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# Implementing Dalcroze's Eurhythmics in Classical Music Appreciation Courses for Young Learners

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## **Abstract**

*In this study, we explore the integration of Dalcroze's Eurhythmics into classical music appreciation courses for young learners. Our aim is to examine its effects on students' engagement, comprehension, and overall enjoyment of classical music. The research delves into the benefits of implementing eurhythmics principles in teaching methods to cultivate a deeper connection with the music and enhance musical understanding among children.*

**Keywords**—*Dalcroze's Eurhythmics, classical music appreciation courses, young learners.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In numerous societies across the globe, engaging in the act of 'listening to music' is often perceived as less inventive and relatively passive compared to behavior-oriented music education. Consequently, a common inclination is to regard it as supplementary in relation to performance or creation elements. Ultimately, instructors who conduct these classes frequently introduce 'appreciation' components unidirectionally, causing students to conclude their lessons without a genuine internalization of the musical piece. This results in a music curriculum devoid of its core essence, failing to facilitate comprehension of musical components or principles through appreciation exercises, and neglecting to provide the myriad advantages that music inherently offers to human beings. Contrary to popular belief, music engagement transcends passive activities and substantially contributes to various aspects of life, including stress reduction, enhancement of cognitive function, and promotion of emotional well-being. Regrettably, many music education classes prioritize performance and creativity over appreciation, culminating in students' inability to experience the full spectrum of benefits that encompass musical

engagement.

Incorporating music appreciation courses, such as Dalcroze's Eurhythmics and Solfège, into the academic curriculum offers significant advantages to students. These pedagogical methodologies not only broaden the scope of affective education but also present a tangible and engaging mode of music instruction. By implementing improvisational elements, learners can cultivate their musical aptitude while also fostering a profound comprehension and esteem for musical art forms. Overall, these specialized music courses complement conventional educational practices, yielding considerable enhancements to a student's personal growth and cognitive development. Hence, it is crucial to reconceptualize our pedagogical stance towards music education, accentuating the significance of auditory engagement and authentic assimilation of musical principles.

## **II. MUSICAL ABILITIES OF 2-7 YEAR-OLD CHILDREN**

In accordance with Piaget's theory, the cognitive development of children is in constant flux and growth, primarily driven by their persistent engagement with the external world. Each developmental stage displays

a distinctive order predicated upon individual variability, with the sequence remaining inviolable and non-transferable. The preoperational stage encompasses ages 2 to 7, wherein the child's interaction with their environment remains predominantly sensory-driven, particularly through visual and auditory stimuli. As logical manipulation of thoughts is not yet achievable during this phase, it is thus denominated as the preoperational stage.

During the preoperational stage, the development of language usage in children demonstrates a rapid progression. In particular, the emergence of representations seem to function exclusively in a symbolic manner, as there is a potential correlation between language and thought processes. Consequently, as linguistic capabilities are enhanced, the prevalence of imaginative play and symbolic activities increase. The primary focus involves the manipulation of items, with each object serving as a mental representation for the child. Children in the preoperational stage rely heavily on their intuition when making decisions which can be understood as basing decisions on their observations. At this point, children lack the concept of conservation, as they have not yet developed reversible thinking abilities. Another characteristic evident in pre-operational children includes egocentrism, wherein individuals perceive situations solely from their own perspective and struggle to comprehend others' viewpoints. This leads to the assumption that everyone shares their worldview. Furthermore, engaging in self-dialogue or monologues is a common phenomenon observed within this developmental stage.

During the preoperational stage, children possess animistic cognitive abilities, leading them to perceive moving objects as living entities. Consequently, incorporating fairy tales or historical narratives featuring animals or inanimate objects proves highly advantageous in early childhood education, particularly within music instruction. Such stories significantly enhance the development of children's animistic imagination. Concurrently, throughout the preoperational phase, children experience rapid growth in their musical aptitude, owing to cognitive advancements. A majority of children at this stage can accurately perceive various sound attributes such as intensity, pitch, and duration. They are capable of tracking auditory stimuli effectively and exhibit strong responsiveness to rhythm and beat.

Musical aptitude is delineated by two distinct factors: musical cognitive ability and musical expression ability.

Musical cognitive ability encompasses the comprehension of musical elements, such as the discernment and distinction of aural stimuli, classification and organization of auditory input, and retention of sonorous information. Concurrently, musical expression ability involves the active articulation of acquired musical understanding through an array of mediums, including vocal performance, bodily movement, instrumental proficiency, and composition (Hassler, M., & Birnbaum, D., 2011). The concept of musical expression pertains to the receptive engagement with music, internalization of aesthetic qualities, emotive response to auditory stimuli, and subsequent conveyance of music. This quintessential aspect of musical artistry derives from cognitive faculties inherent to human beings and exhibits universal features. Gardner (Gardner, H., 1999) posits that infants develop into emotionally enriched individuals by manifesting feelings such as happiness, fury, or grief through various expressive means. Furthermore, during these formative creative engagements, children experience a sense of accomplishment which fosters interest and motivation while enhancing self-confidence. This process facilitates the alleviation of adverse emotions like anxiety or resentment, leading to emotional equilibrium and heightened sensitivity. The diversity in development largely hinges upon the nature and extent of each child's exposure to musical experiences as they mature.

Although young children may not be able to read sheet music, they are capable of comprehending musical concepts through bodily movement. These movements can be articulated using a language appropriate for their developmental stage. Focused on the utilization of the body to convey thoughts and emotions, body expression activities offer an engaging experience for children.

Through body expression, infants develop a sense of rhythm (Stabley, W. J., 2001), allowing them to create harmony with others. By moving according to the emotional content of music, body expression offers a natural outlet for children to express themselves alongside verbal communication. This kinesthetic approach enables them to both feel and communicate musical elements while fostering creative expression of their feelings.

Andress states that by age four, children can perform an array of physical actions, such as singing, rhythmically tapping the floor with their hands, coordinating foot movements to tunes, and nodding

their heads in time. (Andress, S. ,1991)These physical expression activities serve as an organic method for teaching children about music and rhythm development. Furthermore, these activities encourage social growth through shared experiences that promote natural understanding and learning of spatial relationships.

Children can express various musical concepts related to pitch (high and low), tempo (fast and slow), volume (loud and soft), and dynamics (increasing intensity). Consequently, body expression activities should center on enabling children to gain bodily awareness while enhancing their innate motor skills capacity(Hallam, S. ,2010).

Fostering a conducive environment for children to probe their capabilities and articulate their sentiments, emotions, and cognitions in a self-assured and innovative manner enables them to engage with music and convey their comprehension across varied musical domains through diverse expressions. Utilizing such expressions facilitates their understanding of music as they convey their thoughts and emotions in distinct manners. To fulfill their intrinsic necessities, such as emotive states, experiences, and contemplations, children consistently replicate and generate novel movements. Moreover, they naturally articulate developed musical concepts acquired through repeated exposure to an array of musical activities, encompassing singing, handling musical instruments, dancing, and creative pursuits. This expression can be accentuated via bodily movements or by employing musical instruments or vocalizations.

Engaging in music-making activities that encompass a diverse range of creative expressions and content enables children to experience a meaningful platform for the cultivation of cognitive, physical, emotional, and musical aptitudes. These activities serve as an inherent method for articulating and interpreting the innate musicality found among children, influencing their listening abilities, descriptive skills, problem-solving capabilities, and other areas of learning (Nelly, 2001). While much of the music-making occurs spontaneously, its significance is heightened when presented systematically and diversely. Consequently, the process of creating music encompasses all facets of musical expression including listening and sound exploration, bodily movements, vocalizations, and playing musical instruments. These components furnish an exceptional musical experience conducive to the growth and development of a child's musical prowess.

Hence, the provision of music-based activities for children is anticipated to ultimately enhance their overall musical expression capabilities by evolving into holistic music experiences predicated on integration within the discipline of music and interconnections within the broader domain of art.

### III. PHYSICAL EXPRESSION

In scholarly discourse, "body expression" is commonly denominated as "Physical Expression" in the English language. The verb "express" connotes the conveyance of internal thoughts or emotions to an external manifestation. Body expression encompasses the physical portrayal of mental states, such as emotions and ideas. The underpinning of learning is contingent upon bodily expression, which constitutes a fundamental means for prelinguistic young children to communicate their experiences. Body expressiveness inherently constitutes a natural and gratifying activity for children possessing an innate predilection for movement, thereby augmenting their comprehension of their surroundings (Marigliano & Russo, 2011). In the context of early childhood education, nomenclature such as "creative expression activities," "creative movement expression activities," and "dancing" are often employed interchangeably.

Body expression activities, encompassing artistic and expressive endeavors, offer opportunities for young children to experience diverse thoughts and imaginations. These activities encourage children to articulate their emotions and ideas through physical movements while fostering creative thinking and symbolic expression. Consequently, body expression activities serve as an educational experience that enhances cognitive aptitude and cultivates an aesthetic sensibility.

Utilizing diverse locations, manipulating specific body parts or engaging in total bodily movements, children convey their thoughts and emotions, react to musical stimuli, establish peer connections, and demonstrate confident verbal communication. Through this corporeal expression experience, infants develop self-awareness and understanding of their surroundings, thereby enabling a novel domain of personal articulation (Rugg, 1963). As these young individuals are constantly in motion, the development of latent motor skills is facilitated. Furthermore, this active self-expression contributes to well-rounded early childhood development encompassing symbolic communication, innovative thought processes, and

enhancing self-assurance as well as social competency (Gallahue & Ozmun, 2009). Recent studies have demonstrated that such embodied expressive activities exert a positive influence on comprehensive infant development with regard to cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social aspects. Subsequently, the educational significance is explicated in the context provided.

The affective dimensions of early childhood experiences are significantly influenced by physical expressive activities. This engagement in bodily expression facilitates the exposure of young children to a diverse array of emotional contexts, thereby allowing them to manifest their feelings physically. The ensuing emotional development, rooted in this process, empowers young individuals to effectively discern and comprehend varied emotions. Moreover, such a process equips them with the capacity to regulate their own emotions and exhibit heightened sensitivity towards the emotional responses of others. Empirical studies demonstrating affirmative impacts on the cultivation of emotional intelligence corroborate the pivotal role physical expression activities play in shaping the emotional facets of early childhood. Notably, Fernández-Bustos et al. (2019) observed significant enhancements in self-concept and self-esteem among children who engaged in body expression exercises.

The impact of physical expressive activities on the social dimensions of children's development is a significant area of study. During early childhood, children engage in bodily movement, social interaction, and cooperative assistance through various body expression exercises. This process fosters an environment for young children to recognize and validate each other's expressions, acknowledge diverse perspectives, and regulate their emotions and physical behaviors in accordance with established norms and rules. These multifaceted social interactions play a crucial role in shaping the development of children's social competencies. Research conducted by Berti, S., & Cigala, A. (2022) has exhibited a positive effect of body expression activities on neonates' prosocial tendencies. Furthermore, Ginman, K., Anttila, E., Juntunen, M. L., & Tiippana, K. (2022) have established a robust connection between body expression activities and the social development of children.

#### IV. DALCROZE EURHYTHMICS

Dalcroze, a Swiss composer and music pedagogue, pioneered an innovative approach to music education that incorporated physical exercises, in response to the perceived inadequacy of traditional methods in music pedagogy. By integrating musical and physical activities, Dalcroze sought to cultivate a sense of rhythm and thereby enhance the overall caliber of teaching methodologies within the realm of music education. Additionally, this approach aimed to nurture creative musical expression through solfège and improvisation as a comprehensive means of instructing music theory.

Eurhythmics, a fundamental and rudimentary subject pioneered by Dalcroze, derives its name from the Greek phrase signifying "superior rhythm." This discipline encompasses exercises in rhythm, solfège, and improvisation. Dalcroze posited that since mere auditory exposure to music would not suffice for children's enjoyment and appreciation, they ought to develop through rhythmic activities, which constitute the most intimately connected and captivating element of music. (Jaques-Dalcroze, E., 1906) According to his perspective, rhythm functions as the bedrock and driving force behind all artistic pursuits, including musical endeavors. In essence, it was ascertained that exercise comprehensively addressed the strengths and weaknesses of rhythm, which could then be discerned within our muscular system.

The primary components of the Eurhythmics rhythm movement incorporate several crucial aspects such as melodic structure, variations in pitch, tempo, dynamics, and timbre. Firstly, to effectively communicate tempo through corporeal movements, one can opt to either augment or diminish speed or, alternatively, envision an animal that is easily recognizable to young children. In this manner, participants can grasp the concept of tempo intuitively. Secondly, efficacious self-expression within the context of Eurhythmics entails utilizing grandiose movements for assertive expression and subdued movements for gentler expression. This method allows individuals to experience an expansive range of expressiveness while maintaining a coherent connection with the music being performed or studied. Thirdly, the manifestation of timbre in body language consists of employing fragmented staccato motions and fluid legato gestures. By distinguishing between these contrasting movement types, participants become more acquainted with diverse musical textures and are better able to interpret them physically. Fourthly, the representation of pitch

involves elevating the heel for higher notes and bending at the waist for lower notes. This physical aspect engages learners in an experiential understanding of pitch variance, facilitating internalization of these subtle yet essential differences in melodic structure. Lastly, establishing a sense of rhythm necessitates the integration of rhythmic patterns within a phrase through bodily expressions that accurately reflect the melodic progression. By incorporating these movements into their understanding and performance of music, individuals enrich their connection with each piece while simultaneously honing their rhythmic abilities.

#### **V. EURHYTHMICS IN CLASSICAL MUSIC CLASS**

Music is an auditory art form that lacks semantic content. It is a discipline that has the ability to cleanse the soul, refine character, and inspire imagination and creativity in children. Music appreciation courses are no longer confined to functional subjects such as aural perception, lecture-based teaching, or even vocal performance. Rather, they now seek to establish an artistic comprehension and expression of feeling through kinesthetic rhythm in order to realize and attain a higher level of aesthetic pursuit. In music appreciation courses, Eurhythmics education can be introduced through a series of steps. Let us delve into the "March of the Lion King" appreciation class as an example of the usage of Eurhythmics.

Guide the students to listen to "March of the Lion King" quietly for their first time. While listening and conducting, have them imitate the command movements to gain a preliminary impression of music elements such as beat, emotion, speed, and strength of the music.

Children in the lower grades of elementary school are inclined to have weaker self-control. Thus, in order to preclude excessive excitement or disruption from the students during class, the educator may establish a few fixed behavioral cues. When the relevant clips are heard, the children can employ the teacher-specified cues to communicate what they have heard. By linking the heard clips to different physical actions, the children can differentiate between the main theme, the lion king's roar, and other elements. Students can practice imitating the lion's roar by blending pitch and intensity while also incorporating rhythm. Additionally, they should listen carefully to identify how many times the roar occurs, imagine the scene at that time, and express it through bodily movements.

In view of the fact that embodied cognition is the most fundamental intelligence of human beings, and music itself exists in an embodied manner, the body should serve as the foundation for music pedagogy. In order to save time, each group of Solitaire participated in the rhythm performance of a piece of music (ceremony and music group, lion guard group, animal group), and guided the children to freely choose their favorite animal images to imagine and imitate. Each group followed the music story rhythmically and in an orderly manner across corresponding links, with the teacher initiating by asking how many times the lion king roared from the beginning of the ceremony and music, and what changes (melody, tempo, intensity) occurred each time. In the process, the children were advised not to make any noise, but rather to use their ears to listen and coordinate their movements in order to deepen their internal impressions and emotions of music, and to strengthen the spirit of unity and cooperation among group members.

Therefore, educators must utilise all available means to reintroduce music instruction to physical experience, familiarize children with the world of music, and integrate Eurhythmics as a core ability in their learning, particularly for vivacious and dynamic pupils in the early stages of elementary education. Enable children to exhibit enthusiasm, sensibility, and confidence through bodily rhythm, expand the depth of their emotional experience through bodily rhythm and stimulate their creative potential through bodily rhythm. Enhance musical literacy through the use of bodily rhythm, cultivate a strong sense of teamwork and collaborative consciousness through bodily rhythm, allow hearts and music to resonate through bodily rhythm, achieve aesthetic education and nurture a noble emotional state through bodily rhythm.

#### **VI. CONCLUSION**

Music instruction should incorporate Eurhythmics as a core ability in elementary education. By reintroducing music to physical experience, children can deepen their emotional experience and stimulate their creative potential. Bodily rhythm can also enhance musical literacy and cultivate a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration. Through music education, children can exhibit enthusiasm, sensibility, and confidence, achieving aesthetic education and nurturing a noble emotional state.

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