

## Voice and the Alexander Technique

No two people are the same. No two voices are the same. The quality of the individual voice depends on what is happening in the whole person. The vocal cords, larynx etc are at the site of where vibrations occur - but we also have to be aware of overall function and how this affects sound quality.

F. M. Alexander (1869 - 1955) was an actor in Melbourne in the 1890's, he developed voice problems which no one could help him solve. Rather than give up his career he embarked on a series of experiments and successfully solved his problems.

We can use Alexander's ideas as the basis of our own experiments.

1 The concept (image) we have of our structure. Check accuracy of knowledge of where the head hinges with the top of the spine. Put finger on bottom tip of ear lobe, then gently go behind this to feel a small hollow. With a finger in each hollow - explore the head balance. Let the eyes look towards the ceiling - the head following, so tilts upward. then let the eyes move to look to the floor - head following. Whilst exploring this head balance start to add sounds - observe how sound quality changes as you alter the head balance. Don't judge too strongly, just observe what happens. don't leave fingers in hollow too long - the arms get tired.

Other variations of exploring head balance.

(a) Clasp hands behind head - allow it to roll back gently with your hands.

(b) Hands over ears - ease the head from side to side - by using the hands, leave the neck free, allow your hands to move your head.

(c) Hands clasped on top of head or gently tap crown of head with your fingers.

As you explore head balance move on the hinge where head and spine meet ( refer to start of no. 1 ) don't create a "hinge" at the base of the neck by moving the head-neck as a unit.

As you explore gently and vary the size of the head movements from larger to smaller experiment with various vocal sounds. Don't do the movements too jerkily or fast - you may become giddy.

2 Concept of the jaw hinge.

fingers in front of ears. (Place your fingers there without tightening the shoulder area.) Gently open and close the lower jaw - feel with your fingers the movement of the jaw. Next, mouth closed, then open the upper jaw only - notice the head tilts back and down on the spine - a type of whiplash effect - this back and down movement of the head interferes with voice function. The human jaw designed mainly to function by lower jaw opening for speech and song. Explore sounds - open lower jaw, then try making sounds as you open upper and lower jaw together - like a crocodile jaw.