

Reviewed by Jennifer Dennett

Meaningful Movement: A Music Teacher's Guide to Dalcroze Eurhythmics

Written by Marla Butke and David Frego
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As English writer and philosopher William Hazlitt once said, “Everything is in motion. Everything flows. Everything is vibrating.” Through movement we experience music, and through meaningful movement we facilitate our students’ musicality. In the ongoing search for meaningful movement explorations to incorporate into my classroom, I found *Meaningful Movement* by Marla Butke and David Frego to be an amazing resource. This book, much like what I have experienced in their conference sessions, imparts their practical, informative, and aesthetically satisfying concepts and techniques.

The clear structure of *Meaningful Movement* makes it easily accessible to all music educators. Orff Schulwerk teachers will connect with the emphasis on expressive, responsive, and creative movement, as well as the scaffolding process from teacher- to student-driven activities. The lessons for each chapter are divided into four phases: introductory, beginning, intermediate, and advanced. It is important to note there are no specific grade levels correlated to the phases. Rather, the teacher determines what level is most appropriate for his or her students, based on their current needs and experience.

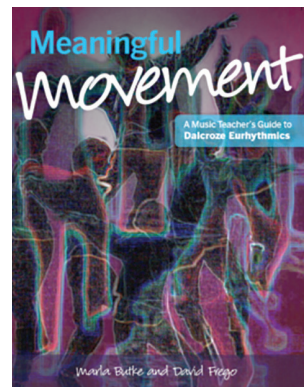
After a brief introductory chapter, the following four chapters each address a major concept—focus, eurhythmics, expressive

movement/*plastique animée*, and rhythmic solfège. The first concept is focus and includes activities that “direct a student’s attention to a particular task.” These focus activities prepare the mind and body for the music and movement tasks ahead, as well as increase students’ ability to focus for longer periods and focus more deeply on complex activities.

A favorite focus activity with my students is Alphabet/Number. This simple introductory activity consists of students counting from one to twenty-six while the teacher says the letters of the alphabet between the numbers (1, A, 2, B, 3, C, and so on). Students point to themselves for their turn and the teacher for his or her turn. This can also be done with the roles reversed. Either way, this activity requires students and the teacher to focus on their task and think ahead. The next challenge is for students to speak both the letters and numbers, keeping a steady beat using one hand for letters and the other for numbers. From here, the level of complexity can increase in any number of ways.

The next chapter highlights the concept of eurhythmics, which is defined as “purposeful movement to increase rhythmic integrity and to teach a variety of musical concepts.” The most basic element of rhythmic integrity is finding one’s personal pulse, which is the first introductory-level eurhythmics lesson in the chapter. This involves students walking at their own personal pace and becoming aware enough of that pace to be able to continue tapping the beat after they stop walking, and then eventually internalize that tempo and simply feel it in their own stillness. Many activities in this chapter focus on pulse, duration, and meter, but eurhythmic activities can also be used to experience melody and harmony. For example, students can use movement in different directions to respond to various chords as they expand their harmonic vocabulary.

The third concept explored is expressive movement/*plastique animée*, “an expressive



visualization of the music in an artistic and meaningful way.” The first part of this two-part chapter includes teacher-driven, short process activities that provide the experience and foundation for the student-created, long process activities in the second part of the chapter. Once students have experienced concepts such as direction, mirroring, shadowing, energy, flocking, tension and release, and others in a teacher-led environment, they can translate those experiences into their own creations.

In the second part of the chapter, the authors suggest several musical pieces for student-led creations, including the musical concepts these pieces can reinforce. They do not describe the process here; at this point the teacher should provide minimal input and allow students to make the creative decisions.

Rhythmic solfège is the fourth and final concept addressed. It is defined as “an aspect of the Dalcroze approach that focuses on purposeful movement while singing; the creation and manipulation of melodies; and the strengthening of inner hearing in both rhythm and pitch.” In its most basic form, this involves students hearing pitches and showing them with their bodies, for example, hearing two pitches and snapping on the higher pitch and clapping on the lower one. A beginning activity is “Gravity Scale,” where students gradually stand as the teacher plays an ascending major scale and gradually sit for the descending scale, never fully standing or

sitting until they hear the pitch “do.” At the most advanced level, students are decoding unknown melodies through rhythmic and melodic dictation.

The final chapter includes a variety of useful supplemental materials. Those who are wary of the piano improvisation aspect of Dalcroze eurhythmics will appreciate the tips on how to build your improvisation vocabulary. Sample lesson plans and rubrics, an index of musical concepts and the activities that can be used to teach them, 79 suggested musical recordings, and a glossary are featured. Finally, a link accesses 31 videos of lessons presented by children and adults.

The amount of information provided in this relatively short, user-friendly book is truly impressive, and it is easy to integrate the lessons and activities into your day-to-day teaching. Your students, like mine, will enjoy doing them and building their musicality. If you are always searching for meaningful movement explorations to use in the classroom, be sure to check out Butke and Frego’s *Meaningful Movement!* ■

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INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

AOSA Professional Development Conference	inside back cover	Peripole	back cover
Beatin’ Path	27	Quaver	1
Carl Orff Canada	50	SONOR	inside front cover
JD Wall	7	Studio 49	2
Malmark	48	Suzuki	47
Music Is Elementary	52	Teaching With Orff	5
Music Rhapsody	52	West Music	33
OAKE	48	Yamaha	21