



"The acuteness of our musical feelings will depend on the acuteness of our bodily sensations."
—Emile Jaques-Dalcroze

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DALCROZE WORKSHOP WITH LISA PARKER

BY SELMA ODOM



A workshop led by Lisa Parker at York University, 11/11/2007: Exploring the phrases with the elastic

Word spread quickly that master teacher Lisa Parker from Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts was coming to Toronto. Teachers and students, musicians and dancers—32 people of various ages and backgrounds attended her workshop at the Accolade East Building, new home of York

University's music and dance departments, on November 11, 2007.

At the end of the afternoon, Lisa left time to review the day's activities. Here are some of the highlights based on my notes, followed by several participants' answers to the question "What was most memorable about the workshop?"

The morning started with “brain gym” exercises. Standing in a circle, we followed Lisa, weight shifting side to side, arms and legs crossing the body’s mid-line as we reached left to right, front and back, high and low—everyone moving together to a steady pulse.

Next we explored the light-filled, high-ceilinged Grant Strate Studio. Lisa asked us to walk around and, at her musical cue, to “melt into a statue” responding to shapes and angles we noticed in the room.

Having checked in with ourselves and the space, we connected with each other. As we traveled on our own path, at our individual tempo, Lisa said to join someone moving similar to ourselves. Partners and small groups formed as people found common movement and timing. *In a matter of minutes, strangers became members of an instant community, ready to work.*

The next exercises focused on experiencing pulse and the feeling of rebound. Still standing in a circle, weight on both legs, we first internalized a pulse as down-up-down-up. Then we shifted weight side to side, so the same steady pulse took us left-right-left-right. And finally, after alternating between those two ways of pulsing a few times, Lisa added another option. We stepped left and brought the right foot over, and then reversed direction: step-close, step-close from side to side. The timing was the same, but the sense of body weight and energy use was distinct in each of these ways of moving.

From here we started traveling in 8’s, finding a partner with whom to share one of the three ways of pulsing for 8 and then moving on, finding a new partner and so on. Soon Lisa introduced a catchy pattern of short, short, long—three steps and pause with finger snap at the end.

We continued to groove and socialize with this pattern before taking a break to figure out how to represent what we’d done in musical notation. Lisa observed later that these activities at the beginning involved many

levels of purpose: musical, physical, spatial, social and interactive, cognitive.

We moved on to phrasing in the next exercises: slowly taking turns stretching elastics into shapes with partners; finding sequences of traveling and pausing to correspond with the phrase structures and cadences of “Amo Tirsi,” a Handel aria recorded by Lorraine Hunt Lieberson; and carrying and delivering balls at phrase endings to others standing still, who then had their turns to carry the balls.

Next, facing each other in pairs, we played a game of solfège—listening and using specific arm gestures to distinguish each pitch change. How fun and mutually reinforcing this work became! Everything seemed to be clicking, and in almost no time the whole group learned “Tue Tue,” a circle song-dance from Ghana, which integrated stepping, clapping and singing.

In the afternoon, we started seated on the floor in small circles, “passing” the beat by clapping toward the person next to us. The challenge was to listen and follow, ready to change direction at any time. We needed to feel the pulse inside even when we ourselves weren’t moving, so that when it came to us we could pass it on, speeding up or slowing down accurately as the pulse moved, no matter which direction each person sent it.

The next part of the workshop consolidated our knowledge and practice of pulse, rhythmic pattern, pitch, meter and phrase while giving us the chance to investigate harmonic rhythm. Lisa chose the Andante grazioso movement of Trio No. 3 in C minor by Brahms. We used weight change (walking and pausing) to mark the chords and progressions, noticing to how tensions and releases of harmony create the dramatic feeling of this musical example.

To end, we learned a four part arrangement of a sixteenth century chanson by Pierre Certon, “Quand j’entens le perdu temps.” Heightened awareness of harmony was pulled inside as we breathed and used posture to sing. I thought to myself how perfectly the music we

produced seemed to embody the group's full day of moving together.

After we sat down, Lisa led us in collectively remembering the workshop so we could make notes. Several participants stayed a few extra minutes to share the following thoughts:

- It was my very first experience. Even though I am not music major, I found it's a very useful way of teaching children. I liked the idea of learning music by moving! Thank you very much.
- The workshop was a great opportunity to take a more organic approach to music and movement.
- Finding the beat in the body by 2's, 4's etc. Passing beat and changing tempo! Such great teaching and pedagogical mentoring.
- Teaching social connection and giving people eye contact
- I love Lisa's sequential approach. I learned so much about teaching! Loved working on the Brahms – especially the breathing exercises.
- (My highlight was) working on the Handel and Brahms pieces as an extension of the (Dalcroze) work.
- The idea that was newest to me was harmonic analysis through posture—feeling and showing in the body the difference between I, IV, and V.
- I found dramatizing and moving to different chords so helpful for understanding harmonic rhythm. I had difficulty with Grade 4 Harmony but I was able to so clearly hear and feel the difference between I, V, IV, vi, ii, and I_4^6 chords in a sequence. This is amazing. We really need a course to teach harmony in a Dalcroze way for children and adults. This was a nice taste of what is possible.
- I am teaching piano (private lessons). Lots of ideas to use in my class, thank you. Very helpful about sensing the T (tonic), D

(dominant), and S (subdominant) with the body—for ear training.

- This was a great experience! I feel we have covered a lot of valuable groundwork and I will be going back to the studio more knowledgeable [of how] to deal with my piano students. Since I belong to both worlds, I value any workshop that incorporates both movement and music.
- What a great day, fabulous teacher and lovely experience. Being a dancer first and musician second, I found it great to awaken some of the natural instincts that I sometimes take for granted. Bravo!
- Loved the SATB singing at the end! Always love the eurhythmics part of hearing musical concepts through my body movements. It is so much like “playing!” –how great for adults.
- What an amazing workshop! It allowed me to move, play, sing and learn.

Selma Odom directs the Graduate Program in Dance at York University in Toronto. Her research focuses on teachers and transmission in dance and music. She has published articles and reviews since the 1960s and co-edited the anthology Canadian Dance: Visions and Stories (2004).

~MEMBERSHIP CORNER~

Our current membership year runs from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008. As of January we have 28 members and we would like to thank all of you for your support. A strong core of members allows us to produce the Journal, run workshops such as our most recent with Lisa Parker, and hold information sessions such as our Sundays at 2 series.

PATRON MEMBERS

Brian Katz
Cheng-Feng Lin
Donald Himes
Peter Merrick

FROM THE EDITOR

This issue is dedicated to the memory of **Jean Wilmouth** (Pittsburgh USA) and **Donna Wood** (Ontario Canada)—two strong supporters of Dalcroze Eurhythmics who have inspired many through their work in music and movement, and who will continue to inspire other music educators with their legacy.

BEING MUSIC is now one year old—we are heading into VOL. 2. It was wonderful to have finally met many of the readers and members of DSC Ontario Chapter in the workshop at York University this past fall, and **SUNDAYS AT 2** in January.

This past **SUNDAYS AT 2** began with energetic African songs and dances led by Wendy Taxis, and progressed to a rich share of pedagogical questions and activities. It was truly hands-on, as we experienced and explored each idea through doing. Lots of great ideas were bouncing off different ends of our circle that afternoon. We ended the session with an improvisation activity led by Donald Himes—vocalizing movement and gesture with a partner. The collaboration between the partners was tightly knitted. The next **SUNDAYS AT 2** will be on March 30. In this issue, there are reflections of the workshop, a personal experience of being a Dalcroze student, a collage of comments from members of the plastique working group, and an article on playing music for contact improvisation. We thank our writers for these rich and thoughtful materials—Enjoy!

Cheng-Feng Lin
Editor of **BEING MUSIC**

TEACHING IDEAS

BY ILONA BOCLAN

A listening and rhythmic exercise for 6-7 year old children: sitting in a circle, each child has a different percussion instrument, e.g. claves, hand drums, wooden block, or tick tock block. Choose the type (timbre) of instruments so that the children can recall each rhythm clearly. With the children sitting eyes closed, the teacher goes around the circle and taps a simple rhythm pattern on one child's shoulder. That child then plays the given rhythm immediately on the percussion instrument. Repeat the same



sequence using a variety of rhythm patterns for the remaining class.

A simplified version of this game for 3-5 year old children to introduce the timbre of each percussion instrument, e.g. jingle bells, castanets, and maracas: Ask the children to close their eyes and identify the name of the instrument played by the teacher.

Children develop listening concentration and reaction skills through this game. They become sensitive to different musical signals, the timbre of different instruments and have a brief exposure to a variety of rhythmic patterns.

Ilona Bocian has been sharing her gift and love for movement through her teaching for many years. She teaches in the Dalcroze Pedagogy course and the children classes at RCM and at the Kingsway Conservatory.

Leaning on the Music: Playing Music for Contact Improvisation Jams



BY Kousha Nakhaei

Being a lover of movement and music and having enjoyed the liveliness of Dalcroze Eurhythmics, dancing and playing in Contact Improv jams are two of my favourite activities. Contact Improvisation is a dance form where points of physical contact between dancers provide the starting point for movement improvisation and exploration using shared balance and leverage, and riding the waves of falling weight, and momentum. For me it is a social dance, an improvised movement form, an experiential study of the physics of movement, a work-out, and much more.

There are two 'jams' in Toronto: one on Sundays and the other on Wednesdays. Usually Contact Improvisation is done without music. But the Wednesday jam has always welcomed improvising musicians. With the opportunity to play for the jam, there

came some fascinating problems and experiences which might be interesting to fellow Dalcroze students and teachers.

There is one particular occasion dancing to a trio of improvising musicians that has stayed in my memory. I remember not dancing but *being danced* in a heightened state of kinesthetic presence and attention: I was dancing, aware of the music, aware of my partner and was able to do things I had not done before, yet there was a certain ease in all this. It was “being” the music and “being” the dance while seeing it all happen. This was the sort of relationship when leading and following merge into one another: *music leads the dance leads the music leads the dance leads the music...* and also *the music follows the dance follows the music follows the dance follows the music...* a kinesthetic-aural conversation develops organically.

This sort of awareness is not that of the usual kind, as it comes mostly from the body. It does not take energy to be attentive in this way. In fact it gives energy. Also the movement is so effortless compared to the usual carrying of one’s body weight, let alone carrying another’s, sometimes on your shoulders, or back. There is lightness. At the same time all sounds can be perceived. I suspect this is the kinesthetic intelligence working. At its best it prepares just the right way (anacrusis), reading the preparation off the partner’s movement, and exerts the right amount of force, using the appropriate muscle tone at the precise time and angle (crusis). It follows through in movement until it merges into what is next (metacrusis) and will be ready for anything. Not too different from the experience in a good Eurhythmics class.

Last fall when I was asked to play for the jam I wished to participate in the dance and support it with the music, so that a lift was lighter, or a touch more poignant, or on landing the floor’s support more strongly felt. I wanted to play not for an audience listening, but for moving bodies, to reach not only their ears, but also their guts and spine. But Contact Improv is not a formalized dance. It is essentially improvised. There are no “steps”

learnt in a rhythmic or metric pattern. So how would I play to support it? One can avoid playing rhythmically altogether, such as in some jams where music provides a background wash. But this is rather passive and Contact dancing can get quite exciting. How can the music be with the dance? Also Contact Improv is mostly done in pairs though solo and ensemble dancing are possible. So on the studio floor there might be three dances going on, each with a different energy. One couple might be exploring weight in a slow and sustained manner, while another might be playing with momentum so they are covering a lot of space and their dynamics are more varied. There also could be a lot of differences in physical/spatial levels. But music touches everyone. If I decided to play for the first group, I would also be playing for the second group. So how could I be supportive to all? Who should I play for?

I decided that there had to be an indirect relationship between the music and the dance. The role of the music was first and foremost to awaken the ears of the body, to help hear every sound and absorb it as you dance. I created a sound tableau, paying attention to the noises in the room, floor creaks, cars passing by on the street, music leaking in from the tango studio downstairs, and so on. I would sneak in between the sounds and play with their texture, timing and dynamics, not always playing *notes* or pitches, but scratches and sliding tones and sounds related to what one heard in the background, and yet giving it a direction and phrasing and bringing it to the foreground of attention. When I slowly stopped playing, I could sense and almost see the aural awareness in the room. I could see the music in the movement.

It was quite beautiful to watch and play. One could see the organic effect of the music. It was not mirroring in exact unison but more like when one touches a fish-tank, or when a shark swims into a huge group of little fish, affecting the animals as a whole. In fact this is exactly what it is. A shark’s quick movement corresponds to a sudden displacement of water—almost exactly what a grand stroke on

a drum or violin strings does to air - and all the fish sense this with their mechanosensory receptors (the evolutionary origin of the sense of hearing in us).

I also realized I had to *see* the dance, to be aware of what I saw and let in the energy of the movement: its preparations, suspensions, and arrivals. I had to *read the score of the contact dance*, aiming to include all of the dances in my attention. If I watched a particular couple, I could experience inside, or get a feeling of the physicality of the movements without actually doing them (I think this is what they call kinesthetic sympathy), and so I could respond to this with the music as if I were dancing and with listening and flow the music would effect the dancers immediately. I tried to see as much as I could of different couples, while I followed one couple that I had chosen; more or less like how one would try to hear the different lines in a counterpoint, perhaps quite contrasting in character, while playing one's part. If we all listen and are attentive, then we actually would be dancing together. So I think what it comes down to is awareness; at the same time seeing the whole all the while listening to the sounds you are offering.

As an improviser for movement it has been an interesting experience, to realize that my music could be responsible for someone's weight, balance and quality of motion. I cannot just do anything I want; I have a whole Contact jam depending on me. In a way, they are *leaning* on it, just as if I were dancing.

For more info on the jams:

www.contactimprov.ca/ www.kousha.ca/ or
www.reasondetre.com/Wedjam1.html

Kousha Nakbaei is a violinist, improvising composer, and music educator. He has studied improvisation and performance as well as Middle Eastern and South Indian music at York University. Also a Contact dancer Kousha has a strong interest in movement and exploring interdisciplinary creation. He has collaborated with several choreographers, dancers, poets and directors. He studied Dalcroze Eurhythmics at the Summer Dalcroze Program at Longy School of Music in 2005.

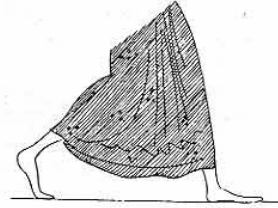
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| Our Monday Nights: the
Plastique Animée Working Group

As an integral part of Dalcroze work, Plastique Animée literally means moving plastic. It uses movement to give a visual and artistic expression to a musical composition, and this new creation then becomes a performance piece in its own right. The work is developed through the ideas and experiments of a group of people seeking to illustrate the textures, timbres, dynamics, phrase structure, form, and character of a composition. At the moment of presentation, we bring the composition to life. It could be called living music: as the audience is listening to the piece, they are also watching the sounds take form in time and space.

In December 2007 we did a presentation of Bartok's piano piece, 'For Children, No. 11', and a movement piece using the ideas/words of 'Preening', 'Braiding', and 'Pausing' from the poem, 'A Day in Autumn' by R. S. Thomas. Some of the members shared their experiences about being in the group.

-Ann Rowland

*We began as two, became three, then returned to a different two. We are learning to be spontaneously creative. (*The number of people in each group of the Bartok presentation shifts due to various circumstances.)

Ideas at first were slow to manifest. The informal expressive conversation switched back and forth between us, one taking the lead, the other reacting to the lead. Often we would reach a question, resulting in the reverse taking the lead and following. In a

threesome, the development began while seated, using our upper bodies and arms. For me in this initial process, I found a phrase I could understand, and began to express it through movement. Yet I felt stumped, with little expression flowing. I needed to study the music more carefully, in order to visualize what the other phrase/melody line was doing, while I was expressing the harmony.

To do this, at home I began by conducting, standing, singing, becoming more aware of what shape the music was taking through my arms. With this different embodiment, I was better able to respond to my partner in class. We began to trust each other more openly, becoming more sensitive to the energy flowing between us. I began to hear the music differently, anticipating what was to come, while still holding to the most expressive flow of the phrases in relation to my partner. I enjoyed the cadences when we showed the resolution with hands held, looking and smiling at each other. Our final cadence resolved with arms looped in circles and looking directly into each others' eyes.

The feedback from the audience was encouraging. I could hear a sincere emotional response to our performance. I feel different now; more confident, more trusting, more receptive, more willing to take risks, more sure of what to listen for when expressing sound through my being. Yet this is just the beginning.

-Shyra Rawson

At first I was pretty nervous about performing because one of our members became ill that night. Luckily I had Ann as a partner. She was very assuring and helped me to "step up" and to create something with her one hour before we had to perform.

Once we were in front of the audience, I felt all of my attention go into what we were doing. It was as if everything around us disappeared and I was completely in the moment. I felt energized! I also felt very connected to Ann during our performance. It was a truly great and memorable experience! It was my first time performing physically in

the form of movement in front of new people. Usually I have performed with my instrument (piano), so I had to step out of my comfort zone to do this. I am so happy that I took that step!



The beginning pose of Bartok's music—from left to right, Shyra Rawson and Ann Rowland.

-Claudia Benz

I think the *plastique anime* is a great opportunity for people who have Dalcroze experience—to meet, explore, be creative, collaborate...unfold. As a Dalcroze teacher, who is new to this country, it is a beautiful way for me to connect and share with others.

-Alicia Excell

I found the experience of performing the Bartok piece very liberating. One of the observers commented that she could see the "tension and release" in our movements. We interpreted the movement of dissonance to consonance (2nds to 3rds) by two of us pressing our palms together gently and releasing in time with the music while a third partner moved the melody. It was very gratifying that someone could see our intention. Doing *plastique* encourages me to explore movement in pieces I am working on at home or with recordings that I listen to. It adds a richer dimension to the experience of listening.

-Janice Lindskoog

Joining the *plastique anime* group this January has brought me back into the community of Dalcroze. In the first circle exercise I am made aware of the continuous flow and direction of the passing beat, giving and

receiving, with the attitude of our body movement. I find it restorative.



A movement representation of dissonance—2nds. From left to right, Alicia Excell, Eveli Korre, and Linda Song



Opening position for Bartok: the melody and the accompaniment: Caron Daley and Cheng-Feng Lin

| My Dalcroze Experience

BY SHYRA RAWSON

I first tried Dalcroze Eurhythmics a few years ago. I honestly wasn't even sure completely what 'Dalcroze Eurhythmics' was when I first signed up! I just knew that it had something to do with music and movement which is something that I hadn't really previously explored in my past education.

Before signing up for the class, I had spent two years at Humber College and was a piano

major there for the jazz program. In my two years of school, I was taught some cool jazz harmony, how to read charts and I was in a few concerts and attended many. During that time, I had lots of hands on experience, but I was never taught *how* to feel jazz.

The amazing thing about my two Dalcroze courses (I took level 1 and level 2) is that through the movement, I could really feel the music. I remember one exercise that we did which for the first time allowed me to *really feel* a triplet! I can't remember exactly what we did, but I remembered having a big 'a-ha!' moment in class.

I also remember how sometimes things that looked simple to do were very challenging! It is still a mystery to me how Dalcroze can be so powerful. Since taking the two courses, I've felt music a lot more and I even dance differently! When I go to clubs now to dance for fun, I feel like my whole body moves more!

Taking the two Dalcroze courses has really left me intrigued with the power of music and movement together. I can't wait to sign up for another course and experience more!

Shyra Rawson is a Métis singer/songwriter from the Toronto area who occasionally performs her own music downtown. A seasoned traveller, Shyra recently returned to Toronto after spending 8 months in Europe & Japan and also 6 months in Vancouver. She hopes to record a demo this year to promote her music.

The journal publishes three times a year. Deadlines for submissions are: December 15; March 31, and August 15. Views and opinions expressed in the journal do not necessarily represent those of the Dalcroze Society of Canada. The content of the articles are subject to approval and editing. Please send submissions by email.

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