

Method Times Three: Pedagogical Pathways in Practice

Music teachers in schools are typically trained in music first and general education later, with just a course or two devoted to the myriad of possibilities of music for children. Even when they declare their professional interest in music education on entrance to the university, they seldom get much of a training in the pedagogical practices that will prepare them for teaching music to children. This is due to the fact that their four-year programs of study require their competence in music theory, music history/culture, performance studies in private lessons and ensembles, and a whole host of courses beyond music—distributed among the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Further, since their degrees in music education usually certify them for K-12 school-teaching positions, they frequently must study the pedagogy for working with secondary school bands, choirs, and orchestras. For many music teachers, one course in music for children (often referred to as “General Music Methods” in the United States) is all the training they get.

Mostly, music teachers pursue the study of how-to-teach children (and what to teach them) beyond the university when they seek out, on their own, the specialized training involved in methods of the Orff-Schulwerk, the Kodaly System, and Dalcroze Eurhythmics (and others, too, such as Gordon’s Music Learning Theory, Comprehensive Musicianship, the Rudolf Steiner Method, Kindermusik, and so many more). In illustration of music methods-made-manifest, three historic European approaches whose practices are alive and well in North American schools are described below.

Dalcroze Eurhythmics. Witness Dalcroze in motion: little arms slicing the air, bouncing down on “1’s” and bounding up on “2s”; little feet stepping single-time, double-time, and four-times-as-fast; little bodies of bright and muted colors, whirling-twirling, bending-extending, hopping-stopping...and starting all over again. There may be scarves, bean-bags, tennis balls, and beach balls flying, too, but Dalcroze Eurhythmics guarantees that the children who move will do so in direct relation to the music that sounds from pianos, drums, voices, and other assorted musical instruments.

Dalcroze is not dance, although that is the impression it makes on those who view it (but do not do it). It is movement with a mission, in which movement is not the end-all but rather the means for responding to and understanding music’s overall composite and individual components. In classic form, the teacher is a competent pianist who can improvise easily (and well) at the piano, in a variety of forms and styles that inspire children to listen and respond to the music’s character and mood, its tempo, rhythm, and meter, its phrasing, dynamics, and pitch structures, its timbres, textures, and tunings. Children listen and move as the music moves, or according to the directives of the teacher:

“Change directions every time you hear a new phrase”, “Step the beat and clap the rhythm”, “Move in place (non-locomotor movement) on high sounds and across space (locomotor movement) for low sounds”. Dalcroze makes the connections between the ear, the brain, and the body, because for children to move eurhythmically, they must listen, process the music they hear, and trigger their bodies to move. Done well, Dalcroze movement “looks” the way the music sounds.

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) was a radical figure in his time and place. He was a professor of music theory and composition at the Geneva Conservatory in Switzerland when he realized that genuine and complete musical understanding requires the ability to feel it deeply, which can only be fully accomplished when the aural and kinesthetic capacities are combined through “good (i.e., music-attentive, music-focused) movement”, or eurhythmics. He believed that music and movement should not be treated separately, that technically accurate musicians could become more sensitive players if they could develop a keen listening sense that would be best demonstrated through movement. In various experimental settings, he saw that children’s musicality grows in leaps and bounds as a result of their earliest experiences in music and movement.

Dalcroze is a delight for little ones, and there are lessons and programs, especially on east and west coasts of the U.S., that give good weight to the method. It is difficult for teachers, however, particularly if they are not pianists or cannot master the fair balance of musical logic, pedagogical aims, and “hang-loose” improvisatory skills. Along with eurhythmic movement, those who abide by the Dalcroze method include a wide assortment of ear-training techniques, singing passages they learn by ear via “do-re-mi” *solfege* syllables, and the art of piano improvisation. This last feature is expected of the teachers, who must spontaneously improvise music, yet with very specific goals for their students. It is also meant for the students, who are expected to demonstrate their musical understanding through the music they create “in the moment”, vocally and on instruments.

Kodaly System. It looks like the Kodaly system in full gear when the hand signs are up, children singing their hearts out to the melodious sounds of one folk song after another, changing words into the syllables of solfege. “Do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do”, they sing on, forming their hands into a little fist for “do”, slanted palms for “re”, a flat-level palms-down form for “mi”, and so on. They claw the air with their hand signals, feeling a certain sense of gratification from the kinesthetic symbol they can produce to match the vocal sounds they emit. When it comes to rhythms, you can hear Kodaly-trained children chanting with some excitement the “tas” and “ti-tis” that correspond to the quarter- and eighth notes they can read. There’s more to Kodaly than this, too: there’s hearty and healthy singing of folk songs, art songs, and singing games—alone, in unison, and in harmony, typically sung with energy, enthusiasm, and close attention to the musical detail. There’s support for the learning of national and regional folk dances, and instrumental music, all for the purpose of celebrating Hungarian national heritage first and the wider world as a secondary offshoot.

Kodaly has been called a method by North Americans, and yet it is more a state of being, a belief system, a philosophy. The Hungarians view as the greatest contribution of composer-namesake Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1967) not so much a pedagogical approach as his sincere embrace of children as musically able and with the potential to become more musical under the guidance of those who are already musically competent as singers, players, and conductors. His philosophy was that “music belongs to everyone”, and he maintained that there should be no inherent class of people, or neighborhood, or individual that somehow should get a leg up over others on the chance to be musically expressive. He maintained that music is the right of not only the so-called talented (few) but of all children, who can and should be able to develop performance, listening, and music literacy skills. If they can speak, they can sing the songs of the people; if they can

walk, they can dance the traditional dances; if they can read letters and words, they can read music and thus achieve a level of musical independence.

Because Kodaly was a world-class composer and an influential figure in the cultural, social, and political life of Hungary, his appeal for the musical education of children and youth was heard and heeded. Children from kindergarten through secondary school were once treated to four to six weekly periods of music instruction in Hungarian schools, bar none, so that by high school graduation they had progressed from singing games to choral music and instrumental tuition. A host of musicianship exercises were devoted to developing children's inner hearing, so that they could see notation and know precisely what it sounded like. Some of the finest children's choirs in the world still emanate from the thorough-going musical training the Hungarians provide their children, and "all the rest" in non-select groups nonetheless sing readily, easily, as if it were second-nature to them. Even today, participation in Hungarian culture is no less about making the music of the ancestors than about speaking the language, and Kodaly and his proponents are geared to the adage that no child be left behind in their musical education.

Orff-Schulwerk. Enter any school music classroom, and it's likely that something of the Orff approach is happening. The obvious object-signs of the Orff presence are the rosewood xylophones, the solid silvery metallophones, and the lighter-weight glockenspiels that comprise the *instrumentarium*. This Orff ensemble has been expanded in recent years by less traditional non-pitched percussion instruments from Africa, Latin America, and even Asia. Beyond the instruments, the *Schulwerk* (schoolwork method) is identifiable by the teaching process, which is considerably wrapped up into imitation (of the teacher by the children), free and guided exploration (of poetry, rhythms, melodies, forms, and instruments), and improvisation (vocal, instrumental, movement), with music-reading as a sideline-peripheral activity. Poetry is rhythmically chanted, chants are pitched and converted to songs, songs are accompanied by repeating instrumental patterns, and dances in ABA and rondo form are common practice within the Orff method.

German composer Carl Orff (1895-1982) inspired the Schulwerk, and sought to integrate the performing arts into the education of children. He viewed children as naturally musical, uninhibited in their expressive movement, and keen to experiment with language, music and movement. His sense was that learning should be closely linked to the child's world of play, and that their games, rhymes, chants, songs, and movements should be blended into the way they are taught. He and dancer Dorothee Gunther established an experimental school of dancers, players, and singers in the 1930s, and with Gunild Keetman in the late 1940s and 50s they devised the Schulwerk, publishing music and giving radio broadcasts to spread the word of the evolving pedagogy.

The music of Orff Schulwerk sounds "folk" and folksy, with five-tone melodies, patterns that are spoken, sung, played, and moved, droning tones and hollow, Medieval-sounding chords called bourdons. In Europe, the musical accent is on exploration and improvisation, and the movement can appear quite sophisticated and similar to modern and interpretive dance. As the method has developed in schools of North America, imitation thorough song, movement, or performance on percussion instruments seems central, music reading and writing have become important in some settings, and movement is more likely to resemble the structures of folk dances rather than the free and improvisatory styles found across the Atlantic. Still, the natural behaviors of childhood,

including singing, saying, dancing, and playing are seen here and there where Orff-Schulwerk is practiced.

Music teachers may hold on to a single method, particularly if that is their training, or they may mix and match the techniques of several methods to guide children's musical learning. In fact, the methods themselves overlap one another, since Dalcroze, Kodaly, and Orff were all evolved in central Europe (Switzerland, Hungary, and Germany) within a few decades of one another. The founders of the methods were acquainted with each other, and their protégées and proponents were also aware and even influenced by the various pedagogical ideas that were floating in that time and place. Because the point of these pedagogies is to offer children experience-based education in music, teachers know that there will be plenty of singing, dancing, and playing ideas to fit the interests and learning styles of the little ones. Many teachers rely on the books and recordings in print that suggest exercises and activities for the classroom, and on the weekend and summer workshops that extend their repertoire of resources. They give of their time and energy to their continuing pedagogical training because they are committed to enhancing children's musical lives, and to making them more musically expressive through an active and invigorating musical education.

Charlie Keil:

Music education's European founding fathers were into moving and grooving, primary communication, triune brain integration, the common glad impulse, mimesis, exploration, improvisation, everything we're advocating here in Born to Groove. I love Pat's descriptions of what each practice looks like – Dalcroze dancing, Kodaly kinesthetics, Orff imitation-exploration-improvization on the percussion instruments. It seems like these practices, and Rudolf Steiner's eurhythmics as well, were designed to flow into the moving-grooving-popular-musicking of the Americas – jazz, salsa, samba, bomba, gospel, rhythm & blues, new orleans 2nd line, bluegrass, polka, balkan line dancing, square dancing, contradancing, pow-wow song and dance -- the list of life-affirming dance-music traditions is endless thanks to America's deadly history: the 'displacement' of the Indians, the 'collateral damage' of bringing slaves from Africa and the 'opportunism' of opening the door to dozens of immigrant groups. Thanks to the powers of music-dance it is possible that the dead millions of the infamous "middle passage," the native American peoples who didn't survive war and disease, and the immigrants who worked their way up from ghettos and slums to the suburbs, can all be commemorated in mind, body and spirit by children at play in performance. Kodaly would certainly be the first to agree that our kids should be singing in their mother tongues, and Dalcroze, Orff, Steiner would also want indigenous traditions and the many local styles to flourish differently in each ecological niche. Just as we learn from William Blake and the poets how to identify, how to translate from dreams, how to live inside the four fold vision more of the time each day, we can learn from these European pioneer reclaimers of the prime and primitive exactly how to integrate music-dance and the arts into play and performance.

We also need to meditate on the fact that these big names in music education got it exactly right early in the 20th century, yet here we are at the beginning of the 21st

century and well over 95% of our adults do not music, dance, sing, chant, recite poetry for pleasure in public any more. Sad to say, but institutionalized racism and mass mediated entertainment have been fostering passive appreciation of the state=us quo and turning people off faster than we have been able to turn them on. The following chapters focus on 'pockets of resistance,' efforts to revive the whole village that raises a child, examples of what one person or a few people can do to restore the pattern that connects and enlivens.