Havas herself does not refer to Alexander as an influence. The principles formulated by FM Alexander existed before he discovered them, and as Jones (1976: 154) suggests, they “can undoubtedly be discovered again, not necessarily by the same route”. It is very likely that Havas independently uncovered processes that are similar to those found in the Alexander Technique while developing her violin method. A secondary objective in this study is therefore to ascertain the degree of influence, if any, that Alexander may have had on the formulation of the New Approach.

My hypothesis is that ‘The New Approach to violin playing’, developed by Kató Havas, is a very valuable and effective violin method, as it parallels many aspects of

the Alexander Technique, a scientifically proven method for promoting kinaesthetic learning and re-education, and coordinating the mind and the body (cf Jones, 1976).

## 1.2 Background

Many years of teaching the violin and the viola have convinced me that knowing intellectually what should be done, does not necessarily result in the physical ability to do so, often to the great frustration of both the teacher and the pupil. This inability to carry out physically what is understood intellectually seems to be especially pertinent in cases where bad technical habits have become ingrained in the early stages of learning. The re-education of physical movement is a very demanding but essential task, as establishing good habits in the basic techniques involved in playing the instrument (such as one's posture and the ways of holding and handling the instrument and bow), is fundamental to all subsequent technical development. In the process of helping students change deeply ingrained and harmful habits, I have continually searched for more effective methods of teaching. In the process, I noticed that certain procedures seemed to be particularly beneficial, such as making pupils more aware of their own sensory feedback, and moving their arms or hands to give them the desired sensation for a particular movement. The pupil's descriptions of these experiences were then used with positive effect for further instruction in lessons.



In the years directly preceding this study, my search for more efficient methods led to lessons with Ludmila Ignatieva, a Russian violinist who was based in Cape Town for a number of years. These lessons exposed me to a method of teaching that emphasised kinaesthetic awareness, leading to an increased ability to direct one's playing movements consciously. The resulting ease of playing was surprising and I became more and more convinced that one's body is the instrument, not just the violin/viola and the bow. Attention needs to be paid not only to learning techniques for manipulating the instrument, but also to the way in which one uses oneself in the process.

An introduction to the Alexander Technique in 2001 confirmed this belief. Stevens (1996: 96) notes that because "*we ourselves* are the instrument we must use, whatever we are doing, we need to know how to use ourselves well", and Jones (1976: 182) postulates that far fewer technical breakdowns would occur if musicians "understood

the use of themselves as well as they understand the use of their instruments”. During a comparative study of violin methods in 2002, I discovered that this idea is also fundamental to Kató Havas’s ‘The New Approach to violin playing’. Havas believes that successful study of the violin depends more on learning how to use the right physical movements than on talent (Havas, 1968: 9), as an “ugly sound simply means that the violin is maltreated and that erroneous limb and muscle actions are used” (Havas, 1979: 1).

Considering the importance of body use on the response of the instrument and in the ease of one’s playing, I found it disconcerting to notice how many students, even performance majors at a tertiary level, attempt to play a very difficult repertoire without paying sufficient attention to the way they use themselves in the process, ultimately resulting in frustration and self-limiting beliefs about their own abilities. Similarly, the standard of violin teaching at an elementary level sometimes leaves a lot to be desired, with a low standard of performance accepted as the norm among beginners.

These observations led me to surmise that a comparative study of the New Approach and the Alexander Technique could be useful to explore the ways in which the principles of the Alexander Technique can be incorporated into string playing and teaching, in order to bring about an improved use of the body in instrumental performance. The aim of such an investigation is not merely to impart intellectual knowledge *about* good technique, but to generate knowledge of ways in which a student can actually be helped to implement and apply it.

A review of the literature supports the need for such an enquiry.

### **1.3 Literature review**

The ideal in instrumental performance is to achieve an expressive technique, which is able to “do justice, with unflinching reliability and control, to each and every demand of the most refined musical imagination” (Galamian, 1985: 5). The greatest desire of any performing musician is to have this freedom of musical self-expression, where musical thought is directly translated into sound through free and balanced physical movements. Such artistry requires a high degree of integration between the mind, the

body and the instrument, which is often described in terms of the player's body merging with the instrument, or of the instrument becoming an extension of one's body (Green & Gallwey, 1986: 147; Kreitman, 1998: 26).

In his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner (1985: 8) argues that there is persuasive evidence for the existence of several relatively autonomous human intelligences, or "frames of mind", as opposed to "a singular, inviolable capacity" (1985: 7), or a general factor of intelligence, that is drawn on to perform all skills. According to Gardner (1985: xii), "nearly any adult end state of any consequence in any culture will involve a blend of intelligences". A competent musical performer will exhibit not only musical intelligence but also, among various other intelligences, bodily kinaesthetic skills in order to handle his or her instrument with the required subtlety. In the light of the above, one could say that instrumental performance is musical intelligence expressed through physical intelligence.

As an example of masterful use of the body, Gardner (1985: 207) cites the Greeks of the Classical Era, who, in their artistic and athletic activities, "sought a harmony between mind and body, with the mind trained to use the body properly, and the body trained to respond to the expressive powers of the mind". Similarly, the aim of an expressive technique is to bring about a physical responsiveness, so completely synthesized with the musical imagination, that as the music is conceptualised inwardly, it is directly and immediately expressed into sound through the player's physical interaction with the instrument.

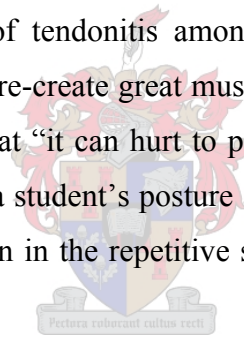
The reality, however, is that such an integration of mind and body in instrumental performance remains an ideal that is generally only experienced on rare occasions, if at all (Green & Gallwey, 1986: 12; Havas, 1961: 1). Even accomplished artists are not immune to a breakdown in this unity of mind, body and instrument. Perhaps the most famous example is that of the violinist, Yehudi Menuhin, who described a painful "break in sequence" between his musical vision and its communication through the instrument (Menuhin, as cited in Sand, 2000: 155)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Menuhin made use of yoga in his attempt to re-establish the intuitive unity of mind and body that he had experienced as a child prodigy (Sand, 2000: 155). It is significant that he was one of the first major artists to recognise the value of the New Approach (see 4.2.4).

Both amateur and professional musicians very often experience such a breakdown between their artistic sensibility and their actual performance, and books such as *The inner game of music* (Green & Gallwey, 1986) are specifically designed to address this dilemma. Gallwey (1986: 7) notes that the primary discovery of his “Inner game” theory is that “human beings significantly get in their own way”, especially in an achievement-oriented culture, and that much of this self-interference in performance originates in the way that one has been taught. Green and Gallwey (1986) suggest useful techniques for eliminating such interference, and Green (as cited in Green & Gallwey, 1986: 244), credits Kató Havas for some of these insights.

Both mental and physical freedom from interference is essential in order to preserve the integration of the mind, body and instrument in an expressive technique. The endless hours of practising in search of the elusive state of free and instinctive music-making can lead not only to discouragement, but also to physical pain and injury, as is shown by the high incidence of tendonitis among string players (Horvath, 1992: 1051). Instead of being able to “re-create great music with ease and expressivity”, for many musicians the reality is that “it can hurt to play” (Horvath, 1992: 1051). Stein (1999: 72) notes that it is often a student’s posture and particular way of moving that contribute to discomfort and pain in the repetitive strain injuries so often incurred in string playing.



In her report on preventing performance injuries, Carol Anne Jones (2001: 24) observes that instrumental musicians often forget that “the musical apparatus they pluck, stroke...or bow is only half of the instrument”, and that the other half is their bodies. The biggest challenge facing music teachers today is to impart healthy habits to their students, thereby laying a secure foundation for their musical future (Jones, 2001: 30). The distinguished cello pedagogue, Victor Sazer (as cited in Jones, 2001: 24), argues for instrumental playing that is based on a fundamental understanding of the body's natural impulses, so that one’s technique can be adapted to one’s body, and not the other way around. Insights into the body’s natural impulses give musicians the tools with which “to sort the healthy from the harmful” in the physical movements involved in playing an instrument (Sazer, as cited in Jones, 2001: 24).



Sazer (as cited in Jones, 2001: 27) believes that it is essential to move away from the traditionally accepted ways of teaching that rely primarily on imitation, to a teaching paradigm that incorporates biomechanics and medical findings. The Alexander teacher and cellist, Vivien Mackie (1994: 48'40) concurs that bad mistakes are often made due to a lack of knowledge and a misunderstanding as to how the body works, as physiological knowledge is generally not included in the training of music teachers. Therefore, the “first thing teachers need to do is acquire the knowledge themselves and, second, impart to their students that having such knowledge is important to performing” (Sazer, as cited in Jones, 2001: 27).

Polnauer (as cited in McCullough, 1996) also found that the “needs of a highly perfected violin technique require that bio-mechanical functions of the entire body be included”. Instead of considering bowing purely as a “mechanical-physiological problem of the bowing arm only”, or thinking in terms of separate right and left hand techniques, it is scientifically more defensible to talk of an “entire body” technique (Polnauer, as cited in McCullough, 1996). However, as not enough was known of neuromuscular physiology when the various schools of violin playing came into being, fixed ways of standing, holding and manipulating the instrument were introduced, that are often in conflict with the ways in which movement is regulated within the body as a whole (Hellebrandt, 1969: 277). These practises eventually became encoded in the various schools’ dogmas, so that that “violin pedagogy, over time, became a formalized, rule-governed ‘methodology’” (Perkins, 1995: 9), often to be followed and defended unquestioningly by the adherents of the particular schools.

Kenneson (1974: 11) observes that, in seeking a solution to the physical immobility that they may experience in their playing movements and in contact with the instrument, musicians sometimes turn to technical exercises that are “intended to break through immobility with sheer strength”. However, playing through countless of studies and exercises in order to develop technique, while the underlying tensions and inefficient movement patterns are not addressed, is not only counter-productive, but the source of many playing related injuries. The fact that instrumental teachers may be unable to detect or recognise such misuse, due to a lack of knowledge and training with regard to a physiologically justifiable use of the body, further

compounds the problem. Paul Rolland (as cited in Havas, 1968: 65) rightly observes: “There is much in playing that escapes the eye of the traditionally trained teacher”.

Although it may be difficult to establish good postural habits in young beginners, it is essential, as children do not automatically grow out of their bad physical and technical habits as they develop and mature, a fact that is borne out by research into the ways in which neural pathways are created and established in the brain (cf Robertson, 1999: 62). Many destructive habits that are formed at a beginner level, lead to problems that eventually hinder or even bring to an end the professional development of aspiring young musicians (Rosenblith, as cited in McCullough, 1996). Workman, a performing arts chiropractic specialist, stresses that the “very first lesson is the *very most important lesson*”, and that most injuries and playing-related problems would be resolved if the proper use of the body were addressed before all else (Workman, as cited in Jones, 2001: 24).

However, McCullough (1996) observes that “learning to use oneself well, both in everyday living and while playing an instrument, is not a simple matter of being told (or telling oneself)” what to do. De Alcantara (1997: 43) confirms that one of the greatest stumbling blocks of musical pedagogy is that “you cannot perform an act correctly until you have had the experience of performing it, and you cannot have the experience without performing the act”. The true nature of teaching therefore does not lie in merely imparting intellectual knowledge, but in coaching and guiding the student, who is as yet ‘blind’ to the required act, into an actual experience of such an act.

Gardner (1985: 68) also notes that it is customary to distinguish between “know-how” (actual experiential knowledge) and “know-that” (intellectual knowledge of the procedures involved in the execution of an act) in the study of skills and abilities. The problem in instrumental tuition is that intellectual knowledge and understanding about good technique (*know-that*) has to be conveyed to a pupil in such a way that he or she will be able to carry it through to successful completion (*know-how*). Verbal instruction alone is not enough to bring this about, as “words and ideas by themselves are not a sufficient form of education in anything which involves the senses” (Barlow, 1973: 190).

Although there are excellent violin method books that give detailed descriptions of technical procedures and exercises, such as Galamian's *Principles of violin playing and teaching* (1985) and Simon Fischer's *Basics* (1997), they also merely communicate information about good technique (*know-that*) and do not address the ways in which such intellectual knowledge can actually be imparted to students, in order to become part of their experiential knowledge (*know-how*). Galamian (1985: xi) admits that "no printed work can ever replace the live teacher-student relationship", and that no one can teach or learn to play the violin from a book only.

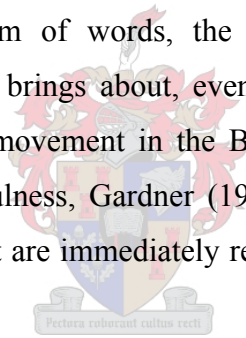
Traditionally, instrumental teaching has followed a master-apprentice model, in which the student-apprentice learns almost exclusively through observing and imitating the master teacher (Boyden, 1990). Although Gardner (1985: 228) speculates that learning by imitation seems to be the most appropriate way to impart physical skill, there are many problems inherent in this way of learning, particularly when the model being imitated, does not exhibit good use, or has many idiosyncrasies and exaggerated mannerisms (De Alcantara, 1997: 253). Students may not have the ability to discern between a model's defects and good qualities, so as to copy only the good. De Alcantara (1997: 253) suggests that even a good model is usually imitated incorrectly due to faulty sensory awareness. Instead of copying a good model as he or she is in reality, too often one tends merely to imitate one's own perception of the model (De Alcantara, 1997: 252).

Havas (1968: 3) notes that it is "generally accepted that only those pupils of Joachim flourished who were good at imitating", and that this was apparently true of the Auer school as well. In the light of De Alcantara's perspective on imitative teaching, as related above, it is probable that this is the case in all imitative teaching. The problems encountered in learning through imitation, confirm Sazer's argument (as cited in Jones, 2001: 27) for the need to move away from a purely imitative paradigm of teaching.

De Alcantara (1997: 253) notes that for imitation to be healthy, one needs to "imitate not effects but causes, not the outward manifestations of co-ordination but the co-ordinative processes themselves, not the *functioning* of the self but its use". It would be useful to explore ways in which such co-ordinative processes in string playing can

be identified to begin with, as well as how they can be conveyed from the teacher to the student, as it is clear that the imitation of outward, visible movements are not sufficient in order to accomplish this.

Gardner (1985) gives a fascinating insight into the ways that sensory information is conveyed from the teacher to the pupil in cultures that are known for their physical grace and exceptional kinaesthetic abilities. The cultural anthropologist, Ruth Benedict (as cited in Gardner, 1985: 228), notes that Japanese children learn to write, use chopsticks or shoot an arrow as the teacher physically places their bodies in the correct position, and moves their hands to give them the feeling of the desired action. Bateson and Mead (as cited in Gardner, 1985: 226) observe that children in Bali learn almost nothing from verbal instruction, but physical skills, such as learning to walk, eat, dance or play a musical instrument, are all handed down from generation to generation, with the teacher guiding the pupil, “conveying directly by pressure, and almost always with a minimum of words, the gesture to be performed”. The kinaesthetic awareness that this brings about, eventually leads to a well-developed sense of balance and grace of movement in the Balinese (Gardner, 1985: 234). In describing this balanced gracefulness, Gardner (1985: 235) notes that the Balinese tend to use only the muscles that are immediately relevant to a particular act, leaving the rest of the body undisturbed.



Such kinaesthetic awareness and “subtle bodily feeling” is rarely taught consistently in traditional instrumental tuition in the West, as teachers very often “become preoccupied by more obvious aspects such as technical problems or those of posture or musical expression” (Burzik, 2003: 718). However, it is essential to give conscious attention to developing a heightened sense of kinaesthetic awareness, especially in contact with the instrument, as it is the kinaesthetic sense that allows one to adjust and control one’s movements, through highly articulated feedback mechanisms (Gardner, 1985: 211). Burzik (2003: 717) notes that it is only through becoming so sensitively attuned to the instrument, that the body becomes “permeable”, in order to allow the music to flow through the player “as a medium between composer and audience” (Burzik, 2003: 717).

From the foregoing review of the literature, it is clear that essential prerequisites for developing an expressive technique include the following:

1. Freedom from mental and physical interference, which facilitates the unity of mind and body
2. A balanced use of the body as a whole, which is based on sound biomechanical principles
3. Heightened kinaesthetic awareness, especially in the contact between the player and the instrument

However, the problem remains as to how these prerequisites are to be established in a pupil's actual use, in order to move from intellectual to experiential knowledge, and an inquiry into the specific ways in which this might be accomplished in string teaching is necessary. A review of recent scholarship in this area further confirms this conclusion.

Although Chen (1997) examines the problem of mechanical (as opposed to expressive) violin playing, she focuses mostly on the psychological factors involved, and makes no reference to physical misuse as a possible reason for not being able to express musicality. While Roos (2001) does focus on the importance of freedom of body movement in violin playing, the recommendations that she gives in her thesis are in broad, general terms. Brief mention is made of the Alexander Technique as one of several non-musical techniques that could help one to gain freedom of movement, but no in-depth study is made of the actual processes involved in teaching body movement or conveying sensory information to a pupil.

Koornhof (2001: 2) argues that a need exists to codify the expertise of master teachers, as the "artistry" of teaching has been left too often "to intuitive emulation rather than the application of rigorous, systematic method". Through making use of methodology derived from NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), he constructed a model of the inter-personal teaching skills and strategies of the master teacher Dorothy DeLay. Koornhof (2001) concluded that DeLay's cognitive skills, her beliefs about teaching and her style of communication, created a context of empowerment, within which a pupil could experience optimal growth. As the focus of his study is primarily on the psychological factors involved in the interaction between the teacher

and the pupil, it does not directly address strategies for the implementation of good body-use in playing, or ways in which kinaesthetic awareness can be heightened in a pupil.

However, Koornhof's argument (based on Schön, 1987) for the need to identify the processes used by acknowledged master teachers in the training of instrumental performers, is also of relevance to this study. Koornhof (2001: 2) notes that the training of violin teachers usually consists only of learning "the principles of the mechanics of violin playing, as codified by different schools of playing and teaching", but does not focus sufficiently on imparting the actual teaching skills required to convey such information to the student. Exceptional teaching skills are often considered to be a manifestation of individual talent and personality, and therefore outside the range of academic research. Koornhof (2001: 9) argues that systematically studying the skills of master teachers "could illuminate the nature of teaching expertise, and serve as framework for the training of instrumental teachers".

Schön (1987) contends for the legitimacy of such research. Although a master teacher's expertise, or "knowing-in-action" (Schön, 1987: 22), differs from formal academic knowledge, it is still "rigorous in its own terms" (Schön, 1987: 13). While academic institutions generally promote musicological research with the understanding that such research should inform practice, in reality, instrumental teaching involves much more than the application of musicological knowledge (Koornhof, 2001: 8). Schön (1987: 14) argues that the "question of the relationship between practice competence and professional knowledge needs to be turned upside down", as purely academic knowledge does not take into account the dynamics of the real world situation in which instrumental training takes place, and therefore cannot generate the skills that are needed to achieve excellence in practice. Schön (1987: 17) concludes: "We ought, then, to study the experience of learning by doing and the artistry of good coaching. We should base our study on the working assumption that both processes are intelligent and – within limits to be discovered – intelligible".

The argument initiated by Schön (1987) and advocated by Koornhof (2001), supports the rationale for this research paper. Havas's method, 'The New Approach to violin playing', was designed specifically to eliminate mental and physical interferences in

order to release the musical imagination (Havas, 1964: Introduction). Many people attest to the fact that the New Approach has helped them to achieve greater unity of mind and body (Frondenberg, 1987: 3), freedom from physical injury (Olsen, 1985: 5), as well as increased expressive abilities (Kreith, 2002: 4)<sup>1</sup>. As the New Approach seems to be a highly effective method, which brings about an actual change in a pupil's use, an enquiry into the teaching practise of Kató Havas could be useful in order to identify the specific skills and strategies that are needed to promote kinaesthetic learning and establish an expressive technique in string players. The fact that Havas is currently still teaching in Oxford, presents a unique opportunity to obtain first-hand experience of her teaching expertise.

Combining an enquiry into Havas's method and teaching skills with a comparative study of the Alexander Technique, a scientifically verified method for re-educating physical movement and increasing the coordination of mind and body (Stevens, 1996: 75; Barlow, 1973: 13), would significantly enhance the validity of such research. Examining the New Approach from the perspective of the Alexander Technique could also provide significant insight into some of the reasons for the efficacy of the method.<sup>2</sup>

The Alexander Technique has long been known to assist in the prevention and cure of performance injuries (McCullough, 1996; Ben-Or, 1995; Jones, 2001). Many musicians have made use of the Technique in order to refine their instrumental technique and achieve ease in playing (Stein, 1999). Sanders (2002) also mentions that most musicians today are familiar with aspects of the Alexander Technique, and contends that good breathing, one of the first principles of the Technique, is an essential requirement for good string playing in general, and in overcoming stage fright in particular. Ben-Or (1995) notes that the increased coordination brought about

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<sup>1</sup> See **Appendix F** for more examples of such feedback.

<sup>2</sup> Although other approaches to psychophysical education, such as the Feldenkrais method (Feldenkrais, 1990; Zemach-Bersin & Reese, 1990) and Ericksonian therapy (Gordon & Meyers-Anderson, 1981) have produced significant results in kinaesthetic learning, they fall outside the scope of this study. As the particular purpose of this study is to research possible parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique, the focus of study will primarily be limited to these two methods, and the way in which they may resolve some of the problems that were identified in the background and literature review in this chapter. However, it is not the purpose of this study to suggest that any other discipline falling outside the delimitation of the subject is therefore of lesser value, or may not also provide solutions to some of these problems.



by the Alexander Technique enables performers to experience a unity between the body and the soul in performance. Iammatteo (1996: 37) supports these observations:

For over a hundred years, performing artists have been using the Alexander Technique to enhance their ability to perform by improving inner balance and the relationship with the body....the ability to reduce tension enables the performer to step on to the stage like a clean canvas with an inner balance which is essential for a good performance. Many students mention an improvement not only in their performance ability but (*sic*) in the consistency of their performance.

The violinist Michele Makarski (as cited in Eisler, 2001: 51), winner of several international prizes and competitions, including the Carnegie Hall competition, is an artist who considers the Alexander Technique to be “one of the most important factors in (her) personal and professional growth”. In an interview with Edith Eisler (2001), Makarski recounts how she sustained severe playing injuries when some of her teachers misguidedly advised her not to use a shoulder rest. “They were short and had no necks, while I am tall and have a very long one, so in trying to accommodate their wishes, I managed to paralyze myself completely” (Makarski, as cited in Eisler, 2001: 51). Makarski nearly abandoned her professional career due to the pain she experienced, but an introduction to the Alexander Technique enabled her to resolve her problems and to help herself on many different levels.

Makarski, as cited in Eisler, 2001: 51:

...my work with the Alexander method has been of enormous value to me and to my longevity as a performer, so I decided to go into training as an Alexander teacher...This will certify me as a private teacher and enable me to help a lot of people, especially my violin students and colleagues. The method is hardly ever taught from the perspective of a violinist who has experienced the pressures of playing and performing; I know how much pain can be involved and how this can keep people from realizing their full potential.

It is not surprising that several studies (Homann, 1997; Lloyd, 1986; Bosch, 1997) confirm the efficacy of applying the Alexander Technique in instrumental and vocal performance. In exploring the significance of the Alexander Technique for attaining postural balance in piano playing, Homann (1997: 19) observes that mal-posture is often the result “of a body acting without the conscious advice of the thinking brain”. The lack of awareness of the way that the body is used in the act of making music, is



one of the most damaging habits among musicians, disconnecting the mind and the body and resulting in a dependence on mechanical repetition (Homann, 1997: 19). When instrumental teaching focuses primarily on the end-result without considering the use of the student, it is not surprising that a student may lack the “awareness of the muscular condition necessary to fulfil the conception” (Homann, 1997: 44). Her conclusion is that the Alexander Technique not only improves postural balance, but also significantly increases one’s kinaesthetic awareness, providing a valuable tool against the many stressful stimuli encountered in piano performance (Homann, 1997: 47).

The purpose of Lloyd’s study is to examine the specific ways in which the Alexander Technique increases kinaesthetic awareness and how this may be applied to the art of singing (Lloyd, 1986: 4). While it is generally acknowledged that many singers benefit from the Alexander Technique, Lloyd (1987: 7) identified that a need existed for a direct description of how this is actually accomplished. Lewis (as cited in Lloyd, 1986: 7) recommended that studies “that explored specific relationships between Alexander principles and the act of singing would do much to clarify the benefits of the Technique for singers and teachers of singing”, and Lloyd (1986: 7) consequently attempted to do so, using a case study approach.



Lloyd’s approach was to integrate the insights that she gained in Alexander lessons with advice given by her singing teacher (1986: 131). Although both singers and singing teachers are aware that certain postural attitudes are detrimental, the problem remains of how to correct them, as the “only guide towards correcting that attitude is the singer’s awareness of how the old habit feels and his ignorance of how the new habit should feel” (Lloyd, 1986: 129). These untrustworthy feelings keep the singer locked into his ineffectual behaviour, regardless of how much detail the ideal posture may be described with (Lloyd, 1986: 129).

However, Lloyd (1986: 129) found that the Alexander Technique is able to solve this dilemma, by bringing about an improved use in the student, increasing both their physical flexibility and their conscious mental control of the muscles used in the support system. She concludes that the Alexander Technique is a vital tool in both performing and teaching, as one becomes able to facilitate change in the body habits

of those students whose performances are being hindered by their misuse (Lloyd, 1986: 133). Consequently, Lloyd (1986: 133) advocates that singing teachers should ideally be trained as Alexander teachers as well.

Lloyd, 1986: 133:

It is not possible to overstate the increased powers of communication that the teacher can gain by training as an Alexander teacher...One's powers of observation are increased a hundredfold; one's understanding of body mechanics helps with the understanding of singing technique; one's ability to identify the muscles that are not working becomes a vital tool in one's own singing and in the students' singing; and most important, one is given the power to actually change the posture for the better in those students that are being hindered by habitual postural imbalances.

However, as very few teachers are able to train as Alexander teachers, due to practical considerations, Lloyd's recommendation is for music teachers to work in conjunction with Alexander teachers (1986: 133). Such collaboration would bring about quicker results in the long run, as a student is usually "largely unaware of his tension habit and usually unable to cure it through will-power" (Lloyd, 1986: 134).

Bosch (1997) investigated the use of the Alexander Technique in order to improve the production of sound on the flute. Warren (as cited in Bosch, 1997: 7) asserts that flautists and violinists are among the instrumentalists most likely to become Alexander teachers, as the flute and the violin generally cause the most tension in playing due to the off-centred playing position. Bosch (1997: 8) concludes that the most desirable ideal would be to have a flute or violin teacher who is also an Alexander teacher, in order to avoid the harmful tensions that are so easily elicited in playing these instruments. Such a teacher would be able to help one to resolve the problem of "combining the playing of an instrument with the most optimal body use" (Bosch, 1997: 13). However, Bosch (1997: 8) rightly notes that there are only a few such teachers, and that they are hard to find.

From the preceding review of the literature relating to the Alexander Technique and its application in instrumental performance, the following can be concluded:

1. The Alexander Technique is very helpful in overcoming and preventing performance injuries, refining one's instrumental technique and improving postural balance. The Technique increases the coordination of the mind and the body, and brings about an inner balance that is vital to instrumental performance. One's kinaesthetic awareness is greatly increased through the Technique, so that the body can be directed more consciously and accurately in the act of making music.
2. Although the benefits of applying the Alexander Technique in instrumental performance is clear, the problem remains as to how the principles of the Alexander Technique can actually be integrated with instrumental technique, and a description of how this can be accomplished, is needed.
3. Studying with an instrumental teacher, who is simultaneously also an Alexander teacher, would be the most desirable ideal, but due to the relative shortage of such teachers, most musicians are unlikely to have this privilege.

While Lloyd (1986), Homann (1997) and Bosch (1997) attempted to explore the specific ways that the Alexander principles could be applied in singing, piano- and flute playing respectively, a similar inquiry into specific relationships between the Alexander principles and string playing could be helpful to illuminate the benefits that the Alexander Technique has for string players and teachers, to paraphrase Lewis (as cited in Lloyd, 1986: 7).

Stein (1999) briefly discusses the ways in which the Alexander concepts of balance, directing, grounding, inhibition, and opposition can be applied in string playing, but does not give an in-depth description of the way in which these principles can be integrated with instrumental technique. McCullough (1996) researched the implications of the Alexander Technique for string players and teachers, with reference to Paul Rolland's pedagogical ideas<sup>1</sup>. This study illuminates aspects of the Alexander Technique that are relevant to string playing, such as the way in which a

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<sup>1</sup> Both Rolland and Havas studied with Waldbauer at the prestigious Academy of Music in Budapest during the 1930's (Perkins, 1995). It is therefore perhaps not surprising that parallels with the Alexander Technique have been noted in both their methods.

healthy relationship between the head, neck and back can facilitate upper string playing. While McCullough (1996) produces fascinating insights, her reasoning and conclusions remain largely theoretical. A more practical approach is needed in order to explore the ways in which the Alexander Technique can actually be integrated with violin/viola technique. An inquiry into the practical teaching expertise of a violin teacher who actually uses Alexander principles, knowingly or unknowingly, would present the ideal vehicle for such a study.

Although many people have recognised the similarities between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach (Perkins, 1995; Foxwell, 1987; Alexander, 1988; Sommer, 1994), no research has yet been undertaken to identify and catalogue such parallels between the two methods. It is my purpose to show that Kató Havas intuitively combined her knowledge of violin technique with principles similar to those of the FM Alexander Technique, and through organising these principles into a systematised method, makes the acquisition of an expressive technique more accessible to all.

#### **1.4 Chapter outline**

The research report will be presented in three parts. The first part of the study is concerned with the research problem and design. With reference to the research problem and the aims of the study that were identified in this chapter, the relevant research design and methodology will be considered in Chapter Two.

In the second part, individual literature studies of the Alexander Technique and the New Approach will be made, in Chapters Three and Four respectively. A comparative study of the two methods is made in Chapter Five, which includes the conclusions that were reached in this part of the study.

The third part of the research report considers the empirical study that was made of Havas's method. Chapter Six presents the results of the participatory action research that was undertaken, with concluding comments. In Chapter Seven, final perspectives regarding the research findings of both the comparative literature and the empirical study are given, as well as a few recommendations resulting from the research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Research design and methodology**

#### **2.1 Research design**

As the primary aim of this study is an in-depth description and understanding of the nature of the similarities in the processes underlying ‘The New Approach to violin playing’ and the Alexander Technique, the research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 270).

A multi-methodological approach was best suited to answering the research problem. This has the added benefit of enhancing the validity and reliability of the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 275; Warwick & Osherson, 1973: 26). In the first phase of the research, an in-depth literature study with the purpose of comparing the New Approach and the Alexander Technique was made. Seeming parallels in the underlying principles and procedures that constitute the two methods, as well as their outcomes, were identified and analysed. The insights produced through the comparative literature study were then tested empirically in the second part of the research (Mouton, 2001: 180). The qualitative methods of data collection used in the empirical study, include participatory action research, qualitative interviews and observation.

In order to generate the necessary data with which to address the research question, the existing literature and scholarship relating to both methods were considered in depth. However, as the purpose of both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique is to bring about a change in one’s actual use and functioning, practical experience of both methods was also essential. It is only possible truly to know and evaluate a method relating to one’s physical use through personal experience and application of such a method. As the researcher is the main instrument in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 273), such experience and participation is essential in order to make the comparison between the methods with an insider perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 270).

Jones (1976: 139) confirms that theoretical reasoning regarding sensory experience is not sufficient in itself. Regardless of how well a theory may be constructed, “it does not become valid until it has been put to the test of experience – to sensory verification” (Jones, 1976: 139). However, a subjective account of sensory experience is also not enough in itself, and needs to be supported by anatomical and physiological reasoning in order to be of scientific value (Jones, 1976: 139).

In his research into the scientific principles underlying the Alexander Technique, Jones (1976: ix) combined objective, data-based reasoning with an autobiographical, subjective account of his own experiences of the Technique. The dual nature of Jones’s approach also forms the basis of the research design for this study: the extensive comparative literature study in the first phase of the research provides the conceptual framework for the subjective account of actual experience in the empirical study.

## **2.2 Methodology**

The Alexander Technique was used as a construct through which the New Approach was examined, in order to identify congruence between the two methods. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 122) note that using procedures that have been proven to be reliable can enhance the reliability of a study, which is a key concern in social research. There is considerable scientific merit to using the Alexander Technique as an instrument of measurement, as many prominent scientists and philosophers have attested to the scientific nature of the Technique. Significant research has also confirmed this view.

George Coghill, generally regarded to be one of the most outstanding biologists of the early twentieth century, was one of the first eminent scientists to endorse Alexander’s method (Jones, 1976: 63). Coghill (as cited in Jones, 1976: 62) points out that it is the actual demonstration of a theory that places it on a scientific foundation, and for this reason he regarded Alexander’s method to be “thoroughly scientific and educationally sound”. Sir Charles Sherrington, cited to be the “greatest physiologist of modern times” (Stevens, 1996: 75), also supported Alexander’s work, as his own research, and the studies conducted by Rudolf Magnus, had confirmed the crucial role that the neck and the head play in the control of posture, balance and movement (Stevens, 1996: 75).

The American philosopher, John Dewey, described Alexander's discovery as a "new scientific principle with respect to the control of human behaviour as important as any principle that has ever been discovered in the domain of external nature" (Dewey, as cited in Jones, 1973). Dewey staked his reputation on the scientific character of the Alexander Technique, stating unequivocally that Alexander's method "is scientific in the strictest sense of the word", as the principle was demonstrable in practise in different situations and with different people (Dewey, as cited in Jones, 1976: 104).

Jones's research supports Dewey's opinion of the scientific importance of Alexander's discovery (Jones, 1976: 4). Using methods derived from experimental psychology, Jones attempted to identify the mechanism that accounts for the subjective sense of kinaesthetic lightness in the Alexander Technique. By integrating the results from his research with his knowledge of anatomy, mechanics and physiology, he created a "testable theory" of this mechanism (Jones, 1976: ix).

Many other studies have also provided direct experimental evidence for the efficacy of the method. For instance, Dr. Wilfred Barlow conducted extensive research into postural and tension defects at various educational institutions, including the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and the Royal College of Music in London (Stevens, 1996: 81). This research clearly demonstrated the effect of the Technique on posture and one's level of performance, while Dr. Barlow's clinical experience as a medical doctor produced evidence of the improvements in health brought about by the Technique (Stevens, 1996: 82).

More recently, the sensitivity of modern scientific instruments has brought about a deeper understanding of Alexander's discoveries. Chris Stevens (1996: 81) has been involved with many of these studies, which have also confirmed much of the initial research conducted by Jones and Barlow. Professor Raymond Dart (as cited in Stevens, 1996: 15) concludes:

The electronic facilities (of electromyography and electroencephalography) have confirmed Alexander's insights and authenticated the technique he discovered in the 1890's of teaching both average and skilled adult individuals to become aware of their wrong body use, how to eliminate handicaps and thus achieve better...use of themselves, both physically and mentally.



### 2.2.1 Measurement<sup>1</sup>

During the comparative literature study, a framework of the key concepts of the Alexander Technique was constructed as an instrument of measurement<sup>2</sup>. Key aspects of the Alexander Technique were selected and conceptualised in conjunction with an Alexander teacher, to ensure their validity. Each of the concepts in the ‘Framework of key concepts’ was provided with a code in order to make it useful for analysing the data.

Creating an operational definition of the selected Alexander concepts, by specifying the different dimensions for each of the concepts and identifying the relevant indicators, made specific comparisons with the related processes in the New Approach possible (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 112; Warwick & Osherson, 1973: 33). This procedure also brought about a more thorough understanding, not only of the Alexander Technique itself and of the specific nature of the parallels between the two methods, but also of the processes underlying the New Approach, and clarified, at least in part, some of the reasons for the efficacy of the method.

The ‘Framework of key concepts’ was used as an instrument of measurement in all the phases of the research. The analysis of data in qualitative research is a comprehensive task, but through coding, the information could be organised in such a way that it was possible to find the relevant data again with greater ease. In the comparative literature study, the New Approach literature was coded and analysed using the ‘Framework of key concepts’, in order to identify parallels with the Alexander Technique. Data collected through observation and participation in the New Approach lessons were coded and analysed in a similar way.

A difficulty in speaking about sensory experience is that many of the processes involved are interlinked and occur simultaneously. It is not possible to isolate one aspect of physical use without another being involved also. If an attempt had been made to identify and describe all of the parallels between the New Approach and the

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<sup>1</sup> The term *measurement* is not used in a quantitative way in this document, i.e. the objective of the measurement is not the “quantification of constructs” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 49), but the identification of particular Alexander Technique processes that have been conceptualised in depth, and “indicating the presence or absence” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 111) of such concepts in the New Approach.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3.

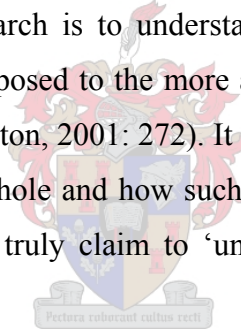


Alexander Technique each time they appeared in the text, the study would have become too intricate and convoluted. Therefore, it was decided also to insert the codes in the margins of the text, in order to identify the various levels of congruence between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique, without unnecessarily disrupting the flow of the argument.

The codes were used in a qualitative way, in order to identify parallels with aspects of the rich descriptions with which the Alexander concepts and processes were delineated in the literature study, under related headings. As the basic principles are formulated very differently in the two methods, each with its own distinctive terminology and language, reasoned argument was the primary method of demonstrating the parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach.

### **2.2.2 Comparative literature study**

The purpose in qualitative research is to understand events, actions and processes within their own contexts, as opposed to the more atomistic approach of quantitative variable analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 272). It is only as one “understands events against the background of the whole and how such a context confers meaning to the events concerned, that one can truly claim to ‘understand’ the events” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 272).



For this reason, it was decided to present the Alexander Technique and the New Approach literature in separate chapters first, before drawing them together in the comparative literature study. In this way, each method could be described within its own paradigm, using the distinctive categories, concepts and terminology that are unique to each method (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 272). Once the concepts from the two disciplines are integrated in the comparative literature study, the demarcation lines between the two methods may become blurred, leading to unnecessary confusion, unless a clear picture of each method had been established first.

One of the problems encountered in the individual literature studies of both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, is that any attempt to separate the different aspects of a physical discipline in order to study them in sufficient detail, inevitably results in the artificial splitting up of that which is essentially a complex,

integrated activity, in which everything is interrelated. As was mentioned above, individual concepts and procedures can only truly be understood in relation to the whole (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 272), and therefore the Alexander Technique and New Approach chapters were constructed after the model of a hologram, in a similar way to the procedure followed by Babbie and Mouton (2001: xxi) in their textbook on social research.

Both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique chapters begin with a brief introduction, outlining the basic tenets of the method, after which a background study relating to the development of the method is given. The background presents a wider and slightly more detailed perspective of the method, while retaining an overview of the interconnected nature of all the procedures. This is followed by an in-depth and detailed look at the individual processes involved in the method. While this procedure does result to some degree in the overlapping of material, it has the benefit of giving sufficient detail to gain a true understanding of the underlying processes in both methods, without losing sight of the broader context.

Using words to describe information relating to sensory experience is problematic, as Alexander himself, and many others, had found (Jones, 1976: 33). Although a procedure might be very simple in practise, “to describe it is not so simple, and it may require familiarity with quite small detail if it is to be understood” (Barlow, 1973: 223). For this reason, comprehensive and detailed descriptions of specific aspects in both methods were given - a procedure that is entirely congruent with the nature of qualitative description (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 272).

The secondary data that was used in the comparative literature study was selected with specific criteria in mind, as the authority of one’s sources and the degree of representation that they afford, is a decisive factor of the final quality of such a study (Mouton, 2001: 180). F.M. Alexander’s book *The use of the self* (1932) was chosen as an important source, as it gives his own account of developing the Technique and is at the same time the most accessible of his books. Other sources that were selected for the Alexander Technique chapter include Frank Pierce Jones (1976) and Wilfred Barlow (1973), as they had both personally studied with FM and AR Alexander. It has already been noted that Jones conducted extensive research into the scientific nature

of the Alexander Technique, and in *Body awareness in action* (Jones, 1976), which is used in this study, he gives a comprehensive account of both his research methodology and findings. Barlow (1973, *The Alexander principle*) was a doctor of medicine who worked with Alexander and eventually became the medical director of the Alexander Institute. Details of his research have also been given earlier. Both Jones and Barlow are therefore qualified to speak with considerable personal and scientific authority on the Alexander Technique.

*Alexander Technique* by Chris Stevens (1996) was chosen as another Alexander source. Even though it seems that he had not personally studied with Alexander, Stevens has been involved with many scientific studies investigating the effects of the Alexander Technique, which have enabled him “to find improved ways of teaching the Technique” (Stevens, 1996: 84). Pedro de Alcantara is a musician, rather than a scientist, and although he also did not personally study with either of the Alexander brothers, his book *Indirect Procedures* (1997) considers the specific application of the Alexander Technique to music performance and teaching, and as such it has special relevance for the purposes of this study. While many other books and articles regarding the Alexander Technique were also consulted<sup>1</sup> in the course of the research, these five books form the core of the literature study on the Technique.



For the New Approach literature study, Havas’s four books on the New Approach (1961, 1964, 1968, 1973) and Claude Kenneson’s *The cellist’s guide to the New Approach* (which was endorsed by Havas herself), were selected as the main sources. The biologist Dr Frances Hellebrandt (1969, 1970a, 1970b), who wrote extensive articles on the biomechanical and neuro-physiological rationale of the New Approach, was also used as an important New Approach source. Once again, many other sources<sup>2</sup> were consulted as well, but the books and articles mentioned above were specifically selected for their personal and/or scientific authority, and were used as the principal references.

In the individual literature studies, the relevant information was organised into manageable themes in order to facilitate an understanding of “the various constitutive

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<sup>1</sup> See the list of references for the other Alexander Technique sources that were used in this study.

<sup>2</sup> See the list of references for the other New Approach sources that were used in this study.

elements” of the data (Mouton, 2001: 108). The patterns and relationships that were identified between the concepts in each method, contributed to the design of the Alexander Technique and New Approach chapters. The ‘Framework of key concepts’ that was developed in the study of the Alexander Technique, served as a model according to which the comparative literature study in Chapter Five was constructed.

### **2.2.3 Participatory action research (PAR)**

Whyte (1991: 8) notes that although it is generally accepted “that good science must eventually lead to good practise”, the prevailing view in mainstream behavioural research is to assume that others will make use of the basic facts and relationships that social researchers have discovered. Consequently, a direct connection between such research and action is seldom established. Participatory action research, on the other hand, seeks to create an approach in which research and action are closely linked, in order to advance science while yet producing practical results (Whyte, 1991: 8). Whyte et al (1991: 21) argue that “science is not achieved by distancing oneself from the world”, and that it is possible to pursue both scientific truth and specific solutions to concrete problems simultaneously.

Although PAR is commonly used in grassroots development interventions and has its origin in the specific concerns and problems associated with social research in developing countries (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 331), it is currently being practised in an increasingly wide-ranging diversity of fields and in a variety of forms (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 314). PAR seems to be particularly well-suited to researching a method of physical re-education such as the Alexander Technique or the New Approach, as it can be argued that both these methods are in their very nature a form of PAR. Babbie and Mouton (2001) list the following key aspects of PAR, that are demonstrably present in both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach:

1. It involves participation and collaboration between the researcher, or change agent (teacher), and the participants (students). This is the most distinctive feature of PAR and it influences all other aspects of this research paradigm. (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 315.)

2. It is concerned with bringing about positive, progressive, remedial and corrective change. This is the major characteristic that distinguishes PAR from other types of action research. (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 321.)
3. Empowerment is the central focus and goal of PAR: it is primarily an approach for enabling participants (students) to become protagonists in their own situations, by analysing their own particular situations and problems critically, and advancing their own solutions. *Learning how to learn* is a central objective of PAR, which takes place through collaborative investigation and is accompanied by reflective dialogue. (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 318, 322, 323.)

[Both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach aim to teach students to become self-reliant, through teaching them to direct their own use and becoming their own experts in finding solutions to problems.]

4. The role of the researcher (teacher) in PAR is supportive and facilitative, with the researcher (teacher) playing a catalytic role, rather than a domineering or imperialistic role. The distance between the researcher (teacher) and the participants (students) is decreased, and a partnership based on trust is established, in which both participate equally in developing a common field of knowledge and a shared consciousness. (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 317-318.)
5. The participants' subjective experience of and perspectives on their own situation is relied upon and incorporated into the research process. Merging the participants' (students') local knowledge and the researcher's (teacher's) academic knowledge into a common field of knowledge allows for a more accurate and comprehensive grasp of a situation. (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 318-320.)

[In both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, the academic knowledge of the teacher is only helpful if the pupil's own experience, knowledge and feedback are also taken into consideration. The teacher's knowledge has to be translated into a language that is accessible to the student, and rediscovered by the student in terms of his or her own use, before it can be of value.]

6. PAR is sometimes defined as a methodological approach to develop consciousness in the participants, as raised awareness is essential in order to achieve effective transformation (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 322).

[Increasing awareness in a student is a major objective in both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach.]

7. PAR induces a sense of autonomy, ownership and long-term motivation in the participants (students), thereby increasing the possibility for transformation to endure (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 319, 325).

PAR facilitates a researcher's in-depth understanding of a situation, and therefore a qualitative methodological approach, with its interpretative and inductive nature, is used most often in such research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 326). Because of its applied and problem-solving nature, PAR is multidisciplinary and eclectic (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 325). The research methods that are used in PAR are tailored to each specific situation, and there are an unlimited variety of ways in which data can be obtained. The definition of data in PAR is also very wide, including both expressive forms of data such as music, dance and theatre, as well as the more conventional forms of data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 326).

As the focus in PAR is on subjective experience (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 326), data for the empirical component of this study were gathered through participation in both Alexander Technique and New Approach lessons. In this section of the study, the researcher was simultaneously also the participant, with the New Approach and Alexander teachers that were consulted, taking the role of the change agents (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 316, 317).

A series of ten Alexander Technique lessons was completed prior to the New Approach lessons in order to gain an insider perspective of the processes and procedures of the Alexander Technique, which made meaningful comparisons between the two methods possible (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 270). These regular lessons with the Alexander teacher, Yvonne Becker, have continued throughout the duration of this project, resulting in continually increasing insight and understanding of the Technique.

During the fact-finding trip (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 315) to the United Kingdom in 2003, I also had two Alexander lessons (15 and 24 July, 2003, London) with Vivien Mackie, a well-known cellist who had studied with Pablo Casals and later became an

Alexander teacher. Ms Mackie specialises in applying the Alexander Technique to musicians, and this experience generated valuable information that was later very useful in comparing the two methods.

The following sources were selected for collecting primary data about the New Approach:

1. 16 & 17 July 2003, Oxford:

The New Approach lessons with Kató Havas

2. 19 July 2003, Oxford:

A New Approach workshop presented by Kató Havas

3. 21 – 23 July 2003, Marple:

A ‘Six Lesson Course’ with Gloria Bakhshayesh, Havas’s personal representative

4. 21 – 23 July 2003, Marple:

Observation of New Approach lessons, given by Gloria Bakhshayesh

The methods of data collection included participation, observation and unstructured, qualitative interviews. In addition to participation in the lessons with Havas and Bakhshayesh, the New Approach workshop (19 July, 2003) included participation as well as observation. An interview<sup>1</sup> with Kató Havas was conducted during the lesson on 17 July 2003, in order to ascertain the degree of direct influence that Alexander may have had on the formulation of the New Approach<sup>2</sup>.

A more unconventional way of collecting data that is often used in PAR, involves reflective and empowering dialogue between the change agents and the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 327). During the lessons with both the New Approach and the Alexander teachers, dialogue was frequently used in exactly the same way as described below by Babbie and Mouton (2001: 327):

Through dialogue participants are helped to develop knowledge by learning from their own reality and specifically by learning to critically analyse their own particular situations and problems. (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 327.)

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<sup>1</sup> See **Appendix D** for the interview transcript.

<sup>2</sup> This inquiry was later extended through correspondence with Havas and other key figures. See **Appendix E**.



The central tool for producing data during the fieldwork consisted of keeping extensive and detailed written records (Mouton, 2001: 107). These notes described the procedure of events as well as my own subjective experience of them (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 326). Tape recordings of the interview and all the lessons were also made, and later used to correct and confirm the written field notes. Certain sections of the recordings with special relevance to the study were selected, transcribed and integrated with the field notes.

The reduction of data is a very important analytical procedure in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 278). The raw data were continually corrected, reduced and rearranged in manageable themes and patterns in order to make the information more accessible for analysis. The summaries and condensed notes derived from the field notes were used as the basis for identifying the specific themes according to which the information was synthesised in the final report (cf Mouton, 2001: 108). The data were analysed and interpreted through the 'Framework of key concepts'<sup>1</sup>, in order to identify and demonstrate the perceived parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique.

The description of actual cases seems to be the preferred means of communicating the practise of PAR (Reason, as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 329). A case study approach (in which the participants' efforts to change over a period of time is documented) is therefore frequently employed in PAR. Jones (1976: 167) used a similar procedure in his report on the Alexander Technique:

Jones, 1976: 167:

The experience...is, in a sense, the crux of the system; and I believe that an attempt should be made to describe it in spite of the poverty of our kinaesthetic vocabulary. The best procedure seems to me to use first person and to confine my account to what I myself have observed, both in lessons given to me...and subsequently in my own teaching. In this way I can vouch for my own statements. I don't wish to give the impression, however, that I am describing something that is private or mystical. What I have to say can be checked against the observations of others who have studied the method.

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<sup>1</sup> See 2.2.1.



The course of action described above was also adopted in the empirical component of this study. In the first section of the PAR report, an account of my observations and personal experience in the New Approach lessons and workshop, as well as the Alexander lessons, was given. This was integrated with my observations and experience in subsequently applying the New Approach principles in my own teaching. These observations are confirmed by the experience of many others, whose feedback in the KHANA newsletters was used as triangulation in the second section of the report, in order to verify and validate the findings of the participatory action research (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 329).

### **2.3 Validity**

Issues relating to the validity and reliability of the research have been mentioned throughout the preceding chapter, and will be considered in more detail in this section. The topics that will be discussed, include objectivity, validity and reliability, all of which are major concerns in qualitative research. As this study is essentially comparative in nature, the question of conceptual equivalence will also be addressed.

Objectivity is an important concern in qualitative research, as the paradigm does not lend itself to meeting the same criteria for objectivity that have been specified in quantitative research. However, Münchhausen's objectivity, which is defined as "doing justice to the object of study", has particular relevance in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 274). The objectivity in a study is automatically increased by the same conditions that improve the validity and reliability of the data, but these conditions differ in qualitative and quantitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 274).

Triangulation is generally considered to be one of the most efficient ways of increasing the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 275). Although triangulation is used to establish validity and not reliability, there can be no validity without reliability, and therefore "a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 278). Triangulation occurs when multiple methods are used in the same study in order to overcome the inevitable limitations inherent in using a single method (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 275). In this study, more reactive research methods (i.e. participatory action research and

observation) were combined with less reactive methods (i.e. the comparative literature study and other documentation). In the empirical study, the primary data obtained through PAR and observation, are triangulated with the secondary data obtained from the New Approach newsletters. The feedback from two Alexander teachers, who had both also studied the New Approach, is included in this triangulation in order to enhance the validity of the study<sup>1</sup>.

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 275) mention that other important aspects of enhancing the validity and reliability of research include the writing of extensive field notes, peer debriefing and member checks. It has already been noted that extensive field notes were used as the central tool for producing data in the empirical study. In peer debriefing, a colleague who is outside of the context of the study, but “who has a general understanding of the nature of the study”, is consulted, in order to review the “perceptions, insights and analysis” involved in the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 277).

In this study, the co-supervisor, Magdalena Roux, was consulted for the purpose of peer debriefing. Ms Roux is exceptionally well suited to perform this function, as she is very knowledgeable about the Alexander Technique, having studied the method for a number of years. She is also a leading cello pedagogue who is nationally and internationally respected. With her insight into string pedagogy as well as the Alexander Technique, it was possible to have constructive and meaningful discussions regarding the findings of this study on an ongoing basis.

Member checks involve submitting the research findings to those from whom the information was obtained, in order to verify both the data and the interpretations that have been made (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 275). According to Whyte et al (1991: 41), such scientific meticulousness is inherent in PAR, as the very nature of the paradigm “forces researchers to go through a rigorous process of checking the facts with those with firsthand knowledge before any reports are written”. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 328) agree that such social verification of data is a distinctive value of PAR and one of the key principles in conducting this type of research. Through

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<sup>1</sup> See 6.4.

validating the research findings in this way, the quality of the PAR data is established (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 328).

For this purpose, the research findings were submitted on a continual basis throughout the study to the New Approach teachers who had taught me: Kató Havas, who designed the New Approach, and Gloria Bakhshayesh, her personal representative. Vivien Mackie, the Alexander teacher whom I had consulted in London (July, 2003), was unfortunately not available for this purpose, but Yvonne Becker, the Alexander teacher whom I see on a regular basis, was intimately involved in all the phases of the research. The text was submitted at regular intervals to these teachers to ensure that the data would be accurately presented and that interpretations of the data would remain conceptually close to the essence of both techniques<sup>1</sup>. This procedure would have the added benefit of ensuring conceptual equivalence in comparing the two methods.

Warwick and Osherson (1973: 11) note that a basic problem in comparative analysis is to establish conceptual equivalence. Providing “conceptual definitions that have equivalent, though not necessarily identical” meanings in different “cultures”, or disciplines, is a major challenge in comparative research (Warwick & Osherson, 1973: 11). Warwick and Osherson (1973: 18) suggest that an effective approach to solving the problem of equivalence can be found in involving “knowledgeable members of all participating societies” in the research. By submitting the report to teachers from both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, they were all equally involved in verifying the data, ensuring conceptual equivalence and giving a critical perspective on the conclusions that were reached.

Finally, accuracy in research is enhanced through “the availability of qualitative material about the individuals, groups, or events under study” (Warwick, 1973: 194). For this reason, the credentials of all the individuals that were consulted in this study were given as they were introduced in the text, in order to establish their authority and reliability in their respective fields.

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<sup>1</sup> See **appendix A** for the feedback from both of these teachers regarding the findings in this study.

As the reliability of the research depends to a large degree on the reliability, ability and trustworthiness of the researcher, who is the main instrument in qualitative research (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 309), such information about the researcher is also important. The researcher's experience, training and perspective all influence the descriptions of the fieldwork, as well as the subsequent analytical and interpretative processes. The role of the researcher in this study was simultaneously that of researcher and complete participant (cf Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 296), as well as teacher and change agent, once the New Approach procedures that I had learnt were applied in my own teaching.

As the researcher has been involved in performing professionally as a violist for more than twenty years, and teaching the violin and viola for more than fifteen years, an extensive knowledge of the field under study was brought to bear on this research. The typical problems that are encountered both in instrumental performance and teaching, initially gave rise to the formulation of the research problem and ensured that there was sufficient insight into the procedures that are followed in the methods under study. It is probable that a researcher with no knowledge of instrumental performance, or without an appreciation for the exacting nature of using one's body as an instrument of expression (and teaching others to do the same), would not have been able to grasp the subtleties encountered in both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique.

Other factors that supported the researcher in undertaking this study, include a comparative study of violin methods (Louw, 2003) and a course in research methodology, that were both completed as a direct preparation for this study. A review of the literature relating to the general and methodological issues that are addressed in this enquiry, further contributed to the knowledge and ability that was required to undertake the research.

## Chapter 3

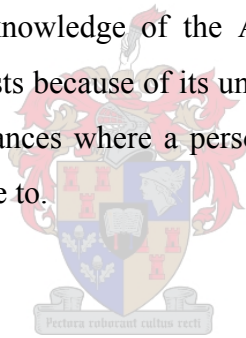
### The FM Alexander Technique

#### 3.1 Introduction

The FM Alexander Technique is a scientifically verified method for changing habitual behaviour (Jones, 1976: 101) and promoting the integration of mind and body. The Technique was developed in order to deal with the pervasive problem of faulty sensory appreciation (Jones, 1976: 21), which is inextricably linked to the misuse of oneself. It is designed to address mental attitudes and physical conditions simultaneously, through teaching directive thinking while facilitating an improved manner of use (Jones, 1976: 21). In this way, a pupil is taught to “associate a new sequence of thought with a new manner of using the body” (Barlow, 1973: 206), so that unnecessary tension during activity or rest can be perceived and eliminated.

Jones (1976: 4) believes that knowledge of the Alexander Technique “should be available to teachers and therapists because of its unique power for dealing with habit and change”, even in those instances where a person might desire to change, but is convinced that he or she is unable to.

Jones, 1976: 4:



Most people are caught in monkey traps of unconscious habit. They cannot escape because they do not perceive what they are doing while they are doing it...The Alexander Technique opens a window onto the little-known area between stimulus and response and gives you the self-knowledge you need in order to change the pattern of your response.

#### 3.2 Background

FM Alexander developed a method of constructive conscious control (Jones, 1976: 17) in order to overcome a debilitating vocal and respiratory problem he was experiencing in his early acting career. His observations of himself resulted in the procedure known today as the Alexander Technique.

##### 3.2.1 Biographical details

Frederick Matthias Alexander, generally addressed as “FM” by those who knew him, was born in 1869 in Tasmania. As a child he suffered from poor health and had to be

educated at home (Stevens, 1996: 20). After moving to Melbourne at the age of 20, he achieved success as an actor specializing in reciting, and toured around Australia and Tasmania (De Alcantara, 1997: 283).

Recurring vocal and respiratory problems eventually led to hoarseness and a complete loss of voice during performances, for which he could find no cure from doctors or vocal experts (Alexander, 1932: 7). He concluded that it was something he was doing while reciting that caused the trouble (Alexander, 1932: 8), and decided to try to discover the origin of his problems for himself. After many experiments, he came to the conclusion that mental and physical processes cannot be separated, and that they have to be addressed simultaneously in order to prevent an unsatisfactory way of using oneself (Alexander, 1932: 5). With the improved use that he attained in this way, he not only cured his vocal problems, but also noticed a remarkable improvement in his general health (Stevens, 1996: 24).

Alexander started teaching the procedure, which he had developed to help himself, professionally to others. He developed a way of guiding people's movements with his hands in order to convey directly, and relatively quickly, the information that had taken him years to discover (Stevens, 1996: 24). With his brother, AR Alexander, he established a successful teaching practice in Sydney and Melbourne from roughly 1898 until 1904, when he moved to England (Jones, 1976: 19). This gave him the opportunity to present his discoveries to a larger public.

He achieved great success as a teacher in England, and later also in the USA. His pupils included many prominent actors and such luminaries as Aldous Huxley and George Bernhard Shaw (De Alcantara, 1997: 283). The American philosopher John Dewey was strongly influenced by Alexander's teachings and wholeheartedly endorsed the scientific character of his technique (Jones, 1976: 104). The biologists George Coghill and Sir Charles Sherrington were among Alexander's many ardent supporters in the various disciplines of science, education, politics and the arts (De Alcantara, 1997: 271).

The Alexander brothers eventually started training others to become teachers of the Technique as well, ensuring that FM's legacy would be passed on to later generations.

During World War II, Alexander moved to America, but returned to England in 1943, where he continued teaching until his death in 1955 (De Alcantara, 1997: 283).

Alexander wrote various pamphlets and four books to explain his theories. The first book is *Man's supreme inheritance* (1910), in which he presents the philosophy behind his technique. In *Constructive conscious control of the individual* (1923), Alexander demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the “end-gaining” widely practised in Western culture, as opposed to the “means-whereby” principle of prevention that his method promotes. *The use of the self* (1932) is commonly recognized to be his most accessible book, and gives a detailed account of the self-observations and experiments that led to the formulation of the Alexander Technique. Jones describes *The universal constant in living* (1941), Alexander's last book, as “a long, disconnected appendix to the earlier books” (Jones, 1976: 57), that nevertheless contains much of interest to a serious Alexander student.

Alexander's books are not easy to read or understand, and he readily concedes that “knowledge concerned with sensory experience cannot be conveyed by the written or spoken word” (Alexander, 1932: viii), even though he had been very meticulous in choosing the exact words with which to describe his discoveries (Barstow, 1983). He further argues that, while anyone may rediscover for themselves the principles of the Technique if they were to follow the same procedures as he had, it would take years to “reach a point that can be reached in few weeks with the aid of an experienced teacher” (Alexander, 1932: ix); no-one should therefore be surprised if they were unable to teach themselves from his books. De Alcantara (1997: 285) suggests that reading Alexander's books should be complementary to taking lessons from a qualified Alexander teacher, in order to gain a true understanding of the Technique.

De Alcantara, 1997: 285:

Alexander was one of the century's great freethinkers, and...his discoveries are of universal importance. Society at large has yet to give Alexander his due; end-gaining and faulty sensory awareness lead us to deny our self-inflicted problems and ignore the solutions that he proposed.



### 3.2.2 The evolution of the Technique

With no other cure for his vocal problems, and faced with the prospect of potentially harmful surgery, Alexander attempted to discover what he was doing while reciting to cause the trouble (De Alcantara, 1997: 283). He gives a very detailed account of these years of painstaking experimentation in *The use of the self* (1932), of which only the most important conclusions will be summarised here.

Using mirrors to observe himself, Alexander noticed three distinct tendencies in his reciting that did not seem to be present in his normal speaking: he pulled back his head, lowered his larynx and audibly sucked in air through his mouth. He concluded that this constituted “a misuse of the parts concerned” (Alexander, 1932: 10). Observing himself again, he realized that he did the same three things in his normal speech, but to a lesser extent. He discovered that, of these three tendencies, he could only consciously avoid the pulling back of his head, and that this had a positive effect on the other two tendencies as well, considerably improving the use of his voice. This marks the first two important stages in his investigation, in realizing (1) the importance of the head-neck relationship, or primary control, and (2) the close connection between use and functioning (Alexander, 1932: 11, 12).

Through continued experimentation, Alexander discovered that the functioning of his voice was influenced by the way he was using his whole body, not only the specific parts related to speaking and reciting, and also that pulling his head back and down was “inseparably bound up with a misuse of other mechanisms which involved the act of shortening of the stature” (Alexander, 1932: 13). He noticed that the best vocal conditions depended on lengthening himself while widening his back, and that in order to maintain this lengthening he had to give himself conscious directions to keep his head “forward and up” (Alexander, 1932: 14). However, he soon found that while he could do these actions by themselves, he could not maintain the same conditions while speaking or reciting (Alexander, 1932: 15).

When he used the mirrors once again to observe himself, he found that he was doing the opposite of what he had decided to do, and actually had believed he was doing (Alexander, 1932: 15). This discovery of the unreliability of sensory experience was the turning point in his research. Alexander concluded that it was a delusion to



presume “that because we are able to do what we ‘will to do’ in acts that are habitual and involve familiar sensory experiences, we shall be equally successful in doing what we ‘will to do’ in acts which are contrary to our habit and therefore involve sensory experiences that are unfamiliar” (Alexander, 1932: 16).

In trying to find out at which point in his *doing* he had gone wrong, he discovered that he was using his whole body with undue muscular tension, particularly in his legs and feet, and that this interfered with his balance (Alexander, 1932: 17). He recalled an instruction from a vocal coach to take hold of the floor with his feet in order to get better results in his reciting. Alexander (1932: 18) realized that, although he had tried his best to copy his teacher, and had believed that if “told what to do to correct something that was wrong” he would be able to do so, this was not the case. What he had supposed to be an improved and satisfactory stance was in fact “exerting a most harmful general influence upon the use of (himself) throughout (his) whole organism” (Alexander, 1932: 18).

In attempting to carry out his teacher’s instruction, Alexander’s idea of reciting had become connected to this misconception regarding his stance, and had influenced him to cultivate a habitual use of himself that “constituted a combined wrong use of the whole of (his) physical-mental mechanisms” (Alexander, 1932: 19). He realised that his desire to recite would inevitably cause this habitual wrong use to come into play and dominate any attempt to make better use of himself while reciting (Alexander, 1932: 19). The stimulus to wrong use, because it was habitual, was far stronger than the stimulus of his desire to employ the new use of his head and neck.

Alexander also realised that he used himself habitually in a way that felt natural to him, and that he depended on this feeling to direct his movements. Since it had led him into error, he concluded that this feeling must be untrustworthy (Alexander, 1932: 21). He reasoned that everyone has an ingrained habit of judging whether experiences were right or not by the way they felt. Any new use would inevitably feel different from the old, and “if the old use felt right, the new use was bound to feel wrong” (Alexander 1932: 32). Depending on the feeling that was the guide in the old way of doing, might feel right and familiar, but it is wrong and will lead to error.

Alexander, 1932: 23:

...instinctive control and direction of use (has) become so unsatisfactory, and the associated feeling so untrustworthy as a guide, that it could lead us to do the very opposite of what we wished to do or thought we were doing.

This discovery pointed Alexander to a new field of inquiry, where he sought a way to rehabilitate the sensory mechanism that had become untrustworthy through the acquired habits of self-use (Alexander 1932: 21). He came to recognize that in order to free himself from an instinctive, habitual reaction to stimulus, he would have to rely on a conscious, reasoned direction instead of automatic sensory guidance (Alexander 1932: 32). The procedure that he devised was to analyse the initial conditions of use, then to reason out the means whereby a more satisfactory use could be achieved, and finally to project consciously to himself the directions required for realizing these means (Alexander 1932: 25).

Initially Alexander did not have much success in attempting to replace his old, instinctive reactions with this new conscious and reasoned direction. As soon as he received the stimulus to speak, and tried to do the new directions at the same time as speaking, he reverted back to the old, familiar use of himself that felt right (Alexander 1932: 26). In seeking a solution to this dilemma, he discovered one of the most important principles of the Alexander Technique: inhibition. Through inhibiting the misdirection of his primary control (i.e. the head-neck relationship) associated with the wrong habitual use, he was eventually able to stop the unsatisfactory reaction to the idea of reciting at its source (Alexander 1932: 24).

Alexander found that part of the problem was that, in trying to be right, he was too concerned with gaining the end (i.e. speaking) and reacted too quickly to stimuli. He realised that he had to be more concerned with preventing himself from doing, and that by refusing to react immediately to the stimulus, he was able to give himself enough time to project “as many times as was necessary” the directions that he had worked out as a new means whereby he would gain the end of speaking (Alexander, 1932: 27). This reasoned direction would ensure the improved use of his head and neck, bringing about a satisfactory reaction to the stimulus to use his voice (Alexander, 1932: 25). The important thing was, however, that he had to continue to

rely only on this conscious reasoned direction, even though the sensory feedback might feel strange and wrong (Alexander, 1932: 32).

Alexander eventually managed to separate the stimulus to speak from his habitual response, through inhibiting any immediate response to the stimulus to speak and then, while continuing to project the new reasoned directions, he would stop to reconsider his first decision to speak, either deciding not to proceed but to do something else instead, or to make a new decision to speak after all (Alexander, 1932: 33). After following this procedure for a considerable time, Alexander gained freedom from his tendency to revert to a wrong habitual use in reciting, resulting in a marked improvement in his functioning. An unexpected side effect was that he also became free from the nasal and respiratory difficulties that had troubled him from birth (Alexander, 1932: 36).

### **3.3 The method**

Although many different definitions of the Technique have been made by a great number of people, including well-known scientists and scholars, it remains problematic to communicate the true meaning of the Alexander Technique verbally, as words are not sufficient to convey sensory experience to those who have not experienced it (Jones, 1976: 33). In fact, a key feature of the Technique is that Alexander eventually learned how to use his hands in order to impart adequately the necessary information to his pupils (Jones, 1976: 15). While acknowledging the limitations of any written account of the Technique, the most important aspects will be considered in this section.

#### **3.3.1 Summary**

The Alexander Principle is that “use affects functioning” (Barlow, 1973: 17). While there are many different ways of using the body mechanically at any time, for each situation there is a particular body use that will allow for the best functioning (Barlow, 1973: 67). Conversely, faulty muscular tension patterns lead to an unreliability of performance, especially in activities where a special skill is required (Barlow, 1973: 69).

As the concept of an activity sometimes becomes connected to flawed, “maladaptive” experiences, conditions that lead to unsatisfactory results are created (Jones, 1976: 102). These results will be the outcome as long as the bad conditions exist. Attempting to change such a bad habit is not easy, due to unawareness of the exact nature of the particular pattern, and too often one bad habit is merely replaced by another. It is a fallacy to suppose that if one is told what to do in order to correct something that is wrong, “all that is required in order to bring about the right act is will or wish on the part of the one who is to act.” (Dewey, as cited in Jones, 1976: 101.) “Debauched kinaesthesia” (Barlow, 1973: 96) is at the root of the problem, as our senses deceive us. This is particularly true of muscular movement: a person may think he or she is doing one thing, while actually doing the exact opposite (Jones, 1976: 183).

It is only when the sensations generated by the desired movement are actually experienced, that the movement can be understood or known for what it really is (Jones, 1976: 102). Words and ideas by themselves are not enough to convey this sensory information, and they need to be connected with physical experience before they can become effective (Barlow, 1973: 190). In the Alexander Technique, teachers use their hands to lead a person to an improved kinaesthetic experience of the required physical action. This is known as guided movement.

Through the increased sensory awareness that this brings about, faulty movement patterns are identified, which can then be stopped through what Alexander called inhibition. This most often, but not exclusively, relates to inhibiting the tightening or shortening of the muscles in the neck and shoulder area, which interferes with the primary control, i.e. the correct relationship of the head, neck and back. A sequence of verbal commands, or directions, that have been learned in conjunction with the correlated sensory experience, enables the pupil to recreate the improved movement pattern for him- or herself (Barlow, 1973: 194.)

A lot of mis-use is caused through *end-gaining*, i.e. being so focused on attaining a particular objective that no attention is paid to the way the self is used in the process. In the Alexander Technique, focus is taken away from the ultimate end and placed on each individual step of the process through a *means-whereby* principle, thus

promoting good use, as unsatisfactory habitual responses are inhibited along the way and the intermediate steps required are consciously directed against a backdrop of heightened sensory awareness (Jones, 1976: 195).

Applying the Technique becomes a continually evolving learning process, with frequent new discoveries about the quality of movement. According to Barstow (1983), the greatest value of the Technique is that it brings about an increasing “experience of flexibility and freedom, giving controlled balance in all types of daily activity as well as in all types of professional performance”.

### 3.3.2 Use

Carrington, as quoted in Becker, 2001: 43:

The Alexander Technique teaches directly the correct use of the self. In other words, it guides one towards the state of freedom and balance of body and mind that is the basis of effective performance in all activities.

The term *the use of the self* does not refer to the way specific parts of the body are used individually in activity. Alexander (1932: 4) emphasised that he used the term in a more comprehensive sense, to denote “the working of the organism in general.” All his teaching was based on the fact that a person functions as a psychophysical whole (Alexander, 1932: 44), and that all activities engage the whole person.

De Alcantara, 1997: 12:

The use of the self, then, is the way I react, with the whole of myself, in any given situation...The self consists of...a whole, so unified in its workings that no separate part (body, mind, spirit) can be said to exist independently of the others....if you are one, you work as one, and you cannot examine, change, or control one of your parts separately from the whole.

Alexander found that in order to solve his vocal problems, he had to attend to the way he was using his whole body in the process, in addition to reconsidering the mental attitudes and concepts related to this use<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.2.2.

The total pattern that characterizes a person's responses to stimuli is included in the term *use*. While heredity and previous experience cannot be changed or controlled, use "can be brought under conscious control and redirected" (Jones, 1976: 46) in order to increase a person's creative potential. The Alexander Principle says that the way in which the self is used, will affect the way a person functions (Barlow, 1973: 17). It follows that in order to enhance functioning, use needs to be improved (De Alcantara, 1997: 16).

Misuse can be regarded as a stress disorder, "which habitually involves bodily systems beyond the relevant ones, and in which the organism does not return to a balanced resting state after activity" (Barlow, 1973: 97). This happens when an inappropriate amount of effort, or wrongly distributed tension, is involved in carrying out a particular action. These faulty, mal-distributed muscular tension patterns interfere with optimal mental and physical functioning, and become habitual. Such habitual misuse can disturb "the delicate, subconscious mechanisms for balance and posture" (STAT, 1993), as can injury, and the less satisfactory ways of compensating for this postural disturbance inevitably make it worse.

Barlow, 1973: 69:

Muscular control will only become possible if we can start from a properly balanced state of rest, and if we know how to return to (and maintain) such a steady state of muscular rest when we stop. Alexander's concept of USE implied a conscious awareness of such a steady state.

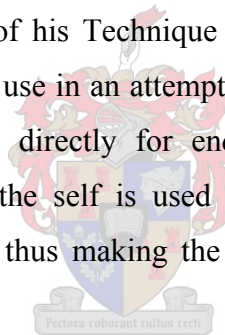
Although the Alexander Technique deals with releasing inappropriate tension and re-establishing a balanced resting state, it is not primarily concerned with physical relaxation as such. De Alcantara (1997: 11) states unequivocally that the Technique "is not a method of physical relaxation, or posture, or the use of the body, but of the use of the self".

Tension in itself is not negative, and the right kind of tension "is a prerequisite of dynamic, energetic, vital human endeavour" (De Alcantara, 1997: 15). The problem is rather that too much tension, or the wrong kind of tension, is used in activity. In fact, a lack of the necessary tension in the right place is often the cause of inappropriate tension elsewhere. It is futile to attempt to relax such compensatory stiffness directly,

as it will only release once the right and necessary tensions have been established. True relaxation is not the cause, but rather the effect of good use, and “it is, therefore, useless to seek out relaxation in itself” (De Alcantara, 1997: 15).

However, when a person cannot release residual tension after activity in order to return to a balanced resting state, it remains latent in the body and can be triggered merely by the idea of moving, as anticipatory tension or “set” (Barlow, 1973: 80). The danger with such “over-active states” is that they become habitual, “and a predisposition to adopt them will persist even when they temporarily disappear” (Barlow, 1973: 80). This can, over time, change the physical framework by modifying the bones and joints, warping and deforming the posture: “use influences function, and function ultimately changes structure” (Becker, 2001: 43).

Alexander believed the universal habit of end-gaining to be the ultimate cause of misuse, and this is at the core of his Technique (De Alcantara, 1997: 18). In end-gaining, a person bypasses good use in an attempt to control functioning directly (De Alcantara, 1997: 19). Working directly for ends, or goals and results, without considering the way in which the self is used in the process, is ultimately self-defeating as it leads to misuse, thus making the desired end unattainable (Barlow, 1973: 192).



Jones, 1976: 2:

No matter how many specific ends you may gain, you are worse off than before...if in the process of gaining them you have destroyed the integrity of the organism.

End-gaining “shows itself in the form of over-quick and over-energetic reactions”, and leads people to “prepare for action by creating unnecessary muscle tension” (Barlow, 1973: 192). Barlow (1973: 241) defines end-gaining as “any form of behaviour which does not permit the feed-back of information except that which relates to the one specific end desired”. The lack of attention to feed-back does not allow for the continuous fine-tuning of motor movements during the activity (cf Gardner, 1983: 11), and this lack of sensory awareness keeps one locked into a pattern of misuse.

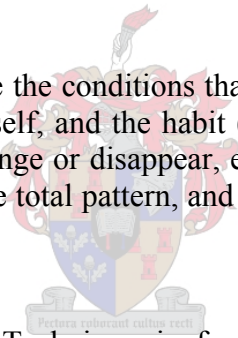


While “mechanization is an essential property of all habit” (Jones, 1976: 100), and not all habits are necessarily bad, they become damaging “when they are automatic, harmful, and beyond the control of the conscious will” (De Alcantara, 1997: 21). A habit can be defined as “a familiar reaction to a certain stimulus” (De Alcantara, 1997: 21). Merely wishing to change a habit is not enough in order to do so, as the stimulus to action will cause the inevitable, habitual responses to come into play as soon as a person reaches directly for his ultimate goal.

Alexander proposed a means-whereby principle to deal with end-gaining habits: through giving up the idea of immediately reaching for the goal, the old, stereotyped response to the stimulus is inhibited (Jones, 1976: 2). The desired end is approached indirectly through a series of intermediate steps that lead to good use, and which become ends in themselves (Jones, 1976: 102).

De Alcantara, 1997: 33:

To change a habit, change the conditions that allow the habit to exist. Make a change in the use of the self, and the habit (a manifestation of the use of the self) must necessarily change or disappear, even without your working on the habit itself...Condition the total pattern, and the partial patterns will look after themselves.



In this respect, the Alexander Technique is fundamentally different from other approaches of changing human behaviour: “It seeks to alter use, not functioning; further, it seeks to alter use indirectly, through changes in the use of the Primary Control” (De Alcantara, 1997: 34).

### **3.3.3 Primary control**

After unsuccessfully attempting to change each of the tendencies to misuse that he had observed in himself, Alexander concluded that they were “interrelated parts of a total pattern of which the principal part was the change in the axis of the head” (Jones, 1976: 16). The basic premise of the Alexander Technique is that all activity is dependent for its efficiency on the proper relationship of the head, neck and back, or primary control. When the primary control is properly directed, the other uses of the body tend to correct themselves and function as they should, as “the orientation of the head influences the organization of the whole organism” (De Alcantara, 1997: 27).



When the head leads the body in activity, it brings about a muscular harmony throughout the body, but if this relationship is disturbed, the whole system becomes disorganised.

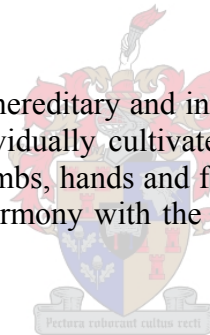
Alexander, 1932: 60

...there is a primary control of the use of the self, which governs the working of all the mechanisms and so renders the control of the complex human organism comparatively simple.

The biologist George Coghill pointed out that the locomotor function in vertebrates involves two patterns: the total pattern, which is hereditary and innate, and partial patterns that are individually cultivated (De Alcantara, 1997: 25). The primary control is the mechanism of the total pattern, and it has an integrating effect on the coordination of the body as a whole (De Alcantara, 1997: 27).

De Alcantara, 1997: 26:

Ideally the total pattern (hereditary and innate...) should take precedence over the partial patterns (individually cultivated). In other words, every localized action – the activity of limbs, hands and fingers, and of lips, tongue and jaw – should be executed in harmony with the co-ordination of the head, neck and back.



Alexander developed a way of using his hands to make changes in a pupil that went far beyond simple postural adjustment and worked directly with this total, innate pattern (Jones, 1976: 31), accessing reflexes that operate automatically without the need for conscious control (Jones, 1976: 144). Through improving the use of the primary control, the body's innate reflex systems are released and restored to operate effectively. These reflex responses work to maintain poise almost effortlessly (STAT, 1993), and bring about a kinaesthetic effect of ease and lightness in one's movements (Jones, 1976: 145)<sup>1</sup>.

The head-neck reflexes are responsible for changing the distribution of tonus throughout the body (Jones, 1976: 42). Good use of the primary control, and hence

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.8 and 3.3.9.

the quality of muscle tone, requires a combination of the upward stretch of the spine and the mobility of the head (De Alcantara, 1997: 33). The head balances freely on top of the spinal column, with the back lengthening and widening, and the shoulders broadening (De Alcantara, 1997: 31). As the head is allowed to tip slightly forward at the atlanto-occipital joint through inhibiting any customary tightening or pulling back (De Alcantara, 1997: 61), the stretch reflexes in the neck muscles are stimulated, resulting in a higher quality of muscle tone throughout the body (Dawley, 2001: 21). However, if the larger outside muscles of the neck become tense and contract the spine, they override these desirable stretch reflexes, creating undue tensions throughout the body. Inhibiting the “set or fixation” of the head brings about an improved distribution of tonus in the torso and limbs, resulting in better coordination and more control in all kinds of activity, “whether it is speaking, or writing, or playing the flute” (Jones, 1976: 179).

In researching the reflex pattern that occurs when someone is startled, (i.e. the stereotyped postural reaction to an unexpected loud noise), Jones (1976: 132) found that the resulting postural changes do not all take place at the same time, but always begin in the head and neck, before affecting the rest of the body. He goes on to say that the startle reflex is a model for other, slower response patterns such as fear, anxiety, fatigue and pain, which all show a similar pattern: the muscles in the neck are contracted, thus shortening the neck and displacing the head, after which the postural change continues down to the trunk and legs (Jones, 1996: 179). As these responses are much slower than the startle pattern, they can be changed through inhibiting “the first stage in the pattern, the head displacement, through which the rest of the pattern is propagated” (Jones, 1996: 179). Such inhibition gives a person the freedom to choose to respond in a more reasoned and appropriate way, instead of with a stereotyped reaction that may be harmful.

The misuse of the head and neck is always reflected as misuse in another part of the body, for instance as too much tension in one area, accompanied by a lack of muscle tone in another part of the body. Conversely, misuse in any part of the body can only be dealt with adequately once the primary control has been improved (Barlow, 1973: 40), confirming again the supremacy of the total pattern over the partial: “Condition

the *total pattern*, and the *partial patterns* will look after themselves” (De Alcantara, 1997: 33).

The misuse of the primary control has many causes. Apart from emotional states such as fear, anxiety or fatigue as mentioned above, the way a person uses him- or herself in any general or specialised activity can cause interference in the head-neck relationship. Bad postural habits in every day activities such as sitting, reading or walking can all cause the misuse of the primary control. A cellist might twist the head to look at the left hand, or a violinist might misuse the head, neck and back in an effort to hold the instrument up, exerting a most harmful effect on the primary control (De Alcantara, 1997: 32). Even attempts at improved posture can cause misuse of the primary control if a fixed, static position is adopted in an effort to *be right*.

The region at the base of the neck, known as the hump, is a “veritable maelstrom of muscular co-ordination” (Barlow, 1973: 42). The activities of the shoulders and upper-arms exert a distorting influence in this area, and the effects of stress and tension also accumulate in the muscles in this region. It is also from here “that the head itself – the structure that carries man’s most important sensory equipment of sight and hearing, taste and smell, and balance – has to be co-ordinated at rest and in movement” (Barlow, 1973: 42). Consideration of all these factors underlines how susceptible this area is to misuse, with a potentially harmful effect on the primary control.

Everyone is born with a primary control by virtue of having a head, neck and back, and while it mostly functions below the level of consciousness, it is possible to learn to use the primary control consciously, and in a more constructive way (De Alcantara, 1997: 26). This is accomplished not by doing something right, but through stopping the wrong thing from happening: the head is prevented from contracting into the spine (De Alcantara, 1997: 31). According to De Alcantara (1997: 31), there are many ways of changing the use of the primary control. For instance, a cellist can be prevented from twisting his neck in order to look at his left hand by having him look elsewhere. However, he believes the hands-on approach to be superior (De Alcantara, 1997: 32),

where Alexander teachers actively prevent the contraction of the head into the neck by using their hands, while guiding the pupil in carrying out everyday activities<sup>1</sup>.

Through improving the use of the primary control, positive changes can be made in all spheres of life. De Alcantara (1997: 34) gives the following three guidelines for solving problems (mental, physical, technical or musical): (1) the first consideration should always be to prevent interference with the natural workings of the primary control; (2) at best, all activities or exercises should enhance the natural workings of the primary control; (3) at worst, no procedure should ever require the misuse of the primary control.

Finally, the ability to use the primary control well depends on the reliability of sensory awareness, i.e. “the ability to gauge tension, effort and movement” (De Alcantara 1997: 194), which will be the subject of the next section.

#### **3.3.4 Sensory awareness**

It is a common misconception that all that is necessary to change a harmful habit is to practise an improved way of moving, once it has been pointed out (cf Dewey, as cited in Jones, 1976: 101). Only a person who already has good habits “can know what the good is” (Dewey, as cited in Jones, 1976: 102). Man has no kinaesthetic knowledge of an act before actually experiencing it, and therefore is blind on a sensory level to the new movement that is being required. Having to let go of the security of the old, well-known sensory experience at the same time, further complicates the re-education process.

The difficulty arises from the fact that the habitual way we use ourselves has become so familiar that it feels right, even when it might be inefficient and harmful (Alexander, 1932: 84). This sense of rightness is intimately bound up with the patterns of movement and posture that we have developed throughout our lives; even our memory patterns are closely connected with “the substratum of muscle-tone” which underlies our use (Barlow, 1973: 196). “This means that, the moment we try to carry out a basic re-education of USE, we very rapidly run up against our attachment

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.5.

to our old feeling of ourselves” (Barlow, 1973: 1961). As new use will bring about new and unfamiliar experiences, they are bound to feel wrong if the old use felt right (Alexander, 1932: 32). The sensations accompanying new use can feel so wrong that one might not want to go through with the new use, but instead revert back to what feels familiar and right. “People don’t do what they feel to be wrong when they are trying to be right” (Alexander, 1941: 110).

This untrustworthy sensory awareness makes it very difficult to change one’s behaviour, as there is no reliable sensory standard that can act as a guide in the new way of moving. In trying to correct a particular problem, far too much effort can be used, thereby producing side effects that are as undesirable as the original condition (Jones, 1976: 20). Deliberately taking up a new position and “trying to be right”, causes new faulty tension patterns and inevitably promotes anxiety (Jones, 1976: 20, 191). Unreliability of sensory awareness can even lead one to do the very opposite of what one intended to do (Alexander 1932: 23).

Proprioception is the sensory mechanism through which the brain receives information (mainly from the joints, tendons and muscles) about the state of the body (Stevens, 1996: 35). It is equal to the five other better-known senses, and it is the sense that the Alexander Technique is primarily concerned with (De Alcantara, 1997: 41). It was known vaguely as “muscle sense” in earlier times, and only clearly defined and named as proprioception in the 1890’s (De Alcantara, 1997: 40).

De Alcantara, 1997: 40:

Proprioception concerns itself with all aspects of muscular activity: orientation in space, relative position of body parts, movement of body and limbs, the gauging of effort and tension, the perception of fatigue, static and dynamic balance.

Without proprioception, the body becomes “blind and deaf to itself...and...ceases to ‘own’ itself, to feel itself as itself” (Sacks, as cited in De Alcantara, 1997: 41). Although the sensations of position, mass, and movement form a very large part of the impressions received by the brain (Jones, 1976: 165), proprioception operates primarily on an unconscious and automatic level. Most people are not used to making kinaesthetic observations and prefer to rely on feedback from the other senses, “rather

than critically examine...feelings of tension and weight” (Jones, 1996: 180). Alexander’s great discovery was that the proprioceptive system could be brought under conscious control (De Alcantara, 1997: 41).

De Alcantara, 1997: 41:

Alexander’s genius consisted in (1) understanding that your conception of movement, of action, of yourself, of others – your conception of life – is entirely dependent on sensory perception; (2) highlighting the importance of proprioception in relation to the total use of the self; (3) realizing the pervasiveness of faulty sensory awareness; and (4) developing a method for bringing proprioception into the sphere of conscious, reliable guidance and control.

Sensory awareness becomes unreliable through the misuse of the self: “The freer a body part is, the better able it is to sense accurately what it is doing” (De Alcantara, 1997: 42). Tension in the body distorts the information that the brain receives about where the parts of the body are relative to each other. The many proprioceptors, or muscle spindles, in the neck are pulled and stretched by every movement in the body, stimulating stretch reflexes that help to maintain balance (Hogg, as cited in De Alcantara, 1997: 28). Any mal-distributed tension patterns in the body will inevitably cause the neck muscles to contract, thereby disturbing the many proprioceptors in the neck and distorting their feedback (De Alcantara, 1997: 42). “Misuse, in other words, always causes a distortion of sensory perception” (De Alcantara, 1997: 43). By the same token, sensory awareness can only be improved as the use of the whole self is improved, with a change in the relationship between the head, neck and back (De Alcantara, 1997: 165).

Alexander believed that the reason that re-education procedures usually failed, was because “they did not take into consideration the wrong mental attitudes that were inextricably bound up with the wrong physical conditions” (Jones, 1976: 20). While all stimuli to action are received through the sensory mechanisms (Alexander, 1932: 43), it is also sensory awareness that links conception to experience: sensory feedback (kinaesthetic, visual, aural etc) shapes our idea or interpretation of an experience (De Alcantara, 1997: 43). This idea, in turn, will determine how we respond to the next stimulus for that particular experience, creating a vicious circle in which experience creates conception, and conception determines experience (De Alcantara, 1997: 43).

Barlow (1973: 72) calls this our “body-construct”, shaped by the sum of all the “previous learned experience of the body”, through which we subsequently interpret everything we experience. “Such a ‘body construct’ produces (and is based on) our habitual USE of our bodies, and it forms the background to our perceptions” (Barlow, 1973: 211).

This circle is kept closed through faulty sensory awareness, as all instruction to better use will be interpreted according to one’s habitual, faulty sensory perception, leading to a misconception of what is required (De Alcantara, 1997: 43). When this misconception (of the instruction to better use) is executed with one’s customary misuse, and the results of the completed action evaluated through faulty sensory perception, one is led even further away from the desired end. This will be the outcome “*as long as faulty sensory awareness conditions both (one’s) conceptions and (one’s) experiences*” (De Alcantara, 1997: 43).

Through using his hands to give a pupil “a new experience, untainted by...preconceptions or by the memory of previous attempts” (De Alcantara, 1997: 44), Alexander succeeded in breaking the vicious circle caused by debauched kinaesthesia. The improved use that is brought about through the guidance of an Alexander teacher’s hands causes an automatic and indirect improvement in sensory awareness, “awakening the pupil’s capacity to compare and discern” (De Alcantara, 1997: 45), as the proprioceptors in the body, and especially in the neck, are no longer being disturbed by faulty tension patterns. The sensations generated by the guided movement become a background against which unsatisfactory and ineffective habitual behaviour can be recognized.

Jones, 1976: 51:

When the pupil perceives directly through the kinesthetic sense and can compare a habitual with a nonhabitual way of doing something, he doesn’t need words in order to grasp the significance of the experience.

Through the way in which touch is used in the Alexander Technique (and the improvement in the head-neck relationship that is brought about), an individual can be made more aware of sensory feedback in relation to the key relationships in the body



(Jones, 1976: 168), so that tensional patterns can be perceived that would otherwise not be noticed. Once one becomes aware of harmful behaviour on a sensory level, it becomes possible to inhibit<sup>1</sup> such behaviour, freeing the reflex systems of the body to work optimally, and bringing about improved use.

### **3.3.5 Guided movement**

One of Alexander's most important discoveries was that, by using his hands, he could communicate information directly through the kinaesthetic sense to his pupils (Jones, 1976: 155), thereby greatly accelerating the re-education process. While Alexander maintained that anyone could rediscover the same principles as he had, in practise it would take the same insight, patience, determination and genius he had demonstrated, in order to "succeed in breaking the vicious circle of faulty conception and faulty experience without the help of guiding hands" (De Alcantara, 1997: 84). It was through his own frustration in trying to convey his discoveries to his pupils that Alexander developed the hands-on approach to teaching, which is one of the defining characteristics of the Alexander Technique (De Alcantara, 1997: 84).

While words cannot convey sensory information adequately (Barlow, 1973: 190), and are easily misinterpreted due to debauched kinaesthesia, Alexander found that he could better guide a pupil into an improved use (that might feel unfamiliar and 'wrong') through touch or manipulation (De Alcantara, 1997: 44), thereby imparting a new sensory experience. It was through "applying the inhibitory control...to the use of his hands" that Alexander learnt to make changes in a pupil "that were different from ordinary manipulation or postural adjustment" (Jones, 1976: 31). Alexander teachers typically spend many hours refining the use of their hands during their training in order to learn to use their hands in this way (De Alcantara, 1997: 44).

Jones (1976: 81) believes one of the basic principles of the technique to be that the "amount of kinesthetic information conveyed is in indirect proportion to the force used in conveying it". By using less strength to convey more sensory information, an Alexander teacher's hands encourage a specific quality of muscle tone in a pupil,

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.7.



which, “together with words of instruction, helps to release inappropriate tension and allows the body to become better aligned and balanced” (STAT, 1993).

The teacher has “a very acute sense of what is happening in the student’s muscles from his hands”, which helps him or her to ensure that the primary control is working well during the activity (Stevens, 1996: 53), and encourages certain favourable reactions in the pupil. The various ways of using the hands overlap, as it is not possible to touch a pupil in order to monitor their feedback without automatically also causing a change in their awareness, and consequently their use (De Alcantara, 1997: 85). An Alexander teacher’s hands are used in a healing way to soothe, reassure and help release excessive tension, as well as to guide and support the pupil through the various required movements (De Alcantara, 1997: 85).

Alexander teachers use simple gestures from daily life (such as sitting and standing) to help create awareness of habitual reactions and to teach a pupil inhibition and direction, which can, in time, be applied to all activities (De Alcantara, 1997: 87). Through bringing inhibition to the fore by actively preventing the contraction of the head into the neck (De Alcantara, 1997: 32), an Alexander teacher ensures that “rather than *doing* the right thing, a pupil *stops doing* the wrong thing”, thereby avoiding end-gaining (De Alcantara, 1997: 44). Initially a pupil is asked not ‘to do’ the desired movement (which will bring the habitual response to the stimulus for that particular action into play), but to allow the teacher to initiate the movement while the pupil observes, paying attention to the sensory feedback (Jones, 1976: 156). As the underlying feeling tone of the movement is changed, bringing about a “kinesthetic effect of lightness that (is) pleasurable and rewarding” (Jones, 1976: 2), a pupil becomes aware of the difference between the guided and habitual movements.

Jones, 1976: 156:

Ultimately a pupil must be able to make reliable kinesthetic observations of himself in activity...The purpose of the lessons is to sharpen the kinesthetic sense and to increase self-knowledge and self-control.

As the guided movements begin to feel easier than the habitual, the pupil begins to learn the technique for him- or herself. “The teacher’s hands are like a catalytic agent

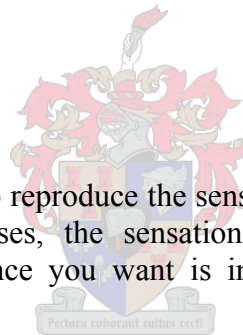
in a chemical experiment. They release a process that goes on without them” (Jones, 1976: 156). Because the pupil had an initial experience of the improved use, the subsequent learning process is made much easier (Jones, 1976: 2). Through the directions that have been learnt in conjunction with the experience of improved use, a pupil eventually becomes able to recreate the movement pattern independently of the teacher.

### 3.3.6 Direction

While the guided movement gives a pupil a new sensory experience of improved use, it is self-defeating to attempt to recapture the kinaesthetic effect of lightness in itself, as it is the “indirect effect of a psychophysical process” (Jones, 1976: 10). The effect of lightness and ease<sup>1</sup> serves primarily as evidence of improved use, and the main function of increased sensory awareness is “to provide a background of feeling tone against which maladaptive response patterns (can) be recognized for what they (are)” (Jones, 1976: 10).

De Alcantara, 1997: 192:

You should seek *never* to reproduce the sensations of a right action, but rather its co-ordinative processes, the sensations being but an effect of these processes. ‘The experience you want is in the process of getting it,’ said Alexander.



The “co-ordinative processes” are recreated by projecting to oneself a verbal pattern that has been linked to the new, improved use (Barlow, 1973: 132). Barlow (1973: 130) considers this directing to be the truly innovative aspect of Alexander’s approach. While the teacher uses his or her hands to guide the pupil into a more co-ordinated movement, he or she verbalises a sequence of directions that closely match the occurrences being induced in the pupil’s musculature (Barlow, 1973: 130). The pupil eventually learns to associate the experiences and sensations generated by the guided movement with their respective verbal commands (De Alcantara, 1997: 60). The directive words are not used to describe the unknown, but have become linked to the shared experience of the teacher and pupil. They assist in clarifying the pupil’s

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.8.

thinking, by formulating “an operational definition of something that is already known” (Jones, 1976: 167).

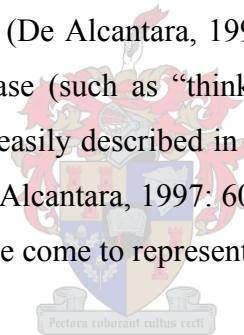
It is important to note that words are merely an aid to organizing the kinaesthetic experiences, and not the experiences themselves (De Alcantara, 1997: 62). Furthermore, Jones (1976: 157) cautions that words can take on a ritualistic quality and can “get in the way of observing and act as a substitute for thought”: a person might be too focused on the words as an end in themselves, instead of paying attention to sensory feedback. Another difficulty is that words often carry connotations from earlier experiences that may interfere with new sensory experiences, and should therefore be used with caution (Jones, 1976: 158). However, Jones (1976: 159) does concede that any teaching device is legitimate if it facilitates learning and does not become an end in itself. Heightening awareness, observing and perceiving – i.e. “knowing objects and events by the senses” (Jones, 1976: 158) - should remain the focus at all times.

Alexander required “a minutely sensitive attention” from his pupils in order to set up “a new *ordered structure*” in their bodies, in which the peripheral movements of the limbs are subordinated to the central co-ordination of the head, neck and back (Barlow, 1973: 131). This structure is ordered in the sense that it is consciously projected as a command, and also ordered in that sequential attention is given to the body “in a certain 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc., order” (Barlow, 1973: 131). In this way, a standard of use is presented against which feedback from the muscles can be matched, so that “‘mis-match’ signals (can be) eliminated and muscular matching obtained” (Barlow, 1973: 132). Eventually a pupil becomes able to evoke the desired state simply by projecting the orders, or directions, to him- or herself. Barlow (1973: 191) gives a very concise summary of this process:

A sequence of such verbal directions is taught whilst a better tensional balance is obtained all over the body; the sequence is designed to scan the body in serial order...The sequence of directions thus provides a model with both spatial and temporal co-ordinates. Such a sequence fulfils the function of checking the development of too much tension and of restoring a resting state when it has been disturbed. If kept in mind during performances, it will ensure that deviations from the resting state are not excessive. (Barlow 1973: 191.)

This sequence of orders is not concerned with maintaining a particular physical position as such, but with the spatial orientation that exists within each position. A position is right only in as much as the interplay of directions within the position is right, and wrong when it is not (De Alcantara, 1997: 66). “Position, muscular movement, and ‘direction’ are three different activities...(and) the third activity – ‘direction’ - should go on inside the other two activities” (Macdonald, as cited in De Alcantara, 1997: 66).

The directions are expressed in phrases such as “let the head go forward and up”, “allow the heels to go down”, and “shoulders sideways and apart” (De Alcantara, 1997: 60). These phrases illustrate clearly the “syntax” to directing (De Alcantara, 1997: 61), in which three distinct elements interact in a very precise way: the desired action, the particular body part, and the required orientation in space. As different parts of the body call for different actions and orientations in space, many different possible directions can be given (De Alcantara, 1997: 61). Eventually, the directions are reduced to a shortened phrase (such as “think up”), yet conveying a depth of experiential meaning that is not easily described in a few words. “The words become a mnemonic index of sorts” (De Alcantara, 1997: 60), and are used to recall or trigger the specific experiences they have come to represent.



Directions integrate thought with action (Jones, 1976: 157), and can be described as “messages from the brain to the muscles via the nerves” (De Alcantara, 1997: 62). To learn to direct, is to “establish, cultivate, and refine the connections between what you think and what you do” (De Alcantara, 1997: 56). As every thought manifests itself as a physical reality, and every physical act is the result of a command from the brain, no act can be said to be purely physical or mental: “brain and muscle” are always connected (De Alcantara, 1997: 55). Electrical activity has been recorded in the relevant muscles in response merely to thinking about an activity, showing the close connection between the body and mind (Barlow, 1973: 122). Thinking, or directing, can therefore be defined as the act of influencing the psychophysical system through clear thought (Dawley, 2001: 8). While some thoughts cause a downward pull, muscle tension and tight joints, other thoughts result in physical release and lightness (Dawley, 2001: 3). “Correct thinking always leads to correct acting, and correct acting always ensues from correct thinking” (De Alcantara, 1997: 13).

Directing differs from ordinary thinking in that it has a quality of “insistent, repeated thought” (De Alcantara, 1997: 59), which involves the linking together of “a mental command, a tangible physical reality and a sensorial feedback” (De Alcantara, 1997: 60). This “triple linkage” of a thought with its resulting action and associated feedback, is the defining feature of Alexandrian directing, as it is absent in ordinary thought, positive thinking and visualization (De Alcantara, 1997: 60).

De Alcantara (1997: 60) stresses that directing in the Alexander Technique is not the same as classical conditioning, as the words do not trigger a set reaction, but presents a choice: “the quickening of the conscious mind brought about by directing and required of it ensures that reactions remain choices rather than automatic reflexes”. Directions are firstly used to break down automatic reactions by increasing an awareness of them, so that those commands that are harmful and unnecessary can be inhibited, along with the superfluous actions they entail (De Alcantara, 1997: 58). Once the will has been set free “to intend, to choose, to decide” through eliminating habitual, automatic responses, directing becomes an act of imagination and creativity, combining “thought, sensation, movement, knowledge, perception, awareness” (De Alcantara, 1997: 64).

In learning the Alexander Technique, a pupil may initially lose a measure of his or her earlier efficiency and become overly conscious of every movement. Deliberate discipline is required in order to cultivate the “carefree ease of good use” (De Alcantara, 1997: 163). The Alexander procedures ideally should be applied reflexively, “without the apparent help of the conscious mind and without stopping the flow of movement to consider its mechanics” (De Alcantara, 1997: 164), but it initially requires that one has to learn to do individual movements well for their own sake. However, direction eventually does become automatic, and therefore more efficient (De Alcantara, 1997: 58). In this way, Alexandrian directing effectively solves the problem of increasing awareness while maintaining efficiency.

De Alcantara, 1997: 58:

The automation of Alexandrian commands is different in nature from that of commands learned haphazardly. A habit acquired with good direction remains accessible to the control of the will, so that it can always be re-examined, altered, or even discarded.

Directing cannot function without inhibition (Barlow, 1973: 191). A pupil first has to learn not to end-gain before it becomes possible to pay attention to the directions, which are the means necessary to achieve the end (De Alcantara, 1997: 56). The stimulus to activity generally elicits preparatory tension in order to “get set” for action, and “such an anticipatory pre-set usually triggers us off into far too much effort when we initiate a movement” (Barlow, 1973: 201). One should therefore not attempt to ‘do’ the new body-pattern, but simply project it to oneself, while inhibiting the instinctive reaction that will merely bring the old, habitual response pattern into play. Giving directions is a matter of thinking, not of actively attempting to ‘do’ the directions by means of a muscular effort or control (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 35; 59). By giving oneself enough time to respond to the directions without muscular effort, a constructive change is allowed to take place in the body.

Misuse and inefficient functioning are mostly caused by a lack of inhibitory directions. Directions are therefore often rather injunctions to stop doing a wrong thing, such as contracting the spine, than to *do* something actively: “orders not to do and to stop doing should normally take precedence over directions to do” (De Alcantara, 1997: 57). While commands to excite as well as to inhibit action are operative in everyone all the time, “learning to direct allows (one) to change this balance of inhibition and excitation at will”, leading to increased self-awareness and improved use (De Alcantara, 1997: 56).

### **3.3.7 Inhibition**

Jones, 1973: 149, 150:

Alexander’s major discovery was not the “primary control” but the significance of inhibition in the intact organism. Inhibition is a positive, not a negative force. Some degree of inhibition is essential not only for a good life but for any life at all. Inhibition maintains the integrity of the responding organism so that a particular response can be carried out economically without involving inappropriate activity in unrelated parts....Inhibition is a physiological process which does not need to be conscious in order to operate. Bringing it up to the conscious level not only establishes an indirect control over antigravity responses but facilitates the learning of new habits and the unlearning of those that are old and unwanted.

None of the mechanisms of the Alexander Technique can function without inhibition (Jones, 1973: 149). Alexander (1932: 45) emphasized that preventing “the

misdirection that leads to wrong use and functioning” is the most important factor in dealing with harmful habits. The basic means for change lies in knowing how to stop, i.e. refusing to give consent to habitual, subconscious reactions to the stimulus for action (Jones, 1976: 83).

The mental conception of an act is followed by a mental process to decide whether to give or withhold consent to act (cf Alexander, 1932: 43). As most people have no reasoned conception of the direction that is necessary for satisfactory performance, their directions are based on a habitual and instinctive use of themselves. This instinctive direction tends to become more and more misdirected with time due to faulty sensory awareness, exerting a harmful influence on one’s functioning (Alexander, 1932: 44). Change only becomes possible when the process of inhibiting and directing is brought onto a conscious level (Jones, 1973: 150).

Many reactions, including not responding at all, are possible when a stimulus is presented for the first time. When a particular response is chosen and learned, and the process “drops below the level of consciousness, a ‘set’ will be established linking the stimulus with the response, which will then occur automatically whether it is appropriate or not” (Jones, 1976: 150). It is only when this process remains conscious that the original freedom of choice is not lost. As the set becomes ingrained, there is less tonic activity in both the sensory and motor systems in response to the stimulus to action. The result is “a habit which operates unconsciously (like an innate reflex) and which is resistant to change” (Jones, 1976: 150). While the purpose of the set is to make the reaction to the stimulus faster and automatic, it does not necessarily improve the response, and it can become an interfering influence, especially in complex, sequential activities (Jones, 1976: 178). This is particularly true when “concepts have become linked to wrong, maladaptive experiences” (Jones, 1976: 102).

Dawley, 2001: 7:

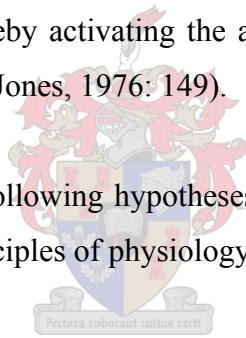
Just thinking about an activity engages the muscles in a habitual pattern of action. This anticipatory engagement interferes with activity. We have to intercept the link between concept and activity so that something different can happen.



Even though a set can be triggered very quickly after the stimulus to action is given, it is never immediate, and always “starts with a change of tonus or tensional balance in the neck and trunk and spreads from there to the limbs” (Jones, 1976: 178). By “stopping off”, or inhibiting the immediate reaction to the stimulus, it is possible to prevent the postural set from imposing itself (Barlow, 1973: 207). Through inhibition, the level of tonic activity in the nervous system is increased again, and as the operation of the habit is brought to a conscious level, freedom to choose a suitable response is restored (Jones, 1976: 150). “Inhibition, by eliminating the postural set, allows a non-habitual response to be made” (Jones, 1976: 150).

Coghill (as cited in Jones, 1976: 61) pointed out that the total behaviour pattern, involving the head, neck and back, included both “excitatory” and “inhibitory” components, and that the successful functioning of specific reflexes depended on the inhibitory factor. In response to a stimulus to move, inhibition allows the spine sufficient time to lengthen, thereby activating the antigravity reflexes and adding to the efficiency of the movement (Jones, 1976: 149).

Jones (1976: 151) submits the following hypotheses, based on his research, as being “consistent with established principles of physiology and psychology”:



1. The reflex response of the organism to gravity is a fundamental feedback mechanism which integrates other reflex systems.
2. Under civilized conditions this mechanism is commonly interfered with by habitual, learned responses which disturb the tonic relation between head, neck, and trunk.
3. When this interference is perceived kinesthetically, it can be inhibited. By this means the antigravity response is facilitated and its integrative effect on the organism is restored. (Jones, 1976: 151.)

All partial patterns, such as the use of the arms or hands, are regulated by the total pattern, or antigravity reflexes (De Alcantara, 1997: 46). “To eliminate a faulty partial pattern it is necessary to co-ordinate the total pattern that activates and regulates the partial one” (De Alcantara, 1997: 46). This has the effect of integrating all the reflex systems and making the body more efficient (Jones, 1976: 151). Inhibition means not to consent to a habitual reaction that causes a total or partial misuse of the self by

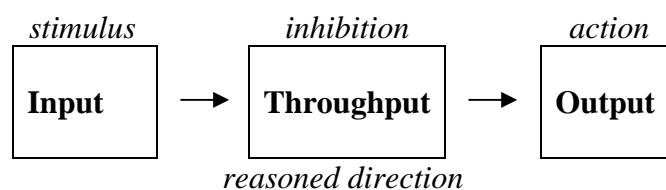


interfering with the reflex systems in the body, and it is the central point of the Alexander Technique (De Alcantara, 1997: 47).

The key to the process of change is not to attempt to inhibit misuse directly, but to inhibit end-gaining, the motivation that triggers misuse (De Alcantara, 1997: 49). In response to the teacher's instruction, a pupil needs to inhibit both his or her own understanding of the action, and the eagerness to be right (De Alcantara, 1997: 49). By paying attention to the teacher's verbal and hands-on guidance, the pupil is enabled to move in a more co-ordinated and balanced way. Through inhibiting end-gaining, the pupil thus gains a new experience, in which the movement often "seems to be *doing itself*" (De Alcantara, 1997: 49)<sup>1</sup>. This experience is reinforced through repetition, variations in the verbal and manipulative instructions and, eventually, by teacher and pupil taking turns to initiate the movement (De Alcantara, 1997: 48).

Barlow (1973: 193) describes end-gaining as "a reflex action which (tends) to bypass the reasoning brain". In end-gaining, a person reacts automatically on an input-output basis, "so that activity is directed towards satisfying the input as soon as possible, whether or not the habitual way of doing this is appropriate" (Barlow, 1973: 193). The following diagram is based on a similar figure devised by Barlow (1973: 193) to illustrate Alexander's understanding of the stimulus/response psychology involved in inhibiting end-gaining behaviour:

**Diagram 1:**



On receiving a stimulus (the input), the immediate muscular response must be inhibited, so that there can be adequate mental preparation (throughput) for the succeeding activity (output) (Barlow, 1973: 198). Through projecting the reasoned directions while inhibiting activity, it becomes possible to detect where unnecessary tension is created in the body in anticipation of the movement. Inhibition therefore does not imply passivity or unresponsiveness, but is seen merely as "a stage of

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.8.

preparatory choice in which the eventual muscular USE can be decided on” (Barlow, 1973: 194).

De Alcantara (1997: 50) reiterates that inhibition should always precede action, in order to empty the pathways between mind and muscle of “the unchecked, automatic flow of habitual messages”. When this is the case, “activity becomes free from excessive tension, thereby appearing effortless to the doer and to the observer” (De Alcantara, 1997: 51)<sup>1</sup>. When initially learning to inhibit, it takes more time to stop and wait while projecting the mental directions, but with experience it becomes possible to inhibit “in motion”, without unnecessary hesitation (De Alcantara, 1997: 54). Inhibition is a process that not only precedes an act, but also continues during activity, in order stop any tendency to faulty use that may manifest itself while the action is carried out (De Alcantara, 1997: 53). Eventually, “coordinative, integrative thought” will set in motion “co-ordinated, integrated activity” (De Alcantara, 1997: 54).

Inhibition is not only useful for changing habitual physical behaviour, but also for mental and emotional states that invariably register kinaesthetically “as a change in the level of muscle tone before a reaction in the autonomic system has begun” (Jones, 1973: 13). By inhibiting any further increase of tension, and allowing the muscles in his neck and back to lengthen, Jones (1973: 14) found that he was able to stop the autonomic manifestation of an emotion from building into an explosive force, so that it “remained a potential for action but did not interfere with rational decision”. He concludes that the “intimate connection between Alexandrian inhibition and postural tonus” makes the Alexander Technique applicable to any learned response (Jones, 1976: 150).

While inhibition can bring about far-reaching and immensely rewarding change, it is also difficult to learn, as to inhibit means to delay the instant gratification of a desire (De Alcantara, 1997: 54). It requires self-denial to go against one’s instinctive desire to react in a habitual way. “Alexandrian non-doing goes right against our long-established wish to get results by doing something, and by being seen to do something” (De Alcantara, 1997: 54).

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.8.

### 3.3.8 The kinaesthetic effect

Jones, 1976: 161:

In the Alexander Technique when a student is inhibiting his habitual response and allowing his spine to lengthen and his head to move in the direction of greater freedom, any movement that he makes will register kinaesthetically as pleasanter, more efficient, and more desirable than his habitual movement. In other words, he is immediately rewarded.

This kinaesthetic effect of lightness and ease is the hallmark of the Alexander Technique (Jones, 1976: 5), and is reported by the great majority of people who have had experience of the Technique (Jones, 1976: 127). Through guided movement, the underlying feeling tone of a movement is changed (Jones, 1976: 2), resulting in a kinaesthetic effect of lightness that “can be demonstrated for almost any activity performed within the gravitational field” (Jones, 1976: 6). This sensory effect usually lasts for hours or even days after a lesson, affecting all subsequent movement patterns (Jones, 1976: 7). In contrast with the new experiences, reverting to habitual movements will feel uncomfortable, further reinforcing the new use that is being learned (Jones, 1976: 162).

However, the kinaesthetic effect of lightness does fade eventually, and a pupil will fall back into his or her old habits if it is not renewed on a regular basis: “The significance of the experience can be grasped only if it is followed up and used as a device for self-examination and for initiating a programme of change” (Jones, 1976: 7). The kinaesthetic experience of good use that one initially obtains during the lesson, becomes an aid to learning the Technique subsequently, and makes the process much easier (Jones, 1976: 2).

As the neck is allowed to lengthen, the Alexander teacher establishes “a new dynamic balance between the weight of head and the tonus of the muscles”, so that “the head behaves like inertial system which can move or be moved freely in any direction without a feeling of weight” (Jones, 1976: 5). For most people, the subsequent movements register kinaesthetically as being easier, smoother and lighter, as well as more pleasurable and effective (Jones, 1976: 5). When interference with the natural workings of the primary control is prevented (De Alcantara, 1997: 34), movements become more natural, and are not forced or artificially controlled. As it is free from

the excessive tension that may be present in habitual movement, this kind of “non-doing” feels easy, unencumbered and effortless, as though the movement were “doing itself” (De Alcantara, 1997: 51).

The purpose of Jones’s research was to identify the mechanism responsible for the kinaesthetic effect of lightness. By using quantitative measures and control groups, he was able “to construct an operational definition of the technique and suggest a mechanism to account for the changes” (Jones, 1976: 4). He proved that this subjective phenomenon (described in remarkably similar terms by impartial and unrelated observers), could be recreated under controlled conditions (Jones, 1976: 136), and through a series of experiments involving multiple image photography, he succeeded in identifying the objective physical conditions “that correspond to the kinesthetic experiences of lightness, smoothness, and ease reported during the guided movements” (Jones, 1976: 6).

In his experiments, the movement pattern always changed as soon as the head-neck relationship was improved, decreasing the feeling of weight (Jones, 1976: 145). He describes the structures involved in the efficiency of the head-neck mechanism in great detail (cf Jones, 1976: 145+), including reference to stretch reflexes, and the righting reflexes that “control the position of the head in space and in relation to rest of body” (Jones, 1976: 144). While the stretch reflexes give the body its tendency to lengthen from within, thereby adding strength and buoyancy to movement (Jones, 1976: 142), they “have no purpose or meaning in themselves, but are organized into an integrated whole” by the righting reflexes (Jones, 1976: 144). When the righting reflexes are functioning as they should, interference with the other reflex systems in the body is prevented (Jones, 1976: 185).

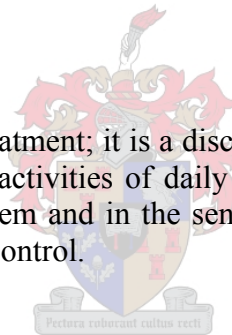
Jones concludes that the sensory experience of “moving lightly and easily against gravity” can be explained only in reference to the righting reflexes, which act as a central mechanism to integrate the antigravity responses (Jones, 1976: 144). Although the righting reflexes usually operate automatically and without conscious awareness, the Technique enables one to gain “conscious control of the proprioceptive component of the reflex mechanism” (Coghill, as cited in Jones, 1976: 62). As “a

better integration of reflex and voluntary elements in a response pattern” (Jones, 1976: 2) is obtained, movement becomes efficient, easy and light.

While the physical effects of the Alexander Technique are easier to describe and measure, Jones (1976: 12) believes that the psychological effects, including more mental and emotional control, are of greater importance. An increase in confidence and competence, as well the pleasure that comes from using oneself optimally, may be the greatest reward of the Technique. As a person’s sensory standard is restored, psychophysical growth and improvement become possible (Jones, 1976: 42). This allows for an increase in happiness, which Alexander (as cited in Jones, 1976: 42) defined as “doing well something that interests you”. As success is an essential prerequisite to happiness (Jones, 1976: 42), being able to do something that one had struggled with before, in a more coordinated and easy way, can only increase happiness and provide the self-motivation needed to change one’s use.

Jones, 1976: 163:

The technique is not a treatment; it is a discipline that, in order to be effective, has to be applied in the activities of daily life. The reward is an increase in competence and self-esteem and in the sensory satisfaction that accompanies self-knowledge and self-control.



### **3.3.9 Postural balance**

A common misconception is that the Alexander technique is primarily concerned with improving posture, but both Jones (1976) and De Alcantara (1997) are of the opinion that the significant aspect of the Technique is not posture, but the movement pattern itself. Jones (1976: 190) suggests that the Alexander Technique “is not concerned with three dimensional but with four dimensional posture, in other words with movement”. De Alcantara (1997: 13) refers to “postural behaviour”, an idea that includes posture but goes beyond it to incorporate attitude and movement as well.

People often move and react in unbalanced ways that they are unable to recognize, and as a result, become unable to achieve a balanced state of rest (Barlow, 1973: 66). Faulty muscular tension patterns, which lead to an unbalanced resting-state, are particularly obvious in the postures that are adopted when a person is not moving (Barlow, 1973: 68). These distorted postures sometimes become a person’s norm, and

“feel so right that a properly balanced use of the body may feel unnatural” (Barlow, 1973: 67). However, making someone self-aware about postural faults is not a solution, as it can lead to anxiety and an attempt to adopt a particular position. By facilitating an easier, non-habitual movement pattern through using the Alexander principle, posture itself inevitably improves (Jones, 1976: 191), as postural homeostasis, i.e. “the steady state in which the body keeps itself balanced” (Barlow, 1973: 70), is restored.

Barlow, 1973: 70:

Postural homeostasis involves a most intricate and delicate interplay of muscular co-ordinations throughout the body, to bring the body close to a balanced state. The balance which results from this interplay is what the physicists call ‘a steady resting state’, and in a healthy person these muscular adjustments will mesh together to give a balanced whole... Work is being done to maintain balance around a central point of stillness. The central point is not fixed. Oscillation takes place around it, with smaller, or bigger swings. Balance can be achieved in all manner of ways – many of them markedly inefficient, with too big an oscillation away from the central resting point. Such oscillation is characteristic of all our muscular activities.

While posture is often mistakenly understood to be a static bodily position that is held for some length of time, in reality there is no such thing as a right or fixed position - the best position is the one that can be altered quickly and with ease in order to respond to the continually changing demands of life (De Alcantara, 1997: 14). A proper stance is therefore not a “mechanical achievement of stability”, (Scott, as cited in De Alcantara, 1997: 110), but a dynamic balance from which it is possible to adapt to changing circumstances without interfering with the integrity of the primary control. Such a balanced stance is known in the Alexander Technique as a “position of mechanical advantage” (Barlow, 1973: 202).

Stein (1999) describes good posture as “an upward flow and a downward flow”: the torso flows up from the hip joints, while the legs flow downward. As the head leads the spine into lengthening, the arms release out of the back, and the knees lead the legs out of the hip joints, creating an expansive flow in the body. When the legs are allowed to release away from the hips, the thighs and the lower back are freed, and the feet become grounded in fully supported contact with the floor. “This sense of grounding flows up the torso into the arms, neck, and shoulders and gives a greater

sense of freedom to the upper body” (Stein, 1999). Support for the upper body in activity therefore does not come from a static, fixed position, but “from a balanced skeleton that is constantly rebalanced by muscles in flow” (Stein, 1999).

It is important to note that the “appropriate muscle activity for postural support is not something we can do by simply trying harder”, as it involves reflex responses that maintain good posture almost effortlessly when they are working optimally (STAT, 1993). The supporting reflexes are stimulated by the gravitational force of the body through the feet to the ground, to which the body responds by lengthening up, provided that there is no interference (Dawley, 2001: 9). Postural reflexes are triggered more effectively when the tendency to hold tension in the feet is inhibited, and the feet allowed to rest more easily on the floor (Stevens, 1996: 101). “The effects of the supporting reactions in the legs...continue through the deep muscles of the hips, shoulders, trunk and neck”, and these deep muscles have special fibres that do not tire easily, unlike the outer layer of movement muscles (Stevens, 1996: 102). Consequently, when the supporting reflexes function optimally, there is less activity in the surface muscles and “less of a sense of effort or heaviness in the body” (Stevens, 1996: 102).

The reflex support system functions largely automatically, and although it cannot be sensed directly, it is the reflex that can most easily be interfered with (Stevens, 1996: 104). In order to compensate for the lack of balance in the body, the movement muscles (especially the larger and longer muscles of the back) will contract, and interference will consequently register as physical tension (Stevens, 1996: 103). The balance of the head and the upward-lengthening spine are especially important to ensure less interference with and optimal functioning of the supporting reflexes (Stevens, 1996: 106).

Carrington, as cited in Stevens, 1996: 17:

Our human upright posture is a unique accomplishment...a most delicate balance, an equation of forces brought about by an interplay of the sensory and motor mechanisms, by which all muscular effort is practically eliminated. The unique quality of the whole performance lies in this reduction of effort.



### 3.3.10 Attention and awareness

Although the benefits of the Alexander Technique are quite clear, what is not guaranteed is “the extent of the trainability of any given person, and their willingness to use what we can teach them” (Barlow, 1973: 217). In order to learn the Technique, one has to be able to sustain attention for at least a certain amount of time (Jones, 1976: 162). Changing habitual behaviour requires commitment and a very detailed attention to one’s use (Barlow, 1973: 203).

Barlow, 1973: 229:

It can never be a question of detecting faulty tension patterns once and for all, de-conditioning them by hypnosis and relaxation, and seeing them disappear. It is rather a matter of continually having to notice the tensions, in countless different situations, and gradually finding out the compensatory tensions, which, like layers of an onion, manifest themselves when succeeding layers have been stripped off.

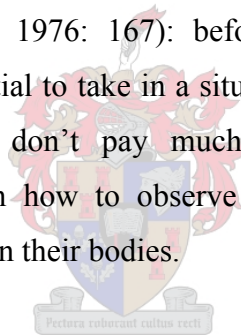
Tension habits can only be unlearned as they are noticed and dealt with at “each actual moment of behavioural reaction” (Barlow, 1973: 130), and this implies a certain amount of awareness and attention. Through increasing sensory awareness and learning to inhibit and direct, a consciously structured pattern of use is created that can eventually be applied to all activities. Awareness implies a unity of body and mind, a sense of being in touch with oneself (Barlow, 1973: 208), which is indispensable for learning to inhibit and direct one’s use. One becomes increasingly aware of shifts of muscle tension that are “as delicate as the finest touch of the violinist”, but as such directed thinking is initially fairly tenuous, “any fatigue or lessening of attention can put an end to it” (Barlow, 1973: 225). This process of critically sifting sensory feedback is an intrinsic part of all normal perception, to a greater or lesser degree (Barlow, 1973: 225), but one’s ability to be attentive is actively cultivated and increased through the Alexander Technique.

Barlow, 1973: 225:

We have usually taken it for granted that we can only use our minds in two deliberate ways – content thinking...and behaviour-control. But between content-thinking and overt behaviour there is another sphere of personal life, a vast world of existence to be managed by awareness and attention (although ‘managed’ is too forceful a term for the attentive living which is implied).

An extended field of concentration arises from the relationship between awareness and attention (Jones, 1976: 176). While awareness can be described as a “generalized alertness to present events” (Jones, 1976: 174), attention means to be concentrated on a particular aspect of this field (Jones, 1976: 176). The danger of concentration, as it is commonly understood, is that it narrows the field of attention so that everything other than the object of focus is excluded. De Alcantara (1997: 70) agrees that a mind that is concentrated in this limited sense is not truly an attentive mind. By expanding attention rather than narrowing it, one’s awareness becomes more widely inclusive, so that it is possible to take in the key relationships in the body, the activity on which attention is focused, and the surrounding environment (Jones, 1976: 176). Jones (1976: 156) asserts that movement within this “expanded field of attention” is the means whereby change is brought about in the Alexander Technique.

Awareness is vitally important in seeking to change behaviour and gain conscious control over one’s use (Jones, 1976: 167): before one can make an informed, constructive change, it is “essential to take in a situation as fully as possible” (Jones, 1976: 168). As most people don’t pay much attention to their kinaesthetic impressions, they need to learn how to observe themselves in order to gain an awareness of what is happening in their bodies.



Jones, 1976: 138:

The technique...extends the scope of self-observation a long way beyond the visual by organizing the kinesthetic sense on a conscious level. Once you can observe changing relationships between parts of the body and between the body and the environment in terms of levels of tension and relaxation, of lightness and heaviness, as well as of position and movement, you have opened new areas of the self to scientific exploration.

While one’s attention is usually either directed inward to oneself, or outward to the environment, feedback from both the environment and the self is “being recorded in the brain at one and the same time” (Jones, 1976: 177). Through expanding one’s attention, it is possible to amalgamate the two fields, by integrating sensory impressions from both the body and the environment around the head-neck-back relationship as the centre of the field (Jones, 1976: 170). The attention is “focused in such a way that when something in the environment is central, consciousness of the

organism is not lost; and when the center is within the organism, consciousness of the environment remains” (Jones, 1976: 171), so that “the interaction of the self and the environment is perceived as an ongoing process” (Jones, 1976: 159).

Jones, 1976: 177:

When the two fields are integrated in this way, the stimulus pattern and the response pattern can be recorded within the same spotlight of attention so that cause-and-effect relations between them can be perceived.

Hence it becomes possible to examine subtle tensional changes that occur within oneself as one interacts with the environment, for instance in reaching for a pencil, or in using a walking stick or a bow as an extension of one’s arm. The “sensations of muscular tension, heaviness, stiffness and their opposites” that are generated in response to the environment are not chaotic or meaningless (Jones, 1976: 177), and becoming aware of the central pattern of stimulus and response within them provides a key for change.

The expanded field of awareness also provides a solution for co-ordinating complex activity. As the “true meaning of co-ordination lies in harmoniously integrating however many factors any situation may require”, eliminating or separating certain factors within the activity does not solve the problem (De Alcantara, 1997: 69). Co-ordination in complex activity can only be achieved through expanding one’s attention to take in all possible aspects of such activity.

### **3.3.11 Control and freedom**

“Constructive conscious control” (Alexander, 1923) does not imply a mechanistic, manipulative control of oneself. Movements are not improved through controlling them directly, as this results in an unnatural, contrived quality, which is the exact opposite of that which the Alexander Technique aims for (De Alcantara, 1997: 35). “For your movements to become truly natural, you must give up whatever control you have of them. The very idea of controlling is a hindrance to changing your use” (De Alcantara, 1997: 35). Control is not a plane to be reached through increased effort, but is obtained as a result of eliminating specific faults and interferences (De Alcantara, 1997: 35).

De Alcantara, 1997: 73:

People often feel that failure comes from not trying hard enough, and follow failure with a greater determination to succeed and a corresponding increase in their misuse... 'Try again, this time with less tension' is a directive we all hear and give freely. If the intention and the desire behind an unsuccessful gesture remains the same, the gesture itself will remain unsuccessful, regardless of the amount of tension involved. A better directive, then, is 'don't try again; do something else altogether'.

De Alcantara (1997: 72) gives four separate but interrelated factors that are required in order to achieve truly free actions: "giving up trying, giving up judging, ridding yourself of hesitation and eagerness, and timing your actions precisely." The tendencies of *trying to be right* and judging one's efforts, reinforce end-gaining behaviour and lead to either eagerness or hesitation, which is a characteristic of inefficient behaviour (De Alcantara, 1997: 75). In order to eliminate hesitation and over-eagerness, the onset of one's actions has to be timed very accurately, their outcome not anticipated, and judgements of right and wrong suspended in order to gain true objectivity (De Alcantara, 1997: 77).

Inhibition should not be confused with hesitation: while the main purpose of inhibition is to give one an opportunity to make a choice as to how to act, once the decision to act has been taken, one should act immediately without regard to the end-result (De Alcantara, 1997: 77). This encourages involuntary reactions to take place, bypassing habitual patterns of behaviour and allowing the reflex systems of the body to operate without interference.

De Alcantara, 1996: 77:

'Conscious guidance and control', in Alexander's expression, does not entail your wilfully controlling every aspect of your every action. Good use and self-awareness are not the result of all that you do, but rather of all that you *stop doing*. Rather than controlling action, think of allowing it to happen. Undo the misuses of your head, neck, and back, and much that is right, easy, and thoroughly enjoyable will follow of its own accord.

### 3.4 Other considerations

The following section considers aspects of the Technique that were not covered specifically in the foregoing account of the main principles of the Alexander Technique, but that are relevant to the objectives of the research.

#### 3.4.1 Teaching

Alexander would not allow the students on his teacher-training course to graduate and teach the Technique to others until their own use had reached a satisfactory standard (Jones, 1976: 50), which they would be able to maintain under the demands of teaching. Teachers can only impart sensory information regarding good use to the same degree that they themselves possess, and “have to obey their own educational demands if they are to influence their pupils” (Barlow, 1973: 203) in any constructive way. By reliably applying the principles of the Technique to themselves, Alexander teachers “have a quality of muscle tone in their body that allows them to transmit the same possibilities to the muscles of the student” (Stevens, 1996: 52).

Jones, 1976: 153:

You can't teach someone else an improved use of himself until your own manner of use has improved. The technique deals with change and development. Before he can impart what he knows to others, a teacher must have experienced in himself enough change to understand the process operationally.

An Alexander Technique lesson is an individual, one-to-one interaction (Barlow, 1973: 189), requiring detailed attention and awareness from both the teacher and the pupil. “A detached form of teaching which relies on a pedagogic, professorial, didactic attitude, is simply not possible” (Barlow, 1973: 203). The teacher forms a partnership with the pupil, with the aim of guiding the pupil to self-discovery (Jones, 1976: 153). An authoritarian approach, in which a teacher attempts to use his or her knowledge to obtain power over a pupil, would undermine the pupil's capacity to observe and trust his or her own perceptions, thereby negating the purpose of the lesson, which is to increase sensory awareness.

Stevens, 1996: 53:

This is a gentle, delicate process involving non-judgemental awareness on the part of both teacher and student, combined with great attention being paid to what is actually happening. This very accurate observation and clear diagnosis, together with positive and practical help in the solution of difficulties, is the hallmark of good teaching.

A teacher's aim should never be to make a pupil dependent, but rather to enable the pupil to become "his own expert in the use of himself", through learning to translate observations into kinaesthetic terms and applying this new knowledge to solve particular problems (Jones, 1976: 153). "The principle of inhibition and primary control existed before Alexander discovered it", and unless a pupil rediscovers it again for him- or herself, lessons ultimately are wasted (Jones, 1976: 154). The process is greatly facilitated by the teacher's guidance, however, as misconceptions that can slow down progress can be avoided through the teacher's insight and knowledge, born of his or her own experience of learning the Technique (Jones, 1976: 153).

Procedures that lead to self-consciousness and anxiety in a pupil are counterproductive, slowing down the learning process by interfering with the pupil's awareness and attention. Making a pupil aware of specific faults is not useful, as the information will not mean anything to him if the specific faults are not perceived kinaesthetically (Jones, 1976: 154). Apart from feeling self-conscious and possibly anxious, a pupil can be tempted to try to correct the fault instead of remaining attentive, thereby reinforcing end-gaining behaviour. Likewise, tests "set the wrong tone by stressing specific ends rather than means" (Jones, 1976: 154).

Alexander (as cited in Jones, 1976: 41) decries end-gaining systems of education, in which failure elicits strong emotional reactions and anxiety: every time a pupil tries unsuccessfully to do something, not only are the old, wrong psychophysical habits (that are associated with his or her misconception of the act) reinforced, but "new emotional experiences of discouragement, worry, fear, and anxiety" are also added.

Alexander, as cited in Jones, 1976: 41:

Learning to these students means doing ‘correctly’ whatever the teacher insists on having done. The imperfectly coordinated student, however, cannot do anything ‘correctly’ at the start; he is bound to have failures no matter how hard he tries...If a means-whereby principle were used in teaching...the pupil would not be asked to perform an act until he was in such a state of coordination that he could perform it easily. An occasional failure would not then be charged with any emotion but would merely add to the pupil’s knowledge of his own responses.

Jones (1976: 162) believes that even praise from a teacher can interfere with learning, as the pupil “is apt to attribute praise to something he did rather than what he did not do, so that the wrong aspect of the response is being reinforced”. In the Alexander Technique, the reward is built into the experience itself, as one learns to respond in a new way to stimuli. The Technique is strongly reinforcing and intrinsically rewarding, and promotes self-motivation to change habitual behaviour (Jones, 1976: 162).

### 3.4.2 Words

Information regarding a pupil’s co-ordination is communicated both verbally and non-verbally, through the use of touch and guided movement (Madden, 2002). Jones (1976: 167) considers the non-verbal instruction in guided movement to be the more important aspect of the Technique, as “any form of strictly verbal communication is imperfect at best”. Words cannot convey sensory information adequately, whereas the redistribution of tension following a guided movement “can frequently be grasped without explanation, as a fact of experience” (Jones, 1976: 167). However, once words have become linked to the pupil’s and teacher’s shared experience, they can be used effectively as a “carefully worked out set of verbal directions” (Jones, 1976: 167) for the pupil to follow, in order to inhibit habitual reactions and obtain improved use.

Students are taught to use their thinking in order to improve their use in everyday- and skilled activity. The thought- and movement patterns inherent in the habitual behaviour, as well as that which is required for improved use, are analysed in order to work out a practical plan to “maximize (the) overall coordination for the chosen activity” (Madden, 2002). The plan is then carried out through a “subtle but powerful coordination of thinking and moving” (Madden, 2002). The choice of words that are



used in this process is of the utmost importance, and has a profound effect on co-ordination. Language reveals thinking, as “what we think expresses itself physically in exactly the way we are thinking it” (Madden, 2002).

Words are inevitably interpreted according to each person’s individual perception and experience, and are distorted due to faulty sensory awareness (De Alcantara, 1997: 44). They also have connotations from earlier experiences that may result in a misconception of the required direction (Jones, 1976: 158). As different people interpret language and images differently, it is essential “to continue observing the effects of language and to tailor the language individually when necessary” (Madden, 2002). One’s response to words includes a kinaesthetic component that is observable to someone who has been trained to pay attention to these slight muscle-shifts of tension in the body. Jones (1976: 172) suggests that these stimulus-words can be identified by the disruptive effect they have on the reflex pattern, and even classified according to the amount of reflex disturbance that they create within the body. It is clear that words and language-use can have a profound effect on the optimal functioning of the body, and should be used judiciously.

For instance, the phrase “working hard” is often interpreted literally, especially by young children, resulting in a tightening of the muscles in order to create work. Although they might look as though they are working hard, in reality they aren’t working well: “they tighten unnecessarily, losing both physical balance and clarity of thought” (Madden, 2002). Madden (2002) suggests that the phrase “working appropriately” would be more desirable. Muscular interpretations of requests that are not muscular in nature also lead to misuse, such as when a need for concentration results in the tightening of the eyes and face (Madden, 2002).

Imitating poor models often causes faulty images of anatomy, but inadequate terminology can also create misconceptions as to how muscles and limbs work. In order to obtain better use, it is essential to find terminology that is anatomically more correct, as “anatomical mis-mapping creates interference in the human systems”, leading to excessive work (Madden, 2002). While no one can control how a student might interpret what is said, describing a movement as accurately as possible can minimize misunderstanding (Madden, 2002).

Madden, 2002:

If we wish to communicate most clearly in the teaching of coordination, it is worth the effort to be anatomically accurate in our choices of language. If metaphors are used or thought processes asked for, they must be understood as metaphor and thought by the students. Our students work diligently to carry out what we ask them to do; we serve them best by making our requests as accurate as we can.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The Alexander Technique “reconditions and re-educates the reflex mechanisms and brings their habits into normal relation with the functioning of the organism as a whole” (Coghill, as cited in Stevens, 1976: 16). Motor function is improved through the integration of the voluntary and reflex components of a movement, “in such a way that the voluntary does not interfere with the reflex and the reflex facilitates the voluntary” (Jones, as cited in Thompson, 1988: 41). As one is enabled to move in a non-habitual and easier way, posture inevitably changes, thereby reducing specific faults and registering kinaesthetically as more efficient, pleasant and desirable (Jones, 1976: 191).

All activities are potentially more effective when the relationship between the head and the body is optimal, as motor performance is made more difficult once the head and neck are tightened. Eliminating the interferences in co-ordination that cause unnecessary tightening enables one to improve one’s use, in a “subtle but powerful co-ordination of thinking and moving” (Madden, 2002).

Madden, 2002:

The Alexander Technique is an ideal tool for investigating how to accomplish any activity with efficiency. It assumes that human beings are well made and that interference in our coordination, such as excessive work, causes us to function at less than our optimal ability.

While the Alexander Technique deals with a general and basic use of the body, it has many specific applications, as the procedure of dealing with everyday movements can also be applied to skilled performance (Jones, 1976: 135). Proponents of the Technique are found in a very diverse field of disciplines, ranging from equestrian- and other sport, to dance and drama. According to Jones (1976: 185), musicians have

been “unusually quick” to respond to and apply the method, possibly because “musicians as a class are keenly aware of the kinaesthetic side of experience”. In all skilled activity, the self is the instrument through which the performer expresses him- or herself; therefore, “a knowledge of how to direct consciously the use of the psycho-physical mechanisms of the self” (Alexander, 1932: iv) can be very valuable for improving performance in various disciplines.

### 3.5.1 Framework of key concepts

With the preceding literature study of the Alexander Technique providing a more comprehensive background, the fundamental concepts of the Technique can be summarized in a framework, which will be used as a measuring tool in the following chapters, in order to identify possible parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique. It is important to note that this framework is meaningless outside of the context of the literature study: although it is not possible to convey the full meaning of the Technique through words, the rich descriptions in the literature study seek to provide a context within which each concept can be delineated, in order to make such terminology useful for comparison.

The main concepts of the Technique can be summarized as follows:

1. The background
  - a. Use affects functioning
  - b. Primary control
  - c. Sensory awareness
2. The intervention
  - a. Guided movement
  - b. Inhibition
  - c. Directions
3. Improved use
  - a. The kinaesthetic effect
  - b. Postural balance
  - c. Control and freedom
  - d. The expanded field of attention

The framework of key concepts is presented schematically in **diagram 2**. Such a diagrammatic representation of the Technique is possibly even more limited than verbal description. In reality, all the concepts are interrelated and mutually influential, and any attempt to separate them is artificial at best. The diagram is useful, however, to give an overview of the basic flow of events and concepts that characterise the Alexander Technique.

The Alexander Principle that *use affects functioning* forms the foundation of the Technique. Within the **background** of one's use, primary control and sensory awareness, which is continually operative in everyone at all times, the Alexander Technique provides an **intervention** through guided movement, and learning to inhibit and direct, with the aim of influencing such background. The **improved use** that is brought about is characterised by the kinaesthetic effect of lightness and ease, increased postural balance, an extended field of attention, and the experience of control and freedom.

The primary control and sensory awareness are indivisible: any change in the primary control will influence the level and quality of one's sensory awareness. By the same token, it is essential that sensory awareness be increased and rehabilitated, if a better use of the primary control is to be learned. Both the head-neck relationship and the degree of sensory awareness are irretrievably linked to one's general use, which determines the quality of one's functioning.

The intervention through guided movement influences both the primary control and sensory awareness, and one's consequent use. Inhibition is essential in order to allow the guided movement to take place, as well as to stop harmful behaviour. Directions cannot function without inhibition, while many directions are inhibitory in nature.

The interrelatedness of the concepts addressed in the Alexander Technique, extends to the results brought about by the intervention: as postural balance is restored, movement will be more controlled and free, but only for as long as such movement remains rooted in balance. The quality of this experience is characterised by a kinaesthetic effect of lightness. The Technique brings about an extended field of attention within which the balanced, free and light movements take place. At the same

time, the extended field of attention ensures that the intervention continues throughout the activity, so that inhibition and direction continually improve use and thereby functioning, while simultaneously increasing sensory awareness.

### **3.5.2 Individual frames**

All the concepts included in the Framework are individually outlined in the frames that conclude this chapter on the Alexander Technique (**tables 3.1 - 3.12**). The main points that were discussed in the preceding chapter (under related headings) are summarised, in order to delineate the inherent meaning of each concept. While these statements are by no means exhaustive, they do provide indicators that make the terminology useful in the subsequent comparison of methods. Each concept is provided with a code that will be used to identify ideas with conceptual resonance in the New Approach. These codes are included in the charts directly underneath or next to the concept that it refers to. A full list of codes as used in this study is provided in **appendix B**.

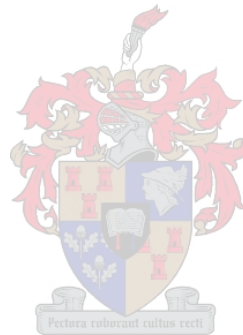
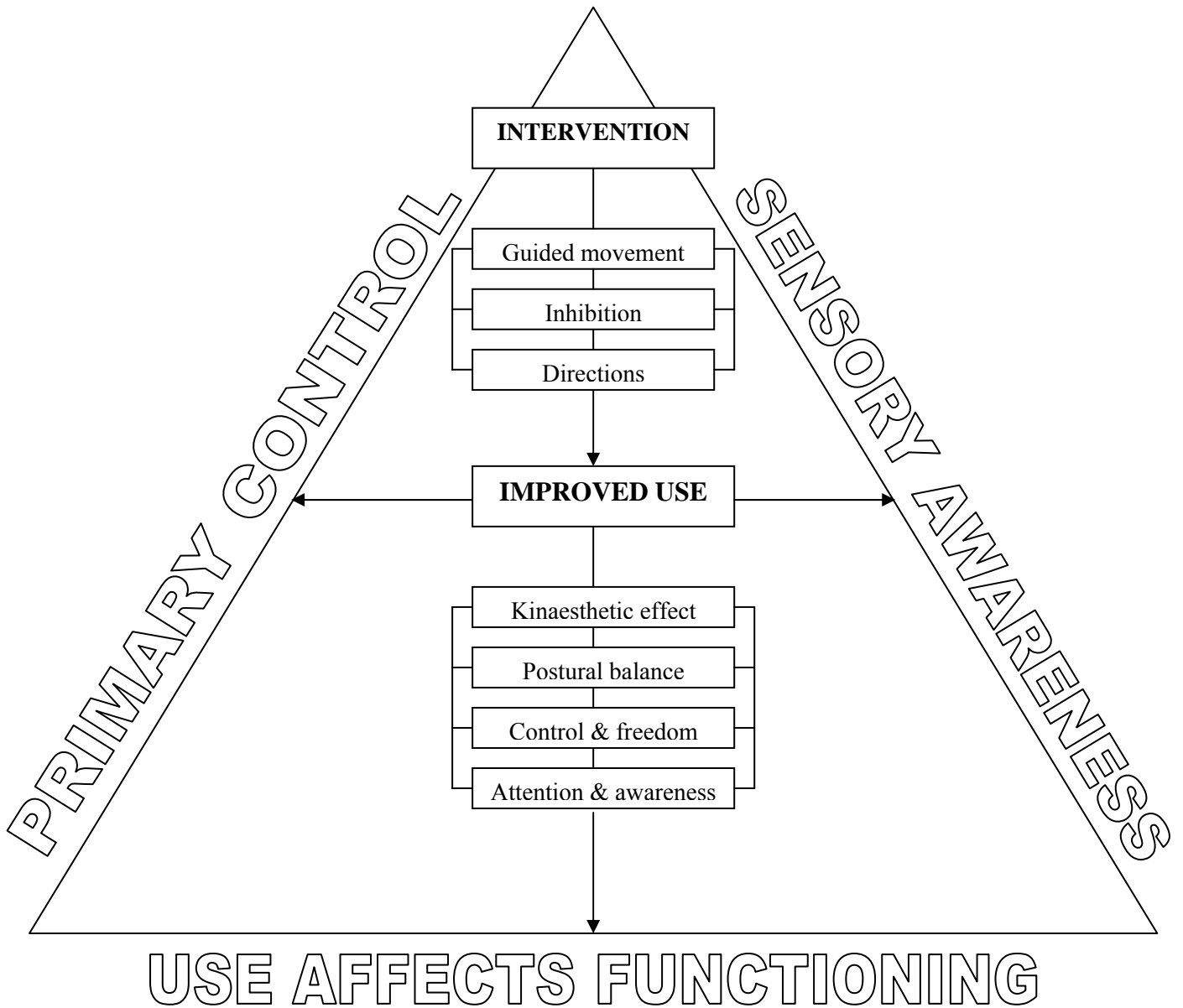


Diagram 2:

**THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE  
FRAMEWORK OF KEY CONCEPTS**



**Table 3.1. Use**

<b>USE (U)</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use affects functioning; one should seek to change use, not functioning.</li> <li>- The term <i>use</i> includes one's total response to stimuli.</li> <li>- Use can be brought under conscious control.</li> <li>- Man functions as a psychophysical whole. For optimal functioning, and in order to solve problems, one has to attend to the use of the whole.</li> </ul>			
<b>Misuse (U-m)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misuse is a stress disorder, involving inappropriate tension in the body that interferes with a balanced resting state. It is also the inability to return to such a resting state.</li> <li>• Misuse refers to mal-distributed muscular tension patterns that manifest as anticipatory tension, or postural set.</li> </ul>	<b>Improved use (U-i)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use only improves as interference with the primary control is inhibited.</li> <li>• Use is improved through inhibiting interference with the natural reflex systems of the body.</li> <li>• Harmful habitual patterns are changed through changing the conditions that allow the habit to exist.</li> </ul>
	Causes of misuse:		Effects of improved use:
<b>End-gaining (EG)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End-gaining attitudes are the major cause of misuse.</li> <li>• End-gaining does not permit sensory feedback other than that related to the specific end.</li> <li>• End-gaining is the attempt to control and influence functioning directly, instead of paying attention to one's use.</li> </ul>	<b>Means-whereby (MW)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use is improved through following a means-whereby principle, in which focus is placed on carefully reasoned out intermediate steps rather than on the end to be gained, or on instinctive habitual responses.</li> </ul>



**Table 3.2. Primary control**

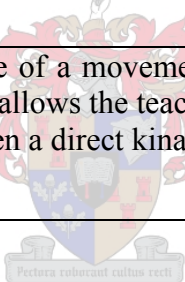
<b>PRIMARY CONTROL (PC)</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The coordination of the head, neck and back, forms the central part of the total locomotor pattern.</li> <li>- Refers to the righting reflexes, or postural reflexes, that integrate the other reflex systems of the body, and operate without the need for conscious control.</li> <li>- The orientation of the head influences the organization of the whole organism.</li> <li>- The primary control functions below the level of consciousness, but one can learn to use the primary control consciously, in more constructive way.</li> <li>- When the primary control is properly directed, the other uses of the body function as they should.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Misuse (PC-m)</b></p> <p>Causes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misuse of the head and neck is always reflected as misuse elsewhere in the body.</li> </ul> <p><i>The causes for misuse of the PC are largely the same as for general misuse:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• faulty preconceived ideas</li> <li>• faulty sensory appreciation</li> <li>• lack of sensory awareness</li> <li>• harmful habitual patterns</li> <li>• end-gaining</li> </ul> <p><i>Specific causes for misuse of the PC include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughts that cause a physical pulling down.</li> <li>• The cumulative effects of stress, tension, injury and fatigue.</li> <li>• Emotional states such as fear and anxiety.</li> <li>• Interferences with postural balance; not returning to a balanced resting state.</li> <li>• Bad postural habits.</li> <li>• Any activity that interferes with the primary control, such as the distorting influence of the shoulders and upper-arms.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Improved use (PC-i)</b></p> <p>Ways of improving the PC:</p> <p>Effects of improved use:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The spine lengthens upward with the head balancing freely on top of the spinal column, while the back lengthens and widens, and the shoulders broaden.</li> <li>• Depends on the reliability of sensory awareness; conversely, improved use of the primary control brings about improved sensory awareness.</li> <li>• Many different ways, including the hands-on guidance of a teacher; any activity that stops interference with the head-neck relationship.</li> <li>• Inhibition of inappropriate tensions that cause a pulling down.</li> <li>• Stopping the head from contracting into the spine.</li> <li>• Activities should             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) ideally prevent interference with the primary control,</li> <li>(2) enhance its functioning, and</li> <li>(3) never cause interference with the primary control.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Muscular harmony throughout the body.</li> <li>• Relatively simple control over the complex human organism.</li> <li>• An integrating effect on the coordination of the body as a whole.</li> <li>• The body's innate reflex systems are restored to operate effectively.</li> <li>• A kinaesthetic effect of lightness, ease and efficiency in all subsequent movement.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.3. Sensory awareness**

<b>SENSORY AWARENESS (SA)</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reliability of sensory awareness depends on freedom from unnecessary tension in the body.</li> <li>- Sensory awareness operates continually on a subconscious and automatic level, but it is possible to increase conscious awareness of kinaesthetic feedback.</li> <li>- Sensory awareness links conception to experience.</li> <li>- Proprioception is the kinaesthetic feedback from muscles, tendons, and joints, and it is concerned with all aspects of muscular activity.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Unreliability of Sensory Awareness (SA-u)</b></p> <p>Causes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untrustworthy sensory awareness complicates re-education and the learning of a new skill or activity.</li> <li>• Misuse of the self: mal-distributed tension patterns in the body.</li> <li>• Interference with the primary control; tension in the neck muscles.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Improved Sensory Awareness (SA-i)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensory awareness is improved through improving the use of the primary control.</li> <li>• Sensory awareness is improved through the direct experience of a new sensory experience, brought about through touch and guided movement, as words are not enough to convey sensory information.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lack of Sensory Awareness (SA-l)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most people do not pay much attention to sensory feedback.</li> <li>• People are apt to trust the feedback from their other senses, rather than critically examine feelings of tension and weight in their movements.</li> </ul>	<p>Effects:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved sensory awareness provides a background of feeling-tone against which misuse can be identified and inhibited.</li> <li>• A greater awareness of tensional reactions and patterns in the body (both in response to a particular activity and in response to the environment) is created, making it possible to inhibit them.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.4. Guided movement**

<b>GUIDED MOVEMENT (GM)</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kinaesthetic information is communicated directly through touch and guided movement.</li> <li>- The amount of kinaesthetic information conveyed, is in indirect proportion to the force used in conveying it.</li> <li>- Detailed attention to the kinaesthetic feedback during guided movement is required, on the part of both teacher and pupil.</li> </ul>		
<b>The hands are used to:</b>	<b>Guide (GM-h)</b>	<b>Touch (GM-t)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guide and support the pupil through the movement that is required.</li> <li>• actively prevent the contraction of the head into the neck.</li> <li>• soothe, reassure and help release excessive tension.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• convey kinaesthetic information.</li> <li>• obtain sensory feedback from a pupil's muscles so that the teacher can give better guidance.</li> <li>• increase sensory awareness in a pupil, by stimulating the nerve receptors through touch.</li> </ul>
Effect of the guided movement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The feeling tone of a movement is changed, as the pupil inhibits his own reaction and allows the teacher to initiate the movement.</li> <li>• The pupil is given a direct kinaesthetic experience of the improved use that is desired.</li> </ul>	



**Table 3.5. Inhibition**

<b>INHIBITION (I)</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Change in habitual patterns is only possible when inhibition and direction are brought onto a conscious level.</li> <li>- Inhibition intercepts the link between concept and activity, in order to allow for new experiences.</li> <li>- Inhibition means refusing to give consent to habitual, subconscious reactions to the stimulus for action; i.e. stopping a postural set from imposing itself on the activity, so that reasoned directions for satisfactory use can be projected.</li> <li>- Inhibiting interference in the PC in response to the stimulus for action is essential for obtaining satisfactory use.</li> <li>- Inhibition initially takes time, in order to stop and clear the pathways between mind and muscle of the automatic flow of messages, and to project reasoned directions before activity.</li> <li>- Inhibition requires minutely detailed attention to kinaesthetic feedback, in order to recognize the harmful tensional patterns that need to be inhibited.</li> <li>- Inhibition precedes an act, but also continues during activity, in order to stop any tendency to faulty use during the activity.</li> </ul>			
Effects of inhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inhibition stops habitual reactions that interfere with the reflex systems of the body, so that activity becomes free of excessive tension, appearing to be effortless.</li> <li>• The successful functioning of specific reflexes depends on inhibition, which gives the spine time to lengthen, activating the anti-gravity reflexes and leading to more efficient movement.</li> <li>• Good use and self-awareness are the result not of what one does, but of what one stops doing. By inhibiting misuse and interference with the primary control, use improves and becomes easier and more enjoyable.</li> </ul>	<b>End-gaining (EG)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End-gaining, the motivation that triggers misuse, must be inhibited.</li> <li>• End-gaining is a reflex action that tends to bypass the reasoning brain in order to satisfy the stimulus to action as soon as possible, whether the habitual way of responding is appropriate or not.</li> <li>• It is an eagerness to be right.</li> <li>• End-gaining is the instant gratification of the desire to act.</li> </ul>
		<b>Means whereby (MW)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inhibition, with reasoned direction, is the means whereby change is brought about in the Alexander Technique.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.6. Directions**

<b>DIRECTIONS (D)</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Directions are <i>thinking in activity</i>.</li> <li>- It is a verbal pattern that has been linked to the new use, which enables a pupil to recreate the co-ordinative processes required for such movement.</li> <li>- Directions are concerned with the spatial orientation that exists within each position: it is an ordered sequence of words containing both spatial and temporal co-ordinates.</li> <li>- Directions are words that have been linked to kinaesthetic experience, and are used as an aid to organize such kinaesthetic experience.</li> <li>- Directions present a standard of use according to which the body is scanned, in order to detect the development of excessive and unnecessary tension.</li> <li>- The ability to sustain attention to sensory feedback is of crucial importance in learning to direct one's use.</li> </ul>			
<b>Qualifying features (D-q)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The triple linkage of a thought, its resulting action and the associated sensory feedback is unique to directing, as opposed to ordinary thought.</li> <li>• The syntax to directing = the desired action + the particular body part + the required orientation in space.</li> <li>• Directions can eventually be reduced to a shortened phrase or single word that contains a depth of experiential meaning.</li> <li>• Direction has a quality of insistent, repeated thought.</li> <li>• Directing becomes natural only after painstaking process; it requires deliberate discipline to learn to do individual movements well for their own sake, before the carefree ease of good use is possible.</li> <li>• Direction leads to freedom of choice, not automatic reflexes as in classical conditioning. Even though directing eventually does become more automatic and therefore more efficient, habits that are consciously acquired with good direction remain accessible to conscious control.</li> </ul>	<b>Psycho-physical whole (D-w)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directions are used in order to integrate thought with action: to establish, cultivate and refine connections between thought and action.</li> <li>• Correct thinking always leads to correct acting, and correct acting flows from correct thinking.</li> <li>• Directions are a matter of thinking, not of muscular doing; the projected movement pattern is allowed to unfold naturally, as though the movement were doing itself.</li> </ul>
		<b>Direction and inhibition (D-I)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direction cannot function without inhibition: the wrong response first has to be stopped before the directions for improved use can be projected.</li> <li>• Directions are often inhibitory: to stop doing the wrong thing, and to inhibit the instinctive reaction linked to old, habitual response patterns.</li> <li>• Once habitual and automatic responses have been eliminated, directing becomes an act of creativity, combining thought, sensation, movement, knowledge, perception and awareness.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.7. The kinaesthetic effect**

<b>KINAESTHETIC EFFECT (KE)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The kinaesthetic effect of lightness and ease is the hallmark of the Alexander Technique.</li> <li>- The righting reflexes are the mechanism responsible for the kinaesthetic effect: when they are operating effectively as a result of inhibition, interference with the other reflex systems in the body is prevented.</li> <li>- Movements feel easier, unencumbered, effortless, more efficient and desirable, as habitual tensions and interference with the natural workings of the primary control are eliminated.</li> <li>- The sense of pleasure in movement, when using oneself optimally, is strongly reinforcing and self-motivating.</li> <li>- The sensory satisfaction that accompanies self-knowledge and self-control brings about an increase in competence and self-esteem.</li> <li>- The kinaesthetic effect does fade eventually, and needs to be renewed on a regular basis.</li> </ul>	

**Table 3.8. Postural balance**

<b>POSTURAL BALANCE (PB)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A steady resting state derives from the intricate and delicate interplay of muscular coordinations throughout the body, to bring the body close to a balanced state.</li> <li>- Muscular adjustments to maintain balance around a central point of stillness, interlock to give a balanced whole.</li> <li>- Faulty muscular tension patterns and unbalanced ways of moving lead to an unbalanced resting state.</li> <li>- There is no such thing as a right or fixed position - the best position is one that can be altered quickly and with ease in order to respond to the continually changing demands of life.</li> <li>- The position of mechanical advantage is a position of dynamic balance, from which it is possible to adapt to changing circumstances without interfering with the integrity of the primary control.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>The postural reflexes (R)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are stimulated by the gravitational force of the body through the feet to the ground, to which the body responds by lengthening up, as long as there is no interference.</li> <li>• function largely automatically.</li> <li>• cannot be sensed directly.</li> <li>• It is the reflex system that can most easily be interfered with.</li> <li>• The balance of the head and the upward-lengthening spine are especially important to ensure less interference with and optimal functioning of the supporting reflexes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Man's upright posture is a delicate balance, an equation of forces brought about by the interplay of the sensory and motor mechanisms, by which all muscular effort is practically eliminated.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.9. Attention and awareness**

<b>ATTENTION AND AWARENESS (A)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attention is an essential prerequisite in all aspects of the Alexander Technique.</li> <li>- The Technique requires a very detailed attention to one's use, in order to recognize and unlearn tension habits at each actual moment of behavioural reaction.</li> <li>- The Technique involves the critically examination of sensory feedback, and requires attention to very delicate shifts of muscle tension.</li> <li>- In order to gain an awareness of what is happening in one's body, it is necessary to learn to observe oneself and to pay attention to kinaesthetic feedback.</li> <li>- Learning the Technique depends on a degree of unity between mind and body, and this mind-body unity is also increased significantly through practising the Technique.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Extended field of awareness (A-e)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention is expanded rather than narrowed, in order to take in a situation as fully as possible, so that one can make an informed decision in making a change.</li> <li>• Extended awareness incorporates sensory feedback with reference to the key relationships in the body, thereby organizing kinaesthetic impressions into an intelligible system on a conscious level.</li> <li>• Expanding awareness to integrate sensory impressions from both the body and the environment allows the two fields to merge, so that the central pattern of stimulus and response can be perceived, thereby providing a key for changing habitual reactions.</li> <li>• The co-ordination of complex activity can only be achieved through extending one's awareness to take in all possible aspects of such activity.</li> </ul>



**Table 3.10. Control and freedom**

<b>CONTROL AND FREEDOM (CF)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Movements only become truly natural and free through giving up habitual control over them.</li> <li>- Constructive conscious control does not imply a mechanistic, manipulative control of movement – this merely results in an unnatural, contrived quality of movement, the direct opposite of what the Alexander Technique aims for.</li> <li>- Control is obtained as a result of eliminating specific faults and interferences; it is not a plane to be reached through increased effort.</li> </ul>	
<b>Prerequisites (CF-p)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One has to give up trying and judging, which leads to and reinforces end-gaining behaviour.</li> <li>• Eliminating hesitation and eagerness, which are characteristic of inefficient behaviour and end-gaining, is a prerequisite for control and freedom.</li> <li>• Actions must be timed precisely: while inhibition is necessary in order to give enough time to decide on a course of action, one should act immediately without regard to the consequence once a reasoned decision to act has been made. This encourages involuntary reactions to take place, bypassing habitual reactions and allowing the reflex systems of the body to operate without interference.</li> <li>• Good use is the result of that which one stops doing, not of what one does.</li> <li>• Rather than controlling action, one should think of allowing it to happen.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By undoing the misuses of the head, neck and back, natural control and freedom of movement will follow of its own accord.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.11. Teaching**

<b>TEACHING (T)</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers can only impart sensory information regarding good use to the same degree that they themselves possess: it is the quality of muscle tone in a teacher's body that allows him or her to transmit the same possibilities to the muscles of a student.</li> <li>- The teacher forms a partnership with the pupil, with the aim of guiding the pupil to self-discovery and to enable the pupil to become an expert in the use of him- or herself.</li> <li>- Alexandrian teaching is an individual, one-to-one interaction, requiring detailed, non-judgemental attention and awareness from both the teacher and the pupil.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Counter-productive procedures (T-n)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End-gaining systems of education, in which failure elicits strong emotional reactions and anxiety.</li> <li>• A pedagogic, didactic attitude and a harsh, judgemental and authoritarian approach.</li> <li>• Procedures that lead to self-consciousness and anxiety in a pupil, slowing down the learning process by interfering with the pupil's awareness and attention.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Good teaching (T-g)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very accurate and clear observation and diagnosis, combined with positive and practical help in solving difficulties.</li> <li>• Following a means-whereby principle in teaching: not asking a pupil to perform an act until he or she is in such a state of coordination that it can be performed easily.</li> </ul>

**Table 3.12. Words**

<b>WORDS (W)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Words cannot adequately convey sensory information unless they have been linked to kinaesthetic experience.</li> <li>- Words can be used effectively as a carefully worked out set of verbal directions for the pupil to follow, in order to inhibit habitual reactions and obtain improved use.</li> <li>- The choice of words that are used in this process is of the utmost importance, as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Words can have a profound effect on co-ordination</li> <li>o “Language reveals thinking; what we think expresses itself physically in exactly the way we are thinking it” (Madden, 2002)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>The danger in using words (W-n)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faulty sensory awareness and connotations from earlier experiences can cause misinterpretation and misconception of verbal instruction.</li> <li>• Words are inevitably interpreted according to each person’s individual perception and experience.</li> <li>• Words can be used in a ritualistic way in directing, thereby interfering with attention to sensory feedback.</li> <li>• Muscular interpretations of requests that are not muscular in nature, lead to misuse.</li> <li>• Inadequate terminology creates misconceptions as to how muscles and limbs work and leads to misuse: anatomical mis-mapping creates interference in the human system.</li> </ul>

## Chapter 4

### The New Approach to violin playing

#### 4.1 Introduction

Hungarian born violinist and child prodigy Kató Havas developed ‘The New Approach to violin playing’ in order to address and eliminate the tensions and anxieties often present in violin performance. The tension-free and expressive playing of the Hungarian gypsy violinists was the inspiration behind her method, and she incorporates Kodály principles of inner hearing and the use of fundamental balances in physical movement in her method, in order to facilitate the free and uninhibited expression of the musical imagination.

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PB  
D-w

The use of inside-to-outward energy impulses is an important feature of her method, and relates especially to an organic rhythmic pulse that involves the whole body in a relaxed, flexible interplay of motion. Instead of outside-in playing, which leads to numerous interferences, her method teaches playing from the inside-out, fostering creative and artistic self-expression through a beautiful singing tone, which is at all times the goal of her teaching.

PB  
EG  
U-m  
MW

#### 4.2 Background

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the New Approach and its application, it is necessary to consider the background that led to its formulation.

##### 4.2.1 Early influences

Havas was born in Hungary in 1920. She started violin lessons at the age of 5 and gave her first professional recital at the age of 7. Shortly afterwards she commenced her studies at the Liszt Férénc Academy in Budapest with Imre Waldbauer, who had studied with Hubay, who in turn had been a student of Joachim (Havas, 1968: 2). She credits Waldbauer with many of her ideas relating to the fundamental balances in the stance and bowing movements (Havas, 1968: 70).

PB

Waldbauer was an original thinker who moved away from a purely imitative school of teaching and advanced ideas about the coordination of bowing technique that were

considered to be revolutionary (Havas, 1968: 3). As a student of motion study, Waldbauer was acquainted with the work of prominent scientists in that field (McCullough, 1996). He emphasized that playing movements originate in the back and that the movements of the smaller limbs are secondary (McCullough, 1996), an idea that features strongly in Havas's teaching.

PC

Havas made her debut at Carnegie Hall in New York in 1937, at the age of 17. At this stage she was also touring and performing extensively, to great critical acclaim. She herself, however, felt that she had reached a dead-end and was not progressing. Although she had no technical difficulties, she did not feel free enough to interpret the music to her own satisfaction (Havas, 1968: 71). Practising more did not seem to help, and neither did lessons with very well-known teachers, including Louis Persinger, who praised her but did not seem to have any answers to her dilemma (Havas, personal communication<sup>1</sup>, Oxford, July 2003).

Eugene Ormandy eventually introduced her to David Mendoza, a violinist and conductor who had studied with Dounis, but who, “just like Waldbauer, was full of his own ideas about violin playing” (Havas, 1968: 71). He understood her problems at once, and was able to help her release the blockages to her creativity. Mendoza specifically introduced Havas to the idea that the left hand finger action is controlled from the base knuckles, and his ideas about the motion of the left hand fingers were later incorporated into the New Approach. Mendoza made Havas aware of the further possibilities of using physical balances in violin playing (Havas, 1968: 6).

PB

Within a year of her debut at Carnegie Hall, Havas married an American writer, and with three children, she eventually decided to leave her performing career in order to raise her family. As she recounts in *The violin and I*, she was unable to compromise by playing only a little: it had to be all or nothing (Havas, 1968: 4). It was during the following 18 years of absence from the violin that she started to develop her ideas around eliminating tension in violin playing, which eventually led to the birth of the New Approach.

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<sup>1</sup> See interview transcript in **appendix D**.

Not performing in public gave her the freedom and the distance required to think clearly about the problems that seem to beset so many violinists (Havas, 1961: 2). Remembering the playing of the gypsy fiddlers whose extreme virtuosity and communicative tone quality she had admired in her youth, various details came to mind: their “giving” left hand with a mobile left thumb, and the freedom of the left elbow, not being pressed in against their bodies, as well as the freedom of the head, in being able to come away from the chinrest while playing (Havas, 2001: 1). Experimenting with these movements gave immediate release and improvement in tone, and led to the formulation of many of the major principles of the New Approach.

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U-i

#### 4.2.2 The Hungarian gypsy violinist

Havas, 1968:19:

I am certain that besides the teaching of Imre Waldbauer in Budapest and David Mendoza in New York, Csicsó's playing in Dömsöd had a great influence on the New Approach. I often wish he could have known what a big hand he had in the writing of my first book.

Csicsó was an elderly gypsy whom Havas had befriended and admired very much for his total identification with and ability to communicate the essence of the music. She says of his playing: “...without knowing it then, I witnessed the epitome of perfect artistic communication” (Havas, 2002: 1). According to Havas (1973: 14), the gypsy violinists play not so much *on* their instruments as *through* them: “...music comes from the entire beings of these players. They use their particular instruments...only to transmit their musical imagination and physical energy”. The ease with which they handle the instrument from the beginning and the pleasure it gives them are palpable. In contrast, the formally trained violinist is often acutely uncomfortable and frequently suffers from playing-related injuries. Physical rigidity is in many instances such an accepted fact that many players believe it to be an inevitable necessity.

D-w

U-m

Liszt (as cited in Havas, 1973: 13), who had also been fascinated with and deeply influenced by the gypsies' phenomenal artistry, expresses a similar view in a letter to a friend:

I almost envy you for having escaped from the civilized art of music making, with its limitations and crampings...you have done well not to engage in concert-room torture, and to disdain the empty, painful reputation of a thorough violinist. (Liszt, as cited in Havas, 1973: 13).

U-m

With their freedom and ease in playing, gypsies do not seem to suffer from stage fright. This may partly be due to the fact that their primary interest is the pleasure of their listeners. There is no social pressure to succeed through bettering their peers (Havas, 1973: 12). While recognizing that cultural differences between the gypsies and the conventional music world will inevitably remain, Havas sought to identify key issues in the gypsies' playing that could be assimilated into a more traditional training.

CF

A major factor in their power of communication seemed to be an organic, rhythmic pulse, which involves the whole body, not only the arms and hands. Havas (1973: 14) came to believe that this total interplay of motion and balance, through the rhythmic pulse, can be a powerful tool in eliminating tension and blockages in performance. In order to understand the nature of the organic rhythmic pulse, she differentiates between natural movements that derive from the flexibility of the joints, and unnatural movements, which are merely compensatory for stiffness in the legs and arms. Only natural movements can give rise to the inside-outward energy impulses needed for the freedom of musical self-expression.

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Through these various influences Havas developed the New Approach, in which the principal aim is "to eliminate both physical and mental obstacles so that through a relaxed and controlled co-ordination, the player may be able to release the full force of his musical imagination" (Havas, 1964: Introduction).

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D-w

#### 4.2.3 Controversy and debate

By 1958 Havas felt a tremendous urge to return to violin, originally with the idea to perform again. However, she had also been experimenting with teaching a couple of pupils, applying her ideas with encouraging results. The New Approach continued to grow until, in 1959, Noel Hale, the Music Advisor for Reading, came across her teaching (Havas, 1968: 6). A series of articles by Hale in *The Strad* in 1959,



introducing the basic tenets of the New Approach, led to a fervent debate in the publication over the next decade<sup>1</sup>.

The articles initially unleashed great controversy and negative reaction from those who saw the New Approach as detracting from orthodox violin methods and training. In the introduction to *The twelve lesson course* (1964), Havas counters this allegation:

...the technique I am expounding...is not to be regarded as some sudden mushroom discovery, totally new and revolutionary...Many of the most important elements are derived from the teachings of the great masters of the past...What I do claim is that these elements have been, through slow experience, integrated into a new form, a working system that may well have been touched upon accidentally and in part by others before me, but has not, to my knowledge, ever been formulated before...although many of the most important elements *are* derived from the teachings of great masters, the difference between this and the conventional methods begins in the very foundations. (Havas, 1964, Introduction.)

In response to incredulous detractors, a growing number of reports by violinists who had found great benefit in applying the method appeared. These were articles written by violin teachers and amateurs as well as professional violinists and soloists. Several medical doctors wrote articles to endorse the New Approach in the light of Gestalt theory and senso-motor study in its application to violin playing<sup>2</sup>.

Scott (as cited in Havas, 1968: 86) clarified the difference between the strength that is found through balance as it is taught in the New Approach, and the mechanistic quality of some schools of violin playing. After years of struggling with violin related injuries, Scott found a teacher in Vienna, Theodore Pashkus, who believed the instrument to be an extension of the body, and the body an extension of the musical imagination.

**PB**

**D-w**

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<sup>1</sup> As copies of *The Strad* before 1968 proved to be virtually unobtainable, many of the references from these articles have been taken from Havas's book, *The Violin and I* (1968), which includes *The Strad* correspondence. See 4.2.4 and 4.5.1.

<sup>2</sup> This subject will be dealt with in more detail in 4.5.1.

Scott (as cited in Havas, 1968: 87) writes:

With Theodore Pashkus I learnt that the body is as much an instrument of the violinist's art as it is of the dancer's, actor's or athlete's. So it was with much delight that I encountered in Miss Havas' (*sic*) book an extension of the same philosophy, and with further musical and personal enrichment that I met and studied with Miss Havas herself. (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 87.)

[This kind of report-back from people who have benefited from the New Approach continues to this day in the KHANA (Kató Havas Association for the New Approach) newsletters, as does debate around aspects of the method itself. Havas encourages the continual refinement and development of ideas, and consequently some of the exercises put forward in her books are applied in a different way today, although they remain true to the ultimate aims of her teaching.]

*The Strad* debate culminated in a series of articles in 1969 and 1970 by Dr FA Hellebrandt, a well-known biologist and writer, who had 40 years of experience in experimental research in the field of physiology, biomechanics and motor learning at the time of writing *The Strad* articles (Hellebrandt, 1969: 281). As an amateur violinist, Hellebrandt had followed the controversial discussion in *The Strad* and subsequently had lessons with Havas herself (Hellebrandt, 1969: 277). The purpose of these articles was to present the biomechanical and neuro-physiological rationale of Havas's teaching devices (Hellebrandt, 1969: 277)<sup>1</sup>.

The intense interest that *The Strad* debate stimulated in the New Approach, catapulted Havas into an international teaching career in a very short space of time. She was invited to teach with Sandor Végh in Switzerland, but decided to remain in England (Havas, 1968: 46). The invitation from Bosworth & Co. to write a book on the New Approach, proved to be the end to her original idea of returning to a career of performing combined with teaching (Havas, 1968: 17), and led to the eventual publication of four books. The interest generated by the books and the demand for personal tuition grew to such an extent that Havas decided to devote all her energy and time to teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> See 4.5.2 for a more detailed discussion of Dr Hellebrandt's articles.

#### 4.2.4 Books

Her first book, *A New Approach to violin playing*, was published in 1961. Initially the physical aspect of playing the instrument was the main concern around which she developed her method, as she encountered the same kinds of physical problems in all her students, regardless of their age or level of playing (Havas, 2003: 1). This book introduces all the fundamental physical balances of the New Approach, and all aspects of violin technique are presented in relation to a search for a beautiful tone (Havas, 1961: 4).

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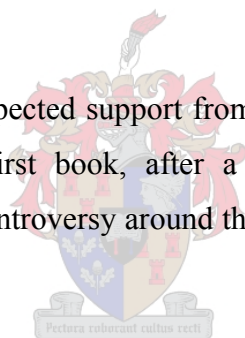
Havas, 1968: 18:

...as far as the New Approach is concerned, there is no such thing as ‘technique’ in the accepted sense. The whole concept is based on tone production and on the wherewithals of its organic motivation and natural transmission. If this is achieved, the so-called ‘technique’, no matter how complicated and seemingly wellnigh impossible becomes an inevitable follow-up.

MW

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Havas (1968: 23) received unexpected support from Yehudi Menuhin, who wrote an unsolicited foreword for her first book, after a mutual friend showed him the manuscript. In the light of the controversy around the New Approach at that time, it is worth quoting at length.



Menuhin, 1961:

It is a sad comment on man’s perennial ignorance that the rare and the original are usually the obvious. Miss Havas is original in her approach to the violin playing because she insists that violin technique must be reducible to basic motions involving more than just the fingertips.

I have long preached and proven that the very placing of the finger, including the vibrato, shifting and glissando, are all aspects of the same basic movement – that is why on the violin it is as difficult and as much evidence of control to draw one beautiful sound or to play a scale as it is to play a concerto....

It is also heartening and equally ‘original’ to find a kindred spirit who holds the *whole body* to be engaged, thus offering no focus of resistance anywhere – only support – and who realises that of all things – the state of continual balance, the equilibrium of all parts...is the object of all training.

Although Havas (1968: 35) had presented her ideas as concisely as possible in her first book, it soon became apparent that those who were interested in the New

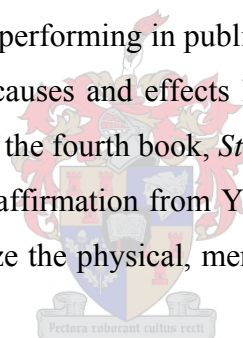
Approach sought more detailed information. As a result, she wrote *The twelve lesson course* (1964), a comprehensive pedagogical account of an intensive programme designed to teach the fundamental balances concerning violin playing, and their control and co-ordination from the mind (Havas, 1964: 2).

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In 1968, *The violin and I*, an autobiographical account of Havas's career and the origins and development of the New Approach, followed, and it included the controversial correspondence around the method that had appeared in *The Strad* up until that time.

Havas (1968: 38) discovered that an additional result of the New Approach seemed to be the alleviation of stage fright. Where many professional (and amateur) violinists had previously suffered from debilitating anxiety in performance, with the release of tensions through New Approach teachings they gained not only freedom from nerves, but also a positive enjoyment of performing in public (Havas, 1973: xiii). This led her to make a special study of the causes and effects leading to stage fright, eventually culminating in the publication of the fourth book, *Stage fright: its causes and cures*, in 1973. Once again, she received affirmation from Yehudi Menuhin, whom she claims to be among the first to recognize the physical, mental and spiritual truth of the New Approach (Havas, 2000: 3).

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Menuhin, 1974:

I would like to write you a second fan letter, as I believe I have already done so some years ago, to congratulate you on your book 'Stage Fright'. It is the most realistic and practical approach imaginable. It stresses the real reasons and not the false ones, and gives in the most honest and lucid form the essential requirements of violin technique, violin playing and music making. It is a book that should be worth its weight in gold to every student and many a performer.

After a lifetime of dedicating herself to helping violinists realize their full musical potential, Havas received the American String Teachers' Association Award in 1992, and in 2002 the Order of the British Empire (OBE), one of the highest honours bestowed by the Queen in Britain, was presented to Havas for her services to music (Havas, 2003: 1).

### 4.3 The New Approach

Havas (1968: 86) calls her method a “New Approach”, as it is essentially in terms of approach and application that she differs with orthodox teachers and methods, and not in denying their achievements and insights. She gives a concise summary of her method from this perspective, in *A New Approach to violin playing* (1961: 2):

It is not a question of teaching and imposing a certain dogma, but of making it possible for the student to ‘let it happen’. From the very first lesson, the student is trained how to differentiate between causes and effects. This New Approach, through the compelling logic of certain basic play actions, is based on the idea of balance, not of strength. There are no ‘mechanical’ finger exercises as we understand them. The aim of the exercises is not a strengthening process but an elimination, through finding the exact balance, of all conscious muscular action save one...so that the mind can be freed from the impossible task of concentrating on two or more things at once...properly developed, (this) is able to transmit and control the musical and artistic impulses of the player to such an extent that all mechanical problems disappear and there is nothing left for him to do but to give full vent to his imagination. (Havas, 1961: 2.)

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#### 4.3.1 A new perspective

The approach of traditional methods is usually to isolate individual movements and develop them through extensive practise, in the hope that by putting them all together again the desired result would be achieved. But the whole differs from the sum of its parts (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477): instead of part motions fitting together in a finely balanced complement, they can too easily become a collection of separate units, each with its own academic merit, but “worthless collectively, since the characteristics of the parts are not motivated by the requirements of the whole” (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92).

Wright (as cited in Havas, 1968: 91), an eminent physician and amateur violinist, elaborates on what he calls “these unenlightened methods of teaching”:

In the past violin playing has been overly engrossed with (a) the precise duplication by the pupil of those specific part function patterns approved by the teacher’s particular ‘school’ and (b) the interminable drills considered necessary to hammer them home. How many of us have suffered the seemingly everlasting gimmicks to ‘strengthen’ fingers, immobilize the shoulder and isolate the wrist, etc. This preoccupation with part function,

totally ignored the inescapable physiological fact that mass movement is a characteristic of normal motor activity. (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 91.)

Havas's approach is the complete antithesis to these more traditional methods, in emphasising whole body function through the use of natural balances: each movement is tracked to its biological source, allowing all actions eventually to become integrated into a co-ordinated whole. Whitman (as cited in Havas, 1968: 96) describes these fundamental balances as "a series of body weight adjustments of infinitely delicate balances, similar to that modern invention, the Mobile, whose many components of varying shapes move around with perfect ease within the pattern as a whole". Wright (as cited in Havas, 1968: 91) explains the efficacy of the New Approach in the light of the motion gestalt, which has as its foundation the concept of optimal balance.

PB

PB

Hellebrandt (1970b: 473) is of the opinion that the biological roots of the physical act of playing the violin "may well provide the key to a more adequately defensible pedagogy than the one inherited from traditional schools replete with sacred dogmas", and also makes reference to gestalt theory in her evaluation of the New Approach. These aspects will be discussed in more detail when considering the scientific base to the New Approach in 4.5.

Movement, that has its basis in the natural physiological functioning of the body, inevitably results in the release of tension and anxiety. Because physical tension is often the cause of mental anxiety in playing, learning to release physical blockages and using the body in a balanced way resolves anxiety in performance and leads to a sense of well-being, both physically and mentally. In the words of Havas (1973: xiii) herself: "These co-ordinated self-propelled physical actions naturally tend to evoke great release in the emotional and mental responses". The New Approach is consequently a very effective tool in overcoming (and preventing) the debilitating effects of stage fright, the ultimate stifling of artistic communication.

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#### 4.3.2 Stage fright: causes and cures

Havas (1973: 5) points out that stage fright is nothing more than an exaggerated symptom of anxiety. Problems in violin playing are not really caused by technique as such, but they originate in the mistaken idea that some kind of superimposed pressure

or force is necessary (Havas, 1964: 2). This leads to faulty movements, which cause an overall state of anxiety. “And the awful thing about anxiety is that, at the slightest provocation, it can spread like wildfire, paralyzing the mind, crippling the body, until everything seems unduly difficult and all artistic expression becomes nothing but a monumental struggle” (Havas, 1964: 2).

**U-m**

The causes for anxiety seem to fall into three categories: physical, mental and social, and are all interlinked and equally deep-seated (Havas, 1973: 16). According to Havas, the cure lies in the following three steps, within the context of continual training and development:

The first step is to clarify the causes of each aspect of anxiety within its own entity. The second step is to find the appropriate cures with the relevant exercises for each cause. The third and last step is to inter-relate all three of the causes and cures. Once this is achieved, stage fright will give way to a feeling of freedom and confidence. (Havas, 1973: 16.)

**D-I**

Understanding the origins and causes of the problems is essential in order to release them, and the cure involves both physical and mental re-education. Attitudes to the physical handling of the instrument need to be changed, as the root of most problems concerning stage fright lies in forced and flawed physical actions (Havas, 1973: 127). The concept of a *violin hold* and *bow hold* is systematically eliminated – allowing the instrument to become an extension of the body - with no tension blockages in any of the limbs or joints, but a reliance on what Havas calls the fundamental, motivating balances for all movement.

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**D-w**

**PB**

Due to the close connection between the mind and the body, tension and anxiety in violin playing can only be released through combining a positive, constructive mind-set with this active physical balance (Havas, 1973: 16). Therefore, apart from the release of physical tensions, the New Approach explores mental attitudes that can trigger anxiety, such as the fear of not playing fast enough, the fear of memory lapse and the power of words and the imagination either to inhibit or to liberate. The impact of the competitive attitudes in society on performers is examined, especially relating to the striving for success and the fear of not being good enough. False beliefs can also cause anxiety. For instance, misleading information from the eyes can lead to a

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**EG**

**SA-u**



false perception of an abnormally long fingerboard or thick neck, causing tension and anxiety, without any conscious awareness of this being so. In each instance, Havas (1973) gives comprehensive and practical advice for eliminating the particular anxiety.

**SA-I**  
**I**

Once physical and mental release from anxiety has been achieved, the final stage in this process is to eliminate the self “by dissolving it into a free-flowing musical communication” (Havas, 1973: 127).

**CF-p**

Havas, 1973: 77:

The more a player learns to summon the power of the inner ear, the more he is able to forget about the extraneous part of his playing, such as his technique, his tone, the impression he makes on his listener, etc., until eventually he can forget about himself. And that is when real communication begins. For with the elimination of the self he is able to reach the very core of the music and through the interplay of co-ordinated balances is free to transmit it to the audience.

**CF-p**  
**PB**

A central point of control, which has the power to co-ordinate not only the diverse physical actions required, but also the workings of the mind (Havas, 1973: 81), is essential if this free artistic communication is to take place. Havas (1973: 82) found one of the deepest causes of stage fright to be the attempt to achieve the desired musical effects through conscious physical efforts. Many musicians know that the more one tries, the less success one seems to have, as “overcontrol” easily leads to interference (Green & Gallwey, 1986: 9). The artist’s musical intent will be realized without any conscious physical effort only if all the musical information and physical movements can be unified in a single co-ordinated activity.

**D-w**  
**EG**  
**U-m**  
**D-w**

Havas, 1973: 81:

This central point of direction which has the power to create total co-ordination of mind and body, lies in the naming of the notes...the accumulated information relating to each note is aural, visual and tactile...(and) it is the name of the note which will synchronize all this information.

**D**

The naming of the note, in conjunction with the imagination of the inner ear and the shaping of melody in the left hand finger action, is the key control once all the

**D**

physical balances have been co-ordinated into a final whole (Havas, 1964: 68). This aural-tactile connection, where the inner ear directs the left hand finger action, leads to eventual spontaneous music making, the ultimate goal of Havas's teaching. A mind so concentrated on the music that there is no place for mental anxiety or interference, together with a body in balance, free of tension and conscious physical control, can finally give release from the tyranny of stage fright.

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These features of the New Approach, briefly summarised in this discussion of stage fright, will be examined in greater detail in the following section.

#### 4.4 The method

Kenneson, a renowned cellist, pedagogue and author, writes in *A cellist's guide to the New Approach* (1974: 10):

(The) New Approach is not a 'method' in the general sense, but a meaningful organization of thought processes which focuses the mental concentration on a musical idea, the physical realization of that idea coming from a logically-conceived use of the body's natural balances. (Kenneson, 1974: 10.)

D  
D-w  
PB

Havas identified tendencies that are common to many players, in that they generally result from the body's physical response to touching the instrument, and arranged this information along with solutions developed through the use of New Approach principles (Kenneson, 1974: 11). Essentially an approach to tone production, the New Approach teaches precepts that are often demonstrated by naturally gifted players, such as Pablo Casals, who instinctively make use of natural physical balances while their musicality predominates over technical demands (Kenneson, 1974: 10).

U-m  
D-I  
PB  
D

The most prominent features of the method are described in 4.4.1 to 4.4.7. This is a summary of the most important concepts, and is not intended to give a comprehensive and specific account of all the New Approach exercises and procedures, for which the reader is referred to Havas's own writings, especially *The New Approach to violin playing* (1961), *The twelve lesson course* (1964) and *Stage fright* (1973).

#### 4.4.1 Easy or impossible

One of Havas's favourite sayings is that "playing the violin is never difficult; it is either easy or it is impossible" (Havas, 1973: 136). While all violinists desire to be able to express themselves musically with ease and freedom, this seems to happen only rarely and ostensibly by chance. The harder one tries, the more elusive this state of bliss seems to be. This communicative ease is only possible through finding movements that are self-propelled, as no amount of practise with tense, overworked muscles can ever ensure complete freedom or assurance in performance (Whitman, as cited in Havas, 1968: 96). Through the New Approach, the origins of inhibiting tensions are first uncovered, followed by a step-by-step process whereby they are eliminated. This allows for the development of natural coordinated movements based on balance, not superimposed effort or force.

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This approach is applied from the very beginning, as the basic problems are the same for all violinists, whether beginner or advanced (Havas, 1964: Introduction). Havas (1964: 12) likens playing the violin to tightrope walking, where "the right balances must be controlled and coordinated from the very beginning, regardless of whether the rope is stretched near the ground or high in the air". Through learning balanced movement and avoiding the use of force from the beginning, a violinist can have a beautiful singing tone right from the start – it is a fallacy to believe that it is inevitable for beginners to "screech" on the violin (Havas, 1964: 2). She does recommend, however, that they should not practise on their own until the basic balances are well established (Havas, 1964: Introduction).

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U-i

#### 4.4.2 Inside-outward playing

All aspects of the New Approach can be described in terms of inside-outward energy impulses. This is the crux of the whole method, the ultimate aim of the approach being to create conditions whereby true artistic communication can take place, without physical or mental interferences. This inside-outward communication relates especially to a rhythmic pulse that involves the whole body in a relaxed, flexible interplay of motion (Havas, 1973: 14). Havas (1973: 19) believes that this "organic rhythmic pulse, with its power of communication, is the very essence of music, and...must generate from within the body itself". However, the rhythmic pulse will be

MW  
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blocked by rigidity in any of the joints in the body (Havas, 1973: 29), which could have a purely physical origin, or be caused by mental anxiety.

**U-m**

The competitive attitudes in society often lead to an anxiety to succeed and a fear of being judged as being less than perfect, causing many mental and technical blockages in a performer (Havas, 1973: 7) and clearly illustrating how an outside-inward focus leads to interference. Havas (1973: 8) believes that all violinists should be encouraged to view themselves as creative artists right from the beginning, with an attitude of giving to their listeners. This inside-outward emphasis fosters a creative imagination and does away with many factors that lead to stage fright and inhibition of the artistic impulse (Havas, 1973: 136).

**EG**

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Havas (1973: 111) also found that in order to cultivate this inside-outward approach, it was crucial to eliminate the traditional teacher-pupil relationship, in which the teacher holds judgment on a student's ability, and to replace it with a working partnership, where the teacher becomes a guide to lead the pupil in discovering ways of helping himself. The emphasis is never on judging a student's efforts, but the criteria for success is whether he or she enjoyed communicating the music from within to the audience. A true sense of inner pleasure and comfort is the goal, and mental and physical blockages are explored and eliminated until a pupil attains this inner state of freedom (Bonnici, 1988: 1).

**MW**

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**T-g**

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Another great hindrance to effective inside-outward playing can be found in the role of the eyes in violin playing. Havas (1973: 64) believes that misleading visual information is a major cause of interference, due to the proximity of the fingerboard to the eyes: "There is no instrument, to my knowledge, where the eye is as closely connected with the fingertip activities as it is in the violin". Not only does this visual-tactile connection undermine the use of the inner ear (Havas, 1973: 64), but it also gives the false impression that the hands (and fingertips) lead the playing movements. This outside-inward playing is the cause of a great many tensions and interferences, as an attempt to lead from the extremities merely results in unnatural physical actions and mental and physical discomfort.

**SA-u**

**U-m**

**U-m**

Casals was possibly the first to advocate the idea that the impulse for the playing movements, especially the bow stroke, comes from the centre of the body instead of the extremities. He believed that this allows the different movements to be integrated into a unified whole, ultimately leading to more satisfying results (Smith, 1996), an idea that is fundamental to the New Approach.

**PC**  
**PC-i**

Instead of playing from the violin in the hands inwards, movements are directed from the mind outward through the body, and follow simple physiological principles, in that all natural movements unfold from the inside out and depend on the flexibility of the joints (cf Havas, 1973: 15). For instance, the bow is not led from the wrist or the hand, but the movement originates in the back and is projected through the shoulder- and elbow joints (cf Havas, 1973: 29; 34). Any tension in holding the instrument (i.e. in the neck and shoulders) will cause rigidity throughout the body and have a negative effect on the flexibility, coordination and ease of movement, and so inside-outward playing endeavours to resolve the problems where they originate.

**D**  
**R**  
**PC-m**

Communicating the music does not depend on conscious physical efforts, but on the ability to sing from within through one's instrument. Vocalizing the music emphasises the reality that the music begins inside the player, "and not from the contact point of hair and string" (Black, 1990: 5). Many great performers instinctively do this: Pablo Casals was well known for singing along with his playing, as was Glen Gould. Mitsuko Uchida has been described in a review in *The Times* as "mouthing the notes trancelike" during a performance (Havas, 2003: 3). Havas (2003: 3) calls this the true "from inside-outward" communication, where inwardly singing with the note names has the power to direct the playing movements.

**D**  
**D-w**

Too often the approach to playing music is to read the written notes and then to try them out on the instrument. Hearing what is played is then followed by correction. Kodály taught the opposite: while reading the notes, the sound is first heard or imagined inwardly and only then played on the instrument. Usually very little correction is needed afterwards with this approach (Havas, 1973: 82). Havas (1961: 31) elaborates on this theme: "...if the mind is developed to anticipate the right pitch and quality of sound, the fingers will follow the demand of the mind. Instead of

**EG**  
**MW**  
**U-i**  
**D-w**

spending hours trying to train the fingers to play in tune, we should train our minds to hear the tune”.

The musical information has to be organised mentally before it can be physically followed through on the instrument. However, Havas strongly advises against listening to a recording in order to imitate and memorise the music, as this also amounts to outside-in playing, blunting individual creativity (Perkins, 1995: 55). Instead, she uses Kodály-based exercises to internalise the pitch and rhythm: this includes feeling the pulse through whole body movements and rhythmic speaking patterns, clapping and sight-singing as well as miming the actual playing movements - leading to a “true musical internalisation rather than mere memorization” (Perkins, 1995: 194).

**MW**

**EG**

**MW**

Through first internalising the music, physical movements can become precise expressions of musical intent. However, in order to be “an open channel for the transforming of musical concepts into sounds” (Kenneson, 1974: 42), it is obviously very important that there should be no physical interferences that can block the powerful inside-outwards energy flow through which an organic communication with the listener is established (Havas, 1973: 29). Through the use of the fundamental balances, this freedom of movement is established and assured.

**D-w**

**I**

**PB**

The New Approach takes the concept of inside-out playing to its ultimate conclusion in coordinating all aspects of technique in an expressive impulse. As the focus is on the music inside and not on the outer movements, it is important to eliminate any thought of a violin hold or bow hold - a preoccupation with the physical handling of the instrument will detract from “letting it happen” and allowing the physical movements to evolve naturally from the musical decisions that have been made in the mind (Kenneson, 1974: 42).

**D-w**

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**D-w**

#### **4.4.3 Mind over movement**

A common response to the New Approach is that, while it does lead to much greater physical ease and freedom of expression, it demands intense mental training in terms of co-ordination and concentration (Hirons, as cited in Havas, 1968: 95). Havas (1964: Introduction) concedes that though violin playing is made far easier through

**KE; A**

the New Approach, the assimilation of the approach itself may not be easy at all. She repeatedly stresses throughout her writing that the method consists predominantly of a training of the mind, not the body, as the body has no choice but to obey “once the mind learns to give the right orders to the right places” (Havas, 1964: 17). Good progress therefore depends on learning the necessary mental discipline.

**A**  
**D-w**  
**A**

Interference is often caused through using excessive effort and unnecessary activity in performing a particular movement. The New Approach aims firstly to identify the key motivating positions of the fundamental balances and subsequently to discipline the mind to give orders only to those specific points (Havas, 1964: 76). Havas (1964: 32) stresses that the difficulty in violin playing is not physical, but in mentally accepting that responsibility be taken away from the outer extremities (i.e. the hands and fingers that are seen to be moving), and given to the place where the movement originates, the motivating balance, which is often obscure (i.e. the left hand base knuckles, or the right shoulder- and elbow joints).

**U-m**  
**MW**  
**A; D**  
**D**  
**MW**

Galamian (1962: 5) calls the relationship of mind to muscles “correlation”, and emphasizes that the very foundation of technique relies on the “smooth, quick and accurate functioning of the sequence in which the mental command elicits the desired muscular response”. He believes that technical mastery and control are gained through improving correlation, and not by the training or strengthening of muscles, as is often erroneously believed (Galamian, 1985: 6). It is not the strength of the muscle that matters, but how responsive it is to the mental command: “The better the correlation, the greater the facility, accuracy, and reliability of the technique” (Galamian, 1985: 6).

**D-w**  
**D-w**  
**EG**  
**D-w**  
**U-i**

This view is fundamental to Havas’s teaching. She states categorically that “no physical action can take place without an order from the mind” (Havas, 1964: 76), and the New Approach exercises are all designed to establish this chain of command. The object is always to have a very clear mental picture of the desired sound - and the action required to produce it - before actually playing. Havas (1964: 5) believes that much difficulty can be avoided through alternating mental practise with physical playing, and so she often recommends that a pupil should put the instrument down to merely think about the movement (Havas, 1964: 6).

**D-w**  
**D-q**  
**D**



Freymuth, 1999: 31:

Mental practise refers to the process of imagining experiences in a vivid and life-like manner, with the intention of influencing physical actions. When practising mentally, you either recall sensory feedback precisely as it was experienced, or project a mental model that is based on personal experience but incorporates changes and/or new elements.

**D-q**

Mental practise has been the subject of much research and there is solid scientific evidence to support its effectiveness (Freymuth, 1999: 13). Researchers have found that alternating physical repetitions with periods of rest where mental review can take place (such as suggested by Havas) is more effective than simply repeating the same movement over and over (Freymuth, 1999: 29). Freymuth (1999: 13) believes that although musicians often develop some mental practise skills on their own, “only a rare teacher will actually teach students to use these valuable skills”. It is clear that Havas is one of these rare teachers.

**T-g**

Fritz Kreisler features prominently in both the writings of Havas and Freymuth as an example of one of the many musicians who depended on “some form of mental practise to help them achieve technical fluency and to refine their musical interpretations” (Freymuth, 1999: 21). He believed that emphasising the mechanical side of playing did more harm than good (Kreisler, as cited in Havas, 1973: 101), and regarded reliance on muscular habit in performance as dangerous, as technique is primarily “a matter of the brain”. The emphasis should not be on how many hours one practises, since “practise benumbs the brain, renders the imagination less acute and deadens the sense of alertness that every artist must possess” (Kreisler, as cited in Havas, 1973: 125). Kreisler (as cited in Freymuth, 1999: 21) further underlined the importance of creating a mental picture, or a kind of “master record” of the playing actions, which he used in conjunction with the silent study of musical scores.

**D**

**EG**

**D-q**

In order to develop such a mental record of physical movements, a heightened awareness of kinaesthetic and tactile feedback during playing is very important (Freymuth, 1999: 33). In *Mental practice and imagery for musicians*, Freymuth (1999: 16, 48) recommends miming, imagining the feeling of movements, and becoming aware of the tactile sense of the instrument in order to facilitate mental practise. She also regards singing as an intermediate step between the mental version

**D-q**

**SA-i**

**D-q**

of a movement and its physical counterpart (Freymuth, 1999: 40). All of these practises are integral features of the New Approach<sup>1</sup>.

#### 4.4.4 The fundamental balances

In contrast with some conventional methods of violin teaching, where the specific placing of the body and hands is often taught (sometimes to the extent of forcing the limbs into uncomfortable positions), Havas (1973: xiii) developed her method from natural, effortless body movements “based on the fundamental principles of co-ordinated balances”. She uses the term *fundamental balances* as a simplification for the scientific terminology of “the physiological key motor responses” (Havas, 1973: xiii).

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While acknowledging that there are many ways to develop technique, Havas’s aim is to find the quickest and easiest route, that will simultaneously also give the most assurance against breakdown and fatigue (Havas, 1964: 68):

MW

...only freedom from anxiety can guarantee complete assurance...this freedom of anxiety, as far as violin playing is concerned, depends entirely on an effortless control of movements. So we are back to the basic principle again – to the self-propelled play-actions of the fundamental balances (Havas: 1964: 68).

CF  
R

Havas (1964: 68) goes on to say that in order to fully understand the function of the fundamental balances, it is of crucial importance to realize that they are all eventually co-ordinated into the smooth functioning of the whole, so that ultimately no distinction is made between the various aspects of technique, such as bowing technique, or left hand technique. Violin playing can then be defined as chain of links, with each point of balance interlocking with and interdependent of another (Havas, 1964: 76).

PB

However, the balances must first be individually identified, and the necessary mental control established in order to activate the particular movement, before they can all be

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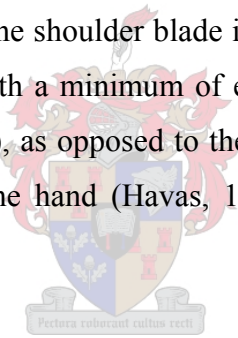
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<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.5, 4.4.6 and 4.4.7.

integrated. The difficulty is that the fundamental balances are usually not visible, so that each action must be traced to its origin in order to find the key control or cue for that movement (Havas, 1964: 2). Attention needs to be focused on the (often) invisible source of the movement, rather than on the visible activity of the arms or fingers. Hence the left hand base knuckles, which are hidden from view while playing, actually control the movements of the fingers, and not the fingertips, which are very clearly seen to be moving. Likewise, it is the muscles that attach the shoulder blades to the spine that have power over the movements of the arms, and not the forearms or hands.

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**MW**

In explaining the fundamental balances, Havas (1964: 3) makes use of the image of a see-saw to illustrate how ease of movement depends on an adjustment of weight rather than on force: even a very heavy object can be moved with the slightest touch when it is evenly balanced. For instance, she points out that with the body as pivot, an imaginary weight hanging from the shoulder blade in the back will allow the left arm (being the lighter end) to rise with a minimum of effort and so achieve a feeling of easy suspension (Havas, 1964: 3), as opposed to the fatiguing effort of attempting to lift and hold the arm up with the hand (Havas, 1973: 21), where more tension is inevitably used than is necessary.



**PB**  
**KE**  
**EG**  
**U-m**

This same principle of balance is applied to the stance and holding the instrument, as it is the feeling of weight in the back that prevents the body from leaning forward with the weight of the violin (Havas, 1964: 4), leading to tension in the back and shoulders. With the legs set shoulder-width apart, the weight is transferred towards the heels and the bottom of the spine (Havas, 1961: 15), so that the violin and arms are counterbalanced by a whole body adjustment (instead of leaning backwards from the middle, for instance). Such a balanced posture is essential, as even the slightest movement of the arms in the front relocates the centre of gravity in the body. According to Wright (as cited in Havas, 1968: 92), only a “good dynamic posture” (which is based on natural balance and able to adapt to changing circumstances as movement takes place) can serve as an efficient background to violin playing.

**PC-m**  
**PB**  
**PB**

The violin is inserted into this balanced stance, and it is important to note that the body is not adjusted to the violin, but that the instrument fits naturally and

**MW**

comfortably into the body. [This is even more obvious from the New Approach exercises as they are taught today, and it will be considered in greater detail in Chapter Six.] Although the left arm appears to be holding up the violin, it is in reality suspended from the muscles in the back (Havas, 1968: 18), and as the violin is balanced between the collarbone and the left hand, with only the weight from the back of the head resting on the chinrest (Havas, 1973: 24), it too feels light and weightless.

Havas emphasises the need to eliminate the very concept of a violin-hold, as most violinists suffer from the misconception that they not only need to hold the violin up with the left hand, but must also press down with the chin on the chinrest in order to secure the instrument. However, any downward pressure with the chin inevitably results in a counter-pressure from the shoulder underneath, leading to tension, anxiety and rigidity in the body (Havas, 1973: 20). As tension in one part of the body tends to lead to tension elsewhere (Havas, 1961: 16), it is of crucial importance to establish a free and balanced stance with the violin, while keeping the shoulder joints loose and flexible.

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**U-m**  
**PC-m**  
  
**PC-m**  
  
**PC-i**

Through establishing a “self-generating motion and balance (in the form of an organic rhythmic pulse)” (Havas, 1973: 18) in the stance itself, tension can be released in the body as a whole. However, due to the tensions connected with holding the instrument, violinists need to take special care to learn to apply the rhythmic pulse before it can become a self-generating process (Havas, 1973: 19).

**PB**  
**PC-i**  
**PC-m**

The success of all bowing technique also depends on the counterbalance in the back. Through suspending the arm from the back - instead of lifting it from the hand, which will make it feel heavy - it is possible to create a “weightless, wing-like sensation” in the arm (Havas, 1973: 21), thus assuring the freedom and mobility of the shoulder joint (Havas, 1973: 25). The bow-stroke can then become a floating action instead of a physical effort (Havas, 1964: 10), so that the suspended arm is like “a spring which opens and shuts like a concertina” (Havas, 1964: 11). All possible blockages in the elbow and wrist joints need to be eliminated as well in order to establish this self-propelled bowing action, in which the bow acts only as a transmitter of the swinging arm movements (Havas, 1973: 32).

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**KE**  
**U-i**  
  
**R**  
**U-m**  
**I**  
**R**

There is a correlation between the weight distribution and rhythmic division of the arm and bow: the section of bow below the balance point is related to the upper arm, and the movement is activated by a sideways swing from the shoulder socket. The heavier section of bow below the balance point is consequently balanced by the relative greater weight of the upper arm, with the sideways swing from the shoulder corresponding to the exact length of this part of the bow (Havas, 1973: 34). The longer part of the bow, above the balance point, relates to the forearm, and depends on the opening and shutting of the elbow joint (Havas, 1973: 32-33). The swinging movement of the upper arm is continued through the forward swing of the forearm, in order to complete the whole bow movement.

**MW**

Havas (1973: 34) found that the elbow is often not able to flex freely, and that the degree of stiffness in this joint corresponds directly to the degree of stiffness in the bow hold, which inevitably leads to tension in the wrist as well. This is usually the result of an attempt to lead the bow stroke with the hand or wrist (or to control it with the fore arm) and many violinists are so used to this state of affairs that they are not even aware of the stiffness in the elbow joint, apart from having a vague feeling of discomfort and anxiety in controlling the bow (Havas, 1973: 34).

**U-m**

Havas (1973: 32–38) gives extensive exercises to correct these misconceptions and to establish the true motivating balances for the bow movements. The thought of a bow hold as such is eliminated through establishing sufficient balance in the thumb underneath the stick, with the end-pads of the fingers released and not gripping the bow (Havas, 1973: 30). Bowing is always described in terms of swinging and curves, and once all the balances are established and integrated, it becomes an autonomous action (Havas, 1973: 37). Noel Hale (as cited in Havas, 1968: 46) compares this self-propelled bowing movement to that of the legs in walking:

**D-I**

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**R**

So, like legs, the bow just goes to and fro on its musical journey: a machine of movement, automatically propelled without conscious thought, ready and able to respond to the slightest nuance or other demand of the player....The bow arm is *part* of the musician and...shares the player's ear for making music – as the legs share his inclination to walk...(Hale, as cited in Havas, 1968: 46.)

**R  
D-w**

Havas's preferred style of producing sound is with this "airborne bowing arm", in which the subtle tonal nuancing required is controlled through subconscious impulse (1961: 28). One of the most important aspects of the New Approach is that all technical problems are tackled through the medium of tone production (Havas, 1964: 67). Havas (1961: 21) believes that "only a perfect marriage" between the left and right hands can create a perfect sound: while the bow sets the vibration of the string in motion, and controls the length, smoothness and volume of sound, the quality of tone depends on the left hand finger action (1961: 28), which in turn depends entirely on the correct use of the fundamental balances in the base joints (Havas, 1964: 27).

CF

MW

MW

Although the actual source of the left hand finger action is in the tendons that attach just below the elbow joint, the "nearest balance point of leverage" with the power to control the movement of the fingers, is in the base joints of the left hand fingers (Havas, 1964: 30). The fingers themselves do not make or cause the action, but only follow through on the swinging movement from the base joints. Likewise, the tips of the fingers do not press into the string, but merely balance the weight from the base knuckles on the string. This free and relaxed finger action is vital to all aspects of left hand technique.

R

In fact, Havas (1973: 41) equates tone with intonation, as well as with vibrato, in a composite concept of "touch" – these are all aspects of a beautiful sound and all require the free and unforced action of the left hand fingers on the strings. The basis for her belief that the quality of tone depends on the quality of "touch" in the left hand (Havas, 1964: 30), is that any rigidity in the left hand finger action will disturb "the full play of the compound sound wave systems" (i.e. the full range of overtones), resulting in a hard, dead sound (Havas: 1964: 31).

U-m

Dr Alexander Wood, *The Physics of Music*, as cited in Havas, 1973: 40:

It is generally recognized that the manner of stopping has a paramount influence on tone-production. This makes the intended tone quality differ from what is actually produced. Hard and liquescent stopping, false intonation, uneven vibrato, insecure change of position, etc., are in part all due to poorly developed touching that is incapable of adaptation.

U

U-m

Rigidity is usually a greater problem in the left hand than the right hand, as the downward pressure of the fingers causes instant and unavoidable counter pressure in the thumb underneath, or on the side of the neck (Havas, 1973: 40). Havas (1973: 43) believes the desire for a flexible thumb will remain unfulfilled while there is vertical pressure from the fingers on the fingerboard, a danger inherent in the very concept of a vertical finger action, as is mostly taught in orthodox methods.

**U-m**

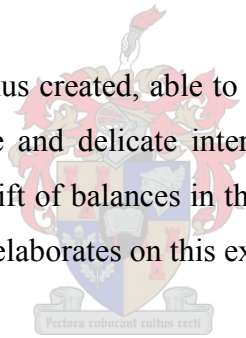
Through taking the attention away from what appears to be doing the movement, i.e. the finger tips, and placing it on the base joints, the movement can be felt as a horizontal swing, or a light lateral slide (Havas, 1973: 44) from the base knuckle, while the finger itself holds no tension. A slight backward tilt in the base knuckle (i.e. towards to scroll), further eliminates vertical pressure on the string. This movement allows the thumb to act as “a ‘counter balance’ to the finger action, rather than a ‘counter pressure’” (Havas, 1973: 45).

**D**

An alive and sensitive hand is thus created, able to respond to the imaginative use of the inner ear in intonation, tone and delicate interval colouring, and all ultimately dependent on “the continuous shift of balances in the left hand finger action” (Havas, 1964: 76). Kenneson (1974: 41) elaborates on this expressive use of the left hand:

**U-i**

**MW**



The New Approach involves the player with the act of touching the instrument in such a way that he becomes totally committed to a spontaneous awareness of contact between fingertips and strings. The left-hand gestures (which give physical form to the music) culminate in a tactile experience that sends back information endlessly to the nervous system, which is constantly modulating movement. The body becomes the transmitter of music, and the tactile awareness allows sensory feedback to constantly organize the automatic machinery of the living body. The player soon enjoys ‘feeling’ the music passing through his body in gestures, and he ceases to observe the physical acts visually for the sake of directing them consciously. (Kenneson, 1974: 41.)

**SA-i**

**SA**

**D-w  
SA; CF**

**I**

**D**

#### **4.4.5 Touch**

Tactile awareness is a major consideration in the New Approach, as is apparent from the above quotation. Many of the problems of tension and rigidity that violinists struggle with, arise from the body’s physical response to touching the instrument (Kenneson, 1974: 11). Havas (1973: 54) points out that there is a great incongruity

**SA**

**U-m**



between the fluid, “liquid” sound that is desired, and the hard wooden feel of the instrument on which this sound is to be produced.

Havas, 1973: 54 – 55:

We all know we should not be rigid. We would all like to have a mobile, flexible, and responsive left hand, darting up and down the violin with great ease. But we also know that, alas, the hand more often than not, refuses to oblige...as our tactile senses respond by nature to the substance of any given texture, there is constant (albeit only subconscious) conflict in the player between his aural desire and the tactile realities...from the third position onward, when the main body of the violin is also involved with our ‘touch’ – the tactile sensitivity of the thumb and wrist is quick to respond to the rigid hardness of wood it encounters. And the more true this is, the more difficult it is to attempt any vibrato – not to mention the shift.

**SA**

**U-m**

There is often a lack of sensory awareness of the hand in its contact with the instrument, as these places of contact are not in the direct line of vision (Havas, 1973: 56). Through noticing the exact contact points and then consciously softening the touch against the instrument, with a very light stroking action of the thumb or hand, it is possible to experience a sensation like stroking silk or satin (Havas, 1973: 56). Consciously fostering this “soft, silk-and-satin tactile image” (Havas, 1973: 60) in contact with the instrument, creates a corresponding release and softening in the hand and thumb, to a far greater degree than the instruction to relax is usually able to do.

**SA-I**

**A-e; D-I**

**SA-i**

**U-i**

This principle applies to the contact points between the chin and neck and the violin as well. The thought that the chin-rest is made of silk and satin, feeling soft to the touch, helps to elicit a corresponding feeling of softness in the body (Havas, 1973: 23). Clamping down on the chin-rest, which results in a feeling of hardness and resistance in the contact between body and instrument, can be recognised clearly in contrast, and avoided.

**SA-i**

**U-i**

**PC-m**

**I**

Imagining that the instrument is alive (which is easy to do since its parts are named after the human body: neck, back and ribs), can also influence the touch on the instrument, especially when the violinist is able to identify the neck of the violin with his own, and to transfer the quality of touch that he would use on his own neck to that of the instrument (Havas, 1973: 99).

**SA**

Through nurturing sensory awareness, the New Approach not only eliminates the tensions inherent in touching the instrument, but also helps to create a greater consciousness of kinaesthetic and tactile feedback, which is necessary for effective mental practise (Freymuth, 1999: 33). Mental representations of movements are created from memories of physical sensations (Freymuth, 1999: 22), in order to construct a “master record” of the playing actions, as described by Kreisler (as cited in Freymuth, 1999: 21)<sup>1</sup>. Havas often refers to the feeling of a movement, and advises that the imagination be used to recreate that feeling, along with the required sound, before actually playing:

**SA-i; I**

**A-e**

**D-q**

**D-q**

This pre-conception is not a question of talent – it is merely a matter of training...And the fusion of the two, both of feeling and of hearing the sound *before* touching it, eliminates the long stages of mechanical struggle with the fingers. (Havas, 1964: 34.)

**D-q**

**I**

An acute sensory awareness of how the body is moved and used, is not only essential for effective mental practising, but also for developing an effective physical technique itself (Freymuth, 1999: 42). It is the kinaesthetic sense that “allows us to judge the timing, force, and extent of our movements and to make the necessary adjustments in the wake of this information” (Gardner, 1985: 210). The body’s feedback mechanisms are highly complex, with a great variety of neural and muscular mechanisms working together in a highly differentiated and integrated manner, continuously refining and regulating the motor movements in relation to the intended goal state (Gardner, 1985: 211).

**SA**

Havas (1973: 113) always relates the touch to the resulting quality of sound, the ultimate goal of the New Approach. The light, sensitive touching as taught in the New Approach - eliminating any pressure in the fingertip on the string (Havas, 1968: 84) – allows for the feedback of rich sensory information, through which movements are continually adjusted in order to precisely convey the musical intent of the performer. This is only possible, however, if the playing gestures are allowed to unfold subcortically (Kenneson, 1974: 42), and the player can “let it happen” without interfering through conscious physical efforts.

**D-q**

**SA-i**

**CF**

**I**

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.3.

Kenneson, 1974: 43:

The balanced hand and the resilient, sensitive touch release one from the idea that the fingertip-string relationship is immediately responsible for musical results. The fingertips become integrated into the total physical gesture, and their touching is both the final expression of a movement, and the means by which sensory feedback is sent to the nervous system, which modulates movement.

SA

It is the inner ear that directs the left hand fingers in touching the string to shape the melody (Havas, 1964: 68), and it is imperative that “every sound, without exception, must be directed according to its musical meaning” (Kenneson, 1974: 33), as a habit of mechanical, musically-unrelated practising may impede a player’s musical progress.

D

MW

EG

#### 4.4.6 The inner ear

Havas places great emphasis on stimulating a creative musical imagination through developing the inner ear, which ultimately directs all physical playing actions. “The more important, more necessary, and most basic requirement of all musicians, especially violinists (is) the development of the inner ear” (Havas, 1973: 75). Musicians are often so caught up in overcoming difficulties on their instruments that they are completely unaware of the inner ear (Havas, 1973: 75), but it is only the inner ear that “can link the player to the depth and inner core of the music” (Havas, 1973: 76) and it needs the same regular, systematic training as the physical aspects of technique. Havas (1964: 34) believes that the sound should be “a living conception” for a violinist, before the fingers even touch the string, much as an author or painter mentally conceives the idea for a book or painting long before the physical act of creating it.

D

EG

D-q

In order for the imagination of the inner ear to function properly, it is necessary to develop it away from the instrument (Havas, 1973: 76). Music is sourced internally from a “heightened awareness and sensitivity of all the passions, joys and sorrows of human nature” (Havas, 1973: 76), which in turn is nurtured by an active interest in many aspects of life and art, not only music. Understanding the background to a composition, and being familiar with a composer’s cultural milieu as well as his sound-world (through listening to a great variety of his works), is essential in order

for the inner ear to “conjure up the texture and sound best suited to a particular composition” (Havas, 1973: 76).

Through the vivid use of imagery, the characterisation of intervals (happy major third, tragic semitone, etc) and singing the notes while rhythmically clapping the pulse, a creative attitude is stimulated right from the beginning (Havas, 1973: 114).

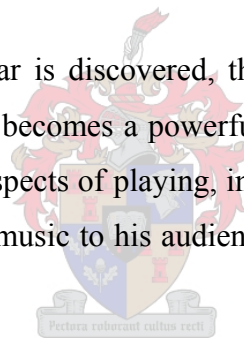
**MW**

Havas, 1973: 19:

Few violinists realise that singing (with the rhythmic pulse), away from their instruments, is one of the greatest releases from tension and anxiety in violin playing, apart from being the real inner source of their musical impulses. For, how can one possibly communicate if the music itself (the tune with its rhythmic pulse) is not established in the very soul of one’s being? In order to achieve this, the aural image must be allowed to develop freely, without the impediments of an instrument. Our artistic potential can be realized only if we learn to become musicians first and violinists second.

**D**

Once the power of the inner ear is discovered, there is a continual increase in its perception and creativity, and it becomes a powerful force that can enable a violinist to forget about all the external aspects of playing, including himself, so that he is able to communicate the core of the music to his audience (Havas, 1973: 77). Havas goes on to say:



**D**  
**CF**

...this state of bliss is only possible if a free-flowing channel of total motion and balance has been established. If there is the slightest physical blockage caused by rigidity in any given part of the body...the imagination of the inner ear stops functioning. For just as in everyday life our limbs translate our thoughts into actions, so in violin playing the inside-outward rhythmic energy impulses become transmitters of the musical imagination. (Havas, 1973: 77).

**PB**  
**U-m**

**D-w**

A balanced use of the body, free from excess tension, enables quick physiological reactions to be made to the direction of the musical imagination, and allows the inner ear to function unhampered (Havas, 1973: 77). Any rigidity in the body “prevents spontaneous reaction in our sensory perception” (Havas, 1973: 72), and so aural feedback is greatly facilitated when tensions are released.

**PB**  
**D-w**  
**U-m**  
**SA-u**  
**SA-i**

The sensitivity of the inner ear is also closely connected with the “co-ordinated aural and physical reaction to the pitch” (Havas, 1973: 76). In *The twelve lesson course*

(1964), Havas gives extensive exercises to train the mind in pre-hearing the pitch, coupled to the corresponding touch required for that particular note, so that the fingers are put under the control of the inner ear: as the note is heard inwardly a fraction before it is played, the fingers automatically find their place. Galamian (1985: 20) supports this view:

**D-q**

**D-w**

Eventually, this skill develops to a point where the mere act of mentally preparing the movement and thinking the sound of the desired pitch will be sufficient to cause the fingers automatically to hit the right places on the strings with accuracy. (Galamian, 1985: 20.)

**D-w**

With a resilient and flexible touch, there can also be a spontaneous adjustment the moment the finger touches the string (Havas, 1964: 32), should it be necessary. Conversely, if the finger is unable to respond to the corrective demands of the ear because of pressing too hard into the string, the inner ear will eventually stop functioning (Havas, 1973: 41), leading to great anxiety with regard to intonation, and blocking creativity.

**SA-i**

**U-m**

**SA-u**

**U-m**

The listening of the inner ear always takes place a moment before actually playing, “conjuring up and transporting all the information it has absorbed into active imagination of the music at hand...So by its very nature of creativity it is always ahead, compelling the player to pursue it” (Havas, 1973: 77). In this anticipatory inner hearing, attention is so focused that a player has no time to be distracted by critical self-talk, and the body is given a clear sense of its goal (cf Green & Gallway, 1986: 75).

**D**

**A; I**

**D**

#### **4.4.7 Automation of technique**

Playing the violin is a highly complex activity, requiring a high degree of coordination. Not only do arms, hands and fingers have to work together in order to produce a single sound, but the interaction between mind and body also needs to be synchronized effectively. It is impossible to consciously control all of these processes at the same time, or to attain total coordination from a set of rules (Havas, 1973: 28).

**D-w**

**CF**

Hellebrandt, 1970: 479:

...upon what does the player concentrate in the midst of this profusion of central nervous system and neuromuscular activity?...He has only one concern, hearing inwardly the idea inherent in the musical symbols read, and not preoccupation with the details of the operation of the physical body used as his medium of expression.

**D**  
**CF**

Kenneson (1974: 90) states that it is impossible to have cortical control over movement and at the same time still focus on the music. The inner hearing of the music alone becomes the co-ordinating factor, triggering and uniting the diverse actions involved in playing the violin. When the music has been conceptualised very clearly, it can be sung directly through the instrument. An analogy could be made with the act of speaking: the actual moving of the lips or tongue is not the conscious focus, but the mental concept is expressed automatically and directly through these physical movements.

**CF**  
**D-q**  
**D**  
**CF**  
**D-w**

Havas (1973: 114) found that a very effective way to connect the imagination with the actual skill of playing is to mime the playing movements without the instrument, while singing the notes. In this way, the playing gestures are programmed so that singing the note-name with the inner musical voice will cue the beginning of the movement (at the motivating key points of the fundamental balances), while rhythmically pulsing the note “keeps the gesture operative throughout the duration of the tone” (Kenneson, 1974: 50). Singing is the mental direction to which the body responds when the player is able to simply “let it happen” (Kenneson, 1974: 51).

**D-q**  
**D**  
**R**  
**D**  
**CF**

It is, however, very important that the mental direction be very clear, in order for it to become a stimulus capable of eliciting the whole movement pattern (Kenneson, 1974: 51). The singing should therefore initially be done out loud while miming, as well as while actually playing on the instrument, as “there is every indication that until this device is habituated, there is danger of its use fading in favor of concentration on the particulars of the physical action” (Kenneson, 1974: 51).

**D-q**

Kenneson, 1974: 75:

When there is a clarity of the ideational objective, the command is bold, and the triggering device works. If the ideational objective is vague, the command lacks definite direction. Command follows conceptualisation. Once the total

**D-q**  
**D**

response is triggered, then the player must allow it to run its course in a pliant way always responsive to the messages streaming from the points of contact.

CF  
A-e

When the body is in a state of natural balance, the left and right hands are spontaneously coordinated while they create the rhythm of the interval gestured in the left hand (Kenneson, 1974: 68), as dictated by the inner musical voice. While those who favour bow-directed playing have criticised the New Approach for the dominance of the left hand, Kenneson (1974: 62) points out that, in fact, “no more than a mechanical rhythm can be produced with the bowing if the bowing is not an integral part of the total bodily response”. Furthermore, the tone produced from the integration of both left and right hands differs substantially in quality from “that which results from a mechanical motivation in the bowing arm itself, which is cortically controlled and does not evolve naturally” (Kenneson, 1974: 64).

PB  
D

Kenneson (1974: 59) gives a short summary of the automation of technique in the New Approach:

When the mind and the body are coordinated to work in this way, the musical ideas will emerge in a positive physical form. Once fundamental skills have been mastered, there is no need for cortical control of the physical aspects of playing. The mind will issue the orders which automatically programme the acts needed. These acts evolve naturally because the physical gestures allow the player the sensuous pleasure of touching the instrument, ‘knowing’ the feel of the technical procedures rather than thinking about them and directing them from the mind. (Kenneson, 1974: 59.)

D-w  
CF  
D  
CF  
SA  
CF

#### 4.5 The scientific base of the New Approach

A brief overview of the scientific basis of the New Approach is helpful not only for attaining an in-depth understanding of the procedures and practises advocated by Havas, but also for drawing parallels with the Alexander Technique in Chapter Five.

##### 4.5.1 Gestalt

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (ed Sykes, 1976) describes gestalt as the “perceived organized whole that is more than the sum of its parts, e.g. a melody as distinct from the separate notes of it”. The New Approach has been appraised in the light of gestalt theory by several physicians and scientists, most notably by Dr. Ivan Wright, an eminent Canadian physician, and the renowned biologist and researcher, Dr. FA



Hellebrandt<sup>1</sup>. Their articles appeared in *The Strad* as part of the debate around the New Approach that raged in that publication from 1960 to 1970<sup>2</sup>.

Dr. Wright explored the similarities between the philosophy of the New Approach and the essence of Polnauer's research in senso-motor study as applied to violin playing. Polnauer's conclusion was that the motion gestalt, where the whole predominates, "is of paramount importance for the optimal performance of any skilled activity, be it ballet dancing, figure skating or playing the violin" (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 91).

**PC**

Gestalt theory is based on optimal balance, and holds that the whole determines the parts, as opposed to atomistically oriented thinking that the whole is merely the sum total of its parts, which leads to a preoccupation with part function (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 91). Thinking about each separate action only serves to inhibit the body's natural reflex actions, causing neuralgic and muscular tensions and difficulties (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 86). Instead of working from smaller actions to build up a whole, the New Approach exemplifies gestalt theory, as it is based on "the larger basic motions of the relaxed body, freeing the shoulders, arms, wrists and fingers to follow their own natural reflex actions" (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 86).

**PB**

**U-m**

**U-m**

**PC**

**R**

Wright gives a summary of a practical demonstration of a motion gestalt, as proposed by Polnauer, which is remarkably similar to what Havas teaches regarding miming before playing (cf Havas, 1973: 23, 33+). The playing positions are simulated without the violin, after which the instrument is placed without disturbing the positions naturally derived in the first stage. While repeating the movements with the instrument, the physical actions and the accompanying sensations should closely match those experienced while miming. Any unnatural position that was not present in the simulation phase, such as an elbow raised out of proportion to where it was without the instrument, will be noticed due to an awareness of increased tension and interference in the coordination of the movement (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 91).

**SA**

**U-m**

**SA-i**

<sup>1</sup> See 4.3.1 and 4.2.3 respectively.

<sup>2</sup> References prior to 1968 are from Havas (1968). See 4.2.3.

In this way a natural, dynamic posture can be achieved. A posture is dynamic when the body is involved in an activity, and it serves as an efficient background to movement (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92). It cannot be derived from specific rules or specifications, but is based on natural balance. The necessary postural adjustments demanded by the complex activity of playing the violin can only be made through the use of balance, and the dynamic posture allows this to happen “with maximum efficiency and minimum effort” (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92). A body in balance is in control, and in a state of relaxed relationship with the instrument, so that it is free to respond to the demands of the creative imagination (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 86).

**PB**

**PB**

**D-w**

Through this dynamic posture, a self-perpetuating process of balance is set in motion, as “the creation of balance demands further balance” (Havas, 1961: 17). However, Havas points out that the converse is also true: tension in one part of the body will create more tension elsewhere, and so a teacher has to be able to recognize exactly where the real origin of the problem lies (Havas, 1961: 57): tension in the right hand might be caused by tension in the left arm or hand, for instance. Wright (as cited in Havas, 1968: 92) discusses this phenomenon of “co-innervation”, where tensions are set up in distantly related parts of the whole body. Although co-innervation is a natural mechanism whereby stronger muscles reinforce weaker ones in mass movement patterns, it can cause great interference in any skilled activity if it is not controlled. Through a technique based on natural balance, hidden tensions can be resolved, in order to enable any player to function at his optimal neuro-muscular ability (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92).

**PB**

**U-m**

**T-g**

**U-m**

**U-m**

**PB**

**I; U-i**

Polnauer’s second hypothesis requires that “the highest degree of motility of the whole body must exist as a prerequisite for achieving an optimal total body technique” (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 93). Through cultivating the use of interrelated, fluid joints, the New Approach ensures a condition of the least unnecessary tension in the muscles and minimal resistance to movement, allowing for the greatest economy of effort (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 93).

**U**

**MW**

**U-i**

Hellebrandt (1970b: 477) also concludes that the New Approach is based on natural movements that are gestalt entities, consisting of “many muscles embracing the integrated use of the body as a whole”. She gives an in-depth assessment of the biological foundations on which the New Approach rests, explaining its techniques in terms of mechanisms known to control and regulate coordinated movements (Hellebrandt, 1969: 277).

**R**

#### 4.5.2 The Hellebrandt articles

Hellebrandt’s exposition of the neuro-physiological and biomechanical rationale of Havas’s teaching, gave the New Approach a solid scientific basis (Kenneson, 1974: 12). In the first article, Hellebrandt demonstrates how the New Approach is based essentially on primal, built-in patterns of coordination (1969: 277), and on natural movements that affect “the musculature of the body as a whole in patterns of activity controlled and regulated subcortically” (1969: 421). Havas’s teaching devices trigger and allow “the automatic running of natural movement patterns and primitive built-in reflex responses to postural sets” (Hellebrandt 1970b: 475), so that playing the violin becomes more natural and easy.

**R**

**R  
KE**

While these natural movements are spontaneous and effortless, it is not easy to release the domination of the mind in order to *let it happen*. Although the violin is played by “volitional neuro-muscular acts” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 473), much of every willed act is, in fact, both involuntary and outside consciousness (Hellebrandt, 1969: 361). As motor learning difficulties are often due to self-imposed interferences (Hellebrandt, 1969: 365), a pupil needs to be “sufficiently in command of his higher centres” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 363) in order to inhibit unnecessary cortical involvement while carrying out motor movements, once he has understood what to do. Learning to activate only “the key cues capable of unlocking the neuromuscular machinery” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 277) in reflexive movement, demands sustained mental concentration.

**KE**

**U-m**

**I**

**D**

**R; A**

Through experimentation, Hellebrandt (1969: 305) found the New Approach stance to be “the most stable of all postures”. Havas positions the body in a comfortable, easy stance (with and without the violin), in which it is able to seek and find its own balance (Hellebrandt, 1969: 279). The balanced body is allowed to make the

**PB**

necessary biomechanical adjustments in handling the instrument, without a conscious effort to control the process (Hellebrandt, 1969: 307) or to place the instrument or body in preconceived, fixed positions.

**CF**  
**U-m**

This stance also frees the shoulder girdle, so that the natural balances required for the suspension of the arms can be established without interference. As many of the muscles that attach to the head are also connected to the shoulder girdle and upper back (Hellebrandt, 1969: 307), it is vitally important that there should be no tension in holding the violin – clamping down with the chin will cause involuntary stiffening in this area. Though eliminating the violin hold in the New Approach<sup>1</sup>, these muscles remain free, so that the shoulder joints can move without restraint, allowing the right and left hands to function effectively (Hellebrandt, 1969: 307).

**PC-i**  
**PC-m**  
**I**  
**PC-i**

Hellebrandt (1970b: 475) found that the distinctive way that the violin and bow are held in the New Approach<sup>2</sup>, serves to inhibit the opposition of the thumb, and so automatically suppresses the common tendency to grasp the neck of the instrument or the bow reflexively. Thumb and finger opposition allows man to manipulate objects precisely, “but the violinist...should not manipulate his instrument” (Hellebrandt, 1970a: 429), as this tends to cause much interference. The ideal in an expressive technique is that the violin and bow should be an extension of the living body, through which the imagination can be expressed. However, as “the body (is) a subcortically controlled instrument of expression” (Hellebrandt, 1970a: 429), an attempt to consciously manipulate the violin or bow will ultimately hinder this relationship.

**I**  
**U-m**  
**D-w**  
**U-m**

Only when the thumb and fingers are functionally dissociated, can the fingers be free for unrestricted and independent action (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 475), which is crucially important in developing an effective left hand technique. While all violin schools admonish pupils not to grip the neck of the violin or the bow, tension in the left hand and the bowing arm still remains the most common problem among violinists (Hellebrandt, 1970a: 429). Although her teaching in this regard is the most

**U-m**

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<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.4.  
<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.4.

unorthodox aspect of her method, Havas seems to be the only one to offer a real solution to this problem of reflexive grasping.

The activity of the thumb also determines “whether the hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder will be allowed to operate as one magnificently integrated system of levers, adjusting without strain to the demands of the music” (Hellebrandt, 1970a: 429). Bowing technique is not divided into several discrete actions that are developed separately, but consists of “natural total limb synergies” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 475) that depend on freedom of movement in all the joints of the arm, which in turn is influenced to a large degree by the freedom and flexibility of the thumb.

In discussing the role of the mind in the New Approach, Hellebrandt (1970b: 475) clarifies “the perceptual arrays that precede the act of playing”. Once the physical balances have been established, the printed note is presented as a sensory cue for the sound produced by the instrument. This visual cue is then given “an auditory facet and rhythmic proprioceptive background” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 475) through singing and pulsing the music before playing. Once this has been internalised, and the pupil is able to hear the music inwardly with the appropriate dynamics, he or she is taught “how to yoke this configuration of objective and subjective cues to that complex of proprioceptive patterns evoked by receptors in muscles, tendons and joints” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 475) in the act of physically playing the instrument. Saying the note name is the key cue that triggers the whole of the physical response, greatly simplifying the conscious process.

Hellebrandt (1970b: 477) analyses the way in which the desired behavioural pattern is programmed in coded form before being carried out. Through feedback loops, the resulting physical act is compared with the original image, “envisioned in all complexity of feeling and sound” (Hellebrandt 1970b: 477). The biological processes involved are described in detail, from the way the code is transposed into neural patterns that prompt motor activity, to the sensory inputs that stimulate primitive structures in the brain stem, the cortex as whole, and finally the limbic system where affective states are aroused.

**U**

**R**

**D**

**D-q**

**D-q**

**SA**

**D**

**D**

**SA**

Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477:

Reading ahead, the player programmes in advance of the execution of each passage. Throughout he is communicating what the music means to him....Although the whole is a process of immense complexity it runs its course with effortless grace when the motivational drive is directed at the expression of a musical content meaningful to a player conditioned to 'let it happen' without cortical interference.

**D**  
**KE**  
**D-w**  
**CF**

As much of what happens is regulated autonomously, and cannot be introspected or voluntarily controlled, the New Approach does not place great emphasis on the neuromuscular details of how the end-result is attained (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477). Havas (1973: 28) clearly states that it is not possible to learn total coordination from a set of rules, or even the study of neurophysiology, kinesiology or biomechanical motor behaviour. "Only the over-all perfection of our human mechanism" (Havas, 1973: 28), relying on an instinctive and organic movement pattern, can ensure this coordination.

**U; PC**  
**R**

The importance of touch cannot be underestimated in this process, as the continuous stream of sensory input is the "ultimate source of all willed movements" (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477), and also the means whereby these movements are refined continually, whether the sensory feedback reaches conscious awareness or not. "It is the patterns of these exteroceptive and proprioceptive directives which must be learnt, not the patterns of movement" (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477). This is precisely what the light, resilient touching of the New Approach accomplishes: it evokes rich sensory input which is "fed back to the arousal system in the brain stem, the limbic lobe and the neo-cortex" (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 479), driving the motor centres and continually modulating the responses of the muscles, so that the tone is infused with warmth and vitality.

**SA**

**SA-i**

Hellebrandt, 1970a: 423:

'Let it happen', says Havas, and when it does the violin becomes an extension of a responsive, living body, itself transformed into an instrument of expression capable of recreating every nuance of the composer's intent.

**CF**

### 4.5.3 Flow

This freedom of musical self-expression, where musical thought is directly translated into sound, without interference from either the body or the mind, is the greatest desire of any performing musician, and Havas (1973: 77) calls this condition a “state of bliss”. The many testimonies of people who have experienced it through applying New Approach principles confirm her claim.

D-w

Though they are too numerous to recount, common responses from both professional and amateur violinists tend to refer to the joy, assurance and seeming effortlessness that they experience in their playing. One amateur violinist described it as a “miracle of ease and assurance” (Crommelin, as cited in Havas, 1968: 89), and a teacher tells of the “glory and incredulous delight” of a pupil “when the violin becomes alive in his hands” (Jones, as cited in Havas, 1968: 76). The violinist Olivier Bonnici (1988: 7) gives a similar account: “the exhilaration of ease I began to experience was overwhelming...It is difficult to describe the feeling of joy when the violin begins to sing almost of its own accord”.

KE

KE

Werner Ehrhardt, the leader and musical director of the acclaimed chamber orchestra *Concerto Köln*, writes: “every single New Approach exercise is in the service of musical communication and the coordination of it all allows the music to take over and flow through the body and the instrument” (Ehrhardt, 2003: 6). The term *inside-outwards energy flow* is often used to describe this essential quality of the New Approach (cf Kreith, 2002: 4).

D-w

Havas, 1992: 1:

Most players have experienced moments of overwhelming bliss with a powerful energy flow that transcends all physical difficulties and a feeling of being one with the magic of the music.

KE; CF

In this statement, Havas gives a very articulate description of optimal experience as it is defined by the social scientist Csikszentmihalyi (1990), who has extensively researched this phenomenon which he calls “flow”. His own description of flow is, in turn, remarkably similar to the accounts given by Havas and New Approach students.



Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 53:

...the most universal and distinctive features of optimal experience (is that) people become so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing.

**KE; CF**

The word “flow” was chosen as a name for optimal experience, as it captures this “sense of seeming effortless movement” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 54), and was often used by the people interviewed during the research, to describe their experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 40). The research indicates that “optimal experience, and the psychological conditions that make it possible, seem to be the same the world over” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 49). It is possible to validate the claims of heightened experience made by Havas and her students in the light of Csikszentmihalyi’s research, as the conditions for flow are all complied with in the New Approach.

**KE**

**KE**

In flow, a “joyous, self-forgetful involvement through concentration” is achieved (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 105). Activities that are conducive to flow are usually geared towards providing enjoyable experiences, and they are structured in such a way that flow is also made easier to achieve (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 72). This is done primarily through bringing order to consciousness and thereby enhancing the quality of experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 58), as the normal state of consciousness tends towards entropy, or chaos, which is not an enjoyable condition to be in (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 119). Flow experiences therefore occur mostly in “goal-directed” activities that require attention and skill (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 49), as the clearly structured demands of such activities “impose order, and exclude the interference of disorder in consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 58). Setting a clear goal, concentrating one’s “psychic energy” and paying attention to the feedback are all essential parts of this process (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 190).

**CF**

**A**

**I**

**U-m**

**D; SA**

Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 54:

Although the flow experience appears to be effortless, it is far from being so. It often requires strenuous physical exertion, or highly disciplined mental activity. It does not happen without the application of skilled performance. Any lapse in concentration will erase it. And yet while it lasts consciousness works smoothly, action follows action seamlessly.

**A**

**KE**

This is certainly true of the New Approach: even though the application of the method leads to a sense of effortlessness and ease in playing the violin, the assimilation of the approach itself is not easy, as it demands strenuous mental discipline and concentration (Havas, 1964: Introduction). Order is consequently brought to consciousness, through the “meaningful organization of thought processes, which focuses the mental concentration on a musical idea” (Kenneson, 1974: 10)<sup>1</sup>.

**KE**  
**A**  
**D; A**

The New Approach satisfies the requirements for clear goals and sustained concentration: the exercises are clearly formulated<sup>2</sup>, and the mental practise that Havas (1964: 2) advocates, further serves to clarify goals – imagining and/or miming a movement away from the instrument, really focuses the mind on the precise objective of the exercise<sup>3</sup>. The individual balances are first established one by one before they are co-ordinated in a balanced whole<sup>4</sup>, and each step is to be mastered before continuing to the next (Havas, 1964: 53). The goals, or challenges that are presented, are therefore always appropriate to the skill (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 190+), so that the pupil has a chance of completing them successfully - an important prerequisite for flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 49).

**D; A**  
**D**  
**A**  
**PB**  
**T-g**

The ability to focus one’s attention, another a pre-condition for flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 31), is indispensable in developing a skill: Havas (1964: 2) emphasizes that good violin playing “depends on the co-ordination of a host of delicate balances which in turn demand a high degree of mental discipline”. Practising in the New Approach is never to consist of mindless, mechanical repetition, but all movements are to be performed with full concentration on the musical concepts that motivate them (Kenneson, 1974: 33).

**A**  
**PB; A**  
**D**

Mental or physical interferences are systematically uncovered and eliminated in the New Approach (Havas, 1964: Introduction), thereby minimizing the distractions that can “disrupt consciousness by threatening its goals” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 37), and improving the ability to focus attention<sup>5</sup>. All the mental and physical processes

**U-m; I**  
**U-m**  
**A**

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.3 and 5.2.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.4.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.4.3.

<sup>4</sup> See 4.4.4.

<sup>5</sup> See 4.3.2.

required in playing the violin are further co-ordinated into a single point of mental control (Havas, 1961: 2; Hellebrandt, 1970: 479), allowing the player to forget about everything but the moment of music in which he is absorbed<sup>1</sup>.

**D**  
**CF**

Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 62:

When an activity is thoroughly engrossing, there is not enough attention left over to...consider either the past or the future, or any other temporarily irrelevant stimuli. One item that disappears from awareness deserves special mention...our own selves.

In the deep, effortless involvement of flow activities, concern for the self disappears (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 49), which appears to be an enjoyable experience for most people (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 64). As preoccupation with the self expends a lot of “psychic energy” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 63), it is a hindrance and distraction to focusing attention on the activity at hand, thus prohibiting flow. This “elimination of the self” is the final step and ultimate goal in the New Approach, as true communication can only begin when a player is able to forget about him- or herself: “for with the elimination of the self he is able to reach the very core of the music and through the interplay of co-ordinated balances is free to transmit it to the audience” (Havas, 1973: 77). Havas (1973: 77) directly relates this ability to forget the self to the “state of bliss” (i.e. flow) experienced when the violinist becomes one with the instrument in transmitting the music.

**CF-p**  
**U-m**  
**I**  
**I**  
**D-w**  
**CF**

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 205), achieving unity with one’s surroundings (or in the musician’s case, his or her instrument), is an important component of enjoyable flow experiences:

**A-e**

The person whose attention is immersed in the environment becomes part of it – she participates in the system by linking herself to it through psychic energy. This, in turn, makes it possible for her to understand the properties of the system, so that she can find a better way to adapt to a problematic situation. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 205.)

**A-e**

The musician becomes one with the violin in a symbiotic partnership, when there are no physical or mental blockages to distract from the attention given to the feedback

**A-e**  
**SA-i**

<sup>1</sup> Cf Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 60. See also 4.4.7.

provided by this “system” (cf Havas, 1973: 77). The way in which the body is used has a direct influence on the way the violin will respond, and the acoustical properties of the instrument dictates the way in which it should be handled in order to obtain the musical result desired. Only keen attention given to both the aural feedback and the physical touch will enable the continual refinement of motor movements in relation to the desired musical goal<sup>1</sup>.

**U**

**A-e**

Havas always relates the touch to the resulting quality of sound (1973: 113), and stresses that a feeling of ease in the playing movements and good sound always go together (1964: 19). The attitude to the instrument that she encourages in her pupils, greatly increases sensitivity to this aural and tactile feedback. The violin is regarded as being alive (Havas, 1973: 21), and its well-being is paramount at all times: it complains with a scratchy tone when mistreated, and it responds with a beautiful tone when it likes the way it is being touched (Havas, personal communication, Jul 2003). As a result, a “whole new relationship develops with the violin” (Bonnici, 1988: 7). The interaction between player and instrument becomes very intimate and responsive, as the violin is no longer merely an inanimate object to be manipulated, but a living partner in the act of making music.

**SA**

**KE; U-i**

**A-e**

**A-e**

The violinist’s experience of physical comfort and enjoyment is a very high priority in the New Approach (Bonnici, 1988: 1), and the importance of this is supported by Csikszentmihalyi’s research. He found that music can become a source of psychic disorder instead of flow for pupils, if “too much emphasis is placed on how they perform, and too little on what they experience” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 112).

**KE**

**T-g**

**T-n**

In applying Csikszentmihalyi’s flow concept practically to playing an instrument, Burzik (2003: 714) comes to many of the same conclusions as Havas, though completely independently of her teaching, as he has never encountered the New Approach (Burzik, personal communication, Sept 2003). Like Havas, he emphasizes the importance of “consciously attuning to the quality of touch” at the contact points with the instrument, which allows the hands and fingers to seem automatically to

**SA-i**

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Gardner, 1985: 111, 276.

“fine-tune themselves to the requirements at these sound-forming points” (Burzik, 2003: 715).

**A-e**

Burzik, 2003: 715:

Sensitised fingertips convey a wonderful, fresh, malleable, even sensual feeling, forming a sharp contrast to a finger merely stopping the string as though nailed to the spot. Besides greater security of intonation this special quality of left hand touch has an immediate effect on tone production.

**SA-i**

**U-m**

**U-i**

The similarities between Burzik’s teaching, which is specifically geared to achieving flow, and Havas’s ideas<sup>1</sup> concerning the left hand touch, are very clear from the above citation. There are also deep parallels in philosophy regarding interferences: Burzik (2003: 718) mentions various “inner dispositions” that get in the way of accessing the flow-state, such as fear, over-ambition, impatience, and striving for perfection. In *Stage fright* (1973), Havas deals extensively with these anxieties, giving very practical advice for eliminating them, and in so doing, paving the way for the violinist to enter into flow.

**SA**

**U-m**

**EG**

**I; U-i**

Csikszentmihalyi’s research revealed that a disciplined use of the body could lead to “a joyous, self-forgetful involvement through concentration” (1990: 105), and also that activities incorporating rhythmic movements can generate flow (1990: 99). The New Approach emphasizes both a disciplined use of the body<sup>2</sup> and the importance and centrality of the rhythmic pulse<sup>3</sup>.

However, physical movements alone do not produce flow, as the mind will always be involved as well: “flow cannot be a purely physical process: muscles and brain must be equally involved” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 96). Havas (1992: 6) also stresses this holistic aspect of flow: “for the player to experience the ‘magical’ quality in music, the body, mind and spirit have to become a unified whole”.

**D-w**

From the above, it is patently clear that the New Approach “is an enormously strong force which moulds one’s musical thoughts and physical prowess into a unified

**D-w**

<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas: 1964: 76. See 4.4.4, 4.4.5 and 4.5.2.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.3.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.4.2.

performing experience” (Kenneson, 1974: 10), leading to the blissful experience of flow.

#### 4.6 Summary and conclusion

Central to the New Approach, is the premise that the violin and the bow are extensions of the living body. As the body is an instrument of expression that is controlled sub-cortically (Hellebrandt, 1970: 429), it stands to reason that movements relating to the instrument will be controlled sub-cortically in performance as well, if there is to be no obstruction between hearing the music inwardly and the outer physical action that is required to translate the musical intention into sound. Havas achieves this through first preparing the body and the mind individually, and then co-ordinating all the parts into a unified whole with a single, central point of control, through which the player is able to release all his energy and musical imagination.

CF  
D-w  
D

Through the use of the fundamental balances, a body free of tension, cortical domination and interference is developed. The concept of a *violin hold* or *bow hold* is eliminated, and an effortless handling of both instrument and bow are obtained (a) through balance, and (b) by avoiding the opposition of the thumb, which leads to reflexive grasping and interference from the manipulation of the fingers. Every movement is reduced to the source of its motivation, enabling it to become part of a self-propelled, co-ordinated whole, and so doing away with segmented movements and thoughts.

PB  
I  
KE  
R

Although the physical movements are far easier with the New Approach and lead to a general feeling of well-being, the application of the method demands a high degree of mental discipline (Havas, 1964: 2). As no physical action can take place without an order from the mind, the mind is trained to give the right orders only to those basic points which are the key positions and cues of the fundamental balances (Havas, 1964: 5).

KE  
A  
D-w  
MW

The musical information is conceptualised and organised mentally before the violin is used to express it, through rhythmically clapping, singing and miming the music away from the instrument. The training of the mind includes the imaginative use of the inner ear, as the sound should be a living conception for a violinist long before the

D

fingers even touch the string. The pre-hearing of the sound and the sensory awareness of the required touch before playing a note, eliminates “the long stages of mechanical struggle with the fingers” (Havas 1964: 34). Every physical movement is musically directed and there is no place for purely mechanical exercises in the New Approach. The music is shaped through “the drama of the interval shapes” in the left hand finger action. Feeling the rhythmic pulse, singing the music inwardly and directing it through the note name to the left hand base knuckles, becomes the single point of control, to which all other movements, including the bow stroke, respond as reflex actions.

**SA**  
**D-w**  
**D**  
**CF**

In addition to the sense of physical well-being that the New Approach brings about, it also leads to a state of optimal experience, or flow, in which the body is so responsive, and attention so focused, that the violinist is completely absorbed in the act of communicating his musical thought through the instrument, without interference.

**KE**  
**D-w; A**  
**CF**

It is clear that the New Approach is a vast subject, incorporating many diverse elements in a holistic approach that addresses the physical, mental and emotional aspects of playing the violin. Kenneson (1974: 93) is of the opinion that the potential of the New Approach has not yet been fully realised, as the method itself is still relatively young and the ideas “lend themselves to a seemingly unlimited use”. Examining and applying these principles hold much promise for the integration of mind, body and instrument in building an expressive technique.



## Chapter 5

### A Comparative study

#### 5.1 Introduction

In reading through Chapters Three and Four, the many parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach will already be apparent, even though the language and terminology used in the respective methods do not necessarily correspond. The purpose of this chapter is to bring these parallels to light and to clarify the conceptual equivalence between aspects of the New Approach and the Alexander Technique.

As a broad introduction to the comparative study, the main features of the New Approach (as described in 4.4) can be shown to resonate with the following Alexandrian concepts, as defined in 3.3 and 3.4, and summarised in the ‘Framework of key concepts’ in 3.5:

**Table 5.1. Comparisons**

The New Approach	The Alexander Technique
4.4.1 Easy or impossible	Use affects functioning ( <b>U</b> )
4.4.2 Inside-outward playing	Means-whereby ( <b>MW</b> ); Direction ( <b>D</b> )
4.4.3 Mind over movement	Direction ( <b>D</b> )
4.4.4 The fundamental balances	Postural balance ( <b>PB</b> ); Reflexes ( <b>R</b> )
4.4.5 Touch	Sensory awareness ( <b>SA</b> )
4.4.6 The inner ear	Direction ( <b>D</b> )
4.4.7 Automation of technique	Control and freedom ( <b>CF</b> )

These parallels will be clarified in the following discussion.

#### 5.2 Framework of key concepts

In order to have a constructive discussion on the parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, the ‘Framework of key concepts’ will be used as the context and outline for the rest of the chapter. Ideas and practises in the New Approach with apparent similarity will be discussed in relation to the relevant

Alexander concepts, as set out in the individual frames in 3.5.2. This is a broad summary, and by no means a comprehensive account of all the parallels to be found between the two disciplines, which would be too numerous to recount in detail. (It should also be remembered that this discussion is not intended to give a full representation of the New Approach, for which the reader is referred back to Chapter Four, and to Havas’s own writings.)

### 5.2.1 The background: use, primary control and sensory awareness

The New Approach essentially deals with the way in which a violinist uses his or her body to translate musical thought through physical movement into sound. The method identifies and eliminates faulty movements that lead to undesirable results, and teaches an improved use through employing the fundamental balances<sup>1</sup> and fostering inside-outward playing. A balanced, dynamic stance with the violin, resulting in the freedom of the head, neck and shoulders, is the foundation on which all other aspects of technique rest, and sensory awareness is cultivated as an integral part of the method.

U  
D-w  
I; U-m  
U-i  
MW  
PC-i  
SA

#### 5.2.1.1 Use affects functioning

The New Approach philosophy demonstrates profound congruence with the Alexander principle that “use affects functioning” (Barlow, 1973: 91). The way the body is used in playing the instrument will determine whether it is easy, or in fact, impossible: when faulty movements are used, playing the violin becomes a struggle, and no amount of practise will help unless the basics are improved (cf Havas, 1973: 136). All aspects of successful violin technique depend on a balanced use of the body, and Havas takes great care to establish the fundamental balances right from the beginning (Havas, 1964: 23).

U  
KE  
U-m  
MW  
PB

Havas, 1964: 9:

...in order to understand this Approach fully one must realize the enormous difference that lies between the ‘elementary’ and the ‘fundamental’; and it is needless to say that nothing could be more fundamental than establishing an effortless balance of the violin- and bow-holds....Often have I traced the cause of difficulty of many (an advanced) violinist...to a conscious or subconscious anxiety about the violin- or bow-hold.

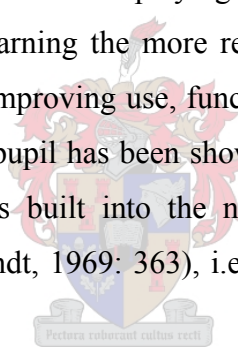
U

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.4.

Such anxiety invariably causes inappropriate tension that interferes with a balanced use of the body, and the natural reflexes that make movement efficient and easy. For instance, tension in the fingers of the bow hand, especially the thumb and index finger, quickly spreads to the wrist, elbow and shoulder, interfering in the operation of the arm “as one magnificently integrated system of levers” (Hellebrandt, 1970a: 429). Motor learning difficulties are mostly due to such self-imposed constraints (Hellebrandt, 1969: 365), and the aim of the New Approach is to identify and eliminate these interferences. By disassociating the thumb and fingers of both the right and left hands, opposition of the thumb and fingers are precluded and any tendency to reflexive grasping eliminated (see 4.5.2).

U-m  
R  
U-m  
U-m  
I

Hellebrandt (1969: 277) concludes that Havas’s teaching devices “serve as key cues capable of unlocking the neuromuscular machinery of the living body in ways which greatly simplify the fundamentals of violin playing”, and are designed to put the body into an optimal condition for learning the more refined playing skills (Hellebrandt, 1969: 363). In other words, by improving use, functioning is also improved: learning the violin becomes easy once a pupil has been shown how “to release that admirable repertoire of natural movements built into the neuromuscular apparatus of every normal human being” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 363), i.e. movements based on the body’s natural reflex systems.



R  
KE  
U-i  
R

It is clear that this is facilitated in the first instance through inhibiting interference with the primary control, as the New Approach eliminates the concept of a *violin hold* and the associated tensions in the neck and shoulders, and this will be discussed in more detail 5.2.1.2. Other causes for misuse, as cited by both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, include: end-gaining, harmful habits, excessive muscular effort and misconceptions, or faulty preconceived ideas. Faulty kinaesthesia and lack of sensory awareness is another cause for misuse recognized by both disciplines, and will be discussed in 5.2.1.3.

I; PC-m  
I  
PC-m  
EG  
SA-u  
SA-l

Both methods hold that attempting to improve functioning directly (i.e. end-gaining) is counterproductive<sup>1</sup>. Havas (1961: 1) believes that any amount of practising while

EG

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.2, and table 5.2.

there is “physical strain in the mechanics of violin playing” is self-defeating, and cannot bring about the improvement longed for. The New Approach does not teach repetitive, mechanical exercises that would only serve to reinforce bad habitual patterns, but rather seeks to eliminate the tensions and blockages that interfere with a balanced, co-ordinated use of the body.

**U-m**  
**EG**  
**I; U-m**

Havas, 1973: 127:

It cannot be underlined enough that if practising is based on the principles of co-ordination and the interplay of balances, one hour can achieve better results than six hours of mechanical practising could ever do.

**U**

The same principle is found in the Alexander Technique: “If a bad manner of use exists....that same bad manner of use will be employed to perform these specific exercises and these latter cannot therefore bring about any improvement in the psycho-physical organism” (Griffith, as quoted in Jones, 1976: 85). Alexander also proposed that instead of attempting to solve a problem in a localised, specific area of the body, attention should be paid to one’s general muscular co-ordination (Barlow, 1973: 96). Likewise, instead of focusing on part-function<sup>1</sup>, the New Approach aims to improve co-ordination through a natural, whole-body balance, where “each point of balance is interlocked and interdependent of another” (Havas, 1964: 76).

**U-m**  
**EG**  
**MW**  
**EG**  
**MW; PB**

In the discussion on the Alexander Technique, excessive muscular effort and inappropriate tension was cited as a prime cause of misuse<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, Havas believes that problems in violin playing are mostly due to the mistaken idea that some kind of superimposed pressure or force is necessary in the playing movements (Havas, 1964: 2). Attempting to realize the desired musical result through conscious physical effort merely results in unnecessary muscular tension, which contributes to stage fright (Havas, 1973: 82). Musical communication can only take place through transmitting one’s musical imagination and physical energy through an inside-outward, organic rhythmic pulse, which in turn depends on the flexibility of all the joints, including shoulder sockets, elbows, wrist and knees (Havas, 1973: 14). Any rigidity, such as

**U-m**  
**U-m**  
**EG**  
**U-m**  
**MW**  
**U-i**  
**U-m**

---

<sup>1</sup> See 4.3.1.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.3.2.

stiffness in the fingers, wrist or elbow, will block the flow of these energy impulses, and result in malfunction, such as a trembling bowing arm (Havas, 1973: 29).

**U-m**

While the New Approach aims to eliminate unnecessary tension in the playing movements, Havas (1973: 15) points out that freedom of movement is the ultimate aim, and not relaxation, or flaccidity:

**I**

**CF**

It is important not to confuse the concept of relaxation with movement. The word 'relax' is often used but not often enough understood....As violin playing consists mostly of purposeful, vigorous and strong actions, the desire to relax while realizing these actions can create serious conflict in one's nervous system, because of trying to combine two actions which cannot be combined – such as being vigorous and enervated at the same time. It is essential that the significance of the natural, organic movements, with their inherent powers, are understood correctly and applied systematically. (Havas, 1973: 15.)

**U-m**

**R**

Havas's view is entirely congruent with the Alexander Technique in this matter. De Alcantara (1997: 16) indicates that good use of the self requires the right kind of tension, which is "a prerequisite of dynamic, energetic, vital human endeavour" (1997: 15). Neither the Alexander Technique nor the New Approach are concerned with relaxation as such, but with eliminating (or inhibiting) faulty, mal-distributed tension patterns that cause interference with optimal mental and physical functioning.

**U**

**I**

**U-m**

Alexander (as cited in Barlow, 1973: 96) suggested that the basic cause of misuse is psychophysical, rooted in faulty preconceived ideas and misconceptions. A faulty idea of an activity, or misconceptions as to how muscles and limbs work<sup>1</sup>, can lead to misuse of the body and inefficient functioning. Havas also examines the psychophysical causes of misuse, in order "to eliminate both physical and mental obstacles" (1964: Introduction). Through the New Approach exercises, concepts and beliefs around the handling of the instrument and other aspects of technique are explored. While these misconceptions are common to many players (cf Kenneson, 1974: 11), each person's pattern may vary. In working through the exercises with a teacher's guidance, a pupil's specific tendencies are brought to light, and countered through the use of the New Approach principles (cf Havas, 1961: 57).

**U-m**

**U-m**

**I; U-m**

**GM**

**D-I**

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.4.2.

The New Approach identifies visual misconception<sup>1</sup> as a major cause of misuse in playing the violin. The optical illusion that the fingerboard is excessively long or the neck very thick causes anxiety, creating tension and discomfort in the left hand and affecting its function. Misleading visual information can cause one to believe that the hands or fingertips lead the playing movements, as they are directly in the line of vision. This misconception results in unnatural movements that are contrary to the physiological principles underlying the body's functioning, and causes tension and rigidity. The New Approach exercises are designed in such a way that one is made aware of these unconscious beliefs and resulting tensions, in order to eliminate them. Similar fallacies are recognized in applications of the Alexander Technique: De Alcantara (1996: 25) identifies in one of his pupils an “end-gaining idea of controlling visually something that should be controlled kinaesthetically (that is, by muscular feel)”, which consequently triggers a pattern of total misuse of the self, negatively affecting functioning.

**U-m**  
**SA-u**  
**U-m**  
  
**EG**  
**U-m**  
  
**I**  
  
**EG**  
  
**U-m**

Sometimes these misconceptions become accepted in conventional wisdom, and are even taught in orthodox violin methods. One such example is the idea of a vertical left-hand finger action, which derives from the fingertips appearing to do the work, even though the actual source of the movement is in the base knuckles. Havas believes that the freedom of the thumb will remain elusive as long as there is vertical pressure from the fingers on the fingerboard, a danger inherent in the very concept of a vertical finger action (Havas, 1973: 43). In seeking to identify the actual (and often invisible) source of each movement<sup>2</sup>, Havas eliminates these misconceptions and teaches a very clearly reasoned means whereby use can be improved.

**EG**  
  
**U-m**  
  
**MW**  
**I**  
**MW; U-i**

It is clear that both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach recognize that human beings function as a psychophysical whole, and seek to address the mental as well as physical aspects in order to solve problems, and improve functioning<sup>3</sup>. Barlow (1973: 125) points out that it is not easy to separate the physical and psychological reasons that cause muscular dystonia, as the way we construe our surroundings and experiences “is a psycho-physical act, in which Mind cannot be separated from

**U-i**  
  
**U-m**

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.2.

<sup>2</sup> I.e. the fundamental balances; see 4.4.4.

<sup>3</sup> See 3.3.2 and 4.3.2.

Muscle for long.” Havas (1968: 32) also finds “the interplay of the physical and psychological reactions a never-endingly fascinating study”, and points out that the continuous co-ordination of natural, organic movements is able to release and control both aspects. Negative mental attitudes often arise as a result of physical distortions, and releasing physical blockages therefore has a positive influence on mental anxiety (Havas, 1973: 127). The following statement by Barlow, as a proponent of the Alexander Technique, confirms her view:

U-i  
U-m  
U-i

Barlow, 1973: 125:

The body is not simply system of mechanical levers, to be adjusted into different positions like a mechanical crane. It is a subtle organ of expression, in which emotional states modify and are modified by muscular tension states.

Muscular tension states frequently occur in situations where there is emotional strain (Barlow, 1973: 125). In order to obtain a free and balanced use of the psychophysical organism, therefore, it is essential that emotional and mental anxiety be addressed together with their physical manifestations. This is precisely what the New Approach aims to do (cf Havas, 1973: 16).

U-m  
D-I

While certain individual master teachers may pay attention to more than just the physical aspects of violin technique, most structured violin methods do not. Perkins found that, in comparison with the Rolland and Suzuki methods, only the New Approach “consistently addresses the needs of the whole individual” (Perkins, 1995: 202) in also dealing with the mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of violin playing, and their impact on personal musical expression and growth.

T-g

In *Stage fright* (1973), Havas made an in-depth study of the causes of anxiety. In each case, the causes for the physical, mental or social anxiety are examined, followed by their relative cures in the form of specific exercises and advice. In examining and exposing these various causes of misuse, they can be inhibited and eliminated, and replaced by a reasoned out means whereby a better psychophysical functioning can be obtained.

U-m  
D-I  
MW; U-i



From the above debate, it can be seen that the New Approach answers to all the indicators for the Alexander principle that *use affects functioning*, as discussed in 3.3.2, and summarised in **table 3.1**. Use is not improved through attempting to control functioning directly, but by identifying and eliminating the specific causes for misuse, which are described in similar terms in both methods, and relate to our functioning as a psychophysical whole.

Use is improved in the New Approach through:

1. **eliminating interference with the primary control**, by doing away with the concept of a specific violin hold and establishing a balanced stance with the instrument
2. **eliminating interference with the natural reflex systems of the body**, by doing away with excessive muscular effort and tension, and unlocking the use of natural, organic movements that are based on balance
3. **changing conditions that allow harmful habits to exist**, by eliminating physical and mental blockages and misconceptions relating to violin technique, and the mental and physical re-education of the pupil
4. **following a means-whereby principle**, in a carefully reasoned out and structured programme, to establish the fundamental balances and organize the co-ordination of the mind and body in building an expressive technique

This results in an **improved use**, in which the freedom and balance of body and mind forms the basis of effective performance. Havas (1973: 134) stresses that the playing of the violin never presents difficulties “once one requires sufficient skill in the actual handling of the instrument without any physical or mental blockages.”

**Table 5.2** gives a selection of statements regarding use that show close parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique.

**Table 5.2. Comparisons: Use**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Alexander Principle says that USE will always affect FUNCTIONING” (Barlow, 1973: 91).</li> <li>• While there are many different ways of using the body mechanically at any time, for each situation there is a particular body use that will allow for the best functioning (Barlow, 1973: 67).</li> <li>• Faulty muscular tension patterns lead to unreliability of performance, especially in activities where a special skill is required (Barlow, 1973: 69).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through a technique based on natural balance, hidden tensions can be resolved in order to enable any player to function at his optimal neuro-muscular ability (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92).</li> <li>• “Given the opportunity of learning how to use the right movements, everybody could learn to play the violin easily and well in a surprisingly short time” (Havas, 1968: 10).</li> <li>• “An ugly sound simply means that the violin is maltreated and that erroneous limb and muscle actions are used” (Havas, 1964: 2).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lot of mis-use is caused through end-gaining, i.e. being so focused on attaining a particular objective that you do not pay attention to the way you are using yourself in the process. End-gaining bypasses the reasoning brain in order to satisfy the stimulus to act as soon as possible; it is an eagerness to be right, and does not allow feedback other than from the desired end.</li> <li>• “...it is more important to take care of the body than to get the passage right...The performer inhibits the habits that have been created by the ever-present drive to attain a goal. By eliminating these habits, he or she changes the movement patterns that reinforce getting it done at any cost” (Stein, 1999).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The New Approach is designed to eliminate end-gaining attitudes that cause mental and physical blockages in playing the violin, such as the “neurosis of compulsive playing in order to get better” (Havas, 1973: 80), the anxiety caused by competitively striving for success (Havas, 1973: 7), and using conscious physical effort to obtain musical results (Havas, 1973: 82).</li> <li>• “Most violinists are so anxious to get on, somehow or other, with the <i>playing</i> during their practise, that in spite of the increasing symptoms of tension and fatigue, they press on, quite unable to apply any curative measures” (Havas, 1973: 48).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through a means-whereby principle, focus is taken away from the ultimate end and placed on each individual step of the process, thus promoting good use. Bad habitual responses are inhibited along the way and the intermediate steps required are consciously directed against a backdrop of heightened sensory awareness (Jones, 1976: 195).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The New Approach follows a means-whereby principle through:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tracing each movement to its organic source</li> <li>- first establishing the fundamental balances together with their required mental control</li> <li>- heightening sensory awareness through touch</li> <li>- internalising the music away from the instrument, before co-ordinating it all in an expressive impulse governed by the rhythmic pulse and the inner musical voice.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-education procedures usually fail because they do not “take into consideration the wrong mental attitudes that (are) inextricably bound up with wrong physical conditions” (Jones, 1976: 20).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The aim is to eliminate both physical and mental obstacles so that through a relaxed and controlled co-ordination, the player may be able to release the full force of his musical imagination” (Havas, 1964: Introduction).</li> </ul>

### 5.2.1.2 Primary control

Although Havas does not overtly make the optimal relationship of the head, neck and back the central focus of her method in the way that the Alexander Technique does, all aspects of the New Approach work together to eliminate interference with the primary control, and to enhance its functioning. By eliminating the concept of a violin-hold, the New Approach inhibits a very specific and debilitating cause of misuse of the primary control that is prevalent among violinists<sup>1</sup>.

I; PC-m  
PC-i  
I  
PC-m

The violin and viola are the only western instruments to be held under the chin, and with this comes an increased potential for interference with the delicate balance of the head and neck (cf McCullough, 1996). One's general functioning is greatly affected by misuse of the head and neck, as interference with the primary control is always reflected as misuse elsewhere in the body (Barlow, 1973: 40). The following two excerpts from *A New Approach to violin playing* (1961) make it abundantly clear that Havas clearly recognises this fact:

PC-m  
PC-m  
U-m

Havas, 1961: 10:

All good teachers agree that a condition of looseness is imperative. The question is, just how do we achieve this? With our chins pressing into the chin-holder, our left arm contorted sometimes beyond human endurance, our fingers taxed beyond their natural capacity, I do not see how it is physically possible to maintain a loose, relaxed position for very long.

PC-m  
U-m

Havas, 1961: 16:

...it is of the greatest importance *not* to grab the violin with the chin. For not only will this make a violinist uncomfortable and insecure but as soon as the lower jaw begins to grip, a feeling of stiffness is established, especially in the back of the neck. Indeed as soon as one place becomes stiff the feeling of cramp spreads like wildfire with all the usual disastrous results.

PC-m  
U-m

The violin-hold is closely connected to the stance: Havas (1973: 18) calls it "one and the same thing". Any tension or anxiety in holding the instrument will cause rigidity throughout one's body (Havas, 1973: 18), interfering with postural balance. Havas believes that it is the fear of dropping the violin that causes this anxiety and the consequent physical rigidity (Havas, 1973: 18). In the light of the Alexander

PC-m  
U-m

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas 1973: 18. See 4.4.4.

Technique, it can also be said that any discomfort in holding the instrument will cause misuse of the primary control, interfering with the postural reflexes and leading to mal-distributed tension patterns in the body (cf McCullough, 1996).

**PC-m**  
**U-m**

Havas (1973: 28) often refers to the gypsies' unassailable bodily well-being in playing their instruments, which includes the liberty of the head in being able to come away from the chinrest, as well as an organic, rhythmic pulse that involves the whole body<sup>1</sup>. She believes that it is only "this total interplay of motion and balance" that can eliminate the rigidity that blocks the communication of one's musical imagination and physical energy through the instrument (Havas, 1973: 14).

**PC-i**  
**I; U-m**

Havas, 1973: 18:

...the first step towards the release of all possible tension, is to establish a self-generating motion and balance (in the form of an organic rhythmic pulse) in the stance itself without even thinking of the violin.

It is significant that Havas recognizes that the "the first step towards the release of all possible tension" (1973: 18) depends on the balanced freedom of the whole body<sup>2</sup>, and begins with eliminating "the tensions connected with the violin hold" (1973: 19), i.e. tension in the jaw, neck and shoulder in holding the violin. In other words, she first establishes a balanced use of the total locomotor pattern<sup>3</sup>, by eliminating interference with its central part, the co-ordination of the head, neck and back (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 26).

**I; PC-m**  
**PC-i; I**  
**PC-m**

The Alexander Technique teaches that by conditioning the total pattern, the partial patterns will look after themselves (De Alcantara, 1997: 33). In the New Approach, part function is also derived from the function of the whole<sup>4</sup>, and is dependent on first establishing a balanced, dynamic stance, thereby "freeing the shoulders, arms, wrists and fingers to follow their own natural reflex actions" (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 86).

**PC**  
**PC**  
**PB**  
**R**

---

<sup>1</sup> See 4.2.2.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.4.

<sup>3</sup> See 3.3.3.

<sup>4</sup> See 4.5.1.

It is clear that when Havas mentions “the all-over perfection of our human mechanism” as the only factor that can ensure a completely free co-ordination in violin playing (Havas, 1973: 28), she is in fact referring to optimal use of the primary control, which is the “mechanism of the total pattern” (De Alcantara, 1997: 26) with its integrating effect on the coordination of the body as whole (De Alcantara, 1997: 27). This becomes even clearer in considering Dr. Hellebrandt’s assessment of the biomechanical rationale of the New Approach. (It should be remembered that the terminology and biomechanical insight in the following discussion is not Havas’s own, but that of a scientist seeking to evaluate the New Approach teaching practises.)

**PC-i**

**PC-i**

**U-i**

Hellebrandt, 1969: 305:

The autonomous equilibration of gravitational stresses by appropriately modulated variation in the tensions exerted by antigravity muscles is the first of the natural balances to engage the attention of the violin pupil. Once *understood* and *experienced*, he learns quickly to rely on automatic governors to compensate for the biomechanical effects of willed changes in the relationships of body parts...he permits the wisdom of a superbly automated body to select the one best way to implement the desired act.

**PC  
R  
PB**

**PC-i**

Any interference with the primary control causes interference with the antigravity reflexes, thereby disturbing postural balance (cf Jones, 1976: 144). By eliminating any downward pressure of the chin on the chinrest<sup>1</sup>, the “set or fixation” of the head is inhibited, so that the improved distribution of muscle tone throughout the body brings about better coordination and more control (cf Jones, 1976: 179), and the postural reflexes are allowed to operate without interference.

**PC-m**

**U-m; I**

**PC-m**

**I**

**U-i**

**R**

Hellebrandt (1969: 305) asserts that experiments performed in her laboratory demonstrated Havas’s stance “to be the most stable of all postures”. She mentions that the spine elongates in the Havas stance, and the base of the neck pulls back (Hellebrandt, 1969: 305) while the head drops forward onto the chin rest “with a straightforward motion restricted to the joint between the base of the skull and the first vertebrae (atlanto-occipital joint)” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 307). This is virtually an exact description of the optimal functioning of the primary control, as defined in the Alexander Technique (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 31, 61).

**PB**

**PC-i**

**PC-i**

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.4.

Havas (1964: 6) also emphasises that the neck should not be stretched when making contact between the jaw and chinrest. Hellebrandt (1969: 307) points out that stretching the neck would result in a physiological dilemma, as two opposing neck reflexes would be stimulated at the same time, i.e. cervical spine ventroflexion (undesirable) as opposed to atlanto-occipital ventroflexion (desirable). She notes that it “is remarkable that changes as subtle and little understood as these, were discernable to Havas and adapted as practical training devices useful to the violinist in acquiring a natural head hold” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 307).

**PC-m**

**PC-m**

**PC-i**

The dynamic posture and stance of the New Approach also eliminates one of the other specific causes for misuse of the primary control, namely the distorting influence of the shoulders and upper arms (cf Barlow, 1973: 42). Hellebrandt (1969: 305) concludes:

**PB; I**

**PC-m**

The Havas stance...puts the shoulder girdle into the position required to establish the natural balances demanded for the suspended elevation of the arms. This is an exquisitely precise total body adjustment which positions every anatomical part in ways facilitatory to the performance of the motor acts required in violin playing. (Hellebrandt, 1969: 305.)

**MW  
PB**

**U-i**

Many of the muscles that attach to the head, shoulder girdle and upper back overlap, so that any “involuntary clamping of the violin between the chin and an elevated shoulder” will interfere with the relationship of the head, neck, and back, and impede the functioning of the shoulder joints (Hellebrandt, 1969: 305). “This poses a problem for the violinist since the shoulder joints must be free to move without restraint if right and left hand functions are to be performed effectively” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 307). A pupil is therefore made aware right from the beginning that discrete movements in the shoulder joints are possible, even with the violin resting lightly on the collarbone and the head balancing on the chinrest (Hellebrandt, 1969: 307).

**PC-m**

**MW**

**PC-i**

By encouraging one to “forget the image of the violin hold altogether”, Havas (1973: 23) facilitates the inhibition of faulty preconceived ideas regarding the violin hold, so that a new, balanced relationship with the instrument can be experienced. As harmful habitual patterns associated with the violin hold are eliminated along with the very concept of such a hold (Havas, 1973: 27), the instrument can be integrated into the

**I; U-m**

**A-e**

**U-m; I**

balanced use of the body as a whole, to become an extension of the expressive, living organism (cf Hellebrandt, 1970: 473).

**U-i**

Sensory awareness plays an important role in improving the primary control<sup>1</sup> in holding the violin. Due to a lack of sensory awareness, the degree of clamping down on the chinrest, with the consequent tension in the neck, is often not noticed, or it is regarded as being inevitable (cf Havas, 1973: 14). Havas recognizes that unreliability of sensory awareness (i.e. concepts that have become linked to maladaptive experiences<sup>2</sup>) can make it very difficult to let go of one's idea of an activity. A violinist may be so accustomed to "gripping the violin", that he may find it "impossible to imagine, and therefore to experience, this light feeling of arm, violin and head, and even more impossible to accept the concept that there should be, in fact, *no violin-hold at all...*" (Havas, 1973: 24).

**SA; PC-i**

**SA-I**

**PC-m**

**SA-u**

**PC-m**

**KE**

Havas actively cultivates sensory awareness in relation to the instrument, and suggests that the thought that the chin-rest is made of silk and satin, feeling soft to the touch, can help to elicit a corresponding feeling of softness in the body (Havas, 1973: 23, 24). In contrast to this softness, the hardness and resistance in the contact between body and instrument, brought about by clamping down on the chin-rest, can be recognised and avoided, thereby inhibiting misuse of the primary control<sup>3</sup>.

**SA-i**

**PC-i**

**U-i**

Other specific causes of misuse of the primary control (as cited in **table 3.2**) that the New Approach deals with, include stress, anxiety and fear, which all manifest in negative thoughts that can cause a physical pulling down in the body (cf Dawley, 2001: 3). Havas examines the causes for such anxiety, and seeks to counteract negative thought processes and fears with a constructive, positive mindset (cf Havas, 1973: 91; 127)<sup>4</sup>. Instead of words and images that "arouse tension and anxiety", she seeks to use those that "create ease and flexibility" (Havas, 1973: 96).

**PC-m**

**PC-m**

**I**

**MW**

**W-n**

**W**

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.3.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.3.4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Jones, 1976: 151. See 4.4.5 and 5.2.1.3.

<sup>4</sup> See 4.3.2, 4.4.2 and 5.2.1.1.



Havas, 1973: 99:

...it has been proven over and over again that if the player learns to activate his imagination with positive ideas, his self-doubt tends to disappear and then he obtains the desired physical release as well.

It is clear that the New Approach answers to all three of the guidelines that De Alcantara (1997: 34) gives for solving problems in any activity (see **3.3.3** and **table 3.2**):

1. The practises of the New Approach, which focus on establishing an organic movement pattern in the body, enhance the functioning of the primary control
2. Even though the teacher does not use his or her hands directly to prevent the pupil from contracting the neck, the New Approach *no violin-hold* and balanced stance actively prevents interference with the primary control
3. None of the procedures in the New Approach cause interference with the primary control

The New Approach deals with the same general and specific causes for misuse of the head-neck relationship as cited in the Alexander Technique (see **table 3.2**). These include: (a) **faulty preconceived ideas** regarding the violin hold that lead to (b) **harmful habitual patterns**; (c) **faulty sensory appreciation** and (d) **lack of sensory awareness** (in relation to contact with the instrument, as well as general tension in the body) that is often caused by (d) **end-gaining**, i.e. being so focused on getting on with playing the violin that no thought is given to the way that the body is used in the process. Specific causes of interference with the primary control, such as **tension in the neck** brought about by the violin hold, the **distorting influence of the upper arms**, and anxious **thoughts that cause a pulling down in the body**, are all eliminated in the New Approach. By first establishing a dynamic, balanced stance with the violin, **interference with the postural reflexes** are inhibited, so that **the other reflex systems in the body can be integrated and restored to operate effectively**. By relying on “an instinctive and organic movement pattern, combined with the conception of ‘let happen’” (Havas, 1973: 28), **muscular harmony** is experienced throughout the body, and the effortless, instinctive **co-ordination of the body** as a whole is ensured. In this way, a **relatively simple control over the complex activity** of violin playing is made possible.

**Table 5.3** gives a selection of statements regarding the primary control, i.e. the mechanism of the total locomotor pattern, which show close parallels between the two techniques.

**Table 5.3. Comparisons: Primary control**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The primary control is the mechanism of the total locomotor pattern, and it has an integrating effect on the coordination of the body as whole (De Alcantara, 1997: 26).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The only factor which can ensure a completely free co-ordination in violin playing is the over-all perfection of our human mechanism” (Havas, 1973: 28).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The mis-use of the head and neck is prior to misuse elsewhere, according to (Alexander’s) principle. Mis-use elsewhere can only be adequately dealt with after the correction of mis-use of the head and neck” (Barlow, 1973: 40).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“As soon as the lower jaw begins to grip, a feeling of stiffness is established, especially in the back of the neck. Indeed as soon as one place becomes stiff the feeling of cramp spreads like wildfire with all the usual disastrous results” (Havas, 1961: 16).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All partial patterns are regulated by the total pattern, or antigravity reflexes. “Condition the total pattern, and the partial patterns will look after themselves” (De Alcantara, 1997: 33).</li> <li>“The orientation of the head influences the organization of the whole organism” (De Alcantara, 1997: 27).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinking about each separate action only serves to inhibit the body’s natural reflex actions, causing neuro-muscular complications (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 86).</li> <li>The New Approach is based on natural movements that are gestalt entities, consisting of “many muscles embracing the integrated use of the body as a whole” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The region at the base of the neck, known as the hump, is a “veritable maelstrom of muscular co-ordination” (Barlow, 1973: 42). The activities of the shoulders and upper-arms exert a distorting influence in this area, and the effects of stress and tension also accumulate in the muscles in this region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The Havas stance also puts the shoulder girdle into the position required to establish the natural balances demanded for the suspended elevation of the arms...an exquisitely precise total body adjustment which positions every anatomical part in ways facilitatory to the performance of the motor acts required in violin playing” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 305).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some thoughts cause a downward pull in the body, muscle tension and tight joints. Other thoughts cause physical release and lightness (Dawley, 2001: 3).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“It has been proven over and over again that if the player learns to activate his imagination with positive ideas, his self-doubt tends to disappear and then he obtains the desired physical release as well” (Havas, 1973: 99).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Undo the misuses of your head, neck, and back, and much that is right, easy, and thoroughly enjoyable will follow of its own accord” (De Alcantara, 1996: 77).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Natural balance can do nothing <i>but</i> facilitate the optimum neuro-muscular function of any player, whatever his body type (or) habitual posture...” (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92).</li> </ul>

### 5.2.1.3 Sensory awareness

De Alcantara, 1997: 165:

Only an improvement in the use of the whole self – an improvement which depends in every instance on a change in the relationship between the head, neck, and back – will automatically entail progress in sensory awareness.

**U-i**  
**PC-i**  
**SA-i**

In the light of the discussion in **5.2.1.1** and **5.2.1.2**, it is patently clear that the New Approach increases sensory awareness, along with use, through eliminating interference with the primary control and promoting the balanced, “integrated use of the body as a whole” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477). It has also been demonstrated that the New Approach re-educates harmful mental attitudes that have become “inextricably bound up with the wrong physical conditions” (Jones, 1976: 20)<sup>1</sup>. The new sensory experiences brought about by the New Approach exercises (with the teacher’s guidance), greatly facilitate this process of breaking through the “vicious circle of faulty experience and faulty conception” (De Alcantara, 1997: 44), which is kept closed through faulty sensory awareness<sup>2</sup>.

**SA-i; U-i**  
**I; PC-m**  
**PB**

**U-m**  
**SA-i; GM**

**SA-u**

Havas (1973: 34) found that many players are so used to inappropriate tension in the playing movements “that they are not even conscious of it”, and even if they feel that something is not right, “they are not aware of what it is”. The New Approach practice of miming the desired playing movements without the violin, greatly increase kinaesthetic awareness. When the movements are repeated with the instrument, faulty tension patterns that cause interference in co-ordination are recognised, and can be inhibited (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 91)<sup>3</sup>.

**SA-l**

**SA-i**

**I**

The reliability of sensory awareness depends on freedom from unnecessary tension in the body: “The freer a body part is, the better able it is to sense accurately what it is doing” (De Alcantara, 1997: 42). By eliminating rigidity and cultivating the “total interplay of motion and balance” (Havas, 1973: 14) in the body as a whole, the New Approach therefore significantly increases the reliability of sensory awareness.

**SA**

**I; U-m**

**SA-i**

<sup>1</sup> See **5.2.1.2**, **5.2.1.1** and **5.2.1.2**.

<sup>2</sup> See **3.3.4**.

<sup>3</sup> See **4.5.1**.

De Alcantara (1997: 43) notes that misuse always causes a distortion of sensory perception. Havas (1973: 72) also recognizes that any rigidity in the body will prevent a “spontaneous reaction in our sensory perception”. It is not only kinaesthetic feedback that is distorted by unnecessary tension in the body, but also aural feedback, with detrimental effect on the violinist’s intonation. If the finger is pressing too hard into the string, it will be unable to respond instantaneously to the aural feedback, so that the “ear eventually stops its corrective demands” (Havas, 1973: 41). When the aural-tactile connection is undermined in this way, it inevitably leads to great anxiety with regard to intonation, and blocks one’s creativity<sup>1</sup>.

SA-u  
U-m  
SA-u  
U-m  
U-m

According to Havas (1973: 54), the body’s tactile response to the instrument is one of the prime causes of the rigidity that hampers performance<sup>2</sup>. The body’s tactile sensitivity “is quick to respond to the rigid hardness of wood it encounters” (Havas 1973: 54) and this causes many of the problems of tension and rigidity that violinists struggle with (Kenneson, 1974: 11). This problem is exacerbated further by a lack of sensory awareness, which Havas (1973: 56) attributes to the fact that the places of physical contact with the instrument “are not in line with our field of vision”. This is entirely congruent with the view expressed by Jones (1996: 180), that most people do not pay much attention to sensory feedback, and are apt rather to trust the feedback from their other senses, such as vision<sup>3</sup>.

U-m  
SA-I  
SA-I

However, awareness of kinaesthetic feedback is crucial in all aspects of developing technique. The New Approach places great emphasis on nurturing sensory awareness through touch, in order to eliminate the tensions inherent in contact with the instrument, and to increase awareness of kinaesthetic and tactile feedback. Many of the ways in which this is accomplished, have been described in 4.4.5. Other examples include the following: she advises the pupil to rub the base joints of the left hand fingers gently, in order to increase awareness of the motivating balance for the finger action (Havas, 1964: 34). By pulsing with the left hand fingertips on the back of the right hand, it is possible to identify the “sensitive and mobile pulsation” needed in the touch of the finger on the string (1964: 44). Transferring the quality of touch that one

SA  
SA-i  
I; U-m  
SA-i  
SA-i  
SA

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.5.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.5.

<sup>3</sup> See 3.3.4.

would use on one's own neck to the neck of the instrument (Havas, 1973: 99), further helps to develop the soft, sensitive kind of touching that is needed for the feedback of rich sensory information. The playing movements are continually adjusted in response to such feedback, so that the musical intent of the performer may be conveyed precisely:

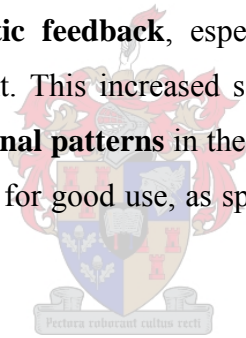
SA-i  
A-e  
D-w

Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477:

The tone desired and inwardly heard is literally sought by infinitesimal shifting movements of the finger involved. These keep alive the inputs from extremely sensitive touch and pressure end-organs located in the fingertips and send a shower of sensory impulses inward...The richness of the sensory input thus evoked and fed back to the arousal system in the brain stem, the limbic lobe and the neocortex, drives the motor centres, continually modulates the response of the muscles, and gives warmth and vitality to the tone produced.

SA-i

It is clear that the New Approach, like the Alexander Technique, substantially **increases conscious awareness of kinaesthetic feedback**, especially with regard to the relationship between the body and the instrument. This increased sensory awareness makes it possible to **notice and inhibit interfering tensional patterns** in the body as they arise. The New Approach fulfils all of the following conditions for good use, as specified by De Alcantara (1997: 194) in the following excerpt:



Good use entails reliable sensory awareness, the ability to listen to yourself accurately, and the ability to gauge tension, effort and movement. (De Alcantara, 1997: 194.)

**Reliability of sensory awareness** is assured in the New Approach through eliminating interference with the primary control, as well as any other rigidity in the body. **Sensory awareness is increased** through creating awareness of the body's response to the instrument, and consciously fostering a soft and flexible touch. **Lack of sensory awareness** and relying on the other senses (especially the visual), instead of critically examining feelings of tension and weight, are recognized in the New Approach as major causes of misuse. The New Approach exercises, the teacher's guidance and the importance of touch, all bring about **new sensory experiences** that help to rehabilitate **the link between conception and experience**.

The statements in **table 5.4** illustrate the congruence in philosophy between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique regarding sensory awareness.

**Table 5.4. Comparisons: Sensory awareness**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a common misconception that all that is necessary to change a harmful habit, is to practise an improved way of moving, once it has been pointed out (Dewey, as cited in Jones, 1976: 101).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We all know we should not be rigid. We would all like to have a mobile, flexible, and responsive left hand...But we also know that, alas, the hand more often than not, refuses to oblige...” (Havas 1973: 54).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It has often been said that our senses deceive us...Often it can be shown that a person is doing something quite different from what he thinks he is doing” (Jones, 1976: 183).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The trouble is that people are apt to think they are loosening their hand with a continuous vibrato while in fact very often they are stiffening it” (Havas, 1964: 35).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Misuse, in other words, always causes a distortion of sensory perception” (De Alcantara, 1997: 43).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rigidity in the body “prevents spontaneous reaction in our sensory perception” (Havas, 1973: 72).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The amount of kinesthetic information conveyed is in indirect proportion to the force used in conveying it” (Jones, 1976: 81).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lightness and resilience of the touch allows for the feedback of rich sensory information, through which movements are continually adjusted (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The chief difficulty lies in the fact that we are not used to making kinaesthetic observations and prefer to accept the evidence of our other senses...rather than critically examine our feelings of tension and weight” (Jones, 1976: 180).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Most of us are not aware of these contacts because they are not in line with our field of vision. But wherever these contacts may happen to be, the ‘touch’... should consciously be softened...as if stroking something soft, like silk or satin” (Havas, 1973: 56).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexander demonstrated that “the proprioceptive system can be brought under conscious control, and can be educated to carry to the motor centres the stimulus which is responsible for the muscular activity which brings about the manner of working (use) of the mechanism of correct posture” (Coghill, as cited in De Alcantara, 1996: 41).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The continuous stream of sensory input is the “ultimate source of all willed movements” and also the means whereby these movements are continually refined, whether the sensory feedback reaches conscious awareness or not: “It is the patterns of these exteroceptive and proprioceptive directives which must be learnt, not the patterns of movement” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477).</li> </ul>



## 5.2.2 The intervention

The New Approach provides an intervention that effectively eliminates the negative conditions in a pupil's body that allow bad technical habits to exist. By reconditioning a pupil's use, through a whole body technique based on natural balance, conditions are created that allow for ease and reliability of movement, as well as increased musical expression. Through touch and guided movement, a pupil is given new sensory experiences that enable him or her to recognize and eliminate rigidity in the body. Inhibiting the mental and physical causes of misuse (that are identified with the teacher's guidance), along with carefully worked out directions for improved use, is the means whereby change is brought about in the New Approach.

I  
U-m  
PB  
KE; U-i  
GM  
SA-i; I  
I; U-m  
D; U-i  
MW

### 5.2.2.1 Guided movement

While it can only be through a direct experience of the New Approach lessons that the actual degree and role of guided movement in the method can be evaluated<sup>1</sup>, there are sufficient examples in the New Approach literature from which inferences can be drawn in this regard.

In all her books, but especially in *The twelve lesson course* (1964) and *Stage fright* (1973), Havas gives a very comprehensive account of the procedures whereby the individual balances are established. The most common tendencies of misuse among violinists are described, together with detailed guidelines for improving use. She carefully points out the possible errors that could be made in the process, along with frequent injunctions to check for flexibility in the joints and muscles (Havas, 1973: 45–47). However, she also emphasises that it is the actual experience of the improved use that is of relevance, and not merely a description of the procedures (Havas, 1961: 18; Hellebrandt, 1969: 305).

MW  
PB; U-m  
D-I; U-i  
U-m  
U-i

Havas, 1961: 18:

...it is not enough to say 'relax, 'loosen up'. Such a direction becomes of real value only when every step towards achieving relaxation and looseness has been so clearly explained and experienced that it would seem ridiculous to do anything else.

D

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Six.



In other words, Havas recognises that words by themselves are not effective in conveying the necessary sensory information (cf Barlow, 1973: 190), and that it is only possible to know the desired movement kinaesthetically through actually experiencing it (cf Jones, 1976: 102). Havas (1961: 3) agrees that it is not possible to learn to play the violin from a set of written instructions, without a teacher. Her books were not written to replace the teacher-pupil relationship, but merely to be a guide to the New Approach principles. The teacher's guidance is indispensable, in order to lead a pupil to an experience of freedom and flexibility in the body.

**SA-i**

**GM**

Havas, 1961: 59:

...the first thing a teacher must do...is to establish a condition of 'looseness' throughout the body of the student. It is important to make him realise without holding the violin or the bow, just what a feeling of looseness means. Some of them have been so tense for so long, without even knowing it, that they have no idea of what being really relaxed is like.

**GM**

**SA-I**

While teaching, Havas often uses her hands to touch a pupil, in order to gauge the degree of tension or flexibility in the joints and muscles (Hellebrandt, 1969: 365). Hellebrandt (1969: 365) considers Havas's way of using touch to be a "valuable and highly suggestive" learning cue in itself. Stevens (1996: 115) concurs that "touch aids perception" and increases alertness, as "nerve cells specialised for sensing touch contribute to proprioception and give important background help for conscious movements" (Stevens, 1996: 116). The way that touch is used both in the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, enables the pupil to feel more accurately what his or her body is doing (cf Stevens, 1996: 116).

**GM-t**

**GM-t**

**SA-i**

**SA-i**

Jones postulates that the "amount of kinesthetic information conveyed is in indirect proportion to the force used in conveying it" (Jones, 1976: 81). It is through the quality of touch in the Alexander teacher's hands that a corresponding softness in the pupil's body is elicited<sup>1</sup>. The soft, sensitive touch developed in the New Approach, demonstrates a profound correlation with this principle. Fostering the image of silk and satin in touching the instrument (Havas, 1973: 61) helps to evoke a soft response in the pupil's body in its contact with the instrument. Havas even uses the lightness of her breath to impart sensory information to the pupil:

**GM**

**GM-t**

**GM-t**

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.5.

Havas, 1973: 99:

...for many players the weightless, wing-like sensation in the arm...becomes much more real when I emphasize the lightness by blowing against the inside of my own upper arm (in the violin bow-hold position) which instantly responds with a sideways swing. Almost invariably the player's arm (which may have been as rigid as a board before) will respond in the same way when it is blown against.

GM-t

U-m  
GM-t

Touch is used in yet another way in the New Approach: as the pupil rests a hand on the teacher while he or she plays, sensory information about a particular movement is conveyed to them directly through their hands. For instance, a pupil learns a great deal from feeling that left hand fingers can be so loose that they can easily be lifted off the string or bow (Havas, 1973: 113). Children also learn through having to correct the teacher, by pointing out when his or her movements are (deliberately) tense, or the fingers are too stiff to lift off the string (Havas, 1973: 113). In these exercises, the amount of tension or freedom in the touch is always related to the resulting quality of sound. Stevens (1996: 66) gives an example of using a similar procedure, in teaching a student who was unable to inhibit his own stimulus to action during an Alexander lesson: "the way through for us was to let him feel me as I acted in the way he did and to compare that with when I stopped and gave directions".

GM-t  
SA

GM-t

GM-t

The purpose of the New Approach exercises is to bring about new sensory experiences in relation to the instrument. For instance, as the pupil inhibits his own faulty conditioned idea of what the violin- or bow hold entails, he gains a new experience of relating lightly and effortlessly with the instrument, through the teacher's guidance in establishing the *no-bow* and *no-violin hold* (cf Havas, 1973: 24). This amply illustrates the truth of De Alcantara's assertion that it is "the guiding touch that breaks the vicious circle of an incorrectly perceived experience colouring perception", which in turn predetermines experience (De Alcantara, 1997: 86). The following excerpts demonstrate various ways in which a New Approach teacher may guide a pupil's movements, in order to impart new sensory information:

SA-i

I

SA-i

GM-h

GM-h

SA-u

GM-h

Hellebrandt, 1970a: 425:

Havas arranges the fingers on the bow...The fingers hang loosely on the stick while Havas guides the bow through its full length on each of the four strings...Individual fingers may be lifted passively without affecting the

GM-h

security of the hold. Havas does this frequently while the basic pattern of the right hand is being established.

Hellebrandt, 1969: 305:

The teacher's functions were, *first*, to make the objective (the violin hold, for example) vividly clear; and *second*, to facilitate the response through positioning or the introduction of specific key cues capable of potentiating what comes naturally.

D  
GM-h

Hellebrandt, 1969: 361:

Briskly, momentary pressure is applied by the teacher to the triceps tendon located just above and behind the elbow joint, in alternation with a similar tap to the biceps tendon on the opposite side of the articulation. This evokes a succession of quick reflex movements...The elbow opens fully and then closes in response to tendon stimulation...Once the muscle and joint sensation has been experienced, the pupil activates the triceps and biceps muscles voluntarily *in synchrony with tendon stimulation*, and then finally, does this alone without potentiating proprioceptive facilitation.

GM-h  
R  
SA-i  
D

From the last quotation, it is clear that the teacher initiates the movement in order to give the pupil an experience of improved use based on the body's reflexes, as opposed to movement that is controlled through muscular effort. Facilitating reflexive movement is also precisely what the Alexander Technique aims to do (cf Jones, 1976: 7, 31, 52), once again demonstrating the close congruence between the two methods.

GM-h  
U-i; R  
GM; R

It is very clear that the New Approach, like the Alexander Technique, is intimately concerned with re-educating the body on a sensory level. Verbal instructions and explanations acquire a depth of kinaesthetic meaning through the various ways in which touch is utilized in the New Approach. The improved kinaesthetic experience brought about through the guided movement, coupled with clear directions, enables a pupil eventually to recreate the desired movement for him- or herself, while increased sensory awareness allows the pupil to recognize and inhibit harmful behaviour (cf Jones, 1976: 51).<sup>1</sup>

**Kinaesthetic information is communicated directly through touch and guided movement in the New Approach.** The softness elicited in the body through New Approach procedures,

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.5 and table 3.4.

demonstrates the principle that the **amount of kinaesthetic information conveyed, is in indirect proportion to the force used** in conveying it.

Both the teacher and pupil continually give attention to **kinaesthetic feedback**. The teacher uses his or her hands in order to **obtain sensory feedback from the pupil's muscles**, as well as to **guide the pupil through the required movement**. In this way, the pupil is given a **direct kinaesthetic experience of the improved use**. The **feeling tone of a movement is changed as the pupil inhibits his own reaction** and allows the teacher to initiate the movement. The New Approach teacher also uses his or her hands to increase sensory awareness by **stimulating the nerve receptors through touch**, to **convey kinaesthetic information**, and **soothe, reassure and help release excessive tension**.

However, New Approach teachers do not actively use their hands to prevent the contraction of the head into the neck, as Alexander teachers frequently do. Interference with the primary control is eliminated through the stance with the rhythmic pulse and the *no-violin hold* (see 4.4.2, 4.4.4 and 5.2.1.2). Occasionally lifting the head from the chinrest while practising also helps to release all possible vertical pressure (Havas, 1973: 47) that inevitably causes interference with the primary control. The increased sensory awareness of the contact between the body and the instrument becomes the guide in eliminating any downward pressure of the chin on the chinrest (Havas, 1973: 24). This in itself is entirely congruent with applications of the Alexander Technique in string playing, as evidenced by the following example of inhibiting misuse during activity:

Stein, 1999:

If a violinist realizes that during a performance she is tightening and pushing her jaw into the instrument, she can release the pressure and tension without stopping. This tool is very powerful because it gives the performer the confidence to get out of physical trouble no matter what the circumstances.

The statements in **table 5.5** further illustrate the close parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique with regard to guided movement.

**Table 5.5. Comparisons: Guided movement**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It is often useless to tell a pupil that he is doing something wrong; he will not necessarily feel it by being told about it...The most productive way of working is to give the pupil an experience of good use that contrasts with what he normally does” (De Alcantara, 1996: 45).</li> <li>• “Words and ideas by themselves are not a sufficient form of education in anything which involves the senses, and they can only become effective when they have been linked to a raw experience by a learning procedure” (Barlow, 1973: 190).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “It is important to make (the pupil) realize without holding the violin or the bow, just what a feeling of looseness means. Some of them have been so tense for so long, without even knowing it, that they have no idea of what being really relaxed is like” (Havas, 1961: 59).</li> <li>• “...it is not enough to say ‘relax, ‘loosen up’. Such a direction becomes of real value only when every step towards achieving relaxation and looseness has been so clearly explained and experienced that it would seem ridiculous to do anything else” (Havas, 1961: 18).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “When the pupil perceives directly through the kinesthetic sense and can compare a habitual with a nonhabitual way of doing something, he doesn’t need words in order to grasp the significance of the experience” (Jones, 1976: 51).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Havas considers the feel of the movement as the primary guide to performance...she spends considerable time in the patient guidance of the pupil to perceive and through perception to accept whatever is demonstrated” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 365).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Books...can inform, enthuse and influence...books, however, do not show <i>you</i> how to do it. Your particular needs and difficulties cannot be dealt with (without a teacher) and it is precisely with these areas that the Technique is concerned” (Stevens, 1996: 74).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Although I shall often repeat instructions in order to emphasise a point more strongly I must emphasize too that no one...can possibly hope to learn the violin without a teacher...Another important thing is that beginners should not practise on their own between lessons...” (Havas, 1964: Introduction).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...it was a consciousness, not of being moved by someone else...but by a set of reflexes whose operation I knew nothing about” (Jones, 1976: 7).</li> <li>• At first, the teacher initiates the movement while the pupil inhibits his or her own response to the stimulus to act, as well as his or her own judgement of right and wrong. Once the new experience becomes clearer, the teacher and pupil take turns to activate the movement, until the pupil is able to take over the responsibility for the improved use on his or her own (De Alcantara, 1997: 48).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Briskly, momentary pressure is applied by the teacher to the triceps tendon located just above and behind the elbow joint, in alternation with a similar tap to the biceps tendon on the opposite side of the articulation. This evokes a succession of quick reflex movements...The elbow opens fully and then closes in response to tendon stimulation...Once the muscle and joint sensation has been experienced, the pupil activates the triceps and biceps muscles voluntarily <i>in synchrony with tendon stimulation</i>, and then finally, does this alone without potentiating proprioceptive facilitation” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 361).</li> </ul>

### 5.2.2.2 Inhibition

Many of the causes for misuse (notably misuse of the primary control, and misconceptions regarding the violin- and bow-holds), and the way in which they are eliminated in the New Approach, have already been discussed at length in **5.2.1** and **5.2.2.1**. The purpose of this section will be to highlight the deeper parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach regarding the process of inhibition itself.

Inhibition, together with reasoned direction, is the means whereby change is brought about in the Alexander Technique<sup>1</sup>. It is not a matter of learning to actively do the right thing, but rather of stopping the misuse that interferes with good use (De Alcantara, 1996: 77). This same principle is also at the heart of the New Approach:

**D-I; MW**

**I; U-m**

Havas, 1961: 2:

I realized that a whole new approach was necessary – an approach which eliminates physical disturbances and makes it possible for the mind to have full reign over the music.

**I; U-m**

Havas recognises that “the physiological intelligence is almost incapable of making a mistake” when left to itself (Huxley, as cited in Havas, 1973: 77), a concept which is central to the Alexander Technique. (It is significant that Havas quotes Huxley, who was deeply influenced by Alexander, and this will be discussed in greater detail in **5.4.1**.) Havas (1961: 2) frequently emphasises that the New Approach is not concerned with imparting knowledge or imposing a certain dogma, but with dealing with interferences so that it is possible for the student to “let it happen”. The teacher’s role is to pinpoint exactly where such tensions originate, so that they can be eliminated (Havas, 1961: 57) - or in Alexandrian terminology, inhibited. This is not easy, as a problem manifesting in one part of the body might originate somewhere else, owing to the principle of co-innervation<sup>2</sup>. However, once the cause for misuse has been discovered, “the trouble itself is well on the way to being eliminated” (Havas, 1961: 68).

**PC; CF**

**I**

**U-m**

**I**

---

<sup>1</sup> See **3.3.7**.

<sup>2</sup> See **4.5.1**.

Stein (1999) gives a definition of inhibition from the perspective of an Alexander teacher involved with teaching string instruments, that is conceptually identical to the aims of the New Approach as formulated by Havas:

Inhibition is the process of observing how the...student is moving and stopping during an activity, noting any inefficient movement patterns and then intervening to prescribe movements that have a minimum of tension and a maximum of balance and ease. (Stein, 1999.)

**I**  
**U-m**  
**D-I**  
**PB; KE**

The basic means for preventing the “misdirection that leads to wrong use” (Alexander, 1932: 45) lies in knowing how to stop, that is, to refuse to give consent to habitual reactions to the stimulus for action (Jones, 1976: 83). Havas (1961: 63) is in agreement with this point: the aim is not to improve old habits, but to completely eliminate them, replacing them with a new way of playing. For instance, the vibrato cannot be a “natural development of the fundamental play-actions” unless one first stops a faulty vibrato, i.e. a super-imposed oscillation (Havas, 1964: 36), which is the result of a tense, vertical finger-action<sup>1</sup>.

**U-m**  
**I**  
**D-I**  
**I**

Stein (1999) suggests that when misuse is perceived, one needs to “pause for a moment” in order to give directions for improved use. Havas also frequently recommends that a pupil should stop completely before continuing with an action, as is illustrated by the following example. Violinists often struggle with tension in the fourth finger of the left hand, which inevitably leads to the incapacitating rigidity of the whole hand (Havas, 1973: 48). This is usually because the finger is stretched out and tensed in anticipation of playing. As a first step to overcoming this problem, Havas advises the player to stop completely and remain in a state of rest on the string, while pretending “that he has finished altogether *before using the fourth finger*” (1973: 49). She adds that she has found “over and over again that only this total ‘stop’ could put an end to its anticipatory agitation” (1973: 49).

**I**  
**D; U-i**  
**I**  
**U-m**  
**I**  
**I**

It is clear that Havas’s aim with this exercise is to stop a postural set (triggered in response to the stimulus for using the fourth finger) from imposing itself. This is exactly the conclusion that Alexander reached: he had to stop his unsatisfactory

**I; U-m**  
**I**

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.4.



reaction to the stimulus to use his voice at its source (Alexander, 1932: 24), before he was able to reason out directions for improved use. In other words, it is not possible simply to do the improved action, as the very thought of the action will cause a postural set, which links the stimulus to the response, to occur automatically (cf Jones, 1976: 150). De Alcantara also observes that inhibition “is not simply the temporary suspension of an activity; it is the suspension of the very wish to act” (De Alcantara, 1997: 53). Only this complete stop, advised by both Alexander and Havas, can break the subconscious link between concept and activity, to allow a different response to be made (cf Dawley, 2001: 7)<sup>1</sup>.

**D; U-i**

**I**

**I**

**U-i**

Havas follows her injunction to stop before using the fourth finger with very detailed and comprehensive directions for improving the fourth finger action (Havas, 1973: 49–50). This includes a light, yielding slide of the thumb in the direction of the third position, before the fourth finger itself is used. She also relates various responses from pupils regarding the feeling of subsequent ease in the fourth finger and the increased mobility in whole arm and hand (Havas, 1973: 51). This exercise answers to all the indicators in the input-throughput-output diagram for inhibition, as discussed in **3.3.7** (see **diagram 1**). As soon as the stimulus to use the fourth finger is received (input), the desire to act is inhibited through coming to a complete stop, so that reasoned directions for improved use may be projected (throughput), leading to a much-improved use and the experience of freedom and mobility (output).<sup>2</sup>

**I**

**D**

**KE**

**I**

**D**

**U-i; CF**

Havas (1973: 49) recognises the wider application of this principle of stopping, or inhibition, as a means for becoming aware of and eliminating unwanted behaviour in all aspects of playing:

**I**

‘Stopping’ in this manner (in any given passage) is a most important and useful exercise...because it shows up (and gives the player time to notice) all the tensions and twists in the body one is not conscious of otherwise. (Havas, 1973: 49.)

**I**

**SA-i**

This shows significant equivalence with the Alexander precept that misuse can only be inhibited once one has become aware of it on a kinaesthetic level (Jones, 1996:

**U-m**

**I; SA**

<sup>1</sup> See **3.3.7**.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Barlow, 1973: 193.

<p>51). Barlow (1973: 198) also indicates that, through projecting the reasoned directions while inhibiting activity, it becomes possible to detect where unnecessary tension is created in the body in anticipation of the movement.</p>	<p><b>D</b> <b>I; SA</b></p>
<p>Havas spends considerable time in making pupils aware of their “own individual tightening points”, in order to release them (Bonnici, 1988: 1). Apart from misuse arising from misconceptions regarding the play actions, Havas recognises that a tightening process frequently occurs before performance “in a subconscious desire for safety” (Bonnici, 1988: 1). Stein (1999) confirms that many musicians have a tendency to “lock or set” the body in anticipation of performing, in the false belief that this will help them to do the activity more precisely<sup>1</sup>. Inhibition, or stopping, coupled with the appropriate directions, gives one the opportunity to notice and inhibit such unnecessary stiffening (Stein, 1999).</p>	<p><b>SA-i</b> <b>U-m; I</b></p> <p><b>U-m</b> <b>EG</b> <b>U-m</b> <b>EG; I</b> <b>D; SA</b> <b>I</b></p>
<p>De Alcantara (1996: 47) emphasises the importance of inhibiting end-gaining desires, as they are the motivators for misuse. By eliminating end-gaining habits, the movement patterns that reinforce pursuing one’s goals at any cost can be changed. “Paying attention to the means is a radical departure from what many teachers and performers do to solve technical problems”, yet it is only by inhibiting the “habits that have been created by the ever-present drive to attain a goal” that change can be brought about (Stein, 1999). The desired results can be allowed to happen, rather than pursued, once the student is no longer in his or her own way (Stein, 1999). Again, this is conceptually very close to Havas’s method: the inside-outward focus<sup>2</sup> of the New Approach prohibits end-gaining desires, in favour of a means whereby approach that “eliminates the self” (Havas, 1973: 127), so that the violinist can “let it happen” without cortical control or interference<sup>3</sup>.</p>	<p><b>I; EG</b> <b>U-m</b></p> <p><b>MW</b> <b>I</b> <b>EG</b> <b>CF</b></p> <p><b>MW</b> <b>I; EG</b> <b>CF</b></p>
<p>Through inhibiting end-gaining, the pupil gains a new experience, in which the movement often “seems to be doing itself” (De Alcantara, 1997: 49). The result of inhibition, as applied in the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, brings</p>	<p><b>I; EG</b> <b>CF</b> <b>I</b></p>

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<sup>1</sup> Other end-gaining desires that cause muscular stiffening have already been discussed at length in 5.2.1.1. Also see table 5.2.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.2.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.4.7, 5.2.1.1 and table 5.2.

about the same kinaesthetic effect<sup>1</sup>, namely ease and effortlessness of movement, which will be discussed in more detail in 5.2.3.1.

KE

While these natural movements are spontaneous and effortless, the pupil needs to be able to inhibit his or her own understanding of the action, as well as the eagerness to be right, in order to allow the teacher to initiate the movement (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 49). Although the term *inhibition* is not used as such in the New Approach, the student has to release (i.e. inhibit) the domination of his or her mind, in order to allow the teacher to stimulate the key cues for the fundamental balances, i.e. the motor reflexes (cf Hellebrandt, 1969: 363).

KE  
I; EG  
GM  
I  
GM  
R

Also, while learning to initiate the reflexive movement for oneself, the desire to *do* the movement with muscular effort has to be inhibited, in order to *let it happen*. In the initial stages of learning, nothing is required of the student other than “non-interference with what the neuromuscular apparatus is equipped to do naturally” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 361).

EG  
I; CF  
I; R

Hellebrandt, 1969: 363:

...the pupil is shown how to release that admirable repertoire of natural movements built into the neuromuscular apparatus of every normal human being. This is not easy for either the teacher or the pupil. It requires a receptive student capable of “functional decortification” – that is, sufficiently in command of his higher centres to free them from unnecessary involvement in the execution of motor acts, once what has to be done has been comprehended.

R  
I  
CF

The New Approach answers to all the indicators for inhibition, as described in 3.3.7 and summarised in table 3.5. It is clear that both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach work directly with the body’s innate reflexes, and that the success of the procedure depends on the pupil’s ability to **inhibit interference with the body’s reflex systems** (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 47). This is done in the first instance through **inhibiting interference with the primary control**, and by **bringing inhibition and direction on to a conscious level**. Both methods use inhibition to **intercept the link between concept and activity**, thereby **stopping a postural set from imposing itself**, so that **reasoned directions for satisfactory use can be projected**.

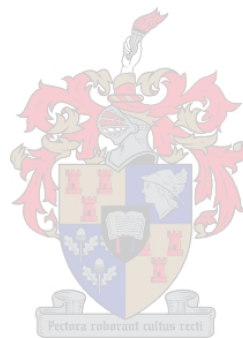
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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.8 and 4.5.3.

**Awareness of kinaesthetic feedback is increased** in both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique, so that harmful tension patterns can be inhibited.

**The effect of inhibiting interferences with the reflex systems** in the body is that **activity becomes free of excessive tension, appearing to be effortless**, an effect that is often reported by New Approach students. Both methods teach that use is improved through eliminating misuse, i.e. **not by what one does, but by what one stops doing**. **End-gaining habits** that trigger misuse are identified and eliminated in both disciplines. It is possible to say, therefore, that **inhibition, with reasoned direction**, is the **means whereby** change is brought about both in the Alexander Technique and the New Approach.

See **table 5.6** for further examples of statements that show similarity between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique regarding inhibition.



**Table 5.6. Comparisons: Inhibition**

<b>The Alexander Technique</b>	<b>The New Approach to violin playing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Inhibition is the process of observing how the...student is moving and stopping during an activity, noting any inefficient movement patterns and then intervening to prescribe movements that have a minimum of tension and a maximum of balance and ease” (Stein, 1999).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Thus, first one learns to pinpoint the seats of these tensions systematically and then, having recognized them, one learns step by step how to eliminate them...this sense of ease and perfect balance...is the aim of the New Approach” (Whitman, as cited in Havas, 1968: 96).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Knowing how to stop...demands a technique of inhibition in which refusal to give consent to habitual (subconscious) reaction is the basic means for change” (Alexander, as cited in Jones, 1976: 83).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The first important step was to prevent the anticipatory agitation of the fourth finger before it was used...the only way to prevent it was to stop completely while playing on the previous finger” (Havas, 1973: 48).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through projecting the reasoned directions while inhibiting activity, it becomes possible to detect where unnecessary tension is created in the body in anticipation of the movement (Barlow, 1973: 198).</li> <li>• “If we become sensorily aware of doing a harmful thing to ourselves, we can cease doing it” (Jones, 1976: 51).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “‘Stopping’ in this manner (in any given passage) is a most important and useful exercise, apart from the fourth-finger action, because it shows up (and gives the player time to notice) all the tensions and twists in the body one is not conscious of otherwise” (Havas, 1973: 49).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inhibition stops habitual reactions that interfere with the reflex systems of the body, so that activity becomes free of excessive tension, appearing to be effortless (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 47-49).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The secret of teaching is not so much the question of imparting knowledge. It is the ability to make the road clear for the pupil both physically and mentally so that he can lose whatever constraint he has and as a result is able just ‘to let it happen’” (Havas, 1961: 57).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “..the whole procedure depends, for its success, on the willingness and ability of the pupil to inhibit his desire to vibrate and to stop his usual vibrato before he learns a new vibrato” (De Alcantara, 1997: 48).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The vibrato should not be a super-imposed oscillation, but develop naturally. “The player should stop his own vibrato during these exercises otherwise the natural vibrato will not be able to develop with the basic play-actions” (Havas, 1964: 36).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While inhibition can bring about far-reaching and immensely rewarding change, it is also difficult to learn, as to inhibit means to delay the instant gratification of a desire. It requires self-denial to go against one’s instinctive desire to react in a habitual way, and most people find this a struggle (De Alcantara, 1997: 54).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...the pupil is shown how to release that admirable repertoire of natural movements built into the neuromuscular apparatus...It requires a receptive student capable of ‘functional decortification’ – that is, sufficiently in command of his higher centres to free them from unnecessary involvement in the execution of motor acts” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 363).</li> </ul>

### 5.2.2.3 Direction

It has already been demonstrated in 5.2.2.2 that the principle of inhibition followed by direction, exists in the New Approach. The purpose of this section is to examine deeper congruence regarding the process of direction itself, as applied in the New Approach and the Alexander Technique.

I  
D

Havas agrees that old, harmful habits need to be eliminated completely, but also recognises that this places the pupil in the dilemma of having to let go of the familiar without as yet knowing what the new use entails<sup>1</sup>: “It is as though a lame man is told to throw away his crutches. He would feel utterly helpless unless he had something else he could trust equally well to support him” (Havas, 1961: 63). It is therefore imperative that pupils be given “something definite and something completely logical to take the place of their previous playing” (Havas, 1961: 62). Havas’s view shows deep resonance with Alexander’s realization that he had to stop relying on the feeling associated with his instinctive direction, and rely on his reasoning processes instead (Alexander, 1932: 25).

I  
SA-u  
D  
SA-u  
D

Direction in the Alexander Technique involves analysis of the conditions present in the unsatisfactory use, as well as the thought and movement patterns required by the improved use (Madden, 2002). With the teacher’s guidance, the verbal pattern describing the steps to improved use is linked to the pupil’s kinaesthetic experience. This is precisely the way in which Havas proceeds to give a pupil a clear and logical plan for improved use (cf Havas, 1961: 62). She first identifies the exact cause and nature of the physical and mental blockages, followed by a carefully worked-out plan to establish a balanced, inside-outward way of playing. The teacher helps to make the steps to the improved use as clear as possible, through discussion, demonstration and facilitating the movements (cf Havas, 1961: 18).

D-I  
GM; D  
U-i; SA  
D  
U-i  
D-I  
U-i  
MW  
GM

Alexandrian directing always requires the first step of inhibiting one’s immediate response to the stimulus for action. By stopping for a moment, in order to project the sequence of directions for improved use before acting, familiarity with the new

I  
D

<sup>1</sup>This is conceptually very close to the discussion regarding unreliable sensory awareness in the Alexander Technique - see 3.3.4.

*means-whereby* is gained<sup>1</sup>. This is also true in the New Approach: Havas often recommends that a pupil should merely think about the movement until a clear picture of the desired action is obtained (cf Havas, 1964: 13). The importance of mental rehearsal<sup>2</sup> in the New Approach ensures that the focus of perception regarding the intended action is very clear.

MW  
D-I  
D

Barlow, 1973: 225:

Giving ‘directions’ is like setting the focus and speed of a camera. If the focus is wrong, a blurred picture will result, which can be misinterpreted in many ways. Time spent directing is never wasted. A far more appropriate response is possible if the focus of perception has been sharpened by directing.

D  
D-I

The New Approach practise of mental rehearsal and miming the movements away from the instrument inhibits the end-gaining desire to play at all costs, while sharpening one’s focus of the *means-whereby*. As the instrument is not actually handled while the movement is mentally projected and mimed, the habitual response to touching and playing on the instrument is inhibited, giving one an opportunity to experience the desired movement physically without the distorting influence of the instrument. Unnecessary tension and misuse can then be recognised and eliminated when the same action is repeated with the instrument<sup>3</sup>.

D-I  
I; EG  
MW  
I  
SA-i  
U-m; I

Mental representations of movements are created from memories of the kinaesthetic sensations that accompany such movement<sup>4</sup>. Havas (1964) often refers to the *feeling* of a movement, which is recreated in the imagination along with the required sound, before it is actually played on the instrument. This answers to one of the defining features of Alexandrian directing: the triple linkage of a thought, its resulting action, and its accompanying feedback (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 60). As this triple linkage is absent in ordinary thought, it is safe to say that New Approach thinking is equivalent to Alexandrian directing; with the addition that aural feedback is also included in the sensory feedback that is linked to the mental representation of the action.

D-q  
D-q  
D-q  
D-q

<sup>1</sup> See 3.2.2.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.3.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.5.1. It is important to note that this process is only applicable while the fundamental balances are being established, as the pupil eventually forgets all about the external aspects of technique while performing, in order to project the music.

<sup>4</sup> See 4.4.3.



Havas frequently uses the term *direction*, and does so in this Alexandrian sense, as is evident from the following citation: “Such a direction becomes of real value only when every step...has been so clearly explained and experienced that it would seem ridiculous to do anything else” (Havas, 1961: 18). In other words, she refers to a verbal pattern that has been linked to kinaesthetic experience, in order to recreate the co-ordinative processes required for improved use (cf Barlow, 1973: 132).

**D-q**  
**D**

The New Approach directions are “ordered” in both of the senses to which Barlow (1973: 131) refers<sup>1</sup>. Firstly, the directions are “consciously projected as a command” to the body, as was discussed in the preceding paragraphs. Secondly, the fundamental balances are established in a particular order (cf Havas, 1964), starting with the balance of the body as a whole, thereby ensuring that the central co-ordination of the head, neck and back is maintained as a core structure and the pupil does not become caught up in the peripheral movements of the arms and hands<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the directions for establishing the fundamental balances are also given in a sequential order (cf Havas, 1964).

**D**  
**D-q**  
**PC**  
**D**

Both Havas (1964) and De Alcantara (1997: 218) insist that establishing a dynamic, balanced posture and cultivating good use of the arms, precedes any attempt to play the instrument<sup>3</sup>. In other words, both methods proceed “from the general to the particular” (De Alcantara, 1997: 218). De Alcantara (1997: 218) advises that “new steps should not compromise earlier ones”, and that when any deviation from general good use is noticed, one should “backtrack and re-cultivate earlier norms until a new step does not compromise earlier ones”. Havas’s insistence on first individually establishing the fundamental balances rests on the same principle:

**PB**  
**PC**  
**U-m**  
**D-I**

Havas, 1964: 73:

...it is imperative that each point of balance you have learned so far should be interlocked with and interdependent of every other. For example, unless the violin-hold is correct, the left arm cannot be free, and if the left arm is twisted, the left finger-action is cramped...if the control of finger-action is not from the base joints, the thumb gets disabled...please check on all (these points) again before going any further.

**PC**  
**U-m**  
**D-I**

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.6.

<sup>2</sup> See 5.2.1.2.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.5.1 and 3.3.9.

The detailed directions for improved use are eventually shortened to a single word, once the principle behind the action is understood well. For instance, the thought processes that are followed to establish the fundamental balance in the left base knuckles include the following: (1) “Lift the base joint of the first finger – *hear, say,* and *feel* the ‘A’ in your mind, simultaneously...transferring this sensation to the first base joint as if they were one and the same”; (2) “Drop the finger from the base joint forward...on the ‘G’ string...the generating power itself remains behind in the bone of the base joint, so that the actual contact between the finger-tip and string is light and resilient”; (3) “‘Buckle’ the wrist very slightly towards you, after each finger-action on the string” in order to “counter-act any possible stiffness” in the left wrist (Havas, 1964: 34).

**D-q**

This detailed procedure is eventually abbreviated to “‘raise’, ‘throw’, ‘buckle’”, once the “principle of how to prepare each note is well understood” (Havas, 1964: 50). In other words, the New Approach directions eventually become a “mnemonic index”, such as described by De Alcantara (1997: 60), where the abbreviated phrase or word contains a depth of experiential meaning, and is able to trigger a particular experience.

**D-q**

**D-q**

Another similarity between directing in the Alexander Technique and the New Approach lies in the “syntax” to directing, which involves three distinct elements that interact in a precise way, i.e. the action, the part acted upon, and the orientation in space (De Alcantara, 1997: 61). The example of the New Approach direction cited above illustrates this syntax very clearly: the finger (body part) is dropped from the base knuckle (action), and the orientation in space is forwards onto the string (Havas, 1964: 34). This syntax is common to the New Approach directions in general.

**D-q**

**D-q**

As in the Alexander Technique, the New Approach directions are not concerned with maintaining a particular physical position as such, but with the spatial orientation that exists within each position<sup>1</sup>. As opposed to the fixed ways in which the body is often positioned in traditional violin methods, the body is “positioned to seek and find its own natural balance” in the New Approach (Hellebrandt, 1969: 279). Havas does not advocate set positions, and believes in each pupil’s innate ability to discover “for

**D**

**PB**

---

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.6.

himself the design of co-ordination best adapted to his needs” (Hellebrandt, 1970a: 429). At the same time, she does refer to the spatial orientation that exists within the playing movements, as is shown in this quotation: “Make certain that the action of the index finger...is always a *forward* motion towards you and that the left elbow *points to the ground* and is not twisted under the violin” (Havas, 1964: 29). (Italics added.)

**D-q**

Alexandrian directing has been described as an ordered sequence of words containing both spatial and temporal co-ordinates (cf Barlow 1973: 191), and it has been illustrated above that the New Approach also incorporates both spatial and temporal<sup>1</sup> co-ordinates in the directions used for establishing the fundamental balances. Once a balanced use of the body has been established, the New Approach directing adds a further dimension, in linking the balanced physical use to the musical co-ordinates, so that the inner ear eventually directs all movement required in performing the music (cf Havas, 1973: 76). Although this process is unique to the New Approach, it is still entirely congruent with the Alexander Technique. De Alcantara (1997: 56) stresses that directing is to “establish, cultivate, and refine the connections between what you think and what you do”. In violin performance the thought is ultimately musical, and the aim of the New Approach is to *establish, cultivate and refine the connections* between the violinist’s musical thinking and the physical movements required to express such thought.

**D  
PB**

**D-w**

**D-w**

**D-w**

Havas (1973: 76) proceeds from the perspective that it is only the inner ear that can link the player to the music<sup>2</sup>, and that this needs as much regular and systematic training as the physical aspects of playing. The New Approach directing can be summarised as “the co-ordinated aural and physical reaction to the pitch” (Havas, 1973: 76), and Havas (1973: 84) outlines the sequence of this psycho-physical co-ordination as follows:

**D**

1. Identification (the naming of the notes containing aural, visual and sensory information);
2. Response of the left-finger action to the identification;
3. Responses in the right arm movements to the lead of the left hand (for this it is imperative that there are no blockages in the bow-hold, and elbow

<sup>1</sup> The temporal co-ordinates include not only the sequential order of the directions, but also the rhythmic pulse with which the physical movements are coordinated - see the discussion to follow.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.6.

joint and that the whole bowing arm is based on motion and balance), without any conscious effort on the part of the player. (Havas, 1973: 84).

To clarify this process, it is worth examining each of these steps in greater detail. Firstly, Havas (1973: 82) teaches that “the accumulated information relating to each note is aural, visual and tactile”, and that it is the name of the note that synchronises all of this information. However, the concept of notes are very often “connected in the player’s mind only with a finger action on the fingerboard with hardly any (or no) sensory, aural and imaginative perceptions” (Havas, 1973: 83). It is through internalising the music away from the instrument that this information becomes linked to the visual stimulus of reading the notation.

The printed note is presented as a sensory cue for the sound produced by the instrument, and is given “an auditory facet and rhythmic proprioceptive background” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 475) through singing and pulsing the music rhythmically before playing. Once the music has been internalised together with the appropriate dynamics and musical imagination (Havas, 1973: 76), the pupil is taught “how to yoke this configuration of objective and subjective cues to that complex of proprioceptive patterns evoked by receptors in muscles, tendons and joints” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 475) in the act of physically playing the instrument.

This process is initially limited to the left hand finger action: once the mental image of the music is very clear, it is transferred to the left base joints through miming, i.e. lifting and dropping the respective base joints simultaneously with hearing the music inwardly (Havas, 1961: 67). Havas (1973: 88) stresses that the wrist should remain “feather-light” during this exercise and that there should be “no feeling in the fingers at all”, but that the motivation for the movement should be purely in the base joints, once again illustrating the importance of attention to sensory feedback in learning to direct<sup>1</sup>. In eventually playing the same passage on the instrument, the notes are verbalised aloud “with such authority that the playing itself becomes a mere reflex action” (Havas, 1973: 89). In this way “the visual, aural, and sensory information becomes united into one response, the naming of the notes” (Havas, 1973: 84).

**D-q**

**D-q**

**D-q**

**SA**

**CF-p**

**D-q**

<sup>1</sup> See table 3.6.

As long as the bowing arm is free of tension, and the fundamental balances well-established, the bowing will evolve naturally to the lead of the left hand (Havas, 1964: 68). Havas (1964: 10+) takes great care in the beginning to establish the bow strokes on the open strings, using detailed, sequential directions. The movements are always based on balance and coordinated with the rhythmic pulse as the activator for the movement (Havas, 1973: 38). The rhythmic division and weight-adjustment of the bow and arm eventually “take care of all bowing technique as a matter of course” (Havas, 1973: 38). As soon as the “feeling” of the different bow strokes (legato, détaché, martelé, etc.) has been mastered on the open strings, the student is instructed to concentrate only on the left hand finger action when the two hands are combined (Havas, 1964: 72). As the duration of the bow-strokes continually changes, depending on the rhythmic configuration of the melody being shaped in the left hand, “it is imperative that the right arm should follow the command of the left” (Havas, 1964: 69). Directing the note name to the left base knuckles is the key cue that triggers the whole of the physical response, greatly simplifying the conscious process – it is the central point of direction that is able to coordinate the mind and the body (Havas, 1973: 85)<sup>1</sup>.

**PB**

**D-q**

**CF-p**

**SA**

**D**

**CF**

**D-w**

Havas, 1964: 68:

...it is most important to realize that in the long run, there are no such things as ‘bowing technique’, ‘left hand technique’ etc., but that good violin playing depends on the co-ordination of all the balances into a final ‘whole’; and that the basic control of this ‘whole’ lies in the shaping of the melody in the left finger action.

**D**

This is of profound importance, as it is the lack of mental and physical coordination that is the cause of much anxiety and misuse in violin performance (Havas, 1961: 69). There are so many things to coordinate in playing the violin, that the mind can become diffused in several directions, disorganised and unable to give direction to the operation of the whole at the crucial moment “when everything should click together” (Havas, 1961: 69). However, once all the musical information has been organized in the mind (as described in the preceding discussion), the body in balance knows what to do and responds reflexively and with ease of movement to the musical imagination

**U-m**

**D**

**PB**

**CF; KE**

<sup>1</sup> Havas (1968: 72) emphasises that this is not an over-simplification: “all the muscles and joints and sinews do the work that is attributed to them, but in this way they simply become *subconscious* actions”.

of the performer. When the mind is focused only on one point of control (i.e. directing the music through the left hand finger action), it is free to recreate the music “instead of being continuously occupied by various physical aspects” of playing the instrument (Havas, 1961: 68). The inside-outward playing brought about by New Approach directing, exemplifies an ordered structure of use of the whole of the psycho-physical self, in which mind and movement are co-ordinated in an expressive musical gesture.

**D**

**D-w**

This extended, multi-layered directing, linked to the note name, is not easy to learn and demands a great deal of attention, as well as the ability to inhibit unnecessary cortical involvement in “the execution of motor acts” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 363). In other words, it requires the ability to inhibit the desire to control the playing movements, so that they can be allowed to unfold naturally. Havas (1973: 84) emphasises that saying the note names is “not an empty drill, and can fulfil its function as the central point of co-ordination only if the visual, aural, sensory, and tactile information is well-established”. This requires slow, detailed practise so that the mind has sufficient time “to prepare and transmit each note through the left base joints” (Havas, 1961: 52). Once this identification becomes a habit, it is no longer necessary to say the note names aloud, as they will have become embedded in the mind. As the mind works very fast, “identification will be made at an incredible speed”, so that it eventually becomes a natural process similar to the identification of people and objects, with all the subsidiary information relating to them (Havas, 1973: 83).

**D-q**

**A; I**

**I**

**CF**

**D-q**

**D-w**

The foregoing discussion reveals parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique on many different levels. Firstly, the New Approach is ultimately concerned with thinking, and not doing, as is the Alexander Technique. It is the direction that elicits the physical action, while the pupil inhibits his own end-gaining desire to control physical movements with conscious effort<sup>1</sup>. The movements are allowed to unfold naturally rather than controlled, so that the body’s reflex systems come into play, leading to ease and accuracy<sup>2</sup>. Learning to direct in this way is an amalgamative process, requiring much attention, deliberate discipline and time in order to reason out and link the co-ordinates of the directions (cf Barlow, 1973:

**D**

**D-w; I**

**EG**

**CF; R**

**KE**

**A**

**D**

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.11.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.3.8 and 3.3.11.

212). Eventually, however, such directing “becomes a state of ‘thoughtful movement’, rather than ‘thought-out action’” (Barlow, 1973: 212). The New Approach sets up the required conditions in which a flash of “coordinative, integrative thought” is able to “set in motion co-ordinated, integrated activity” (De Alcantara, 1997: 54)<sup>1</sup>.

D-w

D-w

Once such a new body construct has been learned, it can be used to “put oneself into a state of ‘thoughtful movement’” (Barlow, 1973: 212), but the decision to employ it has to be made anew, according to the situation, and has to be directed consciously, as it may not be immediately accessible at a conscious level (Barlow, 1973: 212). Havas also emphasises that applying the “principles of motion and balance” is a continuous development, and should be the focus of attention at the start of each daily practise session (Havas, 1973: 128).

D-w

D

A

Alexandrian directing does not lead to automatic, conditioned responses or a mechanistic control of the body, but freedom of choice and imaginative creativity<sup>2</sup>. This is also true in the New Approach. Like Kreisler (as cited in Havas, 1973: 125), Havas believes that mechanistic repetition and excessive practise “benumbs the brain, renders the imagination less acute and deadens the sense of alertness that every artist must possess”. She points out that it is more important to set aside time just to think about the action and how it should be done (Havas, 1961: 62): “dependence on the function of the mind”, rather than on physical conditioning, gives the musician the freedom to transmit his musical imagination in an act of spontaneous music-making.

D-q

EG

U-m

D

D-q

Hellebrandt, 1969: 279:

...the *New Approach* may be forecasting a future in which the violinist rediscovers himself as the instrument of expression, with the violin and bow as extensions of a sensitively responsive and autonomously regulated physiological machine.

D-w

CF

The New Approach directing complies with all of the qualifying characteristics of direction, as stipulated in 3.3.6 and table 3.6: it is a **verbal pattern that has been linked to the new use**, which enables a pupil to recreate the **co-ordinative processes** required for such use. It consists

<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.3.4.

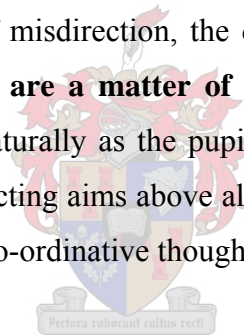
<sup>2</sup> See 3.3.6



of the **triple linkage of a thought, its resulting action and the associated feedback**, and has the same **syntax** as Alexandrian directing.

The New Approach directions contain **spatial and temporal co-ordinates**, as well as musical coordinates. The directions are eventually **shortened to a single word or phrase**, containing a depth of kinaesthetic meaning. It has a **quality of insistent, repeated thought**, as the directions are projected mentally before they are attempted on the instrument. It requires **deliberate discipline to learn to do each individual movement well for its own sake** before all the balances are linked into one point of control, thereby greatly simplifying co-ordination and leading to the effortless ease of good use. The New Approach **does not lead to mechanistic, conditioned control of the body**, but to the freedom of both the body and mind, in an act of imaginative creativity.

The New Approach directing also requires the **inhibition of habitual reactions**. Once the wrong response is stopped at the source of misdirection, the directions for the improved use can be projected mentally. The **directions are a matter of thinking, not doing**, and the physical movements are allowed to unfold naturally as the pupil inhibits cortical interference in motor movements. The New Approach directing aims above all to **integrate thought with action**, and sets up the conditions necessary for co-ordinative thought to bring about coordinated acting.



A unique aspect of the New Approach directing is that aural feedback is included in the triple linkage of a thought, its resulting action and the associated feedback. The directions integrate musical as well as spatial and temporal coordinates, and are eventually shortened to just the name of the note, which coordinates mind and movement, and contains a depth of kinaesthetic information as a result of the painstaking process in which all the different components have been linked together.

**Table 5.7** compares statements relating to direction in the New Approach and the Alexander Technique.

**Table 5.7. Comparisons: Direction**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexander (1932: 25) discovered that he had to give up relying on the “feeling associated with (his) instinctive direction”, and in its place employ his reasoning processes in order to work out the means whereby a more satisfactory use could be brought about. Through consciously projecting these directions once he had inhibited his initial response to the stimulus for action, he was finally able to improve his use (Alexander, 1932: 33).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...some (pupils) find it extremely difficult to give up a habit which, though ruinous, they have developed in order to play at all...They have to have something definite and something completely logical to take the place of their previous playing...It is as though a lame man is told to throw away his crutches. He would feel utterly helpless unless he had something else he could trust equally well to support him” (Havas, 1961: 62).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexander used his reasoning to analyse the conditions of the misuse, as well as to work out the means whereby a more satisfactory use could be obtained, and then consciously projected these directions to himself (Alexander, 1932: 25).</li> <li>• “The Technique involves analysis of habitual thought and movement patterns as well as analysis of the thought and movement patterns required by the activity itself. With that information, students reason out a new constructive plan to maximize their overall coordination for the chosen activity” (Madden, 2002).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “When the point in question is clarified, demonstrate it; first, the incorrect way, to point out the effect that that particular fault has on the tone – then the correct way, to show the effect which that has on the quality of tone” (Havas, 1961: 57).</li> <li>• “Her ability to diagnose the prepotent cause of difficulties in execution is very acute, as is her ingenuity in applying corrective measures” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 365).</li> <li>• The aim is to discover “the design of co-ordination best adapted to (one’s) needs” (Hellebrandt, 1970a: 429).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The conductor was reacting muscularly in the wrong order. Instead of maintaining the central co-ordination of his back as a ‘core-structure’, he was becoming totally involved in the peripheral movements of his arms, so that the structure of his trunk was distorted and his basic balance upset” (Barlow, 1973: 131).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We take it for granted that the movements of every day activities are carried out by inside-outward impulses, the source of which is right in the centre of the body itself...Yet we don’t seem to think it odd at all when the bow is pushed and pulled by the fingers and wrist with the arm following behind ” (Havas, 1973: 28).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “In time the pupil comes to associate the experiences and sensations of directing with their respective commands. He can then use words to recall experiences, or even to trigger them. The words become a mnemonic index of sorts” (De Alcantara, 1997: 60).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “If the principle of how to prepare each note is well understood, abbreviate the thought process before each finger action to – ‘raise’, ‘throw’, ‘buckle” (Havas, 1964: 50).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There may be an apparent conflict between the carefree ease of good use and the deliberate discipline required to cultivate it” (De Alcantara, 1997: 163).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Although it is true that when this Approach has been assimilated violin playing is made far easier, the assimilation itself may not be easy at all” (Havas, 1964: Introduction).</li> </ul>

### 5.2.3 Improved use

The New Approach procedures bring about a sense of ease and well being in playing the violin, which is strongly reinforcing and self-motivating. Postural balance is improved as interference with the righting reflexes is eliminated, allowing for effortless and graceful natural movements to evolve (Hellebrandt, 1969: 279). Although the physical aspects of violin playing are made much easier, it demands a great deal of attention in order to learn this approach. The New Approach brings about an extended field of awareness in relation to the instrument, and the player experiences increased control and freedom, as the instrument becomes an extension of the living, expressive body.

KE  
PB  
I; R  
KE  
A  
A-e  
CF

#### 5.2.3.1 The kinaesthetic effect

Havas believes that “playing the violin is never difficult; it is either easy or it is impossible” (Havas, 1973: 136). The problem lies in “the complexities of the neuromuscular activities” involved in playing the violin, which demands a very high degree of co-ordination (Havas, 1973: 28). The New Approach procedures are designed to co-ordinate mind and movement, so that a single point of direction is eventually able to unite the response of the whole in the act of musical self-expression<sup>1</sup>. It is noteworthy that De Alcantara describes the co-ordinated use of the self in violin playing, from the perspective of an Alexander teacher, in very similar terms.

KE  
U-m  
D-w

De Alcantara, 1997: 157:

Alexandrian co-ordination means...to link thought to action in complex ways...Violin playing, for instance, consists of many factors that relate to one another in complex ways. Yet for the well-co-ordinated violinist, playing the violin consists of a single act of the will, and as such it is one and simple. In other words, the arrangement of factors involved in playing the violin is complex; their execution in a unified whole is simple, unless the violinist is badly co-ordinated, in which case playing the violin becomes complicated.

D-w  
KE  
U-m

Although the process of linking together all the factors involved in violin playing is complex, and demands intense training and sustained mental concentration (Hellebrandt, 1969: 363), the execution of the unified whole is simple once all the

A  
KE

<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.2.3.

factors have been co-ordinated in a single musical gesture. In the New Approach, the *single act of the will* is the inner musical voice, which directs the left hand finger action while everything else responds reflexively<sup>1</sup>. However, this coordinated use of the self is only possible if the physical aspect of playing is based on natural, balanced whole body movements that are “controlled and regulated subcortically” (Hellebrandt, 1970a: 421).

**D**  
**PB**  
**CF**

Hellebrandt, 1970a: 421:

Sufficient evidence has accumulated...to convince...that what Havas does in her application of the key-cue devices is capable of unlocking automatisms which give simplicity and ease to physical acts described almost universally in the pedagogic literature on violin playing as complex, difficult and unnatural.

**R**  
**KE**

Havas (1973: 34) often refers to the feeling of security and “over-all well-being” that a player will experience from movement based on the fundamental balances. For instance, she notes that the balance of the bow arm will elicit “a feeling of enormous comfort and well-being” (Havas, 1961: 50). Havas (1973: 35) also mentions that reflexive elbow movement is so light that “you will not even feel the movement”, in contrast to the stiff elbow-joint that many players suffer from, as a result of leading the bow stroke with the fingers and hand. As many players are so used to tension in their playing movements that they are not even aware of it (Havas, 1973: 34), the improved use brought about in the New Approach is bound to register kinaesthetically as much easier, lighter and efficient.

**KE**  
**PB**  
**KE**  
**U-m**  
**SA-I**  
**KE**

This is confirmed by numerous reports from both professional and amateur violinists, who frequently refer to the joy, assurance and seeming effortlessnes that they experience in their playing as a result of the New Approach<sup>2</sup>. Havas (1992: 1) writes that most players experience “moments of overwhelming bliss with a powerful energy flow that transcends all physical difficulties and a feeling of being one with the magic of the music”. Judging by the numerous reports to this effect in the KHANA newsletters and elsewhere<sup>3</sup>, it is reasonable to say that the kinaesthetic effect of effortlessnes and ease is also a hallmark of the New Approach, as it is for the

**KE**  
**KE**  
**KE**

<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.2.3.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.5.3.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.5.3.

Alexander Technique, and for the same reason: interference with the reflex systems of the body is inhibited<sup>1</sup>.

**R**  
**I**

Jones (1976: 144) concluded that the sensory experience of lightness and ease is the result of preventing interference with the primary control, or righting reflexes, which in turn prevents interference with the other reflex systems in the body. It has been shown that the New Approach eliminates and prevents interference with the primary control through the balanced stance and the *no-violin hold*<sup>2</sup>. Hellebrandt<sup>3</sup> frequently notes that Havas's teaching devices allow the body's natural reflex systems to operate without interference, and makes specific reference to the righting reflexes. In the light of Jones's research as well as Hellebrandt's conclusions, it is logical to conclude that the kinaesthetic effect of ease and effortlessness in the New Approach indeed has the same foundation as it does in the Alexander Technique.

**KE**  
**I; PC**  
**R**  
**I; PC**  
**PB**  
**R**  
**PC**  
**KE**

The sense of pleasure and well-being brought about in both methods, is strongly reinforcing and self-motivating<sup>4</sup>. Jones (1976: 162) is adamant that "the facilitated response should be its own reward", so that the wrong aspect of the response should not be reinforced, as when the pupil attributes praise from the teacher "to something he did, rather than what he did not do". Havas (1961: 58) concurs that it is very important that the result of the improved use not be judged by "the corrected position of any special part of the arm or hand", which would put the focus on achieving a particular set position. Rather, the kinaesthetic effect of ease, coupled with the effect on tone production, is the arbitrating factor at all times, and is tremendously self-motivating.

**KE**  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
**KE**

Havas, 1961: 58:

...if the diagnosis is correct the cure is not only instantaneous, but it has such a definite effect on tone production that the pupil experiences an immediate feeling of well-being – a feeling that 'this is right'. The stronger this feeling is, the more he desires to continue it, and is well on the road to a sense of fulfilment and achievement; which in turn are the best possible antidotes to insecurity and lack of self-confidence.

**U-i**  
**KE**

<sup>1</sup> See 4.5.2 and 5.2.1.2.

<sup>2</sup> See 5.2.1.2.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Hellebrandt, 1969: 277, 279 and 1970b: 475.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Jones, 1976: 2 and Havas, 1961: 58.

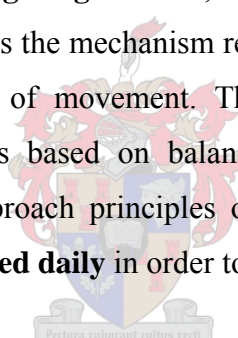
Once a pupil has experienced this feeling of well-being and *rightness*, it is important to renew it daily in order to establish the new way of playing, so that he or she does not fall back into old habits. Havas (1973: 128) recommends that the violinist should start each day's practise by putting together all the balances again, so that tensions and stresses do not accumulate unnoticed in one's playing. This very similar to Jones's view, that the significance of the kinaesthetic effect brought about in the Alexander Technique can only be grasped if it is renewed on a regular basis, and "used as a device for self-examination and for initiating a programme of change" (Jones, 1976: 7).

KE

PB

KE

All the indicators for the kinaesthetic effect, as stipulated in **table 3.7**, are met in the New Approach. Violinists who have had experience of the New Approach, frequently comment on the **lightness, ease and efficiency of movement** that the New Approach procedures bring about. **Eliminating interference with the righting reflexes**, and thereby preserving the freedom of all the other reflex systems in the body, is the mechanism responsible for **the kinaesthetic effect of ease, efficiency and effortlessness** of movement. The **sense of pleasure and well-being** brought about by movement that is based on balance, is **strongly reinforcing and self-motivating**. Applying the New Approach principles of motion and balance is a continuous development, and **should be reinforced daily** in order to maintain the carefree ease of good use.



See **table 5.8** for a selection of statements that show parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique, with regard to the kinaesthetic effect of ease and lightness.



**Table 5.8. Comparisons: The kinaesthetic effect**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “For the well-co-ordinated violinist, playing the violin consists of a single act of the will, and as such it is one and simple. In other words, the arrangement of factors involved in playing the violin is complex; their execution in a unified whole is simple, unless the violinist is badly co-ordinated, in which case playing the violin becomes complicated” (De Alcantara, 1997: 157).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Playing the violin is never difficult; it is either easy or it is impossible” (Havas, 1973: 136).</li> <li>• “From the independent thinking of a first-rate artist-teacher has come a series of devices which serve as key cues capable of unlocking the neuromuscular machinery of the living body in ways which greatly simplify the fundamentals of violin playing” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 277).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “In the Alexander Technique when a student is inhibiting his habitual response and allowing his spine to lengthen and his head to move in the direction of greater freedom, any movement that he makes will register kinaesthetically as pleasanter, more efficient, and more desirable than his habitual movement. In other words, he is immediately rewarded” (Jones, 1976: 161).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “If the diagnosis is correct the cure is not only instantaneous, but it has such a definite effect on tone production that the pupil experiences an immediate feeling of well-being – a feeling that “this is right”. The stronger this feeling is, the more he desires to continue it, and is well on the road to a sense of fulfilment and achievement; which in turn are the best possible antidotes to insecurity and lack of self-confidence” (Havas, 1961: 58).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “F. Matthias Alexander...discovered a method (a means-whereby) for expanding consciousness to take in inhibition as well as excitation...and thus obtain a better integration of the reflex and voluntary elements in a response pattern. The procedure makes any movement or activity smoother and easier, and is strongly reinforcing” (Jones, 1976: 2).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Once understood and experienced, (the violin pupil) learns quickly to rely on automatic governors to compensate for the biomechanical effects of willed changes in the relationships of body parts...he permits the wisdom of a superbly automated body to select the one best way to implement the desired act” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 305).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The technique is not a treatment; it is a discipline that, in order to be effective, has to be applied in the activities of daily life. The reward is an increase in competence and self-esteem and in the sensory satisfaction that accompanies self-knowledge and self-control” (Jones, 1976: 163).</li> <li>• “ ‘It is a happiness’, Alexander said, which increases with psychophysical improvement’...Happiness, then, consists in the sensory satisfaction that comes with an increase of self-knowledge and control” (Jones, 1976: 42).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Although the physical aspect of the New Approach is infinitely easier than the orthodox way of playing, the degree of concentration it demands is extreme. But at least the player is assured of constant development...One knows that the control of passages is no longer accidental, that the desire to communicate is unhampered by physical obstacles. This new feeling of power and control is an invaluable psychological asset on the concert platform. This, plus the sense of achievement and pleasure one has on the stage is incalculable” (Whitman, as cited in Havas, 1968: 96).</li> </ul>



### 5.2.3.2 Postural balance

In reading through Chapters Three and Four, the parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach with regard to postural balance are immediately apparent<sup>1</sup>. This section aims to highlight some of these similarities.

The principal aspect of the New Approach is that it is a technique based on the motion gestalt, i.e. the balanced use of the body as a whole, from which all partial patterns derive<sup>2</sup>. This is also at the heart of the Alexander Technique: all partial patterns, such as the use of the arms or hands, are regulated by the total pattern, i.e. the balanced use of the whole<sup>3</sup>. Inhibiting reactions that cause a total or partial misuse of the self, by interfering with the body's reflex systems, is the central point of the Alexander Technique<sup>4</sup>, and this is also the foundation on which the New Approach rests<sup>5</sup>. By eliminating interference with the gravitational reflexes, both methods facilitate the integration of the total and partial patterns, resulting in the balanced, co-ordinated use of the body (cf Hellebrandt, 1969: 305).

**PB**  
**PC**  
**I; U-m**  
**PC-m**  
**I; PC-m**  
**PC-i**  
**PB**

Interference with the body's natural reflexes, "with all the neuralgic and muscular complications that are quite likely to ensue", is often caused when teachers work from the smaller motions to the larger, insisting that students think about each separate action (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 86). In contrast to these methods, Havas begins with the balanced use of the body as a whole, thereby "freeing the shoulders, arms, wrists and fingers to follow their own natural reflex actions" (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 86).

**U-m**  
**EG**  
**PB**  
**U-i; R**

Although the "violinist's posture has been treated to an abundance of rules, standards and specifications" in treatises on violin method (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92), in reality there can be no such thing as a "normal posture", as good posture will vary from one person to the next. Wright (as cited in Havas, 1968: 92) attributes misconceptions in this regard to the fact that "thinking has been in terms of static posture, whereas the violinist's posture is not static but dynamic". The Havas stance,

**PB**

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.8, 3.3.9 and 4.5.1

<sup>2</sup> See 4.5.1.

<sup>3</sup> See 3.3.3.

<sup>4</sup> See 3.3.7.

<sup>5</sup> See 5.2.1.2.

however, is not based on rules or fixed positions, and avoids “the imposition of an artificial posture with its predisposition to obstructive tension” (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92).

**U-m**

This shows considerable congruence with the Alexander teaching that there is no such thing as a fixed position, or correct posture (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 14), and that *trying to be right* merely brings about new tensions and anxiety that interfere with a balanced use of the body<sup>1</sup>. Rather than a mechanical achievement of stability, the Alexander Technique aims to establish a position of mechanical advantage, which can be altered quickly and easily in order to respond to the continually changing demands of life<sup>1</sup>. The Havas stance is such a dynamic posture, concerned with balance and movement, and able to fulfil its purpose “with maximum efficiency and minimum effort” (Wright, as cited in Havas, 1968: 92). Hellebrandt (1969: 305) also concludes that the Havas stance allows the “multi-jointed body...to adjust in an infinite variety of ways to meet any exigency” with ease and grace, as “no artificial resistance is imposed” that can interfere with the postural reflexes.

**EG; U-m**

**PB**

**U-i**

**PB**

**U-i**

**KE**

The Havas stance, referred to as the “gorilla stance” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 281), closely resembles that of a position of mechanical advantage, sometimes described as “monkey” in the Alexander Technique (De Alcantara, 1997: 103). De Alcantara (1997: 204) stresses that there are a great variety of monkeys, occurring naturally in many situations outside of the Alexander Technique. Due to the similarity in description<sup>2</sup>, it can be concluded that the Havas stance is in essence such a *monkey*. Both methods describe this stance as a position of dynamic balance, which gives support to the shoulder girdle and upper limbs in activity<sup>3</sup>.

**PB**

**PB**

**U-i**

The Alexander Technique teaches that by freeing the neck and allowing the feet to be fully on the floor, a person is grounded, and this “sense of grounding flows up the torso into the arms, neck, and shoulders and gives a greater sense of freedom to the upper body” (Stein, 1999). Havas (1973: 100) also emphasises the importance of resting the feet fully on the floor, and her description of the “layers of rests” that

**PC-i**

**PB**

**U-i**

**PB**

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.9.

<sup>2</sup> See references in table 5.9.

<sup>3</sup> Cf De Alcantara, 1997: 104, and Hellebrandt, 1969: 305.

ensue in handling the instrument is very similar to the way postural flow is described in the Alexander Technique (cf Stevens, 1996: 120). (Please see the references in **table 5.9** for detailed descriptions of postural flow in both methods.)

By creating balance in the body right from the beginning, the necessary playing movements are able to “spring from a self-propelled action without the need of forced or consciously manufactured movements” (Havas, 1961: 15). This is of great importance, as “the slightest physical blockage caused by rigidity in any given part of the body” will interfere with the “free-flowing channel of total motion and balance” through which the musical imagination is communicated (Havas, 1973: 77). It is only a balanced use of the body, free from excess tension, that can enable quick physiological reactions to be made to the direction of the musical imagination, and allow the inner ear to function unhampered<sup>1</sup>.

PB  
CF  
U-m  
PB  
D-w

Both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach improve postural balance, and also rely on postural balance in order to improve the use of all the separate parts of the body. All the factors relating to postural balance, as described in **table 3.8**, are relevant in the New Approach. The Havas stance is in essence **a position of mechanical advantage**, from which it is possible to adapt to changing circumstances quickly and with ease. Havas (1964: 76) recognises that **each point of balance interlocks with and is interdependent of another, to give a balanced whole**. The New Approach aims to eliminate **the faulty muscular tension patterns in the body that disturb postural balance**. Havas recognises that **it is the gravitational force of the body through the feet to the ground that stimulate the postural reflexes**, when there is no interference. Through eliminating misuse in the head-neck relationship, the New Approach ensures that **interference with the supporting reflexes is eliminated, so that they can function optimally**. This allows the other reflexes of the body to function without interference as well, **eliminating muscular effort** as natural, self-propelled movements are allowed to unfold.

**Table 5.9** contains statements regarding postural balance that show a high degree of congruence between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach.

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<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.6.

**Table 5.9. Comparisons: Postural balance**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proper stance is not a “mechanical achievement of stability”, (Scott, as cited in De Alcantara, 1997: 110), but a dynamic balance from which it is possible to adapt to changing circumstances without interfering with the integrity of the primary control. This is known as a “position of mechanical advantage” (Barlow, 1973: 202).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “A good posture has been defined as one which fulfils the purpose for which it is used with maximum efficiency and minimum effort....A good dynamic posture serves as an efficient background to movement. In order to fulfil its function efficiently it must be able to adapt to changing circumstances as movement takes place” (Wright, as cited in Havas 1968: 92).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Place your feet at shoulder width...Bend your knees slightly. Then lean forwards slightly...Let your arms hang freely by the side of your trunk” (De Alcantara, 1997: 103).</li> <li>• The monkey “occurs in many situations outside Alexander lessons...in every instance the monkey is a manifestation of good use and functioning...we must consider the monkey truly natural – in accordance with the laws of Nature – and therefore intrinsically right” (De Alcantara, 1997: 204).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The feet are separated, the knees bend and the small of the back flattens. The arms hang loosely...The head and neck project forward. The stance is easily visualized by the child as gorilla-like. <i>Gorilla stance</i> becomes a key cue capable of evoking dynamic relaxation in the vertical posture...It succeeds because once cortical control of postural patterning is lifted, what happens is pre-set in the inborn mechanisms fashioned during man’s evolutionary assumption of the biped stance” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 281).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The monkey is a position of mechanical advantage. It co-ordinates the use of the back and legs, a precondition to improving other parts of the self, such as the upper limbs or the lips, tongue and jaw” (De Alcantara, 1997: 100).</li> <li>• The supporting reflexes are stimulated by the gravitational force of the body through the feet to the ground, to which the body responds by lengthening up, provided that there is no interference (Dawley, 2001: 9).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through experimentation, Hellebrandt (1969: 305) found the New Approach stance to be “the most stable of all postures”.</li> <li>• “Until the mindless operation of postural mechanisms is established through volitional subjugation of cortical interference, the evolution of effortless and graceful natural movements over automatic pathways is impossible. The importance of this preparatory teaching device cannot be overestimated. It is the substrate for much that follows” (Hellebrandt, 1969: 279).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “When we stand our feet are supported by the floor...(our) legs are being supported by (our) feet....We can continue this process through the rest of the body to the head, following the route of the supporting reflexes to...where the head returns to a free balance on the neck” (Stevens, 1996: 120).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Many players were helped...by the image of ‘layers of rest’ – their feet resting on the floor (and at the same time being supported by it), their violin resting on the collar-bone, the bow resting on the string (supported by it underneath), and their hand resting on the bow” (Havas, 1973: 100).</li> </ul>

### 5.2.3.3 Attention and awareness

It has already been noted that although both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique aim to establish a physical use comprising of simple, natural reflex movements that register kinaesthetically as light, easy and effortless, they both demand a high degree of focus and attention<sup>1</sup>. Both methods acknowledge that changing habitual behaviour demands sustained attention to kinaesthetic feedback<sup>2</sup>, in order to recognize and inhibit tension patterns as they arise, as well as to project directions for improved use.

R  
KE  
A  
A  
I  
D

The centrality of touch in the New Approach ensures increased attention to kinaesthetic feedback, especially in relation to the instrument<sup>3</sup>. Attention to aural feedback is also increased in the New Approach: Havas (1964: 19) stresses that a feeling of ease in the playing movements and good sound always go together. Relating the touch to the resulting quality of sound “enhances the awareness of the pupil” (Havas, 1973: 113). Through increasing sensory and aural feedback in relation to the instrument in this way, a new creative relationship with the violin is developed (Bonnici, 1988: 7). The interaction between the player and the instrument becomes very intimate and responsive, as the violin becomes a living partner in the act of making music (cf Hellebrandt, 1970a: 423).

A  
SA-i  
KE  
A-e  
SA-i  
A-e  
A-e

The New Approach creates, in effect, an extended field of awareness between the player and the instrument. By integrating sensory impressions from the body in its contact with the violin, with the resulting aural feedback, the two fields (i.e. the player and the violin) are allowed to merge, so that the interaction of the self and the instrument can be perceived as an ongoing process<sup>4</sup>. As a result, the subtle tensional changes that occur within oneself, in the interaction with the instrument, can be explored and inhibited<sup>5</sup> where necessary. The “sensations of muscular tension, heaviness, stiffness and their opposites” (Jones, 1976: 177) that are generated in response to the instrument, are therefore not chaotic or meaningless, but provide a key for changing habitual reactions.

A-e  
SA  
A-e  
I; SA  
A-e

<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.3.1 and table 5.8.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.3, 3.3.10, and the references in table 5.10.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.4.5.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Jones, 1976: 159, 170 and Hellebrandt 1970a: 423.

<sup>5</sup> See 4.4.5 and 4.5.3.

It is obvious that the violin does not play itself: “What we hear is the interplay of the instrument and the performer” (Havas, 1961: 6). The violinist has to be able to adapt the skills that are required, to the demands imposed by the specific characteristics of the violin (cf Hellebrandt, 1970a: 423). This interplay between violin and violinist is entirely dependent the aural and kinaesthetic feedback generated by this system, and therefore it is essential that mental or physical blockages that could distract the player’s attention from this feedback be eliminated<sup>1</sup>.

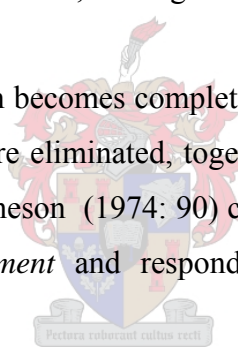
A-e  
A-e  
SA  
U-m  
I

The New Approach emphasises the need for the player to focus attention on the musical concepts and goal-images that have been created in the mind through directing. Kenneson (1974: 90) emphasises that without these “goal-images based on the perceptions yoked to cello playing”, the cellist can easily fix his or her “explicit focal attention...on the physical manipulation of the cello rather than on the musical concepts to be transformed into sound”, leading to interference and misuse.

A  
D  
EG  
U-m

As the player’s focus of attention becomes completely absorbed in the actual moment of playing, the past and future are eliminated, together with self-judgement and self-doubt (cf Havas, 1973: 77). Kenneson (1974: 90) concludes that “becoming aware of what is *happening at the moment* and responding *only* to that awareness has wonderful results”.

A  
CF-p  
A



Knesson, 1974: 90:

The cellist must form the habit of being totally involved in the present moment. The mind must focus on the temporal aspect of the musical design, and the body must be constantly regulated by the information resulting from its sensory perception.

A  
SA

The New Approach has similar requirements as the Alexander Technique with regards to the **need for attention**, as stipulated in **table 3.9**. It requires a very **detailed attention to kinaesthetic feedback**, and **the critical examination of very delicate shifts of muscle tension** in the body, specifically in the places of contact with the instrument. A certain degree of **unity between mind and body** is required in learning the New Approach (cf Havas, 1973: 16) and

<sup>1</sup> See 4.5.3.

this mind-body unity is developed further through the increase of sensory awareness<sup>1</sup>. **An extended field of awareness** is developed between the player and the violin, through integrating **sensory impressions from both the body and the instrument**, thereby **allowing the two fields to merge**. Thus, **the central pattern of stimulus and response** between the violinist and the violin can be perceived, thereby **providing a key for changing habitual reactions**.

The New Approach differs from the Alexander Technique in that the extended field of awareness is developed specifically in the relationship between the player and the instrument, whereas the Alexander Technique deals with a more general use of the body and its response to the wider environment. Attention to aural feedback, in addition to sensory feedback, is therefore a very important factor in the New Approach, although it is not cited as such in the Alexander Technique. Havas (1994: 3) believes the importance of sound quality to the musician's well-being to be essential, and an indispensable factor in overcoming stage fright:

Brodsky, as cited in Havas, 1994: 3:

There is no shortage of non-drug treatment, cognitive therapy, behaviour therapy, hypnosis, Alexander technique, relaxation, but none of them solves the problem...what most people need is something that communicates to them on an auditory level.

**Table 5.10** further illuminates the similarities between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach with regard to the need for attention in changing habitual behaviour, and the extended field of awareness that is developed in both methods.

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<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.1.3.



**Table 5.10. Comparisons: Attention and awareness**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although the benefits of the Alexander Technique are quite clear, what is not guaranteed is “the extent of the trainability of any given person, and their willingness to use what we can teach them” (Barlow, 1973: 217).</li> <li>• “One essential condition for successful teaching is the ability of the pupil to sustain attention for some definable minimum of time” (Jones, 1976: 162).</li> <li>• The pupil “must realise that the learning process involves a most detailed attention on his part...both he and his teacher can never forget what a tall order it is to ask him to disobey habit” (Barlow, 1973: 203).</li> <li>• One becomes increasingly aware of shifts of muscle tension that are “as delicate as the finest touch of the violinist”, but as such directed thinking is initially fairly tenuous, “any fatigue or lessening of attention can put an end to it” (Barlow, 1973: 225).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good violin playing “depends on the co-ordination of a host of delicate balances which in turn demand a high degree of mental discipline” Havas (1964: 2).</li> <li>• The pupil needs to be “acquiescent, alert, and motivated. Without these attributes learning is hindered or impossible” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 475).</li> <li>• If the pupil “sticks to the very slow work every day, the new way of playing will gradually become so much part of him, that it will be quite natural and easy. But there is no getting away from it, the ‘bridging over’ period needs a lot of concentration and mental discipline” (Havas, 1961: 64).</li> <li>• “...the results will be amazingly good if you do some silent work every day...Do realize that you are trying to train your mind...Once the mind learns to give the right orders to the right places, your body will have no alternative but to obey” (Havas, 1964: 17).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The character of the thinking involved...is an expansion of the field of consciousness...so that you are taking in both yourself and your environment” (Jones, 1976: 192).</li> <li>• “The technique...extends the scope of self-observation a long way beyond the visual by organizing the kinesthetic sense on a conscious level. Once you can observe changing relationships between parts of the body and between the body and the environment in terms of levels of tension and relaxation, of lightness and heaviness, as well as of position and movement, you have opened new areas of the self to scientific exploration” (Jones, 1976: 138).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many of the problems of tension and rigidity that violinists struggle with arise from the body’s physical response to touching the instrument (Kenneson, 1974: 11).</li> <li>• “...as our tactile senses respond by nature to the substance of any given texture, there is constant (albeit only subconscious) conflict in the player between his aural desire and the tactile realities” (Havas 1973: 54).</li> <li>• A “whole new relationship develops with the violin” (Bonnici, 1988: 7). The interaction between the player and the instrument becomes very intimate and responsive, as the violin becomes a living partner in the act of making music (cf Hellebrandt, 1970a: 423).</li> </ul>

#### 5.2.3.4 Control and freedom

The Alexander Technique and the New Approach are in agreement that control and freedom are obtained through eliminating specific faults and interferences, and not through a mechanistic, superimposed effort to control movement<sup>1</sup>. De Alcantara (1997: 35) calls this “a defining characteristic of the (Alexander) Technique, and a reason for its effectiveness.” It is an important measure of the profound congruence between the two methods that it is also a defining feature of the New Approach<sup>2</sup>.

CF  
I; U-m  
EG

Although the process of learning to inhibit and direct, requires much attention, repetition and “time for the conscious thoughts of the directions to be laid down in the nervous system” (Stevens, 1996: 51), eventually these Alexander procedures are applied reflexively (De Alcantara, 1997: 164). This requires the willingness to take a risk, and giving up the desire of trying to be right. While the initial response to the stimulus for action must be inhibited and the appropriate directions projected, ultimately one acts without trying to control the outcome (De Alcantara, 1997: 74, 76). As a result, involuntary responses are allowed to come into play, while habitual reactions are bypassed (De Alcantara, 1997: 77). The reflexive character of the ensuing movement registers kinaesthetically as easy and effortless, with increased control, and yet remaining free.

I; D; A  
D-q  
  
R  
CF-p  
I; D  
CF-p  
I; U-m  
R  
KE  
CF

This process is equally true for the New Approach: “Havas prepares both body and mind, lets happen what will, trusting in the wisdom of Nature, and the violin begins miraculously to speak” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 479). It takes time and attention to establish a balanced use of the body, as well as to conceptualise the music, but once this has been achieved, the final step is that of abandon (Havas, 1973: 127)<sup>3</sup>. Once fundamental skills have been mastered, there is “no need for cortical control of the physical aspects of playing” (Kenneson, 1974: 59). Havas’s frequent injunctions to *let it happen* encourage the pupil to risk and lose cortical control, in order to achieve natural control and freedom<sup>4</sup>

D  
CF-p  
U-i; A  
PB; D  
CF  
  
CF

<sup>1</sup> See references in **table 5.11**.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Havas, 1961: 56. See references in **table 5.11**.

<sup>3</sup> See references in **table 5.11**.

<sup>4</sup> Cf De Alcantara, 1997: 77.

Kenneson, 1974: 88:

Simple and bold devices related to the musical concepts will trigger the automatic physical responses...If the ideas are sharp and clear, if the cue devices are effective, and if the postural aspects of the body are in a natural state, the transformation will be complete. Musical ideas will be translated into tonal realities with artistic and communicative value....Only two things are necessary: one is that the 'command' is indeed ideokinetic, and the other is that one 'lets it happen naturally' – that is, lets the total response evolve through the body which is in its most natural state.

D  
D-q  
PB  
D-w  
  
D-q  
CF-p

As the mental concentration is fully absorbed in the act of pre-hearing and projecting the music, there simply is no time or place in the performer's mind to consciously control the physical movements or to judge the outcome of his or her efforts<sup>1</sup>, and therefore the body is free to respond reflexively to the direction of the inner ear without cortical interference<sup>2</sup>. This answers to the prerequisites for control and freedom, as stipulated in **table 3.10**: giving up trying, and judging one's efforts, which merely reinforce end-gaining behaviour (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 72).

A; D  
I  
EG  
R  
CF-p

The centrality of the organic rhythmic pulse in the New Approach ensures that all actions are timed precisely, thereby eliminating hesitation and eagerness - another prerequisite for control and freedom in movement<sup>3</sup>. As has been illustrated in **5.2.2.3**, all physical movements are co-ordinated with the rhythmic pulse as the activator for such movement.

CF-p

Kenneson (1974: 70) elaborates:

The constant use of the rhythmic resource assists the performer in organizing his body movements into meaningful gestures. The pulsing of the rhythm with the body must be encouraged because it is an important unifying device in transforming musical concepts into appropriate physical gestures.

CF-p  
D-w

From the above discussion, it is clear that the automation of technique in the New Approach<sup>4</sup> and the Alexandrian automatism<sup>5</sup> are conceptually very similar. De Alcantara (1997: 164) writes that the Alexander procedures should ideally be applied

<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas (1973: 77) and Kenneson (1974: 90). See **5.2.3.3**.

<sup>2</sup> See **4.4.7**, **5.2.2.3** and **5.2.3.1**.

<sup>3</sup> See **table 3.10**; cf De Alcantara, 1997: 72.

<sup>4</sup> See **4.4.7**.

<sup>5</sup> See **3.3.11**.

reflexively, “without the apparent help of the conscious mind and without stopping the flow of movement to consider its mechanics”, while Havas (1961: 68) stresses that if there is only one point of control, “the rest of the physical movements can follow by natural impulses and the mind is left free to re-create and transmit the music though that one point, instead of being continuously occupied by various physical aspects.” Kenneson (1974: 90) confirms that “one cannot control movement cortically and at the same time concern the mind with musical content”.

**R; CF-p**  
**D; CF**  
**R; D-w**  
**EG**

Havas believes that successful co-ordination in violin playing depends on this unification and automation of technique. De Alcantara (1997: 57) confirms this, in saying that “a measure of automatism is an integral part of good co-ordination”. Reflexive bowing, as it is taught in the New Approach, illustrates this principle well, and answers to all the prerequisites for control and freedom as stipulated in **table 3.10**. The movements of the balanced bow arm are timed precisely, as the rhythmic pulse is the activator for all the physical movement in the body. As the mind is occupied in directing the music through the left hand interval progression<sup>1</sup>, there is no cortical interference with the bow action. Consequently, involuntary, reflexive responses are allowed to come into play, resulting in more natural and efficient movements<sup>2</sup>. Kenneson’s comments in this regard are worth examining in greater detail (cf Kenneson, 1974: 61-64), but for the purpose of this study, the following citation will suffice:

**CF**  
**CF-p**  
**CF-p**  
**D**  
**I; R**  
**CF-p**

Kenneson, 1974: 64:

The mental-physical abandon brought about by the use of spontaneous bowing offers quick and lasting results both to the beginner and to the advanced player dealing with complex articulations. The tone production resulting from the integration of the actions of both sides is quite different from that which results from a mechanical motivation in the bowing arm itself, which is cortically controlled and does not evolve naturally.

**CF**  
**U-m**

Above all, natural control and freedom of movement ultimately depends on eliminating the misuses of the head, neck and back (De Alcantara, 1996: 77)<sup>3</sup>. It has been already shown that the New Approach eliminates such misuse of the head-neck

**CF**  
**I; PC-m**

<sup>1</sup> Kenneson, 1974: 61.

<sup>2</sup> Cf De Alcantara, 1997: 74, 76, 77.

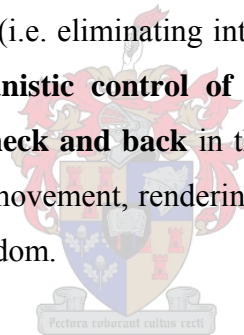
<sup>3</sup> See **table 3.10**.

relationship<sup>1</sup> and establishes a balanced, co-ordinated use of the body as a whole<sup>2</sup>, making it possible for the pupil to *let it happen*, so that movement can become free, natural and efficient.

PB  
CF

The New Approach fulfils all the prerequisites for control and freedom as stipulated in **table 3.10**: the **end-gaining attitudes of trying and judging** are eliminated<sup>3</sup>, and the movements are **timed precisely** through the stimulus of the organic rhythmic pulse. This has the effect of eliminating **hesitation and eagerness**. After a painstaking process of eliminating interferences, establishing a balanced use of the body and learning to direct, one **acts immediately** in response to the “ideokinetic”<sup>4</sup> stimulus, without trying to control the outcome. In other words, **movement is allowed to happen, rather than cortically controlled**, so that **involuntary reactions**, arising from the body’s reflex systems, **are encouraged to take place**.

The New Approach is in agreement that the natural control and freedom of **good use is often the result of what one stops doing** (i.e. eliminating interfering tension and blockages), **rather than increased effort** or a **mechanistic control of movement**. This relates especially to **undoing the misuses of the head, neck and back** in the stance and the *no-violin hold*, which serves as a basis for all subsequent movement, rendering violin playing easy, with a seemingly effortless control and expressive freedom.



The New Approach differs from the Alexander Technique in that the self (along with all the ways in which it tends to interfere with good use) is dissolved “*into a free-flowing musical communication*” (Havas, 1973: 127) whereby the pupil becomes able to allow reflexive movement to take place. However, cortical control of movement has to be inhibited right from the beginning, in a way that is entirely congruent with the Alexander Technique.

**Table 5.11** very clearly points out the considerable equivalence between the two methods with regard to control and freedom in movement.

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<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.1.2.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.4 and 5.2.3.2.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.4.2.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Kenneson, 1974: 88.

**Table 5.11. Comparisons: Control and freedom**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “‘Conscious guidance and control’, in Alexander’s expression, does not entail your wilfully controlling every aspect of your every action. Good use and self-awareness are not the result of all that you do, but rather of all that you <i>stop doing</i>. Rather than controlling action, think of allowing it to happen. Undo the misuses of your head, neck, and back, and much that is right, easy, and thoroughly enjoyable will follow of its own accord” (De Alcantara, 1996: 77).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The secret of teaching the violin is not so much the question of imparting knowledge. It is the ability to make the road clear for the pupil both physically and mentally so that he can lose whatever constraint he has and as a result is able to just ‘to let it happen’, but not haphazardly trusting to chance and hoping for the best, but through the relaxed control of perfect physical co-ordination which releases the imagination” (Havas, 1961: 56).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “If conscious guidance and control is a plane to be reached, inhibition and direction together comprise the method of reaching it” (De Alcantara, 1997: 37).</li> <li>• “You conceive the gesture in your mind; you inhibit your motivations to end-gain; you direct the use of your whole self. Then you <i>decide</i> to act. Immediately you take this decision, act!” (De Alcantara, 1997: 76).</li> <li>• “Ideally you should apply the Alexander procedures reflexly – without the apparent help of the conscious mind, and without stopping the flow of movement to consider its mechanics” (De Alcantara, 1997: 164).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The so-called ‘natural’ cello player...has removed certain mental-physical obstacles and simply ‘lets it happen’” (Kenneson, 1974: 93).</li> <li>• “Havas prepares both body and mind, lets happen what will, trusting in the wisdom of Nature, and the violin begins miraculously to speak” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 479).</li> <li>• “Although the whole is a process of immense complexity it runs its course automatically and with effortless grace when the motivational drive is directed at the expression of a musical content meaningful to a player conditioned to ‘let it happen’ without cortical interference” (Hellebrandt, 1970b: 477).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Alexander’s view is that there is no distinction between the thing being controlled and the control itself. This precludes the possibility of mechanistic, manipulative control of human reaction. Alexander said that ‘control should be in the process, not superimposed.’ This is a defining characteristic of the Technique, and a reason for its effectiveness...For your movements to become truly natural, you must give up whatever control you have of them...The end result of the process of eliminating faults is control” (De Alcantara, 1997: 35).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “With a phrase like ‘controlled pressure’, Mr...reveals the mechanistic character of his approach and his basic difference with Miss Havas. For ‘controlled pressure’ suggests an effort imposed from without. The control that comes from balance, on the other hand, is an inner quality, a state of relaxed relationship with the instrument through which the musical imagination is free to create the reality – in tone, fluency, and feeling – which is conceived in the idea. Skill is demanded, certainly, but the only effort is the effort of abandon” (Scott, as cited in Havas, 1968: 86).</li> </ul>



### 5.3 Other considerations

The considerable similarities between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach with regard to the teaching process and the use of words will be discussed in the following section.

#### 5.3.1 Teaching

As in the Alexander Technique, Havas (1973: 112) believes that it is only in forming a partnership with the pupil that he or she can be guided to self-discovery<sup>1</sup>. In the discussion regarding attention in **3.3.10**, it was noted that a judgemental, didactic and authoritarian approach only serves to increase the pupil's anxiety, thereby slowing down his or her ability to learn (cf Barlow, 1973: 203). It is for this same reason that Havas (1973: 111) believes it to be necessary to eliminate the teacher-pupil relationship<sup>2</sup>.

T  
T-n

Havas, 1961: 57:

In order to develop this trust and self-confidence, it is important that the teacher should not impose anything on the pupil by sheer dogma or overpowering personality. Instead he has to find a happy medium between inspiring the pupil and being able to draw out any latent ability.

T-n  
T-g

Havas (1961: 56) creates an atmosphere of trust and encouragement, and nurtures a feeling of "absolute confidence on the part of the pupil...in the possibility of his own progress". The lesson is based on a mutual exchange of ideas. Instead of "giving an opinion in the capacity of a teacher" (1973: 112), Havas explores misconceptions with the pupil in an atmosphere of working together, so that he or she can gain insight into the exact cause of the difficulty as well as the necessary solution<sup>3</sup>. It requires a great deal of tact, clarity and precision on the part of the teacher in order to create the atmosphere of trust necessary for this process (Havas, 1961: 63).

T  
T-g

The method of evaluation is changed from *good* or *bad*, which reflects on the students own ability, to "having a sense of well-being" (Havas, 1973: 112), so that teaching takes place in a non-judgemental environment. The detailed, non-judgemental

T-g  
T

<sup>1</sup> See references in **table 5.12**.

<sup>2</sup> See **4.4.2**.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Havas, 1961: 63 and 1973: 112.



awareness needed from both the pupil and the teacher in this working partnership, is common to both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique. This process brings the pupil to self-discovery, while giving him or her the benefit of the teacher's own experience in dealing with misuse and insight with regard to the misconceptions that slow down progress<sup>1</sup>.

**T**  
**T-g**

It is clear that both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique denounce end-gaining systems of teaching, in which failure elicits strong emotional reactions and anxiety<sup>2</sup>. Havas (1968: 30) ardently disapproves of pressuring pupils to play pieces that are far too difficult for them, as this only results in harmful habits that will inevitably hamper their progress at a later stage. The New Approach, like the Alexander Technique, follows a very comprehensive means-whereby approach, in which a pupil is not expected to perform an activity for which he is not sufficiently co-ordinated<sup>3</sup>. Going slowly enough in the beginning in order to “get the elementary rudiments right” (i.e. to teach good use) will allow for faster progress later on (i.e. improved functioning) (Havas, 1968: 30).

**T-n**  
**T-n**  
**EG**  
**MW**  
**T-g**  
**MW**  
**U-i**

Havas regards the end-gaining attitudes so prevalent in Western society as a prime cause of the anxiety that leads to stage fright<sup>4</sup>. Working towards exams and auditions, rather than viewing violin playing as a creative art, is the origin of many of the violinist's mental and physical blockages (Havas, 1973: 11). This is identical to Jones's position, that tests are counter-productive as far as the Alexander Technique is concerned, as they “set the wrong tone by stressing specific ends rather than means” (Jones, 1976: 154).

**EG**  
**U-m**  
**U-m**  
**EG**

Havas, 1973: 9:

Beset with accumulated technical difficulties, examinations, international competitions, the positive side of music-making, the over-riding desire to communicate, soon gives way to anxieties and fears...It is almost inevitable that by the time a student reaches maturity, the importance and the constant evaluation of his own self become the dominant factors in his career – and stop him from fulfilling his potential of the ‘right divine’.

**EG**  
**U-m**

<sup>1</sup> Cf Jones, 1976: 153. See **table 5.12**.

<sup>2</sup> See **4.3.2, 4.4.2, 3.4.1** and the references in **table 5.12**.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Havas, 1968: 30. See **4.4.4**.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 104 – 110. See **4.3.2** and **4.4.2**.

Stevens (1996: 53) cites accurate observation, clear diagnosis and positive, practical help in overcoming difficulties as the hallmark of good Alexander teaching, and it is clear that Havas's teaching philosophy fulfils all these requirements<sup>1</sup>. Havas (1961: 55) believes teaching to be a vocation, with the tremendous responsibility to nurture the pupil's physical and mental well-being, so that his or her psychological urge to self-expression may find the appropriate channel.

T-g

T-g

Havas, 1961: 56:

And this is the crux of the matter. The secret of teaching the violin is not so much the question of imparting knowledge. It is the ability to make the road clear for the pupil both physically and mentally so that he can lose whatever constraint he has and as a result is able just to 'let it happen', but not haphazardly trusting to chance and hoping for the best, but through the relaxed control of perfect physical co-ordination which releases the imagination.

T-g  
CF

U-i

The New Approach complies with all of the indicators in **table 3.11**. The teacher and pupil form a **partnership, in which the pupil is guided to self-discovery**. This process involves a detailed, **non-judgemental attention and awareness** on the part of both student and teacher. **Authoritarian, judgemental attitudes** are considered to be counter-productive, as are **end-gaining systems of education** that elicit feelings of failure, anxiety and thereby reinforce self-consciousness and self-doubt. Instead, a **means-whereby principle of teaching** is followed, providing accurate observation, clear diagnosis and positive and practical help in solving difficulties.

The statements in **table 5.12** demonstrate the depth of congruence regarding the teaching philosophy of the Alexander Technique and the New Approach

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Hellebrandt, 1969: 365. See **table 5.7**.

**Table 5.12. Comparisons: Teaching**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The aim of teaching...is to bring a pupil to the point of self-discovery” (Jones, 1976: 153).</li> <li>• Procedures that lead to self-consciousness and anxiety in a pupil slows down the learning process by interfering with awareness and attention (Jones, 1976: 154).</li> <li>• A detached form of teaching which relies on a pedagogic, professorial, didactic attitude, is simply not possible” (Barlow, 1973: 203). The teacher forms a partnership with the pupil, with the aim of guiding the pupil to self-discovery, “to apply his new knowledge to the solution of his own problems and become in effect his own expert in the use of himself” (Jones, 1976: 153).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a pupil learns “to find out alone where and how he can help himself...the anxiety of having to test his ability in front of the teacher is eliminated...These discussions...help to transform the teacher-pupil relationship into a working partnership” (Havas, 1973: 112).</li> <li>• “Most people know a certain amount of fear, insecurity and lack of self-confidence...when any of these tendencies happens to be accentuated...it can play havoc with the progress of the most talented pupil...In fact, the teacher’s attitude can be the making or breaking of such a student, not only from the standpoint of music...” (Havas, 1961: 56).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The imperfectly coordinated student ...cannot do anything ‘correctly’ at the start; he is bound to have failures no matter how hard he tries. Under the present end-gaining system of learning, failure brings with it strong emotional reactions and a pattern of anxiety that is never gotten rid off...If a means-whereby principle were used in teaching, Alexander said, the pupil would not be asked to perform an act until he was in such a state of coordination that he could perform it easily. An occasional failure...would (then) merely add to the pupil’s knowledge of his own responses” (Alexander, as cited in Jones, 1976: 41).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...it was an accepted fact that one should go very slowly in the beginning to get the elementary rudiments right. Then, as a result of this, progress became quicker and quicker, and the works more and more demanding...(Here) there is a very big pressure put on beginners almost immediately to play pieces which are far too difficult for them. And this tends to result in such bad habits that later on they have to slow down, and out of sheer necessity become less demanding both with their progress and with their standard of playing” (Havas, 1968: 30).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You can’t teach someone else an improved use of himself until your own manner of use has improved...Before he can impart what he knows to others, a teacher must have experienced in himself enough change to understand the process operationally. When a person starts teaching the Alexander Technique, he does not thereby stop learning it. On the contrary, he should be learning as much from a lesson as the pupil is” (Jones, 1976: 153).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “...any method, however carefully and scientifically evolved and tested, is treacherous ground for a non-initiate” (Chapman, as cited in Havas, 1968: 99).</li> <li>• “...if one is aware of the principles of motion and balance, one’s practising goes on while teaching...The act of applying these principles to pupils of all standards throughout the day is as good as if one applied them to oneself” (Havas, 1973: 128).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There have always been failures of pupils to learn the Alexander Technique...Some...may have been due to bad teaching – to the teacher’s ineptness with words, or his inability to convey the kinesthetic experience in a meaningful way, or his refusal to adapt his way of teaching to the pupil’s needs...good teaching certainly speeds up the process of learning” (Jones, 1976: 162).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “But be the pupil old or young, professional or amateur...his progress and development are up to the teacher. For if the teacher <i>knows</i> how to teach, the pupil’s attention is immediately arrested, his imagination is aroused and often his enthusiasm knows no bounds” (Havas, 1961: 65).</li> </ul>

### 5.3.2 Words

It has been noted in 5.2.2.1 that Havas clearly recognizes that words by themselves are not sufficient to convey sensory information - the teacher's guidance is indispensable in order to enable the pupil to experience the balanced use of him- or herself<sup>1</sup>. In this process, clearly defined directions become linked to kinaesthetic experience<sup>2</sup>.

W  
GM  
SA-i  
W

Havas (1973: 96) recognises that the words used in teaching can have a profound effect on one's physical use, eliciting either tension, or creating ease and flexibility. Jones (1976: 172) confirms that one's response to words includes a kinaesthetic component that is observable to someone who has gained sufficient awareness to notice very slight shifts of muscle tension in the body. He suggests that such stimulus-words can be identified by the disruptive effect they have on the reflex pattern, and even classified according to the amount of reflex disturbance that they create within the body (Jones, 1976: 172). The following citation shows that this is precisely what Havas does:

W  
U-m; U-i  
A  
U-m

Havas, 1973: 96:

A word which may make all the difference to one player may not have any meaning at all to another. But there are a handful of words which I have found create similar reactions in most players. These can be divided into two categories: words which arouse tension and anxiety and words which create ease and flexibility.

U-m  
U-i

She lists several of these words, together with the most common reactions that she has observed in her vast teaching experience (Havas, 1973: 96 – 98). The tables in **appendix C** give a summary of some of these words, as identified by Havas in *Stage fright* (1973: 96+), together with reference to the related activity and the response elicited by the particular word.

Madden (2002) stresses that one's language choices reveal one's thinking: "what we think expresses itself physically in exactly the way we are thinking it"<sup>3</sup>. Havas recognizes this very clearly, and goes to great lengths to clarify the language and

W

<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas, 1961: 59.

<sup>2</sup> See 5.2.2.3.

<sup>3</sup> See 3.4.2.

ideas relating to technique. For instance, she cautions that accepting the idea of strength in a percussive left hand finger action (as opposed to a finger-action based on balance), will inevitably express itself physically in pressure, rigidity and immobility in the contact of the fingertip with the string, negatively affecting intonation, tone and vibrato (Havas, 1961: 28). By insisting on mental rehearsal, i.e. mentally projecting a movement rather than merely repeating it over and over, Havas ensures that thinking is clarified, resulting in a more satisfactory physical expression of such thought than repetitive mechanical practising could ever bring about<sup>1</sup>.

W-n  
U-m  
  
D  
U-i

Another point raised by Madden (2002), is the need for language that is anatomically more accurate, in order to communicate clearly in the teaching of coordination. “Anatomical mis-mapping creates interference in the human systems”, leading to excessive work (Madden, 2002). Havas (1964: 17) is in complete agreement: in tracing each movement to its biological source (i.e. identifying the key cues for the fundamental balances), movement becomes more coordinated and natural, as excessive work and faulty movements are eliminated.

W  
  
W-n  
  
U-i  
U-m; I

Havas, 1964: 2:

The difficulties lie in the false notion that violin playing depends on some sort of superimposed pressure or force. This mistaken idea inevitably results in faulty movements....This is what every player must learn from the very beginning: *where the fundamental balances concerning violin playing are and the control and co-ordination of them from the mind...* So, tempting as it is to think about the action which we can see...concentration should be focused on the source which causes it to move.

U-m  
D

When one does not realise that the base knuckles are the motivators for the left hand finger action, the fingertips can “be tempted to take over” (Havas, 1961: 32), causing rigidity in the left hand. However, knowing where the biological motivation for the movement is, allows one to “give the right orders to the right places”, resulting in improved physical use, as the “body will have no alternative but to obey” (Havas, 1964: 17).

D  
U-i

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.3. Also see references in table 5.13 for further examples in this regard.

Madden (2002) also notes that one continually has to observe “the effects of language and to tailor the language individually when necessary”, as different people interpret language and images differently. Havas (1973: 96) recognises that not all words have the same connotation for all people<sup>1</sup>. She continually seeks to refine her method and the use of terminology, in order to obtain the best release from tension in her students, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

W-n

W

U-i

Havas, 1973: 45:

...experience has taught me that rigidity in the left-hand finger action was such a universal and pernicious problem that in extreme cases expressions such as ‘sideways vertical action’ or ‘forward throw’...were not enough to induce total release, even though the lightness of the action and the lack of pressure were sufficiently stressed. So I have changed these expressions to a ‘lateral slide’ of the finger action with a ‘backward tilt’ of the base joints, with excellent results.

U-m

W

W

Havas has a profound understanding of the tremendous influence that words can have on one’s coordination, and takes great care to eliminate **inadequate terminology that could cause misconceptions** leading to misuse. The **choice of words and directions** used in New Approach teaching is carefully considered, to **ensure anatomical accuracy** in the mental orders given to the body. The importance of mentally clarifying the directions before acting them out, shows that Havas recognises that **what one thinks expresses itself physically in exactly the way in which one thinks it**.

The references in **table 5.13** demonstrate considerable similarity between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique with regard to the use of words.

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<sup>1</sup> See **table 5.13**.



**Table 5.13. Comparisons: Words**

The Alexander Technique	The New Approach to violin playing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The obvious application of a kinaesthetic standard is in problems that are commonly classed as physical, like the improvement of posture or the reduction of fatigue. There is ...however, a kinaesthetic element in all behaviour, and the standard, once it has been established, can be used with equal profit to throw light on problems that are thought of as predominantly ‘mental’. Take, for example, verbal communication. It frequently happens that words...act as stimuli to set off a train of thoughts whose character is determined more by past experiences than by the actual context...such a response involves marked kinaesthetic components and will identify itself in a trained subject by its disruptive effect on the reflex pattern. Anyone who is interested can by this means identify stimulus-words according to the amount of reflex disturbance they create within himself” (Jones, 1976: 172).</li> <li>• “Different people interpret language and images differently, so it is necessary to continue observing the effects of language and to tailor the language individually when necessary” (Madden, 2002).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Often, when a person seems quite unable to release his tensions even when the movements are correct, using a word which creates a feeling of harmony and peace in him affords immediate results. Now, obviously these reactions are highly individual and in most cases totally subconscious. A word which may make all the difference to one player may not have any meaning at all to another. But there are a handful of words which I have found create similar reactions in most players. These can be divided into two categories: words which arouse tension and anxiety and words which create ease and flexibility” (Havas, 1973: 96).</li> <li>• “The very term violin-hold can create such far-reaching tensions and anxieties in many players that it is advisable to eliminate the terminology altogether. I have found that words like rest, place, link, nestle, cradle, not only manage to replace the traditional expression of violin-hold successfully, but that they create an active and curative thought process as well” (Havas, 1973: 27).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The choice of words that are used in directing has a profound effect on co-ordination; “language reveals thinking...what we think expresses itself physically in exactly the way we are thinking it” (Madden, 2002).</li> <li>• In order to obtain better use, it is essential to find terminology that is anatomically more correct, as “anatomical mis-mapping creates interference in the human systems”, leading to excessive work (Madden, 2002).</li> <li>• “If we wish to communicate most clearly in the teaching of coordination, it is worth the effort to be anatomically accurate in our choices of language... Our students work diligently to carry out what we ask them to do; we serve them best by making our requests as accurate as we can” (Madden, 2002).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The difficulties lie in the false notion that violin playing depends on some sort of superimposed pressure or force. This mistaken idea inevitably results in faulty movements....This is what every player must learn from the very beginning: <i>where the fundamental balances concerning violin playing are and the control and co-ordination of them from the mind...</i> So, tempting as it is to think about the action which we can see...concentration should be focused on the source which causes it to move” (Havas, 1964: 2).</li> <li>• “Once the mind learns to give the right orders to the right places, your body will have no alternative but to obey” (Havas, 1964: 17).</li> </ul>



## **5.4 Conclusion**

The New Approach shows considerable equivalence with each of the fundamental concepts of the Alexander Technique, as delineated in the 'Framework of key concepts' in **3.5.1**.

### **5.4.1 Summary**

The New Approach recognises the vital importance of the primary control in the optimal functioning of the violinist, and the New Approach exercises are specifically designed to eliminate interference with the head-neck relationship and the postural reflexes. Another major consideration in the New Approach procedures is to heighten the sensory awareness of the violinist, especially in relation to the instrument.

The New Approach teacher provides an intervention into the pupil's use through guided movement and touch. This intervention is always aimed at making a student aware of the blockages that cause inefficient functioning in playing the violin, so that they may be eliminated and replaced with directions for improved use. The directions are carefully worked out in conjunction with the student, so that he or she has a very clear conception of the coordinative processes that are involved in recreating the improved use that was experienced with the teacher's guidance. The verbal directions used in teaching are therefore always linked to actual sensory experience.

Inhibition, or stopping, is a key consideration in the New Approach, as the pupil first has to inhibit the end-gaining motivations that lead to misuse, in order to consider the step-by-step means whereby improved use can be obtained. Likewise, a pupil has to inhibit the desire to perform an action, in order to allow the teacher to guide the movement. Physical movements all take place in response to the stimulus of the voice, combined with the organic rhythmic pulse, instead of being actively executed with muscular effort. The physical movements that are elicited in the New Approach are all reflexive in nature, and the pupil has to be able to inhibit cortical control in order to allow these movements to unfold.

The New Approach proceeds from the integrated and balanced use of the body as the basis for all subsequent movement. This improved postural balance is achieved through eliminating interferences and applying the New Approach exercises for

establishing the fundamental balances with the guidance of the New Approach teacher. The ensuing physical movements are frequently described as being easy, light and effortless. Awareness and attention are also enhanced when physical rigidity and tension are eliminated, thereby increasing the coordination of the mind and the body. The violinist experiences an extended field of awareness in relation to the instrument, so that the instrument is perceived as an extension of the body in expressing the performer's musical vision.

The directions for improved use in the New Approach are all linked to the organic rhythmic pulse and the musical intention of the performer. All physical aspects of playing the instrument are eventually integrated into one central point of musical direction through the left hand finger action. As the performer's mind is completely focused in this musical direction, the tendency to impose a conscious, mechanistic control on the physical aspects of playing the instrument is eliminated. Consequently, interferences are greatly reduced and reflex movements are allowed to come into play. These effortless and efficient movements allow the performer to experience natural control and freedom in playing the violin.

The New Approach also shows considerable parallels with the teaching practice of the Alexander Technique, as described in 3.4. The New Approach teacher forms a partnership with the student, in order to lead the pupil to self-discovery and self-mastery. This process demands detailed, non-judgemental attention and awareness to kinaesthetic feedback from both the teacher and the pupil. The teaching follows a very strong means-whereby principle, always with an inside-outward emphasis. End-gaining practises and thoughts are the antithesis of New Approach philosophy, and are systematically uncovered and eliminated<sup>1</sup>.

The use of words in the teaching process is carefully considered. A distinction is made between words that arouse tension and those that create ease and flexibility. Words and images that elicit soft responses in the body are favoured. The words and ideas relating to technique are clarified in order to avoid misconceptions regarding the anatomical functioning of the body. Finally, the New Approach recognises that

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<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.2.2.

sensory information cannot be conveyed through words alone, and the directions for improved use are always linked to sensory experience obtained through the teacher's guidance.

#### 5.4.2 Influence

Given the extent of equivalence between the two methods, the question arises as to the degree of direct influence Alexander may have had on the formulation of the New Approach. Havas herself does not refer to Alexander as an influence in any of her books, and in a personal interview<sup>1</sup> with her in Oxford in 2003, she categorically denied any such influence, as well as any experiential knowledge of the Technique.

In all of the literature relating to the New Approach, Perkins (1995: 23) gives the only reference directly linking Alexander to Havas as an influence, asserting that Havas “often refers to Alexander's principles throughout her writings”. On closer investigation<sup>2</sup>, this was shown to be a misrepresentation. Karen Davy, one of the New Approach teachers consulted by Perkins in her research, confirms that Havas has never cited Alexander as a direct influence. She states: “in a way it's true that Kato refers to Alexander's principles, but certainly not by name, rather by nature” (Karen Davy, personal communication<sup>3</sup>, 9 Aug 2004). It appears that Perkins misunderstood that to mean that Alexander had been an influence (as she implies in her book), when in fact it had only been pointed out by the New Approach teachers that many of the principles of the New Approach are similar to those found in the Alexander Technique.

The nature of the misunderstanding becomes clearer when it is noted that Perkins (1995: 23) cites both Alexander and Hellebrandt as influential authors, when in fact Hellebrandt's articles in *The Strad* were written a decade after Havas had established and introduced her method: three of Havas's books had been published (1961, 1964 and 1968) before the Hellebrandt articles appeared in 1969 and 1970. Havas does refer to Hellebrandt's articles in *Stage fright* (1973) in order to clarify certain points, but it is clearly fallacious to imply that Hellebrandt had been an actual influence on

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<sup>1</sup> See **appendix D**.

<sup>2</sup> See the correspondence in **appendix E**.

<sup>3</sup> See **E.3.2** in **appendix E**.

Havas's formulation of the method. Perkins's use of the heading "Influential Authors" (1995: 23) with reference to Alexander and Hellebrandt is therefore completely misleading.

In further correspondence, Havas (personal communication<sup>1</sup>, 11 Sept 2004) once again confirmed that she had not known of the Alexander Technique until students started to comment on similarities between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique. In this letter Havas also notes that the New Approach has been likened to many other disciplines, such as Tai-Chi and yoga, of which she also has no knowledge. It is only in *Stage fright* that Havas (1973: 77, 85) first makes indirect reference to the Alexandrian concepts: she quotes from a foreword to Bonpensiere's *New pathways to piano technique*, written by Aldous Huxley<sup>2</sup>, who had been an ardent follower of Alexander. By the time *Stage fright* (1973) was written, however, the New Approach had been formulated and established for more than a decade. These references could therefore only serve as a clarification, not as an actual influence. When these issues were pointed out to Perkins<sup>3</sup>, she conceded that her book "is not intended to be viewed in any way as the definitive background guide to the New Approach, especially historically, as Kato herself, her writings...are obviously the ultimate authorities on that subject" (Marianne Murray Perkins, personal communication<sup>4</sup>, 26 Sept 2004).



It is entirely plausible that Havas could independently have developed a way of teaching that is based on the same principles of human functioning and learning, as formulated in the Alexander Technique. Jones (1976: 153) emphasises the importance of making a distinction between "what Alexander discovered and the method he used for imparting his discovery to others". He further states that the "principle of inhibition and the primary control existed before Alexander discovered it...(and) can undoubtedly be discovered again, not necessarily by the same route" (Jones, 1976: 154). This is borne out by many examples in literature.

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<sup>1</sup> See E.1.2 in appendix E.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.2.1.

<sup>3</sup> See E.2.3 in appendix E.

<sup>4</sup> See E.2.4 in appendix E.

For instance, Daniel Pevsner (1980), a professional working with horses who later also became an Alexander teacher, found “a great resemblance between the ideals of good posture and locomotion, as applied to horses or to people”, and noted a distinct similarity in the concepts and procedures involved in attaining these ideals in the two disciplines. In commenting on the dressage practised by the Spanish Riding School of Vienna, he notes that the riders carried themselves “as if they had all undergone thorough training in the (Alexander) technique”, although this had not been the case (Pevsner, 1980). He concluded: “in order to become a really top class rider, one would have to develop qualities that would be instantly recognised and appreciated by an Alexander teacher” (Pevsner, 1980).

In the light of the broad range of disciplines that recognize parallels with the Alexander Technique, including therapies seeking to improve mental well-being such as psychotherapy and behavioural therapy, Barlow (1973: 133) concluded that the “Alexander principle of USE may indeed be as fundamental to Psychology as MASS is to Physics”. De Alcantara (1997: 280) also mentions the universality of the Alexandrian concepts and principles:

De Alcantara, 1997: 280:

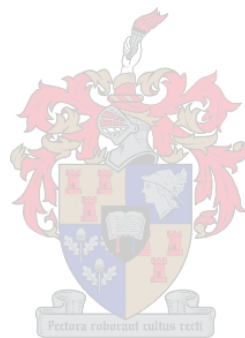
I have had teachers of aikido and of singing, for instance, whose work was suffused with the principles of the Technique, even though these teachers had never done any Alexander work. The Technique is based upon universal principles that inevitably crop up in other spheres of knowledge and activity.

It seems clear that the New Approach is also based on these universal principles. In her evaluation of the New Approach, Hellebrandt (1970b: 479) found that the teaching devices that Havas developed intuitively, all appear to have a biological rationale, explaining the method’s innovative efficacy.

Hellebrandt 1969: 277:

All appear to be explainable in the light of neurophysical mechanisms regulating coordination and movement. Havas deserves great credit for recognising the manifestations of autonomous regulation, exploiting their pedagogical implications, and proving their validity in all age groups and at any level of technical proficiency.

As both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach are based on biomechanical and neuro-physiological principles<sup>1</sup>, and it is therefore not surprising that there should be a large degree of congruence between the two methods. It is a tribute to the genius of both Alexander and Havas that they arrived at their respective methods intuitively, through trial-and-error experimentation, and without prior academic study of these principles<sup>2</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> See **2.2** and **4.5**.

Havas (1973: 28) herself does not place great store on a knowledge of “neurophysiology, kinesiology or biomechanical motor behaviour”, and states categorically: “even if one devoted one’s life to these studies, it would be difficult to achieve total coordination (such as violin playing demands) from a set of rules”.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Hellebrandt, 1969: 277. See **3.2.2**.

## Chapter 6

### Participatory action research

#### 6.1 Introduction

Jones, 1976: 139:

By itself, sensory evidence is not enough. It must be supported by anatomical and physiological reasoning. On the other hand, reasoning alone is not enough either. No matter how well a theory is constructed, it does not become valid until it has been put to the test of experience – to sensory verification.

The extensive literature study that culminated in the comparison of the New Approach and the Alexander Technique in the previous chapter forms the conceptual framework for the subjective account of actual experience that will be given in this section. The purpose of this chapter is not to give a comprehensive account or description of all the New Approach exercises and procedures, and the reader is referred to Havas's teaching video (Havas, 1991) and her books for more information in this regard. Detailed descriptions of many of the New Approach exercises can also be found in the beginner's method books that Bakhshayesh (1985; 1991) based on Havas's principles.

It is not possible to experience fully all that the New Approach has to offer in a concentrated series of lessons such as I had, or to give an adequate account thereof in a report of this nature. Only personal experience and application of the method over an extended period of time can do justice to the complexity and depth to be found in the New Approach (cf Kenneson, 1974: 93). However, the basic New Approach exercises and principles included in the 'Six Lesson Course' do have immediate and measurable results (cf Havas, 1961: 63), so that there are sufficient data to analyse for parallels with the Alexander Technique. The teaching procedures Havas uses to convey information are, to a large extent, also the object of study in this section, and the lessons with her and Gloria Bakhshayesh over a two-week period in July 2003 afford enough data for this purpose.

Due to the constraints of this study, a selection of the New Approach principles and exercises, as applied and experienced in the lessons and workshop, will be made for discussion in this report. The 'Framework of key concepts' (see **3.5.1**) will be used as the measuring tool once again, to bring parallels between the New Approach and the



Alexander Technique to light. Where applicable, reference will also be made to experiences and discussions in the Alexander lessons with Vivien Mackie (London, July 2003) and Yvonne Becker (Cape Town, 2003-2004), which show significant resonance with New Approach procedures. For the sake of conceptual clarity, data obtained from the lessons and workshop have been organised according to specific themes, rather than presented in the chronological order of experience.

## 6.2 The lessons

During the lessons in Oxford (July, 2003), Havas mentioned that some of her ideas have evolved since writing *Stage fright* (1973), due to her continual search for more effective procedures. As a result, some of the exercises presented in the books are applied differently today, although the ultimate aim of the New Approach procedures remains the same (cf Hellebrandt, 1969: 277).

### 6.2.1 The rhythmic pulse and the stance

At the first lesson, Havas spent considerable time to clarify the precise nature of the organic, rhythmic pulse and its importance in transmitting energy outward in a communicative flow. She explained that, in an effort to defend ourselves against the stress and anxieties in violin performance, we tend to tighten and harden unconsciously, thereby blocking this energy flow through the body and consequently stifling musical communication<sup>1</sup>.

Havas emphasised that the rhythmic pulse is not merely a succession of static beats (such as one can observe in an electronic metronome), but that the pulses are interconnected, with sense of movement from the one pulse to the next (such as can be observed in the swinging pendulum of a mechanical metronome). The interconnected movement of the legs in an activity such as ice-skating was also used as a metaphor to illustrate the nature of the rhythmic pulse. Havas was insistent that the music happens in the journey between the notes - it is only as the whole body is suffused with the rhythmic pulse that musical communication can take place<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See 4.2.2 and 4.4.2. At the workshop in Oxford (19<sup>th</sup> July, 2003), Havas also noted that when we are exposed to criticism, our bodies tend to become rigid – a comment often expressed by Yvonne Becker during my Alexander lessons with her.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 19. See 4.4.2.

Rigidity in any of the joints blocks this pulse; conversely, learning to apply the rhythmic pulse in the stance helps to bring to light and dissolve hidden tensions<sup>1</sup>.

**U-m**  
**SA-i; I**

It is worth noting at this point that Mackie (2000) gives very similar descriptions in illuminating the resonance she found in Casals's teaching and playing with the Alexander Technique. Mackie (2000: 87) describes an "animal rhythm" which pervades the whole body, not merely existing in one's mind or feet when counting or tapping beats, and conjectures that real musicality and this "animal rhythm" are in essence the same thing. Mackie (2000: 88) also observes that ill-conceived technique sometimes puts the musician's natural elasticity out of reach, and like Havas<sup>2</sup>, makes specific reference to a hammer-like action in the left hand, which creates a "block of tightness that deprives the brain of the stretch information which allows the rest of the body to give full play to this natural animal rhythm" (Mackie, 2000: 88).

**U-m**  
**U-m**  
**SA-I**

The similarity between the New Approach stance and the monkey in the Alexander Technique has been described in **5.2.3.2**, and this was confirmed to me in the practical experience of the two methods. In an Alexander lesson with Vivien Mackie (London, July 2003), she guided me into a monkey, where I stood with my spine against and aligned with the corner of a doorway, with a slight bending or giving in the knees. Mackie emphasised a springiness, or aliveness, throughout the whole body.

**PB**

Likewise, Havas (1964: 4) describes the stance as though one were standing with one's back against a wall, with a sensation of tilting the weight backwards onto the bottom of the spine and the heels, and with springy knees that are slightly bent. In the lessons in Oxford (July, 2003), Havas emphasised that one rides on a springy (imaginary) support, such as a stool or third leg, which is situated at the bottom of the spine, when applying the rhythmic pulse in the stance. This exercise is described in detail in *Stage fright* (1973: 19), where Havas notes that one should imagine "that the body is made of coils of spring...which rides on the elasticity of the knee bends" (cf Havas, 1991).

**PB**

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 18. See **4.4.4**.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 43. See **4.4.4**.

When Havas demonstrated this movement to me (Oxford, July 2003), while simultaneously clapping the pulse and counting out loud, her movements were very small and light. In contrast to clapping a static pulse, which she initially demonstrated, this organic pulse involved a subtle but total freedom in all the joints in her body, including her knees and wrists, with a sense of energy being transmitted outward. There was indeed a springy aliveness in all her movements.

**U-i**

When I joined her in pulsing, counting out loud and clapping, the movement in my knees was much bigger and uncoordinated – my knees bent before I said the pulse, and I did not experience the grace of movement that she demonstrated. Havas emphasised that the voice is the major control, and that the movement of the knees should merely respond to and mirror the character of the voice articulating the pulse (which can vary according to the character of the music). In other words, the movement of the pulse throughout the body, including the knees, takes place in response to the voice, instead of actively doing or initiating the movement physically with the knees. Havas also pointed out that my wrists were straight and rigid, and not flexible and giving – a fact of which I had been completely unaware. Once she had pointed this out, however, I noticed how this rigidity in my hands blocked the transmission of the rhythmic energy.

**U-m**

**D**

**D-w**

**U-m**

**SA-l**

**SA-i**

This exercise also made me aware of the lack of coordination not only in my body, but also between my mind and body. Through actively trying to do the movement with physical effort, the pulse as I said it with my voice and the pulse as expressed in my body movements were two different things – in other words, my physical movements were not expressing my thought and intent, and my mind was disconnected from my body. With continued work with Havas and later with Bakhshayesh, my pulsing eventually became lighter, easier and more gracefully coordinated as I allowed my body to respond to my voice (i.e. my mental direction).

**SA-i**

**U-m**

**EG**

**U-m**

**U-i; KE**

**D**

In repeating the pulsing and clapping exercise in lessons with Bakhshayesh (Marple, July 2004), she noted that I tended to lift my chin and tensed my neck, a fact that I had not been aware of. This is a clear indication that I was interfering with the primary control (although she did not use this terminology), which resulted in my uncoordinated movements. Bakhshayesh stressed that pulsing and clapping in this

**PC-m**

**SA-l**

**PC-m**

**U-m**

way always shows up where the tension spots in the body are, so that by identifying them, they can be eliminated. She particularly stressed the importance of keeping the neck free at all times. Repeating this exercise while keeping my head still and my neck free, brought about an immediate improvement in my coordination.

**U-m**  
**I**  
**PC-i**  
**U-i**

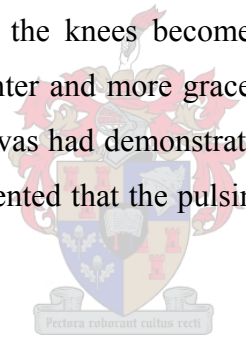
In applying this exercise to my pupils over the period of a year, I found that virtually all of them, to differing degrees, initially displayed the same tendencies: the static, inward clapping with rigid hands instead of the small, upward and circular pulsing movements with flexible wrists (as was demonstrated by Havas), and excessive, jerking knee movements that are not coordinated with the rest of the body or with the voice. Although (to my knowledge) it is not applied in the New Approach in this way, I found that when I lightly supported the base of the skull with my hand to stop a pupil from retracting the neck - as Alexander teachers often do when guiding a pupil in activity<sup>1</sup> – it immediately brings about a reduction in effort throughout the pupil's body, so that the movement in the knees becomes barely noticeable. The pupil's movements become smaller, lighter and more graceful, as well as more coordinated, approximating the pulsing as Havas had demonstrated it to me. All of the pupils who have had this experience, commented that the pulsing seemed much easier to do, and more pleasurable.

**U-m**

**GM**  
**I; PC-m**  
**U-i**

**KE**

**KE**



This suggests that *riding on the pulse*, as taught in the New Approach, is not possible to do correctly while there is interference with the primary control, and consequently the postural reflexes<sup>2</sup>. Working with the New Approach teacher in exploring and releasing the interfering tensions, will bring about an improvement in the total locomotor pattern, with it's integrating effect on the coordination of the body as a whole<sup>3</sup>. Although the improvement in coordination is instantly noticeable when the organic pulsing is applied correctly, I found that tension blockages do reappear again from time to time in a pupil's pulsing. These tensions then have to be released again, but the kinaesthetic memory of the improved use obtained in previous attempts makes this progressively easier. With continued practise, this exercise helps to establish a

**PC-m**

**I**  
**PC-i**

**U-m**  
**I**  
**SA-i**

<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.2.1.

<sup>2</sup> See 5.2.3.2.

<sup>3</sup> Cf De Alcantara, 1997: 27. See 3.3.3.

balanced use of the whole body, and it forms the basis for all other New Approach procedures, including internalising the music away from the instrument.

**PB**

An earlier experience in the Alexander lessons with Vivien Mackie (London, July 2003) confirms the importance of releasing physical tension blockages in order to maintain balance and a rhythmic pulse in the body. I was asked to step onto a wobble board, on which one balances by rhythmically stepping from side to side. As I attempted to place my viola in order to play while wobbling, I lost the even rhythmic balance on the wobble board, which made me aware that I had stiffened my body by leaning backwards as I lifted the instrument – something I had not noticed earlier. On repeating the exercise, this time not leaning backwards, I was able to maintain an even rhythmic pulsing throughout the manoeuvre. Likewise, during the performance of a work while balancing on the wobble board, I became aware that the wobble rhythm became unstable during certain passages, once again indicating that I had stiffened my body, this time in response to the perceived difficulty of the passage. This confirms Havas's view that any tension blockage will interfere with the "inside-outward rhythmic energy impulses" through which "organic communication" takes place (Havas, 1973: 29).

**I; U-m**

**U-m**

**SA-I**

**I**

**U-m**

**U-m**

De Alcantara supports the importance that the New Approach gives to the rhythmic pulse, and its centrality to musical communication. As with ordinary thought, musical thought has a certain hierarchy, with rhythm being a key consideration that should never be taken for granted (De Alcantara, 1997: 202). He states that "most musical difficulties are caused by a lack of rhythmic clarity", and that rhythmic precision and forward motion are to be considered before other factors, such as intonation, sound-production and even accuracy (De Alcantara, 1997: 202). Musical continuity is a function of good use, and facilitates technical security. De Alcantara (1997: 190) further notes that one's physical gestures at the instrument can only be manifestations of "interpretative freedom" once inner mastery of rhythm has been gained, but prior to that they "are primarily manifestations of technical shortcomings".

**U-m**

**U-i**

**U-m**

It is often pointed out in the New Approach that physical blockages will cause a distortion of physical movement in the body. During a lesson with Bakhshayesh (Marple, July 2003), she mentioned that when there is tension in a joint that needed to

**U-m**

**U-m**

be free to move, there will inevitably be a compensatory movement elsewhere in the body. In observing a New Approach lesson given by Havas, Bonnici (1988: 1) noticed that tension in the particular pupil's left shoulder caused the rhythmic pulse to become "a gyration in her body", and that once Havas helped her to identify and release the tension, the compensating movement stopped and "her playing improved beyond belief".

U-m  
I  
U-i

There are similar accounts from musicians in applying the Alexander Technique. According to Jones (1976: 136), "musicians frequently report that with the (Alexander) technique they have greater control over timing and rhythm". It is clear that by eliminating physical tensions and blockages, both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique bring about an improvement in rhythmic clarity, a balanced use of the body and consequently an increase in expressive freedom.

I; U-m  
U-i

### 6.2.2 Winging

Another of the New Approach exercises, designed with the specific purpose of eliminating tension in the body and promoting fluid joints, is the *winging*, which prepares the arms and hands for the essential bowing movements. A precursor of this exercise is described in *The twelve lesson course* (1968: 10) and *Stage fright* (1973: 21), which both emphasise the light, wing-like and suspended position of the arms. Both Perkins (1995: 73) and Bakhshayesh (1985: 4) give a description of the *winging* as it is taught today, and it is demonstrated by Havas in her teaching video (1991).

I; U-m

In the lessons with Havas (Oxford, July 2003), she first demonstrated this exercise to me, emphasising the balanced position of her arms, which she then proceeded to swing gently back and forth, with a sideways, horizontal movement from the shoulder hinges. Even though this movement had just been modelled to me, when I repeated the exercise, I tended to angle my elbows downward (as incorrectly illustrated in the photograph in Perkins's book (1995: 74)), without any awareness that what I was doing, did not accurately mirror the movement as demonstrated by Havas.

U-m  
SA-u

Havas pointed this out, adjusting my elbows so that I was able to find the horizontal, suspended and floating position. She then gently manipulated my shoulder hinges, so that my arms released out of their sockets in a sideways movement, swinging to and

GM  
GM-h

fro. This movement was incredibly light and free, and it was a revelation to discover the ease and effortlessness with which my arms could move, as well as the exact position of the shoulder hinges, which felt springy and elastic. Havas emphasised that when a player is in perfect balance, this movement becomes a totally self-propelled action, and it did seem to me that, as I was using no effort at all, my arms could continue in this swinging movement indefinitely without becoming fatigued.

**KE**  
**KE**  
**KE**

In repeating this exercise with Gloria Bakhshayesh (Marple, July 2003), she noticed that I tended to make a nodding movement with my head while winging, and once again, I had been completely unaware of this. Like Havas had done, she adjusted my arms and did the movement for me. It felt even more springy and lighter than before, and I noticed that this time the movement was only in my arms. I became aware that I had previously tried to wing using some effort from my shoulders as well, instead of just allowing the arms to release out sideways from their sockets. Bakhshayesh commented that my head was no longer nodding along with the *winging*, and reiterated that tension and rigidity in the joints that need to move, will inevitably cause compensatory movement elsewhere, while doing the right movement will allow the unnecessary movement to stop.

**U-m**  
**SA-I**  
**GM; KE**  
**SA-i**  
**PC-i**  
**U-m**  
**U-i**

I had also thought of inhibiting the movement of my head while she was doing the winging for me, and these two factors had brought about an experience of improved use that gave me a new sensation and consequently a new understanding of the exercise. Although I had thought that I understood the *winging* and was doing it correctly, there were still interfering tensions involved in my movements that were outside of my own awareness. However, the experience of the movement facilitated by Bakhshayesh brought me to a true kinaesthetic knowledge of the movement.

**I**  
**GM; U-i**  
**SA-i**  
**SA-u**  
**SA-I**  
**GM**  
**SA-i**

In discussing the application of the Alexander principles to string playing, Stein (1999: 75) comments that many musicians tend to lean into the instrument, or draw their arms into the torso, which creates pressure in the shoulder joints. He advises that to avoid this, “the arms should be allowed to release out of the back where the shoulder blades attach to the upper arm”, creating opposition between the joints of the body as well as between the arms and torso (Stein, 1999: 75).

**U-m**  
**U-i**



It is precisely this kind of opposition that the New Approach *winging* brought about in my use, so that I was aware of the difference between the direction of my swinging arms and the core structure of my head, neck and torso, which retained its integrity and did not become involved in the winging movement. As with the rhythmic pulse and the stance, I found that it is impossible to do the *winging* correctly while interfering with the primary control. It is clear that my *winging*, with the accompanying nodding movement, unnecessarily involved the shoulder and neck muscles, while the improved experience of the exercise did not – the head and neck remained free, so that there was no interference with the primary control<sup>1</sup>.

**SA-i**

**PC-i**

**U-m**

**PC-m**

**PC-i**

Although this exercise results in an effortless, simple, self-generating movement, it is surprisingly difficult to teach. I have found that most pupils have quite a bit of tension in their shoulder joints, and are initially unable to find the balanced, suspended position of the arms without guidance. Without exception, all the pupils to whom I have taught the *winging* initially attempted to *do* the movement actively, using too much effort and involving their shoulder muscles, in the same way I had done.

**KE**

**U-m**

**EG**

**U-m**

Bakhshayesh pointed out, during one of my lessons with her, that using the word *shoulder* too much can create the misconception that actual effort from the shoulder is needed to perform the winging. However, the term *shoulder joint* is merely used in order to identify the actual location of the hinge. The important thing is that this joint should be free, so that the arms can be allowed to swing, seemingly of their own accord. She likened the shoulder joints to the hinge of a door that is free enough to swing effortlessly in the wind.

**W-n**

**W**

During the New Approach workshop (Oxford, 19 July 2003), Havas frequently asked the pupils to whom she was teaching the *winging*, to allow her do the movement for them, reminding them that they did not have to do anything to help her. This gave the pupils a direct sensory experience of the movement they could not obtain through trying to do it actively, or by following verbal instruction. Instead of being given a negative instruction to stop trying so hard, or being told to relax, the responsibility for the *winging* was taken away from the pupils completely, which opened the way for

**I; GM**

**I**

**SA-i**

**I**

<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.1.2.

them to gain an experience of the movement untainted by their own misconceptions and interpretations.<sup>1</sup>

SA-i

Another device used by both teachers to convey kinaesthetic information to me about this exercise, required me to place my hands lightly on the top of their shoulders while they were winging. The feedback obtained in this way, gave me a sensory awareness of the springy and free quality of the movement. I have found this procedure to be very beneficial with my own students: once they have obtained kinaesthetic information about the lightness, springiness and ease of my movements directly through their hands, their own use immediately improves as well. Similarly, I have found that asking a pupil to manipulate my shoulder joints while my arms are in the balanced and suspended winging position, teaches them more about the quality of the movement than any amount of verbal instruction can.<sup>2</sup>

GM-t

SA-i

GM-t

U-i

GM-t

SA-i

Havas uses another ingenious way to convey the necessary sensory information about the *winging*: by blowing lightly on the inside of her upper arm, it responds with the greatest of ease in a sideways swing. (Havas demonstrated this device at the New Approach workshop, as well as in my lessons with her.) When this is repeated with the student, the response is invariably the same, with a freedom and release in the shoulder hinge that was not there before. The blowing communicates the lightness and ease inherent in the movement, which must be allowed to happen rather than actively performed with muscular effort<sup>3</sup>. I have found this device to work particularly well with my own students – their winging movements instantaneously become freer and lighter, in response to the lightness suggested by blowing.

GM-t

U-i

GM-t

KE; CF

U-i

GM

The balanced and lightly suspended position of the arms that is established through the *winging*, forms the basis for the bowing movements, and also provides the support needed for the instrument. With the left arm forming a suspended cradle for the violin, while the right arm's *winging* position is retained, the playing posture is easily simulated, and the instrument and bow is inserted into this balanced stance without stiffening the muscles or joints. The experience of improved use gained in the

U-i

<sup>1</sup> Cf 3.3.4 and 3.3.5.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.5 and 5.2.1.3.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 99. See 5.2.1.3.

*winging*, serves as a sensory standard in relation to which unnecessary stiffening in the actual playing movements can be perceived and inhibited<sup>1</sup>.

SA-i  
U-m; I

### 6.2.3 Integrating the body and the instrument

After I had played for Havas during my first lesson with her (Oxford, 16 July, 2003), she commented that I seemed to have tension in my left shoulder, and consequently also in my left thumb, as a result of the way in which I was holding the viola. Prior to this lesson with Havas, I had become aware through the Alexander lessons that there was tension in my shoulder while I played, but this information as such did not enable me to eliminate this tension, or to change my habitual way of holding the viola at that time.

U-m

U-m

I had also not realised to what an extent it was the way I held the instrument that had caused the problem. I had been taught to hold the instrument briefly with the weight of my head while swinging my left arm at my side, in order to check the freedom in the joints of the arm. Earlier, the Alexander teacher, Vivien Mackie (London, 15 July, 2003) had immediately noted that taking my left hand away from the instrument caused a small adjustment to my posture, especially in my face and in the relative positions of my head and neck. She admitted to having a prejudice against holding the instrument with head-weight only, as it is difficult to release the tension once one has a grip on the instrument with the chin. Mackie recommended that I should place the instrument with the right hand instead, and to continue experimenting with alternative possibilities. Presumably I might have been able to bring about a change with continued experimentation and application of the Alexander principles, but as Mackie also noted, this can take a long time, firstly to discover and become aware of the exact nature of the misuse, and then to alter one's thinking in order to change habits that have become set in one's use<sup>2</sup>.

U-m

PC-m

PC-m

The New Approach lessons, however, thoroughly explored all the misconceptions and tensions inherent in the violin hold, even those of which I had hitherto been ignorant. It also gave me a very clear set of directions to follow, in order to integrate the instrument comfortably with my stance, without distorting or interfering with my

T-g

D

<sup>1</sup> See 4.5.1.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.3.7.

body's natural balance. I experienced an immediate improvement in terms of physical comfort and ease in the playing movements, as well as a marked improvement in the tone I produced.

U-i  
KE

### 6.2.3.1 Flying fiddles

Havas firstly illustrated that holding the viola with the left hand, with the thumb on top of the chinrest, makes the instrument feel very heavy, as it is unbalanced. By resting the back of the viola on the palm of the hand, with the fingers lightly on the ribs, the instrument is balanced and consequently feels light and relatively "weightless". Havas referred to this as the true weight of the instrument, which is balanced between the collarbone and the suspended left hand, and accentuated that there is therefore no need to tense the body in anticipation of having to hold the instrument securely (cf Havas, 1973: 18).

U-m

This is an important point, as musicians sometimes tend to lock or set the body in holding the instrument, as well as in anticipation of playing. In discussing the application of the Alexander principles to string playing, Stein (1999: 73) emphasises the importance of inhibition before playing, in order to increase a pupil's awareness so that he or she can "keep a free neck and free knees" when bringing the instrument and bow into the playing positions. This is also the purpose of all the New Approach preparatory exercises (i.e. the rhythmic pulsing, the *winging*, the *flying fiddle* and the *no-violin hold*). Bakhshayesh emphasised that doing these exercises before playing on the instrument, helps to eliminate tension in the body, so that it is not carried over to the instrument and into the playing movements.

U-m

I; SA-i  
U-i

I; U-m

In the first *flying fiddle* exercise, the instrument is balanced lightly on the left hand, as described above, while the arms swing in a wide arc from side to side, crossing in front, before swinging out to shoulder-height at the sides with the arms fully extended. This is performed in conjunction with the rhythmic pulse in the stance as described in 6.2.1. The instrument is held in a horizontal plane all the time, as though one were lightly balancing a tray on one's hand. When Havas demonstrated this exercise to me, the strings vibrated with the movement of the air across them, producing a humming sound. Havas pointed out that this is the instrument's "voice", and that the way in which one treats the instrument when playing will either set this

U

voice free or cause it to complain. She stressed that this exercise is very important, as it creates a sense of freedom between oneself and the instrument, and brings to light unconscious anxieties regarding the handling of the instrument that inevitably cause tightening in the body.

**A-e**  
**U-m**

When I attempted to do this exercise, the strings initially did not respond with a humming sound, and on closer investigation, I became aware that I was holding the instrument very tightly with my left hand for fear of dropping it. Havas reiterated that any tension in the way we touch the instrument, either with the chin, or by grabbing with the left hand, will dampen the natural vibration of the instrument. By softening my hand and trusting the balance in the movement, the strings eventually started vibrating of their own accord.

**SA-i**  
**U-m**  
**U-m**  
**U-i**

Gloria Bakhshayesh later noted that I looked very worried while I was doing this exercise, and I realised that I was overly concerned about making the strings vibrate. Bakhshayesh (Marple, 21 July, 2003) responded that “thinking about doing something is not the same as directing oneself”, and noted that we often tend to make the end-result the focus, which takes us away from the actual process of doing it. This changes our point of reference, so that we stand outside of our performance and try to evaluate what we are doing, rather than giving our full attention to the actual moment of playing. She stressed that the important thing is to monitor how one is feeling physically in the moment of playing, as any discomfort will inevitably manifest somewhere in one’s performance. In applying this to the *flying fiddle* exercise, I stopped thinking or worrying about getting the strings to vibrate and focused instead on the ease of the movement, relaxing the hold of my left hand and taking the time needed to complete the exercise – “enjoying the journey”, according to Bakhshayesh – with the result that the strings started to vibrate, again without my assistance.

**EG**  
**EG**  
**SA**  
**U-m**  
**I; EG**  
**MW**  
**U-i**

Earlier, Vivien Mackie (London, 15 July, 2003) had made very similar observations after I had played for her in our first Alexander lesson. She noted that I needed to move away from “thinking about” how I was playing, to being more responsive to what I was doing in the actual moment. At the time, I did not fully understand what Mackie meant or how to go about doing this, but the subsequent experience of the first *flying fiddle* exercise, described above, exposed and made me aware of my end-

**EG; A**  
**EG**

gaining approach to playing. The carefully structured and ordered New Approach directions, with their strong emphasis on sensory feedback and physical comfort, opened a new way of approaching the instrument, by paying attention to each individual step along the way and being more responsive to the immediate feedback.

MW  
D; SA  
A  
MW; SA

The second *flying fiddle* exercise entails using the right hand to swing the instrument into the playing position, and I found this to be very similar to the way in which Vivien Mackie had suggested I should place the viola<sup>1</sup>. In the simulated playing position<sup>2</sup>, the right arm swings the instrument into the cradle created by the suspended left arm, and balances the violin lightly between the collar-bone and the passive left hand. Havas repeatedly stressed that the left hand should merely receive the instrument, and it was enlightening to discover how instinctively my left hand wanted to take hold of the instrument, thereby immediately adding unnecessary tension to the whole of the left arm. The head, neck and torso likewise should not adjust to accommodate the instrument, but the violin or viola fits easily into the balanced stance.

U-m  
PC-i

This exercise reinforces the idea that there is no artificial or special position necessary in order to hold the instrument; in fact, there is no violin or viola hold at all, just the comfortable, balanced stance with the weightless arms suspended from the back<sup>3</sup>. The placing of the instrument is coordinated with the rhythmic pulse in the stance, as described in 6.2.1. The violin is swung in and out of position to a rhythmic pulse of four, and by incorporating motion and balance in this way, the concept of a static, fixed violin hold is avoided right from the start. This is very important, as many misconceptions regarding the violin hold originate in the postures unconsciously adopted in the beginning, with very damaging long-term consequences once they become habitual (cf Havas, 1973: 18).

U-m; I  
U-m

Modern research on brain rehabilitation confirms the approach to changing habitual behaviour that both Havas and Alexander formulated instinctively. In discussing the ways that synapses are formed in the brain, Robertson (1999: 22) explains that when

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<sup>1</sup> See 6.2.3.

<sup>2</sup> See 6.2.2.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.4.4.

two neurones are repeatedly triggered to fire at the same time, they will eventually become synaptically connected with each other, so that a trigger for the one will also cause the other to fire. This is known as Hebbian learning, and although all learning takes place in this way, it can be very damaging when a harmful, unconscious response (such as stiffening or distorting an area of the body) becomes linked to the stimulus for a desired activity (such as placing the violin).

U-m

Alexander developed his Technique with the specific purpose to inhibit such postural sets, and this is also the purpose of these seemingly simple exercises devised by Havas. Robertson (1999: 62) emphasises that it is only through actively paying attention to an activity that the related neural circuits can be trained into changing their patterns of connections. Through consciously inhibiting the undesired response, the synaptic connections between the neurones are weakened (Robertson, 1999: 33), until the unwanted response is eventually pruned away. The New Approach exercises, such as the *flying fiddle* and the *no-violin hold*, are specifically designed to make one aware of such undesirable and unconscious responses, so that harmful habits can be eliminated, or avoided right from the beginning.

I; U-m

A

I; U-m

SA-i; U-m

I

### 6.2.3.2 The no-violin hold

During my lessons with her, Havas emphasised that all strain and tension in the top vertebrae of the spine are to be avoided while holding the violin, and that the neck will inevitably stiffen if the chin is pushed down onto the chinrest in order to hold the instrument<sup>1</sup>. She also noted that her views in this regard have developed considerably since she initially designed *The twelve lesson course* (Havas, 1964). Like Mackie, she no longer believes that one should ever drop the left arm to one's side, holding the instrument only with the weight of the head, contrary to what she had written in *Stage fright* (Havas, 1973). Although her writing has always emphasised the importance of not gripping the instrument with the chin, Havas felt that the exercises as set out in *Stage fright* (1973: 25, 26) could potentially have the opposite effect, and as a result she no longer uses them in her teaching.

PC-m; I

PC-m

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<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.1.2.



Havas stressed the importance of a natural head position while playing the violin, in order to be able to communicate freely. She demonstrated how holding one's neck stiffly to one side while attempting to speak or sing, blocks the energy flow, and noted that this is no less true when playing the violin. She emphasised once again that there are no fixed positions, such as a violin hold or a bow hold, as all is based on balance. Fixing anything in a specific, rigid position immediately blocks the transmission of energy, and therefore hinders communication<sup>1</sup>.

**PC**

**PC-m**

**PB**

**U-m**

The New Approach *no-violin hold* exercise is a very powerful, step-by-step guide to achieving an improved integration of the body and the instrument. I have personally found this exercise to be of immense value in my own playing, as well as in guiding my pupils (beginners included) to become comfortable with the instrument. Bakhshayesh (1985: 15) gives a very detailed account of the *no-violin hold* in her beginner's tutor book, *Dancing Bows* (1985), but as with the *flying fiddle* exercises, the teacher's guidance is indispensable in order to bring to light the hidden tensions and unconscious responses to the instrument.

**MW**

**U-i**

**GM; SA**

**U-m**

With the left hand resting against the body of the violin at the block (i.e. where the neck joins the body of the instrument), the fingers spread out on top of the strings and the thumb on the back of the violin (pointing towards the end-pin), the instrument is lightly and quickly turned and placed on the collar-bone. Havas (1973: 25) credits Heifetz with the idea for this exercise, which reinforces "the weightless feeling of the violin". Although this movement looked incredibly easy and light when demonstrated to me, I initially found it very awkward and uncomfortable to swing the viola onto my shoulder while keeping my fingers spread out over the strings. There was a lot of strain in my forearm, and I thought that the size of the viola would make this movement impossible; it felt quite heavy and cumbersome. In doing this exercise with Gloria Bakhshayesh, she traced the discomfort to stiffness in my left shoulder-joint and upper-arm. I had not been aware of this tightness at all, but when I released it, the movement instantly became not only easy, but also very light and secure. Bakhshayesh also pointed out that the only movement that is necessary is a rotation of

**U-m**

**T-g**

**SA-l; I**

**KE; CF**

**T-g**

<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.3.

the forearm from the elbow in order to swing the viola up, and that the left upper arm and elbow joint need to be completely free in order to allow this action.

With the instrument resting on the shoulder, but not yet inserted under the chin, Havas adds another ingenious device in order to counteract the misconception that the neck has to be stretched out or contorted in order to accommodate the instrument. The thickness of the instrument is measured by the middle finger and thumb of the right hand (resting on the middle of the chinrest and the bottom of the shoulder rest respectively), while one authoritatively says “measure”. The area from below the jaw to the collarbone, where the instrument is to be inserted, is measured next (again while saying “measure”), and found to be exactly the same as the thickness of the instrument<sup>1</sup>. This procedure is repeated with the length of the chinrest and the length of the side of the jaw. The powerful message that this conveys to the sub-conscious mind of the violinist is that there is an exact fit, like two pieces of a puzzle, between the instrument and this measured space below the chin, and therefore no adjustment in the body is necessary.

**T-g; I**  
**PC-m**

Once this has been established, two fingers of the right hand are placed underneath and behind the jawbone, and the instrument is inserted into the measured space, while one says “one and fit”. Havas kept her hand lightly on my left hand in order to monitor my movements, and as I inserted the viola, she made me aware that I was pushing the instrument up with my left hand, instead of just closing my left elbow in towards my body. I had not consciously intended to push the viola up, and it took me a while to recognise that I was doing so and stiffening my left upper arm in the process.

**D; GM-t**  
**SA**  
**U-m**  
**SA-u**  
**U-m**

Once the instrument has been inserted, the right hand is removed and the chin spread onto the chinrest, while one says “two and spread”. The image here is of a couple of double chins spreading out all over the chinrest, and the direction of the movement is forward rather than down. The quality of the contact between the chin and the chinrest is always soft, and Havas advised me to think the weight back to the crown of my

**D**  
**SA**  
**D**

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<sup>1</sup> The success of this exercise depends on whether the chinrest and shoulder-rest have been adjusted to the right height for the pupil, and the exercise will therefore also show up if further adjustments are necessary.

head, in order to counteract any unconscious pressing down on the chinrest. The right hand then takes a secure hold of the inner bout of the instrument (so that the head has no responsibility to counterbalance the weight of the instrument), and the left hand slides down to first position, in a soft, giving gesture while one says “three and slide”. It is imperative that there is no tension in the left hand and that the hand remains in a completely natural position instead of being prepared or placed in a particular playing position, as this inevitably adds unnecessary tension. The final step is to check the freedom of the left shoulder joint, and to counteract the tendency to push the left elbow in under the violin, by releasing the arm sideways and out<sup>1</sup>, while saying “four and swing”.

**I; PC-m**

**D**

**U-m**

**D**

The verbal directions and the movements were always exactly matched, so that the movements are allowed to happen in response to the voice, rather than the voice trailing behind the movements in a kind of delayed commentary<sup>2</sup>. The time and effort both Havas and Bakhshayesh took to ensure that each step of the exercise was accomplished without unnecessary or habitual tension, was extensive and detailed. They paid attention to very subtle shifts of muscle tension in my movements, and the level of the kinaesthetic observations made, far exceeds anything I have ever encountered in instrumental tuition of any kind. As a consequence, my body was informed of a new way of relating to the instrument that verbal instruction could not have communicated to me.

**D**

**D-w**

**T-g**

**MW**

**T**

**SA**

**A-e**

The result was a completely new feeling of lightness and ease, especially in the contact between my jaw and the instrument: it felt decidedly spongy and soft, a feeling I had never experienced before in holding the instrument. There was no discomfort or pressure on the chinrest, yet the instrument felt very secure. This position initially felt very foreign to me, as the viola seemed to be quite a lot lower than I had imagined it should be, and yet when I looked in a mirror, it was not unduly angled downwards but remained fairly horizontal.

**KE**

**SA-i**

With time, I have found a much greater freedom in the use of my left hand, especially with regard to shifting and double stopping. I have also noticed a distinct

**U-i**

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this is a very slight movement; the elbow remains pointing towards the floor.

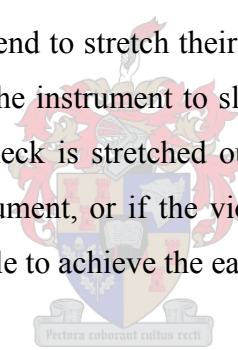
<sup>2</sup> See 6.2.1.

improvement in my over-all coordination and mind-body integration, especially in sight-reading very fast passages, which had, at times, brought about an uncomfortable level of tension and a lack of security. I experience greater ease in all of the playing movements, a markedly reduced level of anxiety in performance, increased facility and above all an increased beauty of tone that is expressive and deeply satisfying. This is no doubt due to the combined effect of all the New Approach exercises, but the integration of the body and instrument through the *no-violin hold* is the foundation on which all other aspects of violin playing depend, as any interference with the head and neck in holding the instrument will affect the functioning of the rest of the body <sup>1</sup>.

U-i  
U-m  
KE  
U-i  
  
PC-i  
PC-m  
U-m

In teaching this exercise to a number of pupils, both beginner and advanced, I have noticed that they exhibit very similar responses to placing the violin. They all tend to push the instrument up with the left hand, and are usually completely unaware of this fact. There is often a tightening in the left arm and shoulder in an effort to hold the instrument up, and most pupils tend to stretch their chins forward in order to take the chinrest, instead of waiting for the instrument to slide in underneath the chin. I have also found that as long as the neck is stretched out in this way, or contorted in an effort to accommodate the instrument, or if the violin is being pushed up, the pupil remains uncomfortable and unable to achieve the ease of the *no-violin hold*.

U-m  
SA-I  
U-m  
PC-m  
  
PC-m



The degree of contortion is usually more severe if a pupil had had a particularly bad violin hold before. Even the idea of bringing the instrument into the playing position elicits a distortion in such a pupil's body. Such an instinctive reaction has to be pointed out and stopped repeatedly before the body begins to learn that it does not have to change or adapt to the violin. All of the pupils to whom I have taught this exercise, and especially those who previously had a large degree of misuse in this area, have commented on the surprising fact that the violin can be easy and comfortable to hold<sup>2</sup>.

U-m  
  
U-m  
I  
  
KE

The *no-violin hold* is an exploration of awareness that the student undertakes with the teacher's guidance, and it can sometimes take a number of lessons before a pupil has

A  
GM

<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas, 1961: 16. See 5.2.1.2.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that a well-adjusted shoulder rest was always used in teaching the *no-violin hold*. However, the discomfort in holding the instrument was traced more often to a distortion in the pupil's body than to an ill-fitting shoulder rest.

gained enough insight into his or her own use in order to inhibit unwanted responses that interfere with the head-neck relationship. However, until this ease in holding the violin is established, there seems to be a constant negative influence in all of the playing movements, so that the quality of movement remains mechanical and laboured. I have found that once a pupil discovers how much easier it is to play the violin when there is *no violin hold*, they are inspired to continue this process of paying attention to their use. When they realise that there is a direct correlation between what they do (and how much tension they use in doing it) and the way the instrument responds, they become very motivated and take pleasure in discovering new and freer ways of touching the instrument.

SA-i; I  
PC-m  
U-m  
U-m  
KE  
U  
KE

#### 6.2.4 Bowing

The detailed working procedure followed by Havas and Bakhshayesh in integrating the body and instrument, were also applied in establishing the bowing. The particular New Approach bowing exercises that were covered in the lessons with Havas and in the ‘Six Lesson Course’ with Bakhshayesh will not be described in detail in this section, but after a brief overview, a selection of experiences relevant to the purposes of this study will be discussed.

As with the *no-violin hold*, Havas stressed that there is *no bow hold*. The body receives the instrument and bow, instead of actively trying to take hold of them. In the *flying bow* exercise, the left hand swings the bow into the right hand, which remains completely passive. The right hand is merely a receptacle for the bow and does not prepare to take the bow, as this adds unnecessary tension to the hand and reinforces the tendency that most people have to grip the bow with the fingers<sup>1</sup>.

U-m

All of the bowing movements are based on the suspended position of the arms that was established in the *winging*<sup>2</sup>, and are always mimed before being played on the instrument. The freedom of the miming is retained when playing on the instrument, and it certainly feels as if there is no bow to be manipulated with the hand. The

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<sup>1</sup> The right thumb is flexed and the thumb muscle remains very soft and relaxed throughout. The skin below the nail lightly touches the hair of the bow, thereby adding greater security. Furthermore, the forearm and hand are pronated, i.e. turned towards the violin, when the bow is placed on the instrument (cf Havas, 1961: 24).

<sup>2</sup> See 6.2.2.

movements of the bow and hand merely follow through from the swinging of the shoulder- and elbow-joints. The hand never initiates or consciously controls the movement during the basic exercises to establish the balance in the bow arm.

Both Havas and Bakhshayesh guided my bowing movements, in the miming as well as in actually playing on the string, in order to give me a sensation of the desired movements. The directions for the bowing were always verbalised in a sequential order, and the voice remained the major control<sup>1</sup>, with the movement merely unfolding in response. Havas emphasised that the quality of all the bowing movements is springy, swinging and light, and frequently checked whether my arms were “weightless” and balanced, or resting too heavily on the strings.

Although I had studied all Havas’s books prior to the series of New Approach lessons, I found the exercise for establishing the upper-half bowing particularly difficult. I understood intellectually that the swinging movement from the elbow was a continuation of the movement originating in the back, but Havas made me aware that I still attempted to lead the movement from my hand. I had thought that I was doing what she asked, but as she guided my arm and did the movement for me, it had a distinctly different feel: it was easy and light, as though the movement happened by itself, and as if there really was no bow to move to the tip. The movement had a rhythm and swing, and the sound was much more alive than before.

It had occasionally been pointed out to me in lessons and master classes (prior to the New Approach lessons) that the movement in my right elbow was not elastic enough and needed to extend more forward as the bow moved to the tip. However, this instruction did not help me to change this aspect of my playing, even though I had assented to the instruction and had tried to implement it. The particular teachers were not able to explain more fully to me what was needed, or to lead me into an experience of improved use in this regard. I was aware of a vague discomfort in my bowing arm at times, and consciously attempting to control the movement of the bow arm did not help to improve the situation. However, during the lessons with Kató Havas and later with Gloria Bakhshayesh, this aspect of my bowing was thoroughly

**GM-h**  
**SA-i**  
**D**  
**D-w**  
**GM-t**

**T-g**  
**U-m**  
**GM**  
**KE**

**U-m**  
**SA-u**

**T-g**

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<sup>1</sup> See 6.2.1.

explored, discussed, demonstrated and facilitated, so that I gradually obtained a clearer mental picture of the desired movement.

**T-g**  
**D**

I initially felt as though I were blind on a sensory level, and unable to grasp the kinaesthetic meaning of the words and explanations given to me. In miming the swinging upper half movements, I knew that my hand needed to remain passive, but every time I attempted the exercise, I still found myself reaching forward with the hand instead of allowing the movement to swing from the elbow joint. In guiding my movements with the bow, Bakhshayesh felt tension in my right hand thumb area, indicating that I was still leading the bow from my hand (although I was not aware of doing so), and explained that any tension in the bow hand and thumb will inevitably cause tension in the shoulder- and elbow joints as well.

**SA-u**  
**SA-u**  
**GM-h**  
**GM-t**  
**U-m**  
**T-g**

As Bakhshayesh facilitated the bowing movement, her hand covered mine in such a way that my index finger was not able to guide the stroke, as it had always done. I found this to be quite frustrating and uncomfortable, and felt that I would be completely unable to bow without the index finger's help. By inhibiting my unconscious habits directly through her guidance, Bakhshayesh made me aware of the extent to which I had tried to control the bow from my hand before, instead of swinging the arm from the inside out. Although I had initially tried to hold on to my habitual way of bowing, it was the very thing that was interfering with my use, and by stopping this habitual movement pattern from taking place, Bakhshayesh enabled me have a completely new experience of the upper half bowing.

**GM-h**  
**I; U-m**  
**SA-u**  
**I**  
**GM; SA-i**  
**U-m**  
**I**  
**U-i**

This experience taught me more than verbal instruction had hitherto been able to, by giving me a direct sensory knowledge of the desired movement, which in turn enabled me to perceive the misuse that I had not been conscious of before. Merely trying to copy what the New Approach teachers were doing, and giving mental assent to what they were saying was not enough. I only understood the movement as I felt it, and realised what it meant that I was not allowing my arm to extend to its full length, or allowing the elbow to swing open.

**SA-i**  
**SA-i**

My mental picture of the movement was also clarified through discussing the misconception I had had regarding the upper half bowing. Bakhshayesh spent a

**T-g**



considerable amount of time clarifying the concept of the inter-related fluid joints of the arm, and explained that my forearm had moved only from the elbow joint without involving the shoulder joint as well. This is a result of leading the stroke from the hand and it restricts the sound, as the energy flow from inside is unable to flow through the shoulder to the whole arm. As tension inevitably builds up in the whole arm (and especially the shoulder joint) when there is no energy flowing through it, the bowing, and therefore the sound, becomes static. Leading the bow stroke from the hand results in a mechanistic, external movement that is cut off from the inner musical impulse. Bakhshayesh commented that even though one can get proficient at playing in this way, it can cause repetitive strain injuries, and does not allow one the pleasure of feeling the music flowing through one's movements.

**T-g**

**U-m**

**U-m**

**U-m**

However, when the movement is projected from inside through the shoulder to the elbow joint, the movement of the arm and bow become self-propelled, and the sound of the instrument is more resonant<sup>1</sup>. As the arm unfolds from inside out, the quality of the movement is very springy, and the shoulder joint remains free all the time. As Bakhshayesh demonstrated the difference between the two movements, I could hear a very clear difference in the sound that she produced: when the forearm moved only from the elbow, the sound was indeed static, but with the inside-out swinging the sound was much more alive. When I touched her arm as she did the bowing, I could feel that there was undeniably a springy aliveness in the movement that was not there when she had moved from the elbow only.

**U-i**

**R; KE**

**U-i**

**GM-t**

**SA-i**

The reflexive movement of the arm in bowing, as experienced in the lessons with Havas and Bakhshayesh, has become progressively clearer to me as I have continued to apply the New Approach exercises, as well as in teaching them to my own pupils. I have found that beginners who have never played the instrument before generally learn the reflexive swinging movement much more quickly than those in whom the habit of leading the bow-stroke from the hand is already well established. However, all pupils seem to have a tendency to want to manipulate the bow with the hand, even

**R**

**D-q**

**R**

**U-m**

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that it is essential for the thumb to remain linked lightly with the hair of the bow throughout this exercise. Without this link, there will be some tension in the fingers that will transit up the arm and inhibit the movement, breaking the link from the inside through the shoulder and elbow to the string.

those beginners who are able to mime the bowing movements without interference from the hand.

Bakhshayesh noted during one of the lessons that the hand will tend to take over the responsibility for moving the bow, if the mental direction to the shoulder and elbow-joints is not strong enough. The most important thing therefore remains to train the mind to give the orders to the right places, as the “body will have no alternative but to obey” such mental direction (Havas, 1968: 17).

**D-w**

### **6.2.5 Touch**

As is evident from the preceding discussion of specific New Approach exercises, teaching through touch is an important component of the New Approach, and this section will look at the different ways in which it is applied in the lessons.

**GM-t**

Havas uses the blowing device described in the section on *winging*<sup>1</sup> very often in her teaching, for instance to make pupils aware of hidden tensions in their hands. On several occasions during my lessons with her, Havas asked me to blow on my hands, and they responded almost of their own accord by flopping, or giving, with the release of tension. In each instance, I had been unaware that I was holding tension in my hands and wrists, and the subtlety of this device revealed a new level of meaning to the idea of releasing tension that being told “relax your hands”, could not have done. Havas explained that the concept of blowing denotes very little effort, and as a result it creates a more desirable response in the body than verbal instruction (which a pupil is likely to interpret as something to do actively) is able to.

**SA-i**

**SA-l**

**SA-i**

**GM**

This demonstrates profound congruence with the Alexandrian principle, articulated by Jones (1976: 81), that the “amount of kinesthetic information conveyed is in indirect proportion to the force used in conveying it”: a hard touch will elicit a hard response, while a soft touch elicits a soft response<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the lightness suggested by blowing, Havas nurtures a way of soft touching that brings about a corresponding softness and release of unnecessary tension in the pupil’s body<sup>3</sup>. This is relevant both

**GM**

**GM-t**

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<sup>1</sup> See 6.2.2.

<sup>2</sup> See discussion in 5.2.2.1.

<sup>3</sup> See 4.4.5.

to the way in which the instrument is touched, and the way in which the teacher touches the student in guiding his or her movements.

**SA**  
**GM-t**

In my first lesson with her, Havas demonstrated how different kinds of touching communicate different messages. Stroking a person's hand with a soft touch, allowing air between the hands, conveys a completely different thought than a hard, gripping touch does – the latter is threatening, and makes you want to pull your hand away. In order to elicit the desired response or to convey the required sensory information, it is therefore very important to use the right kind of touch. I found this touch, as demonstrated by Havas, to be very similar in quality to the soft, reassuring touch I experience in the Alexander lessons with Yvonne Becker.

**GM**

Havas often rested her hand on mine throughout the duration of an exercise in order to gauge the amount of tension in my movements, and consequently made me aware of very subtle tensions that I had not noticed. Obtaining kinaesthetic feedback from my movements in this way also enabled her to discern whether the movement that I was making originated from the right source. For instance, she made me aware that my right hand often tends to initiate a movement (such as pulling the bow in order to start the bow stroke) when in fact the movement of the hand is merely a follow-through of the arm's swinging, which unfolds from the inside out<sup>1</sup>. I was completely unaware of this tendency to tighten my bow hand, but once she had pointed it out and I consciously directed the mental command to the correct place (i.e. the shoulder- or elbow joints), the movement felt completely different and the sound quality dramatically improved.

**GM-t**  
**SA-i**  
**GM-t**  
**SA-i**  
**EG**  
**SA-I**  
**U-m**  
**D-I**  
**KE**

Havas also used this soft touch to re-assure my right hand, to enable it to release tension. She pointed out that our hands are always busy manipulating objects and doing things, and that we carry this tendency over to the instrument. This tendency was, in fact, one of the major interferences that the New Approach lessons helped me to identify in my own use. By resting her hand on mine for a couple of seconds, Havas communicated the soft, released and yet alive quality of her touch directly to my hand, so that I gained an awareness of the unnecessary tension in my right hand,

**GM-h**  
**GM-t**  
**SA-i**

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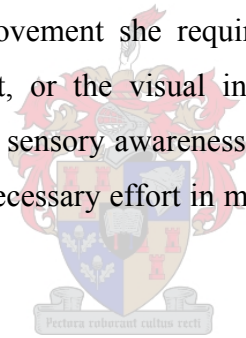
<sup>1</sup> See 6.2.5.

and was able to release it. My hand seemed to absorb the kinaesthetic quality of her touch. Even though the tension uncovered was very subtle, eliminating it had a very noticeable effect on my sound, and brought about a new sense of freedom and softness in my movements in relation to the instrument.

**I; GM-t**  
**I**  
**U-i; KE**

During one of my lessons with her, Havas mentioned that a limb can look as if it is in the right position and doing the right movement, but all the while it can be full of tension inside. To demonstrate this, she asked me to touch her wrist and elbow as she touched the bow to the string. She tensed her arm as she did so, and the hardness of the tension was very easy to feel. As she repeated the action, letting go and releasing the tension, I immediately felt the new softness in her arm, yet the position and movement of the arm looked very much the same as before. There was only a slightly more collapsed or giving look to it, which could be easily overlooked by an untrained eye. Obtaining sensory information through my hands in this way explained more to me about the quality of the movement she required me to make than the verbal instruction that had preceded it, or the visual information I had gained through watching her demonstrate it. My sensory awareness was increased, so that I was able to recognise the tension and unnecessary effort in my own arm, however subtle it had been.

**U-m**  
**GM-t**  
**GM-t**  
**GM-t**  
**SA-i**



This experience reveals an essential difference with the other methods of instrumental tuition that I have experienced and observed. None of the violin methods that I have studied, except the New Approach, examines ways in which one can detect hidden tensions in the pupil's actions. If the movements that the pupil makes, looks right, it is generally accepted to be right and left at that, but the subtle dystonic patterns that may not be discernable to the eye are consequently not dealt with, and continue to affect the pupil's functioning negatively.

**U-m**

Stevens (1996: 115) points out that "touch aids perception": as the nerve cells that are specialised for sensing touch are stimulated, proprioception is increased, so that it is possible to feel more accurately what the body is doing<sup>1</sup>. With this increased alertness, there is more background information available to help in carrying out

**GM-t**  
**SA-i**

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.4.

conscious movements. Havas intuitively recognised this principle, as is evidenced by the large role that touch plays in the New Approach. The link between the mental directive and the particular physical action can be established more precisely when the pupil's kinaesthetic awareness is heightened in this way.

**GM-t**  
**D**  
**SA-i**

For instance, when Havas teaches the fundamental balance for the left hand finger action, she advises one first to rub the particular base knuckle lightly, in order to locate the precise position to which the directions will be given. I have found this to be a very useful device, especially in remedial teaching, as many pupils have a tendency to tighten the whole hand and the adjacent fingers in order to put one finger on the string. Identifying the exact place from which the finger will swing and directing the mental command to that place only, allows the hand to remain free and the fingers independent, and results in greater clarity of articulation, as well as increased expressiveness. The same is true for the other New Approach exercises: through stimulating the nerve receptors through touch, the teacher enables the pupil to direct his or her use more accurately.

**GM-t**  
**D**  
**U-m**  
**SA-i**  
**D**  
**U-I**  
**GM-t**  
**D**

In an Alexander lesson with Vivien Mackie (London, July 2003), she reiterated that "touch teaches touch", and this seems to me to be as relevant to much of Havas's teaching as it is to the Alexander Technique. This principle is illustrated clearly in the way that the left hand touch is imparted to the student. Both Havas and Bakhshayesh had used the image of squeezing a soft, juicy tomato, with the juice running out between the fingers, to illustrate the powerful yet soft and elastic feeling tone in all the joints of the left hand. In teaching me this giving left hand touch on the instrument, Gloria Bakhshayesh enveloped my hand around the neck of the viola with both of her own for several seconds, if not minutes, directly imparting the quality of her touch to my hand.

**GM-t**  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
**GM-t**

This also stopped me from being able to revert to my habitual left hand position, which had felt right and necessary<sup>1</sup> to me, or to prepare my hand in readiness to play. As a result, my hand initially felt paralysed, as though I would never be able to play with my hand cuddling around the neck of the instrument in the way that she was

**I; U-m**  
**SA-u**  
**SA-u**

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<sup>1</sup> Cf 3.3.4.

suggesting through her touch. However, after a couple of repetitions, I found that I was able to move my fingers with ease in a lateral swing, and the softness and liberty that I gained in my hand, as well as the resulting warmth in the tone quality, was a revelation to me.

**KE**

Although I had assented intellectually to Havas's view of the dangers inherent in a vertical finger action<sup>1</sup>, it was through being guided into an actual experience of the New Approach touching that I recognised to what an extent my own use was still being informed by the misconception of a vertical finger action. I had been aware for some time prior to the New Approach lessons that I sometimes pressed too hard with my left hand fingers on the string, especially when I was under stress, but this knowledge had not helped me to resolve this tendency or to prevent it from recurring. The New Approach lessons, on the other hand, gave me a direct experience of the improved use. Although it had seemed strange to me when I first experienced it, I found that the kinaesthetic sensation imparted to me by Bakhshayesh stayed with me for a long time<sup>2</sup>, so that my hand seemed to search out this touch almost of its own accord whenever I played.

**GM**

**SA-i**

**U-m**

**U-m**

**SA-u**

**SA-i**

**U-i**

**KE**

**U-i**

Having consistently nurtured this touch through the New Approach exercises over the last 18 months, I have gained greater ease and accuracy in all aspects of left hand technique, but especially in double stopping and shifting, due to the increased elasticity of my hand<sup>3</sup>. My vibrato has also acquired a significant measure of freedom and expressiveness.

**KE; U-i**

**U-i**

In the lessons, both Havas and Bakhshayesh commented on the fact that I was receptive and responsive to their guidance<sup>4</sup>. Gloria Bakhshayesh noted that it was only possible for me to experience the sensation of the movements because my arms were responsive to her touch and I did not resist her guidance (even though the guided movements had sometimes felt strange to me). This is important, as it is the sensations

**A**

**SA**

**I; GM**

**SA-u**

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf 3.3.8.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Mackie, 2000: 88. See 6.2.1.

<sup>4</sup> This is most probably due to an increase of sensory awareness from the ten Alexander lessons that I had had prior to the New Approach lessons, but it is also likely that the style of teaching that I had adopted over the past decade, in guiding my own pupils' movements to help them find freedom in the playing movements, could have been an influence.

that are imparted through the lessons that one ultimately remembers. She added that a large part of the New Approach has to do with the touch and the kinaesthetic response, and that this is what is lacking when one only reads about the New Approach. Academic knowledge can only give one a partial understanding of the method.

SA-i  
SA

The New Approach lessons increase one's awareness of what happens in the body and facilitates soft and powerful sensations in relation to the instrument. However, it is essential to rediscover these sensations again every day through the carefully structured New Approach exercises. Bakhshayesh noted that even though one may gain an understanding of the movements, the body still needs to be taught and reminded of the sensations on a daily basis. As intellectual knowledge and sensory knowledge do not always correspond, the connection between the mind and body needs to be nurtured consistently.

SA-i  
A-e  
SA  
MW  
SA  
D-w

#### 6.2.6 Directing

Both Havas and Bakhshayesh paid very detailed attention to every movement I made while the fundamental balances were being established, and stopped me whenever they detected unnecessary tension in my movements, making me aware of the exact nature of the misuse. In guiding my movements, they gave me a direct sensory experience of the desired movement, all the while linking the experience to a set of directions with very clearly defined steps, through which I would be able to recreate the desired movement for myself.

T  
I  
U-m  
GM  
SA-i  
D; MW

All these directions follow a specific and sequential order, and are always verbalised to the exact key cue in the body (such as the left hand base knuckles or the shoulder-and elbow-joints) that motivates the particular movement. Havas frequently told me that “the voice and the movement are the same”, and to let my body do what my voice was saying. I found that this took the responsibility away from the particular limb, so that the movement could be allowed to happen effortlessly in response to the voice, rather than being performed actively with muscular effort.

D  
D-w  
D-w  
CF

A unique aspect of all the New Approach directions is that they are spoken in such a way that the inflection in the voice mimics the timing and the feel of the movement.

D-w



This is true for both the bowing movements and the left hand. For instance, in learning to direct the left hand finger action, the voice says the particular note name, such as “D”, with a kind of sliding sound that coincides exactly with the lateral swinging action of the finger. The note name is spoken to and projected through the relevant base knuckle, initially without the instrument (in various variations of the same exercise, including singing the note name on the actual pitch), and subsequently with the instrument when learning to place the fingers on the string. This exercise is also used later in learning new music: the notes are literally spoken or sung through the base knuckles in this way before the music is played on the instrument. Although this exercise may sound very simplistic, I have found it to be extremely powerful, both in my own playing as well as in my teaching. It has the ability to focus the mind on the exact movement required, thereby eliminating unnecessary tension and superfluous movement. Lack of clarity in articulation in any given passage is immediately improved as soon as the notes are spoken to the base knuckles in this way.

**D-w**  
**D-q**  
  
**D**  
  
**D-w**  
**I**  
**U-m**  
**U-i; D**

This is true for all the New Approach directions. In speaking the directions out loud to the key cue for that movement, the mind is focused only on that which is necessary, so that the physical response can be more accurate. As the movement coincides exactly with the inflection of the voice as described above<sup>1</sup>, and merely unfolds in response to the verbal direction, the mind and the body are coordinated in a very powerful way. Cultivating mind-body unity right from the beginning in this way is essential preparation to allow the musical thought eventually to be expressed directly through the physical movements<sup>2</sup>.

**D-w**  
**U-i**  
  
**D-w**  
  
**D-w**

The purpose of the detailed New Approach directions is to establish a very clear mental picture of the movement, which is projected to the body before it is carried out physically. For instance, in miming the bowing, I was taught by the New Approach teachers first to look at the particular joint and to imagine the movement very clearly, while verbalising the directions, with the feeling and timing of the movement reflected in the inflection of my voice. After this, the arm is allowed to swing in response to the stimulus of the voice (as well as the stimulus of the left hand index

**D**  
  
  
  
**D-q**  
  
**D-w**

<sup>1</sup> See also 6.2.1 and 6.2.3.2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf De Alcantara, 1997: 54. See 5.2.2.3.

finger<sup>1</sup>), always in coordination with the rhythmic pulse. This always resulted in a more accurate rendition of the movement, and I have found this to be the case with my own pupils as well. Instead of attempting to do a movement with excessive tension and physical effort, their movements become freer, easier and more precise. The body knows what to do once the mental picture of the movement has been made clear through mental rehearsal<sup>2</sup>, so that interferences are reduced considerably.

U-i  
U-m  
KE  
D-w

Robertson (1999: 59) confirms that mental rehearsal can sculpt the synaptic connections in the brain as much as real practise can. By using a PET scanner, researchers have been able to monitor what happens in the brain during such mental practise:

D

Robertson, 1999: 56:

Mentally imagining a movement triggers much the same brain machinery as does preparing to make the same movement. It seems, therefore, that imagining a movement is not very different from actually making the same movement, as far as the brain is concerned.

However, it is important to imagine the actual feeling of the movement (as Havas advises<sup>3</sup>) in order for the movement areas of the brain to be involved (Robertson, 1999: 57). Robertson (1999: 56) also notes that talent resides in the network of connected neurones that are carefully established over a period of time, and that this “synaptic embroidery” needs constant maintenance in order to keep the patterns of connections firing together. This can be done either in the real world or in the “virtual world of the mind” (Robertson, 1999: 56), through vivid imagining. It is clear that this is exactly the procedure followed in the New Approach directing<sup>4</sup>, and a reason for its effectiveness.

D-q

A

D-q

D

Obtaining and projecting a clear mental picture of the movement is always the focus in the New Approach. Bakhshayesh (Marple, July 2003) pointed out that the object of practising in the New Approach is always to have full awareness and full focus in the actual moment of performing the exercise, and not merely to repeat something over

D-q

EG

A

EG

<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 35, 36. See 5.2.2.1.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.4.3.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Havas, 1964: 64.

<sup>4</sup> See 4.4.3 and 5.2.2.3.

and over. De Alcantara (1997: 195) confirms this from the perspective of applying the Alexander Technique to instrumental tuition:

If you wish to create a clear kinaesthetic memory of a given gesture, you are better off playing that gesture five times perfectly in a row than nine times perfectly and a tenth time imperfectly, thereby blemishing your memory of the whole set. (De Alcantara, 1997: 195.)

**D**

By creating such a kinaesthetic memory of a gesture, a command from the brain will be able to retrieve it with ease and reliability in performance<sup>1</sup>. However, endlessly repeating the same movement in an effort to gain security leads to a “machine-like accuracy (that) goes against the very nature of music-making” (De Alcantara, 1997: 192) – the mechanistic control that the methods of both Havas and Alexander aim to eliminate<sup>2</sup>. The important thing is not only to avoid repeating the wrong things, but also to know when to stop before mental fatigue sets in, so that every repetition can be made with full awareness, as “attention is an important ingredient for brain sculpture” (Robertson, 1999: 62).

**D**

**U-i**

**EG**

**U-m**

**U-m**

**I; U-m**

**A**

The end-gaining desire for control is not only manifest in excessive repetition, but also in being over-careful<sup>3</sup>. During my lessons with Havas (Oxford, July 2003), I found that I sometimes hesitated before executing a movement in order to make very sure that I would do it correctly. Havas emphasised the importance of doing all the exercises very rhythmically: one thinks beforehand, but then there is no hesitation once the movement is performed in response to the pulse<sup>4</sup>. Bakhshayesh also noted that many thoughts about a movement are not helpful, as they tend to interfere with the actual performance. Looking for feedback in order to judge the outcome has the same effect. Projecting a very precise thought before playing and then trusting the movement without trying to impose control, allows the movement to unfold freely and reflexively. This is in complete accord with De Alcantara’s view that one should not anticipate the outcome of one’s actions or judge them afterwards if one is “really paying attention to the means and not the ends” (1997: 74).

**EG**

**EG**

**CF-p**

**EG**

**CF-p**

**R**

**CF-p**

**MW**

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion on mental rehearsal and Kreisler’s ‘master record’ of the playing movements in 4.4.3.

<sup>2</sup> See 5.2.3.4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf De Alcantara, 1997: 72. See 3.3.11.

<sup>4</sup> See 5.2.3.4.

Havas emphasised that the New Approach exercises are preventative, not curative. They do not attempt to improve an old way of moving and playing, but teach the body a whole new way of being with the instrument that prevents tensions from accumulating in the playing movements. In other words, new exercises are not imposed on the old way of playing, but the old is completely bypassed and eliminated<sup>1</sup>. Although many New Approach directions are inhibitory, Havas (personal communication, Oxford, July 2003) discourages negative imperatives, preferring to say “beware of” rather than “don’t”, as she feels that the latter too easily makes a pupil feel defensive, which results in the body stiffening in self-protection - a view also often expressed by Yvonne Becker in my Alexander lessons with her.

**I; U-m**

**I**

**D-I**

**W**

**W-n**

**U-m**

I have found in teaching the New Approach exercises to my own pupils that it is very often a case of teaching them to inhibit. For instance, they have to inhibit an eagerness to *do*, which sometimes results in grabbing the instrument with excessive tension. They also need to inhibit the tendency to try hard in order to get something right, and rather stop and think through the directions for each step of the process. When I guide their movements, they have to inhibit their own desire to move and allow me to do it for them, in order to give them the feeling of the movement. Before playing on the instrument, they have to wait a moment and consider whether there is tension in their bodies, and especially their hands, that could negatively affect what they are about to do. Instead of just taking the violin and playing a piece, they first have to organise themselves by learning the musical information away from the instrument, and then gradually build this information into their physical movements through clapping, singing and miming.

**I; EG**

**U-m**

**I; EG**

**D; MW**

**I; GM**

**SA-i**

**I**

**I; EG**

**D**

**MW**

However, the reward for all this inhibition and careful direction is the satisfaction of doing something well, and being able to express themselves musically on the instrument with greater ease. Even though some of my pupils find it hard to focus their attention to the degree required of them, I have noticed increased enjoyment and self-motivation in virtually all of them.

**I; D**

**KE**

**U-I; A**

**KE**

<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas, 1961: 63; see 5.2.2.2.

### 6.2.7 The inner ear

At the New Approach workshop (Oxford, 19 July 2003), Havas always responded in a positive, affirming way to a participant's playing. Even when there were glaring and obvious musical inaccuracies, she never made a pupil self-aware about their mistakes, but led them to discover the problems for themselves through rhythmically clapping and singing the music away from the instrument. Once the music was internalised and experienced in this way, the playing always improved, and the musical inaccuracies disappeared automatically.

T  
T  
D  
U-i

Havas noted that the problem often is that we want to play the instrument instead of singing inside, and that we are unable to sing when we are too involved with the external machinery of playing the violin. As a result, our playing is silent even though it may often be proficient and good; it does not communicate because it has no inner music. She reiterated that rhythm comes through pulsing and clapping, and not by trying to play the violin. Havas also mentioned that because musicians in the West are often not trained to hear the intervals inwardly when reading the music, the "eyes are threatened by the notes", causing rigidity in the body. However, as the music happens in the tensions between the notes, it is very important to train the inner ear by singing the music away from the instrument, as is the practice in Kodály ear-training<sup>1</sup>. This is followed with singing while miming, and then finally with singing out loud to the left hand base knuckles while playing.

EG  
EG  
MW  
EG  
U-m  
D  
D

At the New Approach workshop (Oxford, 19 July 2003), Havas asked me to sing out loud to my left hand fingers while playing a movement from a Brahms viola sonata. Even though I found it impossible to sing the actual note name, as is the practice in the New Approach, Havas encouraged me to sing anything, as long as it was out loud and communicated the essence of the music to the base knuckles. I found even this to be very difficult, but as I persevered, I was astounded at the transformation in my own playing. I had often been plagued by interferences<sup>2</sup> in performance, such as insecurity regarding difficult shifts or passages, but with all my concentration absorbed in having to sing out loud while playing, not only did these technical insecurities disappear, but my physical actions were expressing the music in the way I had always

D  
U-i  
U-m  
A  
I  
D-w

<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Green and Gallwey, 1986: 33.

wanted to, without any seeming effort on my part. Even though I had paid no attention to my physical movements, my left hand and bow were more coordinated, and the sound was more alive. It was a profoundly moving experience, in which I felt more fully connected to my own inner musicality as well as more integrated in mind and body.

CF  
U-i  
D-w

In the *Inner game of music*, Green and Gallwey (1986: 23) suggest that one's performance is limited by the degree to which interferences are allowed to detract from one's innate ability. While listening to one's inner critic's "instructions, warnings, criticisms and general play-by-play commentary", even when those comments happen to be valid, it is not possible to pay full attention to the music or to be fully absorbed in the moment<sup>1</sup> (Green & Gallwey, 1986: 29). Using this model as a point of reference, it is clear that singing out loud had completely absorbed my attention<sup>2</sup>, so that it was not possible to listen to this inner critical voice, and as a result my playing more accurately reflected my innate ability.

U-m  
A  
I  
U-i

Kenneson (1974: 90) notes that musicians frequently encounter difficulties during performance if their "explicit focal attention" becomes fixed on the physical manipulation of the instrument, instead of on the musical concepts to be transformed into sound. The New Approach practice of singing is designed to keep the mind focused on the music, instead of the physical movements<sup>3</sup>. Although the singing is eventually internalised and taken over by the inner ear, it initially needs to be done out loud in order to reinforce "what might otherwise be vague or unformed", as one's concentration can too easily be distracted by the physical actions if the singing device has not yet been habituated (Kenneson, 1974: 51). Kenneson gives a succinct and very articulate account of the way in which the New Approach singing is applied in performance, and it is worth quoting at length:

U-m  
EG  
D  
D-q

Kenneson, 1974: 50:

*Singing the note's name* (with the inner musical voice) cues the beginning of the gesture, and *pulsing the note* rhythmically keeps the gesture operative throughout the duration of the tone. The displacement of the bow is

D

<sup>1</sup> This relates very closely to the comments made to me by Bakhshayesh and Mackie - see 6.2.3.1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 84 and Kenneson, 1974: 51.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Havas, 1961: 2, 68.

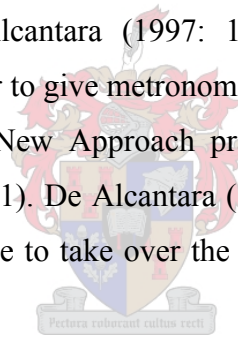
coordinated with the pulsing left-hand gesture; the entire body is alive with motion as the player ‘feels’ the gesture transforming his idea into sound. This sensory perception feeds back information which does not intrude into the consciousness, but does keep the mechanism of the living body modulated and operative...Singing the note names is not a vague or passive action. It not only serves as a cue for the triggering of the gesture, but pulsing of the note fills out the time which must elapse to ascertain the musical duration of the tone....When one has allowed the inner ear to occupy itself in this way, one has excluded everything from the consciousness except the musical thought which is totally pertinent to the task at hand.

**SA**

**D-q**

**A**  
**I; D-w**

De Alcantara (1997: 184) also proposes a strategy for working on rhythm that involves speaking out loud and playing at the same time, once again indicating the close correlation between the New Approach and applications of the Alexander Technique to music performance. Some of the exercises themselves are also fairly similar (although not identical) to the New Approach, in that the rhythm is spoken by the voice while the body gestures the basic pulse (cf De Alcantara, 1997: 185). Other variations suggested by De Alcantara (1997: 187) include vocally pulsing the subdivisions of the beats in order to give metronomic precision to long notes, in a way that is nearly identical to the New Approach practice of singing and pulsing, as described by Kenneson (1974: 51). De Alcantara (1997: 190) also concludes that the “mind’s ears” are eventually able to take over the role of the voice, as it does in the New Approach.



**D-q**

In the Alexander lessons I had with Vivien Mackie (London, July 2003), she likewise paid much attention to the role of the inner ear. She noted that the inner ear should be able to teach the finger how to produce what one wants, and that it is also the inner ear that connects the two extremities, coordinating the left hand and the bowing. These two statements directly echo Havas’s own views regarding the role of the inner ear<sup>1</sup>. Mackie also noted that the connection between the inner ear and the finger could only function freely if the critical self does not interfere. Getting ahead of oneself, instead of having one’s whole attention fully in the actual moment of playing, is a major cause of interference in performance. We need to inhabit every moment, not looking back or forwards, as “now is the only moment we really own” (Mackie, personal communication, London, 15 July 2003).

**D**

**D-w**

**I; U-m**

**A**

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<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.6.



Although I understood what Mackie meant, I did not know how to go about achieving this, other than to continue with Alexander lessons and to continue working on my use, which is no doubt essential if one wants to increase and maintain this kind of focus of awareness. However, at the workshop (Oxford, 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2003) a couple of days later, singing the music out loud had the effect of eliminating my critical self, so that I was able to remain focused in the actual moment of playing. There was no attention left to think *about* what I was doing or had just done, or to anticipate what was coming.

A  
D; I  
A  
EG

Havas often notes that negative injunctions tend only to focus the mind more fully on the undesired behaviour, and that it is more helpful to give a pupil something constructive and positive to do instead<sup>1</sup>. Trying *not* to listen to the critical inner voice or *not* to think about the physical movements is self-defeating, while singing the note name automatically focuses the mind on the music, bypassing the distracting thoughts altogether<sup>2</sup>. Kenneson (1974: 90) reiterates that the imaginative musical goal images on which the performer focuses in the New Approach, serve to involve him or her fully in the actual moment of playing, and that “becoming aware of what is *happening at the moment* and responding *only* to that awareness has wonderful results”. The New Approach teachers not only identified a certain lack of awareness<sup>3</sup> in my playing, but provided a constructive means whereby I could actively and immediately increase such awareness, while eliminating my critical self through “dissolving it into a free-flowing musical communication” (Havas, 1973: 127).

W-n  
D  
A; I  
D  
A  
D-w  
SA-I  
MW  
A; I

In teaching my own pupils, I have also found that internalising the music away from the instrument (through rhythmically pulsing, naming the notes and miming) brings about an immediate and measurable improvement in their coordination when they subsequently do play on the instrument. The mind is much more focused and excessive muscular effort is greatly reduced. I have seen over and over that once the thought has been created, the body responds accurately, and the interferences that are so often caused by the effort of *trying to be right* are eliminated. Directing the left hand finger action, through singing aloud while playing, has also greatly benefited my

D  
U-i  
D  
D-w  
EG; I  
D

<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas, 1961: 57.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 84. It is interesting to note that Green and Gallwey (1986: 35) reach the same conclusion.

<sup>3</sup> See 6.2.3.1.

pupils, especially those who had already been playing for some time. There is always a much greater clarity and increased musical expression in their playing when they sing instead of trying to make the music with physical effort.

**U-i**  
**D; EG**

Havas (1964: 34) places great emphasis on stimulating the creative imagination away from the instrument, so that the character and idea of the music is alive in the player's inner ear before the instrument is used to transmit it<sup>1</sup>. While it is possible to tell pupils exactly how to phrase, and where to use more or less bow weight or -speed in order to get the desired effect, I have found that as soon as they themselves connect to the inner pulse of the music and sing with their own creative musical voice, their phrasing usually improves dramatically of its own accord. The transformation in a pupil once they discover their own inner musical voice is very rewarding to witness, and increases their self-motivation significantly.

**D**  
**MW**  
**D**  
**U-i**

The problem with methods of teaching that rely only on imitation, is that in trying to copy the teacher's way of phrasing or playing, an enormous amount of effort and interference can be created in the pupil. Due to faulty sensory awareness<sup>2</sup>, there can also be a fair amount of miscommunication between the pupil and the teacher, further complicating the process. This is outside-in playing, and ultimately does not empower the student. My own experience with various teachers in the past confirms this. Through trial and error and repeating phrases over and over, it is possible eventually to approximate that which the teacher wants to hear, but the effort involved is considerable, and security in performance remains elusive.

**EG; U-m**  
**SA-u**  
**EG**  
**U-m**

Being taught how to direct one's use in the comprehensive New Approach way<sup>3</sup> is profoundly empowering. I find that it is possible to achieve a much more satisfying and secure musical result with much less practise than before. The inside-outward focus of Havas's teaching enables pupils to discover their own inner musical voice, right from the beginning, and to experience the joy of creatively transmitting it through the violin.

**D**  
**U-i**  
**MW**  
**D**  
**KE**

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<sup>1</sup> See 4.4.6.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.3.4.

<sup>3</sup> See 5.2.2.3.

### 6.3 Conclusion

Kenneson, 1974: 10:

One can only fully appreciate the value of what Miss Havas has to say about playing music when one has accepted and understood the concepts of the New Approach and actually begun to explore it in the context of one's own playing.

The practical experience of the New Approach lessons gave me a new depth of insight into the principles of the method. Although I had already obtained an understanding of the New Approach concepts through studying the literature, the sensory experiences imparted by Havas and Bakhshayesh in the lessons helped me to discover subtle tensions that I had been completely unaware of in handling both the instrument and the bow, and brought about an actual change in my use. I had previously not been able to access these tensions on a conscious level in order to change them, and it was only after being guided into feeling the improved movement that I knew the difference.

**SA-i**  
**U-m**  
**U-i**  
**GM**

The New Approach teaches soft, powerful movements in relation to the instrument, in effect re-educating the body on a sensory level, as the Alexander Technique does. My body now seems to seek out these new ways of being and feeling of its own accord. The New Approach exercises, with their very clear formulation and verbal directions, enables one to put it all together anew every day, continuing this process of sensory re-education and changing bad habits to physical conditions that favour optimal functioning.

**A-e**  
**SA-i**  
**MW; D**  
**SA-i**  
**U-i**

Gloria Bakhshayesh (personal communication, Marple, July 2003) noted that all the New Approach exercises are designed to explore the ways in which one relates to the instrument, and I have found that, with time, the instrument has become a much more integrated part of me, so that I no longer only play *on* or *with* the viola, but *through* it, to a far greater degree than before. Over the past 18 months, as I have been applying the New Approach directions (and have continued to gain awareness through regular Alexander lessons), one of the most important changes in my playing is that I am much more responsive to the slightest tension in my contact with the instrument, and am able to release it while playing. Stein (1999) confirms that inhibition is a very powerful tool when one gains the ability to apply it in this way, as tension can be

**D**  
**SA-i**  
**I**

released without having to stop, “giving the performer the confidence to get out of physical trouble no matter what the circumstances” are.

When my mind is totally focused on the music through inwardly singing the music with the note name and the pulse<sup>1</sup>, I have found that I no longer tend to run ahead, anticipating what is about to come or thinking of what went before, so that I am much more responsive to what is happening in the actual moment in my own body, and also more responsive to other musicians with whom I happen to be playing.

A  
D  
A-e

I have also noticed that my awareness is definitely increased when there is a condition of “total motion and balance” (Havas, 1973: 127) in my body. Pulsing the rhythm through my movements<sup>2</sup> while playing, has helped me to sharpen this immediate awareness. I often have the sensation of walking through the subdivisions of the pulse from one note to the next, with my attention being fully engaged in every step of the journey. However, I have also noticed that this awareness is always threatened by any tightness in my body, often as a result of exposure in performance. I sometimes tend to stiffen my back while playing, holding myself in a static position (supposedly to be in a state of readiness while playing), but this tendency immediately interferes with the organic pulse and threatens the acuity of my attention, taking me outside of the moment. By continually releasing this tension as soon as I perceive it, I have been able to remain more responsive and in the moment during performance, rather like an acrobat on a tightrope, being sensitive to and instantly correcting each deviation from the central point of balance, while maintaining the forward momentum of the pulse.

A-e  
PB  
A; MW  
U-m  
PC-m  
U-m  
I  
A-e

### 6.3.1 The framework of key concepts

The practical experience of the New Approach confirms that there is considerable equivalence with each of the fundamental concepts of the Alexander Technique<sup>3</sup>. The New Approach teachers provided a profound intervention into my use and interaction with the instrument, eliminating interference with the primary control through teaching me to integrate the instrument with my body, and increasing my sensory awareness through guided movement and touch.

GM  
I; PC-m  
SA-i  
GM-t

<sup>1</sup> Cf Kenneson, 1974: 50.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Kenneson, 1974: 70.

<sup>3</sup> See 3.5.1.

Inhibition played a central role in the New Approach lessons. Various misconceptions and physical tension blockages in my playing were systematically explored so that they could be eliminated. Both teachers stopped me when they perceived unnecessary tension in my movements, and guided me in such a way that my habitual responses were unable to come into play. In this way they facilitated an improved experience of the movement, which always registered kinaesthetically as lighter and easier than my habitual use. As a result, I have become able to perceive and inhibit unnecessary tension to a far greater degree than before.

**I**  
**U-m**  
**I**  
**GM**  
**KE**  
**I**

Very clear directions were linked to the new sensory experiences, so that I would be able to recreate the movement for myself. These directions comply with the qualifying features of directing in the Alexander Technique, as set out in **table 3.6**. I found that the New Approach is much more concerned with teaching one how to think, rather than to *do*. Consequently, I have learnt how to direct my own use to a much greater degree than I had been able to before, resulting in more precise physical responses and increased clarity of musical expression.

**D; SA-i**  
**D-q**  
**D**  
**U-i**

The New Approach exercises applied in the lessons increased my postural balance, and I have found that all the playing movements are easier, lighter and more pleasurable when they are based on balance. The New Approach lessons not only increased my sensory awareness in my contact with the instrument, but also gave me an experience of keeping my attention focused in the actual moment of playing. Through continuing to apply the New Approach principles, I find that the condition of “total motion and balance” (Havas, 1973: 128) created in my body allows me to experience an extended field of consciousness, both in my interaction with the instrument and in interacting with other musicians in performance.

**PB**  
**KE**  
**SA-i**  
**A**  
**PB**  
**A-e**

I have gained a significant amount of freedom in my playing. I no longer try to control my physical movements consciously in performance in an effort to be secure, but focus only on singing through the base knuckles, and yet I experience far greater technical accuracy in my playing than ever before. The soft sensations generated in touching the instrument and the beautiful, rich tone that is produced seemingly without any effort, has given me great joy and pleasure in performance. I have also found that it is essential to repeat the New Approach exercises on a regular basis, in

**CF**  
**EG**  
**D**  
**CF**  
**KE**

order to maintain the sensitivity of touch and awareness that I had gained through the New Approach lessons.

A

Apart from the obvious similarities in the way in which the New Approach and the Alexander teachers imparted sensory experiences to me, I found that many of the comments and observations they made were also very similar. In both the New Approach and the Alexander lessons, I had a sense of working together with the teacher in a non-judgmental atmosphere, exploring tensions and finding solutions. The teachers from both methods paid very close attention to my use, providing accurate observation and guidance, but with no criticism or judgment. A strong means-whereby approach was followed at all times, and the language used in conveying the necessary information was always very precise.

T

T-g

MW; W

It is clear that the New Approach lessons confirmed the conclusions that were reached in the comparative study regarding the parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique.

### 6.3.2 Participatory action research

The changes brought about in my playing and teaching through the practical experience of the New Approach lessons, fulfil one of the major characteristics of participatory action research. Babbie and Mouton (2001: 321) note that the positive and remedial changes facilitated through participatory action research distinguishes it from other types of action research. The central focus in PAR is the empowerment of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 322), which in this case included myself as researcher as well as participant, and the pupils to whom I applied the New Approach principles that I had learnt. My experience of the New Approach, in both performing and teaching, confirms that the method aims to empower the musician to direct his or her own use in a way that is very similar to the corresponding process in the Alexander Technique.

#### 6.4 Triangulation: the KHANA newsletters<sup>1</sup>

At the New Approach lessons in Oxford (July 2003), I obtained copies of the KHANA (Kató Havas Association for the New Approach) newsletters, dating from 1985 to 2003. This newsletter appears biannually and each volume includes an editorial by Kató Havas, as well as articles and feedback from numerous people who had benefited from the New Approach.

Many of the correspondents are professional musicians, who mention debilitating pain and injuries sustained in playing their instruments as the reason for initially becoming involved with the New Approach, and all report that they obtained dramatic relief through the method. Havas herself notes that “if the inbuilt balances are correctly applied while playing the violin, aches and pains are totally irrelevant” (Havas, 1987: 1). Many of the articles also report increased awareness and improved mind-body coordination as a result of eliminating unnecessary physical tensions. Frequent reference is made to a new sense of ease and effortlessness experienced in playing the violin, as well as the newfound joy and exhilaration in making music as a result of the New Approach<sup>2</sup>.

The correspondents include professional musicians (performers and teachers, several of whom are professors of music at various institutions), as well as amateurs from all walks of life, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, medical doctors, biologists, psychotherapists, computer programmers and nuclear physicists. Some of the articles give additional scientific validity to the New Approach, such as an article by Dr Brian Whitfield, a musculoskeletal specialist, who gives a rationale for the dominance of the left hand in the New Approach in the light of the neuro-physiological law of hemispheric dominance<sup>3</sup>. Only two of the articles, both written by Alexander teachers, specifically address parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, and these will be used for the purposes of triangulating the findings of this study.

U-m

U-i

PB

A-e; D-w

I; U-m

KE

<sup>1</sup> The KHANA newsletters are used with the kind permission of Kató Havas.

<sup>2</sup> See 4.5.3, as well as **appendix F** for specific examples of such feedback.

<sup>3</sup> See **F.1** in **appendix F** for excerpts from Dr. Whitfield’s article.



### 6.4.1 Hilary Foxwell

Foxwell (1987: 3) is a professional violist who became involved with the Alexander Technique in an effort to find solutions to the pain and discomfort she experienced in her playing. As the Technique brought her much relief, she trained and qualified as an Alexander teacher. However, she notes that even with the improved use obtained through the Alexander Technique, there “were still some hurdles in playing” that she was unable to overcome (Foxwell, 1987: 3).

Foxwell, 1987: 3:

Although the Alexander Technique has been extremely helpful in my playing, it was not so easy to *apply* the Technique to the finer problems associated with the violin and viola. These finer problems, like the unconscious tendencies to grip the instrument and the bow, require specific insight and awareness.

This “specific insight and awareness” was subsequently provided by Havas, who helped her “to join the instrument of the body and the musical instrument into one united whole” when Foxwell had a series of lessons with her (Foxwell, 1987: 3). With her comprehensive experience of both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach, Foxwell (1987: 3) asserts the two techniques to be totally compatible.

Foxwell, 1987: 3:

Both bring about changes in habits, and in unconscious reactions, which result in a greater awareness of appropriate and inappropriate tension in the body. The inappropriate tensions are particularly insidious in string playing since they have often grown from the very first encounter with the violin or viola.

U-i  
SA-i  
U-m

In pointing out the similarities between the two techniques, Foxwell (1987: 3) mentions the following aspects:

1. The stance

In both methods, keeping the skeleton aligned and the joints free and mobile provides the framework within which all movement takes place. The feet are apart, giving a firm base and balance, and the back is vertical (lengthening) while the shoulders are horizontal and relaxed, so that the arms are able to move freely from the sockets. This allows the widening of the back and chest, which in turn provides a resonator for the sound when playing the violin.

PB  
PC-i

2. The balance of the head

The balance of the head on the atlas bone (the top vertebrae of the spine) is an important similarity in the two techniques: the head is not titled or turned sideways. Foxwell (1987: 3) adds that the New Approach exercises teaches one to find one's balance point, by "inserting the instrument into the neck in such a way that there is literally a feeling of there being 'no viola-hold' at all".

**PC-i**

3. Heightened sensory awareness

The New Approach brings about a heightened sensory awareness in one's contact with the instrument. Havas made Foxwell aware of unnoticed tensions, such as tightening the left hand fingers in playing, and pressing down on the fingerboard, and these tendencies were relieved through the New Approach exercises. Foxwell found that the New Approach teaching of focusing the "inner eye" on hidden tension points increased her sensory awareness, allowing her to experience greater freedom and flexibility in all aspects of left hand technique.

**SA-i**

**A-e**

**U-m**

**I**

**SA-i**

4. Inhibition

Foxwell (1987: 3) notes, "Both techniques are based on preventing faulty movements, not in correcting them by imposing activities on the existing problems". Wrong use is stopped at the source, and easy, natural movements are taught instead. Strength or effort is not required in either method.

**I**

**EG; U-m**

**I; D; KE**

Other similarities that Foxwell found enlightening, include the importance of releasing tension in the thumbs (an important point in the Alexander Technique) and the central role that the thumbs play in the New Approach. While the rhythmic pulse is not specifically used in the Alexander Technique, as it does not incorporate music, Foxwell found that using the rhythmic pulse allows for additional freedom, coordination and ease of movement in playing. The New Approach concepts such as the rhythmic pulse and the inter-related, fluid joints are all compatible with the conscious expansion of the body, as taught in the Alexander Technique. Foxwell (1987: 3) concludes that the New Approach enriched not only her viola playing, but also her Alexander teaching.

**CF-p**

Foxwell, 1987: 3:

The additional insights of balance, rhythmic pulse, left-hand flexibility, the proper use of the thumbs, and the inner eye in the New Approach have enhanced beyond measure my awareness and enjoyment, both in my playing and in teaching the Alexander Technique.

SA-i; KE

#### 6.4.2 Wade Alexander

The cellist Wade Alexander reaches many of the same conclusions as Foxwell, but adds a couple of additional insights. Contrary to Foxwell, Alexander (1988: 4) became involved with the New Approach first, before being introduced to the Alexander Technique, after which he studied the two methods simultaneously for a number of years. Upon retiring from a long cello teaching career, he decided to train as an Alexander teacher as well. His article for the KHANA newsletter was written two years after commencing the Alexander teacher-training course.

Alexander (1988: 4) notes that the importance given to the use of the head, neck and back in the New Approach directly echoes the centrality of the primary control in the Alexander Technique. He also found the way in which Havas used her hands, to guide his movements in implementing the New Approach ideas, to be very similar to the teaching procedure in the Alexander Technique lessons. Another similarity between the two methods relates to Havas's use of specific verbal directions. Alexander (1988: 4) found that Havas's "verbal directions...draw on the same process used by the Alexander Technique", and "lead to consciously controlling one's activities".

PC

GM

D

Inhibition is one of the key aspects of the Alexander Technique, in which one stops to consider "a new and better use of one's self (body and mind)", and Alexander (1988: 4) found that Havas's frequent injunctions to stop, gave him the same experience of inhibition while learning new violin-playing techniques. This process of inhibition is essential in learning to improve behaviour, and demands psychophysical coordination.

I

U-i

I

D-I

Alexander, 1988: 4:

We learn to *inhibit* the old, undesired habits and then *replace* them with improved ones which are consciously controlled. During my lessons with Kato she worked with me to replace my faulty habitual movements with desirable ones.

D-I

D-I

Alexander (1988: 4) describes a three-stage process used in working with students with faulty use, that is common to both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach. The first step is to analyse the existing use in order to identify the faulty behaviour, which is then inhibited in the second step. Thirdly, the undesired habits are replaced with new improved ways of functioning. This process requires a teacher's guide and assistance, and inhibition is the key to preventing the re-occurrence of faulty movements.

**U-m**  
**T-g**  
**I**  
**D**  
**GM; I**

Like Foxwell, Alexander (1988: 4) mentions the similarities of the stance in the New Approach and the Alexander Technique, and calls the Havas stance a shallow position of mechanical advantage that facilitates violin playing while standing. Finally, Alexander (1988: 4) found that his experience and knowledge of the Alexander Technique enhanced his ability to make use of the New Approach concepts.

**PB**  
**PB**

### 6.4.3 Postlude

It is clear that both Foxwell and Alexander recognise the same parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach that have been brought to light by this study. This includes the following aspects:

1. The centrality and importance of the primary control and sensory awareness in improving one's use
2. The intervention provided through guided movement, and learning consciously to inhibit faulty habits and to project directions for improved use

**PC**  
**SA; U**  
**GM**  
**I; D**

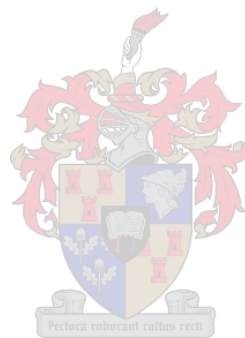
It has already been noted that numerous reports<sup>1</sup> in the KHANA newsletters confirm the improved use that is brought about by the New Approach intervention, and this includes reference to the lightness and ease of the ensuing movements, increased balance and awareness as well as greater freedom and control in playing the violin.

**U-i**  
**KE; PB**  
**A; CF**

The feedback in the KHANA newsletters, stretching over nearly twenty years, offers persuasive evidence that the New Approach indeed does make playing the violin easy

<sup>1</sup> See 4.5.3, as well as appendix F for specific examples of such feedback.

for many who had thought it not only difficult, but also impossible to achieve expressive freedom on the instrument<sup>1</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> Cf Havas, 1973: 136.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

#### 7.1 Summary: The New Approach

The New Approach essentially deals with the way in which a violinist uses his or her body to translate musical thought through physical movement into sound. The method identifies and eliminates faulty movements that lead to undesirable results, and teaches an improved use through employing the fundamental balances and fostering inside-outward playing. A balanced, dynamic stance with the violin, resulting in the freedom of the head, neck and shoulders, is the foundation on which all other aspects of technique rest, and sensory awareness is cultivated as an integral part of the method.

The New Approach provides an intervention that effectively eliminates the negative conditions in a pupil's body that allow bad technical habits to exist. By reconditioning a pupil's use through a whole body technique based on natural balance, conditions are created that allow for ease and reliability of movement, as well as increased musical expression. Through touch and guided movement, a pupil is given new sensory experiences that enable him or her to recognize and eliminate rigidity in the body. Inhibiting the mental and physical causes of misuse (that are identified with the teacher's guidance), along with carefully worked out directions for improved use, is the means whereby change is brought about in the New Approach.

The New Approach procedures bring about a sense of ease and well being in playing the violin, which is strongly reinforcing and self-motivating. Postural balance is improved as interference with the righting reflexes is eliminated, allowing for effortless and graceful natural movements to evolve<sup>1</sup>. Although the physical aspects of violin playing are made much easier, it demands a great deal of attention in order to learn this approach. The New Approach brings about an extended field of awareness in relation to the instrument, and the player experiences increased control and freedom, as the instrument becomes an extension of the living, expressive body.

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<sup>1</sup> Hellebrandt, 1969: 279.

The New Approach uniquely explores the interferences that arise from the body's physical response to touching the instrument, thereby offering a solution to the immobility that many musicians experience in their playing movements. Havas recognises that a lack of clarity in the mental conception of the music is a significant cause of anxiety in musicians, and her method is specifically designed to eliminate such anxiety<sup>1</sup>. The mental anxieties that are generated by the pressures of performance are also addressed.

## 7.2 Concluding comparisons

The primary aim of this study was to explore and identify parallels between 'The New Approach to violin playing', developed by Kató Havas, and the Alexander Technique. Both the comparative literature study and the participatory action research revealed significant and far-reaching congruence between the two methods, that far exceeds the initial expectations with which this study was commenced. The parallels extend beyond the physical re-education of movement to the underlying philosophies and principles of the respective methods, as well as the application of specific procedures and their outcomes.

The similarities between the two methods are largely due to the fact that both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach have a biomechanical and neuro-physiological rationale, consistent with established principles of physiology and psychology<sup>2</sup>.

The following concluding comparisons can be drawn from the research findings:

1. Both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach seek to alter use, not functioning, and are primarily concerned with eradicating the conditions that allow misuse to exist

In focusing on the specific means for improving use rather than attempting to control functioning directly, the New Approach and the Alexander Technique demonstrate a significant harmony in philosophy. The inhibition of interference is the central tool for improving use in both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach.

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<sup>1</sup> See 6.2.7.

<sup>2</sup> See 5.4.2.



The inside-outward emphasis of the New Approach follows a very strong means-whereby principle. End-gaining practises and thoughts are the antithesis of New Approach philosophy, and are systematically uncovered and eliminated. The integrated, balanced use of the body is obtained in the first instance by conditioning the total locomotor pattern, and not by mechanical exercises to improve partial patterns<sup>1</sup>. As interference with the righting reflexes are eliminated, muscular harmony throughout the body is obtained, making physical functioning more efficient.

Neither method promotes repetitive, mechanical exercises as a means for influencing physical functioning, as such procedures only exacerbate mind-body disconnection. Rather, the integration and coordination of the mind and the body, through which optimal functioning is facilitated, is the primary focus at all times in both methods. Such a unity of mind and body depends on freedom from mental as well as physical interferences. The Alexander Technique and the New Approach consistently address mental anxieties and misconceptions, as well as physical rigidity and muscular dystonia, in the search for psycho-physical unity.

2. Both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach eliminate the traditional teacher-pupil relationship

The response to negative criticism and authoritarian attitudes was among the anxieties identified and addressed in both methods. All anxiety inevitably manifest as a tightening in the muscles of the neck and shoulder girdle<sup>2</sup>, thereby interfering with the primary control. An authoritarian teaching paradigm therefore greatly hampers the pupil's ability to learn a balanced whole body technique. Consequently, both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach eliminate the traditional teacher-pupil relationship in favour of a non-judgmental partnership, in which the pupil is guided and empowered to gain mastery of his or her own use.

3. Two distinct processes can be identified in both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach

The first process involves the detailed, conscious learning of good use, followed by the automation of technique, in which one acts with abandon and without regard to

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<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.3.2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Jones, 1976: 150 and Barlow, 1973: 180.

the physical outcome<sup>1</sup>. Neither process is of functional value without the other: the effortless ease of improved use is entirely dependent on first eliminating misuse and learning to direct one's use through painstaking attention, while it is imperative that directing should eventually become more efficient. This kind of automatism, still remaining accessible to the will, requires a specific learning process<sup>2</sup>, which the research results have shown to be very similar in the Alexander Technique and the New Approach.

4. Like the Alexander Technique, the New Approach teaches a structured use of the self, in which the central co-ordination of the trunk is maintained as a core structure<sup>3</sup>

The research findings show that there is a very deep resonance between the inside-outward playing of the New Approach and the integrated use of the self in the Alexander Technique. Other sources confirm this conclusion: Casals's idea that the playing impulses originate from the centre of the body, rather than the extremities, is recognised by Alexander teachers to be in congruence with the "overall integration" that is the aim in the Alexander Technique (Mackie, 2000: 68). In his treatise on the evolution of cello pedagogy, Smith (1996) argues that Casals's "pedagogical principles found greater clarity of formulation in the 'New Approach' of violinist Kato Havas", which "continues the progress to the center of the body, and the coordination of all aspects of technique in the expressive impulse".

5. Both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique promote psycho-physical coordination

The Alexander Technique and the New Approach both use the self as a balanced whole, rather than in segmented thoughts and movements. A body in balance, in which the reflex systems are restored to optimal functioning, is responsive to mental direction: it fulfils the conditions necessary for "coordinative, integrative thought" to set in motion "co-ordinated, integrated activity" (De Alcantara, 1997: 54).

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<sup>1</sup> See 5.2.3.4.

<sup>2</sup> De Alcantara, 1997: 58.

<sup>3</sup> See 5.2.1.2.

While there are musicians who seem to demonstrate an instinctive integration of mind and body in performance, such use may be largely unconscious and is therefore not exempt from breakdown<sup>1</sup>. Another major disadvantage of such automatic performance is that it cannot be changed, due to the lack of awareness involved<sup>2</sup>. Through heightened awareness and teaching a structured use of the self (thereby refining the connections between one's thoughts and actions), the New Approach and the Alexander Technique both bring about the potential for the conscious, constructive control of one's use, empowering the individual to counteract negative influences and habitual reactions that may interfere with optimal functioning.

In the New Approach, the student's self-interference is inhibited through "eliminating the self" in communicating the music (Havas, 1973: 127), so that the desired results can be allowed to happen, rather than pursued or controlled<sup>3</sup>. Mind and movement are coordinated in an expressive impulse, as the mental conception of the music is turned into sound through the carefully structured use that the New Approach establishes in the student. Apart from the obvious parallels regarding postural balance and eliminating interference, this coordination of mind and movement is one of the most striking similarities between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique. It is also in this "ideokinetic" directing (Kenneson, 1974: 89) that the uniqueness of the New Approach, in relation to other violin methods, can be found:

Hellebrandt, 1970b: 479

Havas makes obligatory in all playing, even that of beginners, procedures generally recognized as indispensable in virtuoso performance. These have to do with the encoding of perceptual patterns which are the precursors of the physical act of playing.

Herein, Havas re-orders the priorities, fundamentally changing the whole pedagogical approach to violin playing. In identifying and encoding the coordinative processes for the desired movements, the New Approach moves away from a purely imitative teaching paradigm, an idea that is supported in the Alexander Technique.

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<sup>1</sup> The example of Menuhin (as cited in Sand, 2000: 155) has already been cited in this regard, in **1.3**. Vivien Mackie (2000) also recounts the difficulty she experienced due to not knowing what she was doing.

<sup>2</sup> Cf Jones, 1976: 175.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Stein, 1999. See **5.2.2.2**.

6. Through teaching one to direct one's use, both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique overcome the limitations of imitative learning

De Alcantara (1997: 60) cautions that imitative reactions can only work if a person is fully responsive to the image. Due to faulty sensory awareness, learning by imitation often has the effect of dis-coordinating a person even further (De Alcantara, 1997: 60). Imitating a model when faulty sensory awareness conditions both one's conceptions and experiences<sup>1</sup>, inevitably results in misinterpretation and misuse.

Until a particular movement is actually experienced, the pupil remains kinaesthetically blind to it. Intellectual or theoretical knowledge about the movement can neither substitute for nor impart the experiential *know-how* needed for the movement to become a part of the pupil's actual use. Consequently, the pupil has to be guided and coached into such an experience by the teacher. Both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach provide an intervention into the pupil's use through touch and guided movement<sup>2</sup>. Thus a student is not merely given verbal instruction to follow or shown what to imitate<sup>3</sup>, but kinaesthetic information is conveyed directly from the master teacher to the student, bypassing the vicious circle of faulty sensory awareness and misconception<sup>4</sup>.

Through linking the carefully worked out, sequentially ordered directions to this actual experience, the coordinates for the desired physical movements are clarified and encoded in the pupil's mind. The directions provide a means whereby the pupil may negotiate his or her kinaesthetic blindness in order to reproduce the desired movement again, until the movement itself becomes habituated. Even then, the directions serve as a standard of kinaesthetic memory against which unnecessary tensions may be identified and inhibited. As pupils are taught how to direct their use, rather than to copy or imitate, they gain independence and become their own experts in the use of themselves.

A unique feature of the New Approach is that the sequential directions are always linked to a rhythmic pulse. This aims to promote the pupil's full attention in the actual

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.4.

<sup>2</sup> See 5.2.2.1.

<sup>3</sup> See 3.3.4.

<sup>4</sup> See 5.2.1.3.

moment of movement, thereby eliminating unnecessary mental interferences<sup>1</sup>. Another fundamental difference between the Alexandrian and New Approach directions is that the true focal direction for all movement in the New Approach is the expression of the musical intent of the performer<sup>1</sup>.

My personal experience of the New Approach, both in playing and in teaching, is that this musical direction allows the authentic musical voice of the individual to emerge, and this is noticeable even at a beginner stage of learning the instrument. The inside-out playing of the New Approach not only eliminates physical distortions that hamper the performer's expressive abilities, but also brings clarity to the violinist's musical conception that is entirely natural and convincing. This clarity is due in large part to the organic rhythmic pulse that is central in the New Approach. Furthermore, as physical misuse (the inevitable result of attempting to create musical effects through conscious physical efforts) is eliminated, the violinist's true musical voice can be expressed simply, clearly and directly<sup>2</sup>.

7. Kinaesthetic information is increased and organized on a conscious level in both the New Approach and the Alexander Technique

Teaching through touch provides the teacher with a very powerful tool with which to identify hidden tensions that may not be visually apparent, but which exert a negative influence on the pupil's use. Tension in a pupil's back, for instance, can often be felt quite clearly in the quality of muscle tone in the pupil's hands. Likewise, a pupil learns a great deal about the kinaesthetic quality of a movement through touching the teacher while he or she performs a movement. These ways of conveying kinaesthetic information are integral features of both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach<sup>3</sup>.

Both methods significantly increase sensory perception, thereby extending the "the scope of self-observation a long way beyond the visual" (Jones, 1976: 138). As a

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<sup>1</sup> See the transcript of the interview with Havas in **appendix D**.

<sup>2</sup> See 6.2.7. De Alcantara (1997: 212) confirms that using oneself well while making music takes care of most of one's interpretative work as a musician: "To 'put feeling' into your performances is to end-gain. Feeling should arise of its own, through the freedom of the technique and the substance of the music itself...If you seek freedom, beauty will arrive of its own. But if you seek beauty directly, you risk losing freedom and its attendant beauty".

<sup>3</sup> See 5.2.2.1 and 6.2.5.

result, ever-changing relationships within the body itself, and also between the body and the instrument, can be examined critically in terms of tension and release<sup>1</sup> so that habitual reactions and misuse can be perceived and inhibited. In the New Approach, the resulting sound quality is always linked to the physical touch, thereby adding another important criterion to this process of self-observation.

The nature of kinaesthetic learning is that it has to be reinforced repeatedly, and both methods aim to nurture the connections between the mind and the body on an on-going basis. Gaining an intellectual understanding about a movement does not guarantee sensory knowledge of such a movement, and therefore the body continually has to be reminded and coached into an experience of good use. Through the stresses incurred in life, and especially in instrumental performance, tensions accumulate that inevitably manifest in one's physical use, interfering with postural balance and the reflex systems of the body. Through heightened kinaesthetic awareness, one becomes increasingly more skilled in recognising and eliminating such unnecessary tensions.

The well-structured exercises of the New Approach (which are all essentially a search for awareness in one's contact with the instrument) provide a very clear guide in this continual process of sensory re-education. As the player's individual tightening points are explored and eliminated, the unity of mind and body is enhanced in a "subtle but powerful co-ordination of thinking and moving" (Madden, 2002), leading to an exuberant joy in expressing the music through the violin, with greater ease<sup>2</sup>.

### **7.3 Final perspectives**

Makarski (as cited in Eisler, 2001: 51) pointed out that the Alexander Technique "is hardly ever taught from the perspective of a violinist who has experienced the pressures of playing and performing". This study has shown that Havas intuitively incorporated principles similar to those in the Alexander Technique in her violin method. With her personal experience of the demands of a performing career, and the pain and frustration that can be involved in pursuing an expressive violin technique, Havas is able to point out the way to eliminate many of the blockages that can keep violinists from realising their full potential.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Jones, 1976: 139.

<sup>2</sup> See 5.2.3.1.

As a consummate violinist and creative artist, Havas has a profound understanding of the way in which the instrument needs to be handled in order to elicit the desired response, and this is the information that she is able to convey to her students. An Alexander teacher deals with the general use of the body, which then has to be applied in playing the instrument. However, the specific requirements imposed on the player by the instrument<sup>1</sup> remains an unknown factor, unless the Alexander teacher also happens to be a musician, with the same artistic insight<sup>2</sup>. The particular value of the New Approach lies in the fact that Havas combines her technical and artistic knowledge of the violin's acoustical characteristics and capabilities, with an intuitive understanding of the conditions necessary for the optimal psycho-physical functioning of the violinist<sup>3</sup>.

The New Approach is based on universal principles, such as those that are found in the Alexander Technique, and naturally gifted performers often demonstrate many of the precepts that are taught in the New Approach. Through organising these principles into a structured method<sup>4</sup>, Havas makes it possible for all violinists, including beginners, to integrate these principles and procedures with their own playing.

As the Alexander Technique does not deal with music performance as such, it does not address the specific areas of misuse in relation to the instrument, which the New Approach explores in depth. However, like Foxwell and Alexander<sup>5</sup>, I did find the Alexander Technique very useful in applying many of the New Approach exercises. The increased awareness and ability to inhibit that I obtained through the regular Alexander lessons, enabled me to absorb much more during the New Approach lessons, and has also helped me considerably in teaching the New Approach to my pupils.

One's total pattern of coordination and general use in daily living will inevitably have an influence on the ease with which the New Approach procedures can be applied, and therefore Alexander lessons in conjunction with New Approach lessons would be

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Gardner, 1985: 276. See **4.5.3**.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of such Alexander teachers include the cellists Pedro de Alcantara (1997) and Vivien Mackie (2000), both of whom are used as sources in this study.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Hellebrandt, 1969: 277.

<sup>4</sup> See interview transcript in **appendix D**.

<sup>5</sup> See **6.4.1** and **6.4.2**.



very beneficial. However, learning a balanced whole body technique in the New Approach also does affect one's general use, and the influence of New Approach exercises (such as the *winging* and *riding on the pulse*) on other, non-musical aspects of life have already been noted<sup>1</sup>. A combination of the New Approach and the Alexander Technique would no doubt be a more effective way of changing habitual behaviour with regard to instrumental performance, but the application of the New Approach by itself is already enough to bring about such improved use. The Alexander Technique could speed up this process significantly, however, especially in cases where a student's general coordination and use are severely compromised.

While an intellectual knowledge of the New Approach principles, obtained through reading about the method, can be helpful to a degree, it is only through actual lessons with a trained New Approach teacher that the true value of the method can be appreciated. As in the Alexander Technique, New Approach teachers cannot teach a better use than they themselves possess<sup>2</sup>, and therefore the degree of training that the New Approach teacher has had, would play a role in the success of the lessons. Given the nature of kinaesthetic learning, it is doubtful whether a New Approach workshop, such as I attended in Oxford, could be sufficient in itself to convey adequately the essence of the New Approach. At the very least, an intensive 'Six Lesson Course' would be necessary in order to gain a true understanding of the benefits that the New Approach has to offer.

#### **7.4 Methodological issues**

The fact that the 'Framework of key concepts' was fairly comprehensive could be seen as a possible disadvantage, as it resulted in an extensive comparative literature study that far exceeded the requirements for a study of this nature. However, the comprehensiveness of the 'Framework' is simultaneously its strength. It has been noted<sup>3</sup> that using words to describe information relating to sensory experience is problematic, as even very simple acts "require familiarity with quite small detail if it is to be understood" (Barlow, 1973: 223). The comprehensive and detailed nature of the 'Framework of key concepts' therefore secured a more accurate research result,

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<sup>1</sup> See 6.4 and appendix F.

<sup>2</sup> See 3.4.1.

<sup>3</sup> See 2.2.2.

and also brought about a depth of insight into the procedures of the New Approach that otherwise would not have been possible.

At the same time, the detailed analysis of the procedures common to the New Approach and the Alexander Technique, illuminated processes whereby optimal use may be obtained in instrumental performance. For instance, by identifying the qualifying characteristics of directions<sup>1</sup>, specific and very pertinent information is made available to those seeking to understand the ways in which the coordinates of improved use may be identified and projected. Such information needs to be detailed in order to be useful: merely pointing out that both methods employ directions does not have much practical value. This argument is obviously true for each of the Alexander concepts included in the framework.

With regard to the validity of the data, submitting the text at regular intervals to teachers from both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach<sup>2</sup> ensured that the data was accurately presented and that interpretations of the data remained conceptually close to the essence of both techniques. As all the teachers were able to recognise the similarities in the method that they were unfamiliar with, it seems that sufficient conceptual equivalence was obtained in the study. This is confirmed by the fact that a high degree of equivalence between the two methods was also recognised in the two documented instances in which teachers of the Alexander Technique had had direct experience of the New Approach<sup>3</sup>.

### **7.5 Further recommendations**

This paper gives a comprehensive overview of the New Approach, a method of violin teaching that deserves to be more widely known. By having summarised and integrated many New Approach sources into one volume, a resource is provided that could be useful as a reference for those who are interested in the method. For instance, most people who read Havas's books do not have access to the very important articles on the biomechanical rationale of the New Approach written by Dr Hellebrandt, or the KHANA newsletters.

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<sup>1</sup> See 3.3.6 and 5.2.2.3.

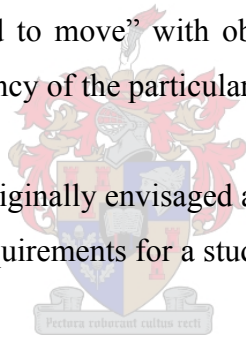
<sup>2</sup> See **appendix A** for the feedback from these teachers regarding the findings in this study.

<sup>3</sup> See 6.4.

Furthermore, the data in this report is presented in such a way that specific information is readily available to those with a particular enquiry regarding the Alexander Technique, the New Approach or ways in which to increase sensory awareness and promote kinaesthetic learning in pupils.

An additional study that could be undertaken in the light of this research, would be to conduct a 'Six Lesson Course' with randomly chosen violinists, under controlled conditions. Capturing the data through videotape for objective observation, combined with questionnaires to ascertain the subjective experience of the participants, could further validate the findings of this research. Jones (1974: 139) argues that once the "changing relationships between parts of the body and between the body and the environment" can be observed "in terms of levels of tension and relaxation, of lightness and heaviness, as well as of position and movement", one has opened up new areas of the self to scientific observation. Combining a subjective report "of a reduction in the effort expended to move" with objective, data based observations, could provide an index of efficiency of the particular procedures (Jones, 1974: 190).

Although such an enquiry was originally envisaged as a complementary component of this project, it far exceeds the requirements for a study of this nature and therefore had to be abandoned.

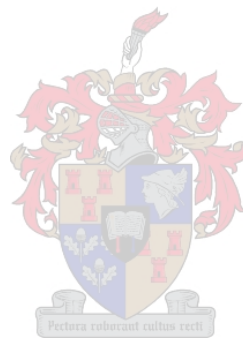


## **7.6 Aims accomplished**

In conclusion, all the aims and objectives that were identified in the research problem were fulfilled in the course of this study. The specific parallels between the Alexander Technique and the New Approach were identified and catalogued, using the 'Framework of key concepts' as a guide. A deeper knowledge and understanding of the New Approach was obtained through examining the method in the light of the Alexander Technique. While this of necessity imposed a specific slant on the New Approach, it was also entirely appropriate that it did so, as the primary aim of this study was to identify specific parallels between the two methods. Using the Alexander Technique as a measuring tool gave a much deeper insight into the New Approach and specifically illuminated some of the reasons for the efficacy of the method that are not immediately apparent in reading the New Approach literature.

A secondary aim of this study was to ascertain the degree of actual influence that Alexander may have had on the New Approach, and through the qualitative interview with Havas<sup>1</sup> and the additional correspondence<sup>2</sup> with other key figures, it was determined that Alexander had not been a direct influence on Havas's formulation of the New Approach. The degree of similarity between the two methods is due to the fact that they are both based on universally recognised physiological and psychological principles.

The research findings indicate that 'The New Approach to violin playing' shows profound congruence with the Alexander Technique, a scientifically verified method for promoting kinaesthetic learning and re-education, and coordinating the mind and the body. The New Approach is a very powerful tool in eliminating physical and mental interferences, thereby making the acquisition of an expressive technique more accessible to all.



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<sup>1</sup> See **appendix D**.

<sup>2</sup> See **appendix E**.

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## APPENDIX A

## FEEDBACK

### A.1 The Alexander Technique: Becker

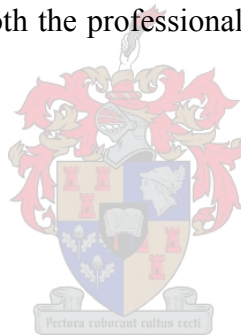
29<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Dear Marina

This is an excellent study and I endorse everything that you have written about the Alexander Technique. I cannot comment on the New Approach, other than to say that what you have written, makes perfect sense to me.

You write with commendable insight into the two techniques which you compare. It is extremely difficult to write about anything that has to be experienced in order to be understood, and I think you succeeded in achieving just that. You write with such clarity and understanding that both the professional and the layperson should be able to follow your thesis.

Yours sincerely



Yvonne Becker

**A.2. The New Approach: Havas**

**KATO HAVAS, OBE**

72 Victoria Road  
Oxford  
OX2 7QE  
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Website: <http://www.katohavas.com>

1<sup>st</sup> December 2004

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I read Marina Louw's thesis with interest. I found it to be an excellent, in-depth work of 'The New Approach to Violin Playing'.

Also, at her lessons with me, she was most receptive and I very much enjoyed working with her.



**KATO HAVAS, OBE**



**A.3. The New Approach: Bakhshayesh**

Gloria Bakhshayesh  
3 Beacon View  
Marple  
Stockport  
SK6 6PX

14 December 2004

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I have read with great interest the thesis by Marina Louw, comparing the FM Alexander Technique with 'The New Approach to Violin Playing' of Kato Havas. The New Approach of Kato Havas is described very thoroughly and with clear understanding of the detail and structure of the work.

In reading the account of experiences during the course of lessons that Miss Louw took with me in July 2003, I was reminded of her deep interest in really absorbing the true essence of the Approach and her responsiveness in learning to apply the physical balances correctly. She displayed an open attitude to the holistic nature of the work, appreciating and experiencing the links between the mind and body and the musical imagination. She made full use of the opportunity for learning, asking searching questions where appropriate and taking full notes.

Her account shows that she has taken away a good working knowledge and understanding which she has put to positive use in her teaching and playing.

I have no hesitation in endorsing what she has written.

Gloria Bakhshayesh

Personal Representative to Kato Havas OBE

**APPENDIX B**

**CODES**

<b>USE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misuse</li> <li>• Improved use</li> </ul>	<b>U</b> <b>U-m</b> <b>U-i</b>
<b>END-GAINING</b>	<b>EG</b>
<b>MEANS-WHEREBY</b>	<b>MW</b>
<b>PRIMARY CONTROL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misuse of PC</li> <li>• Improved use of PC</li> </ul>	<b>PC</b> <b>PC-m</b> <b>PC-i</b>
<b>SENSORY AWARENESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unreliability of SA</li> <li>• Lack of SA</li> <li>• Increased/improved SA</li> </ul>	<b>SA</b> <b>SA-u</b> <b>SA-l</b> <b>SA-i</b>
<b>GUIDED MOVEMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of the hands</li> <li>• Touch, kinaesthetic information</li> </ul>	<b>GM</b> <b>GM-h</b> <b>GM-t</b>
<b>INHIBITION</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>DIRECTIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualifying characteristics</li> <li>• Psycho-physical whole</li> <li>• Direction and inhibition</li> </ul>	<b>D</b> <b>D-q</b> <b>D-w</b> <b>D-I</b>
<b>KINAESTHETIC EFFECT</b>	<b>KE</b>
<b>CONTROL AND FREEDOM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prerequisites</li> </ul>	<b>CF</b> <b>CF-p</b>
<b>POSTURAL BALANCE</b>	<b>PB</b>
<b>REFLEXES</b>	<b>R</b>
<b>ATTENTION AND AWARENESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended field of awareness</li> </ul>	<b>A</b> <b>A-e</b>
<b>TEACHING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characteristics of good teaching</li> <li>• Counter-productive procedures</li> </ul>	<b>T</b> <b>T-g</b> <b>T-n</b>
<b>WORDS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative effects of Words</li> </ul>	<b>W</b> <b>W-n</b>

## APPENDIX C

## HAVAS: WORDS

These lists are based on Havas's discussion on the power of words (1973: 96–98).

<b>Words causing tension</b>	<b>Related Activity</b>	<b>Result</b>
Hold, grip	Violin hold and bow grip	The static images of these words create a tendency for localized, segmented efforts.
Push, pull	Bowing movement	These words create the misconception that the fingers motivate the bow stroke.
Stretch	LH finger action, especially 4 <sup>th</sup> finger	It causes anticipatory tension in the finger, and consequently in the hand, thumb and wrist.
Hit, press	LH finger-action; bowing	Rigidity in both hands; super-imposed pressure in all the playing movements.
Jump	Shifting	Creates the image of an endless fingerboard, leading to anxiety regarding intonation.
Shake	Vibrato	The false impression of a super-imposed oscillation, separate from tone production and intonation.
Good, bad	Evaluation of pupil's performance	Accentuates existing self-doubts; increases anxiety.
Loud	Dynamics	Influences both left and right hands; the word arouses a static physical response.
Listen, concentrate	Performance	These words cause a constant concern with the self and hinder the flow of subconscious transmission.
Force	Performance	This word is often connected to violence, or intense effort, and consequently generates tension and anxiety. (I.e. "I must force myself to play well".)

<b>Words creating release</b>	<b>Related Activity</b>	<b>Result</b>
Rest, nestle, cradle	Violin hold	A physical response of softness and release in contact with the instrument.
Soft, silk, satin	Touch; texture of instrument	A physical response of softness and release in contact with the instrument.
Swing, slide, fan, spread, cuddle, curl	Left hand action	Physical release in the hand and fingers, unlocking tension; ease of movement.
Rest, open, close, fly	Bowing	Facilitates release of tension and cortical control of the bow action; reflexive bowing.
Move, flow, give, love, peace, release, pulse, through, unite	Before performance, alleviating stage fright	Words associated with harmonious activities, can be of great value for release of stage fright when used in the right moment.
Power	Performance	This word tends to be associated with an authority greater than oneself, with an endless supply of energy and movement; it can help to release anxiety and tension.

## APPENDIX D

## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

*This interview was conducted with Kató Havas at her home in Oxford during a lesson that I had with her on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003.*

ML: You said yesterday that you had to retrain yourself. What were the major influences in this retraining?

*Kató Havas mentions Telmanyi, Waldbauer and the playing of the gypsies as the principal influences of her early years. Later, due to the strains and pressures of her concert career, she sought lessons with Louis Persinger, who praised her and gave very general advice (such as to play some things faster and others softer), but was unable to help her find solutions to the physical discomfort she was experiencing. Eugene Ormandy referred her to David Mendoza, who was the first person to make her aware that the base knuckles are the source of the playing movements of the left hand fingers. Mendoza had a great influence on Havas, and by applying the principles she had learned from him, together with her own explorations, she started to experience the beauty of tone and ease of playing that she had longed for<sup>1</sup>.*

ML: I wanted to ask you about some of the other influences on your work. Last year when I was doing the comparative study of violin methods that I told you about...the thing that struck me was the deep harmony between your method and the principles of Alexander Technique. I wanted to ask you whether there was any direct or indirect influence from Alexander on your work.

KH: When I gave my talk when the first book was published at Bosworth, two of the most prominent teachers of the Alexander Technique came to the workshop. Some of my pupils have become Alexander teachers...and they (all) say it is exactly the same. People ask me if I have Zen. I didn't even know who Zen was, I had to look and find out what Zen is doing. Because it really boils down to common sense. You can't do anything which is not natural. Just remain normal when you are playing. I didn't invent the physical movements; they were there forever. All I did, I discovered them, and they are there to serve the music.

ML: Which I think is exactly what Alexander did. He didn't invent anything. He discovered the way of using your body optimally.

KH: That's right. Yes. I discovered it through all these sources of my childhood. And what I did, is systematise it, which I got from experience of teaching. I systematized it.

ML: Yes, I understand. What I found very intriguing in your method, and you mentioned it earlier when you were speaking of your lessons with Persinger, is that a lot of teaching is just saying 'do this, do that', but they don't teach you how to actually make it part of your (playing)...

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<sup>1</sup> As this history is recounted in detail in *The Violin and I* (Havas, 1968), this section of the interview was not transcribed verbatim, but summarised above.

KH: That's right. They tell you what the problem is. And what is interesting, is that now, I find out that a lot of people are interconnected all over the world...The New Approach is spreading everywhere. My major thing is that it is given over (i.e. communicated), that people have pleasure, that people can give, instead of this other culture we inherited, that 'I have to be a little bit better'...

*Havas talks about one of her pupils, a young and very talented girl who had nearly given up playing the violin due to the pressures of performing, before seeking help from Havas.*

...The composer can only live through you, and our privilege is to recreate the composer and not to be a big producer...Technique is always connected to the piece. If she plays the piece, I give her the relevant exercises to work it out, so it's easy. Her operative word, it has to be easy...and she is rid of aches and pains. It has to be easy. And the laughter at our lessons, and the sweets [indistinct]

ML: So it's just fun.

KH: Yes. Of course.

ML: Sorry to return to this once again, I just want to ask you a couple more questions. So you yourself never had any Alexander lessons at any time?

KH: No.

ML: And did you read any of Alexander's books?

KH: No. But I did read Zen...And what does Zen say? 'Prepare before you leap'.

ML: Yes! So it's 'think'. And that is the other big thing I saw in your method. It's thinking, not doing. And that's the same as the Alexander Technique...And then also about directing the movements...what I found really interesting yesterday, is that you give a sequence of directions, words, that follow one another, verbal commands to direct the movement, and that is also exactly the same as the Alexander Technique.

KH: What I am doing, I don't know if you noticed, the words are all one syllable, and they have to be in the rhythm... '1 - Fit, 2 - Spread, 3 -', all this in the rhythm. And if you do that, you simply have no time to think. Thinking, I tell everybody, thinking is forbidden. Because thinking is chaotic. Thinking is chaotic. It is focusing (that is important). Focusing with the words from one to the other, to the other. Now the Alexander (Technique), that's all right, but they don't know how not to have a violin. So I focus on the use of the instrument as well.

ML: So you focus on the use of yourself, and the use of your instrument.

KH: Yes. You see, the singers have no instrument.

ML: Their body is the instrument.

KH: Their body is the instrument, but we have to do that through a very complicated violin and bow, very complex, very often challenging, incompatible movements. And that's what I am trying to coordinate. So that is why I'm saying that everything we do is in the service of music making. Everything. Because that's all tone production...

ML: That's also to me like the Alexander principle that says 'use affects functioning'. You're saying that all technique happens through tone production. In other words if you use something wrong, if you use your body or the instrument in a wrong way, it will affect the function, so it will affect the sound.

KH: That's right. It creates blockages. So the whole thing is to open up all the energy routes, and so that's what all these exercises (are for). So I put them into a very practical application, instead of just talking about it. Because I could say 'relax' this or that and so on, and it might help a little, but this is what people find difficult, the focus.

ML: What struck me quite powerfully is that Dr. Barlow, who had written about the Alexander Technique, writes that people make the mistake of thinking that if they are just pointed in the right direction, then all they need is just to do it.

KH: Yes!

ML: But it is not the same thing. With all the greatest will in the world, you are not necessarily able to do it even if you are pointed in the right direction, because your own use might be in the way.

KH: Yes. And also don't forget, we have very great handicaps. We have the optical illusion. Very great handicaps (in playing the violin), which the Alexander people don't have. So this is why I say that everything we do, all these exercises, is to prevent (misuse). Because we all have those tendencies. If somebody didn't have those tendencies, I would think a super-person arrived in my room, who will do magic!

ML: You mean the tendencies to make yourself hard, to react with tension and anxiety in a threatening situation...

KH: But also in this way (i.e. through the exercises), you eliminate the ever-disturbing ego. Because we are great ones to doubt ourselves, or to belittle ourselves. Our self-esteem in the best of situations is very low. We depend on other people all the time, other people's approval. We all want to be loved, we all want to be approved, we all want to please, and all that. And you see, when you doubt what you sound like, or if you can do it, it is a defeatist thing. Because it will be. I tell them when they go out on the stage, if they want to give, people have to receive. If they are frightened, this is in the nature, people will criticise. I always tell my pupils at performance, if they feel good, and have a really good feeling, they know, and they should never ask other people what they sound like. You know exactly.

ML: You feel in your body that it is good.

KH: You know exactly. If somebody comes up afterwards to say ‘you know I thought it was perhaps a little slow’, or ‘you didn’t have a big enough tone’, then that is their problem. Because you felt fine...

And the teachers (referring to well-known soloists) are very often full of problems. They want to teach well, but they teach what they were taught, which they themselves don’t do. They are natural players and don’t know how to teach...That happens often...Like Kreisler, who said he had one pupil, and when she went out, she played much worse than when she came in.

ML: I suppose that if you’ve had to go the route of having to retrain yourself, re-teach yourself, then you have the insight into what is needed.

KH: And that happens more than I can say. Because you see, we are all compound people. Our past is within us. You can’t eradicate the past...I thought if I could see into violinists, if they had glass stomachs, what chaos would I see? What chaos and fear and anxiety. So I often tell people imagine that your pasts (i.e. past experiences) are all lying down on each other inside you. Then one day this will get up, then that will get up, and your job is to reassure them, to soothe them with your present life, to give them a lesson how easy it can be, how lovely it can be. You give them a lesson, the way you give it to your pupil. That seems to help a lot. Because you see, they want to do what I ask, but too many disturbing things are inside them, interferences, and it prevents them. So they are in conflict...One thing, you can’t do this (the New Approach) a little bit, you can’t mix it up. You can’t do it a little bit. You can’t do it any more than you can walk the tightrope a little bit, or do any kind of acrobatic things a little bit. You have to do it absolutely. And then the results are immediate. And that is the difficulty, and the difficulty is because it is so easy. And the establishment is still puzzled by it...

ML: You know what you said about not being able to do it a little bit, but completely: Alexander teaching also says that you have to stop doing the wrong thing in order to do the right thing. So you can’t change what is wrong, and sort of make it right, you have to stop it completely.

KH: That’s exactly!

ML: That’s what you’re saying as well.

KH: ...You have to stop ‘for a year’. Stopping is one of the most important things.

ML: That’s the Alexander concept of inhibition.

KH: You see, I have no idea.

ML: ...I think the Alexander Technique is one of the most incredibly useful techniques, but when I look at your method, I think that on a very deep conceptual level, the harmony between the two is incredible. So to me that says that your method works with the body and how we are put together.



KH: Except that it works with the instrument as well. That is the big difference. Because I have Alexander people who come to me, who have a problem with the violin hold. No matter what they do, they have problems with the violin hold.

ML: That is what is so powerful to me about your method, because it seems that you integrated the same principles that are in the Alexander Technique with knowledge of violin technique, and created an incredibly unique method of teaching.

KH: That's right. That's why I call it a New Approach and not a method...What we do is to put every movement into music making, we use every movement for the service of the music. That's the difference with Alexander Technique...we use every movement for creating the music, so that is the direction for it. The music is the true focal direction for the movement ...

I can't tell you how grateful I am for finding (the New Approach). Because again, I look at it as a gift, as a great gift. And a gift is only there to give it to you. That's the nature of it. If I can give it to you, I'm alright. I am a transmitter...and I say thank you for it every day...because it is creative.

ML: For me, meeting you and coming across your method during this last year or two has been like the answer to a life-time of questions. When you read it, you realise that 'this is what I have been looking for'.

KH: You see, this is what people all over the world find, and that is what I am so thankful for.



## APPENDIX E

## CORRESPONDENCE

### E.1 Correspondence with Kató Havas

#### E.1.1 Letter to Havas, 2 Sept 2004

(Letter has been shortened)

Dear Kató

May I ask you a couple of questions, as an extension to the interview I had with you in Oxford? If you remember, I had asked you whether the Alexander Technique had had any direct influence on the formulation of the New Approach, and you said no, that you had not taken any Alexander lessons or read his books.

...my problem is that I have to deal with a claim made by Marianne Murray Perkins, one of the sources that I use. (You may remember that she had a couple of lessons with you about 10 years ago?) She says in her book, *A comparison of violin playing techniques*, that Alexander had been an influential author on the New Approach. She writes on p 23: "Havas often refers to Alexander's principles throughout her writings". However, she does not substantiate this claim in any way.

I contacted her to ask on what basis she wrote this, and ... it seems that she reached this conclusion from interviews with New Approach teachers – she mentioned Karen Davy. I contacted Karen, and she also said that, although you refer to principles that are similar to those in the Alexander Technique, you have never cited him as a direct influence. (I've included Karen's letter at the bottom of this e-mail, together with my reply to her.) It seems that MM Perkins may have misunderstood the reference to Alexander's principles to mean that he was a direct influence – that is certainly how it comes across in her book.

1. So the first question is, how do you respond to what MM Perkins had written about Alexander being an influential author on the New Approach?
2. The other question I have is similar: In the KHANA newsletter of July 1994 (Vol 10, no 1), Felix Sommer writes: "In her approach, she (i.e. Kato Havas) combines methods of Alexander to Zen, intuitively applying principles of encounter, balance, and conditioning" (it is on p 4). Again, does he mean that you consciously use the principles of the Alexander Technique in your approach, or is it merely that he recognises (like I do) that many of the ways in which you work are very similar to Alexander Technique?
3. You quote from Aldous Huxley in *Stage fright* (on p 77 and 85). It is taken from a foreword that he had written for Bonpensiere's "New Pathways to Piano Technique". Were you aware at all that Huxley was a very strong supporter of the Alexander Technique, and that the reference to the physiological intelligence (being almost incapable of making a mistake when it is not interfered with), is in fact the concept at the very heart of the Alexander Technique?

I am sorry to trouble you with all of this, Kató. It is just that the parallels between the two methods run very deeply, and therefore it is very important to be as clear as possible about the actual degree of direct influence that Alexander may have had. This is even more important, since it seems that MM Perkins had already jumped to the wrong conclusion, and everyone who reads her book (like I initially did) will automatically think that it is true. I think it is important to have a debate about it, and since you are the real authority in this matter, I would really like to include your response.

With all the very best wishes,

Marina

### **E.1.2 Reply from Havas, 11 Sep 2004**

Dear Marina,

My answer to your questions is very simple.

No! I didn't know about the Alexander method until pupils, who like you, were amazed about the similarities and only after that did I start to mention his method. As a matter of fact the New Approach has been compared to Zen Buddhism, Tai-Chi, Yoga and psychotherapy, not to mention golf.

And I am innocent of all those activities. So I would really appreciate it if you could clear this matter up. And by the way, the New Approach can be used for all other instruments including singing.

I just arrived a week ago today and started to teach on Monday. I haven't even unpacked yet. So I hope this will really reach you.

With greetings and best wishes

Kató Havas

## **E.2 Correspondence with Dr MM Perkins**

### **E.2.1 Letter to Perkins, 2 June 2004**

(Letter has been shortened.)

Dear Dr Perkins

Hunter Corn from ASTA gave me your e-mail address. I am a Master's degree student from Cape Town, South Africa. For my thesis, I am researching parallels between the Alexander Technique and the 'New Approach to Violin Playing' by Kato Havas.

Your book, *A Comparison of Violin Playing Techniques*, has been very helpful to me, both in my teaching and in my research - thank you! I was intrigued to read that you cite Alexander as being an influence on Havas, and that you say that she "often refers to Alexander's principles throughout her writings" (p 23).

This is of great interest to me, as the parallels between these two disciplines are (obviously!) also very clear to me. I wonder if you would be so kind as to exchange ideas with me on this matter: are there any specific sources that you based your conclusion on, or was it purely your own observation of the similarities between the two disciplines that persuaded you of this fact? I believe you had a series of lessons with Ms Havas; did she at any time mention Alexander as an influence?

As I said, the parallels are very obvious, yet I have not found any direct quotes that Havas attributes to Alexander in any of her books, or specific references (other than in your book) to the effect that Alexander had had a direct influence on Havas's formulation of the New Approach. It would be incredibly helpful to me if you could tell me how you reached your own conclusions, and perhaps refer me to any sources where I might find more clarity about this.

I really look forward to hearing from you, and any help or insight that you could give me in this regard would be most appreciated!

Regards,

Marina Louw

(Head of Strings: Beau Soleil Music Centre, Cape Town, South Africa)

### **E.2.2 Reply from Perkins, 2 Aug 2004**

(Letter has been shortened)

Hi Marina.

...I had been trying to contact one of the key New Approach teachers I consulted with for that portion of my research (Karen Davy) earlier in the summer but she has moved to California from New York and I am having trouble finding her new address and e-mail...

At this point in time, I am hesitant to "go on record" in your thesis in regard to your questions. As I said previously, I really have not kept up with Kato Havas and the New Approach since my book was published (based on my dissertation) over ten years ago! I feel it is important that I first speak with Karen to refresh my memory and get her perspective.

Thanks for your patience.

Marianne Murray Perkins

### **E.2.3 Letter to Perkins, 2 Sept 2004**

(Letter has been shortened.)

Dear Dr Perkins

Thank you for your reply; I really appreciate your time and effort to communicate with me on this matter!

I managed to find Karen Davy's e-mail address through the New Approach newsletter and contacted her. I'm including her response (and e-mail address) at the bottom of this correspondence. As you will notice, Karen Davy states that, as far as she knows, Kato Havas has never cited the Alexander Technique as a direct influence on her work...I refer to Karen's letter: "in a way it's true that Kato refers to Alexander's principles, but certainly not by name, rather by nature". In other words, Kato Havas may have recognized and applied similar principles to those that Alexander had described in his Technique, without having derived them from him.

I had a look at your book (*A comparison of violin methods*) once again, and I noticed that you mention both Alexander and Dr Hellebrandt under the heading "Influential Authors" (on p 23). However, I don't understand how Hellebrandt could have been an influence on Havas, as the articles she wrote (to explain the bio-mechanical rationale of the New Approach) were written long after the method had already been formulated and established. The Hellebrandt articles appeared in *The Strad* in 1969 and 1970, and by that time Havas had already written three of her books (1961, 1964, 1968). Havas does refer to Hellebrandt's articles in *Stage Fright* (1973) in order to clarify certain points, but surely one could not say that Hellebrandt had been an influence on Havas's formulation of the method?

I mention this, because it does throw some light on the problem regarding Alexander. It seems to me that the heading "Influential Authors" is misleading, as it creates the impression that Havas had derived some aspects of her method from them, which seems not to be the case.

Please forgive me for insisting on this point, but I have to deal with this issue in my thesis - I can hardly leave out the only reference to Alexander's influence on Havas that I have found. The depth to which the parallels between the two disciplines run is quite astounding, and one could easily conclude that Havas has a very profound, experiential knowledge of the Alexander Technique and its philosophy - which is why it is all the more important to be really clear about the degree of actual influence.

I would really value your response and input in this matter, before I actually write anything about it in my thesis. I should perhaps just mention that, based on what you had written, I interviewed Kató Havas (in July 2003 when I had lessons with her in Oxford) about Alexander's influence on the New Approach. She was quite taken aback that I had just assumed that he was an influence, and was adamant that it had not been the case.

I do think that it is very important to clear up any misunderstanding in this regard... However, I also feel that it is right to give you an opportunity to respond first, as I realise that I might still not have the full picture. I would really appreciate your feedback and thoughts in this matter.

Sincere regards,

Marina Louw

#### **E.2.4 Reply from Perkins, 26 Sept 2004**

Dear Marina,

Since you already have Kato Havas' answer on the subject I would consider that "definitive." As I mentioned previously, I have never characterized my work from that research period (over twelve years now) as being authoritative on the New Approach. The central theme of my dissertation and book is a COMPARISON of the three playing TECHNIQUES of Suzuki, Havas, and Rolland; it is not intended to be viewed in any way as the definitive background guide to the New Approach, especially historically, as Kato herself, her writings, and those of her closest disciples are obviously the ultimate authorities on that subject.

*Pectora roburant cultus recti*

I am sorry I could not shed any further insight into the matter. I wish you the best of luck with your thesis and in the future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marianne Murray Perkins

### **E.3 Correspondence with Karen Davy (New Approach teacher)**

#### **E.3.1 Letter to Davy, 2 Aug 2004**

Dear Ms Davy

My name is Marina Louw, and I am a violist from Cape Town, South Africa. After a series of lessons in July 2003 with Kato Havas and Gloria Bakhshayesh, I was asked to be the KHANA representative in South Africa. I am writing in the hope that you may be able to enlighten me on a particular point regarding the New Approach.

At present I am researching the New Approach for a master's degree thesis, and am specifically interested in parallels between the New Approach and the Alexander Technique.

I read in Marianne Murray Perkins's book, '*A comparison of violin playing techniques*', that she cites Alexander as having been an influential author, and she states on p 23: "Havas often refers to Alexander's principles throughout her writings". However, she does not substantiate this claim in any way, nor does she give any reference to specific examples. I contacted her to find out on what basis she asserts this, and she was unable to give me a direct answer. However, it seems that she reached this conclusion from interviews with a couple of New Approach teachers about 10 years ago, and she specifically mentioned your name.

Do you recall any such interview with her? It would be incredibly helpful to me if you could perhaps tell me on what basis she might have reached this conclusion. I have not read anywhere else that Alexander was a direct influence on the formulation of the New Approach, and Ms Havas likewise does not mention him anywhere. While the parallels are very obvious to me – and others, judging by previous articles in the KHANA newsletters – had Alexander in fact been a direct influence? Is it at all possible that the New Approach could be in harmony with Alexandrian principles without having been derived from those principles? I would really appreciate any help you could give me in this regard.

I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you in advance for considering my many questions!

Kind regards,

Marina Louw

(Head of Strings: Beau Soleil Music Centre, Cape Town, South Africa)



### **E.3.2 Reply from Davy, 9 Aug 2004**

(Letter has been shortened)

Hi Marina,

I have given your questions some thought.

As far as I know, Kato has never cited the Alexander Technique as an influence on her work...but both the Alexander Technique and the New Approach were very big and in vogue in the 1960's and '70's in London. So I believe the similarities were not merely coincidence but rather synchronicity.

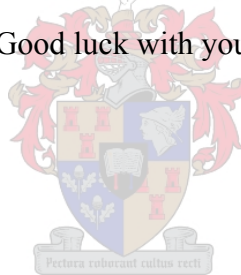
As far as Marianne Perkins quote, I'm just not sure where she got that from. In a way it's true that Kato refers to Alexander's principles, but certainly not by name, rather by nature: the stance, the natural weight of the head on the instrument, the idea of the ease of playing etc.- yes, she refers to these throughout her writings.

I also believe that both Kato and Mr. Alexander were in sync with broader philosophical ideas which teach ease of being, inside-outness, let it happen rather than make it happen, etc...

So yes, I do think that it is possible that the New Approach could be in harmony with Alexandrian principles without having been derived from those principles.

Let me know if I can help more. Good luck with your work. It sounds great!

Karen



The excerpts from the KHANA newsletters are used with the kind permission of Kató Havas.

**F.1 Dr Brian Whitfield: “Physiology, physics and the New Approach”.****Whitfield, 1993: 5:**

(The New Approach) not only makes scientific physiological sense, it also produces remarkable results. It is in harmony with the laws and principles both of physics and physiology and therein lies its success...

The brain works much like a computer, except the way the brain is set up it is really like two computers, one ‘computer’ being the left hemisphere of the brain and the other ‘computer’ being the right hemisphere of the brain. The two hemispheres are linked together by a band of ‘wires’ called the corpus collusum. It is through these ‘wires’ that the two halves of the brain communicate and co-ordinate body functions. The neurophysiological law of hemispheric dominance, in which the left hand/right brain: right hand/left brain ‘hemispheric connection’ is explained, is given major importance in the New Approach when applied to the proper training of the left and right hand functions. Many of the exercises in the New Approach ask one to focus one’s attention on the ‘musical’ left hand while learning a new passage of music. Once the left hand has learned the correct ‘pattern’ for the musical passage, the ‘programmed’ left hand action will automatically co-ordinate the required responses in the right arm because of the law of hemispheric dominance which states ... the more active hemisphere will dominate or ‘lead’ the less active hemisphere in its required response. Using the New Approach it is no longer necessary to spend endless hours on string crossing exercises, if one teaches the LEFT hand ‘where to go on the strings’ the right hand will automatically follow because of the neurological law of hemispheric dominance. To my scientific mind, Kató’s words were earth shattering. Here was someone explaining how to play a musical instrument physiologically and besides that, her physiology is absolutely correct!

The importance of the sensorial connection between the two halves (the right and left side) of the physical body via the bent thumb of the right hand on the bow hair and the skating fingers of the left hand, ALWAYS assisted by the ‘dancing’ left thumb, cannot be underplayed because these connections are what neurologically co-ordinate the two halves of the physical body, thereby creating an integrated whole for the expression of musical energy...Once one begins to understand the principles that the New Approach is based upon and is able to apply this knowledge, it seems almost as if automatically, the voice of musical expression is allowed to be heard.

**F.2 Individual observations****Frondenberg, 1987: 3:**

With Kato’s help in making me believe that violin playing was either easy or impossible...(and) with the help of her physical and mental exercises, I have found for myself the center of my gravity, and with that have discovered the true bliss of

‘no-violin’...My entire body understood that violin playing honestly is easy or impossible...Physical blocks disconnect the mind from the body. Now the learning of the violin has taken on a whole new dimension. Learning to play is expanded to learning to cultivate my awareness...It seems to me that awareness is a fluid and constant anticipation of the inner ear of what is to come and not what has been. This is not possible until one is completely free from any holds...Now I know that awareness blossoms with physical freedom...With physical freedom comes the ability to focus into the core of music-making. Focus is the bringing together of the mind and the body in a totally coordinated way.

**Kreith, 2002: 4, 5:**

When my thought process is involved with the rhythmic preparation of intervals I enjoy a unity of ‘technical’ and ‘musical’ thought that is not analytical or self-critical but constantly creative.

**Forsman, 2004: 3:**

I could really experience the truth of the New Approach and discovered that once the inside-built fundamental balances are found and linked into a big chain there is no need for hours and hours of mechanical practise.

**Novom, 2002: 3, 4:**

Everything must always be done in a way that reassures the hand and body as to how easy it is. This means that one stops...until the whole hand knows what it is going to do and can prepare the next interval...to stop and not just freeze - and before moving on have an image in my hand of what it is going to do. This image is an actual sensation...There is a huge difference between ourselves – understanding and thinking about the ‘concepts’ – and our bodies, which need to gain the knowledge, through constantly being shown what is possible...I found that being able to stop before the chaos set in often meant breaking the music down to one bar...these sections gave me an incredibly enjoyable sense of control.

**Johnson, 2001: 7:**

I spent the next four summers in England getting as much time as I could with Kató. The learning that took place from both a playing and teaching point of view was startling...people were playing in ways they never thought possible – people from the most basic to university students to advanced professional players.

**Bonnici, 1988: 7:**

...the exhilaration of ease I began to experience was overwhelming...It is difficult to describe the feeling of joy when the violin begins to sing almost of its own accord.

**Milo, 2001: 3:**

Years ago, when I first came to Kató, a miracle happened in my life...a long ‘bloody’ war between my love and hate for the violin came to its end...after a very short time, I

began to feel a beautiful sound is beginning to be born. The aches were also gone. Things my teachers were trying for years to correct were absolutely gone with the wind as if they never existed.

**Traver and Peterson, 2001: 6, 7:**

With basic New Approach exercises, participants discovered that there is an answer and a solution to their playing difficulties...One's playing begins to be a search for the 'ease' instead of trying to overcome difficulties...Participants were in awe of the ease in which thirds, sixths, octaves and tenths can be initiated with the concepts of balance in the left hand.

**Evans, 1994: 4:**

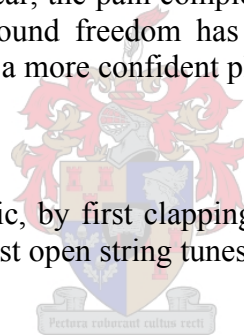
As I continued all the exercises for the left hand...my hand became more and more flexible.

**Olsen, 1985: 5:**

Kato demands a lot of work and total application, but there was always laughter at the lessons...Within the span of a year, the pain completely disappeared. In addition, and more importantly, this newly found freedom has given me a better awareness of music, and has allowed me to be a more confident player.

**Porcino, 1985: 5:**

If the child internalises the music, by first clapping, singing, and pulsing with vigor and energy, then even the simplest open string tunes will give him/her the exhilaration that comes from music making.



**Heikkila, 1994: 6:**

It was clear, of course, that the New Approach cannot be mastered all at once, especially when you have to overcome many old ingrained habits. But even the slightest achievement and steps of progress were epoch-making for me. The more I achieved a sense of freedom and ease the more enthusiastic I became to continue with my studies.

**Gaines, 2004: 7:**

The New Approach...uses the body in the way it was created to be used. There is no distortion of the body in order to play the violin...Instead the natural physical balances of the body are established and the violin and bow are incorporated into the natural use of the body. This eliminates pain, nerve entrapment, diminished blood flow and injury. It also creates a sense of ease and well being in the student.

**Schoettly, 1994: 6, 7:**

Fourteen doctors concluded, together and separately, that the nerves had been compressed too long (two years) and as feeling had not returned to my hands, I would

never play the violin again (nor write with a pen, nor do any task requiring fine motor co-ordination)...By 1986, because of exercise and therapy I was able to play my violin for 10 minutes, twice a week. In 1987, I was up to 10 minutes a day and began lessons...I wish I had known about the New Approach earlier. After years of searching, exercise and effort, I now employ this simple method to improve my playing. The benefits are extensive....The technique of opening the shoulder hinges may not seem to apply to ordinary job skills, yet it does. The opening and relaxation it brings frees the mind for all kinds of possibilities....As for the doctors, some of them were astonished that they were wrong....What these doctors missed...was this: Without the New Approach, it would never have happened...the skills learned at the workshop allowed me to improve enough to play a recital...my 'no-violin – no bow' enables me to overcome residual numbness and to correct tensions that bring it about.

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