

CHAPTER THREE



FUNDAMENTALS OF RHYTHM IN MOVEMENT

The Dalcroze method embraces a philosophy of education that is student-centered; the focus is on the gradual development of the student's musicality, not simply the learning of literature. Consequently, the teacher must be sensitive to the developmental level of the student at any particular moment. While we give you examples that you may try, you may find that part of an activity as described may have to be repeated or altered to fit your student's momentary need. It may not even be feasible to get to the end of an exercise on some occasions. Your own personal and musical sensitivity will guide you in reshaping these examples to suit the moment.

A Dalcroze exercise is like a music performance: there is preparation, a decided beginning, and a rhythmic continuity that obtains throughout. At its best, the lesson itself is a thrilling music improvisation, where the teacher and student ride on and contribute to an underlying rhythm (Fundamental Gesture), which brings the student's body, mind and spirit into communication. Eurhythmics is a way of experiencing and exploring musical sensation and musical knowledge together. Progress begins the first time you walk through the music with your feet, instead of your fingers.

The exercises in this chapter are based on an educational philosophy developed by Jaques-Dalcroze, in collaboration with the eminent psychologist Eduoard Claparede. Their concern was to improve the quality of music education and education in general, by finding ways to increase the capacity for learning. Their experiments convinced them that the central necessity was to elevate the levels of attention, concentration, and memory in Dalcroze's students. They devised a set of "games" to accomplish these goals: exercises in the form of "Follow," "Quick Reaction,"

CHAPTER FIVE



EXPLORATION OF COMPOSITIONS

Johann Sebastian Bach Invention No. 8 in FM

Observations:

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote the 15 Inventions as teaching pieces for his son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. They were intended as guides to composition, as well as performance on the keyboard. On the title page of the 1723 autograph edition of the *Inventions and Sinfonias* (often called Two- and Three-Part Inventions), Johann Sebastian writes:

Sincere instruction in which lovers of keyboard music, and especially those desiring to learn to play, are shown a clear way not only (1) to learn to play cleanly in two parts, but also after further progress (2) to proceed correctly and well with three obbligate parts, and at the same time not only to compose good inventions, but to develop them well; but most of all to achieve a cantabile style in playing, and to acquire a taste for the elements of composition.

The Two-Part Inventions, as a whole, follow similar form designs. All are pieces where two voices have equal roles. Each Invention divides roughly in half, similar to what one might expect in a binary dance movement, with a modulation to the dominant, if the piece is in major, and to the relative major, if it begins in minor. At this midpoint, Bach modulates to diatonically related keys before returning to a dominant preparation for the final cadence. Often, the closing material is a transposition of the opening material—the characteristic of rounded binary form. It is advisable for the student to incorporate the larger dimensions of the piece by internally singing the RH or LH melodic

Claude Debussy

First Arabesque

Observations:

Even though the Two Arabesques were written early (1888) in Debussy's career, they show the characteristics of composition that had made him a problem for his theory instructors. He is described in *The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians* as having a "feeling for unorthodox chord successions" and engaging in "vehement arguments in opposition to the rules of traditional harmonic procedure."²²

Objectives:

The musical gesture of curving lines (arabesque) requires a matching flexibility of movement in the body. The two-against-three sections call for complex motor coordination, increased when the right hand has two voices to present as melody and accompaniment. Such subtleties, demanding so much attention, must find their place within the Fundamental Gestures that build the full musical design.

This exercise is related to Exercise 3.4 under Fundamental Gesture:

Variation:

T and S face each other, S holds a scarf in each hand

"Mirror my movements."

T swings arms to the left, starting a horizontal figure eight, and counts "1-2."

T completes figure eight to the right with counts "3-4."

T varies tempo.

"Continue."

²²Oscar Thompson, "Claude Debussy," in *The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*. 7th ed., ed., Nicholas Slonimsky (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1956), 413.