



The Application of Dalcroze Eurhythmics in Primary School Music Education

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How to cite this paper: Yafei Guan, Pranote Meeson. (2024). The Application of Dalcroze Eurhythmics in Primary School Music Education. *The Educational Review, USA*, 8(2), 340-344.
DOI: 10.26855/er.2024.02.027

Received: January 30, 2024
Accepted: February 27, 2024
Published: March 25, 2024

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Abstract

Dalcroze Eurhythmics stands as a prevalent and influential pedagogical approach in the realm of primary school music education. This method ingeniously amalgamates the realms of music and physical movement to foster a multifaceted comprehension and appreciation of musical intricacies among students. Its overarching aim extends beyond the mere impartation of musical knowledge; rather, it strives to hone students' concentration and coordination abilities through the seamless integration of music and physical expressions. The instructional methodology at the core of Dalcroze Eurhythmics emphasizes the symbiosis between musical elements and physical actions. Students, under the guidance of their instructor, embark on a journey where they synchronize their movements with the rhythmic cadence of the accompanying music. In essence, the integration of Dalcroze Eurhythmics into primary school music education not only enhances the academic curriculum but also serves as a transformative influence, molding students into well-rounded individuals with a deep appreciation for the art of music and the capacity to express themselves both creatively and collaboratively.

Keywords

Dalcroze Eurhythmics, primary school music, musical literacy

1. Introduction

The traditional teaching method in primary school music classes primarily involves the teacher leading the singing while students learn to sing along. Afterwards, some music theory knowledge is taught, with an emphasis on theoretical aspects. However, this approach fails to enable students to truly grasp the meaning of music, making it challenging for them to internalize its essence. Consequently, music education often remains superficial, hindering students from fully perceiving and enjoying the beauty of music.

In contrast, the introduction of the Dalcroze Eurhythmics teaching method into primary school music education can revolutionize the way students engage with music. By incorporating movement and physical expression into the learning process, Dalcroze Eurhythmics provides a unique opportunity for students to embody the music they are learning. Through purposeful movements, gestures, and rhythmic exercises, students develop a profound connection between their bodies, minds, and the music.

Engaging students' bodies in the process of musical exploration has multiple benefits. Firstly, it cultivates their coordination skills and body awareness, promoting physical dexterity and control. As students synchronize their movements with the rhythm and melody, they develop a heightened sense of timing, precision, and expressiveness.

Moreover, the physical experience of music through Dalcroze Eurhythmics allows students to go beyond the mere

intellectual understanding of music theory. They begin to internalize musical concepts on a deeper level, experiencing the emotional and expressive dimensions of music firsthand. This holistic approach to music education enables students to develop a more intuitive understanding of musical structures, dynamics, and phrasing.

In addition, Dalcroze Eurhythmics fosters a sense of creativity and improvisation. Students are encouraged to explore their own interpretations of the music through spontaneous movements and gestures. This nurtures their ability to express themselves authentically and confidently, both as individuals and as part of a group musical experience.

By integrating Dalcroze Eurhythmics into primary school music education, we provide students with an immersive and transformative learning experience. It expands their perceptual range, enabling them to appreciate and understand complex musical forms such as symphonies and operas. Furthermore, this approach capitalizes on the vibrant energy and rapid sensory development of childhood, allowing us to shape students' musical sensibilities and expressive capabilities from an early age (Andrew Davidson, 2023).

The practical significance and educational value of integrating Dalcroze Eurhythmics in primary school music education cannot be overstated. It goes beyond teaching students to sing or play an instrument proficiently; it instills in them a deep love and understanding of music. Through this approach, students not only develop their musical abilities but also cultivate important life skills such as creativity, coordination, expressiveness, and teamwork. Ultimately, Dalcroze Eurhythmics enriches students' overall music education experience and equips them with the tools to engage with and appreciate music throughout their lives.

2. Characteristics and Functions of the Dalcroze Eurhythmics Teaching Method

The Dalcroze teaching method, one of the three major music teaching methods in the world, was established by Swiss music educator Émile Jaques-Dalcroze in the early 20th century. This innovative approach to music education revolutionized the way students engage with and understand music. Jaques-Dalcroze believed that there is a close relationship between the rhythm of music and the human body and that neglecting the body's response to musical rhythm hinders the development of students' sense of rhythm, imagination, and creativity.

At the core of the Dalcroze teaching method is the Eurhythmics approach, which aims to promote rapid and rhythmic communication between the brain and the body through musical rhythm. It emphasizes the harmonious connection between individuals and music, allowing students to truly embody and experience the music they are learning. By integrating bodily movements with musical elements, the Eurhythmics teaching method provides a rich and multisensory learning experience.

In the Dalcroze Eurhythmics teaching method, students utilize their bodies as instruments to represent and interpret musical elements. For example, walking speed can be used to demonstrate the tempo of the music, with faster or slower steps indicating a faster or slower tempo. Clapping hands can be utilized to distinguish different notes, accentuating the rhythmic patterns present in the music. Furthermore, various musical games and exercises are incorporated into the lessons to enhance students' ability to control rhythm and develop a deep understanding of musical structure and phrasing.

One of the key characteristics of the Dalcroze Eurhythmics teaching method is its emphasis on experiential learning. Rather than solely relying on theoretical instruction, students actively engage with the music through movement, touch, and physical expression. This hands-on approach allows students to develop a strong kinesthetic awareness and an intuitive understanding of musical concepts. By directly experiencing the rhythm, dynamics, and emotions of the music, students are able to internalize its essence and express themselves authentically.

Another important aspect of the Dalcroze Eurhythmics teaching method is its focus on improvisation and creativity. Students are encouraged to explore their own interpretations of the music, responding to its rhythms and melodies with spontaneous movements and gestures. This fosters a sense of artistic freedom and individual expression, nurturing students' imagination and creative thinking skills.

Furthermore, the Dalcroze Eurhythmics teaching method promotes a sense of community and collaboration among students. Group activities and ensemble work are integral components of the lessons, allowing students to interact and communicate musically with one another (Davidson Andrew, 2023). By collectively creating and experiencing music, students develop important teamwork and communication skills, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Overall, the Dalcroze Eurhythmics teaching method offers a dynamic and holistic approach to music education. Integrating movement, rhythm, and physical expression enables students to deepen their understanding and appreciation of music while developing essential skills such as coordination, creativity, and self-expression. Its innovative and experiential nature has made it a powerful tool in nurturing the musical sensibilities and expressive capabilities of students worldwide.

2.1 More Listening, Less Talking

Dalcroze pointed out: "Music education should be based on auditory perception and help students develop their auditory and memory skills through bodily movement, cultivating perfect pitch and developing inner hearing". Traditional music lessons focus too much on students singing along with the teacher, neglecting the act of listening and experiencing music. The Dalcroze teaching method emphasizes listening to music during the teaching process, providing continuous stimulation of music information for the students. By listening to a large amount of music, students constantly accumulate experiences of sensing music, exercise the sensitivity of their ears to music, and strengthen their physical memory of music. Only by internalizing music in their hearts for a long time can they have enough musical expression when externalizing it.

2.2 Emphasizing the Experience of Music

Dalcroze firmly believed that music training should go beyond mere vocal exercises and singing. According to him, incorporating bodily movements is essential for a comprehensive musical education. He emphasized the importance of students developing a deep connection with music by actively engaging their bodies in the learning process.

To achieve this, Dalcroze advocated for repeated listening to music, allowing students to immerse themselves in its intricacies. By carefully observing the speed, intensity, melody, and rhythm of the music, students gain a heightened awareness of its nuances and subtleties. This active listening serves as a foundation for their further exploration of musical expression.

In the Dalcroze teaching method, students are encouraged to use their bodies as instruments to interpret and respond to the music. They engage in imaginative and simulated performance scenarios, envisioning themselves on stage or in various musical settings. By mentally and physically embodying these scenes, students develop a stronger connection with the music and enhance their ability to convey its emotions and narratives.

Furthermore, the Dalcroze approach encourages students to produce sounds using different parts of their bodies. This includes clapping hands, stomping feet, tapping fingers, and even vocalizing through non-traditional methods such as humming or whispering. By exploring the varied possibilities of creating sounds, students expand their understanding of music beyond conventional techniques. This hands-on exploration also provides them with a deeper appreciation for the diverse ways in which music can be expressed.

Through these embodied experiences, students not only enhance their technical skills but also cultivate a rich and immersive musical experience. They develop a profound sense of musicality, where the body becomes a vehicle for self-expression and a conduit for interpreting and communicating the essence of music. By integrating bodily movements into their musical training, students gain a holistic understanding of music as a multisensory art form, fostering a deeper connection with the music they create and perform.

2.3 Creating Musical Contexts

Aspects of music such as speed, melody, and rhythm are abstract to students. It is necessary to translate the emotions of music into concrete actions, rhythms, and sounds. The Dalcroze teaching method uses contextual teaching, simulating various soundscapes in real life, allowing students to move their different body parts according to the music, thus experiencing music and internalizing the abstract elements of music as bodily memory (Daly Diane K, 2022). This approach not only improves students' concentration on music but also makes music lessons enjoyable and interesting.

3. Practical application of Dalcroze's somatic rhythmic pedagogy in elementary school music teaching

Students learning to appreciate and immerse themselves in the artistic conception of music is a prerequisite for effectively expressing music. Dalcroze believed that individuals often transform emotions into music through bodily movements. When people listen to music, their bodies also react in certain ways to express the music. Therefore, incorporating the teaching method of rhythmic movement into primary school music education can better help students perceive music, cultivate their interest in music, and lay a solid foundation for enhancing their musical literacy.

3.1 Creating Natural Contexts

How to help students perceive music is the most fundamental question in music education. The best sound comes from nature. In primary school music classes, the Dalcroze eurhythmics teaching method can be used to simulate natural sounds

and create an artistic conception. For example, using hand rubbing to simulate the sound of wind, increases the speed of rubbing to create an atmosphere of an impending storm. Snap fingers to simulate the arrival of light rain, then pat legs to represent the rain getting heavier and finally stomp feet to express pouring rain. Additionally, students can stand up and sit down to simulate the sound of thunder, allowing them to create a context and experience the sounds of wind, thunder, rain, and other elements of nature. This effectively awakens students' perception of music and enables them to experience the spiritual journey that music brings to their hearts.

Many students often lack emotional experience with music, resulting in a lack of sufficient musical expressiveness in singing or playing instruments. This is largely because they lack the experience of perceiving music and have not developed a bodily awareness of musical elements. Music is mostly taught as knowledge and skills. The Dalcroze teaching method creates various natural contexts and simulates natural sounds, allowing students to experience the joy of music lessons during the teaching process.

3.2 Creating Spatial Contexts

In music education, it is important for students to perceive music from multiple perspectives through observation, listening, singing, or playing instruments in order to develop their basic expression of music. This process requires students to have comprehensive coordination skills and the ability to manipulate different elements (Rosalind Ridout & John Habron, 2020). Many students may find it difficult to coordinate their actions, such as playing an instrument while achieving a perfect unity of auditory, visual, and physical movements, reaching a state of "body-instrument integration." Dalcroze Eurhythmics uses a training method that focuses on perfect spatial awareness, allowing students to develop coordination skills through playful exercises. The specific steps are as follows:

In a specific space, the teacher instructs students to walk in accordance with the tempo of piano playing while maintaining an appropriate spatial distance. When the sound of the piano stops, students freeze in place and maintain an appropriate distance from their classmates and objects around them. The key point is to use the tempo of the piano to help students perceive the speed of the music and exercise their visual and physical control abilities by finding appropriate spatial positions (Wentink Catrien & Van der Merwe Liesl, 2020).

Furthermore, the perfect spatial teaching method can be further deepened by incorporating the rhythms of "ta" and "titi." When students hear "ta," they walk with the music; when they hear "titi," they clap their hands. This exercise incorporates more rhythmic elements, allowing students to connect their bodies with the music. Through bodily movements, attentive listening, and visual observation, students can better control their bodies, experience the music, and achieve a state of coordination between their bodies and the music. For example, when learning to create music for "Walking Together at Different Speeds," the teacher can create a story, such as "Sometimes we're climbing mountains, sometimes we're on grasslands, and sometimes we're in mud." Based on the emotions and atmosphere of the music, students practice rhythmic walking and perfect spatial exercises. When the teacher plays a descending melody, students squat down; when the teacher plays an ascending melody, students stand up. In this music teaching activity, not only rhythmic elements and tempo are incorporated but also the emotions of the music. It helps students deeply understand the directional aspects of music. Only when students grasp the directionality of music can they express it with more musicality in their singing.

3.3 Creating Musical Contexts

In specific musical performances, it is crucial to have correct and reasonable playing techniques. Training students to perceive and understand legato, accent, and staccato is the foundation of playing music and can greatly enhance students' musical expression. Dalcroze Eurhythmics incorporates the training method of creating musical contexts, integrating the inner logic and elements of music into students' physical activities. Students' ability to perceive and express music can be improved rapidly and unconsciously.

For example, using "Gavotte" as background music, place hula hoops on the ground according to the expression of the music. When students hear the music, they express the liveliness of the music by jumping in the first two measures. In the third measure, students jump into the hula hoops with their left and right feet alternately, expressing the accent relationship of the music. In the fourth measure, students jump into the hula hoops with both feet simultaneously, expressing the sense of staccato required by the music (Liesl van der Merwe & John Habron, 2019).

Through creating contextual teaching situations, Dalcroze Eurhythmics gradually introduces students to the world of music, allowing them to perceive the speed, direction, melody, and rhythm of music. These elements are internalized within their bodies, leading to a state of harmony and unity between individuals and music.

4. Conclusion

Through the comparative analysis with traditional music education, we can better appreciate the charm of Dalcroze Eurhythmics. On one hand, it fully engages students' sensory perception and involves them in music learning, making the music classroom more dynamic. On the other hand, creating various contextual games fosters a fun and harmonious classroom atmosphere that aligns with the laws of music education and the psychological characteristics of student music learning. More importantly, the purpose of primary school music education is not to cultivate musicians and professional performers but to enhance students' musical literacy. It aims to enable students to appreciate the intrinsic beauty of music, express their emotions through singing or playing music, and connect with the world better through the universal language of music. It enriches their lives and allows them to enjoy a high-quality spiritual life.

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