

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

Dalcroze Eurhythmics in music therapy and special music education

## Editorial

## Dalcroze Eurhythmics in music therapy and special music education

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### DALCROZE EURHYTHMICS

Music therapists, music educators and community musicians will be familiar with the primacy of enlivening musical consciousness in those with whom they work: clients, patients, learners, participants and fellow musicians. For it is through such consciousness that other types of awareness – of self and other, of time, space and energy, and of one's environment – may be developed and interpersonal connections, and one's relationship with music, established and deepened. Music used in this way becomes an adaptive tool, a bridge, a means to some sort of transformation, whether this is understood therapeutically, educationally or – more inclusively – pedagogically. One such resource is Dalcroze Eurhythmics, which foregrounds the role of movement in musical activity and understanding, and the usefulness of exploring and harnessing music-movement relationships in pedagogy, therapy and the performing arts.

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), who originated and gave his name to this approach, wrote, "Musical consciousness is the result of physical experience" (Jaques-Dalcroze 1921/1967: 39). He highlighted what, for him, was music's best kept secret, but which was not much acknowledged, understood or used to its full potential in the practices he saw around him at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the movement of music and, as a consequence, the role of movement in music cognition. Jaques-Dalcroze and his collaborators, therefore, took a reforming attitude to pedagogy, dance and music making by experimenting with situations in which people could

*be* music, through enacting their musical consciousness somatically and thereby simultaneously engaging thought, emotion, agency and creativity in a psychophysical means of expression. During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jaques-Dalcroze developed his philosophy and practice, with the first Dalcroze schools springing up in Europe in the years immediately prior to World War I.

To witness a Dalcroze session is one thing. One would normally see a group of people in a large space, in their bare feet, moving to music, either the piano improvisation of a teacher or a recording, or occasionally another instrument, such as a drum. The participants would be responding on their own terms or according to an instruction from the teacher/practitioner. They would be communicating non-verbally, as they made contact with others through vision, touch or via a piece of equipment such as a ball, stick, hoop, rope or a length of elastic, all the time synchronising their movements, dosing their energy and using space according to how the music moves. At times there would be singing or other forms of vocalisation, spontaneous or otherwise; at others the participants might be engaging in creative group work to devise movement sequences in response to a piece of repertoire. One might sense a deep connection between the movers and the music, even the desire to join in.

However, to experience a Dalcroze session is quite another thing. As an actor, rather than an observer, one would be called upon to use one's whole self creatively to analyse and solve problems, express thoughts or moods and react to musical challenges. One's sensorimotor system

would be gradually enlivened through preparatory exercises, bringing vision, hearing, touch and the voice into play, as well as the vestibular system, kinaesthesia, one's spatial awareness and one's own felt sense of self, or 'body schema'. Over time, one would become aware of others in the space, finding ways to share it as participants moved around and engaged with each other. One's movement – focusing on one part of the body or the whole – would be, to some degree, entrained by the music. One's individual, or group, response to the music might focus on one parameter – metre, phrasing, harmony – or be more global.

From these descriptions it might be possible to appreciate the types of learning typical in Dalcroze contexts as well as the multi-faceted, holistic nature of participants' experiences, interweaving the personal with the social, the physical with the mental. It might also be evident that such a way of interacting and responding might have more than purely musical benefits. As Jaques-Dalcroze wrote: "Mind and body, intelligence and instinct, must combine to re-educate and rejuvenate the whole nature" (Jaques-Dalcroze 1930: vii). Indeed, his concern for the whole person led practitioners from the beginning to utilise the method in general education as well as in teaching children with special educational needs; an early example was set by Joan Llongueres, a Catalan Dalcroze teacher, who adapted it for blind children (Jaques-Dalcroze 1930). To other similar teachers, Dalcroze Eurhythmics seemed "a way of working half pedagogical and half therapeutic" (Van Deventer 1981: 28), or was "*always* a therapeutic experience" (Tingey 1973: 60).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it may be surprising that it is only now that a special journal issue devoted to this topic should appear. Notwithstanding this, there are some outstanding individual studies that have recently made the case for the place of Dalcroze Eurhythmics in preventative medicine, particularly for older people at risk of falling, and also form a backdrop to this issue (Kressig et al. 2005; Trombetti et al. 2010).

Dalcroze Eurhythmics is a practice with a long history and widespread geographical reach in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whilst Jaques-Dalcroze used the word 'method' (Jaques-Dalcroze 1906), Dalcroze Eurhythmics is not 'methodical' in the sense of teachers and students having to move in a set sequence of activities codified in books. Yet in the hands of its exponents, certain fundamental principles and a sense of rigour are maintained which might appear method-like. Another

commonly used word is 'approach', which resonates with this journal's name. It is apt in this context as the articles published here describe varied approaches to using the principles of Dalcroze Eurhythmics for different groups with different needs. This adaptability, inherent in the word 'eurhythmia', was understood by Percy Broadbent Ingham, who – along with his wife Ethel Haslam Ingham – founded the London School of Dalcroze Eurhythmics in 1913. Ingham, one of Jaques-Dalcroze's close friends and intermediaries, wrote in his last letter to students: "Try and think of Dalcroze Eurhythmics as being not so much a method as a principle" (Ingham 1930: 3).

However we conceptualise Dalcroze Eurhythmics, it is a fact that the practice has been adapted and reconfigured for various purposes throughout its history, a process that continues today. Jaques-Dalcroze spoke of the five fingers of Eurhythmics: "music, movement, the theatre, arts in education and therapy" (Tingey 1973: 60). This interdisciplinarity results from Eurhythmics' origins in contexts where experiments in holistic pedagogy and the performing arts were deeply interwoven – such as the Geneva Conservatoire and his first, purpose-built school (the Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze in Hellerau near Dresden) – and from Jaques-Dalcroze's own interest in psychology and the philosophy of education. In contrast to Carl Orff, who did not imagine his method having a therapeutic application (Voigt 2013), for Jaques-Dalcroze his method "was always more than an education through and into music or a preparation for artistic work. Rather, it had wellbeing at its core" (Habron 2014: 105).

Originally known as 'les pas Jaques' (Jaques' steps), the terms 'Gymnastique Rythmique' (rhythmic gymnastics) and 'la Méthode Jaques-Dalcroze' soon became synonyms and were used in Jaques-Dalcroze's own publications. Early in the method's history, John W. Harvey – concerned that the method should catch on in Britain – coined 'Eurhythmics' as a term better suited to a more holistic practice than that suggested by 'rhythmic gymnastics' (Ingham 1914). Later Professor of Philosophy at the University of Leeds and one of Jaques-Dalcroze's erstwhile English supporters, Harvey stated that the 'Eurhythmics of Jaques-Dalcroze' was "not a mere refinement of dancing, nor an improved method of music education, but a principle that must have effect upon every part of life" (Harvey et al. 1912: 5). This wider vision of Eurhythmics was reflected some years later by Jaques-Dalcroze with regard to the aptitudes required in the practitioner: "A true teacher should

<sup>1</sup> Italics in original.

be both psychologist, a physiologist, and artist” (Jaques-Dalcroze 1930: 59), a description that will resonate with many readers, and which emphasises the multifaceted nature of both pedagogy and therapy as well as the points at which they interweave.

## THE RESEARCH

Jaques-Dalcroze’s concern for the development of the whole person permeates his writings, as articulated by Ana Navarro Wagner in this special issue, who argues that whilst his occupation was music, “his *preoccupation* was the human being”. That is, although Jaques-Dalcroze’s experiments in pedagogy began with solving problems such as expressivity, time keeping and how students used their bodies whilst performing, his thought and practice evolved to encompass a much broader understanding of music’s role in human and social development. In this way, and through his own empirical approach to teaching and learning, he anticipated by generations some influential theories in ethnomusicology, music psychology, music therapy and music education such as the theory of musicking (Small 1998) and the concept of ‘communicative musicality’ (Malloch & Trevarthen 2009). Dalcroze Eurhythmics has recently been theorised with regard to these notions (Habron 2014) and Navarro Wagner’s article develops this line of thought in relation to the wellbeing of children and young people in Dalcroze contexts.

A different foreshadowing is explored with regard to Neurologic Music Therapy by Eckart Altenmüller and Daniel Scholz, who outline the ways in which Jaques-Dalcroze’s discoveries about sensorimotor integration prefigure contemporary theories in neuroscience and current practice in neurorehabilitation using music and movement. In many ways, the neurological foundations of Eurhythmics have been hidden in plain sight, as it were, for many years and yet we know that Jaques-Dalcroze carried on extensive correspondence with doctors and psychologists, such as Édouard Claparède, and was influenced by them in his use of medical terminology and his understanding of the body-mind.<sup>2</sup> It has taken 110 years to pick up where Claparède, in 1906, left off when he wrote to Jaques-Dalcroze:

<sup>2</sup> The letters between Jaques-Dalcroze and Claparède are in the Bibliotheque de Genève and would repay editing and detailed study to illuminate this historical thread within Dalcroze Studies.

“you have arrived, albeit by routes entirely different from those of physiological psychology, at the same conception of the psychological importance of movement as a support for intellectual and affective phenomena” (Bachmann 1991: 17).

Sanna Kivijärvi, Katja Sutela and Riikka Ahokas provide a conceptual study of the role of embodiment in music and movement-based education for children and young people with physical or intellectual disabilities. In so doing, they use Dalcroze Eurhythmics as an example of practice. This opens out a philosophical area of debate that is new to Dalcroze Studies and ripe for further investigation, in particular notions of value around the ‘disabled body’ and how we understand the nature of embodied cognition for those with disabilities.

The other studies in this volume are all empirical, relying on qualitative and/or quantitative data. Space does not permit detailed introductions and the articles will speak for themselves. What is noteworthy is the continual re-adaptation of Eurhythmics with groups from across the lifespan and in a range of settings: educational, medical and in the community. These research articles give details about the activities designed for the groups in question and provide either robust evidence for the use of Dalcroze Eurhythmics in music therapy and special music education, or the grounds on which to build further studies.

## THE VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Besides research articles, this special issue includes two annotated interviews with senior Rhythmics practitioners: Marie-Laure Bachmann and Eleonore Witoszynskij. Both worked in the field of special music education and were apprenticed to important figures in the history of music therapy: Claire-Lise Dutoit and Mimi Scheiblauber respectively. Bachmann and Witoszynskij also undertook other studies besides their Rhythmics trainings, demonstrating how their practical wisdom has developed alongside a commitment to lifelong learning. Together they embody the different traditions of Eurhythmics / Rhythmics training that emerged from Jaques-Dalcroze and Hellerau, and that were unintentionally spurred on by the ‘Dalcroze diaspora’ occasioned by World War I and the closure of the Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze. Broadly speaking, one of these traditions became Dalcroze Eurhythmics (Bachmann) and the other, in German-speaking countries, became Rhythmik

(Witoszynskij).<sup>3</sup> Both women share their perspectives on these lineages, including colourful and detailed recollections of their teachers and mentors.

There were times during these interviews when words clearly did not suffice and Bachmann and Witoszynskij took to the floor to move, or sing, or otherwise *show* what they meant. These moments are mentioned in the transcripts and serve as reminders that, no matter how much material is written in the pursuit of knowledge, the know-how of educators and therapists is largely carried within and passed on (or not) via a pedagogical process. Bachmann and Witoszynskij are, like all of us, living archives, housing precious storehouses of memory, both of fact and action, which can be accessed in oral histories like these. Kessler-Kakoulidis's book on Amélie Hoellering (1920-1995), reviewed here by Ludger Kowal-Summek, is another welcome addition to constructing the history of Dalcroze-inspired therapy work. Taken together, all these stories point to a parallel history of music therapy, which is only beginning to be explored, alongside that of more well-known figures such as Altshuler, Alvin, Gaston, Nordoff, Priestley and Robbins.

## DALCROZE STUDIES AND OPEN ACCESS

The rapidly expanding field of Dalcroze Studies is transdisciplinary, as evidenced by the wide cross-section of scholars, teachers, artists and other practitioners who present and perform at the International Conference of Dalcroze Studies ([www.dalcroze-studies.com](http://www.dalcroze-studies.com)), now in its third iteration.<sup>4</sup> This special issue is part of that growth and, in a similar way, emerges from a wide spectrum of activity around the globe and from all levels of professional expertise: from doctoral students to eminent neuroscientists, from those implementing Dalcroze principles as students to highly experienced practitioners. Such widespread work, undertaken by such a variety of practitioner-researchers, is a sign of health for Dalcroze Studies and for Dalcroze Eurhythmics as a living practice.

<sup>3</sup> 'Rhythmik' (translated here as 'Rhythmics') is also known as 'Musik und Bewegungspädagogik' or 'Rhythmisch-musikalische Erziehung'. Readers will come across different usages in this special issue.

<sup>4</sup> For a report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of Dalcroze Studies, see Conlan (this special issue) and for information about the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of Dalcroze Studies (Quebec City, 2017), see page 111.

This special issue also highlights the power of collaboration between practitioners and specialists in other domains, with some studies providing insights that could only emerge from interdisciplinary investigation.

Finally, the fact that this is an online, open access journal is worth noting and celebrating. Many Dalcroze, or Rhythmics, practitioners are not affiliated to academic institutions with access to peer-reviewed journal articles via password-protected databases. In this sense, *Approaches* is a gift. We offer this special issue in the same spirit, hoping that it will be useful, enlightening, and a source of inspiration not only for Dalcroze practitioners and scholars but also for music therapists, community musicians and music teachers who are exploring the endless resources of the music-movement nexus in their bid to facilitate positive change in individuals' lives, their local communities and wider society.

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