

All-State: Creating the Performing Body — Dalcroze Eurhythmics for Strings

presented by Timothy Caldwell
reported by Betsy Neil

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) developed the original program of Eurhythmics. Timothy Caldwell's synopses, repeated many times in the course of his 4 sessions were "Everything in music, can be taught through movement" and "Begin with the body because the body trains the ear."

Mr. Caldwell provided us with a few definitions. Dalcroze conscientiously used "kinesthesia" to teach: "kine" means "movement" or "motion"; "thesia" means "study of." Rhythm comes from the Greek word "rhythmos" — "flow" or "river." Rhythm is variations of how we flow through time and space. "Aes" is a Greek term that means "duty" or "order." "Aesthesia" means "to awaken," the opposite of "anesthesia," which puts you to sleep.

Before Mr. Caldwell began showing us several games that are used in this method, he stressed that it is not the game that is as important to remember, but the concept. A

teacher first decides which musical concept to teach, then finds a game. Games can be invented and adjusted to fit any concept. The goal of the games is not to succeed, but rather to have the experience. However, if there are no rules, it is not a game.

Musical behaviors that can be taught through movement include: being ready, socialization, starting on time, entering on time, watching the conductor, and listening. Mr. Caldwell pointed out that even without training in Eurhythmics, intuitive teachers already teach many of these concepts creatively and with movement.

Without coordination there can be no good rhythm. Movement with artistry makes it easier. During all the movement activities we were reminded to make noise (sing, scat, vocalize) to be sure we continued breathing.

One of the first activities was a "Twice as Fast/ Twice as Slow" game that can be

used to teach sub-division of beats. We walked in a circle, following each other, walking to the same beat. We took walking steps on quarter notes, took long steps on half notes, and running steps on eighth notes. We also tried swinging our arms to match our feet, and then two steps per swing or visa versa.

One game emphasized space, time, and energy as it relates to keeping a beat. We stood in a circle and bounced a ball to the beat of the music Mr. Caldwell played on the piano. As he changed the tempo, we assessed that we had to change the force of the bounce (energy) and either create more or less space (higher/lower bounce) depending on the beat. We were also asked to internalize the beat, put it somewhere in our body. We were also asked to show what we were hearing. To add to this activity, the piano accompaniment changed it's sound either from major to minor, staccato to



Top: Keeping the beat
Bottom left and right: Improvising music to movement

legato, low to high, etc. For one sound we'd bounce; for the opposite sound, we'd toss the ball up. In another session where we used balls, we stood in circle of 5 and passed the ball on the beat, keeping the beat in our body. We passed to the right in a major key and to the left in a minor key. We also changed and passed on the off beats. We were told, "Once the task is learned, there is no point in continuing without adding something new" such as tempo, bowings, etc.

Mr. Caldwell stressed that the less verbal the teacher is, the more attention they will get from students. For example, when working with major and minor modes, teacher can simply ask students to sit or stand for one or the other type of sound, without giving the sounds a title. Students can walk around in a circle and change directions when the music changes, without labeling the change. Let the ear tell the students what to do with their body!

Mr. Caldwell emphasized individuation verses de-individuation. On the latter the attention is drawn to the group and is less emotionally threatening to the student. Students learn better if they feel safe emotionally.

Demonstrating the opposite or exploring extremes of a desired outcome can be most efficacious. For example, students can sometimes discover good tone, the middle ground, by performing a strong harsh sound and a too light sound.

We looked into the study of *crusi*. A *crusi* is the moment of impact, when the hand slaps the lap. The *anacrusis* is the preparation for the beat; it leads up to the beat. The *metacrusis* is in between; nothing is happening. In the conducting pattern of 4, the 3rd beat is a stretch between *meta-* and *anacrusis*.

We attempted a game of Cognitive Dissonance. We walked and practiced our conducting 4 pattern; *crusi*, *meta-*, *stretch*, *ana-*, and then conducted while walking a dotted rhythm. Most of us found this to be

quite difficult.

Agogics is the study of sound and weight in sound. The longer the sound, the heavier the perception is of the listener. When playing in 3/2 as compared to 3/4 for example, the music is not slower but should sound heavier. It is not the dynamics, rather something in the sound quality.

During one of our sessions, we observed Mr. Caldwell working with the All-State Orchestra. The students were having difficulty playing a triplet together in an entrance. He asked the students to vocalize the triplet. Singing the note for an entrance, then playing it, thinking the note, and then playing it helps the students hear the notes in their head first. To help students measure and calculate and crescendo, Tim asked them to slowly rise from their chairs as they played the crescendo and only stand at the end of it. Without playing, Tim asked students to imitate the conductor's movement, and then imitate the rhythm with their mouths. When students showed difficulty in hitting an accidental correctly, he asked them to accent the accidentals. Students in the orchestra responded somewhat hesitantly at first and then warmed up to him once they noticed his devices were effective.

We spent a little bit of time on improvisation. Mr. Caldwell stressed the importance of thinking large to small and general to specific. We picked partners; one person had an instrument and the other did movement. First the leader was the person moving, and the instrumentalist played sounds to match. Then the leader was the instrumentalist, and the other person made up movements to match. It can be good to be free to let a bad sound out of the instrument on occasion; it aids in creativity and freedom.

Our final study was on working with pitch. We clapped and sang "do do do —" ♪ ♪ ♪ ♯. Then while continuing to clap but remaining silent, the teacher worked at distracting us with strange singing and vocalizations. We then were expected to

remember the pitch we had sung. We also did this with the piano playing a variety of chords we had to ignore while trying to remember our pitch.

Another activity that helped to develop a strong sense of pitch was while having everyone playing a scale and when the teacher says, "change," everyone would switch from quarter notes to eighth notes, or triplets. We also played a scale and took turns playing two notes of the scale and passing it to the next player. To give variation to this exercise, rests can be added where one group is skipped. A visual can be added to follow on the blackboard or such. Blue eyes can play beats one and three, and brown eyes can play beats two and four. Many variations of this can be used and are most useful in training students to read certain beats of a measure. This no doubt contributes to sight-reading skills.

We also sang a scale using solfege and became silent on a prescribed note of the scale. We also did a game similar to the "Radio Game" where the student must use inner listening to keep the melody going in their head when stopping playing. The challenge is to come in together in the same spot, sometimes after being distracted by a teacher who may be performing other melodies.

Books that Tim Caldwell recommended are: *Expressive Singing* by himself, *Teaching Music in the 21st Century* by Robert Abramson, and *Musical Interpretation* by Matisse Lussy.

I will use every activity and every bit of advice Mr. Caldwell offered us in his workshops. I teach general music as well as strings and I know from experience how great a difference doing activities such as these can make in a student's development. Even for those who may not seem to "need" any reinforcing activities, these kinesthetic activities will add depth to their understanding. ♯