EXPLORING AND LEARNING MUSIC THROUGH EMBODIED EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines musical learning in the context of Dalcroze Eurhythmics. Dalcroze Eurhythmics is an approach of music education that incorporates body movement, ear-training, and improvisation. The paper studies how Dalcroze Eurhythmics offers a possibility for students to explore music through bodily involvement, and to learn through embodied experiences. It also studies how embodiment is reinforced by Dalcroze teachers’ actions and how teaching procedures reinforce the mind-body connection. The philosophical framework of my study is based on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1908-1961) phenomenological philosophy. For Merleau-Ponty, perceptual experience always precedes knowledge. He suggests that the body and bodily involvement with the world are the primary tools of knowing the world and oneself. My paper suggests that embodied experiences advance knowing at a deep level, while often incapable of expression in words. It also suggests that bodily exploration of the musical world enhances bodily knowing, musical understanding, listening, and the sense of self. In addition, it argues that the bodily exploration reinforces the mind-body connection, for example, by combining sensing, feeling, thinking, and action.

1. INTRODUCTION
This paper is based on my doctoral study [9] and examines musical learning in the context of Dalcroze Eurhythmics. Dalcroze Eurhythmics is an approach of music education that builds on Émile Jaques-Dalcroze’s (1865-1950) ideas. Jaques-Dalcroze defines eurhythmics as education through and into music [5]. It can be seen as a process for awakening musicality and developing musicianship in a broad sense. According to Jaques-Dalcroze, eurhythmics gets students to listen and to imbue the whole of their bodies and being with musical sounds; this, in turn, reinforces sensations, regulates habitual actions, and awakens imaginative faculties [6]. The theoretical framework of my research is drawn from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1908-1961) phenomenology. Following Merleau-Ponty, embodiment refers to living body-subject through which one experiences and knows the world subjectively. In the immediate bodily exploration of the world, the sense experiences and sensations blend with one’s inner world. The body is considered a constitutive element of cognition and creativity. The perspective of embodiment tries to bring out how human beings think and act holistically. Prereflexively, we do not experience psychophysical causal relations between the mind and body. Merleau-Ponty seems to have struggled with the same challenges in a theoretical way within philosophy as Jaques-Dalcroze did in a practical way within music education. Merleau-Ponty’s [13] work can be interpreted as an effort to unify the world and our experience of it and to turn our attention to the importance of embodied, prereflexive experience. Jaques-Dalcroze [3] suggests that we come to know the musical world and ourselves through meaningful mind-body exploration and experiences that combine music and movement.

2. BODILY EXPLORATION OF MUSIC
In a Dalcroze lesson, learning experiences originate in exploring some musical subject or phenomenon. This exploration includes exercises that combine, for example,
listening, moving, singing, thinking, improvising, and imagining—a variety of mind-body involvements within given musical culture. A Dalcroze teacher’s responsibility is to enable and guide this exploration through physical activities and exercises. The exercises integrate music and body movement using the body as a musical instrument. The movement within Dalcroze Eurhythmics aim to mirror listening to music so that the qualities of movement (speed, energy, intensity, direction, etc.) correspond as closely as possible to the qualities of the music heard. There is no right way to move; instead, movements are individual but reflect some cultural influences as well. Thus, teaching is indirect rather than didactic conveying of information, and learning integrates many experiences. It seems that the actual role of bodily exploration is seldom discussed in music education. I argue that educative bodily exploration with music can transform bodily knowing, musical understanding, expression, and listening, as well as the sense of self [10].

2.1. Bodily knowing
Dalcroze Eurhythmics aims to develop general bodily knowing. Bodily knowing originates in the body’s interaction with the world and has a direct connection to the senses and bodily awareness as well as to psychomotor abilities, skills, and actions [14]. It includes the realization and understanding of the movement as well as being able to accomplish it. This knowledge is acquired through observing our own movements and through ‘listening to’ our kinaesthetic sensations. Bodily knowing encompasses the sense through which we know ourselves as whole; it is the foundation of all our knowing and the sense of self. Within the Dalcroze approach, bodily knowing is developed primarily in order to create a finer and subtler instrument for musical expression. In learning psychomotor skills, it is the body that comprehends new motor significances through kinaesthetically attuned bodily involvement. Thus, bodily habits make the expression of music possible without having to concentrate on bodily actions moment by moment.

2.2. Musical understanding
In interpreting how body movements relate to and can facilitate musical understanding, musical understanding can be seen as a habit of musical action. By applying Merleau-Ponty’s notion of habit [13], understanding of a musical phenomenon as a habit of action implies bodily knowing of its meaning in use. Thus, a musical action, including body movement, can be seen as a bodily understanding of musical meaning. In this light, the Dalcroze approach primarily seems to develop prereflective and mindful modes of knowing, ‘a bodily way of being in sound’ (including sensing, feeling, and thinking) that form the basis for subsequent reflective thought. Through transforming musical actions, embodied involvement also transforms thinking and, consequently, shapes both thinking-in-action and thinking-as-action[18]. One way to interpret how body movements relate to musical understanding is to analyze their use as a physical metaphor. Bodily exploration of a musical phenomenon can imply various things: The teacher can either aim to direct the students through physical metaphors and experiences towards a definite musical idea (e.g., a certain rhythmic pattern) or can offer a musical phenomenon (e.g., phrasing of a piece of music) as a metaphor for bodily exploration which aims at individual understanding of the music. In the first case, the process is primarily designed to teach students to be able to understand, name, recognize, read, or notate a certain musical phenomenon—or all such possibilities. Such a process, especially with children, often starts by connecting daily movement experiences, images, and sounds with a certain musical phenomenon. Then, the students are encouraged to become attended to the qualities of their movement in relation to those of music. Finally, the written form and (or alternatively) the name of the musical phenomenon are introduced. In this example, body movement can be seen as physical metaphor that has been abstracted from the concrete (physical) experience. In the second case, the teacher offers a musical phenomenon as metaphor for bodily exploration in order to
generate diverse performance options and to foster improved understanding of the music. This process could involve a musical phrase, for example. Thus, the students can be asked to explore different ways of exemplifying the phrase through movement; that is, different movements that can expressively mirror the phrase. However, because a metaphor is at stake, the question also can be asked in reverse: How is the music like or different than the movement? This approach can generate entirely different and new ideas. Such exploration encourages the development of personal understanding since the students’ movement responses and experiences are unique. However, a student’s understanding can also be expanded through observing or mirroring the movements of other students. With Dalcroze teaching, students are primarily asked to find their own way to express in movement what they hear in music but they are also encouraged to learn from each other. Then, because the same musical idea is represented in various ways, each student can become aware of other possibilities for motion and action.

2.3. Musical listening, expression and sense of self
In the Dalcroze approach, body movement is used to intensify musical listening. There are also other reasons for integrating listening and bodily action: Bodily involvement gives students something concrete to do as it, at the same time, supposedly clarifies and reinforces listening and the understanding of musical phenomena. It compels students to react in bodily ‘terms’ and - in order to be right - to concentrate. All students can participate simultaneously and have a possibility to learn from each other. In addition, the teacher is able to see the responses of all of her/his students all at once. One reason for integrating body movement into music teaching is that musical sounds naturally vibrate in the whole body and cause bodily reactions. When we listen to a musical performance, we do not just hear or think, we participate with our whole bodies. Music is not purely intellectual; it works through the senses and sets the whole sensory being to echo the vibration of sound. Dalcroze Eurhythmics aims at reinforcing this cross activation so that all sensations from different senses can fuse into one synergetic experience. By applying bodily involvement with listening to music and by encouraging students to listen sensitively to their own reactions in the body, Dalcroze teaching also aims at making ‘musicing’ more personal and connected to one’s own self. The moving and sensing body, by resonating through sounds, contributes a sense of wholeness [16]. Moving with music is likely to initiate emotions and feelings, whether one is aware of them or not. Thus, we do not only move with music, but we also are moved by music; music ‘affects’ us. To have been moved by the music is to have discovered something new in the interaction of body and sound, something that changes how we know ourselves in relationship to the evolving sound. Especially, the spontaneous reaction to the music—being-in-the-sound—enables feeling (and understanding) music by the listening body as a whole [11,15]. The expression “being-in-the-sound” implies that feeling and doing are spontaneously and inextricably integrated. Listening, that is paying attention and being attuned through the body’s felt sense, can also develop our capacity to think; the capacity to think in a way that is not 275 just more ‘reasoning’ and ‘reflecting’, but thinking which listens just as it can develop listening that is thoughtful [11].

3. HOW EMBODIMENT IS REINFORCED BY DALCROZE TEACHERS ACTIONS AND TEACHING PROCEDURES
The variations of applications of Dalcroze Eurhythmics, and the teachings styles are plentiful [8]. The subjects include, for example, studies in theory, solfège, rhythm, and performance; choral and band rehearsals and conducting; as well as studies for solo instrument and voice. The practical applications of Dalcroze Eurhythmics seem to be shaped according to each teacher’s individual preference. Nevertheless, there are many commonly shared aspects: All the applications more or less aim at the same instructional goals1. In teaching, it is typical for students to be constantly challenged to be alert, to pay attention, and to use their imagination. In Dalcroze lessons, working
individually, with a partner, and in small groups are all included. Teachers who use the approach stress that Dalcroze Eurhythmics allows learning from experience and in an individual way [7] but it also allows learning from observing and interacting with the others present. Thus, in this respect, Dalcroze Eurhythmics incorporates both subjective (individual) and the sociocultural (shared) aspects of learning. Within a Dalcroze lesson, learning through embodied experiences is reinforced in various ways. Usually, a Dalcroze lesson starts with a "warm up" that aims at leading students towards a state of concentration, and at making them kinaesthetically focused and aware. During a given lesson, exercises are paced to result in a balance between the mental and physical energy required for each activity. Varying the level of difficulty of the exercise also helps to keep the students motivated. The teaching proceeds in accordance with the students’ reactions and learning. This means that students are not taught more, or faster, than they can deal with effectively. One way to reinforce the mind-body connection is to establish communication between sensations and action. In Dalcroze teaching, the connection between music and movement is established first by accompanying students’ natural movements with appropriately improvised music and then by making students follow the music with their movements. Students are also encouraged to accompany movement with their voices or body percussion. To think of, to remember, and(or) to express in words one’s experiences reinforce the mind-body connection and initiate new connections, images, and(or) ideas. The shared instructional goals are, in particular, deepening musical understanding, improving bodily knowing, developing concentration, hearing and listening skills, enlivening musical expression, bringing students in contact with their inner selves, and enriching their musical experiences. Words also initiate awareness of ‘I’ as the subject of the experience. In reflection, the experience is questioned and its qualities are imaginatively changed and extended. Through reflection, the experiences are connected to earlier ones and to earlier understanding, and they are, then, restored in clearer images. These images can later be consciously recalled, for example, when playing an instrument, singing, reading, or writing music. Within a lesson, as well as in the long term, making students kinaesthetically and thus qualitatively aware of their movements, and establishing a connection between, listening, thinking, and moving, are all important goals. This connection is in fact required for the experiences of Dalcroze Eurhythmics to be personally meaningful. Kinaesthetic awareness can be awakened through various exercises. One way of making students aware of their natural movements and their qualities is to ask them to remember bodily actions and experiences and (or) to use simple words to analyze them. Asking the students to do things in different ways also reinforces kinaesthetic awareness. The issue of imaginative bodily involvement imagining a movement before doing it (i.e., a considered response), or re-experiencing a movement through images in mind, without moving—is also important. It is an aspect that has also been recognized in some recent studies of learning [10]. Other types of Dalcroze exercises can also be applied. One is called the technique of excitation and inhibition in a constantly changing musical environment. Another way to increase bodily awareness in relation to musical sounds is to study the gestural points of departure and arrival: anacrusis, cruxis and metacrusis [4]. These phases can also be named as preparation, attack, and prolongation. In Dalcroze teaching, the importance of joy in learning is stressed. In order to create an atmosphere of play and joy, many Dalcroze exercises are shaped as games (e.g., show the phrasing of the music with your arms; step the rhythm of the music in canon; when you hear a high note, change direction). All these exercises are designed to necessitate rapid and direct communication between (analytical) thinking, feelings, listening, and action and they are designed to encourage spontaneous interaction between a student and the music. Thus, in Dalcroze teaching the importance of one’s emotional state in learning is recognized. Joy arises when students experience balance between present capacities and the task in question. Csikszentmihalyi [1] refers to this experience of balance by the notion of flow. Furthermore, When accomplishing any movement for the first time, we become aware of its felt qualitative character [15]. Thus, in order to get a sense of this original experience in habitual movements, such as
walking, we need to try different ways of doing them. For instance, students walk with the pulse of the music. Every time they hear a triplet, they stop or start walking again. However, they are not supposed to react to any other kind of change in the music, for example to stop walking if the music stops; in other words, they have to resist the ‘natural’ reaction. They have to be simultaneously ready to react and to resist reaction. This sort of exercise forces constant attention and conscious control over the kinaesthetic processes positive experiences foster positive motivation toward study. Merely acquiring information does not generate motivation because motivation is not embodied in cognition [17]. Motivation, rather, comes from and is experienced by the ‘felt’ body.

REFERENCES
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[5] Jaques-Dalcroze, É. La grammaire de la rythmique (préparation corporelle aux exercices de la méthode), Le Rythme 17, 2–9, 1926.