The Use of the Alexander Technique as a Practice Tool for Horn Performance

Centria Deondra Brown
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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THE USE OF THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE AS A PRACTICE TOOL FOR HORN PERFORMANCE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

The College of Music and Dramatic Arts

by
Centria Deondra Brown
B.M.E., Wingate University
M.M., Louisiana State University
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This dissertation is dedicated to my partner, Alysia Ali, who encouraged me to pursue my dreams and believed in me when at times I did not believe in myself. I also dedicate this dissertation to my family Sandra, Dwayne and Cassandra Brown for their continuous support in my musical career.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to present how the Alexander Technique can be used as a practice aid for horn players. In this document, I have proposed that the Alexander Technique can be a tool students use to achieve efficient and effective practice sessions. Students who have a clear understanding of the Alexander Technique would be aware of their body and mind, such as physical tension and mental thought processes, while performing. The intention of this dissertation is to use standard repertoire as a means of learning how the Alexander Technique can assist a student practicing these works.

I have reached out to college-level horn teachers and orchestral members who teach privately in the United States. Through a provided questionnaire and optional phone interview, the responses discussing both physical and mental habits were recorded. After reviewing the responses, I selected the habits mentioned most by horn teachers that could benefit from the Alexander Technique.

I then reached out to Alexander Technique teachers to discuss the responses received from horn teachers. I discussed which concepts the teacher might use in a lesson with a student who is dealing with the identified habits. I also discussed with the Alexander Technique teachers their experiences working with horn players or instrumentalists.
The selected works are Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, K. 495: first movement Allegro maestoso, Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, op. 47: first movement Moderato-allegro non troppo low horn tutti (Rehearsal 17- Rehearsal 21), Johannes Brahms Horn Trio in E-flat, op. 40: third movement Adagio mesto. I received 21 responses from horn teachers and 10 responses from Alexander Technique teachers.

Alexander Technique does not answer all problems in playing the horn. No one technique does. However, it is my assertion that many performers can benefit from using the Alexander Technique as a practice tool in standard pieces. This research is intended to offer an open, clear understanding of how the Alexander Technique can improve the quality of a musician's practice, refine their overall playing technique, and directly impact one’s long-term viability as a performer.
CHAPTER 1. THE PRACTICE ROOM

Self-Regulation and Self-Efficacy

It is crucial for horn players to foster beneficial habits in practice in order to improve performance technique.¹ Practicing assists in developing new habits, but also reveals old habits from previous years of playing. Some of these habits are desirable, such as breathing in time before playing, subdivision, and placing fingers consistently on the valves. Other habits may not be as beneficial; such as quick shallow breathing and curving the shoulders into the horn. Not only do students need the tools for an effective practice session but they also need to believe they are capable of a successful practice session.

Students who study music at the collegiate level are willing to dedicate hours of their day to performance practice. However, how many of those hours are actually productive and helpful to the performer? Throughout the years musicians have constantly searched for ways to conduct effective practice sessions. In this paper, various techniques and concepts have been presented as a way to create such an effective session.

“Self-regulated learning has been defined as active metacognitive, motivational, cognitive, and behavioral participation in one’s own learning and has been related to perceived competence and to academic achievement”² Preparing positive conditions for

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practice sessions is essential for a successful practice session. This includes the physical environment in which the student is practicing as well as the thought process of planning and setting goals.

There has been a positive correlation between self-regulated practice sessions and musical achievement. However, having strategies for practice sessions not only fosters musical success but overall encourages the student. When using self-regulated strategies, students begin to believe they are capable of success in the task they are working through.³

Self-Efficacy is defined as a personal belief in one’s ability to learn and perform a task.⁴ Horn players’, thoughts of endurance and performance capabilities will impact their belief in their ability to execute a musical work. Such judgments can undermine what a musician is capable of accomplishing. “Perceptions of personal competence are so powerful that they are theorized to influence a student’s motivation and future decision to continue developing his or her skill in the area.”⁵

This has led me to believe that having the tools to assist in organizing a practice session and also having goals to evaluate a practice session can lead to a more productive and positive learning environment.

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Effective Practice Sessions

It is common for students to practice technical passages mindlessly. Often students will continuously repeat passages with hopes that the repetition will cultivate the technique they desire. Although repetition is an approach that musician’s use, it is how they approach the excerpt and each repetition that will ultimately bring about the improvement they desire.

An effective practice session requires a multi-layered approach. Being aware of concepts such as pitch, tempo, tone, and phrasing, go beyond the quantity of practice and instead emphasize the quality of the practice.

Students have to penetrate the surface level of a problem, and search for the root of the problem. They have to be patient in working through their concerns. Students often rush the process of practicing. Time frames and deadlines will influence the students need to learn a concept quickly. However, they must also learn to be patient in working through their concerns.

When students work too quickly through concepts it affects their ability to retain musical concepts. This can be discouraging for students who feel as if they are not making progress. Students begin to lose self-efficacy, and will lose motivation to practice.

Critical thinking within a practice session is crucial to becoming a better performer and an overall better musician. Being able to self-evaluate, observe and
experiment in the practice room shifts the focus from perfection to experiencing fully the process of creating music.

The idea of consistent self-evaluation and observation is not a concept that is easy to incorporate. Teachers can discuss each week in a sixty-minute lesson the importance of understanding “how” one is practicing in order to see progress. But offering tools to use in the practice room will awaken them to the importance of awareness in achieving success.

Each person studies and retains knowledge differently, therefore each student will develop habits from varying circumstances. With the understanding that habits are personal, some habits can also be shared amongst students. How each student has arrived at this habit is dependent upon personal performance history.

No individual technique will fix all the problems that a performer will experience. Offering various tools, to assist in fostering healthy and beneficial habits, is something that musicians can share with one another. “At its core, and in the context of enhancing students’ practice, metacognition entails students’ planning for developing, tracking, reflecting on, and changing their practice habits to effect the best performance improvement.” One such technique that evolved out of the observation of habits and finding ways to foster healthier habits is the Alexander Technique.

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What is the Alexander Technique?

“The Alexander Technique is a way of learning to move mindfully through life. The Alexander process shines a light on inefficient habits of movement and patterns of accumulated tension, which interferes[sic] with our innate ability to move easily and according to how we are designed.”

Alexander Technique was created by Frederick Matthias Alexander. This technique emerged from Alexander’s experience of hoarseness during his Shakespearean recitation. He initially thought he experienced hoarseness only when reciting, but he did eventually notice that the habit which caused him to lose his voice was also present in his day to day speech.

Doctors would advise him to rest his voice prior to performances. Resting would often eliminate the hoarseness, but for only a short period of time. At one time, Alexander rested his voice for weeks prior to a performance. Halfway through the performance he still experienced hoarseness and discomfort in his throat. Frustrated that doctors were not helping him get to the root of his problem, he decided to figure out the cause on his own through self-observation.

Alexander’s Process of Discovery

To that end he decided to observe the reactions of his mind and body while he was reciting. He found that the habits he presented during recitation also occurred when

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he was not reciting but not to the magnitude as when he performed. When these habits occurred during his recitation it affected his speech organs, causing his loss of voice.

Alexander experimented and examined himself during reciting and everyday activities to deduce what physical and mental habits could be causing some of his issues. “Standing in front of a mirror, he started to observe exactly what he called his ‘manner of doing’ – first while speaking and then, since he found nothing unusual, while reciting.”

“As he started to recite he noticed three things: he stiffened his neck, so causing his head to retract (he later called this ‘pulling the head back’); he depressed his larynx unduly; and he sucked in breath with a gasp. In more difficult passages the pattern became exaggerated.” After discovering these three habits, he believed he had found the source of the problem. He concluded that since he had discovered the habits that were causing his loss of voice the proper course was to stop doing them.

Alexander was able to rectify pulling back his head. When he stopped pulling back his head, he was able to stop his head from retracting. The other two, depressed larynx and gasping, soon fixed themselves. Alexander noticed that when he worked on one habit, such as pulling back his neck, it interacted with his other two habits. "This was the beginning of his realization that the choices we make about what we do with ourselves to a large extent determine the quality of our lives. He called this power Use.”

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Primary Control

As a result of his explorations, Alexander developed a process to promote good
Use-- awareness, inhibition, and direction.

- **Awareness** - Curiously noticing all aspects of one’s self including mind, body, and emotions.
- **Inhibition** - Pausing to notice how one reacts to a stimulus. Within the pause a state of ease is established, a space where all possibility remains available, even as one eventually chooses an action. As the art of T'ai chi instructs, "ready for anything, prepared for nothing."
- **Direction** - A clean, clear intention about how to proceed with a task, so that all aspects of the self are operating in dynamic relationship. Directions encourage clear and accurate thinking about how the mind and body function optimally. Among important directions are those concerning body alignment, especially the head/neck relationship and how it relates to the rest of the spine; an accurate understanding of body structure, such as where joints are and are not; and encouraging a quality of thinking that is friendly toward oneself, such as, "I have all the time I need," or "can I do less to play this high passage?"

The result of this process is primary control. This discovery of Alexander is the hallmark of the Alexander Technique. As master Alexander Teacher Barbara Conable describes it, "Primary control is the inherent and intrinsic mechanism for balance and
support in the body. It assures that uprightness will be effortless and that the movement will be supported and fluid.”

Suppose one wished to reach for a pencil. Before reaching, one would pause (inhibition) and become aware of any unnecessary tension (awareness) and finally, encourage a more positive direction to complete the task (direction). One could, for instance, take note of how much effort is truly needed to reach out to pick up a pencil, and then simply free one’s neck and allow the body to choose the most user friendly way to proceed with picking up the pencil.

Some Accompanying Alexander Techniques Concepts

Endgaining and the Means-Whereby

The consistent idea of performing a piece as accurately as possible tends to be the main goal during practice sessions. It is possible to lose awareness of our bodies during a practice session when we focus too much attention on achieving our performance goals. Alexander called this endgaining, or misusing oneself to achieve a goal.

“The ultimate cause of misuse, in Alexander’s understanding, was the universal habit of end-gaining. Aches and pains, as well as problems of all sorts, come about because of our goals and intentions.” However, the debate then presents itself- do we or do we not set goals for our crafts?

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Instead of focusing only on the goal one should think about the process that presents itself when reaching for a goal. “...the ability to wait and make resonated choices before acting, permanent awareness of your own use, and willingness to give up achieving your ends by direct means (such as yelling at a child to stop her crying) and go about it using indirect procedures. This is the means-whereby principle.”\(^\text{13}\)

De Alcantara astutely observed that shifting the focus from the goal to the means needed to reach the goal, does not mean one has to abandon the goal in its entirety. Instead you have embraced the process.

Head-Neck Relationship and a Free Neck

Finding freedom in the neck is imperative to achieve freedom in the entire body.

“1. Tensing in the neck distorts the rest relationship of bone to bone in the skeletal system, impairing the skeleton’s ability to deliver weight efficiently. 2. Tensing in the neck interferes with involuntary muscular support for voluntary movement.”\(^\text{14}\)

The head/neck relationship is vital to finding balance with the rest of the skeleton. The top two vertebrae of the spine are the atlas and the axis.\(^\text{15}\) These two vertebrae support the head at its occipital bone. The atlas bone allows us to nod our head forward and back. The axis bone allows us to rotate our head from side to side. The connection of the atlas, axis and occipital bone create the atlanto-occipital joint.

One could say that the atlanto-occipital joint is the master joint for freeing the neck, spine, and the entire skeleton. If the weight of the head is too far forward the larynx will be thrust uncomfortably downward. If the weight of the head is too far back the spine contracts and creates a downward pull. Having freedom in the atlanto-occipital joint will cause balance of the head on the spine. This will lead to a free neck, lengthening of the spine and widening of the back. Therefore, if the head-neck joint is free the body will soon follow the freedom of the head-neck joint.

Oneness of the Self: Body and Mind

Another key teaching of Alexander Technique is the oneness of the body/mind connection. We often see them as two separate entities, however, the mind affects the body and the body affects the mind. “It is impossible to separate ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ processes in any form of human activity.”

Unreliable Sensory Perception

When Alexander first observed himself while engaging his primary support it felt uncomfortable and unfamiliar. Conversely, his misuse of himself felt comfortable to him. “I have to admit that I had never thought of how I directed the use of myself, but that I used myself habitually in the way that felt natural to me. Judging, however, from results for my experiments, this method led me into error… proving that the ‘feeling’ associated

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16 Alexander, FM. The Use of the Self. (Great Britain: Orion Ltd, 2001), 21.
with this direction of my use was untrustworthy.”\textsuperscript{17} The habits he had created each day when reciting felt normal, even though they were causing performance problems.

“Having recognized that his feeling was not trustworthy, he found that the key to discovering ‘the knowledge of the means whereby trustworthiness could be restored to feeling’ lay in subjecting himself to a new experience – the experience of trusting his reason rather than his habit, even if this felt awkward.”\textsuperscript{18} Alexander realized that he could not trust what he felt was comfortable. The habits he had instilled in himself could not be trusted to be good \textit{Use}.

\textbf{Proprioception}

“Faulty sensory awareness is a double phenomenon: what is wrong feels right, and what is right feels wrong.”\textsuperscript{19} We often label our senses into five categories but the idea of knowing and relating to the body is considered a sense in itself. “Proprioception encompasses 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.”\textsuperscript{20}

Proprioception is \textit{awareness} in the Alexander Technique's purest sense of the word. Alexander's main intention was to achieve a heightened awareness of himself, his habits that caused unnecessary physical tension or mental turmoil that sabotaged his

\textsuperscript{17} Alexander, FM. The Use of the Self. (Great Britain: Orion Ltd, 2001), 35.
\textsuperscript{18} Alexander, FM. The Use of the Self. (Great Britain: Orion Ltd, 2001), 59.
performance. Employing habits one has developed when practicing and performing can cloud one’s perception not to mention a deeper exploration of the music. Being wedded to a certain way of playing can also delay one's attention to physical problems until presented with a debilitating type of injury.

Body Mapping

“Body Mapping is the conscious correcting and refining of one’s body map to produce efficient, graceful, and coordinated movement. The body map is one’s self-representation in one’s own brain, one’s assumptions or conception of what one's body is like, in whole or part.”

Although body mapping is not a term coined by FM Alexander, many Alexander Technique teachers use this concept when working hands-on with students. Having a clear idea of our anatomy is a widely accepted aid to discovering one’s own good Use.

Many teachers use anatomical text, pictures, and 3D models to give students a clear understanding of how the body functions. For instance, musicians would find it beneficial to understand where the lungs reside in the torso, or the number of joints and bones located in the arm structure. Logically then, Alexander Teachers will focus a lot of time correcting a students’ body maps.

Breathing Mechanism

One of the most important topics of discussion among horn players would be breathing. Since there seem to be varying opinions about how to approach teaching and working with breathing, it is important to mention that Alexander was initially known as 'the breathing man' due to his successful work with patients with breathing issues.

During his initial period of self study and subsequently FM focused much of his attention on breathing. “Alexander had a habit of pulling his head back and down, putting pressure into his throat and onto his vocal apparatus. When he breathed in, there was an audible gasp.”\textsuperscript{22}

Alexander noticed that breathing involved his whole body, not just his lungs and ribs. When working on breathing he began with primary control and finding freedom in his head-neck relationship. This helped with his habit of downward pull, that is, pulling his head down and back. This freed the pressure in his vocal apparatus.

Alexander’s process also facilitated the lengthening and widening of the back to allow more breath to enter the lungs. But Alexander did not focus on the upper torso of the body but the lower half of the body, pelvis, legs, and feet. “The reason the feet and the legs have such an affect [sic] on the breathing are [sic] the muscular connections from the diaphragm to the spine and the legs.”\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} Kleinman, Judith, and Peter Buckoke. The Alexander Technique for Musicians. (London: Methuen Drama, 2018), 92-93.
\textsuperscript{23} Kleinman, Judith, and Peter Buckoke. The Alexander Technique for Musicians. (London: Methuen Drama, 2018), 93.
The diaphragm and many other muscles in the torso cooperate in dynamic relationship within the breathing mechanism. Proper mapping and understanding of the diaphragm’s function will do much to clear up myths which persist within the community of horn players and others who use their respiratory systems to make music.

One cannot consciously move the diaphragm; however, one can dictate the movement of other muscles in the body that have an effect on the diaphragm. This makes the diaphragm both an involuntary and voluntary muscle. Having a clear understanding of the breathing apparatus and increased awareness of how to avoid interfering with the natural way of functioning is vital to the success of the horn player.

The lungs are housed in the thoracic cavity and are shielded by the ribcage. The lungs extend from just above the collarbone to just below the breast. During inhalation the intercostal muscles between the ribs cause the ribs to move up. During exhalation these muscles release allowing the ribs to return to their resting position.

This brief introduction of some of the basic teachings of the Alexander Technique is intended to aid those reading this document to understand the following interviews by Alexander Technique teachers. They have certainly led me to believe that using these concepts in the practice room would assist the horn player in performing in the most efficient way possible, mentally, physically and musically.
Using the Alexander Technique in the Practice Room

There are books on the Alexander Technique, written by people of various careers and disciplines. Each of these writers begins by discussing the foundation of the Alexander Technique, accessing primary control. Understanding and achieving the process of primary support leads to good Use.

Primary control is the balance of the whole body that occurs when the head, neck, and spine are aligned and free of unnecessary tension. For issues that pertain to fingers, air, range, posture, and musical intent, it all begins with engaging primary control. Teachers of the Alexander Technique will always begin with primary control. Primary control is the focal point of Alexander’s discovery.

Finding books on the Alexander Technique no matter the discipline can benefit the horn student. One such book is “The Actor’s Secret: Techniques for transforming habitual patterns and improving performance” by Betsy Polatin. Her book is a collection of insights on performance from experts, including Alexander.

In the fourth chapter she discusses the “five principles of the Alexander Technique,” Primary control, the power of habit, Inhibition, Faulty sensory perception, and direction. “An understanding of these principles helps the actor to make choices about his or her performance, and to follow through with consistent and believable characters.”24 In performance, horn players to embody the emotion of the composer’s

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work in order to share this with the audience. However, how the audience receives that music must be left entirely up to the listener.

The work of the Alexander Technique is not an immediate fix, but a practice that is to be contemplated, studied, and worked on for life. It may feel like an instant fix during a first lesson or masterclass, but the teacher is assisting the student in finding awareness of themselves. When the student is left to his own devices, the process becomes patient exploration.

Like practicing the horn, students have to practice the Alexander Technique. Bringing awareness, inhibition, and direction in the practice room should increase the efficiency of a practice session.

Based on personal experiences, I know that the study of the Alexander Technique can offer horn players strategies for more successful practice sessions and performances. Alexander Technique encourages an awareness of the entire self and all that it comprises from the viewpoint of the individual. All the various aspects of horn playing are inextricably involved in music making.

I wanted to see if horn players share a commonality of habits which they bring into the practice room. Some of the issues we encounter as horn players, both amateurs and professionals, students and teachers, are not exclusive to ourselves. I also wanted to open a window for horn players to see how Alexander Technique teachers think and interact with their students. Understanding how Alexander Technique
teachers work will enlighten horn players about how Alexander Technique benefits performers.

Using the standard horn repertoire, both taught and performed, seemed to me the best way to proceed. I wanted to get a wide range of music, encompassing many styles and musical periods, therefore I selected Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, K. 495: first movement *Allegro maestoso*, Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, op. 47: first movement *Moderato-allegro non troppo* low horn *tutti* (17-21), Johannes Brahms Horn Trio in E-flat, op. 40: third movement *Adagio mesto*.

These three works vary in musical style, performance practice, musical range, dynamic range, speed, and capabilities needed to execute the piece. The intent is to give an overarching idea of as many musical situations students could encounter.

I wanted to reach out to as many horn teachers as possible, to find common habitual tendencies they notice when working with their students. When speaking with horn teachers I wanted to hear their perspective when working on these pieces with their students and as performers.

Then I wanted to talk to Alexander Technique teachers of various backgrounds such as instrumentalists, vocalists, actors, and dancers. Although an Alexander Technique teacher can work with people of various careers, such as an athlete, musician, or computer analyst, I selected teachers who work with musicians. I reached
out to teachers who may have had some experience working with instrumentalists, but did not eliminate anyone who has never worked with horn players.

My thought is that the responses from the horn teachers and Alexander Technique teachers will be similar in approach. Although, the horn teacher response will be specifically based on the music, some of the habits they will observe and how they work with their students will be similar to the Alexander Technique approach. At first glance it may seem as if each teacher thinks differently, but I believe their intent will be the same.
CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

Horn performers are frequently challenged with performing in various ensembles, each with their own standards regarding dynamics, range, technique, and blending. Keeping this wide variability in mind, I selected three standard works that cover a range of performance settings: concerto, orchestral, and chamber ensemble.

The questionnaire I created asks horn teachers to discuss the physical and mental requirements needed to perform these pieces. The survey also encourages them to identify common pitfalls that students encounter when working on these pieces. Finally, I asked if they or their students have worked with an Alexander Technique teacher, and ask the horn teachers to identify an Alexander Technique teacher from their area on the form.

The questionnaire is in a short answer response format. This encourages teachers to respond as they typically would to their students and colleagues. I discarded the idea of multiple-choice questions, to remove the possibility of survey takers being influenced by the answer choices. The short answer allows for more natural, creative responses, with the potential to identify more diverse and unforeseen problems among horn students.

I initially compiled my survey contact list through the International Horn Society’s web page, searching for horn teachers in the United States of America. My intent was to email at least one professor from each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. I
combed through individual University websites for more contacts, and I was able to locate and email at least one person from each state.

Through random selection, I was able to find 268 horn teachers and professors, all within the United States. Unfortunately, not all websites contained valid email addresses. Thus, I was able to send 242 questionnaires via email, with a goal of obtaining 20 responses before reaching out to Alexander Technique teachers. I received 21 responses to the survey from across the country.

I offered the respondent an opportunity to discuss their answers in more detail by phone. I asked for phone contact information on the questionnaire and contacted those who indicated they would be willing to participate in a follow-up phone interview. Many people prefer to communicate verbally often revealing thoughts that might otherwise not arise when writing. Of the 20 questionnaire responses, 14 were willing and participated in a follow-up phone interview, and 13 have consented to having the interview listed in the appendices. In addition, one requested to give a phone interview only and not participate in the questionnaire.

Once I obtained 21 responses to my questionnaire, I began to group each response according to the physical or mental habit listed by the respondent. Each response was given by the professor in their own words. Therefore, I took only some minor liberties with grouping categories. The categories for the physical comments are:
• Endurance: defined as the ability to perform a piece that can be considered physically demanding on the body and/or embouchure. Endurance can be a factor as it pertains to length, range, or volume.

• Range: the *tessitura* of the piece.

• Finger Coordination: defined as the precision and coordination of the fingers. This also includes the coordination of the tongue, fingers, and air.

• Flexibility: the ability to maneuver throughout the horn. Specifically, it pertains to slurs, trills (non-valve and valve) and embouchure shifts.

• Body tension: unnecessary physical tension within the body. This includes - but is not limited to - legs, back, shoulders, arms, neck, throat, jaw, and embouchure.

• Air efficiency: defined as the use of air and efficiency in breathing. This includes - but is not limited to - air/breath support, airstream, warmth, volume, speed, and consistency.

• Articulation: the idea of tonguing in time with clarity.

• Tone: the sound quality and production on the horn.

• Dynamics: the volume as it pertains to loud and soft.

• Oral cavity: specifically discussing the embouchure and the inside of the oral cavity. This pertains to lips, tongue placement, jaw and vowel concepts.

The categories for the mental thought process noticed by horn teachers are:

• Mental Interpretation: the ability of the musician to convey the composer’s intent of the piece. This includes ideas such as style, character, mental imagery,
musical lines, musical direction, musical phrasing, emotions, and performance practice.

- **Musical Maturity:** the ability to understand the musical and technical layers of the piece beyond surface level of thinking. Having this mature thought process often leads to an all-encompassing musical interpretation.

- **Mental Endurance:** the ability to focus for lengths at a time. Balancing the various variables such as accompanist, chamber settings whilst maintaining focus on the overall music.

- **Intonation:** focusing on pitch and hearing the pitch center. This also includes maintaining pitch and hearing entrances before playing.

- **Tempo:** maintaining and hearing the subdivision for the tempo of the piece.

Some of the categories such as air efficiency, finger coordination, musical interpretation, and intonation have many terms associated with them. For example, air efficiency covers all aspects of breathing and the use of air in the horn. Many teachers used words such as air stream, air support, and breath support. As each of these is associated with the usage of air, they were categorized together.

Finger coordination covers the idea of finger coordination, as well as how this coordinates with the tongue and air. This category was difficult to put together, but the context of each response allowed for the coordination of these three physical ideas. Thus, they are presented under “finger coordination.”
Musical interpretation covers the idea of a student’s understanding of style, character and performance practice. The words used for this category cover a vast amount of terminology, all of which could be summed up under interpretation.

Intonation includes the idea of hearing the pitch, before and during the note. Even though this concept can be seen as a physical concept, in these responses it was defined as awareness. This includes having the awareness to hear the pitch, find the center of the note, and perform it at all dynamic levels.

For each piece I looked at the top three responses for each physical and mental habit. Based on those top responses I selected the ones that I felt would benefit from the Alexander Technique. I selected the top response from what I felt horn players would relate to the most and would appreciate hearing an Alexander Technique teacher’s response.
Horn Teachers Responses and Results

I compiled the results of the questionnaire into a graph to show the frequency of how many professors mentioned the physical and mental concepts needed to perform these pieces. Each number represents a person, not the number of times they mentioned the specific topic.

There are two graphs one for the mental habits and physical habits needed to perform these works, as well as the concepts students often struggle with. The first graph is the physical habits followed by mental habits.

![Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Horn Concerto no. 4 in E-flat, mvt. 1 Top Mental Comment Results](image)

Figure 1.1: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, K. 495: first movement Allegro maestoso mental comments.

The musical interpretation was mentioned by eleven out of twenty-one, 52.3% of the responses. Musical interpretation is the most significant mental factor when working
on the Mozart Horn Concerto no. 4. Having a clear understanding of the historical context of the piece and conveying that as a musician is important when preparing and performing this work. Mentally the student needs to focus on the music while the technique should be prepared enough to feel second-nature and natural.

Following this statistic was musical maturity, connecting the technical skills of finger coordination, range, trills, and mental skills to the knowledge of performance practice. I selected musical interpretation as it received an overwhelming response from the questionnaire. I feel the Alexander Technique community would be of great assistance to students dealing with conveying the musical intention.

![Bar chart showing top physical comment results for Mozart Horn Concerto no. 4.](image)

**Figure 1.2:** Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, K. 495: first movement *Allegro maestoso* physical comments.
Based on the information above fifteen out of twenty-one, 71.4% of the responses, I received believe that both finger coordination and range are important physical factors students deal with the Mozart Horn Concerto No.4.

This contributes to the idea of finger coordination in the sixteenth note passages often give students complications. These sixteenth note passages are in the high range for the horn up to concert E-flat.

Next is air efficiency and physical endurance with nine out of twenty-one, 42%, teachers mentioning this concept. This was often mentioned as breath support, air support, use of air within the fast passage and the inhalation process needed to be relaxed. This concerto is on the embouchure for a considerable amount of time in the high range, both fast and lyrical passages.

I wanted to select the responses that received the most responses. Based on the questionnaire these would be responses that horn players would have a higher chance of working through. I also selected responses that I felt would use the most benefit from the Alexander Technique, based on my Alexander Technique trainee experience.

Horn Teacher Response Conclusion

Horn teachers felt one of the most challenging aspects of performing the Mozart was a musical interpretation and getting students to relate to the musical style. Having
the students in the mental mindframe of the Classical style was very significant in executing this work.

Horn teachers even included having the students listen to various types of music from that time period and looking up the fashion. Followed closely by interpretation was maturity in approaching this piece. Addressing the technical challenges and still keeping the musical idea.

As for technique the top two responses were range and finger coordination. Most of the higher range passages in this movement are followed by fast sixteenth note passages. Students tend to focus on the higher pitches and suffer with coordination of the sixteenth notes. When focusing on sixteenth notes students then tend to confront the issues of air and finger coordination of the notes.

Formulating the Alexander Technique Questions

After reviewing the responses, I began to generate questions that I thought might anticipate topics Alexander Technique teachers would likely address with students. As a trainee of the Alexander Technique, I made a mental note of the concepts I would discuss with horn players who brought these concerns to their Alexander lessons with me.

As I had done before with the horn teachers I did not suggest specific Alexander Technique solutions in the questions. After review and consideration of the responses I came up with the following questions for the physical and mental habits for the Mozart Horn concerto no. 4
• How do you approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?
• How would you work with students who physically tighten up as they play in the higher register?
• How would you use intention to help the student bring alive the “Mozartean” Style?

Alexander Technique Teachers’ Responses

When I asked the teachers about obtaining the optimal finger coordination for the fast passages in Mozart they all began by mentioning the importance of the primary coordination of the whole body which is dependent on the performer’s understanding of head/neck/spine alignment.

Understanding this alignment is the foundation for creating an expansive space and freedom to do muscular activities, such as fast sixteenth note passages in Mozart. It is also essential to understand that specific body parts are not separated from the whole body.

Having the understanding that the body is a whole mechanism with many moving parts that cooperate and seek balance with each other will assist the performer in remaining grounded. Grounding shifts the performer’s often common thinking away from the idea that the tension needs to be held in the fingers or arms.

It is important that the student have a clear idea of the head, neck, and spine relationship in order to be able to understand and cooperate with any new body
mapping of the fingers, wrists, arms and back. Many teachers mentioned the importance of body mapping as it assists in clearing up any misunderstanding the performer may have as to how the fingers function.

FM Alexander taught that the fingers lead and the fingers connect to the wrist, to the arms, to the scapula, clavicle, and into the back muscles. The muscular effort should not be held in the fingers, or wrist, or elbow, or shoulder. The strength comes from the back, allowing the arm and the fingers to move without unnecessary tension. Many of Alexander teachers offer specific exercises, even classes that focus on the hand-arm-back relationship as it is one of the most common mismapped areas in the body.

Barbara Conable discusses in “How to Learn the Alexander Technique,” the details of the arm structure. Most people believe the arm only has three joints, wrist, elbow, and shoulder. The arm is comprised of at least four joints and most teach as many as seven.

Where the clavicle meets the sternum is a joint, this allows us to have a full arm rotation and range of motion. The joints include the two joints near the clavicle, where the clavicle meets the ball of the humerus in the front, and the scapula that meets the ball of the humerus from behind. The ulna and radius meet the elbow creating two more joints. Next, we have two joints where the ulna and radius connect to the wrist. The wrist in itself is comprised of many little joints between the seven carpal bones.
The fingers are often mismapped. Many believe the fingers have three joints, and the fingers stop at the knuckles that protrude when making a fist. The finger structure goes to the wrist, including the thumb. Having this clear understanding gives a horn performer more room and sense of length in fingers when performing.

When mismapping the fingers and stopping the motion of the fingers in the knuckles one loses a range of motion, and the tension tends to linger in the upper joints of the fingers. Being able to find more length in the fingers gives the performer more flexibility and freedom when performing.

The next question addressed strategies AT teachers might employ to help students who have a tendency to tense up as they begin to play in the higher register. All of the teachers really dove into the three concepts of awareness, inhibition and direction.

Some of the teachers mentioned they would encourage the students to observe what they are thinking about when they get to those passages in the higher register. One teacher specifically mentioned that she would have them stop once they notice they are getting tense. Often, they will stop measures before the passage that is actually what they are anxious about. This type of awareness and inhibition opens the students' perspective to how thinking about what is to come can impact what they are presently performing.
Another teacher mentioned she works with the student on understanding *endgaining* and how to stay present and work through the *means-whereby*. *Endgaining* is the tendency to focus on the end result of a task and then over muscling to achieve it. For example, in the Mozart Horn Concerto the student may focus on the high B-flats in the exposition. However, because the focus is on one specific pitch, the performer loses sight of what needs to be done to perform the sixteenth notes, or phrase, up to this pitch musically.

FM Alexander discussed the *means-whereby* as the process through which we achieve a goal. In this example it is not to focus on the high notes in a passage, but instead the process that is leading up to the higher notes. This assists students in staying present to the music thereby dismissing unnecessary tension that accompanies ‘trying,’ and release any unnecessary tension that might occur when *endgaining*.

The teachers also mentioned finding what the students were thinking about when they got to those passages. Often students are not aware of what they are telling themselves when they “endgain.” Their mind-chatter has become a mindless old habit. Helping them to become more aware of this self talk enables them to pause and find more productive directions to give themselves when performing. As one teacher mentioned, “spinning the nervous anxiety into a positive musical moment.”

The final question for Mozart was on intention and helping the student focus on the style they want to convey to the audience. Many of the teachers mentioned various
ways they get the student to understand what they want, as a performer, to convey to the audience.

All of the teachers are fond of asking the performer questions about their intent with music they are performing. They encourage the students to be present with those emotions they want to convey to the audience, but also to be open to spontaneity.

Spontaneity is closely related to the idea of the means-whereby. By staying present with the music, the music stays alive and vibrant. As one teacher so wonderfully pointed out it is a balance of experience and spontaneity. Trusting your musical experience and trusting the moment when you are performing to take a musical risk.
CHAPTER 4. SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO. 5, LOW HORN TUTTI

Horn Teachers Responses and Results

I have compiled the results of the questionnaire into a graph to show the frequency of how many professors mentioned the physical and mental concepts needed to perform the low horn tutti horn 1 excerpt from the Shostakovich fifth symphony. Each number represents a person, not the number of times they mentioned the specific topic.

There are two graphs one for the top physical habits and top mental habits needed to perform these works, as well as the concepts students often struggle with. The first graph is the physical habits followed by mental habits.

Figure 1.3: Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D minor, op. 47: first movement Moderato-allegro non troppo low horn tutti (17-21) mental comments.
Based on the results above 9 out of 21, 42.8%, of teachers mentioned intonation. In the low range, it was often mentioned that having a clear pitch center is significant. Because the range is lower, students have to work harder for pitch accuracy.

Figure 1.4: Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D minor, op. 47: first movement *Moderato-allegro non troppo* low horn *tutti* (17-21) physical comments.

Based on the graph the comment received most by teachers was on range. 14 out of 21, 73.6%, of the teachers mentioned range. The focus of these responses was finding ease in performing in this range. The tone quality and clarity needed to play in the low range was discussed by teachers. Teachers also mentioned the large range covered in this excerpt. 7 out of the 14, 50% of those responses specifically mentioned the importance of the high range at the end of the excerpt.
Following range were dynamics and air efficiency with 12 out of 21, 57.1%. This went closely alongside range in making sure the correct amount of air is used when playing in the lower and higher register as well as having the correct dynamic indicated for this excerpt.

Horn teacher response conclusion

Teachers mentioned frequently the range as being the biggest challenge for this excerpt. This includes finding clarity and a focused clear tone in the lower register, whilst maintaining the ability to play at the top of the staff at the end of the excerpt.

Dynamics, embouchure and air efficiency were often mentioned together by teachers. Horn players have a hard time balancing the embouchure needed to play with a full sound with the correct air quality in the lower register of the horn.

Along with executing a full sound in the lower register it is important that the player is able to hear each pitch. Without the proper air support in this register the intonation can be unstable.

Because the excerpt is a musical phrase comprised of whole notes, half notes, and in the lower register precise tempo is pertinent. Subdivision of the long notes and making sure the articulation is on time is an important factor of this excerpt.
Formulating the Alexander Technique Questions

After reviewing the responses, I began to generate questions that I felt Alexander Technique teachers would discuss with students. I made a mental note of the concepts I felt, as a student of the Alexander Technique, I would discuss with horn players who bring these concerns to their Alexander lessons with me.

As I had done before with the horn teachers I did not mention specific Alexander Technique etudes in the questions. After much thought and review of the responses, I came up with the following questions for the physical and mental habits for the Shostakovich low horn tutti excerpt.

- How do you work with the awareness of the jaw? And the awareness of the jaw to the horn and embouchure?
- Can you talk about how would you work with students working with the breathing mechanism without over controlling it?

Alexander Technique Teachers’ Responses

The top responses for the Shostakovich low horn tutti addressed very physical technical skills. Horn teachers mentioned that students have difficulty with the jaw and keeping an embouchure that encourages a great tone that can move easily throughout the entire horn register. Teachers also mentioned having the correct breath support for this piece is important because of the ranges this piece covers.

Alexander Teachers all mentioned making sure the student has a clear accurate understanding of the jaw and its relationship to the head, neck, spine. Overall, many
people do not have an accurate idea of where the jaw joint is located. Many of the
teachers mention use of physical models of the jaw, as this will give a clear visual
understanding of the jaw and how it is related to the skull.

Often people think the jaw joint is lower than it actually is so people do not use
the full range of motion in the jaw when opening and closing. This is imperative for horn
players in the low register as having an understanding of the proper joint location allows
for more room and flexibility in moving throughout the lower register.

Along with tension in the jaw Alexander Teachers mentioned the tongue
placement as well as unnecessary tension in the tongue. Understanding the placement
of the tongue while breathing and articulating is very important. The tongue can get in
the way of the inhalation and exhalation of the breath.

Whispered Ah was a technique the teachers suggested as a great exercise to
help students understand the opening of the jaw from the jaw joint, as well as breathing.

Whispered Ah was created by FM Alexander as a means to bring one’s attention
to breathing without creating unnecessary tension to the body. The person should
breathe through the nose. When breathing through the nose it is encouraged to think of
something that makes one happy or smile, this helps raise the soft palate. The tongue
should be resting inside the mouth, preferably on the top of the bottom teeth. As one
begins to open the mouth, one is aware of the location of the jaw joint and how it
releases as you open. This should not be a quick movement, but allow time to observe
the jaw’s motion.
After opening the jaw, one whispers a long sustained and breathy “ah.” When one is out of air from exhaling on an “ah,” one closes one’s mouth and waits for the air to come back in through one’s nose on the next inhalation. One will then be able to observe the natural reflex of the inward breath at the end of an exhalation.

The Whispered Ah is a great way to heighten one’s awareness of anatomically correct articulation of the jaw joint and the possibility of inhaling without tension. The Whispered Ah is a very common tool of Alexander Technique teachers for this purpose.
CHAPTER 5. BRAHMS HORN TRIO IN E-FLAT, OP. 40: THIRD MOVEMENT *ADAGIO MESTO*

Horn Teachers Responses and Results

I have compiled the results of the questionnaire into a graph to show the frequency of how many professors mentioned the physical and mental concepts needed to perform the third movement of the Brahms Horn trio. Each number represents a person, not the number of times they mentioned the specific topic.

For the Johannes Brahms Horn Trio in E-flat only 19 responses were received. Not all teachers who participated had information they would like to have listed on the questionnaire. All responses will be calculated out of nineteen, unlike the previous two works which are out of twenty-one.

There are two graphs one for the top physical habits and top mental habits needed to perform these works, as well as the concepts students often struggle with. The first graph is the physical habits followed by mental habits.
Figure 1.5: Johannes Brahms Horn Trio in E-flat, op. 40: third movement *adagio mesto* mental comments.

Based on the responses 12 out of 19, 63.1%, mentioned musical interpretation as an important factor when working on this piece. This includes connecting with the music's emotional intent and conveying this in the performance.
Based on the responses 13 out of 19, 68.4%, of the horn teachers mentioned dynamics as the physical habit students struggle with the most. Teachers mentioned the idea of playing at a soft dynamic alongside matching the abilities of the other ensemble members is a difficult technique to master in this piece.

The next most received response was range at 11 out of 19, 57.8%. Teachers mentioned this piece covers a wide range for the horn, but sits primarily in high register of the horn.
The closely following range was endurance and use of air at 10 out of 19 52.6%. This movement is the third movement out of fourth movement work. It is a long movement that covers a wide range so having physical endurance is a significant factor.

Teachers often mentioned the air support needed to play with a resonant and soft dynamic. This was something teachers mentioned students have a difficult time finding a balance when performing.

Horn Teacher Response Conclusion

Based on the data presented horn teachers collectively felt that dynamics, range, endurance, and air efficiency were the top most physical concepts horn players need to work through with this piece.

The responses often related these four concepts together, clearly indicating that one without the other is often a contributing factor to a student’s lack of success on a work such as this.

The air efficiency needs to be without tension in order for the student to obtain a resonant soft dynamic, and legato style for this third movement. The range sits in the high tessitura of the horn. Having the ability to play in this range for an extensive amount of time is significant to the player’s endurance ability.
As for the mental comments having a clear musical interpretation received the highest response by a considerable amount. Teachers mentioned that it is important for the player to have the maturity level to understand the musical direction, phrasing, chamber setting navigation, and blending of textures is vital to execute this work. The student has to be prepared to work beyond the surface level of technique but the musicality that Brahms had intended.

Formulating the Alexander Technique questions

After reviewing the responses, I began to generate questions that I felt Alexander Technique teachers would discuss with students. I made a mental note of the concepts I felt, as a student of the Alexander Technique, I would discuss with horn players who bring these concerns to their Alexander lessons with me.

As I had done before with the horn teachers I did not mention specific Alexander Technique etudes in the questions. After much thought and review of the responses, I came up with the following questions for the physical and mental habits for the Brahms horn trio the third movement.

- How would you work with students to stay free as they perform softer passages?
- How do you work with students in finding awareness in performing with fellow musicians, such as chamber ensembles?
Alexander Technique Teachers’ Responses

The first question that was asked pertaining to the Brahms horn trio was on playing at a soft dynamic. The horn teachers mentioned that students create unnecessary tension when playing softly. This will lead students to tension in the jaw, neck, and embouchure as well as a lack of breath support.

Alexander teachers mentioned the idea of awareness of the tension that occurs when thinking of, and playing, softer passages. Being aware of the body’s reaction to the idea of playing a soft and delicate passage is essential in understanding one’s natural habits.

Not only did the Alexander teachers mention being aware of the body physically, but also mentally. What are the thoughts one is thinking when approaching a movement such as the third movement of the Brahms horn trio?

As FM Alexander discovered, our thoughts have an important influence on how one operates physical. Using direction to change those thoughts into a positive process is essential to tasking, such as playing soft musical passages, with good use.

The last question was concerning playing in a chamber ensemble setting. The Brahms horn trio is truly a piece where at times all players play the role soloist and accompanist. The balance and the communication is very important, and also makes the music feel more alive and rather than a technique to be executed.

While performing musicians are constantly thinking about various performance techniques. Focusing attention solely on one’s own performance can lead to performers
to forget to communicate with their fellow musicians during performances. We, as musicians, can often face the danger of becoming too task oriented in our performances.

All of the teachers have exercises they use to allow students to relate to their colleagues. All of the exercises mentioned the idea of having the students to remember that they are playing with another person, not an inanimate object. Teachers mentioned using the ground as a means to connect the group. Thinking about one's colleagues backs to stay connected. Even practicing with backs to each other without seeing one another to understand the connection is deeper than sight and hearing.
I found a unanimity of response to the questions presented to Alexander Technique teachers. They approached their work holistically taking into consideration the oneness of the body/mind connection. Whatever the piece, the Alexander Technique teacher was interested in achieving primary control, from which other solutions find themselves.

Musicians often see the issues that occur with our performance as being linked to the repertoire or body part. However, connecting with primary control is the first step in working with specific musical concerns.

The teachers felt it necessary to work with the student in finding freedom in the head-neck joint. To find this, one goes through the steps of primary control which are awareness, inhibition, and direction. When one has achieved primary control, one begins to notice the freedom in the head-neck area of the body and a growing awareness of the amount of muscular strength needed to accomplish a task, such as turning the head from side to side, which seems almost effortless.

This process continues as the body begins to lengthen and widen and one begins to connect into one’s back and senses a connection to one’s body as a whole. As the spine continues to lengthen one feels more connection to the ground through the feet.
Invariably, after primary control is awakened, the Alexander teachers might address specific performance concerns. For example, finger coordination, where they might remind the student of their fingers extending out of the connection to their back.

Students begin to realize the true connection of the fingers. They begin to understand there is a connection to the wrist, elbow, shoulder joint, collarbone, scapula, and spine. When they realize you have support from deep in the back, they begin to free their fingers from the thought they have to carry the musculature load of playing.

When they connect into the legs they allow for the support to come from the legs, when standing and playing in the upper register. They have the support of the ground carrying them through the higher register. Having awareness of one’s feet is also essential when seated. Keeping the contact with the ground gives one the support they need to play in the higher and lower register.

General Knowledge

All Alexander Technique teachers felt that it was valuable that performers have the general knowledge of their anatomy. Mis-mapping of the body, such as the lips, jaw, arms, fingers and breathing mechanism, can cause a lot of unwanted stress for a horn player learning a difficult instrument such as the horn.

Many of the teachers encouraged using 3D models and various images to show the jaw and how it connects to the skull. Having a clear understanding of where the jaw joint releases opens up a greater sense of freedom to the horn player previously
imaginable. Of course, this same clear understanding of the arm structure and fingers and their joints would be explored with an Alexander Technique teacher.

When it came to the breathing mechanism mismepping was often an issue. When a horn player has a clear idea of the parts of the breathing mechanism such as the diaphragm and lungs and how they function together, they will have a much greater opportunity to obtain a full and supported breath and thus sustain and a well shaped musical phrase.

Teachers used ideas, such as Whispered Ah, as a way for their students to fully understand the inhalation and exhalation. Whispered Ah helps one find the natural reflex of the inhalation as well as an awareness of the lungs expanding in the chest and back.

Connecting to the Music and Others

Most teachers did not believe that ‘connecting to the music’ was a concept specific to the Alexander Technique. But the intention to recreate the music and become one with the music helps to bring the music alive. Some teachers went as far as to suggest that researching the fashion, hair do’s and behavioral norms of the times might help spark the imagination for a 18th century mindset when playing the, and living the Mozart Horn Concerto No. 4.

Teachers also felt that experimenting with the style was important. Often, we have an idea of what the music sounds like, so we only strive for one idea, limiting our
musical creativity. Alexander Technique teachers felt that experimenting and trying new things helps bring the music alive. To be able to take a risk and try new things in practice. For example, playing the music in a different style such as a waltz, or even dancing to the music while playing. Experimenting in the practice room allows for the performance to feel like a moment to embrace the music and not getting lost in getting it “right.”

Alexander Technique teachers felt that after experimenting and finding new ways to connect to the music, performers need to find ways to communicate with their colleagues on stage. The teachers have various exercises and etudes they use to work with chamber groups.

For a piece such as the Brahms Horn Trio, inviting colleagues into one’s personal space can bring the piece alive. Horn teachers talked about how important it is to be connected in breathing for players to experience a connection through their breathing to assist in moving the phrase together as a trio.

Alexander Technique teachers believe connecting with one another’s backs can bring about the connection the music needs. Understanding that you are working with someone who is breathing and is sharing the same space with you helps bind the performers together. Also, understanding that all performers are sharing the same ground can help performers sense that connection. These are all strategies for “humanizing” the performing experience.
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

Based on the information I have received, it is evident to me that the Alexander Technique would be a valuable practice tool for horn players. During practice sessions, it is easy to narrow the focus on particular details of the music or performance technique. However, both horn teachers and Alexander Teachers agree, stepping back and taking the broader approach will help students achieve the specific goals they are working.

A student may be dealing with one specific technical issue such as managing range or fast sixteenth note passages. However, in order to work through these technical issues one needs to look at the mental and physical foundation that they have created. With Alexander Technique, a student can assess the issue using healthy mind-body coordination.

Alexander Technique will assist the student through awareness, inhibition, and direction. Students will become aware of the body when working on a musical passage. They will pause and notice what is occurring in their body by just thinking about the music. Patiently, and kindly, working with themselves to release any unnecessary tension the body encounters. They then give themselves positive directions to perform the music.
By taking a moment to pause, students can begin to think, “could it be something I am doing with my air?” “Am I tightening in my throat?” “Am I moving unnecessarily in my embouchure?” Pausing allows for the opportunity to consider a moment in order to notice how they are using themselves while playing the horn.

Horn teachers and Alexander Technique teachers agree that it is essential while playing to have a knowledge of the body and how it is functioning. The body mapping that occurs in Alexander Technique lessons can help students clearly understand the correct structure and functioning of the body. Body mapping could be that template to lead them to good Use during their practice sessions and lead to good Use during a performance.

Horn players are not alone when experiencing the emotions and frustrations that occur when making music. However, it is how they approach those practice sessions that begin the shift to a positive experience. Alexander Technique may not solve all the issues students may have with their playing, but it certainly offers insight into their horn playing.

In the Appendices is a collection of the data that was gathered. It is important to note that the information received was from teachers all across the United States and those who teach a wide variety of students, both undergraduate and graduate level horn players. Regardless of the level or location, these habits were commonly noticed by teachers.
Also, one will find the responses of the Alexander Technique teachers. It is very clear that the work one will receive from an Alexander Technique teacher is rooted in the same principles. The same high-quality information exists from an Alexander Teacher no matter the teacher’s primary discipline. Because the work they do is not focused on “fixing” the horn player; but to opening students’ minds to their habits, and as they become more aware of their habits, they can be more aware of themselves and bring forth the best work, and effort to their craft.

Given the proper guidance from an Alexander Technique teacher, horn students can begin to become aware of themselves and their thoughts. Alexander Technique can be a useful tool that horn players can use to bring more awareness and ease into their practice sessions. Alexander Technique can become a fundamental tool horn players can use in their practice.

As I come to the end of a lengthy study where I sought to explore the efficacy of the Alexander technique in helping students of the horn achieve more ease and economy of movement while making music, it is my conclusion that the Alexander technique achieves the above while also helping musicians develop their own personal artistry because they have become brave enough to explore themselves and to reveal their true selves while practicing their art.
APPENDIX A: COLLECTING DATA I

Contacting Horn teachers

Figure Appendix A.1.1.

The International Horn Society Website home page (https://www.hornsociety.org/). I selected the Network tab which presented the drop-down option of Community Directory. Finally, I selected the Teachers Database tab.
Figure Appendix A 1.2.

This brought me to the page where I searched through each state of college teachers for names and contacts (https://www.hornsociety.org/network/community/teachers).
Figure Appendix A 1.3. I wanted to broaden my options so I then searched colleges in the state.

I selected universities from the top bar and searched the institution's name and added the department of music/school of music. For example “Louisiana State University School of Music.” From there I searched the University websites Faculty and staff list until the horn professor’s name and contact was found.

Figure Appendix A 1.4.
Questionnaire

Below is the questionnaire that was sent out to horn teachers. The questions are short answer allowing the recipient to write freely and to not encourage leading towards specific answers. This also gave the writer comfortable in phrases they would use with their students.

Figure Appendix A 2.1. The questionnaire.
D. Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D Minor, op. 47; first movement Moderato-Allegro non troppo, Low Horn tutti Horn 1 and 3 (17-21)

Long answer text

J. Brahms Horn Trio in E-flat, op. 40; third movement Adagio mesto

Long answer text

Have you or your students ever worked with an Alexander Teacher? *

- Yes
- No

Do you know of any Alexander teachers in your area? If yes, can you write the name(s) below. *

Short answer text

Are you willing to participate in an interview? *

- Yes
- No
Questionnaire Results

I was able to locate 268 emails of horn teachers across the United States. I emailed 242 horn teachers via email. 21 horn teachers responded to be a part of the research either through the questionnaire, interview or both. My overall response rate was at 11.5%.

Figure Appendix A 3.1. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, mvt. 1 mental comments results.
Figure Appendix A 3.2. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, mvt 1 physical comments results.

[Image: A bar chart showing the physical comment results for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, mvt 1. The chart includes categories such as Endurance, Range, Finger Coordination, Flexibility, Body Tension, Air Efficiency, Articulation, Tone, Dynamics, and Oral Cavity. The bars indicate the level of performance for each category.]
Figure Appendix A 3.3. Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D minor mvt. 1, Horn 1, Rehearsal 17-Rehearsal 21 low horn *tutti* mental comment results.

![Mental Comment Results Diagram](image)

Figure Appendix 3.4. Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D minor mvt. 1, Horn 1, Rehearsal 17-Rehearsal 21 low horn *tutti* physical comment results.

![Physical Comment Results Diagram](image)
Figure Appendix A 3.5. Johannes Brahms Horn Trio in E-flat, mvt. 3 *adagio mesto* mental comment results.
Figure Appendix A 3.6. Johannes Brahms Horn Trio in E-flat, mvt. 3 *adagio mesto* physical comment results.
APPENDIX B PHONE INTERVIEWS - HORN TEACHERS

14 phone interviews were conducted with horn teachers and 13 teachers agreed to have their interviews listed in the appendix. All interview questions were based upon the responses to the questionnaire. Therefore, not all of the questions are the same. Each interview does follow a format of questions on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Horn Concerto No. 4 in E-flat, movement 1, Dmitri Shostakovich Symphony No. 5 in D minor, movement 1 rehearsal numbers 17-21, and Johannes Brahms Horn Trio movement 3 Adagio Mesto. After the discussion of the music, we discussed local Alexander Technique teachers they are aware of and their experiences with the Alexander Technique.

The following information below is an edited transcription of these phone interviews. All information that could identify the interviewee has been removed. Also removed the information pertaining to specific names of Alexander Technique teachers.
Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time out of your day to speak with me! My research is on the use of the Alexander Technique as a practice tool for horn players. The intent is to find tools that can assist with the physical and mental habits we develop throughout our playing career.

CB: For my research, I have selected three standard pieces, Mozart’s horn concerto no. 4 the first movement, Shostakovich’s fifth symphony low horn tutti and Brahms horn trio the third movement adagio mesto. I am contacting horn teachers, such as yourself, to get an idea of the habits you have observed.

Respondent 1(R1): Alright, you pick the piece, and we will get started!

CB: Yes, let’s start with Mozart’s fourth horn concerto, the first movement.

R1: With Mozart, the biggest challenge on a technical level has to do with the runs, the fast 16th notes. What I find with my students that helps them prepare these runs well is a three-fold solution.

R1: First of all, I make sure they have a good subdivision of the long note before the run. If it is a dotted quarter, I have them fill in the eighth notes, *singing eighth note subdivision.* So, that they have a very clear sense of when their muscles need to move after that third eighth note of subdivision.
R1: The second thing I have them do, I have them slur the 16th notes so that the air is dictating the movement. Once the air and timing are in place, of course, this is all done better at a slower tempo. Half tempo is usually a great way to do the slurred and subdivision work. I then have them, with the same tempo, add the articulation but changing nothing; keeping the air exactly the same, because the key to good tonguing is good air. If the air is well supported and moving, the tongue has a much easier job of doing its part of the puzzle.

R1: Then I gradually will have them move the tempo up slurred and move the tempo up tongued, never changing the air movement. One other piece of the puzzle is to make sure that you are using the tip of the tongue. For me using the tip of the tongue and what I call the “Sweet Spot,” which is right behind the front teeth where the gums meet. Often this will lead to very clear articulation, especially if the movement is very sharp, and the tip of the tongue is consistent. This is how I get through the technical hurdles of the Mozart Concerto.

CB: Have you noticed a difference when working with Undergraduate Students and Graduate Level students? Maybe in their thought process of how they approach studying a piece with this level of care?

R1: Well, I do notice a difference in boys and girls, I’ll tell you that much, and I am sure you do too! [Laughter]

CB: Oh, really? [Laughter]

R1: [Laughter] Boys tend to develop patience and brain connections a little slower than girls. I try with each student to be very specific with what their needs are, how they need to work, and I do a case-by-case. I teach the person more than the age or gender, but there are certain patterns that I notice with boys and girls for sure.

CB: Very interesting! [Laughter]
CB: My next question is on the low horn *tutti* from the Shostakovich fifth symphony.

R1: I have a very particular way with this excerpt; I am very methodical in how I teach technique. Because without technique, it doesn't matter how musical a person they are; they need the chops to be able to execute technically.

R1: I'll often find that they overblow this excerpt. In my language, this means they blow too fast of an airstream, more air than their chops can handle. Often I find along with overblowing there is not enough mouthpiece pressure equally on both lips. Because when you drop the jaw for the low register, all kinds of stuff happens.

R1: One of the things that tends to happen is they tend to lose connection to the mouthpiece on one or the other lip. I often will make sure their teeth are aligned so that they have the teeth lined up for good even and equal pressure on both sets of lips. This is the first thing I have them do; after this, I have them practice this excerpt quietly, at a very moderate dynamic.

R1: I will have them slur it and using the tuner ultimately once they have the pressure and sound under control at a softer dynamic. Using the tuner is a very helpful teacher, to instruct whether they are using enough pressure. Often, pitch wise, it is flat as a pancake if there is not enough pressure. A tuner helps, reducing the airspeed/dynamics, checking in with the pressure on both sets of the lips and teeth alignment helps. And they can incrementally you add fast airspeed for dynamics and checking in always that the support is there for the airstream.

R1: Checking in with the tongue after the air and chops are in place. So the tongue comes last. Now, this excerpt, the tongue likes to drop with the jaw, and I don't support that at all. Keeping the tongue in a fairly regular place, behind the front teeth with the tip if possible.
CB: One thing I noticed that you mentioned was the idea of students overblowing. In your opinion, why do you think students tend to overblow this excerpt? Is it a physical process or mental thought process?

R1: Yes, I think they want to sound like a horn section. The feedback I get from orchestras is that there is just overblowing in auditions when it comes to this excerpt. So really in an audition, you never want to play as loud as you would in an orchestra. And for practice purposes, in order to find balance with the chops, the air, the pressure and support overblowing throws that whole balance into a tailspin.

CB: What a great concept! The last piece, the Brahms Horn Trio adagio mesto movement, is such a beautiful and delicate piece. Can you talk about what you see in your students both physically and mentally when working on this work specifically this movement?

R1: I find that this piece, the emotional impact of it having been written for his mother’s death hits me in a very deep place. One aspect for me, and certainly with my students once they master the technique, is to have them visualize a situation. For me, I actually put myself in my imagination at the graveside of my mother, and the emotions that come up bring something extraordinary on a soul level to my music-making. But that is not a technical issue that is a musical and emotional inspiration.

R1: On a technical issue, playing that soft with that much control requires fabulous airspeed support. Playing soft requires a slow, steady airstream, just like a string player’s bow, being slow and steady to control the sound. But in order to have that slow, steady air stream, you have to have constant support and whatever support means to you.

CB: Very interesting! I know you mentioned the emotional aspect as a part of this piece. Do you ever think students get caught up in the emotion of the music?
R1: No, I think students get caught up in the technical part of playing. I try to help them learn the technique but then switch over to a more creative side. That is the challenge and very much so with guys, but not all, that is just a generalization.

CB: Awesome well thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I truly appreciate it!

R1: Of course and you are very welcome!
Respondent 2 Interview-

This interview has been transcribed, and all information that could directly link to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire and speak with me today! Your responses were extremely helpful and I just had a few follow-up questions to your responses.

In one of the responses, you mention the anticipation of playing in the high range and faster passages. Could you elaborate more on how the mental process affects a student physically when working on passages such as the sixteenth notes in Mozart?

Respondent 2 (R2): I would say when a student is first learning something, the best way for them to learn it would be in a way where they would not develop any bad habits; however, as we know that is not always the reality of the situation. A lot of times, those bad habits that we have learned continue to be a part of the performance. Hopefully, we go back and do the work that we need to do to get rid of those little moments by a ton of repetition. But if they do not have enough repetition, they can default back to the bad things they remember from before at the challenging passage.

I know we all have had personal experiences with spots that give us trouble. The first step in making it better, is knowing the spots that do give you trouble. One, making sure you have the physical technique to execute the passage. For instance, going up to the B-flat above the staff, you have to have a substantial-high range in order to play that well and with as much ease as possible.
R2: Doing exercises that are different from the specific passage to build those skills are important, such as high range exercises. Also, scale patterns to work on basic finger tongue alignment and grasping that technique. Basically, working on those individual skills and then applying those skills back to the actual passage.

CB: Yes! We develop habits and a lot of times we have to go back and rework those habits. Having the mindset to do that is very important.

R2: I think that part of it is retraining your brain to feel calm when you get to those spots. Another really great way to do that is to sing and do mental practice. When we sing something, we don’t even think about it and it feels natural. That is another way for us to mentally smooth over those areas. So, to sing through it, or hum and finger through it at the same time, is another way to work on the coordination and to have a successful execution of that spot every time.

CB: And to keep with the mental focus concept, you mentioned being mentally attentive in a piece such as the Shostakovich. It is a long melody mainly comprised of whole notes, half notes, and covers a wide range.

What do you believe is some of the mental focus needed to play such a physically demanding piece?
R2: I think having the trajectory of the passage in mind because the line is so long, it is a melody of whole notes and half notes. And it is not the most melodic thing we have ever played but we do have to have a clear phrase shape. I think knowing your road map ahead of time is important. Keeping your brain focused on that and singing the tune in your head while you are playing is a good way to make sure you are staying on the path you want to be on.

Subdivision is so important in this one especially because we are sitting on those notes. It is very easy for them to be too short, or too long, so staying mentally engaged in your subdivision has to happen.

Of course, dealing with the low range some players may deal with physical shifts. Every player has a different break, or different breaks, multiple, within the mid to low range, so you need to have a plan for those. Planning the breathing with everything and doing everything the same way, like breathing, every single time.

I remember one specific time where I did not stick to my plan and it did not work out well in my favor. It was for a graduate school audition and I added an extra breath or took an extra breath where I normally never do, I think out of nerves. That made me chip something that I had never chipped before. So, it is important to have a plan going in and to play your plan.

You feel more prepared when you know what your plan is. Have everything planned out ahead of time. When you pivot, or change the angle of your mouthpiece, or pop your jaw, or whatever way you want to think of it, but to have it prepared ahead of time. Then to have the musical line in your brain, breath planned out, subdividing, and knowing specifically where you choose to do your accelerando.
CB: I like the idea of committing to the plan you have already made for yourself. I know I have committed to one thing on paper, and when the performance time came I didn't do it, and it does impact the performance.

R2: I think it helps with keeping your brain calm, so it does not feel like it is on fire all of the time. This is important for the nerves to train in that calmness. For me, I first began to notice tension in my body by my breath. I was able to then notice tension in my thighs. I began to synchronize my breath with loosening those tight spots, or legs, and that helped to bring about the calm feeling.

It is very hard to tell someone to relax. I think you should say things such as feeling soft, or feeling loose, something along those lines. When you speak like that those are more tangible things someone can hold onto. I think to go for a physical feeling of letting go that will help your mental state stay calm.

CB: Are there any concepts you recommend to your students to keep a calm mindset? Outside of telling them phrases like to stay loose or soft, do you do anything like meditation or along those lines?

R2: I don’t really do meditation. I find when we say let’s meditate our brains get really active. And it is not what we are supposed to do, so it feels like we are doing something wrong. I find it better to give your brain different things to focus on, such as singing the line in your head, the breath and clarity in the articulation. Because you are never really going to get away from the chatter in your head; however, you can make the chatter constructive or associated with something physical. I know I have never been able to fully clear my head so it is better to direct it towards physical things.
CB: I like the idea of making the chatter focused on the music.

Lastly, the Brahms horn trio is a piece that is very delicate and this movement, the third movement, has a wide range of dynamics. Even though this piece is physically demanding, can you talk about the importance of the mental process needed to perform this movement?

R2: Chamber music is my favorite thing in the world. One nice thing when you are playing the Brahms horn trio is you have two buddies with you, it’s less pressure, it is not like a solo and that is a nice thing.

Having a violinist and pianist that breathes with you, especially a violinist at the beginning is important for that first entrance you have together. But having someone breathing with you, with their arm of course, and having that breathe mimicked back, this helps in not feeling tight when you take that breath. When you have someone doing a giant breath with you, you feel that giant gravity of breath, and ‘boom’ that is where the note starts, and not having any question of where that note starts.

I have played the Brahms horn trio twice. Once was with a violinist who was a fantastic chamber musician who did all of that stuff. And once with a violinist who did not breathe with me and I was less accurate because of that. That was really surprising actually.

The ability to put your attention on matching the sound of the violin, or playing with a really focused, condensed, pure centered core of your sound. That way you can match the violin when you want to and when it is horn time you can do your thing.
R2: Instead of thinking, “I am going to miss these notes,” think “I am going to breathe with them here,” or “we are going to do a really big breath together.” And then trying not to be so delicate with it, or at least doing a couple of different versions, where you do it really sped up or a different dynamic. Something to change the parameters of it a little bit in rehearsals might be helpful. Even just standing, or changing what you do, as an exercise. I have seen most people sit and play it, and maybe it is because it is a long piece.

CB: I know for me playing soft I often get tight in my chops because I am thinking about holding back air. I recently have tried to change my vocabulary when it comes to my air. What are some things you do to work through the soft playing and the air in this dynamic?

R2: I always think of spinning my air forward and that my air is never stopped. It is like a tight spiral of air, where my face can be there and my air is what is keeping my embouchure open. Actually, this is one of my favorite things, every time you take a breath you go back to neutral, both mentally and physically. I love that idea! Even if it is the middle of the phrase, and the phrase isn’t closed at the end of it, but it continues through the breath. But every breath you take, you go back to neutral or zero.

For me physically, when I breathe, and I am talking to my students, I want their faces to get loose again. I do not want my corners to be tight when I am breathing. As soon as you go to play the note, that is when your face, embouchure, engages again.

I think using those breathing points as moments to let any of that tension go that might help with the longevity of the movement. It can tend to feel very still. But I would say that this is my biggest mental trick is having the breath be very cleansing
CB: I like the idea of coming back to neutral.

R2: Yeah, I think it helps with the buildup of tension. Like if you made a mistake, it clears everything out, a clean slate, and you start again on your next breath.

CB: Well those were just a few follow-up questions that I had for you today. Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me today!

R2: Of course!
Centria Brown (CB): Thank you again for completing the questionnaire. It was a huge help. I just wanted to take just a couple minutes to follow up on a few of your responses if that's okay?

Respondent 3 (R3): Sure, absolutely. Just let me know what I can do for you.

CB: Alright, let's start with the Mozart. You talked about the many layers that are very critical in executing this piece, such as the tempo, the range and coordination.

What are some of the physical signs that you see in students when they are thinking about all of these concepts? How does their body react when thinking about these various concepts?

R3: The biggest one that I probably see the most has got to be a physical reaction where they're trying to play in the upper register. You can physically see them trying to raise their bodies up higher as they're going higher. Which indicates to me that they're thinking about high notes as more of a challenge, rather than something to really finesse. I kind of like to think about it rather than forcing them [high range].

R3: Something else that I notice a lot is tense shoulders and neck. Which not only can you see pretty easily, but it's actually fairly easy to hear as well. The sound thins out and
it's not as responsive. Often, that is when there is a lot of air
ball notes, that kind of stuff.

CB: Yeah.

R3: I lost my train of thought. Did I answer any of your
questions?

CB: Yes, that’s great. A lot of Alexander’s concepts is about
staying grounded and being aware of your body. I notice in
myself, and my students, when we are playing in the higher
range, you’re really reaching for it and your body reacts in
that way.

How does that reaction affect their sound? You said that
they get a tighter sound when they’re going into it?

R3: Yeah. It feels like it gets less round and full and kind of gets
brighter to me. Brighter and thinner, really.

CB: Okay. In the Shostakovich, you talked about air and air
control in the lower register. You also mentioned that tension
can creep into the embouchure and the body. The tension
that shows in the lower register presents the lack of stability.
How do you work on making sure there’s not too much
tension in the embouchure when working in the low register?

R3: With that, I actually try calling attention away from the
tension if that makes sense. I’ll focus more on how they’re
using their air, rather than mentioning, "Oh, make sure
you’re relaxing, in that low register."

R3: With some students, that helps, but a lot of times when you
mention to them to relax, they end up losing the support of
their corners. They don't quite understand the distinction between being supportive and still relaxing into those notes. So, I try and focus on good delivery of the air.

Sometimes I'll have them blow on their hands, so they can feel what a good air flow feels like, and then sometimes, without being creepy, to blow actually on my hand, so I can feel it as well. Then sometimes, blowing on to theirs, so they can feel that type of flow that I have found is successful down there. You know, still focused, but a larger volume.

Because sometimes, they'll be blowing a lot of air, but it loses that focus. Especially with Shostakovich, they tend to try and play it, in my own personal opinion, maybe a little bit too full. Then things get a little bit too crazy, too unfocused. So, it's more about the intensity, rather than the control.

**CB:** I like that idea of the feeling the actual air, the air flow. I think that's something a lot of people talk about, is the type of air that you need in that lower register, so the fact that you give them another way of seeing it, but actually feeling it, is very helpful.

**R3:** Yeah, that one works out quite a bit. Because you can talk about that air all day long, but when it comes down to it, it's just harder to feel that when you're playing sometimes, until you kind of recognize the difference when you're actually playing.

I know that's one of the things that I personally struggled with for a long time. I was always told, "Use your air this way. Do this with your air." But I always thought that I was, but until I really figured out what that actually felt like, and I realized what I thought was correct, but it really wasn't, that things started to turn around.
R3: I found that helped a lot of them, because I could feel what that feels like. Then trying to make that transition from that, blowing on the hands, to blowing through your horn. Because there’s no resistance, obviously, when you’re just blowing on your hand you have to keep things still relaxed and to try and recreate that when they’re playing.

CB: Awesome. You’ve mentioned that you have worked with, you or your students have worked with Alexander Technique before. Have you yourself personally worked with a teacher or a clinician before?

R3: Yeah. When I was working on my master’s degree I took lessons for three months. That was all I could afford at the time, to be honest.

CB: Do you remember exactly how it impacted your own playing?

R3: Yes. I remember very distinctly, when I was with her, the sensation... like, understanding what my body was doing, and then being able to really relax, and produce good sounds without force. I remember that very, very vividly.

And the problem that I run into is when I'm not when I wasn't with her, and I still kind of struggle with this; when I'm not with her, that's so much harder to recreate. "Okay, now, this is what it should look like. This is what it should feel like. This is what I'm seeing. Let's see you do that." Without that, it was just, it's just so much harder for me to recreate that same sensation, but I always strive for that.
It was still apparent to me when I was working on it. And a lot of the concepts, I do try and portray to my students. One of the biggest ones has to do with just general posture and sitting in chairs. And how, you tell students, "Sit up tall," and the first thing that they do is they immediately overextend.

I always try and relay to them, as best as I can, "Make sure that you're allowing your bones to do the work. You're not going to feel like you're perfectly straight, because that's not how our body operates. You just want to make sure that you're allowing your body to do what it's supposed to do."

Which helps a lot with that [overextending]. It helps quite a bit with some, and then others, it's a harder concept. But I can understand. I can understand that, for sure.

Well, those were just a few of those questions that I just wanted to touch on with you again. And again, to also thank you for taking the time out to do this. And I hope you have a wonderful day.

Yeah! You, too.
Respondent 4 Interview-

This interview has been transcribed and all information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire, your responses were extremely valuable.

Respondent 4 (R4): Well, I was happy to it.

CB: I had just a few follow-up questions to your responses.

R4: Okay.

CB: My first question is about practicing and the preparatory stage of doing all three of the pieces. The ability to work through the technique, so later on during the performance the music is the main focus.

What are the body language cues, or sound cues, you see and hear when the students primarily focus on the technique and not on the music?

R4: Well, I mean this is going to be fairly general. I would say, obviously an experienced teacher can sense sources of tension, whether it be in the sound, whether it be in restriction of the airstream. Certainly, excess physical tension is going to be restrictive to the breathing and the airstream. I'm a big believer in the fact that when a student is really tuned in to the music when the focus is really on producing the music, and expressing the music, there's an inherent freedom that comes in the airstream.
R4: To give an analogy, I'm constantly throwing an association between the wind player's airstream and the string player's bow. If you watch the bow motion and the bow stroke of a great string player, you're going to see a sense of fluid, relaxed motion that's going to then represent itself in a fluid and relaxed expression of sound.

For a wind player, certainly a horn player, to be able to replicate that musicianship, they're going to have to have the same relaxation in their approach to the airstream. If a student is unduly focused on technical demands, or whether they are just wrapped up too much physically in those technical demands. Or wrapped up mentally, worrying or focusing on those technical demands, that's certainly going to manifest itself in a restriction of the airstream and the fluid musical expression of what they're doing.

CB: Nice.

R4: Does that make sense?

CB: Yes, that makes a lot of sense. In fact, this actually leads into my next question on the Shostakovich fifth symphony, low horn tutti. Could you talk about the techniques that you do with your students to get that relaxed breath in the lower register?

R4: Well, one of the things I encourage students to do, particularly on that excerpt, is as a first step it's really important to make sure that you have as much mastery as possible over each, literally every individual note. I encourage students to take that excerpt and break it down. First, start with that low G and make sure you can play that low G, you can articulate it clearly, you can center it well, you can make a nice resonant sound on that note, you can control the pitch. Then of course when you get secure there, then move to the F and then move to the E flat and then move to D flat.
R4: Taking those notes completely out of context, completely out of rhythm and just first, making sure that you do have a relaxed approach, an adequate approach, a secure centered controlled approach to each individual pitch. And then when you can do that, then learn to play them successively out of rhythm in the order that they occur in the excerpt. And then of course, when that step is secure, then it's time to start playing in their correct rhythm and duration. I'm a big believer in fundamentals. It's a little bit like building a house. If you're trying to build a house too quickly and the foundation of the house is weak, then ultimately when you get the house built, it's not going to stand for very long, if at all.

R4: So, in anything you're working on, whether it be that Shostakovich Fifth or anything else, but that's a really good example. Those basic fundamentals, just being able to control each necessary pitch as adequately as possible, it's got to be that foundational point.

CB: Yes. Definitely. And you also mentioned in that response as well about jaw position and the angle of the horn.

R4: Yes.

CB: In your experience, can you discuss what students know about the jaw and how it relates to horn playing and their playing?
R4: Right. Well, I mean, first of all, that's highly based on the individual student. It does depend a lot on the individual student's physiology and their size and how long their arms are and the length of their torso and as you said, it's literally jaw position. So, there's a tremendous number of variables here, but I think the basic elements that I try to get students to understand is that one of the fundamental things is the jaw is certainly going to open to some degree, going into the [Shostakovich] fifth low range. Whether the jaw shifts forward or not and to what degree it shifts forward is variable from player to player but as an initial step to kind of feel that relaxation and natural process that has to go into that, I ask students to just simply sing it.

Until people stop and really think about it, they may not be aware that if they're just singing a scale from a comfortable mid-range pitch, or whatever their voice range might be. If you ask them to start with just a comfortable mid-range pitch and then sing a scale down one octave, and if possible maybe even an octave and a half or two octaves, the natural process is the throat opens up and the jaw drops and the oral cavity gets much larger as you try to sing lower and lower. I think what a student realizes is, "Oh, this is something I'm doing naturally, not really thinking about it, because as I try to sing lower, the natural physical response is to relax the throat open, let the jaw drop down lower, and let the oral cavity get much bigger." And then essentially that process is very similar when they play the horn.

I think if they can come from that rather natural approach that occurs when singing, and then try to transfer some of those approaches to the horn when they play, that helps them understand the process, know how it works and why it's working and be able to keep it as relaxed and natural as possible by not trying to create any unduly affect or contrived physical approaches that are ultimately not going to help.

CB: That's great, I like the idea of singing. And how this will show you naturally the opening of the jaw.
R4: Yeah, well, if somebody tries singing it's very interesting. This really becomes pronounced when they start to sing well below what their normal range would be.

CB: Mh-hmm

R4: I mean, when they start singing lower notes than they would normally feel comfortable singing and try to force themselves to sing lower and lower, what the body naturally does is very similar to what's going to need to happen with the horn.

CB: Nice. Then my last question was on the Brahms. You talked about how a lot of times a student will feel a little bit of a strain trying to play in the soft dynamic.

Can you talk about what do you to get students out of that box that it has to be as soft as possible so it doesn't affect their sound?

R4: Well, once again, telling the analogy between the violinist's bow and the horn player's airstream. Any string player, if you watch them, you know if that bow gets too slow, if that bow slows down beyond a certain point, then the sound is going to suffer and it's going to get scratchy and ultimately it will stop. And so the key for a horn player is to, once again, stay relaxed. Make sure you're breathing well enough and understand soft dynamics are a matter of blowing a smaller volume of air but not a slower speed of air. I think one of the mistakes that horn players frequently make when they're trying to play really soft is they let the air speed itself slowdown in an effort to play the note softer. When in fact what needs to happen is a much smaller amount of air needs to go through the horn, but the speed of that air might be as fast as or even faster than it would be for a mezzo-forte or a forte tone.
R4: So, learning that balance between staying relaxed, with the amount of air that is supposed to be moving through the horn, and continuing to blow that airstream with real intensity and a lot of direction, that's the crucial element in playing really, really soft. Of course, then letting the air speed be what supports the embouchure so that the embouchure itself doesn't need to get too tense. Ultimately, too much tension in the embouchure when you're playing really soft is going to be caused by the fact that the embouchure is trying to overwork too much to compensate for the lack of airspeed.

CB: Yes, and students do not have that mental connection of airspeed and sound and how it relates to each other.

R4: Yes.

CB: But like you said, changing the thought process can make a huge difference in the strain that occurs for students in the soft playing.

Awesome, well thank you for taking the time to speak with me today I truly appreciate it.

R4: Of course, I hope that was helpful and I certainly wish you all the best of success with this.
Respondent 5 Interview-

This interview has been transcribed and all information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire and to speak with me today. I had a few follow-up questions to your responses.

In the Mozart, you talked about how the students will mentally neglect the music itself when they're thinking a lot about technique and performing. Can you talk about what you see happen with your students physically, maybe with their body language, as well as the thoughts they think about when they're only focusing on that technique, versus the musical performance itself?

Respondent 5 (R5): So, you want me to talk about their body language in reference to the technique?

CB: Yes.

R5: Okay. Well, in the past when I've worked with students on that particular piece, I guess one of the biggest issues is tension as they play the ascending scales into the higher parts of the horn's range. Primarily in the neck and shoulders. So, that's one thing that has been an issue. And of course, I think students tend to get a little bit caught up in the fact that it's so demanding, in terms of high range and clarity of articulation as needed.
R5:

I work with them on melding both the technical and musical aspects. So, they work with each other and they don't see them as isolated components to that piece. But mainly using their ear to lead them through every phrase. And as a result, if they're doing that properly, that will release the tension in their necks and their shoulder. I guess we could use the word tension, but I usually call it firmness and flexing to their core. I often tell my students that the only part of their body where they're allowed to feel tension or firmness is in their core, in the lower part of their body, in an effort to alleviate any tension in their neck and shoulders.

CB:

I like that you have selected another word for it. A lot of time people think of tension as a negative thing. But our body needs just a certain amount of tension to actually function. So, I like how you used a different word for it.

My next question goes along with your response to the Shostakovich low horn *tutti*. You talked about just getting the consistency of sound and articulation and intonation in that low range. Can you talk a little bit about some of the things that you do to your students to get them to get that nice solid sound?

R5:

Yep. I usually have them practice that excerpt stopped. Because we all know, stopped horn in the low range, it can be a little harder. Then play it open. And the reason why I think that works and it’s supposed to be one of those magical fixes for low horn, in terms of sound, clarity of articulation, air support, all of that stuff just seems to fall in place after I have them play something stopped for any length of time. I think because of the resistance that you feel playing stopped, it puts you more in touch with more intense use of air, and in order to control that intense air, you have to have a firmer embouchure set up as well. I encourage them, when they're doing these stopped exercises, to pay really close attention to what their body feels like, in both the output of air and the embouchure set up, so they can replicate that to a certain point when they're playing it opened.
R5: That's one of the biggest things. I guess I do run into issues of there being tension in the low range as well, so we work on improving air support as well, and making sure that it’s coming from the right place, and that they’re using an open vow, and using proper low range embouchure set up, as well. We look at all the things, all the components that go into playing well at the low range.

CB: I like how you said the awareness of your body when you do stopped horn. It goes to the importance of being aware of how your body reacts to various situations.

R5: That's right, and I work with students a lot in the low range, and we have the discussion frequently about how every note in the low range has a different feel. And to find the center of each note, it might take something different, in terms of overall set up. So, we really just spend a lot of time trying to find the most resonant centers of those notes, and that's something that stopped horn definitely works with. But in terms of awareness of your body, I encourage them, with any aspect of the horn, when something’s working, pay attention to not only what it sounds like when it's working, but what it feels like when it's working.

CB: Yes, and this actually goes into my next question on the Brahms. You mentioned the mental challenge of hearing the entrances and continuing the musical direction.

Can you discuss the physical and mental challenges that go along with playing in chamber music, like the Brahms Horn trio?

R5: I think the most stressful thing, at least for me and my students, while working on and performing this movement, is the delicate entrances that are involved. Obviously, completely exposed.

CB: Yeah.
R5: So, intention can't be a result of that. I mean, endurance is the obvious thing for this piece, as well. Again, going back to the idea of making sure that every phrase is being led with air, for an easy, efficient approach. But going back to the specific exposed, high entrances for this one, I think it is a matter of staying physically relaxed, hearing the pitch before you start, and also gaining the sense of what it feels like to play that opening note. You're coming at it from multiple angles, hearing and feeling, and then backing it up with the right airspeed.

CB: Definitely. Those are the few follow-up questions I had for you today. Thank you again for speaking with me, I truly appreciate it.

R5: You're most welcome.
Respondent 6 Interview-

This interview has been transcribed and all information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire, your responses were extremely helpful. I had just a few follow-up questions to your responses. My first question is on the Mozart. You talked about how students will often work too hard both physically and mentally. Can you talk about those physical signs you see as a teacher when students begin to start over-working?

Respondent 6 (R6): Let me think, in terms of physically?

CB: Mm-hmm, maybe some of their body responses or-

R6: Yeah, I think one of the quick obvious ones is, it's not always visual, but it's just too much tension in the lips or embouchure, however you want to refer to that, versus just easy free blowing.

There is also a certain aspect of students, and even myself to an extent, of wanting to play Mozart perfectly, and beautifully, and simply, and very accurately. There can be sometimes a body position of just getting rigid out of fear, which is silly because it's just beautiful simple music.

CB: Yeah.

R6: Or the classic trills in Mozart that they are trying really hard and don't go so well.

CB: What are some of the things that you do to encourage students to get out of that rigidity of wanting to get it “right.” What are some things that you do for yourself to get yourself mentally away from wanting it to be exactly right?
R6: I have a lot of answers to that, I'm trying to think about where to start.

CB: Of course!

R6: One thing I do with some of my students to get them in a state of easy playing, and also to really work on ear training, is I'll assign really basic nursery rhymes that they have to learn in any key possible. Which is mostly an ear training exercise and most of them just use scale grades one through five it's pretty simple. It gets them in a state of playing easily, freely, simple melodies which are kind of what Mozart is and not having to worry about the music, not feeling like it has to be perfect. That's one thing I like to do.

In terms of actually working on Mozart concerti, one that I don't really ever give this to students, but one thing that has helped me a lot is to actually play through all the rests in terms of what the orchestra's doing it's not always great but... I'm trying to think, a good example in Mozart 2 like right after the scales where we have [singing] does that make sense?

But I'll learn the orchestral part in all the rests and practice it that way because then it just feels easy, and fun, and almost silly. It's actually kind of difficult too because then you have no place to breathe. So, I'll do that for different sections. I'll take the first half of the exposition, or whatever, and learn the orchestral part and just practice it like that because it feels easy, fun, and silly. I can't take myself too seriously because you're playing the rest of it. And I realize this is sort of rabbit trailing and it's not entirely related...

What you train your mind to do is going to transfer to your body, if that makes sense?

CB: Yes, it does.

R6: That was a very detailed boring answer but that's something I like to do.
CB: It's almost like you're calming your mind down, or putting its thoughts onto different things, so your body can ease itself a little bit more.

R6: Yes, for sure.

CB: Yeah, I like that a lot.

R6: And I think I have to go, especially for myself, I have to work a lot on finding different points of focus physically when playing to figure out where I need support, and where I need relaxation. I think, obviously, we know that tension is not a good thing, but then there's still a certain amount of support needed. Like with corners of the embouchure, there's a certain amount of air support needed, but then there are plenty of places where you really need a lot of relaxation. So, it will change from where I need to focus on the air and the mouth, or where I need to focus on the air and the lungs, or the throat, or whether I need to focus more on corners. You know all the things that we do as horn players. I'm always experimenting with where I can use more support and where I can relax my body more.

I guess the other thing is just that singing is really helpful because I've done a lot of singing, and I frequently still will get tension in my sound and I just need to stop and sing because it's easy. Most of what we do as horn players, as long as we're not playing a very difficult concerto or something, most of what we do is not silly easy, but simple. You know you have a nice beautiful long tone that you enter and we stress about it, but it's simple, just like singing, and so I try and emulate that.

CB: I like that idea of simple. Because when you say “easy” it sounds, I don't want to say negative, but when you say “simple” it changes your thoughts...

R6: Easy has a kind of self-judgmental.
CB: Yes! You kind of touched a little bit on air and support, and that was kind of my next question. For the Shostakovich you talked about consistent steady air stream. Can you talk about how you, or working with your students, how you work on getting that steady and consistent air stream in the low register?

R6: Yeah, I think one big aspect is to get across the idea of letting the air produce the note and letting the air escape versus pushing the air out. It's aggressive, it's Shostakovich, it's got that angst to it, and so it's very tempting to just want to push a ton of air when you start. One you can't get very far playing that way before you need a ton of breath. But I think there's a way to be very relaxed with a lot of support, and it does require a massive amount of air but it's more than just letting the air escape. And much like singing in the low register it just requires a larger oral cavity, or just space in the mouth, not necessarily more push to the air, or larger aperture necessarily. Just a very slow fast, stream of air that lets the air produce the note, versus making the air produce the note. If that makes sense?

CB: Yeah, so not forcing-

R6: Yes.

CB: But allowing the air to do its job.

R6: Yes.

CB: Which can be a hard concept, like you said, in a piece that's very angsty sounding...

R6: Yeah, it is, it is difficult. But I think there is a way to get that concept across. And I think the tongue can do a lot too. The tongue doesn't have to move much to just a quick movement of the tongue can get across the idea, this effect. But that, again, is something I have to work on, letting the air produce notes versus making it.
CB: Awesome. And then my last question was on the Brahms. You mentioned endurance specifically physical endurance. But could you talk a little bit more about maybe the mental endurance that's needed, especially for the third movement. How do you maintain the focus for this movement?

R6: I don't know if I have a great answer for that, but I guess a lot of that would come from preparation and how invested you are in the piece. I think if you're really invested in your preparation, invested in the nature of the piece, especially some of the emotion behind it. I realize Brahms has a lot of emotional ties to that trio, with the passing of his mom and everything. So, I think the whole piece has a lot of emotional preparation just in terms of it being so beautiful and such a monumental piece as well.

So, I think with preparation, if you're invested enough into it, it's not going to feel necessarily mentally exhausting. Not to say that it isn't still because I'll play, you know, long concerts that are difficult to get through mentally. I think just the mental endurance would come from preparation and more or less how much one cares.

And physically, that also comes with preparation but finding efficiency in preparation. And then kind of the obvious, but when I focus on communicating with a violinist and the pianist that just gets your mind off a lot of distracting things of technique and endurance. The communication aspect is also very important, which I think is a good distraction in your mind to tell your body. You know? We just talked about help your body relax in different ways because of what your mind is thinking.

CB: Mm-hmm, because you're putting your awareness more on working with your colleagues at the moment.

R6: Yes.

CB: Versus you as a horn player not missing a note or playing too loud, or too soft, and things like that.

R6: Mm-hmm.
CB: Awesome. And those were just a few of the follow-up questions I had for you today. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today and I hope you have a great rest of your day!

R6: Thank you!
Respondent 7 Interview-

This interview has been transcribed and all information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

**Centria Brown (CB):** Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I just had a few follow-up questions to your responses.

**Respondent 7 (R7):** Of course.

**CB:** My first question was in response to Shostakovich. You talked about understanding the jaw and oral cavity. Could you talk more about how you work with students to make sure they have a full understanding of how to work with the jaw, as well as the openness of their oral cavity, from the low range to the high range at the end of the excerpt?

**R7:** I think there's a couple of ways of thinking about it, and it depends on the student, as to what seems to work better. Some students, when you talk about the idea of opening the aperture for the embouchure they sort of understand that. But a lot of times what they're used to doing is sort of pushing their lips forward to get more flap inside the mouthpiece. Not necessarily understanding that if you do that, the tendency is to close the jaw and bring the teeth closer together to get that to happen. Which doesn't help the breath support and the balance of muscle activity.

**R7:** Depending on the student, what I try to get them to do is first to think vertically, in terms of when the aperture opens. That they are trying to make the aperture larger, and depending on how you phrase it sometimes they do that. How I phrase it, sometimes they understand what's going on and will involuntarily let the jaw drop open farther because they're trying to get the aperture more round or bigger.
R7: But sometimes they still tend to visualize it as continuing to push their lips forward and not really understanding the impact of the jaw position. And so, when that doesn't work, then we have to go through the process of making a conscious effort to open the jaw wider, to think about what goes on inside the oral cavity.

I like to use imagery, for example picture a golf ball inside your mouth and now picture a softball. Or to use a balloon, and inflate it. But then, once they get a handle on that, and again it's a little bit different for each student. You can't just make them all drop their jaw open and get it to work because they also have to understand how far they can 'jut' before it becomes a problem.

If they've had a really heavy sort of marching band experience before, they already tend to be kind of, not up streaming per se, but they're lead pipe comes out a bit more horizontal to their face. So, I can't just have them drop their jaw open, because then they have no clue what's going on in terms of contact with the mouthpiece. And so, we have to work all those different angles at the same time to try and make sure that the lower lip stays in contact, that they understand what the concepts are in terms of moving the inside of the mouth.

So, once they get past that, then we have to talk about how the jaw moves. Ideally for me the jaw is relatively continuous, but most students are like me where there's a bit of an overlap between a higher jaw setting and a lower jaw setting. Where at a certain point, somewhere between middle C and G below, there's a more active drop of the jaw. We work our way through that, but the goal is to make it as continuous as possible so that they're not thinking about slotting and then tensing the jaw in the low range, and at the same time keeping a balanced sort of pressure on the mouthpiece on the upper and lower lip.

I would say there's a lot of little details to it, but it all revolves around how they respond to saying things like, "Okay, let's open the inside of your mouth a little more." Does that make sense a bit?
CB: Yes, that makes sense, and you cater to how they respond to your phrases when teaching them.

One thing you mentioned was breath support and I know you talked about that in the Mozart. I know when we think of Mozart, we think of light classical style and a lot of times, like you mentioned, the breath support will disappear. How do you encourage students to keep the same style, but still have good breath support and make sure they're using enough air?

R7: Probably the easiest sort of nutshell concept is to try and think about is moving the air faster. Make it narrower, if that makes sense. In other words, a smaller aperture with faster air will tend to get you a little more lightness to the tone, and yet making sure that the support sort of fits the need it needs for range.

Most of the time though, what I encounter is people sort of fall into one of two camps. They either have been told that Mozart is light so they back off, and they under support everything and they try and squeeze the notes out. Or they panic and they sort of ‘waa’ into each note. They sort of ‘waa waa’, pillow into the notes.

The problem there is, they think they're being expressive and they think they're playing lightly, but all they're doing is just creating these strange little bubbles of sound that are connected to each other. So, what I try and do with them is get them to think about just simply playing louder overall so that they're more aggressive with it.

Once they have the strength to play an even line, then we sort of scale back the concept, because what I'd rather they do is work from a position of strength. In other words, taking a strong person and teaching them how to be graceful, rather than trying to focus only on being graceful and then not really having any muscle tone to back it up.
R7: Some of it is that in terms of the physical activity, but for the most part I just try and continually try to get them to hone their concept of sound so that whatever they hear in their head, they've got a better shot producing musically. If the musculature is right and balances in terms of the effort, then they'll be able to make sort of their version of Mozart sound very purposeful and very intentional, and they can be as light or as not light as they choose. But it'll be closer to what the industry asked for. So again, from a mechanical standpoint, just fast air but supported air and maybe a narrower airstream, particularly in the high range, but again it's all about horizontal motion.

It's about airflow, that's obviously the big deal. Did I answer your question?

CB: Yes, it does. And having the concept, as you mentioned, in mind is very important. Understanding the composer's intent, historical contexts.

My last question is on the Brahms, you talked about endurance both physically and mentally, and we spent a good bit of time on the physical performance portion. Could you talk a little bit more about what a musician needs mentally to play the Brahms horn trio, especially the third movement?

R7: The third movement is always a problem when it comes to endurance, because you've played two movements and it stays in that range with those sustained notes that just peel the lips off your face. At least with the others you get a little rest. So, the issue is that playing that third movement is akin to playing a recital. You really don't know what it's like and what's involved until you actually do it, no matter how many times you do a run through or dress rehearsal. You don't know what's involved until you're faced with a room full of people and you make your way through it. It's the same thing with that movement. Even rehearsing it, it's still a distortion because when you only have one shot and you're nervous about it, the tendency is to sort of rebalance your effort in favor of being careful.
The benefit of playing a full recital is, the next time you have to play one, you've been through it and you know you can make it. Even though you might not have made it through every piece the way you wanted to, at least, and this is what I emphasize, at least now you know that you can make it all the way through. And that takes some of the heat off because you can say, "All right, to get to that point, I practiced this much and I did these pieces and it required this much." With enough sort of qualitative reflection, you can actually put together a fairly confident plan.

The result though is that when we do dress rehearsals or practice performances, the thing that I stress over and over is, you have to be able to play the last piece after having played the rest of them. You have to know what that feels like. And so, when it comes to endurance for that particular movement, you have to know what it feels like to have played the other two movements first, to then be able to get a sense of what it's going to take endurance wise, both mentally and physically, to make it through the slow movement.

Does that mean you can only play it after, you're only allowed to play that movement after that? In a way, the answer is yes, at least if you're going to do a really responsible, professional job of it. You really need to know what that is like. And if I say to hopefully bring it back full circle, that once you know that you can make it through, then you can begin to strengthen all the other aspects of it, so that you can increase your physical endurance which is supposed to feed your confidence which is going to allow you to be more efficient with the way that your body responds, which feeds positive mindset.
R7: The physical and mental obviously need to work together, but the hard part is, in my experience the thing that needs to come first is they [students] need to prove to themselves that they can actually accomplish this. And then once that happens, then the positive feedback loop begins. The phrase that I try and hammer into their brains is that when you practice anything, practice to make yourself more confident. The techniques that you use are supposed to build your confidence, not just tear yourself down or smash your face. But that you come out of each practice session saying, "Oh, I can do that better now," and, "Oh I know what I need to work on tomorrow," rather than just, "I'm terrible, I can't play anything."

All of the self-talk and all that is supposed to sort of all work together so that you're always thinking in terms of your own progress, and that includes endurance. So there's that aspect. I mean from a physical standpoint, just making sure that they spread out their practice sessions so that they're not, especially if they're trying to work on endurance, that they're not just doing a bunch of hammering.

Yet at the same time, you can't, the muscles don't get stronger if you don't stress them, so you've got to do a little bit of that. That's why what Farkas says, "Always go a little bit beyond, just to keep building." So, the hard part is learning how to do that and it takes a certain level of maturity. But they get there only by doing, and it does mean they have to fail a couple times and stagger across the finish line and learn from it.

But that's part of the gig, I mean that's what we're supposed to be doing. If we were perfect every time or if we were only allowed to perform if it was perfect, we wouldn't be hearing much music.

CB: Awesome, thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to talk with me. It was really great to talk to you and hear your thoughts!
Respondent 8 Interview-

This interview has been transcribed and all information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

**Centria Brown (CB):** Thank you again for taking the time to complete my questionnaire you responses were extremely helpful. I had just a few follow-up questions to your responses.

When working on through a piece, such as the Mozart, students have to think about various things such as transposing and the sixteenth note passages. What are some of the physical habits that students have to work through?

**Respondent 8 (R8):** In my opinion, the Mozart as far as playing it on the double horn as opposed to honoring the performance practice. It is aligning the tongue in the fingers through fast technical passages so that it sounds clean and aligned. Now are you asking what some of the specifics are like that or are you also wanting to know how I teach and deal with it?

**CB:** Yes, and if you would like to share your teaching process that would be great!

**R8:** One thing that I find quite successful is, separate from the transposition that is a whole different fundamental, is picking apart the fundamentals and dealing with them one at a time.

**R8:** Accuracy on the Mozart, aside from the transposition, it's still has to be buzzed on the mouthpiece. I have my students buzz everything. If they're buzzing that [Mozart] they have to buzz it in E-flat to develop the ear separate from what they are visually seeing. Which are notes that are not the same as what they're putting down on their horn. You know they are looking at an E-flat and they are having to play a D or buzz a D.
R8: Then I'll take the articulation studies fast single tonguing, and most of it, I think if not all of it is single tongued. Fast sixteenth passages can be done through scales and I will stick with the key of E flat or whatever the key of the piece is. So if it is an E-flat concerto I will have them play everything with a lot of flats. And articulate single tonguing scales with fast fingers in the key of E-flat. Then I will have them isolate the ones that hang them up the most, still probably not with a trill yet, that is another fundamental to add later. That one has mostly lip trills but I think there is one E or F natural, something like that, and the key signature is better if it is a valve trill.

We talk about the performance practice but isolating out maybe one measure of sixteenths or two measures of sixteenth notes. Sometimes I think playing things slow and then getting them faster is effective. Sometimes I think that it is less effective and it is more effective to have 4 sixteenths and slowly add a couple of sixteenths at the end of it. Or starting at the end and working backwards at tempo just a few woodsheading ideas, stuff like that I think is pretty common. I would imagine for those types of pieces.

CB: I like the idea of isolation, especially with the sixteenth notes.

R8: Another idea that I stole from a couple of other people was to play harder things like that swung. So that you put it under the idea of a jazz rhythm which is, which if you're really picky is a triplet or you can play it like a dotted eighth sixteenth. If you had a, *sings sixteenth note scalar passage* and you couldn't play it you could *sings swung dotted eighth sixteenth rhythm.* Or something like that and then swap it so it is a sixteenth eighth so, *sings sixteenth eighth rhythm.*

What that does is it gets all of the notes closer together that an open eighth note or an open sixteenth note run, you are actually putting some of the pitches closer together then they should be. And if you do that enough when you make it harder than it has to be then when you go back and play the way it is written it is actually easier.
CB: So, do you find with your students that when making things harder it makes the original passage feel easier?

R8: Oh yes, all the time, I do this with everything! For example, a studio project that we do is I have everybody compose etudes based on something that they were terrible at. So I said “go find something you can’t do,” and one of them did do the Shostakovich, but “find something you are terrible at that you really struggle with and write three etudes on the fundamental associated with that difficulty.”

For example, the Shostakovich I have a lot of great exercises that are not Shostakovich but you play them a la, like, Shostakovich. Dealing with whether it is marcato on all the different notes over your break, or volume, or you know flat tone so that there is no egg shape, intonation. And then we put it all back together. The same could be done for the Mozart, in fact I think one of my students picked Mozart 2 and came up with some high horn exercises for Mozart 2.

CB: Yeah.

R8: Yes, and the etudes are meant to make it hard. You are playing etudes that are harder than the piece. Like the Shostakovich, only has 16 measures or something. But you have written three etudes that are each 20 bars long so by the end of it in theory it should be easier.

CB: That is a wonderful idea! My last question is on the Brahms. One of the things you talked about was navigating the spatial relationship, between playing with both a string player and a pianist. Could you talk about how you work with students, and yourself, on navigating the spatial relationship of the Brahms horn trio?
I think a lot of my opinions come from the fact that I have seen so many people do it in so many different ways. Just as an observer I remember once as a young player and I saw someone play it and he stood up, front and center stage like the soloist, with piano and violin accompaniment, and I thought that was weird and interesting. And then you see the horn player next to the piano so they are more of a duet with the pianist, and the violinist is on the right if you are facing the stage.

I think the first consideration is the space itself, if it is at tall space, or a wide space, or deep space, and the kind of backdrop. The trick of the horn is it is, obviously, a directional instrument it is not a trumpet or a violin where the sound comes out. The sound has to reflect off of something.

But then you have to balance with the organic communication that needs to be a part of a piece like the Brahms. And the Brahms is more of a conversation than a trio in some ways. It is really telling a story and I think that the body language and the ability to have a free very intimate relationship with a player's is really important.

In fact, I have a student performing that tonight at 7:30. My DMA student is playing the Brahms and we talked a lot about that and just how really intimate it should be, especially in that movement, because of his mother and all the history that goes into it. The intimacy has to be honored along with the fact that Brahms really felt strongly about hand horn and how the horn has to be muted.

Where can you sit so the horn does not overpowering the violin and piano but yet you can still see everybody. The horn is not bouncing off of the piano too much.

Things I think that everybody involved has to be willing to compromise depending on the space. It is not a piece that I think I would ever want to take on the road because of all of the variables that you could get with every hall that you enter.
CB: I like what you said about being aware of your location, the hall, and fellow performers. Alexander Technique is about awareness of yourself and what is around you. Could you go into more detail about having your students being aware, of not just themselves, but all of these factors? In fact, this could be applicable to any piece like the Mozart.

R8: With every piece! I tell my students every time they bring a solo in I will say “how well do you know this horn part? And they will say “oh I know it, I really learned it well!” I will say “well what is the piano doing in measure whatever?” If they have learned their horn part then they have learned 50 percent and if it is a trio that have learned 33 and a third percent. In fact, maybe even less than that because a large percent of learning a piece, in my opinion, is learning what the composer was trying to say.

Especially in a piece like the Brahms horn trio I talk very much about getting out of your body and in losing yourself in the music. But we do spend a lot of time being aware of our body when we are playing. Because of being grounded, and all the bad habits, and tension that can come through not thinking about what your body is doing. It’s weird, because you have to think a lot about, “how am I using my body to the greatest benefit” and then “how can I forget about my body to the greatest benefit of the music.”

R8: And the way that I teach there is a time and a place to really train, if that is the best word, each layer of the performance. There is a time to think about your breathing but in the music, you should not be thinking about your breathing, because then your conscience is drawn to the breathing, paralysis by analysis, then you are focusing on the wrong thing. But we do spend a lot of time thinking about breathing, posture, sitting and standing, the wrist, the elbow, the shoulders you know every little piece. But in the moment where I just told that very student today, your job is to channel Brahms and the message that’s it.

CB: That is beautifully said!
R8: Aw, well I am just shooting from the hip here! [Laughter]

CB: Well it was great! You are absolutely right about being able to find that balance of having just the right amount of control, not over controlling, or being too free with it. Which is very much being a musician a lot especially in different settings.

R8: Right and there is a time and a place to develop muscle memory. I think holding the instrument is muscle memory, whether you are using the muscles or relaxing the muscles. When you are performing you have to rely on that memory, like “how do you play an A-flat?” You aren’t thinking about how to play an A-flat you have muscle memory that you know what to do. I think the body, brain, tongue, embouchure, air, all of it is essentially on the fundamental level muscle memory. That the ethos of the music is really what is organic in the moment. You don’t know what is going to happen because you can’t know what your colleagues are going to feel in that moment.

CB: Wonderfully said! Well, thank you again for speaking with me today!

R8: My pleasure and good luck!
Respondent 9 Interview -

This interview has been transcribed and all information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

Centria Brown (CB): Thank you again for completing the questionnaire. Your responses resonated with me and I am glad we are able to discuss them more.

You mentioned that the first piece, Mozart 4, is a true test of endurance. Could you discuss the endurance needed physically and mentally for this piece? As well as roadblocks students struggle with in this piece.

Respondent 9 (R9): Okay, yeah. I think it really is a concerto for more advanced students. I think it is kind of a feat of endurance because there aren’t that many rests and the range is sort of in the middle of the staff and above for most of it. It just kind of keeps going. I don’t know if I can talk about the whole first movement, but you just don’t have a lot of time to recover between the exposition and the development, then the recapitulation, and then the cadenza. I think it is very hard for students to get through that last few lines of the recapitulation. That’s why it’s really important to have excellent biomechanics in all of the good ways. I mean, I’m not an Alexander Technique certified instructor or anything like that, but I’ve certainly had exposure to books by Barbara Conable. Do you know her?

CB: Yes, I know of her and I know her books!
The Alexander teachers here that I have worked with are great. I have discussed the importance of body mapping and how important it is to body map the movement of the tongue and the movement of the jaw, other things, playing the horn in the most efficient, efficacious ways. I think all of those things go into getting through a piece like the first movement of Mozart 4, the breathing, the breath support, the air flow, not just relying on the facial muscles to get it to the high register, or to do the “lip trills” and the development section that everybody seems to have trouble with, but to really do everything a biomechanically efficacious ways can help you get through this first movement.

Yes, and I like how you talk about body mapping and awareness of your body when it comes to the jaw, air and articulation. What are some of the things that you notice that students think about or end up thinking about when going through the Mozart?

I know for my students, and myself, sometimes you can only think about so much before it is system overload. When students begin to think too much, what do you notice in them?

Right. That’s the other side of the coin because, since there are so many different movements at play to play the horn really well, it’s not that we need to think about them forever. The way I think about it is we are developing these neural pathways, for example, when somebody learns how to breathe healthfully and deeply, they don’t have to think about it. Their body does that automatically after a while when somebody learns how to support correctly. It takes a lot of brain power, like frontal lobe activity, to keep reminding, keep reemphasizing the importance of correct breath support. After a while, it goes from the frontal lobes back into the motor cortex so that these movements become automatized.
R9: It's hard to talk about this piece or that piece. I'm just talking about playing the French horn, it has all of these different movements that to do them correctly, if they're not being done correctly, students have to practice it until it's learned in this automatic motor cortex kind of way.

Did you ever read The Talent Code by Daniel Coyle?

CB: No, I have not.

R9: It's a great book. I have all my students read it. One of the things he talks about that's sort of getting play now from Don Green, and other people, about practicing is that, and I'm probably explaining this in a very simplistic way, but the way we learn how to do complex movements that can be as basic as like tying your shoes. When my son was five years old, he wanted to tie his shoes in the worst way, and it took him about five minutes per shoe, and he's trying to teach his fingers how to tie shoes correctly. Then, after a couple of weeks of five minutes per shoe, it took him just a couple of minutes per shoe, and then skip to a year later, and he could do it without looking, and it takes him 10 seconds.

Basically, I think what Daniel Coyle would say was all of those movements, he's just creating these neural pathways that are being wrapped around by myelin sheathing in the brain, which is a fatty substance in the brain that insulates neural neurons that fire more often when you're doing a certain skill. It acts as a kind of electrical insulation so that the neurons fire faster and more automatically the more you learn a skill. If you learn how to do breath support in an advantageous way on the horn, the more you emphasize that with yourself when you're practicing, the more this myelin is wrapping around those neural bundles that are activating the muscles to do a certain skill. So, after a while, you don't have to think about it. Just like my son doesn't have to think about tying his shoes anymore, now that he's 32.
CB: I am thinking from an Alexander Technique perspective, and what you have said I am reminded of developing habits. As horn players, we want to have good habits that are the best for our body. I will have to look into this book for sure!

R9: Yeah. It's a pretty quick read. It's entertaining. I learned a lot. It is an assigned reading for one for the brass pedagogy classes I teach.

That’s the thing. It takes a long time to learn how to play the French horn because there are all these different movements that ultimately have to become automatized, because the idea is that we don't have much to think about when we're performing. We shouldn't be thinking too much when we're performing, but in order to get to that point, we have to do a lot of learning. We have to do a lot of building these automatized movements over a long period of time, maybe over four years of an undergrad degree.

My students will say “boy, that's a lot to think about,” and when I tell them just kind of think about one thing at a time, just sort of focus on breath support for the next 10 minutes, and don’t think about anything else. Then with your body doing that more automatically, let’s focus on the movement of your tongue or something else.

CB: That’s great! The next question on the Shostakovich 5th symphony, you discussed biomechanics. Could you talk about the embouchure and the air process when doing the Shostakovich 5th symphony?
I would say almost every student has issues with this excerpt. You asked to talk about the embouchure, so my opinion, I guess I’ve had a lot of experience with those playing French horn. I played for the orchestra for a long time, but my experience with the low register is that it really is a whole different embouchure from the high embouchure. In the high embouchure, the way I would characterize the high embouchure is that the muscles in the corners of the mouth, the buccinator muscle and all the other muscles that go into the corners of the mouth, are very firm in the high register. And the biggest difference, I think, with low registers is that those muscles are not firm, at least the way I play and teach, and I think the way that I think people can get the most beautiful sound in the low register, the most focused sound in the low register. The facial muscles are not as involved in low register playing as they are in the high register.

I need to talk to students a lot about anchoring the lower part of the rim on the lower lip or below the lower lip. I play on the lower lip, because that’s how I have my embouchure set up, but what really seems to help students with the low register is actually thinking about the feel of some pressure of the rim on the lower teeth, like through your skin and through the flesh that’s right under your lower lip or right behind your lip, I guess. It’s hard to describe these things. The rim is really anchored on those lower teeth or on the flesh in front of the lower teeth. That seems to help students a lot with the low register.

Then, like I described in my book, and what we found in the MRI study in Gottingen, Germany was these 11 or 12 really high-level horn players, including some great low horn players, Sarah Willis, Fergus McWilliams, is that everyone is moving their jaw incrementally lower and further out the lower they get in register. It’s not just that these are great low horn players, but it’s so interesting to me that they all do the same patterns. Even Stefan Dohr is not really a low horn player but a great high horn player, is doing the same movement with his jaw.
R9: So, the tongue is not doing a lot of movement in the lower register to make the oral space change size, but it’s really the jaw that’s incrementally getting lower and lower and further forward as you go down, say, the first whole tone scale in the Shostakovich excerpt.

What’s really important for students to know is where the jaw moves from, which is a total Alexander body mapping thing. When I’m teaching someone low register stuff for the first time, I’ll ask them where do you think your jaw moves from? They usually point to the wrong place. It really is right in front of the middle of the ear. Once they know that, once they can locate the temporal mandibular joints, then it’s pretty easy for them to know how to move the jaw in a smoother way and an easier way.

CB: That is one thing I have noticed with students is making sure their body mapping of the jaw joint is correct. It was something that was very insightful for me and has helped my low horn playing as well.

R9: Yeah. I think it was in Barbara Conable’s book. There’s a really great book that she wrote when she was publishing The Movement and Structures of Breathing. She wrote it for choruses, for singers, but it’s a great book. Have you read it?

CB: I have glanced at it but need to read it thoroughly very soon!

R9: Yeah. It’s a very spare book, but it has some great illustrations, and one of the illustrations shows x’s where people think their jaw moves from, and then where it really moves from. Most people think it moves from a place much lower than it really moves from, and when you think it moves from the wrong place, then it’s really hard to move it.

CB: Definitely.
Yeah. I guess just having that experience playing all of the repertoire again and again and again, it’s like you learn what really works, what really works in the most efficient way and the most beautiful way, and you really have time. I kind of used that time in orchestras as laboratory just for me to figure out how do you do this the most advantageous way. Then, I go and talk to my students and see what worked with them, too. It’s worked well for me as a teacher to be able to describe to a student the way playing in the low register feels when it works for me.

The thing I was wrong about was that the jaw really doesn’t move that much once we go above B flat in the staff. It really doesn’t move up, and that’s where the tongue starts moving higher and forward to take up more space inside the oral cavity.

Very interesting.

I originally thought there were all these jaw positions in the high register. There just aren’t. Like, okay, all right. Very humbling.

And for my last question one thing I noticed you mentioned was the Caruso Method for subdivision for the entrances. Can you talk more about how doing this method can help when playing this piece?

The subdivision, it’s like a Julie Landsman thing. I think it really works. It definitely works for me, and I know Jennifer Montone has that style of teaching and that works for my students when they do it. When you’re playing a slow movement of anything, it helps to subdivide to keep the pulse very steady and keep the mind occupied with positive things to do rather than thinking “where am I going to make that slur?” You just sing the subdivision in your mind and in an expressive way, and nine times out of 10, you’ll get it if, you know, you’ve practiced things well and correctly and everything.
R9: I guess the other thing I would talk about, and this might seem a little controversial to some other horn teachers, but one of the things we found from the MRI study, one of the later studies we’re closer to now rather than like three or four years ago, was that we were looking into how we play loud and soft, and this whole study has been such a great thing. I felt like a kid in a candy store, because Peter Iltis was like what do you think we should study now? And, how do we do that? And, what are the protocols that we should use? What are the exercises that we should have everybody doing? What should we look at with the MRI scanner?

I was really interested in this how do we play loud and soft and seeing, like for example, is the glottis involved in how we control the air stream? Is the tongue involved in that? Like it says, like Philip Farkas, in The Art of French Horn Playing, we have to talk about that book, because Farkas didn’t have MRIs to use. He was just sort of intuiting a lot of things and trying to feel a lot of things when he was playing, which is what I was doing before the MRI study, but he did mention that he thought that the glottis narrowed when we play soft, and a lot of educators took issue with this.

R9: But, we found exactly that, and this was with many of the elite subjects. We had a pretty good sample group of really highest-level horn players, and when they played loud, the glottis opened more, all measurable by the Lab, and when we played mezzo forte, it closed a little bit, and piano, pianissimo, it closed a little bit more. Never closed completely. It’s not only the glottis, but the tongue also rose inside the mouth, and, in fact, my first MRI film, one of the first ones that really startled me, was watching myself play a long tone, where my crescendoing and diminuendoing like, I don’t know, a middle B flat, and at the end of the long tone where I’m diminuendoing to like pianissimo, I see my tongue rise like a thunder cloud in the sky.

CB: Wow!
I'm like, oh, that's got to be an aberration. That can't be real. That must be doing something wrong here. Then, I looked at another long tone and another register, and I was doing the same thing, and I said to Peter, are other people in the elite group doing this? He said everybody's doing that. Stefan Dohr is doing that. Sarah Willis is doing that. Fergus McWilliam, Marie-Louise Neunecker is doing that. Jeff Nelson is doing that. We were all doing it, and I don’t think any of us realized a lot of what we were doing inside the mouth to do certain things.

I was thinking about that, and I was thinking, why would that help? Like the glottis narrowing, we coined a term called the dorsal tongue air channel. Dorsal means the back of the tongue. Dorsal tongue is like the dorsal fin on a dolphin. It's sort of near the back of the dolphin’s body on the top. So, dorsal tongue air channel became much smaller for playing soft, and it became much larger when the tongue was lower in the mouth when you played the same note fortissimo.

So, this is a long way- I’m telling you a long story about what’s cool to know and important to know. When you play something like the third movement of the Brahms Horn Trio, so much of it is high and soft and legato, and so many students don’t have any idea of how you play soft in a high register, and a lot of students have trouble with that. Some students have sort of intuitively figured it out but don’t know exactly what they're doing to do it. They can just do it, which is great. The ones who are having trouble playing soft in the higher register really have trouble with this movement.

As a teacher, I don’t like talking about the glottis narrowing so much, because no teacher wants their student to get a constricted sound or sort of think that they can have control over what their glottis is doing. I think it’s involuntary, what the glottis is doing, but if you tell a student, like when they're diminuendo on a long tone, say on a high F, like horn in F, like you have to play a lot in that movement, if you tell them there’s this thing called the dorsal tongue air channel, and this is what it looks like, for the visual learners, and just try sort of thinking about your tongue kind of rising inside your mouth.
R9: I think what both of those points in the vocal tract do is they act as baffles to the airstream. What I mean by that is they've lessened the intensity of the airstream that's coming up out of the lungs and through the windpipe into the pharynx and into the mouth. The glottis narrowing a little bit will take some of the intensity of that airstream away, and the tongue rising in the back of the mouth to form a smaller dorsal tongue air channel will also act as a baffle to lessen the intensity of the air going through the mouth and then going through the aperture.

I think the mistake that a lot of students make to play softly is to try to make the aperture smaller, and when they know these other things are at play, helping to lessen the intensity of the airstream, then they can kind of leave their aperture pretty much alone, and that's when you get a really beautiful pianissimo sound. It also feels like you're flowing the air rather intensely to get a pianissimo sound, which is something that Farkas mentioned in his book. It's surprising that you can get a beautiful pianissimo sound and it feels like the air is flowing intensely.

I just said a whole lot. But, I think it's really important for this movement, because you have to play soft and high and with a lot of control.

CB: That is so fascinating. So, instead of tightening by forcing it to stay open, you're allowing the body to do what it's naturally intended to do, and that's going to help you with that sound, so that's really, really great discovery so people know. Don't work to go the complete opposite if it's not going to be that benefit for you, so that's really great.

R9: Right. So, if teachers are teaching keep everything open when you play softly, then you have to compensate somewhere, with the air speed, and that'll have to be something like the aperture really tightening and squeezing, and then it's really hard to get a beautiful sound in a high register when you're playing softly.
R9: The cool thing about the MRI study is that it's just not like me making things up. There's a lot of mythology, and there's just like well, my teacher taught me this, and it worked for me, so I'm going to tell you this, even though I can't really back it up. It's like well, now we're actually seeing these images, we're measuring things, and we're able to conclusively say that this is what all 12 people, all six people on the Berlin Philharmonic are doing. These are what these six other high level horn players are doing. I think it points to, with that large a sample, it points to there is clearly an optimal way of doing all these different things on the horn, an optimal way of playing softly in the high register, for example.

CB: That is amazing. Well thank you again for talking with me today I really do appreciate it!

R9: Of course, it's fun to talk about.
Respondent 10 Interview-

This interview has been transcribed and all information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

Centria Brown (CB): Thank you again for completing the questionnaire and taking the time out to speak with me today. As I mentioned before, I just had a few follow-up questions to your responses.

You often talked about being relaxed when playing such as shoulders, fingers, coordination and pitch. I wanted to talk more about body language, as well as the mental habits you observe when students become tense performing music such as Mozart, Shostakovich and Brahms?

Respondent 10 (R10): Yeah. Well, how do I know they are tense?

CB: Yes.

R10: Often it's actually a sound, I actually don't see anything first. I think that is why when I was taking Alexander Technique lessons that was one of the hard things, you can't see it but I think Alexander Teachers can feel it, if they are doing hands on work. Like most teachers in a private studio, there isn’t a lot of hands on, I don’t touch my students that often in lessons. Unless I am moving a hand position or something. I am not trained in Alexander to feel what they feel or do.

R10: I identify it first via sound. And that's when I'll probably stop a student and say, "Okay well, you know, your sound really changed there, what do you feel?" It's problematic when they don't feel anything. I have a student right now who's just kind of lives in a constant state of tension. A lot of students, it's become the norm and they don't actually feel it. I think this is where Alexander lessons are so important for kids like that. Because their base line is tense and that's hard.

CB: Yeah.
R10: They can't identify when things feel stressed or strained. It's not a visual thing often, it's actually just a sound thing for me.

CB: That is very true I remember my first Alexander lesson it was my sound that I first noticed. It was very much night and day in regards to the tone and resonance.

And you also talked a little bit in the Mozart about keeping the mental focus on tempo and style. Can you talk more about that and how you work with your students to keep mental focus and not be bogged down with the technical aspect of playing?

R10: I taught a lesson last night. I have a student getting ready for an audition and he is playing an exposition of Mozart 2. It was really heavy and getting slower and bogging down. I put the metronome on, which I don't like to do, a lot, but in Mozart, it's just so tempo based. I put the metronome on what I felt was a good tempo and I said, "Okay, now play again." And he couldn't keep up and I said, "What is your goal tempo?" And he said, "Well it's that tempo that you have playing, I guess I'm a lot slower because I'm playing so heavy." So we talked about, thinking about timing as a way to facilitate lightness of articulation. Really the only way that you can play that at an appropriate tempo is to lighten up on the articulation and not make things so heavy. We talked about, what part of your tongue is striking in the articulation, or what's happening to your jaw when you're articulating?" Often it's just an over-use of tension. It's sort of slowing your articulation down so they thought about it and we set the metronome again.

I always tell people to think about having their orchestra play behind them. You know, it's very hard for violinists to get heavy and bog down. It's not a quality so much of their instruments if you can hear the violin section you can match that, if that makes sense.
CB: Yes definitely. You talked a little bit about jaw which kind of leads a little bit into my next question about the Shostakovich and getting that low stability.

Can you talk about how you work with students in getting those shifts in the low register of this excerpt? And also, maintaining a good sound in the lower register.

R10: I think that actually the way you ended the question is sort of the answer. It's that we really focus on the sound. Sometimes we think too much about our bodies and in Alexander, I mean my memory of that technique is that a lot of it is observation based, it's not necessarily changing what you're doing. It's just being aware.

And so, adjusting, like simple adjustments to those observations. We always start with the sound, because I think that's probably the first thing, the first notification that something is not right. And I'll ask, "what do you hear, and what do you want to hear?" Then we can kind of identify, "Okay well, you really want a stable sound."

Often, the first problem, one of the easiest and very, very common issues is that their [right] hand is too closed. And sometimes we need to adjust the position. A lot of my students play off their leg, but sometimes in Shostakovich you need to play on the leg for stability.

I don't really talk so much about jaw placement. I mean, I do talk about shifting into the low register, but so much of that beginning of an excerpt is just sort of like in the low setting that I talk more about like using a stable column of air because so many people tend to get like a warble-y, vibrato-y sound when they play when down there loud. We talk about maintaining enough support that you've got strong corners and a firm column of air. I think those people just typically get into their low setting at the beginning of that excerpt and stay there until the end.
R10: It's maybe not a direct Alexander technique principle, but I think it's a way of breaking it down and teaching them to be able to teach themselves.

CB: Yeah.

R10: They're going to hear things the way they feel them. On their own, they need to hear things first.

CB: Yes, very true. To me that is very close to Alexander Technique when it comes to being aware of your sound as a horn player.

R10: Yeah.

CB: My last question is about the Brahms horn trio, you talked a lot about this being a fatiguing movement. Could you talk about maintaining that mental focus needed to play a piece like this, especially the third movement?

R10: I mean it's beautiful, it is a physically fatiguing movement, and it's slow. You're on the top of the staff a lot. And there is just not a lot of resting. I think some of this is my own experience. I actually haven't had a student here do it yet. A lot of this is my own of being a student or a professional playing it.

I have to cue into the music itself. Mentally be a part of the music and not think about, like, "Man my lips are burning."

CB: Yeah.
R10: I think that is one of those things where you have to turn off the physical signal of fatigue and just use your air and play. And by this point you've already played a lot. Those first three movements are long. And the fourth movement is still to come. It's like a marathon where you start to kind of get fatigued. So, I think it in some sense, my first observation is always the physical tiredness, but then I have to overcome that with mentally, like I need to just go, I need to use my air and keep going.

CB: Definitely, shifting the ideas of physical fatigue and mentally engage with your air.

Thank you again for speaking with me this afternoon!

R10: Of course, and good luck!
Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today, your responses were extremely helpful. I just had a few follow-up questions to your responses.

Respondent 11 (R11): Of course.

CB: My first question is from your response to the Mozart Concerto. You mentioned the various layers needed to play this concerto and all of the Mozart concerti. You mentioned that the style is what you see as a challenge for students when working on this piece.

Could you talk about how you work with your students to get them to think about the musical style and not stay entirely too focused on the physical aspects of playing?

R11: Yes, sure. I would start by saying I don't think there are easy answers to knowing how to play the style. I think it should be different for everybody, but I certainly have things that have worked for me and I think I've seen work for my students to greater and lesser degrees. I just wanted to say that, I would never speak dogmatically on the subject.

R11: The first thing I think is just immersing yourself in the music. That's something that I think a lot of students don't have the opportunity to do in our modern time. I think especially in our modern academic and post-second-theory musical existences. Even as a professional orchestra player, you actually don't play Mozart and Haydn that often.
R11: My previous job was unusual in the sense that I played a ton of Mozart, Haydn, early Beethoven and all of these types of composers. I was very privileged to be immersed in this music, especially since the best way of immersing yourself is to play that music with other players that understand it. Then you really get a sense of, “Wow, this is what this is.”

Most students now don't have a chance to do that because, first of all, there may not be players that are capable of doing it. Second of all, they don't have the programming either of youth symphonies or the college orchestras or any of that. It's not really focused on that music. I don't know if you disagree with me on that, but…

CB: No, that is very true.

R11: Thinking back on my undergraduate, I don’t think we played a single Haydn symphony or Mozart symphony in the orchestra. My director was very focused on playing Mahler, a lot of Stravinsky, and Shostakovich. Maybe a little bit of Beethoven but as a student you’re not complaining. I haven't seen it here with our orchestras much either.

Another way students can immerse themselves in this style is with chamber music, especially wind quintet. But you have to have the players that want to perform this style of music. I believe students have to be very proactive in getting this experience or a horn quintet, which implies you have to get a really good string quartet.

But students are not always fortunate to experience this type of music or ensemble. That makes it difficult as a teacher to talk about with students in lessons. The other way is just to listen to recordings. I tell my students primarily, “Listen to all of the operas and know what they are about. Listen. Just get a Mozart in your playlist.”

CB: Yes.
R11: The other thing is to listen to the instrumentalists who you think really do it best and most naturally and who are trained most thoroughly in the style. That could be vocalists, string players, pianists, and maybe some woodwind players. I would say if you spend a tremendous amount of time listening to those musicians, I like listening to Mozart by Lancashire's.

Singers as well. Listen to the great singers, men and women, sing the roles and concert arias. I think that really begins to inform you as to what Mozart was hearing too. You get to see in his mind. That's the first thing, I think, just the idea of immersion in a style.

I think the difficulty of the classical style is that it actually is a smaller tent than the other styles. I think it's a more concise. There's really a lot more expected within it. Do you get my drift?

CB: Yes, most definitely.

R11: Music had become a little more sophisticated, there's more of a precedent for performance practice. The music is performed quite often and a lot was written about it. We have texts like the Quantz book that talk about ornamentation. A lot of scholars deal with that, I think the style itself has become more standardized than other styles, which I think there's a lot more latitude to them.

I would be so bold to say, and I could be corrected by others. Another thing that can immerse you into style is to allow yourself to play things on the natural horn or just at least not using a valve to get a sense of what Mozart would have been after from a historical performance practice.
R11: It informs our air, sound, and colors. It then informs our technique. Some of the inherent challenges, I think that's something I have my students do a lot, just try it on a natural horn. That's another aspect.

Any student should try to ultimately think like the composer. When you start to take apart those pieces, the beauty of the classical style is that the themes and all the counter melodies and the harmonies are all very obvious. It’s not difficult to deconstruct the pieces.

If you do that and then put them back together, you begin to analyze the works pretty thoroughly, a lot of the answers to the style begin to emerge. It takes more work on the part of the student. It is not even related to horn playing any more necessarily, but that kind of work, is another thing that really helped.

The other thing I mentioned is the cadenza writing. When you actually have to compose a cadenza, then you really have to address the style because a musically appropriate approach to a cadenza is to stay within the style of the music. I generally consider it inappropriate to play a Mozart cadenza in the style of Rachmaninoff.

I tell my students, “You need to listen to the operas.” They’re like, “What? I’m just playing this one piece.” That is maybe another part of what we’re talking about is that I think a lot of the students are never exposed to that kind of approach to learning the music. They are simply trying to learn the notes and trying to learn the piece either for an audition, or recital, or jury, or lesson.

CB: The idea of going beyond your part as a horn player but a part of the musical process. It is very important.
CB: My next question is on the Shostakovich. You mentioned in your responses about getting a good sound quality in the low register, and at a forte dynamic. Could you talk about some of the things that you do to help students physically in the low register?

R11: One of the things that's challenging about it is it's not just a low excerpt. It eventually goes into the higher range. That part is not often talked about. After you get all of that stuff, the low register, you still have to play high really well and loud.

CB: Exactly.

R11: I think the low range encapsulates probably I guess five or six different skills that I think you need to build in tandem. One of them is the blasting. You really have to. In focus books for instance, the classic exercises of the six notes, I keep seeing that as a little under-the-radar part of the book within the low-register part of it. It's barely given a centimeter of the book.

These are six notes. It's like you start pianissimo, then piano, mezzo-piano, mezzo-forte, forte and then fortissimo. When you get to fortissimo you hold it. You do them all very slowly. The idea is to go from a point of comfort into pushing the base and the embouchure and the style into not something horrible but essentially just comfort. You're getting as loud as you possibly can trying to maintain the integrity of the sound. For most young students this is almost impossible.

It takes this daily process where you start on the written C below the staff. That down the octaves, that's the real problem area, maybe even extending it upward to the G, second line G, and maybe even going down farther into the low register. You need to gain control of the fortissimo with perfect integrity of the sound, intonation being great, stability, endurance all of that.
R11: Take the time to make sure that's done every day for an extended period of time. It could be a year. It could be two years. The students have no idea sometimes how long that takes. That's like the basic part of the control of the fortissimo, which you cannot do just in a very short amount of time. It's just not possible.

It teaches you how to gauge your air. It teaches you that balance you need in the embouchure but focus this as well. You need strength around the mouthpiece. You need to have a certain kind of air, a very thick, dense air that's actually a little more slow-moving than the mid-register that needs to ultimately be put together to produce this. I always like to say a very, very beautiful trombone sound. Not quite trombone but almost trombone-y type sound.

Then you're also after the flexibility, you can't negate that. You can create exercises. There are a lot out there, both in valve technique and also over overtone series.

You probably don't have multitudes of things that deal with that flexibility in the low range. That's got to be part of it. I find personally the mouthpiece a way to get a very clear, easy but focused. Now it warrants integrity of the mouthpiece to control the level, which again, is very neglected by most players.

R11: In the low range, I feel like my mouthpiece buzzing became even down there after I developed it the way it was in the mid-range and the high. It was like my embouchure was ready to go.

I think spending time on the mouthpiece down there to insist that the sound has the same integrity as the other parts of the range is a good indication that we have achieved a lot.

Then a couple other parts of it. The syllable, we talked about the jaw descending. That relates to the general syllable. The lower you go, the more your jaw does have to descend into a hole. We can just start with a half whistle [Whistles].
CB: Interesting.

R11: To do the half whistle, which is not the full whistle, but half whistle, anybody can do that. Then you go down there. That's pretty much how the jaw moves and how the syllable forms for that register naturally.

It's like Sarah Willis' MRI she was doing, which I think was so cool. It shows you exactly what's happening. Like all of us, we might have slight variants for each person, but for almost anybody, that's what happens. You have to make sure it's happening in some ways. When doing your exercises, you need to be mindful of that.

R11: There are two more things I think that students have to work through. One of them is the articulation. It's not an air stream that needs to move slower. The airspeed is slower, but the amount of air is greater. Farkas showed that years ago and Jacobs did that years ago with their experimenting in the '50s or so on how the air works in different ranges. It just gets the science.

When you're dealing with that kind of a scientific physical reality, the tongue now becomes more problematic because in the higher range we kind of get away with harsher tonguing or with lesser.

In the low range, you can't get away with it because now you're talking about a steamroller of air. If the tongue ultimately stops the air in the low range, it has to restart again.

You stop that steamroller, and now the whole thing jolts. So, you have to start back again, but you can't, it takes time. I think you need to learn how to get the tongue out of the way but do just enough to create that clarity. That's a really difficult balance.
A lot of experimentation needs to happen. You need to do things like Kopprasch down the octave, insisting upon perfect articulation, air attacking as an exercise to see how much you can do alone, doing things on the mouthpiece, slurring things first and then adding articulation and to make sure the air is very sustained.

R11:

I think it’s important to practice all the music you have, from your solos to etudes, everything and even excerpts, down an octave or down two octaves. Insisting upon the musical integrity that you had in the mid-range. We’re not just developing physically and ensuring sound, but now we’re also insisting that the low range has a musical integrity that’s commensurate to all the other parts of the range and we can always rely upon it.

This might just be for me speaking as a teacher and a performer. I think it’s just so essential to get the fundamentals in place to begin to really approach the music that we have to play. Approaching a piece like Shostakovich Five can simply just be an exercise in futility.

You can learn those things through that excerpt, but it’s unlikely because now you’re trying to think about also musical things. You have the added pressure of either performance of the piece in the orchestra or more pressure if you’re trying to work on it for auditions.

I actually don’t need to have my students work on that very much until they demonstrate that they can play, have a really good low register actually. They have to play here and there. They have to, but we don’t focus on the lesson. We focus more on the fundamentals. Once you get the fundamentals, then you can pretty much go to work on more.
CB: You focus on the fundamentals to build the foundation for playing the music. Instead of “endgaining” you are having them think about the process, the fundamentals.

R11: That's probably why people without strong fundamentals have a very difficult time functioning in a professional environment because professional environment assumes that you can just click very fast. Students are like, “How do you do each piece every week?” or “How do you put a new piece on a concert, or a solo the day before a performance?” Well, it’s still challenging, but because I have all those skills built in, it no longer is challenging the same way it would be if I did not have those skills. I think that’s why musicians, horn players, have to realize it is so important to learn those fundamentals.

CB: Very true. My last question is on the Brahms horn trio and being sensitive to the various roles the horn player has in this piece. Could you talk about working on the various roles the horn player has this trio and how to balance those roles?

R11: I think one of the biggest compliments you can pay your colleagues in any chamber setting or orchestra is to make them sound better than they do. You have the skill to draw upon that your playing actually complements the violin playing and complements the piano to make their parts make even more sense.

Chamber music, to me, is going to be the ultimate point where it is on us, as musicians, to take responsibility of all these things in the music. Down to the point where we are actually becoming the other instruments in some ways. We're getting our sound and into theirs. We’re sounding more like them.
It's all based on listening. You get a sense. That's why when my students work on that piece, they want to bring the horn part in to work it out. But the piece is not that difficult or technical itself. It's not like even the Mozart where you have to work out the passages. There are a couple of passages you can do that, but really, the difficulty lies now that you have to do it together. This is a group effort.

I think it's what makes that piece so personal. It bonds the performers in ways that maybe other music doesn't quite demand out of you. This demands everything for you in all regards. This sounds hokey to say it, but it calls on you to transcend your own position. You just can't be like, “I'm the horn player playing this piece. I'm going to do it really well.” It's like you are no longer a horn player. You are part of the trio.

As part of the trio, you are transcending horn. That maybe the greatest challenge of this piece, and that's also the greatest joy in the piece. That's why that piece, I think, can really change people, both as performers and listeners.

I'm not doing a very good job of saying how we do this. In terms of self-playing, I think a lot of players just simply don't practice self-playing. I think I was one of them. I was a young player. I would do my self-playing when I was in the orchestra or in the chamber ensemble. To a greater or lesser degree, I do my best. It wasn't good enough.

I finally realized I need to practice my self-playing the way that I practice my scales, make this as soft as I possibly can, hold notes for long periods of time at the absolute softest level with still great integrity of sound, with a tuner. On all parts of the horn and all fingerings of the horn, I need to put this into my practice very systematically.
Once I started doing that, then the skill really emerged for me. I think that’s the good news of any of these skills that we’re talking about. On a brass instrument, everything’s a learning thing. For whatever propensity, whatever our strengths and weaknesses, if we put our minds to it and allow ourselves to go through the necessary process, we can pretty much learn to do anything required of us because the body and the mind are just that capable.

Start making the effort and creating the practice space and the mental space to do it day-in, day-out like the low-playing, for instance, that is the biggest challenge. The discipline of soft playing is really just that you have to push yourself into discomfort. For most players, playing that soft is extremely unenjoyable.

The Brahms, if there’s ever an ultimate reason for practicing soft playing, it’s so you can play the Brahms Trio a lot better. Then in terms of knowing your musical line, I think just listen to the piece. It’s hard to describe in words, but if you listen to the piece, even the very opening passage where you’re all playing together [vocalizing] and that whole passage, it is a group sound.

The minute you start, you have to merge your mind with the other players. You have to connect your souls to create whatever sound is going to emerge. You’re very focused on pitch. You’re very focused on the rhythm. You’re very focused on the phrasing. The goal is to get everybody to come together as one to realize this.

I’ve been fortunate in my life to have a couple of performances, not all the performances, just some of them. The type of performances where everyone just get together and try to do the best we can. It’s always fun, but I would call them that. I had a couple performances of it with special friends of mine over the years that have been transcendent. You just can’t know that when it happens.
R11: That's really the goal, you want the three players to just come together. You all have your own experiences. You all have your own training, your own strengths and weaknesses. Now you have this incredible group goal, which is to realize this piece. The piece itself will cause you to transcend.

R11: That could be a reason alone just to work on pieces. I think it just makes you a better human being. Whether you're able to achieve the ultimate or not, at that point it's kind of irrelevant. I think that's the greatest virtue, that by doing the piece like that or anything similar, I think it actually makes you a better person. It makes you a better citizen, makes you better. Again, this kind of sounds hokey, but I really believe that.

CB: I agree, and it doesn't sound hokey! Thank you again for speaking with me today!

R11: Of course!
Respondent 12 Interview-

This interview has been transcribed and all information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today! I had just a few follow-up questions to your responses.

Respondent 12 (R12): Ok!

CB: In your response to the Mozart 4 concerto, you mentioned the physical hurdles that can occur when working with this piece such as excess tension in the throat, neck, and embouchure. Can you talk about how you work with your students when they have tension in these areas?

R12: I think that it is something that is very common with Mozart. A lot of what I have the students do with the Mozart is play the lines legato before adding the articulation. Trying to get them to relax through it. I think when the fast passages come up, such as the sixteenth notes that is when students start to have tension creep in. They will over articulate at times and cut off their airstream.

R12: I think it helps to play through it legato and also buzzing through it. I have noticed buzzing is so helpful because you get to hear a lot of things that are very raw and you can isolate in the student’s technique. Also, students don’t, or horn players in general, don’t put as much pressure on themselves when they are buzzing. They know it is going to sound silly in a way, so they tend to let go and use better air at times and the tension does not creep in as much.
R12: There is something about when we pull the horn up to ourselves. It is this big piece of machinery that I think psychologically we let tension creep back in. I think buzzing is really great especially for high register. Sometimes students can buzz higher than they can play on the horn. I think they just let go and let it come out, when they go back to the horn it comes out so much better. That is something that I do a lot of.

I try to help the students pinpoint where they think there might be excess tension happening in their body. Trying to just play little chunks of the music and let them, mentally, be able to think about where that tension is creeping in. One of the things that is hard about playing a difficult instrument, and playing really, really high-level music, is you are mentally engaged on so many different levels that these physical habits that aren't ideal can sneak in. They aren't always on your radar as a player until someone else points it out to you. Then I try to get them to articulate what is happening a little bit better.

If you can take something off of their plate mentally, then maybe they can start to think about what they are doing physically. I think a lot of times teachers will say things like “do you realize your hands pop off the keys while you are playing?” They have no idea they were doing it because they were so engaged and they can only think about so many things at one time.

CB: Yes, and Alexander Technique is a lot about awareness. My next question is about your response to the Shostakovich low horn excerpt. Can you talk about how you streamline the focus for students on such a physically demanding piece?
R12: With excerpts I have them do a fair amount of work on it without actually playing it. This way they can isolate these different elements, put their focus on different things, and different times with it. Singing it is very useful, to have it in your ear and to sing along with the recordings. You then begin to internalize everything that is going on. Especially through the accelerando that happens in the middle of it and getting use to the pacing of it. I think that kind of work is great away from the horn and can also make it possible for students to practice longer than they think they can.

I think with younger students they think they need to be playing every minute of their practice time when it can be really, really, good to step away from the horn and get to know the music and sing it. A lot of what I do with this excerpt when I work it up and what I have my students do is spend a lot of time getting a better response in that low register.

R12: One thing I do is repeat every single note and try to center it and get a really clean articulation. I play each note about four times usually then move on to the next one. Almost airing on blasting. I feel if you play really loud in the low register it can help you figure out how to use the best air and find the right spot in your embouchure for everything. I will have them practice it to where they slur from one note to the next trying to get all of this really centered.

After you have done a lot of that work with trying to get a great response down there then begin to think about the musical setting that you are in, like I mentioned before with singing through the music. Putting on a metronome and trying to hear that piano part in the back of your mind that leads you in with tempo. Playing it as you would in context. The breathing is tough with this one too there is just so much to think about, which I guess it is why it gets asked so much. Pacing the breathing and figuring it out because it makes so much more sense with a full section because you can stagger breath. It is an interesting excerpt because the end is entirely different than what the horn player needs to have in their arsenal of skills.
R12: So, working on the high part at the end, I think that is a really great part to buzz on the mouthpiece. So, that you don't let everything get too tight and you feel like you are squeezing it out. When I do have them buzz I have them “gliss” through it so that everything is very connected and take the tongue out of it. Just letting it slide up through those high partials. That is a good way to work through not coming in too loud on the whole note, the A, so that there is room to grow, because otherwise it is like “where do I go from here?” That excerpt is interesting because you have to look through the different chunks of it and figure out how to get a great sound in two very different registers, well three really if you count your mid-range.

CB: Great ideas, and I enjoy the idea of practicing away from the horn!

My last question is on the Brahms. And you mentioned dealing with physical endurance when performing this piece as well as your personal experience of dealing with back pain when preparing this piece. If you feel comfortable, could you talk more on the back pain you experienced and things you did to alleviate that discomfort?

R12: Sure, yeah! This was an interesting time for me. I am 32 and had been playing off of the leg since I was 17 or 18, so for many years. It had never really worked for me to play on the leg because my upper body is too tall for the horn. I had never experienced anything until my thirties, because you know that is when everything starts to go. [Laughter]

CB: Yeah, [laughter].

R12: It seemed like everything was fine. It was during the DMA and I was also doing a lot of driving in the car at that time. I had started to teach adjunct about an hour away so I spent more time in the car. In preparation for this DMA recital, I was doing a lot of long practice sessions, and the horn was up a lot. I think what makes the Brahms horn trio challenging is that the horn is up and you are playing a lot. You don’t put your instrument down very often and it is a big piece.
It was my first time doing it and I was getting use to the pacing of it. We had it scheduled to where it was the very last piece of my recital, which had a lot of big repertoire on it. And the back pain was really getting to me. I spoke with my mom’s physical therapist when I was visiting home for this preparation time for this recital.

She noticed that my right shoulder was sort of sticking forward a lot more than it should be naturally compared to my left shoulder. That seems like a very obvious horn player problem, based on the instrument not being symmetrical. What I think is kind of strange about physical pain like this is it can start to build up and because it is a gradual thing you get used to it. It is not like you wake up and you have full blown pain although that can happen, but for me it was a gradual thing. So all of a sudden I was like “wow, I feel like I am kind of a mess!”

Part of what I started doing was I went and I was paying for massages at a place that works with injuries and all kinds of things. And sometimes the people who worked on me would be like “wow, you are like the worst I have seen in a long time!” [Laughter]

And that was not very relaxing to hear and it did not make me feel good, I was like “great.” It concerned me and I was getting frustrated, and was thinking this isn’t really sustainable. You know I am only 32 and I have this type of pain while preparing a big recital. What am I going to do when I am forty, fifty or sixty if I want to keep playing the horn?

It was kind of strange because a lot of people don’t talk about this and maybe that is something that needs to change. Especially as Alexander Technique becomes more widespread. I have had a lot of my own students talk to me about tension and feeling like they have a lot of fatigue from holding the instrument up.
R12: No one had given me the advice to look for a bell rest, it had just sort of occurred to me. I thought about how I had seen some players like Roger Kasa from the St. Louis symphony, who has a triple horn, and I recalled seeing him with a bell rest. I googled it and I thought this is awesome. I ordered one and I immediately started to feel better.

I don’t think my shoulder comes forward like it used to and I stopped having to spend all this money on getting massages. It was pretty helpful right away. Some of the stuff I tried to implement, I don’t have a personal Alexander teacher, so some of the things I just try to do for myself. Getting into the habit of doing yoga at home more, I use to do it more often. I took a yoga class for musicians during my Master’s and felt better than I ever had when doing that I had a lot of strength in my upper body.

I think that is helpful as well. It was kind of crazy to me how much the bell rest changed things. If I want to play a really big part and I want my sound to get out a little bit more I will just lift my horn up for a solo moment. For the most part about 95% of the time my bell is on my leg. I feel it immediately allowed for me to use a better airstream. Because my body was much more relaxed then it had been.

CB: For me what you are saying is very relatable. When my back went out I realized it was something that had progressed over time from pushing my body beyond its limit. I empathize with this statement because when you are in pain all you can think about is the pain, not making music. So, thank you again for your willingness to share your story.
R12: Of course! I felt like I did not have a lot of answers I try to get the word out in case someone else is struggling. I think the issue is that it depends on your torso height. I would ask my friends if they would ever get back pain. One friend in particular, he was the perfect height to put the bell on the leg, he said he would switch back forth constantly in rehearsals based on how he was feeling. I felt like I did not have that ability because I would have had to really compromise my posture in order to still play.

CB: Yeah in my case I am about 5’3 and I felt like I was pulling myself up. It was putting stress on my lower back.

Also, in the Brahms you mentioned communication with fellow musicians. Could you elaborate more about the mental process of performing a work, such as Brahms, and performing with two other musicians.

R12: I found the piece very challenging in terms of the ensemble. It took a lot of rehearsals and discussion on how we wanted to pace the movements. It is good to spend a lot of time on this piece, develop your thoughts and musical goals as a trio. You really have to know your part really well in order to get your head out of the stand and watch the other two players.

As we were saying earlier, as musicians, we can get to a spot where there is so much going on to pay attention to that we are overloaded. We don’t realize some things are happening or something will have to give maybe miss more notes if we are following other people.
R12: Some of what I did in my preparation that is helpful play along with a recording. It doesn't mean you have to follow their interpretation in the end. Especially, since the music is so readily available online. A piece like this is so standard, it has been recorded many times, so I think it is great to play with different people's interpretations. So, get two or three recordings and play along. I have noticed that it is easy for me to say this now that I am older and I am not a student. I am at home and can use a big sound system or speaker to play along. I know a lot of students who are in a practice room with maybe just headphones. But even in that situation I think it is helpful to try and play along with a recording.

CB: Great well thank you again for speaking with me today! It was nice to speak with you!

R12: You too, thank you!
Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today! I enjoyed your responses and had a few follow-up questions.

When working on these three pieces what are some of the mental and physical habits you see students working with when preparing these three pieces?

Respondent 13 (R13): When I work with a student, with any piece, I have a four-step process in learning a piece.

The idea is that you technically tear a piece apart in order to make the music that you want and how to make it so that it is reproducible. We all have had to work pieces on the fly and have gotten away with it. We may not necessarily know what we did, but we were able to do it. When you are an older mature player you can get away with that but when you are a student, and frankly I am still a student, it is more difficult to pull off.

As musicians, we are currently trying to figure out “how do I make an extraordinary diminuendo,” or “how do I get that color,” or “how do I get that breath sound in the trio,” technically and then gradually getting over to making music. If you are talking about how do you approach this as a younger student, so that when we get older we are able to relax into the piece, and I think that’s it! I find that if you sit down and really figure out mechanically, the music, then you can produce it more honestly in the recital and later when you come back to the piece.

For example, the piece that always comes back to me is Mozart’s third concerto I worked on that in high school with my school orchestra. The tonguing and fingerling in the rondo was always a little just ahead of me. My reaction to that piece for years when I would pick it up is that I would always get a little anxious about the third movement.
R13: What I finally realized was that I have learned to play the piece, not as fast as I wanted, but it was still the way I wanted to learn the piece. I now take what I did and sped it up a little bit. Then I worked on this piece at the collegiate level and took what I learned from that technique. You will then create the music that you want.

CB: Yes, the anxiety that comes from working on previous pieces can definitely be a challenge. Personally, it becomes a mental block for me.

CB: Could you talk more about how you work with your students in the Shostakovich low horn tutti? I know you mentioned the problem students have to work through the low embouchure setup.

R13: Generally, anytime there is something that is louder than what we can do it or softer, faster, slower or anything out of our current ability. It is best to start with what you can do. I do this with my students and myself. Start with what you can do. I find with most people when they pick up Shostakovich you want to start blasting and the first thing I remind them that is not marked fortissimo but forte.

The volume of that section on recordings is because there is a section of horn players, not because everyone is blasting. I will have people start at a much softer dynamic and a full block of sound. I have a tendency when I want people to play louder I avoid using the word “louder.” I will use the phrase “more air.” I find that this idea of saying “more air,” causes people to relax a little bit more.
R13: I really work with students on just getting that low jaw shift with just scales, arpeggios, long tones. To get them used to where that shift works for them. Working on where we need a sudden jaw shift or gradual jaw shift. The Shostakovich becomes the perfect excerpt to work on that, because it breaks down back and forth over that break. This is a great excerpt to work on that jaw shift and find what works for you as a player.

CB: Yes, definitely. And the last piece, the Brahms horn trio, takes a lot of focus. You mentioned musical maturity to perform this piece in order to execute the nuances of this piece. Can you discuss your thoughts of mental maturity and helping students deal with this in this piece?

R13: I try not to gear students towards this piece until they are pretty good players. It is a piece that I feel really strongly about and I want students to be really comfortable with the technique before they start working with this piece. I think in most cases of pianist, and violinist, are musically more mature than we are at any given age. One of the things that I tell most people to do is to listen to recordings and especially performances of the Brahms.

I tell people to go and listen to good recordings of the Brahms [horn trio]. But to also listen to recordings of Brahms cello Sonatas or the other Brahms trios, or pieces like Schumann’s lieder that style of music. When you listen to people in the romantic era that have been with this style their whole lives they have learned to become comfortable with it.

You know sometimes a student will come in and they will play something, especially mechanically, and you can sing it to them or coach it to them. But I find that going to listen to good performances live or recorded sort of teaches you that particular type of style.

One thing that I really don’t like is recordings, or performances, in which the horn player does not accept the fact that they are not playing Mahler. They are playing a different style of music. But this is Brahms and they really need to absorb inside the sound of a piano trio.
CB: Very true. Well thank you again for speaking with me today!

R13: Alright good luck!
I conducted a search of Alexander Technique teachers online through the Alexander Technique International Website. By filtering the search to teachers in the United States I was able to send 40 emails to Alexander Technique teachers.

I reached out to Alexander Technique teachers to get their views on the horn teacher responses. I informed them that my questions I have created are very specific, however, if you feel as if you would like to respond and would work in a broad sense you may.

Some teachers responded via email by answering the questions while some opted to have a phone interview. All responses received were edited to help maintain the interviewees’ anonymity in this research project.

The first three questions are in based on the WA Mozart Horn concerto horn teacher responses. The next two responses are based on the Shostakovich low horn tutti teacher responses. The final two questions are based on the Brahms Horn trio horn teacher responses.

1. How do you approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?
2. How would you work with students who physically tighten up as they play in the higher register?
3. How would you use intention to help the student bring alive the Mozartean Style?
4. How do you work with awareness of the jaw? And the awareness of the jaw to the horn and embouchure?

5. Can you talk about how would you work with students working with the breathing mechanism without over controlling it?

6. How would you work with students to stay free as they perform softer passages?

7. How do you work with students in finding awareness in performing with fellow musicians, such as chamber ensembles?
Respondent 1A Interview—

This interview/email response has been transcribed and edited. All information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

1. How do you approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?

“I always observe to see if there are any unnatural movement patterns interfering with their coordination. What is their sense of the head, neck, spine relationship? Are they supporting the instrument with too much muscular effort? When they are sitting, are they fully being supported by the chair? When they are standing, do they have unnecessary tension in the knees, hips, ankles etc that is interfering with their support?”

2. How would you work with students who physically tighten up as they play in the higher register?

“I would ask them what they are thinking as they approach the higher register. How are they paying attention and where is their focus? What is going on with their breathing? What different things can they focus on that will help them release rather than tighten up to play in a higher register?”
3. How would you use intention to help the student bring alive the Mozartean Style?

“I would ask them what their thoughts are around this (style) and what their intention is to bring this about. What type of sound do they have in mind? What do they think they have to do in order to produce that sound? Is there a more natural way to get that sound that requires less effort?”

4. How do you work with awareness of the jaw? And the awareness of the jaw to the horn and embouchure?

“I would start by making sure they understand the design of the jaw perhaps showing them a 3D image. Are they aware of where the joint is and how the jaw attaches to the skull and that the jaw is not part of the skull? Can they sense when they are tightening their jaw and pay attention to not doing that especially in the most intense passages?”

5. Can you talk about how would you work with students working with the breathing mechanism without over controlling it?

“I would again make sure they understood how the breathing mechanism is designed to work. Images are always very helpful and today it's possible to see wonderful 3D animations. Whispered ah is a great way to get the breathing going in a natural way. I might want to find out what their thoughts are about core strength. Are they doing any abdominal exercises that could interfere with the natural breathing mechanism?”
6. How would you work with students to stay free as they perform softer passages?

“The same way as I would for other passages... How are they paying attention while they are playing? What are they thinking about? What are they focusing on? Can they focus on the sound they wish to produce and focus on staying open while they are playing all passages?”

7. How do you work with students in finding awareness in performing with fellow musicians, such as chamber ensembles?

“I would start by working with their awareness of each other. Do they make and maintain eye contact? Are they sitting in a way that allows them to remain connected especially in key passages? Is it clear who is leading certain sections? Do the leaders have clear cues and do they keep their awareness on the others in key passages? Can everyone widen their vision and keep the connection with others alive? Are they able to hear the others and pay attention to the balance?”
Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time out to speak with me today. My intent is to inform horn players, students and teachers, how the Alexander Technique could work for them. Although everyone is unique in their own way, possibly this research would open one’s mind to how Alexander could assist them or their students.

The questions I have are based on the responses from the horn teachers, interviews and the questionnaire. I selected the top habits from each of the three pieces. I then looked to see how Alexander Technique would assist a student dealing with these habits.

Respondent 2A (R2A): Okay.

CB: The questions I have are very specific. Please feel free to speak in a general sense.

My first question is approaching students with getting optimal finger coordination. How would you work with horn players, who use the left hand to push valves, on finding optimal finger coordination?

R2A: What I would do, or what I would do that would speak to them? I would work with them on how their fingers and hands work. I have a presentation that I do in class around fingers, hands, and movement. Within there are critical concepts. One is to get them to appreciate the fullness of the length of their fingers all the way into their wrist bones.
Another, the various wrist joints that the fingers move relative to the arm, and the kind of 360 degrees, and how you move through space. This is having as deep a cup in their hands as the can. Then their conception of what it means to use their arms.

Yes. I know for myself, I had to understand the anatomy of the fingers, wrist and arms.

Yeah. Because a lot of people, not just horn players, look at the wrists as a hinge joint that ends at the end of the arms. It is not so, and people get in a lot of trouble with that.

Definitely. My next question I had was about students physically tightening their body, specifically when they play in the higher register of the instrument.

Right, right.

Could you talk about how you would work with somebody dealing with this habit.

Yeah, I think I would take a different approach then what you might get from others. But, it's to get them to sense the tightening as it's happening. And, rather than trying to all dissolve it or anything like that, treat it as a way of managing that they can take advantage of. And, put the power of it right through their lips and into the horn. So, it's really transforming that wave advantage into something that's useful for them as musical players rather than just destination now, which is to sort of generally type.

To take that tension and turn it to positive energy?
Yes, exactly!

Awesome. My last question pertaining to the Mozart, is how would you use intention to help a student bring alive the Mozart, or classical style?

I would not know what the “Mozart style” is, but intention. What you’re really talking about there is the confluence of intention at coordination and the flow. Basically, the... Oh, I have to say this was a tough one. How to say this?

Playing music in a style is a mixture of experience and spontaneity at the same time. There's experience and training and all of that, and there's the realities of what's happening in the moment. The stuff that's in the moment is more unknown. What you're trained for is known and how you put the two of those together. I work much more with improvisational players, but I do a little work with classical players, and the same thing still apply.

To find the balance between spontaneity and experience.

Yeah. Well, here's the big challenge. If they think intention is a definition, they're kind of stuck in the past. But, if it's an entry point or a springboard into what's going to be happening now, then that's a wonderful thing. So, to try to get them comfortable with having an open-ended intention, I think it's the best way to say it.

Yeah. My next question is on finding the awareness of the jaw, the jaw joint, and how the jaw relates to the embouchure and the horn.
R2A: Right I do a lot of Whispered ah. There’s a real misunderstanding on what you have to do with open, close your mouth and where the muscularity of it is. I start there and let them take it into the specifics of what’s happening with their horn.

CB: Definitely. And, could you talk a little bit of how you work with students with breathing and the breathing mechanism, so they’re not over controlling breathing?

R2A: I just want to start with them on that breathing is a weird mixture of voluntary and involuntary or voluntary reflexive; however, you want to say that. I work a lot with reflexive breathing.

Then, going to controlled, I’d have them do something like this. A one breath would be just slightly away from the horn. And, when they breathe out, they go whoosh or something along those lines. Next breath, they make a sound, but not worry about the sound is. Then, go back and forth between breathing out, making a sound, breathing out, making a sound. And, then I have them play a passage they know...

CB: That's great. My next question is how do you work with students to stay as free as possible when performing soft passages.

R2A: With this one, I have them play it slowly at a comfortable volume and then gradually quiet down. But until they can play the phrase slowly and still have continuity, it is tough. At least, I find it tough to make any progress and playing very softly.

CB: To work all of the extremes of playing?
R2A: Yeah. It's always pushed the boundaries, and come back to what's hopefully a larger center.

CB: Great. My final question was on the Brahms horn trio, a chamber piece. How do you work with students to find awareness when performing with fellow musicians?

R2A: Yeah, that's a really fine topic about playing and listening at the same time. Boy, I do a lot with that. What do I do? I have sort of a generalized warm up that I take people who are playing with at least one other person through. Where, let's see, if you're the first person, observe the other's breathing and once you're sure of it then imitate it and breathe the same way.

R2A: Then you go back to your own breathing pattern, and then you switch it. So, they sort of reconcile the breathing patterns. I take them through physically going up and down in space while holding hands facing each other by leaning into each other side to side and leaning into resorted back to back. So, they realize that they're playing with a living person who's breathing the same air that they are. So, let's set up a more organic and communication between them. And, then there's others awareness. They all have that same kind of flavor to it, which is the other persons alive, and that's who you're with.

CB: Very true. A lot of times we get caught up in what we are doing as an individual and not the musicians we are performing with.

R2A: They get caught up just in the music and not the people who are producing it. I mean, what I try for is to have this collective entity emerge. That's really not any one of the individuals, but it's all together.

CB: Yes, it helps them become one ensemble.
Yeah. And, then I have other, a sort of ensemble playing things that I do. I have more of... play with various emotions. These are with improvisers. A lot of the times I have them all spontaneously play a soundtrack to a thing that's projected.

So, then when I go back to notes that are pre-written, there's still that this alive liveliness to it.

Great! Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today!
Respondent 3A Interview-

Thank you for taking the time out to speak with me today! After my interviews and review of the horn teacher’s questionnaire, I compiled a few questions that I believe Alexander Technique could assist horn players who are encountering these issues.

My first question is how do you approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?

Do you want to talk specifically about wind players, horn players or you know, I'm a piano teacher.

If you want to, you can talk about wind players but also as a pianist you would definitely relate to finger coordination. Maybe you could talk about overall instrumentalists?

I've spent a lot of time talking to students about how their arm is connected to their back. I do a lot of body mapping, wrists, the forearm joints, elbow, shoulder, sternum, clavicle. That comes in more when it comes to breathing. When I'm talking about finger coordination, because I have a lot of background in the Taubman piano technique. I talk a lot about forearm rotation and allowing your arm to be with your fingers so the finger doesn't become individual.

I'm sorry what was the name of the piano work that you do?
R3A: It was the work of Dorothy Taubman and it's now being continued by Edna Golansky. I didn't go to the certification for that because I started that before I seriously start Alexander Technique. By the time they started doing a certification in that (Taubman), I was already kind of into Alexander Technique and then energy work, and didn't get back to it. Although I still apply it all the time.

CB: I have never heard of that, it sounds very interesting.

R3A: Yeah. So I just try to make sure everything's hooked up for lack of a better thing. You know, the alignment's good. There isn't extra tension in any finger or thumb. I'm always suspicious of the thumb.

CB: Yeah, especially as a horn player our thumb is on the "trigger" key.

R3A: Yeah. I have a horn player right now and haven't seen her a lot yet with the horn. I played violin, well I still play a little violin, but I also played oboe. The thumb supports the instrument. Not that it's that heavy an instrument, but people can get into trouble holding that. I check alignment a lot and making sure there's not a low wrist and making sure there's not thumb tension.

CB: The next question is how would you work with students who physically tighten up as they play in the higher register?

R3A: I would do a lot about hands on Alexander Technique probably, especially if they came complaining of that. I would make sure they're exhaling enough. You can do it at the piano all the time because we don't "have to breathe" more than we do, not to directly play our instrument. I find a lot of people when they tighten up, they do it on the inhale and then they just don't let go. I would try to observe the motion in both directions, but especially exhaling.
CB: Very interesting. Now that I am thinking about it, for me it is in on the inhale where I hold my breath and become tense.

R3A: Because the flute player are the ones that need the most breath. With oboe it's all about controlling a small stream of air probably even less. So not holding it.

CB: The next question I have is how would you use intention to help the student bring alive the Mozart style?

R3A: Oh, I love Mozart. Were you thinking of just fast Mozart or either one?

CB: This one is a pretty lively movement, so probably the faster Mozart.

R3A: I think I would talk about allowing the air to go through the embouchure rather than, trying to fix every single note. With repeated notes I think wind players have it easier because you can put a little bit of air behind each one. Whereas when pianists start repeating notes, kind of scary. I'm not saying it's easy on the horn believe me. I started becoming a horn player when I was in high school. So I appreciate the work. As far as the style, I mean we are lucky in this day and age we can call up YouTube and listen to five different performances and say, "I like this and how do I go about doing that?" I mean, you can't have a good intention until you can hear what you want in your head. I'm always telling my students think about how you want that phrase to sound. Don't just dive in.

CB: To take a pause before diving into the music.

R3A: Yeah. Yeah. You can always hear the phrase in your head while you’re making sure you exhale. I actually write exhale on my student’s music.
CB: What a wonderful idea! And speaking of embouchure, this leads into my next question nicely.

How do you work with students to find the awareness of the jaw, and the awareness of the relationship of the jaw to mouthpiece and embouchure?

R3A: The first thing I look at is when they're taking the horn out of the case and bringing the horn to them. Are they bringing it to their mouth, their embouchure in a comfortable place, or are they jutting out their chin or jaw? I mean that's just where I tend to look first. After that, I really do a fair amount of hands-on locating where the jaw is, do again some body mapping and then how easily can the jaw open. Tension in the jaw is challenging all the time. Especially for wind players. Can you let that just, you know, drop from where it attaches, the skull.

The other thing I'd want them to think about is what's going on with the tongue. It amazes me more and more how tension in the tongue feeds tension in the jaw and vice versa. So I would check in with both of those things or all those things.

CB: Yes, and this leads in perfectly with breathing. My next question is how you work with students on the breathing mechanism. And not trying to over control the breath?

R3A: Well, I made sure they had the mapping of the diaphragm correctly. 10 years ago that was a revelation to a lot of people. Now, a lot of people seem to know, you inhale, the diaphragm goes down, and you exhale and it comes back up. Not that it's huge amounts it's, the dome, enough that things move. Once I've checked in with the neck and make sure they're standing and not tightening, they're locking their knees or locking anywhere else. Assuming they're standing well. I tend to rest on their ribs so they can feel, I put one hand on each side and they can really feel some movement there. Not that you force movement, but just being aware of the movement. I find when you start over controlling it, that's when you feel the stop, the hold.
CB: A lot of [horn] teachers talked about trying to over control the air and forcing a lot of air. So, I'm glad you made that point about the controlling begins to happen when you don't understand the relationship of how all of all that works together.

R3A: Yeah. It's all about movement. Yeah. Nothing like a stop to over control something.

CB: My next question is how would you work with students to stay as free as possible when they're performing softer passages?

R3A: I kept looking at this question going, well, kind of the same as breathing and everything else. What I end up saying to my students, the pianist is often don't tiptoe. Really allow yourself to be there. Your weight to be there. Sometimes I feel like in softer passages again, people hold in because they're afraid to have too much sound.

And holding doesn't help it. Instead you end up getting that uneven soft, soft, louder, soft, soft ... that kind of thing. I'd probably do a lot of hands-on on that. With my pianists that's a lot of hands-on the forearm, and the back, and the neck to make sure they're allowing themselves to play the instrument. As opposed to kind of tiptoeing and hoping that it'll come out right.

CB: I think as a horn player, we kind of pull back on the air, like you said, tiptoeing with the air versus allowing the air to do what it wants to do and have that movement like you talked about.

My last question is how you work with students and finding awareness and performing with fellow musicians. The Brahms horn trio is a work for three musicians and finding the awareness outside of one’s own music can be challenging.
R3A: I really get into them being aware of each other's backs. To the point of, I have a lot of back to back games, but I like to play on Alexander groups and in training schools. I actually did the first movement of the Brahms B Flat Clarinet Sonata sitting back to back with another colleague, who's also an Alexander teacher.

We did the whole thing that way so we couldn't see each other. His comment on that was actually, that gives me more information. Granted we played together before normally. It's amazing how much you can find out from feet and back. That's what I think about. It's especially interesting if someone gets up and you can see all the stuff they're holding as an accompanist; how do I not take that on and still be aware of them?

CB: What an interesting idea! I like that a lot!

R3A: I think it's a really fun game. Do it all back to back. I've even known string quartets to like sit, so they can't see each other. So, they have to think about, the energy in the space around them. Fun game.

CB: It sounds like it. Thank you again for taking the time to speaking with me today!
Respondent 4A Interview -

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**Centria Brown (CB):** Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today!

**Respondent 4A (R4A):** Of course! I am glad this worked out with both of our schedules!

**CB:** Me too! As I mentioned in my email to you my research is on using the Alexander Technique as a practice tool for horn players. My intent is to show how the Alexander Technique can help by using selected works from the horn repertoire.

After interviewing and reviewing the horn teachers’ responses these are the questions that I found to be the most received responses that I believe the Alexander Technique could help students with.

**R4A:** Absolutely. Let me pull up the email here. Okay, so I'm looking at the questions that you had specifically for Alexander teachers. So how should we go about this?

**CB:** If you would like you could talk about yourself and your approach as an Alexander Technique teacher?

**R4A:** Okay. I'm not a musician but I am a dancer, and I do some singing. I've been teaching for over 30 years, and I was fortunate to be able to study with Marjorie Barstow for a number of years. She was a first-generation teacher who studied with F. M. Alexander.

Marjorie is kind of the pioneer of what we now call working in activity. In other words, if you're a horn player, let's get out your horn and see what you're doing as you're doing that
R4A: She sort of took it beyond the basic sitting, standing, walking. Which is really important in the Alexander Technique. If your thinking completely goes awry once you pick up your instrument, then it's sort of not really beneficial.

That's really when I first got to observe Marj working with anyone. And anyone doing any activity under the sun, from playing an instrument to swinging a golf club.

And Marj was not a musician. That was really the key, she's not teaching these people how to play or improve their technique. She's working with their overall coordination. And that's going to improve the activity itself. That's kind of my approach and has been all along.

And together with that, are you familiar with body mapping?

CB: Yes, I am.

R4A: I was also very lucky in my training, in my teacher training, to be mentored by Bill Conable, who is a cellist. He basically invented body mapping in regards to the Alexander Technique, as well as his then wife Barbara.

Marj Barstow didn't do body mapping. But those of us who do include body mapping, it's a way to clear up some misunderstandings about how our body is supposed to move. And once the mapping is made clear, then the Alexander principles tend to go a little bit faster.

If you're thinking that I want to free my head on top of my spine, but you're unconsciously trying to move from a joint that doesn't exist, you're only going to get so far with that.
CB: Definitely! We can get started with the research questions. The first question was on finding optimal finger coordination. How do you help your students find optimal finger coordination?

R4A: Well number one, and again, this would be not only for musicians but just about anybody, but especially musicians. I'm going to ask, I'm never afraid to ask a seemingly obvious or stupid question. Because all questions are good.

First, I'm going to make sure that they actually know where the joint is. In other words, it's not, the base joint of the finger, what we call the knuckle, it is not at the web. It's almost in the center of our palm.

If people don't have that simple mapping, essentially, they're going to be tightening and stiffening and working with fingers that are too short.

That's a quick and simple way to say, okay, now make sure we've got those joints mapped correctly. That would include the thumb as well. And also getting into the wrist, and the fact that the rotation is happening up in your elbow and your radius.

I would say before I would get into any of these details, there would have to be a sort of baseline understanding of the head, neck, spine relationship. What Alexander called the primary control or the primary movement. That's the through line upon which everything else is based.

If somebody's noticing, let's say tension in their hand, then I might say, "Okay, great. Now can you also notice, is anything happening in your head and neck? When you're tightening your hand are you also tightening your neck?" To just keep bringing in that whole body awareness. But as you know, it's so easy to focus on parts, and forget that we are a moving whole.
CB: Very true.

CB: My next question is about the body tensing as the pitch raises. In the higher register students tend to tighten or physically raise their body with the pitch. How would you work with a student who is dealing with this?

R4A: Yeah, well I mean this happens with singers too. And with dancers it wouldn't be so much about pitch, but it's something that's coming that we perceive as difficult. So, with a dancer, that could be a turn or a balance.

But it's the same with musicians. If you're already anticipating what's coming next, it's almost a recipe to fail, right? If you're, "Oh I've got to get ready to play that high note," and then you're already tightening three or four bars in advance.

It's really working with, thinking and awareness moment by moment. Sometimes if it's something that's happening all the time at the same point in the piece or in the score, then we're just going to sort of go back.

I'll say, "Okay, so how long can you play without tightening? And then as soon as you feel yourself starting to tighten, just stop, and see where you are in the music." And it's like, "Whoa, I still have three bars to go, and I'm already in my mind playing that high note, which is taking me out of my good coordination."

That's partly finding the ground. Because that's my antidote to any kind of pulling up, tightening up, is where's the ground, where are your feet?

Again, it's bringing back to whole body coordination. But the support is coming from the ground. And that's how I live in my world. Support is not something we go find or manufacture, we just connect through our feet.
CB: Wonderfully said! My last question for the Mozart is helping students find the Mozart, or classical style. Could you talk about some things that you might would incorporate to get students away from that technique and more into the music?

R4A: Well I'm going to say, in terms of pretending to know that much about the Mozartian style, I'll just take a pass on that.

CB: It's all right.

R4A: But I love to ask questions. Regardless of the composer or the piece, I will ask, "Well what are you going for here?" And try to figure out, first by observing what's going on, if there might be something technical or body mapping that's getting in the way.

Now this, probably not all Alexander teachers do this. But not all Alexander teachers are me. And I'm a dancer.

I might have somebody just put down their instrument and move, say, an arm, or just move through space. Can they identify qualities that they want in the music? Can you express those qualities without your instrument, physically? And then see where that may or may not lead once you pick up your instrument again.

That's just kind of a way to just mix it up a little bit. Because I know that by the time folks get to college or conservatory, they've had probably multiple teachers and they've got all these voices in their head.

That can be part of the battle too, is if you have these competing voices, which are canceling each other out. Well, what's going to serve you? Make a choice. Try it out. And I guess that's all I'll say about that.
CB: That's a wonderful idea! My next question is from the Shostakovich low horn tutti responses. Could you talk about what you would do to work with students in finding the jaw awareness?

R4A: Well, number one, mapping. Make sure they know where the actual joint is. Because a lot of people don't. And making the distinction, as I say, we have one head and one jaw. We are not designed like a Muppet. Well I'm sure as a student of Pat O'Neill, you've encountered the Whispered Ah?

CB: Yes!

R4A: Whispered Ah is a goldmine for clarifying that. There is a little piece of the Whispered Ah that is very helpful. And it's something that Marj Barstow did with folks all the time.

And she would say, "Just close your lips and wait for the air to come in." And the closing the lips, she was pretty specific about that. And this comes right out of Whispered Ah. Is that your lips are lightly touching, but there's space between your top and bottom molars. That is the resting place for the jaw, your teeth are only meant to come together for chewing.

But then when we get into what I call our embouchure friends. Are you, or to some extent or any extent, engaging your embouchure even when you're not playing? Many folks are.

I've worked with a clarinetist. We were just doing some breathing thing. I don't think, it wasn't a Whispered Ah. But he had an ah-ha, where he said, "Oh, I realized I'm involving my tongue as when I'm just breathing, as if I'm playing my clarinet." And he turned bright red and went, "Oh! Wow! Huh!"

CB: Yeah.
R4A: I know with the embouchure, you got to do something really specific, otherwise it's not going to sound good. But it all has to come from the overall freedom of the whole. With the jaw, I would also get into the tongue and hyoid. And that's the whole sort of front body and all those hyoid connections to the jaw. And how delicate those front muscles are compared to the larger muscles of the back.

And encouraging people to really rest, and do that just when you're not playing. Do some Whispered Ahs, or do this simple practice of closing your lips after the exhale and waiting for the air to come in.

The breathing is not related to, "oh, I need this much air." It's just breathing. And practice giving yourself some rest from the very technical embouchure land.

CB: What a great concept! This actually gets into my next question of the breathing mechanism. I know you mentioned the Whispered Ah, but is there anything else you do to work with students on the breathing mechanism?

R4A: Oh, well, I do a ton of stuff. But it's sort of situational. Because in addition to my Alexander, I've done a fair amount of the Carl Stough breathing work. He's no longer living. He was also known as Doctor Breath. But he was not an Alexander teacher, but he lived in New York and he was an acclaimed choir director. But he also figured out how to really help people with their breathing.

This was in the 1950s, when these soldiers were coming back from World War II with this new disease emphysema. Also, a result from cigarettes. The doctors couldn't do anything for these people. So, this man, Stough, with no medical training was granted access in a VA hospital. Because his whole thing was it's not about the inhale, it's about getting a full exhale. And the doctors had never really considered that. And really getting a full excursion of the diaphragm.
When Stough was still alive, a lot of Alexander teachers heard about him and worked with him extensively. I'm not sure when he died, but his work is being carried on by various teachers, sometimes called the Art of Breathing. I would say that this is Alexander adjacent. But it is teaching in reality.

But not just wind players, but folks in general just practice a gentle hissing on an exhale, just as a way to extend the exhale. This is again sort of coming from Carl Stough. But also, other modalities that I'm versed in.

It's not about the in-breath, right? It's about freedom and ease on the exhale, and then the next in-breath will be free and easy. It's sort of getting out of your way. I do a ton of various stuff with breathing. But those are sort of some of the main ones.

Not worrying so much about the in-breath. Also making sure on the in-breath that people are not doing what F. M. Alexander did, which was tightening his neck, pulling his head back, and gasping. That's really what the Whispered Ah is really designed to show people that.

I would also say, find the ground. I never lose sight of that. Find the ground. Because breathing is a full-body activity.

Very true. My next question is on working with students when they tense up when performing softer passages.

Well, now here is where I would ask questions. Could you talk a little bit more about that from your perspective as a horn player?

Of course! Often when we are playing soft passages, we may feel as if we have to overwork to not play too loudly. I know for myself, and a few of my students, we will over tighten the embouchure and hold the air back.

For me, this will make room for error. Especially for this piece with a trio of piano and violin, one might try and hold back their air, and sound, in order to play softly.
R4A: Got you.

CB: So, finding ways to stay free in the softer passage when you feel very small and confined in regards to sound.

R4A: Again, it would depend on what I'm seeing. Who's sitting in front of me? What am I seeing and observing?

When in doubt, come back to full-body awareness. And not only full-body, but the whole room. Which is what I talk about a lot with musicians, is you're moving molecules. You want to be moving all the molecules. And with a softer sound, you still want to be moving all the molecules.

CB: Yeah.

R4A: Otherwise it's just going to be sort of wimpy. You don't want a wimpy sound.

And you mentioned specifically some tightening in the lips and holding back the air. I would, based on what I was seeing, go from there.

This is where I love working with musicians and things that are not my expertise. What I will do if I'm not sure about something that I'm seeing, that's when I'll ask questions. Like, "Is it necessary to do this?" Or, "What do you absolutely have to do, and what's maybe getting in your way?"

Because I work with some musicians who are in various military bands. And with them I ask a lot of questions. "Okay, what is required for when you're standing there?" Because they have to look a certain way, like heels together. Okay, what is required, and how much can we get away with so you won't be yelled at, but you're still accomplishing your task.
R4A: But I think with softer passage, and this just popped in my head, but I might ask questions about what are they hearing? What are you hearing in your own sound when you’re playing soft versus medium loud versus loud?

Because this would go along with tightening the lips and jaw and neck. There might be something going on that's sort of almost putting a barrier between the musician and the sound.

CB: Great. My last question is about finding awareness when playing with other musicians, such as a chamber setting?

R4A: What a nice segue way into listening!

CB: Yeah, definitely!

R4A: Are you hearing the people around you? If not, why not? Well that very much gets into the Alexander concept of, it's sometimes called expanded field of awareness or unified field of [awareness/attention].

Your awareness starts with your own coordination, and from there expands out to include what's around you, who's around you. With chamber ensemble, it's where is your attention? Because if it's outside yourself where you're starting, you're going to get into trouble.

I often use the image of concentric circles. When the stone drops into the pond and the ripples go out. Or with a light rain, and the drops are falling, and the concentric circles overlap. It's sort of like, well where does it begin? And it's got to begin with head–neck coordination, whole body coordination. And from there I can go out and include.

I might look at the configuration of where people are placed in relation to each other. And is there a conductor? Keeping your vision lively.
R4A: And again, connecting to the floor. Because you're all sharing the same floor. That's a great way to build ensemble for musicians, actors, dancers, is you are sharing the same floor. Can you feel that through your feet?

And they may not have thought about that, but as soon as they think about it, oh yeah. And boom, you're connected. There's all kinds of fun stuff like that. And once you have that thought, something shifts. And you will sense a shift in the overall sense of the group.

Because they're no longer individuals with their own, I won't say neurosis, but with their own concerns and worries. It's sort of like, "Oh, whoa, I'm here with these other people. We're sharing the space. Let's go."

CB: Great! Well thank you again for taking the time to speak with me today!
Respondent 5A Interview -

This interview/email response has been transcribed and edited. All information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

1. How do you approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?

From the standpoint of the Alexander Technique, finger coordination is not a separate issue from the total “use” of the performer. First, I make sure they are grounded and know where the support for themselves and their instrument comes from so that they are not confusing holding the instrument and supporting themselves. Confusing the two processes causes undue tension in the arms and finger movement suffers as a result.

I do a lot of body mapping to help them realize the support for themselves that is natural and not “postural.” That is, it is dependent only upon thinking certain directions so as not to interfere with their bodies’ ability to support them with ease, not stiffening to “hold themselves up” which is habitual (but not natural) in our culture.

Often this process alone solves the issue of finger stiffness. I leave the decision as to which fingers to use to the student and their horn teacher.
2. Questions 2, 4, 5, and 6

Questions 2, 4, 5 and 6 to the interviewee seemed to be related to the breath so they answered these questions under one statement.

A discussion of breathing could occupy a whole dissertation in itself, but I believe that correcting the many misconceptions about breathing with solid anatomical and physiological information goes a long way to making breath function easier. The concept of “breath support” in itself implies rigidity of some parts, and nothing could be further from the truth. I aim for “breath flow” or “not interfering with the breath function” as terms instead. Sometimes more accurate bodyscanning and changing language alone makes a huge difference.

If the breath is not allowed free passage through the throat, the jaw often tenses. In fact, it has been my observation, with singers as well as wind and brass players, that we tend to use the throat and jaw muscles to try to control the breath. This is usually totally unconscious, so as an AT teacher, I try to help them discover this substitutionary action and begin to inhibit it. Sometimes this can be achieved simply by giving them permission to make a “bad” sound. . . or two or three! It allows the player to experiment rather than
“get it right.” This, in turn, frees up the bodymind and allows for better breath flow.

To manage the breath flow, I ask them to ask themselves the question, “Do I need more air or less air?” constantly during a phrase. I am indebted to the authors of *What Every Singer Needs to Know About the Body* for this simple question. It is amazing how much better the phrasing and the sound becomes when that is the process instead of trying to use muscular tension to control the airflow!

Soft or high passages then also respond to this question of less or more air. Sometimes students don’t know what it takes to play high notes so they confuse the tension they hear that is inherent in the high frequency with the need to “do more”: more tensing, more pushing. The resulting constriction makes it impossible to play high notes easily. Then the student dreads the high notes, which tenses them even more in what becomes a vicious circle. I often give them “directions” to think that are general enough yet also at the same time specific so that they can continue to think them even while playing. It takes patience to unkink ourselves from long-held habits of tensing while playing or preparing to play, but it can be done if the student is willing to make some mistakes along the way.
Therefore, I operate a “safe place” for ugly sounds and embarrassing attempts that are necessary to learning. Humor helps a great deal here, of course!

For all pitches, but especially for playing soft passages, I ask them to bring awareness to the sensation of the mouthpiece and the resistance of the horn and to experiment giving just enough airflow to overcome that resistance. This takes practice to perfect, of course, but it generally frees the jaw, the breath, and any excess tension in lips or tongue.

In general, I again take a cue from Buckoke and Kleinman (The Alexander Technique for Musicians): “the more sensation the less tension; the more tension, the less sensation.”
3. How would you use intention to help the student bring alive the Mozartean Style?

I would say that style is learned through listening to good models and is instinctive in some musicians (although not all). But knowing what you want to achieve stylistically and being able to do that depends on what we in the Alexander technique world call “good use”—basically, knowing how not to interfere with our natural coordination.

Yet most of us try to achieve a goal like the effortlessness and elegance of Brain’s playing by working harder at it, when the truth is that we have to observe what habits we have that are creating excess tension and learn to change them. The Alexander Technique does that by recognizing that what we are thinking, even if unconscious, is affecting the level of muscular activity in the body, most often in counter-productive ways.

Learning another way to think often releases the excess tension and results in playing with greater ease and also greater technical and musical mastery. This “doing less, not more” yet achieving or exceeding our goal is almost always a surprise because we are trained in our society to “do more.”
Thus, the first reaction to being asked to find ease is often something like, “Well, if I don’t try, it won’t happen!” And there is truth in this. We do have to have the intention to play and to play a certain way that is appropriate for the style and medium. The next issue is how to allow this intention to become reality. In other words, how do I do that? Here is where Alexander’s idea about letting go of focusing on the goal and instead, paying attention to what he called “the means whereby” (what is happening to our whole self as we play) is of utmost importance.

4. Question #7, How do you work with students in finding awareness in performing with fellow musicians, such as chamber ensembles?

This chamber ensemble features three amazing musicians whose ability to listen to themselves and each other is masterful. Without obvious visual cues, each seems to know what the other is doing. This deep listening to each other and to themselves is one of the “by-products” of practicing the Alexander Technique.
In one of my recent advanced classes of the Technique, I ran an experiment. I had a complete string quartet in this class, so I offered them a challenge: would they be interested in learning the first movement of the Ravel String Quartet in G only using principles of the Alexander Technique and only for 20-30 minutes during each class session? No outside practice was allowed. They agreed, and this mode of learning went on for most of the 14 weeks of the semester until the last two weeks when they performed the movement as a whole in class and it was videoed.

Granted, these were for the most part senior performance majors, but they had never before been in the same string quartet, and they had never before tried to incorporate AT principles while learning a piece.

The result was pretty extraordinary. The level of concentration or focus was deep without the excess muscular tension that results when performers try to concentrate. Instead there was much of the same deep listening that was evidenced in this video.
When asked how this was different from the way they usually experience learning and performing chamber music, the cellist said, after a pause to think, “I didn’t have to deal with everyone’s stuff!”—a statement I take to mean that everyone had let go of the unnecessary thinking and allowed the directions I give them as a way to achieve ease and freedom to do their work.

This *deep listening* is only possible when each person is securely grounded and open to both their own music-making and that of the others at the same time. I teach this by asking them to think of three spaces simultaneously (which opens up their awareness to the environment), and if they feel tension creeping in, to bring their awareness to the sensations coming in through their senses, particularly the feel of the fingers on bow and string, the sit bones on the chair, and their breath. *The more sensation, the less tension and vice versa.* (I took many cues for this project from the excellent book by Peter Buckoke and Judith Kleinman entitled, *The Alexander Technique for Musicians.* Both authors are experienced AT teachers in England; Peter teaches at the Royal College of Music in London. This premise comes from their book.)
Centria Brown (CB): Thank you for taking the time out to speak with me today! My intent is to inform horn players, students and teachers, how the Alexander Technique would work for them. Although, everyone is unique in their own way possibly this research would open one's mind to how Alexander could assist them or their students.

The questions I have are based on the responses from the horn teachers, interviews and the questionnaire. I selected the top habits from each of the three pieces. I then looked to see how Alexander Technique would assist a student dealing with these habits.

My first question is based on the Mozart horn concerto. How would you approach a student in getting optimal finger coordination?

Respondent 6A (R6A): So, I'll just remind you that my expertise is not horn playing.

CB: That's all right.

R6A: Nor is it Mozart. I think I said this in my email back to you. I've even had them give me the instrument so I can hold it and they can kind of instruct me and help me adapt.
I want them to show me what they need to do. What's required of you in order to manage not only the architecture of the instrument but then the music. And I might be working with somebody with a string instrument and I kind of go through the same process. Varies with the instrument. But what I would look at is the relationship all the way from the tips of the fingers through the body to the feet. Every single part of the body is playing this instrument. So, that is my approach to any instrument, or any piece of music, or any work of choreography, what is the rest of the body doing to help you get there?

When I've discovered that it's particularly challenging, it's not unusual to find that somewhere in the body there is some kind of contorting going on with some degree of holding and tension to try to manage that. Generally speaking, we look at what is necessary. What of that tension is actually necessary? So would I specifically address the fingers? Maybe not as much as you would think. Really more about the whole coordination.

Of course. Could you talk about the coordination you would work with outside of your fingers?

Yeah, you've been studying the Alexander Technique, so you're going to be familiar when I speak to the relationship of the head to the spine. But I'm also looking at all of the points where bones meet in the body. So, not just the AO joint, not just the top, but I'm also looking at the feet, and I'm looking at the ankles, as well as the knees and the hips and the shoulders, elbows, wrists.

And there's the story of the general, like overall, if we could sort of generalize what our coordination is, and then there's the individual story. So let's call him Steve. Steve comes in, and he had a major fall when he was twelve, or whatever it is. There's some story in his body that is also coming into play with regard to how he plays his instrument. Does that make sense?
CB: Yeah.

R6A: Yeah. So it's, what is your body's coordination? And that includes whatever your story is, and how you've adapted over time to maybe compensate for an injury, or recover from a surgery, or you've practiced this instrument for 500 hours without stop and that's led to another story.

I do a lot of work with musicians without holding their instruments. I think that's not so unusual in the Alexander Technique work. We sort of want to look at the whole body, and anything that that you might be doing, and how you coordinate yourself to do anything. So to me, that is just as important as picking up the instrument.

R6A: So, as I watch Steve, or Gloria, or whoever, the horn player, we're also looking at the basics, the sitting and the standing and the opening a door, talking on a telephone. I don't have that many lines I repeat, but this one I do, and I compare it to like the cyclist, the road rider who trains and trains. If that cyclist gets off the bike but doesn't leave the posture of the cyclist, then those muscular contractions are going to go with you whatever you do. So my line is like, when you're not riding the bike, get off the bike. And I've seen this with string players, like a violin player whose left shoulder/neck region sort of maintains that kind of contraction inward. The message is, when you're not playing your instrument, don't play your instrument. Can you find your neutral so that you're not doing anything?

Then I would like for people to practice music without holding their instrument. So, like a meditation, if you will, a music meditation, maybe lying on your back in a constructive rest, and go through the music and see how your body starts to respond as soon as you get to that hard part. And then if you can let it go, and play with that part a little bit more, and see if you can get at it without that tension in the neck, without that tension in the shoulder. Find comfort and ease while you're thinking about it but not actually performing it.
R6A: I'm kind of talking you all through my process here. And it really depends on the person. And sometimes it's really, really tiny baby steps that make a big difference. I worked with a horn player, he's a French horn player, a few years ago in a graduate program, and we were doing a private lesson. He was in a class, and then he had a private lesson. And I sort of disorganized him to such an extent that when he played, he said it's the worst he's ever sounded. But he laughed about it, because he'd never dared to sound so bad. Although I didn't hear that it sounded bad. But his perception of what was good and what he had to do in his body to make it good, when that was taken away, I think it really... It was very disorienting, which I completely empathize with. When you're working at a professional, high level, the last thing you want to do is disorganize what works, or what you perceive to work.

CB: That is very true. For me it was alarming after my first lesson but I realized I was able to produce a sound without the tension I perceived was needed.

R6A: Yeah, that's right.

CB: My next question is about students tensing as the play in the higher register of their instrument. I am not fluent in dance so I am not sure if this could be related to in dancing terms. Because you are a dancer, is that correct?

R6A: Yes. Yeah, I'm a dancer. I can compare that to dance. I often recall this moment. When I was in a piece of choreography, somebody else's work, it was really hard, and it was really fast, my body started going fast before it needed to go fast. And so I worked with an Alexander teacher, actually, and she had me practice it in slow motion, like go through it slowly, go through it without that anxiety about the part that's coming up, you know?
R6A: This might be specific to dance or athletics, but sort of worked on keeping my nervous system calm while my muscular system sped up. So that took practice. That's the sort of thing that I will talk to musicians about, is try this piece of music in a variety of ways. Maybe play it lying down. Play it with your eyes closed. Play it really slowly.

I'm imagining musicians also go through the motions with their hands and their breath when they're not holding an instrument, sort of that meditation I was talking about, but do that without the motions. And there again is an opportunity to practice. Like as you feel the body get tense, even when you're not holding or playing that music, that's the inhibition moment. Can I pause, regroup, and think through this again? And maybe less tension this time. I'm not saying it's going to go away, but let's see if you can find a way to do it with a little bit less tension. Just play with it.

I'll sometimes do the exact opposite and say, "I want you to play with as much tension as you can, so you know what it is to intentionally play with that tension. Do it on purpose." I think sometimes we try so hard to do without the tension that we don't know what we're doing to get to the tension in the first place. So I play with both. See about doing without, but then actually add some tension to this moment and feel it and decide if that's what you want. Because how do you decide whether you want it or not if you don't know you're doing it?

CB: That is true figuring out what the tension feels like to begin with.

My next question is based on musical style. How would you use intention to help the student bring alive the Mozart, or classical era style? To allow to student to think less about the technique but more about the musicality.
R6A: Well, you’re talking to a dancer. This is something else I do a lot with the class I have. We walk around a lot and move a lot in a group. One thing I do is one of these walking scores that I play with, is I have them start listening to the sound of the room so that they can hear the sound that they’re all making together. I want to connect their bodies and what they’re hearing and what they’re seeing. So they can see that they’re moving. They can see the people in the room moving. They can hear not only their own footsteps but other people’s footsteps. Maybe it’s like the sound of people’s pants, like if you’re wearing corduroy and it makes that sound. There are sounds around you all the time. And now what are the sounds you’re making with this group? And then be in it. Recognize that you’re inside the sound.

R6A: For me, movement is always my avenue into teaching. The students probably did more movement than they were used to in a music class, although it was Alexander Technique class. I mean, we practiced walking together, walking away from each other, walking towards each other, setting an intention about stopping and going. It’s like practicing intention, if you will. And so that if you want to have this experience of really embodying the music, which I think is sort of what you’re saying?

CB: Yes.

R6A: To have the freedom to play with moving with it. I'm not asking them to dance. I'm not asking for anything that would be so awkward. But it is just to recognize that the sound is moving, it's actually vibrating and moving, and to not have it just be something that leaves their mouth and goes out the bell of the horn. It’s all around them. That’s kind of my way.

CB: I like that! To be aware that it’s not a thing that’s not a part of you, but you are part of that musical moment.

R6A: Yeah. Right, right.
CB: The next question was based off of the Shostakovich low horn excerpt. In a lot of responses we got from the questionnaire was the relationship of the jaw and how to use the jaw in that low register to get the best sound. Could you talk about how you work with students to find awareness of the jaw, and the awareness of the jaw possibly in relation to an instrument like the horn?

R6A: Let's see. Well, we do a lot of Whispered Ah, and we do it lying down. We do it standing up. We do it while walking. I have students' kind of cup their hands around either side of the mandible, the jaw bone, and as they breathe, as they talk, as they think, to feel what's going on there.

And like many teachers, I use a full-size skeleton. We work with that a lot. And I had a student once like actually create a 3D model of the skull with the jaw, because she wanted to investigate the jaw.

CB: That's cool!

R6A: Everybody had to come up with a visual piece related to what they were trying to figure out for themselves. I can't, again, say how to work with your jaw for a lower register, because I've never done that. But I can see that just becoming familiar with the entirety of the skull in relationship to the jaw, in relationship to the spine, so that you can play with all the possibilities.
Once again, if I observe somebody, and it looks to me like there is a fair bit of tension going on, I ask why. I want to know if that's actually necessary. Because sometimes a student will say, "For me, yes. I can't seem to do it without it." So then comes the question, "Okay what if you try. What if you try?" Because our notions of what we can and can't do become so fixed. Because I don't have the answer, I can't say, "Well yes you can." It's more like, "You show me. Show me. Play it for me. Tighten as much as you need to." And then because I'm not your music professor and I'm not grading you on how you're playing, I'm just interested in you making some discoveries. What if it sounds terrible but you play with less tension? You're still going to get your degree. I'm not going to take that away from you.

Because you can tell me if I'm wrong, but I encountered so much fear in the students, both graduate and undergraduate, that they were going to do all this work and it wasn't going to pan out, or they were going to miss one rehearsal even if they had a 103 temperature. There is just a ton of fear, which creates tension in and of itself. Sometimes I felt like my job was just to give them 50 minutes without it.

And I don't think their teachers are trying to make them afraid. It's not that. It's a really intense career, as you know. Which is why having wellness programs and things like Alexander Technique, I think, is really important.

Yeah, I agree. I know for me, it was a lot of putting that pressure on myself. And that's why my topic is on using Alexander in the practice room. Because I felt like for me that's where it would start. You're just putting this extra pressure, and you're just carrying this tension around in your playing. And then, as you said, when you're not playing an instrument, it's still there. For me that was what really kind of sparked me wanting to write about this.

Good. Good.
CB: It was definitely the motivation behind this project.

My next one is also from the Shostakovich low horn *tutti* is about the breathing mechanism. Could you talk on what you do to help students understand the breathing mechanism and not over-controlling their breath?

R6A: I'm going to sound like a broken record.

CB: That is okay!

R6A: I just come back to the basics. We look at how we breathe when we're not playing music, or when I'm not doing something callisthenic, or aerobic, if you will. Recognizing that the breath needs to last. The exhale needs to last longer than a normal breath. The inhale needs to be more efficient. It's not just a casual act, to breathe while doing what you're doing.

However, I think the more we can achieve that natural, easy breath again by looking at the anatomy, looking at the movement that happens along the spine and in the ribs, through the arms, through the whole body. Look at what happens when we're not interfering with our breath.

And interfering, I don't mean that in a negative way. I mean we have to manipulate the breath in a particular way to do certain things, especially if you play a wind instrument. There's no way around it. And again I come back to, what is essential to this moment? What is essential to this passage? If you're an actor or an orator like Alexander was, what is essential for you to give your audience, your listeners, the clearest experience?

I just keep coming back to that. I ask them to overdo it, to under-do it, to run out of breath, to lose your breath, to whatever it is so that you have a variety of experiences and know that you have choices.
R6A: But I guess I appreciate watching them do the discovering. They know so much more about this, because they've been doing it for longer. And then I also find in the group class setting, somebody else in the room plays a wind instrument and says, "Oh, I tried this, and it was really..." They start helping each other out.

CB: Yes, definitely. My next question is on the Brahms horn trio. It's a four movement work, but I picked the third movement. It's a very soft, delicate work. How would you work with students to stay as free as they can when performing softer passages?

R6A: Same as when they're a higher pitched, faster passage. Play it too fast. Play it too slow. Play it with less effort. Play it with more effort. Sometimes doing the slowest work and the softest work is just as hard as doing something that's faster. And I don't know. You can tell me if part of your practice is to listen to the music.

CB: Yes.

R6A: As much as you play it? I would assume so.

CB: Yeah.

R6A: So, really let the music talk to you. Let it inform you. It's like to be able to feel the music at the same time that you're playing it.

That said, I don't mean if you're doing something with more intensity to bring all that tension into your body. But the other thing is, I don't think tension is bad. I think it can be harmful if it's overdone, if it stays in the body, if you don't let it out when you're done playing the instrument. Recovery is really important.
R6A: There's something there, and if all of you just sat neutrally and played every single type of music, we would be able to tell. You have to be invested in what the music feels like. And when you perform live, we see it in the musicians.

I also really believe in improvisation. I think that taking a style of music and inviting students to improvise in that register, or within key, or whatever it is, improvise with that, and take the pressure off getting it right. But discover how you play this.

That's actually another thing I did with that horn player who couldn't believe how badly he thought he sounded. I asked him to improvise so that there's nothing wrong. You can't get it wrong. You might not love how you sound, but you're not missing notes. I think improvising is like a hugely helpful tool, no matter how you're trained. If you can bring that into your practice, then you can refine all the details of the body.

CB: Yeah finding ways to get beyond the boundaries you set for yourself. My last question is on finding awareness in performing with fellow musicians such as in a chamber ensemble.

I know you talked about how you have your group walk together and listen to each other and how they're involved in the sound. Is there anything else that you do when you're working with maybe a small ensemble such as a trio?

R6A: Yeah, very similar to what I was talking about before. I would want them to almost play musical chairs, but not musical chairs. So set your chairs up maybe the way you would for your trio, don't play the music right now. This is not about holding instruments. But you have four things you can do, let's say. You can sit. You can stand. You can walk. And you can move your chair to another place. Five things. You can sit in somebody else's chair.
R6A: Then that gets started, and then I ask them to treat it as a composition, like a movement composition. So, you're really looking at and listening for where the empty space is, where the faster moments. You can change your speed. You can change your level. Like if two people are sitting, one person's standing. I've really loved watching the musicians play with this type of score, because they know so much about time, and I know a lot about space. So I'm asking them, in a way, to apply what they know about time to spatial relationships.

Then we add the instruments, and they're just adding listening. So it's fun as well. It can be goofy, but it's really not. It's really like you're tuning your attention. And I think it's great that you're asking this question, because it's so important. And it's so clear when that's on, when everybody's listening. You're not just putting the sound out it's also coming in. It's sort of cyclical, or figure eight. However you want to look at it. Everything's happening at once. But to recognize everybody has an equal part, and it's a collaboration. It's a creative collaboration. It's not just that it's written on the page and you put the sound out. You're actually collaborating in creating the whole picture.

CB: That's awesome! Well, thank you again for speaking with me today!
Respondent 7A Interview—

This interview response has been transcribed and edited. All information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

Centria Brown (CB): Thank you again for agreeing to speak with me today! The first question is on the Mozart Horn Concerto, how would you approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?

Respondent 7A (R7A): Okay. This is obviously a very specific question and because you have experience and you know the language that makes it easier. The first thing I would do is not focus on the optimal finger coordination. I’d really want to focus on what’s happening with the whole body. We’d first put the horn away, not work on the horn and just work through what’s going on with the body. Figuring out what habits they have without even doing any kind of activity.

R7A: We would figure out is there is shortening in the torso. Is the neck shortening? What's happening with the hands? I'd work with the arms. So, we are working with what's happening with the body in the first place without the horn. Because as you know, as soon as you pick up the horn, everything changes. We get into performance mode.

After working with them for a while, just with their body, without the horn, then what I would do is talk about the horn. Still without giving them the horn, and talk about the experience of playing and then see what happens there. Because then we might get into performance mode just thinking about it. Once we go through that and talk through, that lengthening, lengthening, lengthening, then we’d start actually picking up the horn and then just notice what's changing. Obviously, you can't do this on every single horn lesson because you have to play.
**R7A:** But what I would do with a student is, we'd pick up the horn, not playing, put the horn back down, pick it back up and just notice what's continuing to happen with the hands and the arms and the whole body. Just so that it can be really methodical and that they can get in the habit of that freedom. Then once we've done that for a while and they felt really comfortable and with ease there, then we could start playing with using the hands and actually playing [the horn].

But that is not super specific about the optimal finger coordination. However, I personally feel that when you do all of those things, all of a sudden that it gets easier.

**CB:** Yeah.

**R7A:** Because that's what's so great about the Alexander technique is it doesn't matter what you bring to it. If we can get that freedom and ease over, over, over, over again, then that's the wrists and the arms and the hands and the forearms just everything's going to be easier.

**CB:** I think that's extremely helpful because for me it's not what you're playing. Like you said, it's what you're doing with yourself, your use and are you engaging in primary control? That's the core of things.

**R7A:** Well I think the real key is, because this first question of how do you obtain the optimal finger coordination. It so epitomizes what we as teachers in music, how we endgain. Stepping back from that and really focusing on the quality of our use before we actually try for the optimal finger coordination. Does that make sense?

**CB:** Yes, of course!
R7A: We're so task oriented and that's why the Alexander Technique has helped my teaching. Because there are all these things to think about; for example, you are assigned this horn concerto and you have so much work to do and there's so much going on. If the first thing you do is focus on is your optimal finger coordination. Like, as I'm sitting here right now talking through, I'm just noticing, when I specifically talk about them, noticing how my hands get a little tenser. Focusing on the quality constantly, constantly, constantly.

CB: Definitely. That actually leads into my next question about performing in the high range. Could you talk about how you would work on students who perform in the high range and they physically tighten as they see the music getting higher in range?

R7A: Sure, some of the things that may come out of my mouth and may not be totally Alexander Technique, so you take what you want from it. Well, as a singer, I'm also a wind player. It's the exact same thing that happens in singing. If you get a new piece and you flip through and see those high notes, you're like “oh!” Everything starts to change. So again, let's put the music away and focus on what's happening with the body.

What about if we take that excerpt that's high and transpose it. Figure out how to play it or sing it in a lower register. In the lower part of the instrument where it's super easy. You learn the excerpt in a part of the voice, or a part of the horn, where there is no stress at all. I do this with my singers all the time. I have them sing things down the octave until they know that like backwards and forwards. Then you take out the stress of the pattern, out of learning the pattern.

Once that's under control, with ease and you just repeat. In some ways, it is tedious what we do and that we have to just keep reiterating the same directions. Letting things be free and finding the length. So, that when you make the transition, next thing we would do is come back to that excerpt that's in a higher part and then not play.
R7A: Inhibit, because I'm sure that we can feel it happening. Just go through that a little bit psychologically. Get to that point and then take a step back, go back, and play in the lower part of the range. And you do this back and forth. All of this of course, is done so much more easily if you have some Alexander hands on you right there. I assume that you would agree with that experience.

CB: Yes, definitely!

R7A: Yes. Right. But everybody hasn't had that. If you have had an experience one time, then you can remember that experience, I think. My students say that, or when I do workshops that are just a one time thing.

What I like to do a lot when I teach is interfere. And, I'm coming around to liking the word interfere. I'll be working with someone and interfering with those habits, whether it's tightening or whatever, so that they don't get to think about the fact that they're playing high.

You know what I mean? Because if you have to focus on the fact that somebody is working on your feet, and you're standing there playing, but meanwhile I'm playing with your feet and working on your knees and then working on your ribcage and repeatedly saying to you, focus on your feet. Focus on your knees, focus on your ribcage. As you're doing those things, all of a sudden, I think that higher register is going to be easier because you're not focusing on the stuff that's hard and high. Of course, we need to be present when we're singing and playing. But I don't really know that we have to be so present. Well I know we don't have to, that we leave the whole body out.

CB: Yeah.
R7A: So, if instead we can interfere. This is something obviously a student can do. If they know the pattern really well, then they don't have to think about it as much. For example, the high stuff is coming up, so all of a sudden, they're going to bring attention to the ribcage. They're going to bring attention to the length, just the length that they feel in their arms or bring attention to that, and this comes to one of your later questions, bring attention to the ease that they're feeling in the draw.

If we distract, I guess distract is another good word. Distract, interfere from what is hard and scary.

CB: Yeah. I feel like a lot of times we see words like distract and interfere in a negative sense and even inhibition. But if you make it positive-


CB: Yeah. And if we see it as a positive, like I'm distracting myself with something that I need to think about, like my feet, that's staying grounded. Or the jaw just keeping it nice and free, then it'll help me in the long run instead of focusing on this is high passage.

R7A: Exactly right. Yeah. You're right. We need to reclaim those words because those are not bad things because the habits are still so strong, so we have to interfere with them. Yeah. You as a teacher, you know this too, that that's one of our jobs. When you're with students in a lesson and they're playing or they're singing, we have to be constantly interfering because those habits, they're used to breathing a certain way or they're used to singing a certain way or blowing too hard. We have to repeatedly interfere, and this is where the tedious thing comes in again, because every time we let them get away with that, they're reinforcing that habit.
CB: Let's see. Then the last question I have on the Mozart is, how would you use intention to help a student bring alive the classical or the Mozart style?

R7A: I feel like that's kind of a, that's a tricky question. I think that if there were a way to play and be curious about the music. And I don't know if I was saying this back when I taught the class, but 'I wonder', that's what Martha, Martha Fertman, would always say. I don't know if Pat said that, but 'I wonder what would happen.' I think playing, being curious, I think is a really fun way to go with Mozart too. Say you have a particular phrase or melody and asking yourself that question, starting with, I wonder what would happen if I sang this phrase. Sorry. I keep saying sing. Play, play this phrase while allowing the direction in my arms to continue. Which I know sounds so crazy, but it doesn't sound crazy to you because you've been studying the Alexander technique. This would be a hard thing for people who don't know the Alexander technique to get on board with. Yeah. Did that make sense to you at all what I just said?

CB: Yeah! PON would say that, she would say, "I wonder what would happen." I looked at her with so much confusion, I never thought that that was any other possibility because we're so rigid in our training. I began to think, I've never stepped that far out of the box.

R7A: But I think the biggest thing is that curiosity. What will happen? What will happen if I do it different? That's the other thing is what if you do it differently? Not because you're always going to do it that way. That's a tricky question.

CB: Well, my next questions are on the Shostakovich fifth symphony low horn tutti. The [horn] teachers talked about understanding how to play low and what your jaw and your embouchure has to feel like in that register. This led me to the question of, how do you work with students finding the awareness of the jaw as well as the layers of the jaw in relation to say the horn or any wind instrument?
Well, first I would kind of talk through the anatomy. I think that would be really helpful. A lot of people, just like with body mapping, have the idea that people think that there's an upper jaw and the lower jaw.

When I first started studying the Alexander techniques, I had terrible TMJ. After working with my teacher, her name was Anne Marie Davis, and that went away. I think that showing students, having a skeleton to look at, showing some diagrams for the students to understand that first and foremost that could make a huge difference. That could just change their whole concept of what is actually going on in the body. But I think that with the Whispered Ah exercise would be really helpful.

Are you familiar with that?

Yes, definitely!

I think the Whispered Ah exercise would be really helpful. Again, these are things that we're doing without playing or singing. Working through those things that the student understands, “Oh, okay, well that's actually what's happening there.” Then again being methodical. Well first what happens if the students sing it, you do the whispered ah, you talk through it, you have them sing it, because that will be a little bit easier, I think because obviously the embouchure of the horn is very different than just singing.

Interesting.
R7A: Helping them through that. I mean I have students who have little cheat sheets on their music stands of things that they need to think about. Just little reminders. Having just like a strip of paper that says something about finding that connection between the head and the neck and releasing that jaw, having just something like that, again, before they start singing or before they start playing. Of course, this comes back to that optimal finger position as well, because if your hand is really tight, chances are good that's going to connect right off into your neck and into your jaw and vice versa.

Obviously if the neck is tight then we're screwed. Period. Of course. But tension travels, you might believe everything is so free and easy here, but look why is my hand a claw? Again, talking through those things. And just again with the interference.

Okay, it's your turn to play this excerpt. The whole time that you're playing, I'm giving you directions. Again, you could write out your own directions, but giving yourself directions of what you should be thinking about and what you shouldn't be thinking about. Right. Also, is there anything wrong with at first letting it be a little bit messier? Like I mean, I don't know like as a, as a horn player, I mean we do it with my singers all the time. But could it be messy at first? Could you allow it to not be as clean and perfect so you let it be free? I mean, is that something you could experiment with?

Obviously everybody has their own opinion about that because what we do in practice often is completely different than what we do in a final performance. But if we can find a little bit more laziness, because obviously the other thing that comes in when we talk about the jaw and the embouchure is the tongue, right? Yeah. You can't really separate that out. Talking through all of those things, if you can focus on that, because the tongue is enormous. If you can focus on that big kind of lazy tongue, let it be lazy. Will that allow the jaw to be a little bit easier too?
R7A: I mean, obviously we can't be, we can't stay lazy, but very often at a certain level there's too much tension. With young singers and young players, they don't sing with enough... Maybe this is less the case with instrumentals, but with singers they sing with as little energy as possible. But as singers get more and more advanced and as they train, they work and they practice and they practice and so then they're on the other side of the spectrum and there's too much effort.

CB: Ah, being curious of what it's like on the other side of the spectrum for a while.

R7A: Absolutely.

CB: We've talked a little bit about this so far too, but could you talk about how you work with your students with the breathing mechanism and trying not to over control it?

R7A: I don't think you should talk about it all the time because I think that when we talk about it too much, then we do get into the over-controlling. But if you don't describe to the students what is physically happening correctly... Because I don't know, I assume this happens in band as well. Some choral teachers give really bad advice when they repeatedly say that you should sing from the diaphragm, that's probably the guiltiest one. That is the cause of so many problems. They also talk about how you need to push out, push out, push out.

First explaining to them, okay, this is what's going on. Just look at some diagrams, look at the muscles and say, this is what's happening. Then the next part of that is you need to get out of the way. This is the phrase that I often say is the air is going to come in no matter what. You do not need to suck it in because it's coming in.
R7A: The way you breathe in singing is different than the other wind instruments for sure, but isn't really necessary to suck in so much air. Because that's the other thing. Can we take in only enough air that we need for the phrase?

CB: Yeah.

R7A: Does that make sense? I mean, as you, I'm sure you've had the experience of inhaling for like 10,000 measure phrase when you're going to only sing like for two beats.

Right. This is where authentic movements comes back. You can come back and play with that some more. But just bringing the awareness and I'm not one for breathing exercises, but I am one for just breathing. Okay, here's your piece of music and you're not going to sing it. You're not going to play it, but you're going to think through it in your mind and you're going to think through when you're going to breathe and how you're going to breathe.

I think that that takes off the pressure because you can visualize what is going to happen without having to work. I do think that you can overdo it though. I think if we talk about it too much, then that's where more and more tension creeps in.

CB: Hmm.

R7A: And the understanding that it is work, that the tension is not a bad word. We think of it as a bad word, but it's not, it's just like distraction or interfering. It's not a bad word. We need there to be muscular tension in the body when we're singing and playing or when we're doing anything. But how can we let it be easy and just allow the air to come in?

CB: That's true.
R7A: Then let it be easy because all it is when we sing and play, all we're doing is exhaling. I mean, I realize it's easier said than done, but I tried to keep it as basic as possible. Then again, of course, if you're working with a student who's playing one of these things that you can be giving them those directions.

CB: Yeah. Then the last two are from the Brahms horn trio and I picked the third movement because it was different from the Mozart, and the Shostakovich. How would you work with students to stay as free as possible as they perform softer passages?

R7A: Well, the first thing I would do is have them not play it softly. I think that so many of these come back to the same things, figuring out what the direction of the phrase, but also the direction of the body. Here's where we can double up on the word direction. How do you want that to be? Focusing on, again, the quality, not on the endgaining of, I have to sing this really soft. So instead, how are you going to get there?

Obviously we come back to this, if we can find more ease, if we connect this back into the optimal finger coordination and we connect it back to the, playing in a higher register and the jaw and all of these things, reinforcing these same habits, the good habits and giving that direction, giving yourself the directions over and over and over again, pausing, do not play. So, until those directions are so inherent in you, then you just don't play it.

Which I realize, we're in a horn lesson. You have to play this piece. So, you have to get there. But is the goal just to get there or is the goal how we get there? But the first thing I said is I would play it louder first, have them learn it loud, not loud, but have them learn that at a comfortable volume. Is that what you would normally do?

CB: Mm-hmm.
R7A: Again, depending on the level of the student, these things are easier said than done. But you could do little segments, it's not like they have to play the whole movement.

CB: Yeah.

R7A: They could just work a phrase. That's the other thing, take it apart and just work a little bit at a time. Then you can add on.

CB: Yeah, I agree. Then the last question I have is how do you work with students in finding awareness and performing with fellow musicians such as chamber ensembles?

R7A: Right. I would kind of make that connection like with opera. Because it's a different thing. But being on stage with other people, being aware, it's a hard skill to learn. Just like with the singer and a pianist, that right there, that's a hard skill to learn. It's essential that they know the other person's part.

I mean, does that... Is that something? Okay, so if you're... Like how well do you know the other parts when you're doing chamber music?

CB: How well do I?

R7A: Yeah. How well do you?

CB: I'll try to know their part as well as I know my part. I'll even write in their rhythm, their entrances, especially with something like this with a string player, I want to know if they're going up bow, down bow.
R7A: Yes. This is more, music teacher, then Alexander teacher, but like singing the other person's part. Let's see, have you ever worked with Meade Andrews?

CB: Unfortunately, I have not!

R7A: Oh, she's so ahead! She does a work shop. She's there now I think in Seven Oaks, which is an awesome workshop that at some point you would love to go to. But she talks about spheres of, I can't think of exactly what it is, but she talks about it in the fact that we have all of these spheres that are kind of interconnected. We have our own personal body and then the space around us and just kind of incorporating one group at a time, because our field of attention. Like, okay, you're learning a piece of music for the first time and it's so easy to kind of narrow in and get shortened and only being in your small little space.

Yeah. But if instead you can, yes, bring your attention to the music, but also to the space behind you, the space to the right and left of you. Oh, there happens to be a player right there, another string player. Bring your attention to that person, bring your attention to the person over there, and then just the general space around you. Then all of a sudden it just makes everything bigger, but at the same time more intimate.

CB: Yeah.

R7A: Does that make sense?

CB: Yes!
R7A: Yeah. So, there's the homework part of knowing the other people's parts. But then there is the widening. Widening your sense of awareness while all the time maintaining your own body awareness. Because you don't want to all of a sudden, oh look, you're focused on the violin player and then all of a sudden you forgot to breathe.

R7A: And this takes time. This is why the first year of the Alexander technique training is all about your own body awareness. So that when we're in situations that are difficult, that we are able to maintain that body awareness and also whatever else we're bringing into it.

CB: Definitely! Well again, thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. You have mentioned some very valuable things and I truly appreciate it!

R7A: Of course, any time!
Respondent 8A Interview –

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**Centria Brown (CB):** My research is on using Alexander Technique as a practice tool for horn students. Just trying to find ways to bring an awareness on how I think Alexander Technique would help other students.

These are very specific questions and it's okay if you want to answer in a broad sense. These are just based on the responses the horn teachers sent me. The first question I have is based on the Mozart horn concerto. I received quite a few responses on finger coordination. So, how do you approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?

**Respondent 8A (R8A):** Well, first of all, you don't focus on that initially because what you're really dealing with is the whole head, neck, back coordination. If that's not balanced, you can work on finger coordination till those proverbial cows come home and nothing's going to change. So, from an Alexander Technique viewpoint, from a yoga viewpoint, from the Feldenkrais Method viewpoint, all these different systems, you always have to activate this primary direction of the head, neck and back. It's not something Alexander dreamed up or anyone else. It's something that's inherent in the vertebrate animal, this head, neck, back coordination. It even applies to our dog and cat. But with homo sapiens we have this upright poise and balance. If that's not working properly, you're not going to be able to change anything with the hands. Once you get that activated, then you can focus on fingering approach, as it were.

**CB:** Yeah, definitely. Then my next question is how would you work with students who physically tighten up as they play in the higher register?
R8A: Well, when you ask these questions they are trying to fix the part and not looking at the whole coordination of the musician. With the Alexander Technique, it doesn't work that way. I mean, “higher register,” it's still the same nervous system whether it's the “lower register,” middle or higher is not the way to think about it. If tension comes in, it always manifests exactly the same way. It comes in usually because of a fear response, getting caught up in comparing what's actually happening, the sounds you're producing and what you wish would actually happen. And the moment you're in that dualistic comparison, you're going to go into what's called the flight, fight, freeze response. It could be very small, but this fear reaction is there. You have to sort that out first. If you don't, whether it's the fingering positions that you talked about in the previous question or the higher notes that you wish to be played, it won't work. You have to sort out the whole head, neck and back, primary direction first. Again, the importance of the relationship of your head, neck, and back in movement is a fact. It's not Alexander verbiage. It's not like that. It's something that is inherently there in all human beings.

CB: Yeah, I agree. I like how you said it doesn't matter if it's the higher register or lower register, it's just deeper and what's within you as you're working through.

R8A: Right. And some people may have more of a problem with one thing or the other, that's just specific to the individual. It's still the fear that's there. "I'm not doing it right." Or the teacher criticizes, and then they really go into a problematic reaction.

CB: Great. And then my last question for the Mozart was how would you use intention to help the student bring alive the classical or the Mozart style?

R8A: Well, that could be a complicated question. I mean, intention. I work with a lot of performers, not necessarily a lot of horn players. I have worked with French horn players and trumpet players and so on. But the fact is the intention has to be working on yourself from inside out, and you're dealing with your habit patterns. And the way you deal with that, whether it's Mozart or any other composer, you have to see what your habits are, you then need not to simply react in a knee jerk way about how bad you are or, "Oh my God, look at this or that." You have to create a space between the stimulus
and response so that there is an opening and in that opening is the creativity. Then you start to change the overall habit pattern, again, from inside out and then that is applied to how you play an instrument, sing a song, or act a bit of Shakespeare. What you are really doing is rebooting your “original coordination,” which is you. By creating more ease of movement by the way the head neck and back move you are bringing what you might call new use of Self to playing the instrument to performing.

R8A: And we all know this, everyone listening to this, and I don’t care what instrument you play or if it’s the human voice or an actor acting, it doesn’t make any difference. I use the metaphor, "If the violin was out of tune, I don’t care how skilled the player is, and the music will be out of tune." This is the same thing except the instrument is you, it's the performer. If the performer's out of tune, no matter what you do, you’re simply doing a patchwork method to try to change things unless you change the inner habit pattern. You have to move away from “trying to get it right,” from trying to go for end results, to a process of letting go and allowing a certain undoing into length and width with the whole head, neck and torso, the whole body coming back to full poise and stature.

CB: That's a great analogy. I don't know if I've ever heard that. That's great. My next two questions are on the Shostakovich low horn tutti. It's a low horn excerpt, and the responses I got from a lot of teachers was dealing with the jaw. So, how do you work with finding awareness of the jaw as well as maybe-

R8A: Well, again, I'm going to give you the same answer. Usually, and this is funny with actors, here they are, their instrument is their speaking voice, their acting, and I ask them to take their two index fingers and, without looking, shutting their eyes, touch on either side of the face where their jaw hinges. I guarantee you at least 80% of the time people don't have a clue where the jaw joint is. It's right in front of the little ear flap, the ear hole. You say the phrase, "How are you?" You can feel it, but people invariably touch low more times than not. So, the point about it is first you have to know where the jaw is and you also have to realize it's what's called a single hinge. Your jaw releases away from the skull.
The skull does not release backing up from the jaw. This doesn't mean if you bite an apple, you can't expand. But the way the mechanics works is the jaw releases away. It's very interesting, your questions, because they're related to certain pieces of music and certain composers as if that makes a difference. You may think it makes a difference, but when push comes to shove, it doesn't. It's the same nervous system, whatever you're playing. Some music obviously requires more dexterity and probably it increases the stress level in the performer. Just like the actor acting in a soap opera as opposed to acting a lead in a Shakespearian play. So, sure, there's different demands, but it's the reaction that's the issue. You're always coming back with how to fix the part...the jaw or something else... First of all, don't start with the part.

If you start with trying to fix the part without letting the tension release in the whole head, neck, and back relationship, the part whether it's the jaw or lower back or wherever, will simply be a symptom of the overall coordination being out of balance. You have to sort out the overall coordinating pattern of the head, neck and back, and then you can work specifically on the jaw. I was working yesterday with, there must have been about 20 actors, and we did a lot of vocal work. And I did a lot of work, again, with them discovering where their jaw is located, but I had to do it within the context of their whole head, neck and back.

I would teach them an exercise in the Alexander Technique, it's called the 'Whispered Ah.' A lot of people, even Alexander teachers, don't understand it. The 'Whispered Ah' is a vocal exercise with a breathing component. It is not a breathing exercise with a vocal component, but it's a great vocal exercise to get the actor to learn how to free up the jaw and how to free up all that. Anyway, I can go on and on. I've studied voice work since the middle 1960s.

And you kind of got into the next question which was how you work with students on the breathing mechanism.

Right.
CB: Could you talk a little bit more about that?

R8A: Yes, it's really important. You've got to have a free breath, but you can't do a free breath if you're creating downward pressure in your body. Because what breathes is not your lungs, your lungs are porous sacs that exchange oxygen into the bloodstream and so on. But what really breathes is your rib structure. So, you have to have a free rib structure working. If that's not working, the breath will be impaired. What I work with, with a speaking voice, but I also work with... I was most recently working with a very good jazz sax player, a saxophone player, getting, in his case, to free up his ribs as he played, you see.

And that's the key is that once you have a sense of length and width throughout your whole torso and no downward drag on your ribs, the breath starts to work. And then there's another element. I'm sure it's the same with music, but in acting, the emotional awareness and the emotional connection of the actor is directly related to the freedom of the breath. And I'm sure that's the same with horn players or anyone else. If you're sensing the music, if you're feeling the music, if you have a moment when you're in 'the zone' around the meaning of what you want to communicate, the breath has to be free for that feeling awareness to be present. So, it's essential for communication, whether vocally or playing an instrument.

CB: Yeah, that's very true. And then my next question is how do you work with students on staying free and most specifically for playing softer passages. But, as you mentioned, this could be for anything, for playing soft or loud.
R8A: Right. Well, softer passages, you know, the tendency is people always overdo. Whether it's playing a softer passage of music or the spoken word and the delicacy of ease of the communication. So, one has to back away of trying to get the result. The way things happen is that if the music calls for a soft passage, then you have to be really aware of what interferes with that piece of music being played softly and learning how to subtract the patterns of interference that keep it from happening. You don't do soft playing, you get out of the way so it happens. Anyway, that's the way. True creativity is a process of negation and subtraction. You're not trying to be right. What you're doing is focusing on what you don't need and letting that go. And I'll give you a very specific example. Now, this isn't music, per se, but I think people reading may get it.

If you are fortunate enough to go to Florence, Italy. I would suggest you go to the museum to see the sculpture of Michelangelo’s David. You walk into the museum, and after you pay your money there is an archway and then you take a righthand turn and at the end of a long hallway there is a magnificent statue of David.

And of course, you want to take a closer look. You're walking down this long hallway. But if you really pay attention, on either side of you are incomplete statues that Michelangelo had started but never finished. And if you simply stop and look at those incomplete statues and reflect on his process, you realize that Michelangelo's whole creative process was one of taking away the unnecessary marble. He never added on a flake of marble. I remember specifically there was a Pieta merging out of a block of marble, of granite. And that's really how music works. It merges out. You don't do it. You learn how not to interfere with that moment that the person who wrote the music created.

CB: Wow, that's fascinating. And then my last question is how do you work with students in finding awareness in performing with fellow musicians?

R8A: Well, that's a very good question. First of all, I watch the students. So, often performers are in competition with each
other. Competition is deadly. You should not compare yourself to anyone. It doesn't mean you don't have role models. That's different. That's not comparison. That's looking at someone who's been through the fire and come out the other side and is really wonderful at what they do.

R8A: The first thing is I watch the students and I see if anyone's got attitude and sort of trying to one-upmanship on anyone because I want to subtract that and then I get them to look at themselves. Because if you don't know what you're doing, you can't help yourself. So, I get them to observe. And in the Alexander Technique, I get him to observe how they use themselves. Use affects functioning. I want them to observe patterns of interference without criticism. This is highly important because schooling tends to make people critical of themselves in a negative way. But I want to change that up. I want them to be curious about themselves. I want them to notice, be curious without judging, "Oh, hey, I have a little tendency to do this, I have a little tendency to do that." And through that exploration, then they start to observe that maybe they pull down a little bit in their body or they stiffen up. It's the same thing, just the opposite end of the stick.

R8A: And then I wish for them to learn how to undo that, how to let go of that habit so they come back to a natural length, head leading body following a natural poise up through themselves. That's really essential. Coming back to this quality of ease of movement. Again, ease of movement comes about because you learn how to take away the interference, the excess tension in movement, that's how I work with people. Get them away from critical self-criticism or competition with other people. Get them to be curious about themselves and then give them a process that they can learn to work from within themselves, inside out, not dependent on the teacher. I want my students not to depend on me. I want them one day to say, "Hey, I've studied with you over a period of time and I really understand something. I'm going to go work with myself for a while and when I have more questions I'll come back." That's how I want them to work.
CB: That's kind of what we do in horn teaching as well. You go to school, and get the tools, and that way you can go out and do what you have to do.

R8A: Correct.

CB: Yeah. Well, thank you again for taking the time to speak to me.

R8A: Well, may I add one more thing about performance and it's not horn playing, but is piano playing. I was fortunate enough in the 1970s, I lived in England for a decade. That's where I trained to be an Alexander teacher, and I was fortunate to go see Arthur Rubinstein do one of his final performances.

CB: Oh, wow.

R8A: I was even more fortunate because I was sitting on the stage. I didn't know they did that. I'm not that familiar with going to concerts like that, but here I am sitting on the stage with other people and he's right there in front of me, maybe 15 feet away, maybe 20 feet, something very close. And then you had the greater theater in front of us. And what was interesting was the quality of him as a human being.

First of all, at his age, his eyesight wasn't perfect, his balance. So, he had to take about three steps up to get on the stage so he came, you could see him feel with his toes. And he came up the stage and walked over to the piano and he sat down, and he had the most wonderful quality about himself physically. He lengthening up throughout body, he was poised, he had a certain grace about him and then he played, there was no waffling, obviously, whatsoever. I mean, this man was as good as it can be, and he's playing very, very clearly. But the thing was, he hit some wrong notes but no one cared. No one gave it a second thought because if you talk about the performers intention, Arthur Rubenstein intention was in the spirit of the music that he was playing, the classical piece, and he was connected to that essence of that piece.
R8A: And, because of that, we as an audience member, were with him. And at his age, you gave him a little space. But if there was something not quite "perfect," you didn't even give it a second thought. I'm only telling you this as a teaching story. And that's how people need to strive. Perfection, it's a funny thing. On one level, thank God we're not perfect because if you and I were perfect, there would be no room for improvement. There would be no learning. If you had a 10 as the highest mark on anything you did, where would you go from there? It would be quite boring, actually. So, there was something wonderful about Rubinstein's imperfections. I mean, I don't want to get funny with words, but his quality allowed him to transcend and there was a perfection there. Don't let perfection be the enemy of the good, that's what I wanted to say.

CB: Yeah. That's amazing.

R8A: So that's it.

CB: Well thank you again for speaking to me this morning. I appreciate it.
This interview response has been transcribed and edited. All information that could be directly linked to the interviewee has been removed to maintain the interviewee’s anonymity.

**Centria Brown (CB):** Thank you for taking the time out to speak with me today. The first three questions are based on the responses I received from the horn teachers on the Mozart 4 horn concerto. The next two questions are based on a low horn excerpt from the Shostakovich fifth symphony. The last two questions are on the chamber piece, the Brahms horn trio.

The first question is how do you, as an Alexander Teacher, approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?

**Respondent 9A (R9A):** Right. So, I have kind of two parts to that answer.

**CB:** Okay.

**R9A:** One, is that students are always learning from me the power of the primary mechanism, and how it influences the rest of our piece. Early on from the very first Alexander lesson I teach anybody, and even in my class, I talk about how the specificity of finger coordination is not about what’s happening in the fingers. That it’s affected by everything else that we’re doing.

Sometimes I will do something really simple like just have the students put their hand on their lap or on the desktop in front of them, and have them exaggerate a slump. Then ease them out of the slump, and just notice how their fingers are different, how they can sense a little body weight collapsing into their fingers. People can pretty much sense that. I just try to convince them that I'm not ignoring what they're trying to achieve with their fingers, but that I'm going to be approaching it in an indirect way.

**R9A:** In addition to that, for some students, body mapping can be really helpful. Because they think that the muscles in their
fingers are controlling their fingers, and that's just not the case. Once they start to learn about how the muscles of the forearm contribute to the movement of the fingers, I'm already getting them further away from the source of the symptoms, and starting to move them back towards that primary mechanism. I think those are the two biggest factors that go into it.

CB: I like how you addressed the fact that it will feel like you're not discussing the problem. But you're incorporating the whole body, which will impact the fingers.

R9A: Yeah, I mean, I feel it's really important. I will lose somebody right away if they think I'm ignoring their problem. I need to let them know I'm not ignoring the problem. I'm just looking at it from a different perspective. As a pianist it's easy to talk about finger coordination because it's so much of what we do, right? And I can't possibly think about my fingers. It won't help me.

CB: Yeah. The next question I have is about students who physically tighten up as they play in the higher register of the horn. Could you talk about some things that you might do to work with students who might come in to you about those kinds of problems?

R9A: Yeah, I got a little note next to that one that says, this is always the case with brass players. I work with students who play in the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and on a bad day
they sound better than most people. But there's still those issues of, not only that it's high, but that it's so [inaudible]. I wouldn't discount what I said in number one that it's going to be an indirect approach, and it's a primary mechanism. It's kind of the name of the game and it's inhibition, learning how to inhibit that response to what you think you need to do to play high. In some people there is a preparation that involves tremendous tightening. And in the classroom, and certainly in a private lesson, we talk about how that situation is a laboratory, and we have to be willing to experiment in the laboratory so that when we're on stage, and performing, it's not really experimental. You learn how to trust another way of doing it.

So, they're willing to explore other ways of doing it. What I bring in, in addition to the primary mechanism, is working from the ground up and find if they're grounded, because typically I'll see a tightening in their whole body, their upper body, they don't have any support from below. They're trying to garner breath support, which I know we'll talk about in one of your questions later. It's like the temperature is rising, every breath going up, and they're trying to then play these high notes. I try to work with them actually not on the playing, but on just considering playing, and being able to do that without losing their structured support from the ground. Because if we can't even imagine it, it's not going to happen in reality.

**CB:** Yes, this is true.

**R9A:** I start from that place and then once someone can inhibit the reaction, just even considering playing in the high register, then we're ready to approach actually playing it. If somebody is really interested in doing that, if the interest is there, they will be willing to put the time in to that little window of the changed preparation. If they're not really interested it's not going to happen, you know? All I can do is, how they say, lead the horse to water, right? Yeah.

**CB:** Yeah. It's true, and that goes along really well with practicing and performing on an instrument. If you want to put the time in you'll go into those little details of things that you need to work through.
R9A: It's interesting. I find that the students, the professional musicians who come to me have come because they've kind of hit a wall. Something isn't working as well as they think it should, given their level of playing, the years that they've been playing, and the wonderful instruction that they got out there. They're really invested in making a change, and so for them it's not that it's easy, because we've got a lot of myelin wrapped around a habitual pattern. They understand that it takes time. It doesn't necessarily happen overnight. But it can be an interesting process. If they're willing to commit to those little moments of anticipation, they can learn to approach the high register differently. They have to realize that they are reacting to that. They may not even detect that in their body. So that's often the longest part of the process, of saying, oh wow.

I got an email last night from a woman, she's an oboe player, and she lives across the other side of the country now. She took my Alexander class many times many years ago, it must be seven years ago at least. I don't know. She sends me a message on Facebook last month because she did a yoga class and she got a release in her arms and shoulders that she never got before. And she was so intrigued because of how it connected to everything we'd been trying to do. She had to let me know. Who knows when these things are going to happen, right?

CB: That's amazing.

R9A: Yeah. So, we plant the seeds and we hope that the interest is there so that people are willing to do the time.

CB: I like that.

R9A: Kind of a roundabout answer, but-

CB: No, I like it a lot. That's very well said. And then my last question for the Mozart is how would you use intention to help the student bring alive the Mozart style?
R9A: Yeah. Well, my answer to this is not really an Alexander answer. Because you nailed it with the word intention. If I conceive of a sound I want to make, I can make it. If I can't conceive of it, it's not happening. If a student is not versed enough in the style of Mozart, they're going to need to listen to a lot of recordings of Mozart, and just get used to what that sound is like. Immerse themselves in the history of the time. Look at the clothing, look at the artwork, look at everything and start to form your intention. That, I don't think of it as an Alexander thing necessarily. Where it would come in is if they thought they had to behave in a particular way to play Mozart that they'd like to inhibit that reaction like everything else. But the intense declarative of their intention is really going to come from their musical education.

CB: Awesome. And then the next two questions are on the Shostakovich Fifth Symphony. How do you work with awareness of the jaw and the awareness of the jaw to the horn and the embouchure?

R9A: When I work with people with the jaw, whether it's a horn player, a singer, even the oboe, I usually work through the tongue because sometimes people think they've released their jaw, but their tongue is very tight. So, if I can get them to release the tongue, then they can experience the full release of the jaw. Now I know when you're playing the horn, it's not just the tongue, I hate this because it's complicated, but you want to be able to articulate the differences between what's happening in your tongue and what's happening in your jaw, right? And actually, this comes into the embouchure and the breath as well, that there's so many little pieces that are being coordinated. I remember saying to my first Alexander teacher, I feel like I have to take myself apart before I can put myself together.

R9A: I'll never forget that. And it was really a profound experience that I couldn't function in parts, but I needed to understand the articulation of different parts of my body. I think for a horn player it can just get really globbed together, what's happening in the tongue and the jaw and the mouth. I
remember showing a picture from my anatomy app, muscles around mouth layer by layer, and students, horn players, were intrigued because they never really thought of it that way. And again, it can be a massive advantage that if people have a little bit of an understanding of how the musculature around the mouth works, that may help them separate what their jaw is doing from what their tongue is doing. Not separated completely because of the coordination in there, but to not have the response in the jaw be so immediate with what's happening in the tongue. If that's making any sense.

CB: Yes.

R9A: The other thing is separating, and I use the word separating loosely, separating the grouping of the jaw from the skull. Because in any Alexander lesson that's typically a confusing thing for people. They think their whole head includes their jaw and the body mappers are very clear that the jaw is an appendage, which I think is brilliant. Understanding that the movement of your head is not the movement of your jaw makes a huge difference just when people bring the horn up to their mouth, because usually, or often, the head will go back just in bringing up the horn.

So, starting with that motion, can I listen to and do the movement and a kind of a total coordination, accessing my primary vocal pattern? When I bring the horn up to my mouth, in what way do I feel it? Somebody may perceive that their head goes back. They may not realize they become tight. I don't know when it is going to connect with somebody, but if they can let the jaw continue to release, let the tongue... They're not going to play yet. Let the tongue continue to release as they bring the instrument up to their mouth, then they won't be starting from a place of jamming their neck in their head and so forth.

Does that make sense?

CB: Yeah. Yeah. And something that resonated really well with me was you saying that you had to take yourself apart and then put it back together. I was thinking about the phrase,
you can't build something strong on a shaky foundation. I feel like for me Alexander technique was that, it was relearning, re-understanding my body and figuring out both my body and my mind and how they connect.

R9A: Yeah. No, it's interesting with working musicians because as I said, I work with people in the Boston Symphony and so there are some of the top performers, right. They're performing just about every night and every day, and to try to explore ideas and break a pattern when you have a performance every day, you can't be experimenting up there, especially as a brass player. So, it's just really interesting, when in our lives do we create time to actually do that fundamental work? Yeah. You know, and as a team that depends on everybody individually.

CB: Yeah, very true. My next question kind of goes along what were you talking about as well with the job is how do you work with students in the breathing mechanism? As brass players sometimes, we try to over control it in different ways.

R9A: All right. I'll try to keep this part brief.

CB: It's okay.
R9A: It's a big one. One of the things that I do when I start mapping the breath is, what do I say first, let me see. Well, actually the funniest thing I do always is I have everybody close their eyes for anonymity and I say “Point to where you think your lungs are,” and you'd be amazed at the different answers I get. It's never unanimous. Then I let them take their hands down and then open their eyes and tell them it was not unanimous. I think that question has a lot to do with how people use their breath, and understanding that the breathing mechanism is both voluntary and reflexive. It's important you don't have to think about breathing when you're sleeping. The idea IS that you can cultivate the reflexive part of our breathing and use that to our advantage as opposed to trying to do too much controlling.

There's a degree of control that you have to do as a brass player that you want to be informed by what's reflexive. I try to teach them how to activate their reflexive breathing just during the day, so that when they get to the instrument their baseline is better. A couple of ways I do this is I'll talk about the different parts of us that are involved in breathing, and certainly the ribs can come up. And if you look at the spine, you can see that if your spine is compressed, it limits the movement of your ribs, and if the movement of your ribs is limited, you're not going to get your full lung. So, I talk a lot about releasing that pressure of the head on the spine to restore the freedom in the ribs so that they can function optimally.

So that's one of the major body mapping pieces that I bring into it. I have also studied the work of Carl Stough. I think he wrote a book called Dr. Breath. He was very popular in the US in the 1960s. I don't remember exactly, but I've read that in 1964 there was the World's Fair. I actually do remember that. But he had choirs that performed in the World's Fair. He was just a choir guy, not anybody trying to get into anything special but intuitively, he understood the breathing so much that he was credited with curing people of emphysema, which is something incurable. And doctors were sending their patients to him, and I know people who studied with him directly.

R9A: I studied with one of these people for a while. Well, she taught me a lot of about his breathing method, and it's based
on the exhale. I do believe that the world is coming around to notice the exhale, but for a long time, so much effort was put on the inhale. And if we can get a full exhale or achieve a longer exhale, the greater our capacity for inhale will be. Carl also said that what we need to do is strengthen our diaphragm, the diaphragm being a muscle we can't feel, right. So, what he said is the way to strengthen it is through that exhale, and he has a number of exercises you do to extend your exhale.

I do this work with my students and we do it on the floor in class, and inevitably... Well, first of all, the brass players, it's hysterical because you guys can exhale forever anyway. We have to wait, wait, wait until you guys are done. But to do it in a way that you're not pushing it. You're not trying to make a sound. You're just listening to the result of the movement of the diaphragm, so that you're getting a full excursion of the diaphragm, and then the reflexive inhale that comes through is phenomenal. And if you do that for a while and then you pick up your instrument to play, no problem controlling the breath. That is kind of an indirect way. But in Alexander's book, The Universal Constant in Living, he's basically saying that how we view ourselves generally will affect how we view our self specifically, right?

CB: Yeah.

R9A: So, if I'm walking around all day, I'm not thinking about my breath, or maybe still controlling it? Partly I'm using it the way I think I have to when I play my instrument. Then I suddenly pick up an instrument. I'm going to try to control my breath in a particular way. Why not spend my day trying to find the ease that I can find in my system and get that full exhale so that my baseline, my standard is really high for my reflexive system? And then when I pick up my instrument, oh, piece of cake because I'm already there. So that's kind of my long roundabout answer to that one.

CB: No, no. It's great. I think you were the second or third person that's mentioned Carl Stough. I really want to dig into his work.
CB: And let's see, the last two questions are on the Brahms horn trio and the first question was on staying free as you performed softer passages. Because the movement I picked was the third movement, which is the adagio-

R9A: Yeah, of course.

CB: So, how do you work with students in staying free even in those softer passages?

R9A: You know, for me it's pretty much the same thing as your Mozart question and about playing in the high register. Inhibition is paramount. Tommy Thompson, one of the people I trained with, has a way of defining inhibition that I find reaches people. He calls it withholding definition. The idea that we've defined something, we defined our experience before we have it, we know what it is to play soft. So, we have this thinking and this whole behavioral pattern that goes with it. That's what's in the way. And if we cannot define the experience because we haven't had it yet, then that allows us to inhibit the habitual response. It's kind of a nice way to approach it. I think there is a lot of expectation around what it should feel like to play softly.

So again, I would approach this, in the laboratory setting. Okay, let's not worry about playing softly. Let's maybe have the musical intention of playing softly, but let's throw out anything we think we know about what we need to do to achieve that. And if we're in a real experimental lab, are you willing to do that? And it's kind of shocking.

The other thing that goes with this is the breath work that I was just talking about. Once you've done that breath work, you actually have tremendous control over how much sound you're making and how you're making it.
R9A: Every instrument, I don't care if it's piano or horn, when we go to play softly, the body thinks or we think that we need to contract and make ourselves smaller. And in essence we need the opposite. We need more support. So, the idea of just, and whenever you say just, it's a big deal, just inhibiting that response to oh, I need to make myself smaller to make a smaller sound. That's the bottom line. And I would approach it through considering making the sound, not actually playing. But can I conceive of myself making this sound without making myself smaller? And that usually doesn't compute right away for people.

CB: Yeah, definitely. I like that. The idea of being that support that you need for the softness, not contracting into it.

R9A: Yeah, it's going to be similar also to what I've said about the high register, about losing the support of gravity. Suddenly I think I have to or I've got to go up there. I have to squeeze myself together to get the sound out. But if I can just really release into the support of gravity... Sometimes I use a balance disc that they use in fitness centers, one of those wobbly things you stand on. And once you step off of that and you're just back on a solid floor, first of all, you have tremendous gratitude for that. But often you can really get the support of the floor and then when you go to pick up your horn it can exaggerate that relationship that's really always there. And if I'm trying to make myself smaller to make a small sound, I'm probably losing that support that I have from the floor.

CB: And then the last question is, as you know, it's a chamber piece, so finding awareness and performing with your fellow musicians in an ensemble setting. How do you work with finding that awareness?
It's interesting. This semester coming up I'm going to be working with the chamber music department, which is kind of funny to me because all the kids in there have already taken my class anyway, but I love working with people in our performance hall because there's so much energy that's exchanged among the musicians. Many years ago, there was a study that they did at the Cleveland Clinic where they concluded from the study that the performance related injuries of orchestral musicians could mostly be attributed to animosity among stand partners. I have never forgotten this.

I know. Isn't that something? But when you start thinking about it, you're playing next to somebody you think is better than you. You're playing next to somebody you hate for some reason, and you're stuck with that person. If you're playing in a full-time position in an orchestra, you're playing with this person all the time that it really takes a toll on you, and there's a way that you're reacting to that.

It's similar in ensembles, a smaller ensemble, it depends a lot on the relationship. There's a part of me, I don't know if I'd ever say this, but there's a part that would like to take people to one of these outward-bound programs that work on their relationship, which I think could be really valuable. Short of that, I teach about spatial awareness where I'll have people walk around the room and have somebody walk toward them and they ask that person to stop when they feel that's they're in their space, and it's usually at least two feet away. It's a pretty interesting thing and there's a lot of research on all this stuff if you want to look it up. But what's interesting is that you can feel someone at the edge of your comfort zone and then you can make the decision to let them enter that space. And it's like your own space and theirs are intersecting circles, kind of like a Venn diagram, so that you learn how to accept people into your space.
**R9A:** That's something that I think is important in chamber music. It's not that you hate the person, but the idea that you still need to claim your own space even if there are people close to you. In addition to that, I talk about verticality as a protective shield. What if you're playing in a group and there is someone in the group that you don't like the way they play, or you feel they're out of tune, and they don't blend well, whatever it is, that instead of you being pulled in kind of a horizontal direction, which is all of the effort is horizontal and emotional stuff is kind of a horizontal movement. If we can juice up our sense of verticality, it acts as a way of not losing ourselves in the ensemble. And I'm not talking about separation being that you're not going to feel connected. It's just that you're not going to lose your sense of self and your ability to control your playing because you're getting sucked into something that's a little more of a horizontal pull. I don't know if that's clear at all.

**CB:** Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

**R9A:** Yeah. I mean I love working with ensembles and watching them become this more connected structure. One thing in the ensemble that changes is going to change everybody. This is not a bad thing. It's a beautiful living moving structure, and so sensitizing people to that can be really, really beautiful. But I do think it starts with knowing where you are, so then you can notice how that gets challenged when you play.

**CB:** Great. Thank you again for speaking with me today, I really appreciate it!
Respondent 10A Interview-

1. How do you approach helping students find optimal finger coordination?

As with all things approached via AT, it's contextual! I look at overall balance and coordination, to see if the fingers are connecting well via the arms to the back and all the way to the feet on the ground. If balance is maintained by tension/gripping the finger coordination will be impaired. I'm always looking to find an expansive, elastic quality to overall balance, in which the player is always free to move and breathe fully. And it's particularly important to be able to counterbalance the lopsided weight of the horn well. All of which will let the fingers be dexterous, light but firm.

2. How would you work with students who physically tighten up as they play in the higher register?

It really takes clarity of intention! I'd be looking for the anticipatory signs of gearing up with extra tension and helping the student refrain from that. Then I'd direct his or her attention toward the proper mind state. Like FM Alexander’s original quest: I am not trying to play high. I’m just looking to stay open and free, hearing an effortless sound, letting air flow continuously out into the space. I want any engagement of musculature to happen in a way that turns on my lively anti-gravity response. I want to get much more interested in how free I can stay than in getting The Note. Can I not get sucked down the rabbit-hole of end-gaining, right back into my habit?

3. How would you use intention to help the student bring alive the Mozartean Style?

I would be sussing out if they actually do have a concept of Mozartean style, which for the horn generally seems to mean both hunting-horn verve and vocal melodic singing! I would be checking in the usual AT fashion for overall balance and freedom, then seeing if I can help them find the internal lilt or flow as needed, through hands-on help, imagery, movement and often just playing a hunch I may get. If I sense a strong musical intention that’s not quite getting through the physical mechanism, I’d be looking to clarify the musical map in the mind and get that to link more clearly through the muscles.
4. How do you work with awareness of the jaw? And the awareness of the jaw to the horn and embouchure?

I work with students a lot on understanding the relationship of the jaw to the primary coordination of head, neck and back. The jaw can certainly short-circuit that primary coordination all by itself! Nor can the jaw be free to do whatever its job is in the moment if the primary coordination is messed up. Learning to balance the head freely on a lengthening spine with the back opening out to breathe will help the jaw to suspend freely from the skull and allow it to make the necessary subtle movements of playing.

As you know well as a hornist, as part of the outer framework of the embouchure the jaw needs to maintain a good dynamic opposition with the other parts of the outer framework. That way the muscles of the lips have a surrounding support network as they do their micro movements. I’m always hoping to get nice firm elasticity in this relationship!

5. Can you talk about how would you work with students working with the breathing mechanism without over controlling it?

AT has a really helpful way of working with extending the exhale in a way that encourages a good elastic inhale and frees up the whole breathing mechanism: ribs, diaphragm and everything. Learning to do that well can shed a lot of light on meeting the resistance of the horn without locking up the ribs, neck, etc. Allowing some elastic support to engage through the lower abdominal region without compressing our natural upward spring against gravity.

As with all the other questions you’re posing, intention is king! Being clear on What I Want. (Right down to feet spreading on the ground, since the big muscles that connect the legs to the spine interweave with the fibers of the diaphragm at the lumbar spine.)

6. How would you work with students to stay free as they perform softer passages?

Another clarity of intent issue: I want even more ease, less holding, less damming back of the air. What’s going on all through me; where is my attention focused? Not ‘trying to play soft’.
7. How do you work with students in finding awareness in performing with fellow musicians, such as chamber ensembles?

   Developing an ever increasing degree of awareness of how we use ourselves all day long, every day is a great start! Expanding my attention to take in ‘me and my environment’ more of the time develops my ability to listen out into the space around me. By returning to an internally quiet, listening state over and over and over (because we lose it all the time) it becomes easier to listen sensitively out into an ensemble. Orienting the ear out into the group helps develop judgment in knowing how to balance (match, glide under, sail over, etc) and relieves over-focusing on one’s part. (Assuming one knows the music well enough, of course!)
APPENDIX E INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Centria Brown  
Music and Dramatic Arts

FROM: Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: March 19, 2019

RE: IRB# E11591

TITLE: The use of Alexander Technique as a practice tool for horn performance


Review Date: 3/18/2019

Approved X Disapproved

Approval Date: 3/18/2019 Approval Expiration Date: 3/17/2022

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2c

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable): __________________

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING

– Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU’s Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.

4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.

5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.

6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.


8. **SPECIAL NOTE:** When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at [http://www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)
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VITA

Centria Deondra Brown is a horn player currently working in Louisiana. She is originally from North Carolina and she received her undergraduate degree from Wingate University in Music Education. During her Undergraduate degree, her passion for performance grew and inspired her to continue on with her education in performance. She went on to study horn performance and received her Master’s degree at Louisiana State University.

Whilst in her Doctorate in Horn performance Centria was inspired to study Alexander Technique. Alexander Technique has helped her with maintain a healthy mental focus and work through unnecessary physical tension in her performance. This was the motivation for this dissertation topic.