

Steven E. Chambers

Professor Kimball

Learning Theory Research- Dalcroze

March 22, 2018,

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze is a very popular learning theorist among elementary music teachers. His approach was based off of learning and comprehending music through experience. A set curriculum is often not associated with a method based off of this approach, instead rather a music educator gears more towards their own improvisational skills and seeks to build those of their students. This can be compared to the modern approach of music therapy— a more prescription based method, based on prior progress and comprehension. Each person who uses this method may vary slightly, as it can be tailored more on their own musicianship and likeness (Campbell and Kassner, 2006). The piano is often used as the primary instrument of focus for providing examples of musicianship for the students to relate to. There are four major aspects that this approach attempts to refine within music students: skills of perceiving and responding, developing an inner-sense of music, building coordination of the ear, body, mind and the eye, and to develop a wealth of aural and kinesthetic images that students can refer back to (Mead, 1996). This method involves every part of the body and mind that are needed for a successful musician.

A large portion of this learning theory is to get the students involved in music with movement. The innate response that a human has in early developmental stages are engaged to grasp a concept of music. Similar, but not to be confused with dance. Learning to clap, stomp and move the body in different ways that reflect specific rhythms or musical concepts, is the

approach taken by Dalcroze. (Campbell and Kassner, 2006). Eurythmics is a concept that has been coined by this approach, and is a method of combining movement to rhythm. There is no aesthetic role to this approach, only the application of rhythm to the functionality of the human body and brain (Mead, 1996). The use of eurythmics work toward a goal of making something second nature— students will be able to recognize and relate to a rhythmic concept without actually having to “think” about it. Both locomotor and nonlocomotor types of movement are used in this approach to allow students to have a kinesthetic relationship to element of the music they hear whether it be dynamics, meter, or articulation (Campbell and Kassner, 2006).

Dalcroze also taught notes with solfege, using fixed “do,” this would work toward various types of ear training at a young age. As students progress with their music skills with age, they will have a good sense of what “C” feels like (Campbell and Kassner, 2006). This helps facilitate the use of audiation with students at a younger age. Dalcroze used this system for students learn how to identify chords of two and three parts, which would give better context of the notes within the music itself.

A “fun” approach was largely at center of this theory. Students retain more when they enjoy what they’re doing. Using movement that relates to rhythm in the form of games allows the students to retain the information better— not only do they have kinesthetic connection, but also a good psychological impression as well due to association with the memories they create. As well as “games” for movement, this would also be applied to ear-training. Dalcroze was very focused on building an “inner neuromuscular feeling” to music (Mead, 1996). The basis of Dalcroze is to connect the life of music to the inner-conscious of humans.

Dalcroze is a great method to use for younger students and really helps to build core skills that are needed for a continued path in music as a child gets older. The approach is very structured, and relies on building a specific skill set for a specific musical aspect. This approach is best used at the primary education level, but could be useful to revisit at moments in secondary schooling. Many choirs use this approach to building a physical connection to their music and to their voice. Dalcroze devised a very unique and very successful method to teach music that allows a person to relate to the music around them in a manner that will shape the musical course of their whole lives.

Resources:

Campbell and Kassner, (2006), *Music in Childhood*, Schirmer Cengage Learning

Mead, Virginia Hoge (1996). *More than Movement- Dalcroze Eurhythmics*, MEJ Encore