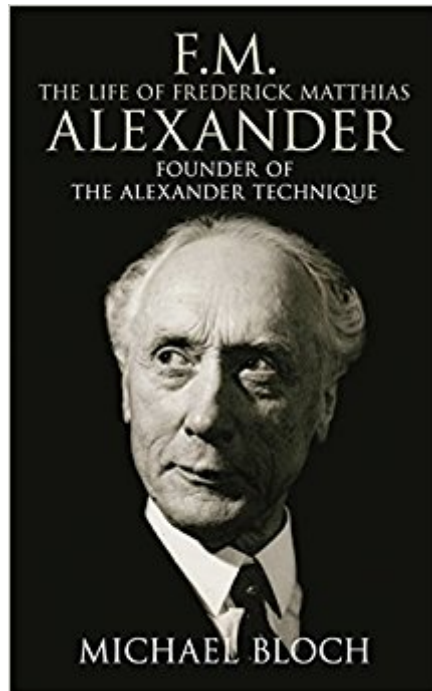




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# **FM - The Life Of Frederick Matthias Alexander**



## Synopsis

The Alexander Technique is a method of muscular re-education, which has become standard training for actors, dancers and singers, and is practised for health reasons all over the world. Its founder, Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955), was an Australian actor who stumbled upon it in the 1890s after studying himself in mirrors to discover why he had lost his voice. He realised that most people suffered from the same postural defects he had noticed in himself, and that this explained much of what went wrong with them. F.M. (as he was known) came to London in 1904 and became enormously successful. During the First World War he practised in America with equal success, converting the American philosopher John Dewey to his cause. He wrote four books (all still in print), and his supporters included Aldous Huxley, George Bernard Shaw and Stafford Cripps. He was, however, a difficult and argumentative man who made enemies. Towards the end of his life he embarked on a libel action against the South African government, which had accused him of charlatanry. He won, and went on practising and propagating his technique until his death aged 86.

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## Customer Reviews

Michael Bloch has done the world a great service by writing this life of a man who deserves to be more widely acknowledged and celebrated. [COUNTRY LIFE](#) Bloch presents the facts in poised, gentlemanly prose, noting foibles without moralising, and dryly alive to amusing details. [TLS](#)

The Alexander Technique is a method of muscular re-education, which has become standard training for actors, dancers and singers, and is practiced for health reasons all over the world. Its founder, Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869–1955), was an Australian actor who stumbled upon it in the 1890s after studying himself in mirrors to discover why he had lost his voice. He realized that most people suffered from the same postural defects he had noticed in himself, and that this explained much of what went wrong with them. F.M. (as he was known) came to London in 1904 and became enormously successful. During the First World War he practiced in America with equal success, converting the American philosopher John Dewey to his cause. He wrote four books (all still in print), and his supporters included Aldous Huxley, George Bernard Shaw and Stafford Cripps. He was, however, a difficult and argumentative man who made enemies. Towards the end of his life he embarked on a libel action against the South African government, which had accused him of charlatanry. He won, and went on practicing and propagating his technique until his death at age 86.

Bloch's biography of FM Alexander is informative, engaging, comprehensive, and altogether an enjoyable read. Bloch draws together the threads of Alexander's life--insofar as that is possible--and keeps you turning the pages. This is not a How-To book about the Alexander Technique itself, but an excellent source about the man and his life.

This book is interesting because: The principles are conveyed in the context of F.M. Alexander's life and the time period. You get a sense of what was important to F.M. Alexander. The challenges that Alexander faced, especially since he was Australian, objectively portrayed. Questions such as "Was F.M. Alexander a good actor?" and "Why would he leave acting for teaching?" are answered.

The institution, which in Emerson's words, is the lengthened shadow of one man, and which now embodies the Alexander Technique, owes a debt of gratitude to the author Michael Bloch. This book brings life to the person behind the shadow.

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