

Alexander Technique for Primary Coordination

JOHN NICHOLLS' TEACHER REFRESHER COURSE: The Carrington Way of Working

"In his annual teacher refresher course, John Nicholls offers a wealth of theoretical knowledge and detailed hands-on experience to the Alexander Technique teacher in search of further depth and direction in their teaching practice. With his long history of training and teaching experience with Walter Carrington, powerful insights into Alexander's principles and discoveries, detailed group and individual exploration of the core principles of the work, plus his generous and welcoming instruction of each participant, John weaves together a compelling and enriching study of the Alexander Technique. Having completed the course, I find that my teaching skills have improved enormously, my professional confidence has soared, and my love for the work and delight in presenting the principles to my students has dramatically increased."---Meade Andrews

February, 2015

John Nicholls is offering a final opportunity for teachers to experience his post graduate series of weekends *The Carrington Way of Working* before he returns to live in England later in 2016. In this course, essential features of John's teacher training and his long experience of working alongside Walter and Dilys Carrington are encapsulated and taught in a way that can be assimilated and used by teachers trained outside of the Carrington tradition. Now distilled into four weekends (Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday) between late October 2015 and early March 2016, the course presents John's synthesis of the fundamental elements of Walter Carrington's approach to teaching. The weekends can also be used as a valuable refresher for those already familiar with The Carrington Way of Working and/or John's structured approach to teacher training.

Within the Alexander world, different styles or "lineages" often use similar words and phrases to describe what they are doing, and yet the hands-on experience can seem at times surprisingly different. While this program cannot attempt to address directly what these hands-on differences might be, we will consider and discuss key writings by FM and leading figures such as Marjory Barlow, Patrick Macdonald, and Margaret Goldie, as well as Walter Carrington. This broad conceptual basis will combine with a solid grounding in John's systematic approach to hands-on work and practical teaching. Past participants have found this to be a very enriching and nourishing environment for their individual growth as Alexander teachers.

Historical Background

John Nicholls worked for eleven years as assistant to Walter and Dilys Carrington, teaching daily alongside them, and returned later to teach two afternoons a week at their center for many more

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years. FM Alexander, in the last years of his life, entrusted to Walter Carrington the running of his teacher training course, and Walter (later together with his wife Dilys) went on to train over 300 teachers. His annual summer refresher courses were filled to capacity many months in advance and for decades had been attended by teachers from all over the world. This style of teaching has had a huge influence on Alexander teaching worldwide.

John was a founder and initial coordinator of the separate first year program introduced into the Carrington training course in 1981. He subsequently directed large training courses in England and Australia for fifteen years, while also leading postgraduate classes for teachers in many different countries, and has now directed a training course in New York City for nine years. This experience has led him to develop innovative ways to communicate the most important factors in the Carrington approach to teaching. He will be returning to the UK to take up a new opportunity there in the summer of 2016.

Private lessons

Participants may also take up to four individual lessons during this period at a discounted rate of \$65 per lesson. Lessons will be available on Fridays before the weekends or at other times between weekends.

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"I truly felt it was one of the most valuable learning experiences I've ever had. I have studied the AT for many years and with many fine teachers, but felt that your explanation and presentation of Alexander's work gave me the piece I'd been missing - the 'missing link' if you will, that allowed me to activate the A.T. principles in myself and my students more fully, more often, and more successfully than I ever had before."---Judy Barnett

The Course

The course will address questions such as:

- How do we communicate quickly and easily that at the heart of our work lies the primary co-ordination of postural support, breathing and movement.
- How do we give clear experiences of improved use combined with clear understanding of how such experiences have been brought about - ensuring that our students will have both the necessary experience and the understanding to consciously facilitate these changes themselves.
- How do we ensure that in using our hands and voice to encourage expansion in a student, we are not squeezing ourselves and thereby creating disharmony between the message and the messenger? Using contact to stimulate elastic expansion in the teacher as the means to stimulate the same integrated, elastic openness in the student

Weekend Structure

The program will comprise four weekends (including Friday evenings) over a five month period. Each weekend will have a theme, forming a structured progression through the months. The group will explore this theme with a combination of theory and practice, including thorough explanations and demonstrations of each practical step which will then be explored through supervised hands on exchanges. (See the course syllabus.) There will be suggested readings from major Alexander literature, and some consideration of relevant scientific findings.

Requirements

- Participants must be teachers certified by any of the current certifying organizations regardless of affiliation.
- The course is open to a maximum of 10 participants.

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Dates

Friday evening 7.00 to 9.00pm. Saturday and Sunday 10:30am to 5:00pm the following weekends:

* Oct. 16-18, 2015 * Dec. 4-6, 2015 * Jan. 15-17, 2016 * Mar. 4-6, 2016

Application deadline

The closing date for application is September 1, 2015. However booking early is advisable as the program is limited to ten participants.

Cost of Training

The tuition for the program is \$1800 due in the following payments

- \$350 due with application. Full refund given to applications withdrawn before the closing date.
- \$400 due at the first weekend, Oct. 16, 2015.
- \$400 due at second weekend December 4, 2015
- \$400 due at third weekend January 15, 2016
- \$250 due at fourth weekend March 4, 2016

Location

- Alexander Technique Center for Performance and Development
330 West 38th Street, Suite 803
New York, New York 10018

For further information, please contact John Nicholls by phone at 212 706 2507 or by email at jnatnyc@gmail.com.

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What people are saying about it:

"I always believed in the 'little bit of nothing' that Marjorie Barstow spoke about, but I never fully experienced it as a teacher until I worked with John Nicholls. John's clarity in teaching the Alexander Principles, combined with the generous way he encourages his students to "Use" themselves and their hands has opened a transformative path for me as a person and a teacher. John Nicholls' Refresher Course is a little bit of nothing with staying power."

--Jocosa Wade, enrolled in the 2013-2014 course

"I will be forever grateful that I attended John Nicholls Post Graduate Alexander Technique refresher course. What I learned from John has refined and clarified my teaching and has helped me to understand the technique and myself better. John took us to the heart of the work with thoughtfulness, insight, and encouragement. Prefaced by supportive readings, each weekend focused on an aspect of the work, broadening our understanding and strengthening our practice of the principles. My hands on work transformed as I discovered a deeper level non-doing. I expanded in all directions, in all senses, through these weekends. John Nicholls has truly mastered the art of teaching the Alexander Technique."

--Chris Friedman, enrolled in the 2013-2014 course

"The intensive postgraduate weekends with John Nicholls offer a depth of understanding of the Alexander Technique that is just not available from any other post-graduate Alexander workshop or teacher-training program. While the Alexander work has been referred to as a technique for living, these workshops offer the unique opportunity to experience the work as a truly living technique. John continuously evolves the teaching of the original Alexander work and provides the missing piece for so many teachers - clarity on what ultimately we are aiming to teach and how to convey it in the clearest and most effective way possible.

"Despite having had a Carrington based training myself, I still found it very helpful to take this refresher course after qualifying. I was in a different developmental place as a new teacher, and having exposure to John's mastery and carefully considered synthesis of decades of experience gave me more confidence and a clearer foundation than most new (and even not so new!) Alexander teachers. Fellow participants (including senior teachers) reported tremendous growth, both personally and professionally, and many of us felt that we were experiencing through John's teaching a direct line to the source of the work.

"John's articulation of the principles of the technique brings a pragmatic clarity to the Alexander work that is unparalleled. Regardless of the level of the teachers on his post-graduate course, he was able to skillfully and compassionately respond to the source of confusion for each particular teacher as we struggled with many of the common challenges of teaching the Technique. John showed a profound empathy for us while simultaneously maintaining a clear focus on the heart of the work, and in just a series of intensive weekends we were able to further connect to the fundamentals of the Technique while exploring our own sense of personal humanity within it. John is a master teacher, a teacher's teacher of the Alexander Technique. After taking his refresher course, we all felt more capable, equipped, and confident. And it was a joy!"

--Cindi Kim, enrolled in the 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 courses

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“The post certification course, and your teaching approach, have transformed my daily practice in the Alexander Technique. I have a new understanding for how all AT practice inherently contains 'hands on the back on the chair'. I have a renewed commitment to 'hands on the back on the chair' as a daily 'warm up' before my private practice students. In addition, you created an environment of validation for each teaching member while encouraging each of us to develop a deeper integrity for the means whereby in learning new skills. I appreciated the ease in which you encourage teachers at all levels to continue to investigate and explore AT principles. These weekends have encouraged me to recommit to Alexander's work in deeper ways. It was through these weekends that I really decided to begin an AT training program in Baltimore.

Many thanks.”

---Nancy Romita, enrolled in the 2008-2009 course

“Many thanks again for your valuable course. I've become a better Alexander teacher – doing less and directing more. My students have noticed the difference in me and in their own better use.”

---Anne Macdonald, enrolled in the 2007-2008 course

“We are so grateful to have had this opportunity and we honestly believe that any and every AT teacher no matter where they are in their learning, could immensely benefit from training with you. We hope that you keep offering this course and we also hope that AT teachers find this valuable treasure and take advantage of learning with one of the most experienced and congenial teachers in the world of the Alexander Technique.”

---Mona Al-Kazemi and Faisal Al-Matrouk, enrolled in the 2007-2008 course

“I truly felt it was one of the most valuable learning experiences I've ever had. I have studied the AT for many years and with many fine teachers, but felt that your explanation and presentation of Alexander's work gave me the piece I'd been missing - the 'missing link' if you will, that allowed me to activate the A.T. principles in myself and my students more fully, more often, and more successfully than I ever had before.

“The link I'm referring to is this one: learning to receive weight/information/sensation through my hands, and then directing myself to maintain an 'open channel' through my arms/shoulders/back, to let it travel through my legs to my feet, then into the floor-while my hands maintain their connection. Not terribly eloquently stated, but I think you know what I mean? This was a totally new experience for me, and frustratingly difficult to learn to do without bracing somewhere or other! But I continue to practice it, mostly through hands on back of chair, and continue to improve. And my back feels stronger and stronger.”

---Judy Barnett, enrolled in the 2006-2007 course

“Teachers wanting to enhance or simply refresh their skills will find this learning experience invaluable. John provides a welcoming environment where everyone's level of knowledge and experience is valued and contributes to an ever-growing body of investigation into the Alexander Technique. You won't get a better theoretical or experiential compilation of FM's work from anywhere!!.”

---Glenna Batson, enrolled in the 2005-2006 course

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Outline of Course Syllabus

1. **Defining our terms:** *The primary coordination* – integration of postural support, breathing, and movement; going up – the primary movement; inhibition/non-doing; direction/ordering; primary control; re-educating kinesthesia; a strong back – the essential support from the widening back; integration – the elastic connections; parallels with horses.
Monkey and Hands on the Back of the Chair: Importance of monkey; antagonistic pulls (avoiding rigidity or passivity); importance of hands on back of chair for teaching - relating the back to the limbs, freeing the thorax, freeing the hands and arms from the back.
2. **Elements of table work:** Why do we use a table; a look at different approaches to it, e.g. different heights of books under head, ways of taking head, limbs, etc. Keeping the unifying simplicity of head, neck, back whatever part of the body you are working on. Doing (as in lifting a leg) on a non-doing basis.
Elements of chair work: why do we use a chair; a look at different approaches to it, e.g. use of the legs in relation to the back; allowing alignment and movement trajectories appropriate to each student's stage of development to emerge naturally; etc. The demand of support for the head from neck muscles, support for the trunk from back muscles, and the legs integrating both support and movement functions.
3. **Breathing - Elements of chair and table work in relation to breathing:** Understanding FM's references to "thoracic mobility" and "intra-abdominal pressure;" shifting pressure between abdominal and thoracic cavities; demystifying the Whispered Ah; how it relates to *primary coordination* and to the origins of FM's work; consideration of freeing the breath as a fundamental goal of teaching. Establishing support and flexibility of the respiratory processes as the essential foundation for vocal use in acting or singing.
4. **Directed Activities and teaching strategies:** Some simple applications; how to teach a simplified version of hands on back of chair to private students to apply in daily life. This gives them the basis of application to everything from chopping vegetables to playing the violin, from typing to using exercise equipment. Balancing the awakening of conscious control with the re-education of kinesthesia to refine subconscious processes; balancing verbal explanation with hands-on experience. Review and further practice of elements from previous weekends.

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Application for: JOHN NICHOLLS' TEACHER REFRESHER COURSE

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Alexander Technique Background and Certification

Please give a brief description of your Alexander Technique background and any other pertinent information (e.g. medical if relevant)

Please include with this form the application deposit of \$350, **made payable to John Nicholls**, and mail the completed form and check to the address at the foot of this page.

The application deadline is September 1, 2015, but there is a limit of ten places, so please apply early. You may withdraw your application with no penalty (i.e. your deposit will be refunded) until the deadline date. After September 1, 2015 there will be no refunds.

Further payment deadlines will be October 16, 2015 (\$400), December 4, 2015 (\$400), January 15, 2016 (\$400), and March 4, 2016 (\$250). **All checks should be made payable to John Nicholls.**

If you have any questions about registration, course content or any other considerations please call John at his teaching studio number (212) 706-2507, or email jnatnyc@gmail.com