

DEVELOPMENT OF RHYTHMIC SENSE POSSIBLE TO ALL

Jaques-Dalcroze, Vocal Teacher, Found Solfeggio Pupils Could Not Keep Time with His Playing as They Walked About Room—System of Rhythmic Gymnastics, or Eurhythmics, Elaborated to Overcome Defective Rhythmic Sense—All-Around Musical Training Offered by Dalcroze Method—Possibilities of New Art Opened Up—Method Has Significance for All

IN an old, rather dark building on Fifty-ninth Street, a few doors east from Fifth Avenue, is housed the New York School of Dalcroze Eurhythmics. It seems a common-place building enough, but if appearances were not notoriously deceitful it would look more like a Greek temple, so fine are the ideals for which it stands. At first blush they seem, against the drab background of our modern civilization, to have not only the beauty of a Greek temple but its strangeness as well; for in this jangling, diverse, unco-ordinated world of to-day, rhythm, the essence of all great and lasting art, seems lost, and the Méthode Dalcroze therefore a voice crying in the wilderness.

Originally, Jaques-Dalcroze was of the freemasonry of vocal teachers. One of the rites of that order is sorrow over the deficient rhythmic sense of the modern pupil; in this, Dr. Dalcroze must have joined with all his heart, until, one day, accident opened his eyes to an expedient. It is related that once, in despair at the rhythmic obtuseness of the members of a class in solfeggio, he bade them walk about the room in time to his playing.

then go on again. This exercise may be fairly easy if the speed is slow and the commands come at long intervals; but at a moderately quick speed and when the commands come in rapid succession, it will be found bewilderingly difficult to accomplish. Here is a similar exercise, more difficult because it contains two factors instead of one: the pupils march and clap their hands in time to the music; when the teacher says 'hand' the pupils omit one clap; when the teacher says 'foot' they omit one step. In this case also where it is taken quickly and the commands are alternated and repeated with rapidity, a beginner has a sensation of mental confusion and lack of physical control which results in a curious feeling of helplessness, to which is often added exasperation at being unable to accomplish such apparently simple movements.

"We then come to the exercises of interpretation. In order to make these clear, it must first be explained that in general the arms are used for beating time, while the feet take one step for every note played. For instance, in a measure consisting of one crotchet and two quavers, the arms would make two regular movements because the measure is in two-four time, while the feet would make three steps, the last two twice as quick as the first. . . . But not only the time and actual notes are to be shown by the body—every shade in the music, the change from staccato to legato, the crescendos and diminuendos, the accelerandos and ritenutos, must all be instantly rendered by physical movement."

May Give Rise to a New Art

The fourth course in the Dalcroze method, the presentation of musical rhythm in bodily movement, is an interesting digression rather than an essential part of the system, for the primary object is to afford the student of music an all-around training prior to the study of a particular instrument. But what was conceived by Dr. Dalcroze as a means to an end is seen, in this fourth course, becoming an end in itself. Though the object of gesture in the Dalcroze method was the deepening of the musical understanding, it could not but be noticed that the gestures themselves might be wonderfully beautiful. Dr. Dalcroze realizes that from this method of deepening the comprehension of one art there may arise a new art in which music and gesture will be equal components of a perfect whole.

"Plastic realization," one Dalcroze student writes, "differs from dancing in that the relationship between the music and the movement is far more intimate and essential in the former than in the latter. In this outgrowth of the Dalcroze method is involved a new art which holds hitherto undreamed-of possibilities of joy and delight. Many persons not especially gifted in the making of beautiful bodily movements find their musical appreciation enhanced by this study, while others, whose defective tone sense closes to them the tonal expression of rhythm, find that they have a gift for bodily movement which lends itself to this kind of interpretation. It is prob-



Drawing by Paul Thévenaz, Artist and Dalcroze Teacher

Childish and easy as the order sounds, it did not prove so in operation. Dr. Dalcroze's eyes were opened at last to the basic cause of his pupils' deficient rhythmic sense; their bodies had lost their natural fluency and control of gesture.

It seemed probable to him that every rhythm known in music to-day had been derived from some physical gesture made familiar by its frequent recurrence in some common sort of work. Thus, to give the simplest kind of example, the up and down beat in duple rhythm may be considered an artistic sublimation of the up and down beat of the arms in such an operation as chopping wood. The ordinary modern person knows little of this wood-chopping gesture, certainly nothing from personal experience; hence, in accordance with that pedagogic first principle of working from the known to the unknown, Dr. Dalcroze elaborated what might be called a grammar of rhythmic gymnastics, certain motions being prescribed for performance on the appearance of certain rhythmic phenomena in the music which the instructor plays; thus through music the Dalcroze pupil works back to gesture and wakes to complete life his rhythmic instinct.

Eurhythmics the Unique Contribution

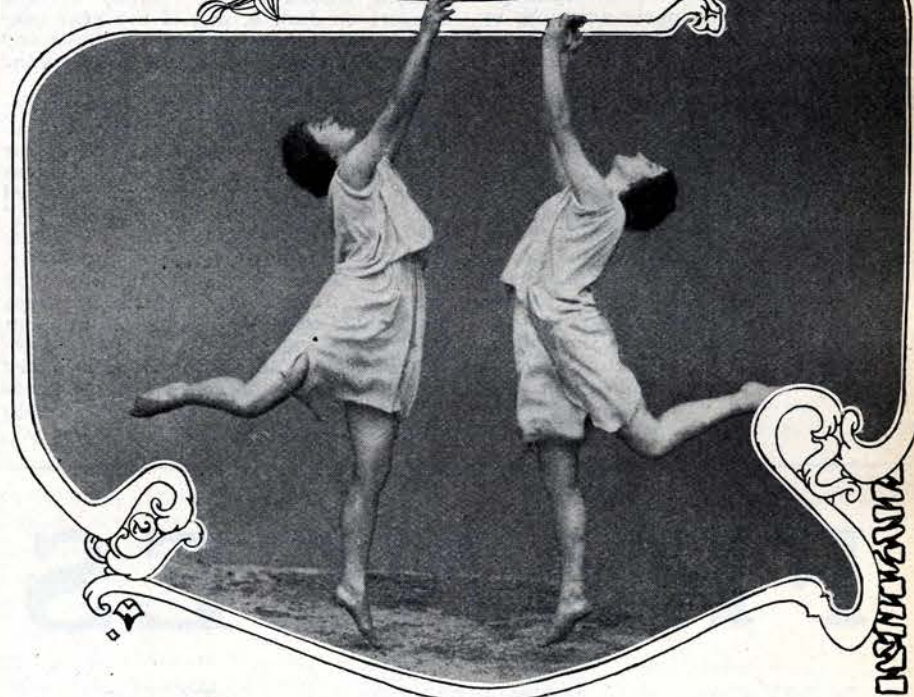
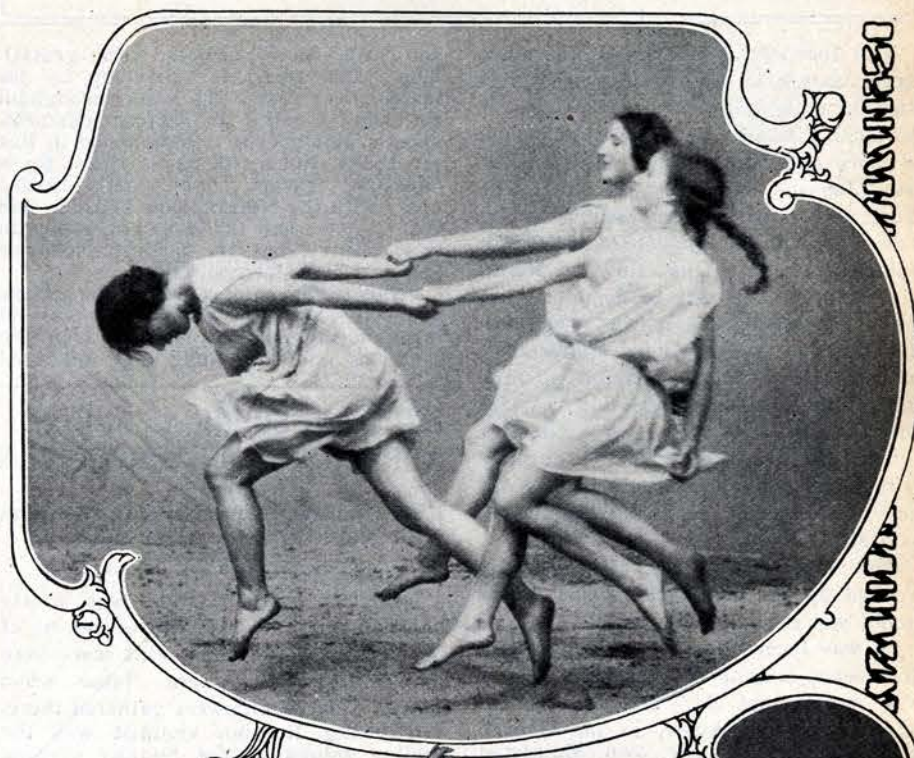
The full training offered by the Dalcroze schools comprises courses in rhythmic gymnastics or Eurhythmics, solfeggio, improvisation, and musical rhythm expressed in bodily movement ("plastic realization"). The first of these, Eurhythmics, is doubtless the most original and important part of the method. The exercises of which it consists fall into two large groups, those of control and those of interpretation. Professor M. S. Sadler of Columbia has written thus of the two elastic categories:

"As an example of the exercises of control, take the following: the pupils march round the room in time to the music, and at the teacher's command immediately take one step backward and



An Improvisation as Sketched by M. Thévenaz During a Lesson

ties of joy and delight. Many persons not especially gifted in the making of beautiful bodily movements find their musical appreciation enhanced by this study, while others, whose defective tone sense closes to them the tonal expression of rhythm, find that they have a gift for bodily movement which lends itself to this kind of interpretation. It is prob-



Above: A Group of Dalcroze Pupils Photographed as They Were "Realizing" the Music the Instructor Was Improvising at the Piano. Below: An Exercise in Rhythmic Gymnastics (Eurhythmics)

ably true that to those who have actually been trained, even slightly, in Eurhythmics, an entirely new experience of delight and refreshment has come, and though enjoyment is not the ultimate test of educational value, we may be truly grateful if the means toward a worthy end proves to be itself fruitful in real and intense joy.

Importance of the Method

"In short, it may be seen that the effect of Dalcroze Eurhythmics is a tremendous stimulation of the highest kinds of mental activity: attention, concentration, sensory discrimination, analytic intelligence and esthetic sensibility."

Whatever may be the truth at the heart of this enthusiastic tribute, it is a certain and undeniable fact that the Dalcroze method is gaining wider and wider currency and that its public is an ever increasing one. For many years the headquarters of the system was the institute built at Hellerau, near Dresden, by a wealthy patron. At the beginning of the war Dr. Dalcroze returned to his native Geneva, which is now the capital city of the world for Dalcroze exponents. In London, Paris, Petrograd and Rome there are large schools. London alone has some 1500 pupils. In the English colleges there are 500 more. The American school, founded in 1916 and headed at present by Marguerite Heaton, has already a hundred pupils. Professor Sadler of Columbia is an ardent champion of the method; Teachers' College pupils already have some work in Eurhythmics, and there is talk of including it as a regular course in the curriculum. The method is taught at Bryn Mawr, in many schools of Philadelphia and in New York University by Placido de

Montoliu; Chicago, too, has a Dalcroze instructor, Lucy Hall.

It has been said that "by their fruits ye shall know them." Modern taste seems to prefer a quantitative to a qualitative criterion, even in intrinsically artistic concerns. Though they would doubtless prefer to be judged on artistic grounds, the staunch supporters of the Dalcroze method have nothing to fear from the appraisal statistical.

DOROTHY J. TEALL.

Quartet of Artists Presents Program at "Globe" Concert

Under the auspices of the New York Globe, another concert was given on Jan. 2 at the De Witt Clinton Auditorium. The list of artists included Oliver Denton, pianist; David Bispham, baritone; Dicie Howell, soprano, and Mayo Wadler, violinist. Mr. Denton gave two groups, including numbers by Rachmaninoff, Rubinstein, Fay Foster and Liszt. Mr. Bispham sang numbers by Gounod, Speaks and also gave Arthur Bergh's "The Congo," with the composer at the piano. Juon, Sinding, Lange and Cecil Burleigh supplied Mr. Wadler's offerings, while Miss Howell presented compositions of Massenet, Pierné, Horsman, Kriens, Buzzi-Peccia and Curran.

Among the important January engagements for Mme. Julia Claussen are two appearances with the St. Louis Orchestra in St. Louis. Mme. Claussen then proceeds to Lincoln, Neb., and from there to Sioux City, where she sings under the auspices of the Sioux City Concert Course. After filling other engagements in the Northwest, Mme. Claussen will return East for several appearances in New England.