

TEACHING RHYTHMICS

By
Elizabeth Vanderspar



Principles and guidelines for teachers of
Dalcroze Eurhythmics

A DALCROZE HANDBOOK

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Contents

	Page
Foreword	2
Introduction	4
Chapter 1	Theory of Teaching Rhythmics
	Rhythmics Education 5
	Teaching Aims and Objectives 5
	How do you prepare yourself? 7
Chapter 2	Basic Principles in Teaching Rhythmics
	Communication 9
	Thought Process 10
	Spacing, Grouping and Relationships 11
	Motivation 11
	Hearing and Listening 12
	Phases of Presentation 14
Chapter 3	Plans and Techniques
	Basic principles 15
	Stimulus, reaction and response 15
	Recall, repetition and muscular memory 18
	Lesson planning 19
	Assessment 21
	Reviewing your lesson 23
	Aims and objectives re-stated 24
	Movement emphasis 25
Chapter 4	A Guide to Curriculum
	Ages 3 to 4 26
	Ages 4 to 5 28
	Ages 5 to 6 30
	Ages 7 to 8 33
	Older children 33
Chapter 5	A Closer Look at Some of the Principle Subjects
	Rhythm, time and timing 34
	Measurement of musical time 35
	Rhythmic pattern 37
	Introduction to formal notation 39
	Teaching rhythmic notation 40
	Improvisation 41
	Musical messages 42
	Realisation of composed music in movement 43
Coda	46
Bibliography	47

Chapter 1

THEORY OF TEACHING RHYTHMICS

Rhythmics education

Dalcroze was very interested in the psychomotor* aspect of the human being. He noted that where personality defects existed, or when a person was not happy with himself for some reason, this was usually reflected in that person's inability to react to musical rhythm. There was a lack of harmony between mind and body, and an absence of co-ordination. Could the situation be reversed? Could overactive children learn control? Could slow learners be helped over their difficulties through music? Dalcroze found that they could.

Eurhythmics as a whole has helped many people, even those who are well satisfied with their mastery of music. Frank Martin, the Swiss composer, was one such person. He was very gifted, with a marvellous talent for keyboard improvisation. Dalcroze persuaded him initially to join a class of Rhythmics. He did so, feeling it to be rather unnecessary in his case, but found that he learned so much that he went on to complete the entire course, qualifying at the highest level.

People who are awake and alert rhythmically are usually awake and alert in other respects as well. Children and adults who have experienced this work in their formative years confirm that they have benefited in many ways.

(* Psychomotor relates to physical movement or action, directly induced by a mental condition.)

Teaching aims and objectives

General

These are always in progress and relate mostly to the general development of the class.

- ♦ Listening.
- ♦ Musical awareness through the senses.
- ♦ The development of motor and musical skills.
- ♦ The release of tension.
- ♦ The ability to relax.
- ♦ Social awareness: group and individual.
- ♦ Long and short term memory.
- ♦ Concentration.
- ♦ Reaction and adjustment: instant or considered.
- ♦ Alertness and readiness to learn.
- ♦ Analysis and synthesis.
- ♦ Transference of acquired knowledge to other contexts.
- ♦ Ability to adjust to the ideas of others.
- ♦ Ability to create ideas from the ideas of others.
- ♦ Strengthening of individual characters, helping them towards self-discipline and decision-making.
- ♦ Ability to express ideas clearly.
- ♦ Development of inner hearing.