**Jaques-Dalcroze, Émile (1865-1950)**

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## Summary

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze developed a method of music education that combines movement and ear training with physical, vocal, and instrumental improvisation. He is often called Dalcroze, the pseudonym he added to his family name Jaques (spelled without ‘c’) as a young man. In English his method is known as Dalcroze eurhythmics. In the early 1900s he devised activities of rhythmic stepping, breathing, conducting, and gesturing to help people experience musical concepts and feelings in the body. A charismatic teacher and pianist, Dalcroze presented demonstrations of his experimental pedagogy throughout Europe, and from 1910 to 1914 he taught several hundred professional students from various countries at the Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze, the purpose-built training institute he directed in Hellerau, near Dresden. In 1915 he established the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva, the city where most of his sixty-year career unfolded. In addition to inspiring many who became teachers and artists, he composed and wrote prolifically. He published a large musical oeuvre, teaching manuals, articles, reviews, and several books of essays and memoirs. His influence extended beyond music into dance, theatre, therapy, and education. The Dalcroze method, handed down and enriched by generations of teaching musicians, continues to explore core practices of this heritage today. Geneva serves as centre for the most advanced qualification, while training programs are offered in Europe, North America, Australia, and Asia.

## Dalcroze’s Contributions

His French-Swiss parents introduced Dalcroze to music and theatre in Vienna, where he grew up to the age of ten. In Geneva he studied with Hugo de Senger at the Conservatory and began to compose while in his teens. In the 1880s he trained in Paris and Vienna, studying composition and music theory with Gabriel Fauré, Anton Bruckner, and Mathis Lussy, among others, and diction with the actor Talbot. He spent 1886 as music director of a theatre in Algiers, where the complex rhythms of local music fascinated him.

File: dalcroze.jpg

Figure Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, photo by Frédéric Boissonnas, Geneva, date unknown.

Source: <http://rythmique.ch/jaques-dalcroze/>

Dalcroze taught in Geneva from 1890 to 1910. At the Conservatory, he investigated the ear-brain-body connection in teaching solfège, expanding on practices such as musical conducting, marching drill, breath training, and Delsartean expression. Improvising at the piano, he directed students to walk and run at different tempi; to step rhythmic patterns; to beat time with their arms; to breathe, phrase, and gesture sensitively; and to control the transfer of body weight in slow movements. He found support in Étienne-Jules Marey’s chronophotography of locomotion and by consulting psychologist Édouard Claparède about research on kinesthesia or the ‘muscular’ sense. The musicality and freedom of Isadora Duncan’s dancing impressed him and the young women such as Annie Beck and Marie Rambert, who assisted in building the method’s early movement style. Dalcroze and his student collaborators demonstrated the work to teachers and the public to show how rhythmic movement, solfège, improvisation, and plastic expression could combine in a modern method of music education. The reforms he envisioned offered a path into improved school music for everyone and a creative practice for performers and teachers of music, dance, and theatre.

File: dalcroze\_london.jpg

Figure Dalcroze with students of the London School of Dalcroze Eurhythmics

Source: <http://dalcroze.org.uk/about-us/>

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After 1910, at the institutes dedicated to training Dalcroze specialists in Hellerau and Geneva, and in his long-term association with the London School of Dalcroze Eurhythmics, Dalcroze taught professional students, colleagues, children, and adults. Active until the late 1940s, he was a master teacher who conveyed musical tasks and games primarily through playing piano, using few words to spark spontaneous reactions by participants. Dalcroze reached his students’ imaginations through the rich array of ideas and images he brought into the classroom, and his exploration of time, space, and energy relationships has proven inexhaustibly revealing. In 2015 the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze donated 120 manuscript notebooks including his lesson plans from 1908 to 1948 to the Bibliothèque de Genève. His most widely-read and often-quoted articles and essays are collected in *Rhythm, Music and Education* (1921) and *Eurhythmics, Art and Education* (1930).

Dalcroze worked unceasingly to prepare strong artist-teachers to carry the method forward, keeping in contact with former students by visiting their schools, convening international congresses, and editing the journal *Le Rythme*. He believed that the principles and practices of the teaching could be applied in many settings for people of all ages and that in future communities of practitioners and researchers would contribute to the method’s development. Dalcroze’s far-reaching influence as a pioneer of progressive education can be traced in the work of countless students, teachers, and artists.

## Selected Works

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**Film Documentation**

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