ALEXANDER ALBUM

FRANCESCA GREENOAK

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ALEXANDER ALBUM



RACHAEL STIRLING

"The Technique in the hands of my teacher has put me back in touch with my body.

I have a heightened awareness of my physicality as a result and perhaps a greater enjoyment of it too.

Rachael Stirling, has starred in Tipping the Velvet, and The Bletchley Circle and, with her mother Dame Diana Rigg in a Doctor Who episode specially written for them. She was Melinda in the Donmar Theatre's memorable The Recruiting Officer and she took the title role in Medea. She has a degree in Art History and speaks Russian. Her films include Salmon Fishing in the Yemen and Snow White and the Huntsman.



PHILIP ARDITTI

"The Alexander Technique has an essential liberating quality useful in daily life and, particularly, whilst acting.

Through long hours of work — it has eased my breathing and enabled me to have a free body and an open voice without having to worry about tension.

Philip Arditti played the leading role of Uday Hussein in the BBC/HBO production House of Saddam. He has appeared in Spooks and Silent Witness and Game of Thrones. He has acted in several plays at the Arcola Theatre. London, including Arthur Miller's A View from the Bridge in Turkish, and he is Associate Producer and Project Co-ordinator for the Arcola. He took a lead part in the premiere of Blood and Gifts at the Lyttelton Theatre and in Snow, adapted from Orhan Pamuk's novel. Films include Mike Leigh's Happy-Go-Lucky, John Carter and Red 2.



MARILYN MONROE 1926–1962

F.M. Alexander:

"...We cannot be surprised that the mere promise to reform is usually futile, and we must furthermore realize that a changed point of view is the royal road to reformation ...

Passage marked by Marilyn Monroe

Man's Supreme Inheritance

The best-known film star of her era, Marilyn Monroe tried to improve her acting while conforming to the demands of celebrity and of the commercial studio system. Her notes and marks show she gave this first book by F.M. Alexander considerable attention though it is not by any means an easy read.

ALAN RICKMAN

"With the best intentions, the job of acting can become a display of accumulated bad habits, trapped instincts and blocked energies.

Working with the Alexander Technique to untangle the wires has given me sightings of another way. ... Mind and body, work and life together. Real imaginative freedom ...



Alan Rickman is known for his stage, film and television work, bringing a directness and honesty to his acting, whether in romantic leads, comedy or portraying villains. He began learning the Alexander Technique while at RADA and continued into his later career.

In Ang Lee's Sense and Sensibility in 1995, he created, notably, the only Colonel Brandon who was interesting and sexy. Also in film, he is known to a younger generation for his Severus Snape in the Harry Potter series. On stage, Noel Coward's *Private Lives* was a recent success in London and on Broadway. He has also directed both theatre and film.



LENNY HENRY

"My voice was pretty good almost all through Othello. Alexander Technique really helped my posture and focus.

Imagine how excited I was when I arrived at the National Theatre for Comedy of Errors and found I could have Alexander taught to me once a week.

Known for his work in comedy, Lenny Henry took Alexander and voice lessons to improve his tone and stamina for Othello, one of the most demanding Shakespeare roles, dramatically and vocally. He followed this with another Shakespearian success playing Antipholus of Syracuse in *The Comedy of Errors* at The National Theatre.



ALEC McCOWEN CBE

"This is me smiling because of the Alexander Technique.

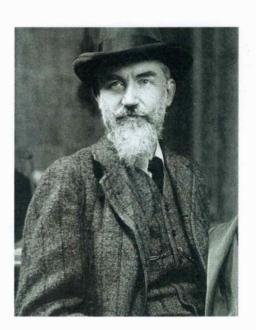
I love the Alexander Technique. It has corrected my posture, improved my health and changed my life.

Alexander Technique was a learning experience that became a lifelong practice.

Among many memorable acting performances Alec McCowen was Richard II, the Fool in *King Lear* (to Paul Scofield's King) and Astrov in Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. He has acted in Beckett, and T.S. Eliot, and title roles in *Hadrian VII*, *The Philanthropist* and *The Misanthrope*. His films include *Travels with my Aunt*, for which he received a Golden Globe nomination. He was awarded an OBE in 1972 and was made a CBE in 1985.

Whilst in *Equus* in 1973, he became 'increasingly aware of tense and aching shoulder-blades and arthritic pains in my hands'. 'To play unhappy Dr Dysart, I had adopted — all too easily — a physically defeated posture …this carried over into my own life. I was a prematurely stooped old man.' Recommended the Alexander Technique by his doctor, he embarked on a learning experience that enabled him to continue working comfortably into his eighties.

WRITERS



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW 1856–1950

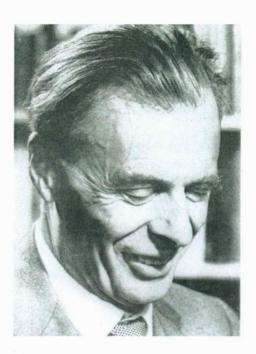
"Alexander has established not only the beginning of a far-reaching science of the apparently involuntary movements we call reflexes, but a technique of correction and self-control which forms a substantial addition to our very slender resources in personal education.

George Bernard Shaw was already a celebrated figure and into his eighties when he began to have lessons with F.M. Alexander in 1936. According to Marjory Barlow, Alexander's niece, they were 'great buddies ...they used to keep each other laughing all the time. You'd hear guffaws of laughter coming from FM's teaching room ...that only happened when Shaw was there.'

An elegant rangey man Shaw was, as Marjory Barlow remembered, 'very tall, very thin ...delightful. He used to love to come along a bit early and come to the student's room with us. I think he enjoyed young people a lot'.

Though he and Alexander disagreed fundamentally on many subjects: politics and diet for example, they agreed on the importance (and rarity) of accurate observation and on the rejection of empty convention and dogma. They shared a vision for humankind.

Shaw recommended the Alexander Technique to many of his friends and became a good friend to Alexander.



ALDOUS HUXLEY

1894-1963

"No verbal description can do justice to a technique which involves the changing ... of an individual's sensory experiences.

I wanted to change the world. But I have found that the only thing one can be sure of changing is oneself.

This, as I know by experience, is an exceedingly valuable technique.

Aldous Huxley was well known by the time he met F.M. Alexander and began to have lessons in 1935. Title phrases of his books 'brave new world', and 'point, counterpoint' have passed into everyday language.

Huxley was very tall and stooped, 'like a gaunt grasshopper' according to Virginia Woolf. He was awkward and subject to fatigue, insomnia and stomach ailments and also pathologically afraid to speak in public. By the time he met Alexander, he was virtually bedridden, reduced to writing lying down with his typewriter resting on his chest. His Alexander lessons, which he continued with for many years after Alexander's death, enabled him to get back to writing and another twenty-five years of active life.

Dr Wilfred Barlow, one of the first trained teachers of the Alexander Technique, thought Huxley 'one of the most influential supporters of the Technique, repeatedly emphasising its importance and value in his writings'. Huxley himself wrote that the Alexander Technique was 'a long process of instruction on the part of the teacher and of active cooperation on that of the pupil, of an individual's sensory experiences', adding that 'understanding comes only with the practice'.

Huxley found 'relief from strain due to maladjustment, and consequent improvement in physical and mental health' and, along with this, 'a general heightening of consciousness on all levels'. He paid tribute to his experience with Alexander in his novel *Eyeless in Gaza*.

Huxley continued to support the Alexander Technique even when his researches had taken him into other areas. His last act of homage to the Alexander Technique was an essay in *The Humanist Frame* in 1962.

In contrast to the acerbity and incisiveness of his writing, Aldous Huxley was a gentle and humane person, generous and shy in manner. His wife Laura, who introduced him to Alexander, continued to have lessons, and wrote a foreword to an introduction to the Technique (*Body Learning*).

ROALD DAHL 1916-1990

"The Alexander Technique

I recommend it enthusiastically to anyone who has neck pains or back pain.

My work routine is simple ...the great thing is of course, never to work too long at a stretch.



In life, as in his fictions, Roald Dahl had dark and difficult periods. He was a fighter pilot in the Second World War and a crash landing in Libya in 1940 left him with persistent back pain and severe headaches.

His wife Patricia Neal suffered paralysis following a stroke. The usefulness of the Alexander Technique in rehabilitation after an accident or illness is often overlooked.

TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

"Among many other things, my teacher taught me to be awar of how I was sitting. Perhaps this awareness was the most important thing as it not only released the body but the mind.



Timberlake Wertenbaker is known and loved for her plays and adaptations for the theatre, radio and television. An American, raised in French Basque country, she brings a refreshing cosmopolitanism to her work which drives innovative production. She brings to life personal and social conflict in meaningful and moving theatre, addressing myth and contemporary issues of discrimination and sexual politics.

When introduced to the Alexander Technique she was 'like many writers scrunched up against my typewriter'. She loved the mixture of discipline and lightheartedness of her Alexander lessons and walked out 'a few inches taller and with a feeling of great openness. I believe this openness helped me to write and I remain very grateful to my teacher and to the Technique'.



RONALD SEARLE 1920-2011

"What doesn't matter is very visible.

Great common sense and a wonderful, insanely wild mixture of solemnity and lightness.

Monica Koenig - of Searle

FM — from the reconstituted artist, with thanks

Inscribed on his drawing of F.M. Alexander

The Alexander effect still working?

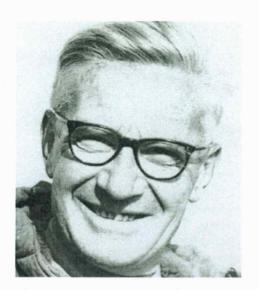
One of the best-known 20th-21st-century graphic artists, Ronald Searle started drawing at five. He said his true education was in the museums of Cambridge 'matchless libraries full of treasures' - where he came across 'wonderful collections of Turner and Blake' and a small room of contemporary caricatures. which began his fascination with graphic humour.

The surviving drawings he made covertly while working on the Siam-Burma railway of the Changi guards and his fellow prisoners have become part of an important historical archive in The Imperial War Museum, London. During the 1950s he set himself a punishing work regime, drawing for Punch, several national newspapers, book publishers and film companies.

It was in these years that he had lessons with F.M. Alexander which he remembered fondly. 'We got on well together and occasionally went off to dine at Sheekeys ... I am sure that our conversations over some delicious fish or other were about everything but the Alexander Technique'. His affectionate sketch of Alexander was made in 1956.

Searle was, however, unhappy in his domestic life and work at that period. In 1961 at the height of his fame as a cartoonist, he changed course, left St Trinians and Molesworth behind, and went to live in France with Monica Koenig (with whom he embarked on a long and happy second marriage) and with whom he collaborated with on many notable reportage projects.

Ronald Searle had a major retrospective at the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1973 and the Wilhelm Busch Museum of Caricature and Graphic Art bought his collection and has a dedicated room of his work. He is an acknowledged influence on many artists worldwide and continued up until 2009 to work as a graphic satirist for Le Monde. In 2010 he celebrated his ninetieth birthday, looking 'remarkably forward and up' - as he observed 'the Alexander effect still working?'



NIKOLAAS TINBERGEN 1907-1988

"The three of us already notice, with growing amazement, very striking improvements in such diverse things as high blood pressure, breathing, depth of sleep, overall cheerfulness and mental alertness, resilience against outside pressures ...

NikolaasTinbergen is one of the best-known natural scientists of the twentieth century, famed for the behavioural research with Konrad Lorenz and Karl von Frisch which won them a Nobel Prize in 1973.

Tinbergen devoted much of his Nobel speech to Alexander and his work. describing how he, his wife and daughter considered the Alexander Technique 'based on exceptionally sophisticated observation' and how 'every session clearly demonstrates that the innumerable muscles of the body are continuously operating as an intricately linked web'.



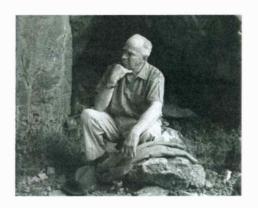
RAY EVANS

1929-2005

"In its initial stages of learning, the Alexander Technique is principally a lessening of the overtension in the outer layer of muscle to allow those of the inner layers to do their

Having been an engineering officer in the merchant navy, Ray Evans took a teaching qualification and lectured in engineering design. His interest in physiology led him to the Alexander Technique which he embraced professionally, as a teacher and a head of training.

He brought his practical understanding of the mechanics and physics of human structure and movement (and of neuro-developmental processes) to his Alexander teaching.



RAYMOND DART 1893–1988

"How is poise to be acquired if lost or defective? The shortest road towards neuromuscular education of the body is at the hands of skilled people who practise an appropriate technique."

The technique designed by Alexander is based on the fundamental biological fact that the relation of the head to the neck is the primary relationship to be established in all proper positioning and movement of the body.

Professor Raymond Dart, an Australian neuro-anatomist and anthropologist was Professor of Anatomy at Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, from 1922. He is known for his discovery of the ancient *Australopithecus* hominid remains and his idea that bipedalism preceded brain expansion.

Dart took lessons with F.M. Alexander for his scoliolis and to help his children's problems. He later wrote *Skill and Poise* which detailed his explorations of the Alexander Technique. He also developed the Dart Procedures which further explored neuro-motor development in human beings.

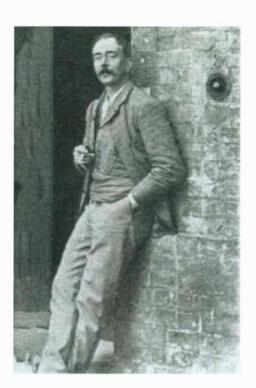
KATHLEEN BALLARD



"A back pain crisis brought me to a teacher of the Technique and immediately I saw this was something of real value... there was no room for pretence just honest straightforward communication, teaching, learning and repeated practical application.

This suited my scientific background in the world of medical research and helped me overcome prejudice against any non-orthodox approach.

Dr Kathleen Ballard studied chemistry, botany and zoology for a first degree, then did postgraduate work at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School in the Courtauld Institute of Biochemistry. After a postdoctoral year at Stanford University Medical Center, Palo Alto, USA, she joined the Department of Physiology, University of Glasgow in 1967 as a Lecturer and later as Research Fellow in the unit studying muscle spindles. She later trained as an Alexander Teacher and has been involved in the design and running of two clinical trials.



CHARLES SHERRINGTON 1857–1952

"Mr Alexander has done a service to the subject [willed movement and posture] by insistently treating each act as involving the whole integrated individual, the whole psychophysical man.

To take a step is an affair, not of this or that limb, solely, but of the total neuromuscular activity of the moment — not least of the head and neck.

Desistence from action may be as truly active as is the taking of action.

Sir Charles Scott Sherrington showed an interest in physiology at an early age as well as an enduring love of the classics. At Cambridge, where he gained a first class degree, he worked on how anatomical detail is expressed in physiological function. When he became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1884, he had already begun his researches into neurology, discovering in 1892 that muscle spindles initiate the stretch reflex.

Appointed Holt Professor of Physiology at Liverpool in 1895, he made original observations on reflex activities as a function of the total organism and continued his work on reciprocal innervation of antagonistic muscles giving the Croonian lecture in 1898.

Sherrington showed that muscle excitation was inversely proportional to the excitation of an opposing group of muscles, stating that 'desistence from action may be as truly active as is the taking of action'. In 1913 he was offered the Waynflete Chair of Physiology at Oxford where in addition to his neurological work (and war work, labouring in a shell factory), he also supported the entrance of women into the medical school at Oxford.

From retirement in 1936 he continued a wide correspondence and gave the Gifford lectures in 1937–38 on which his book *Man on his Nature* was based. In 1946 he published *The Endeavour of Jean Fernel* on the work of the remarkable 16th-century French physician.

He probably met Alexander in the 1920s and he was certainly aware of Alexander's work — and was forthright in print about its significance. He wrote sympathetically in private correspondence with Alexander: 'I appreciate the value of your teaching and observations ... I know some of the difficulties which attach to putting your ideas across to those less well-versed in the study than yourself.'



STEPHANIE DUTTON

"Swimming, when you apply the principles of the Alexander Technique becomes effortless, graceful, fluid and powerful.

Being in the water is about enjoying and exploring movement in a continuing flow of graceful, unforced strokes — every part of the body seems to be an extension of another part and nothing is hurried or rushed.

Stephanie Dutton has an international reputation for her work in swimming. She gained her swimming teaching qualifications with the ASA in 1976, and later qualified as a Shaw Method swimming teacher. Stephanie also has diplomas in Aqua Development and Health and in Sports Psychology. She continues as an Alexander pupil.

Training with Steven Shaw gave Stephanie a deeper understanding of the principles of the Alexander Technique as they apply to swimming. Building on this she has developed her own unique swimming programme, a subtle blend of the skills of traditional swimming instruction, the principles of the Alexander Technique, Water Shiatsu and the Shaw Method.

Her programme helps students to identify and eliminate negative habits that can cause stress and fatigue when swimming and to help you learn to swim calmly, efficiently, gracefully and with ease.

She specialises in working with clients who have a fear of water, special needs, disabilities and sporting injuries. Stephanie's meditative and consciously aware method of swimming is of benefit to adults and children of all ages and abilities.

'My Alexander work is the foundation of my teaching.'



"I realised that with Alexander training the whole self has to participate in the change to enable freedom of movement. It's not just a matter of making various adjustments to achieve a specific goal.

Lesley Finn-Kelcey has lived with horses all her life and made training dressage horses and riders her profession. A success as a child show rider and in her adult career, she began to be dissatisfied with herself and her performance, 'feeling trapped within my mind and body, restricting not only my own but my horses' development'.

In the Alexander Technique she found a means to change and develop for herself. Training as an Alexander Teacher gave her a way to help her equestrian pupils improve — with Alexander in combination with riding.skills.

MALCOLM BALK

"The Alexander Technique is portable ...and it ages well.

I noticed how much effort I put into everything I did and realised trying harder just made it worse.

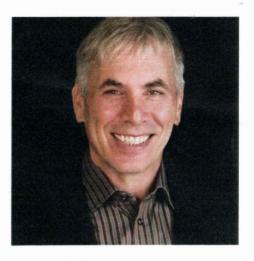
Malcolm Balk spent his youth chasing strength and superfitness and, looking for a quick route to ultimate athleticism, fell into a cycle of injury. Alexander work helped him to train and run more thoughtfully and efficiently, transforming his performance and enjoyment. He now teaches running and workout skills.



MICHAEL GELB

"A brain can improve at really any age. The issue is not "do we have the capacity?" The issue is that we get stuck in limiting habits.

We do the same neuro muscular patterns over and over again. as we do the same movements over and over.



Michael Gelb has written twelve books on creativity and innovation and a classic introduction to the Alexander Technique. Awarded a Batten Fellowship from the Darden Graduate School of Business, University of Virginia, he is a professional speaker, and organisational consultant to a diverse, international clientele. He has also juggled professionally for a living. He has a special interest in exploring practical ways keep the mind quick and intelligent during later life.



JOHN DEWEY 1859-1952

"Alexander created what may be truly called a physiology of the living organism.

His observations and experiments have to do with the actual functioning of the body ... under the ordinary conditions of living rising, sitting, walking, standing, using arms, hands, voice, tools, instruments of all kinds.

John Dewey, an important American philosopher, educationalist and writer acknowledged that much of his work was based on his continuously developing experience and understanding of the Alexander Technique. Some of John Dewey's children and his wife had already had lessons and he followed suit. He was suffering from stress-related back pain, eye strain and stiff neck and looked prematurely old at fifty. He later seemed amazingly youthful, attributing his good health into old age to the Alexander Technique.



STAFFORD CRIPPS 1889–1952

"When you experience it, [the Alexander Technique] you become perfectly convinced it is right.

Sir Stafford Cripps, an early opposer of fascism, became Chancellor of the Exchequer (1947-1950) and laid the foundations of Britain's subsequent prosperity. He thought Alexander 'a great teacher and a great leader in the battle for health and sanity in the world'.

He and his wife Lady Isobel were both very impressed by their Alexander lessons. She wrote 'I cannot be grateful enough for what it has done for us both'. Sir Stafford had contracted ulcerative collitis while working as an ambulance driver in the First World War and he was often ill and exhausted during his time in government.

He tried to make sure he had an Alexander lesson before every important speech and declared the benefits 'enabled him to get the maximum health and the maximum of life out of every twenty-four hours'.



VICTOR, 2ND EARL OF LYTTON

1876-1947

"I am wonderfully well & Alexander's work is having permanent results ... I could be about all day without feeling tired and awake fresh in the morning.

Lord Lytton first took lessons with F.M. Alexander when he came back on leave, exhausted and ill, from Bengal where he served as Governor 1922–27. After he returned permanently to England, he resumed his Alexander lessons and became a loyal supporter of the Alexander Technique and a strong personal friend of Alexander himself.

Alexander announced the first training course for teachers of the Alexander Technique while he was staying with Lytton at Knebworth in 1930. Lord Lytton was also one of the trustees of F.M. Alexander's Little School in which children were taught the Technique alongside normal schooling.



SIR COLIN DAVIS, CH, CBE 1927–2013

"I have been a pupil of the Alexander Technique now for over forty years — the benefits to me have been immeasurable.

I would recommend all students to take advantage of the programme of lessons available at the Royal Academy of Music.

Sir Colin Davis is among the best-known and most-loved English conductors. His ambitions were hatched at the Royal College of Music where he studied clarinet which he played in the band of the Life Guards during military service. He was conductor for the original Ballet Russe in 1952 and received major acclaim for *Don Giovanni* at the Royal Festival Hall and for *The Magic Flute* at Glyndebourne. He had a profound regard for Mozart, and an enduring love of Berlioz. He had respect for the libretto and loved to bring out the drama of opera — with Sadler's Wells Opera and later at the Royal Opera. He was also known for Britten and Stravinsky. He was the longest-serving principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra (1995–2006) with which he had been associated since 1959. He was appointed CBE in 1965, knighted in 1980 and became a Companion of Honour in 2001.



JAMES LISNEY

"I found the Alexander sessions to be pleasant but frustrating. My desire to be cured, to be functioning again was hardly touched upon ... I could see its relevance to my work once I was again experiencing a body that was performing well.

James Lisney a highly regarded concert pianist, while a student at the Royal College, suffered from a collapsed right shoulder and cold sensation of his fourth and fifth fingers after a successful performance. It stopped him playing for eight months. He had a considerable number of Alexander lessons but felt he was not making progress and found instead a chiropractor who in addition to manipulation, gave exercises and 'postural advice not unlike that of the Alexander teachers, just expressed in simpler and more direct terms' with whose help he was able to start playing again.



VIOLA TREE 1885-1938

"I think [the Alexander Technique] is especially useful for singing, because the breath can be taken so imperceptibly ... it entails no effort and is entirely natural.

Matthias Alexander with many thanks

Viola Tree, the eldest daughter of the actor-managers Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree and Helen Maud Holt joined her father's company, playing with him in Trilby at a Royal Command performance in Dublin in 1904. That year, she also made her London debut in playing Viola in Twelfth Night opposite her father's Malvolio, and Ariel in The Tempest. In 1906 she played Perdita in The Winter's Tale, with Ellen Terry as Hermione.

She sang twice in La Traviata, wrote books and plays and appeared in several films. In 1938, she was Perfide in the Oscar-winning film version of Pygmalion, with her son David Tree as Freddy.



MATHESON LANG

1879-1948

"I have derived great benefit ... in every way.

I should never have been able to keep on playing so exacting a part [Hamlet] had it not been for you [Alexander].

The actor-producer Matheson Lang went to F.M. Alexander for lessons as a young man at the beginning in 1908. When he lost his voice during a season of Hamlet at the Lyceum he asked FM for help and recorded in his Memoirs that FM came 'night after night' to the theatre to see him safely through the performance and that they became 'lifelong friends'.

ALEXANDER PUPILS IN THEATRE A CENTURY AGO

HENRY BRODRIBB IRVING 1870–1919

"You have made a new man of me.

If you have learnt to move well and to speak well, to be clear in your enunciation and graceful in your bearing, you are bound to arrest at once the attention of any audience.

... you may have to unlearn a certain amount, or rather to mould and shape what you have learnt to your new conditions.



Henry Brodribb Irving was the elder son of the actor-manager Sir Henry Irving, the first actor to receive a knighthood. F.M. Alexander had been friends with and greatly admired Sir Henry who in a letter (1905) mentions his 'disappointment at being obliged to suspend my interesting experience' but his son continued to have lessons for some time.

H.B. Irving trained for the law but turned instead to the theatre, making his professional debut at the Garrick Theatre in 1891. HB became lessee and manager of the Savoy Theatre. He wrote several books on law (his best-known included an examination of Hamlet's uncle, Claudius). In 1906 HB wrote a commendatory letter to Alexander stating how much he appreciated 'the good you have done me both in my work and my health'.



LILY BRAYTON 1876–1953

"Thank you for the great benefit I have derived from your method. ...[the Alexander] Technique is simply wonderful.

The beautiful and clever actormanager Lily Brayton was one of the most successful actors of her time and co-manager, with her husband Oscar Asche, of His Majesty's Theatre with the owner Herbert Beerbohm Tree. She produced and acted in many Shakespeare plays, and toured Australia — to great acclaim. She was responsible for part-writing and producing *Chu Chin Chow* and appeared in the film.

SARAH BROOKE 1875–1959

"A thousand thanks dear Mr Alexander

At a time when acting was only just becoming recognised as a respectable profession, it took courage for the daughter of Major John Hanna to take to the stage. She made her London debut in 1896 and was in Beerbohm Tree's stupendous *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1900 with Dorothea Baird, wife of H.B. Irving, both pupils of F.M. Alexander.

She also starred in drawing room comedies such as E.F. Benson's *Dodo* and Jerome K. Jerome's *The Master of Mrs Chilvers*.

