EMILE JAQUES-DALCROZE
The Man and His Method (Abridged)
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Emile Jaques, born in Vienna of Swiss parents in the summer 1865, was a fascinating individual. By the turn of the century, he was already known for his music composition. Later, having altered his family name from Jaques to Jaques-Dalcroze (to better distinguish himself from another composer), he became known for much more than his compositions. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze developed into one of the greatest educators in the 20th century.

Many do not realize that Jaques-Dalcroze was the dominating influence in the world of dance, drama, and music from before World War I until the beginning of World War II. Through his international schools in Dresden, Geneva, and New York, his name became synonymous with education and performance in music, movement and dance, as well as dramatic staging and lighting. Today, his influences on music, dance, and theatre run deep. In 1892, after formal study at the Vienna conservatory under Anton Bruckner and the Paris Conservatory under Gabriel Fauré, he began his teaching career by accepting a post as Professor of Harmony at the Conservatory in Geneva, Switzerland. It was in Geneva, however, that he discovered teaching in a conservatory is not what some would imagine.

He observed that the background of young conservatory students often consisted of visual skills; the students had learned to look and read, rather than listen and hear. In order to bridge this gap between visual and aural skills, Jaques-Dalcroze developed a most exciting and innovative approach to music teaching. An approach employed the human body as the primary musical instrument. He developed this new approach into a method he called "Gynmastique Rythmique," and published its first volumes in 1906.

Jaques-Dalcroze's pedagogical ideas and techniques soon gained international attention. He received an invitation to relocate to Germany form Wolf Dohrn, who had attended a lecture-demonstration in Geneva. As a member of the Werkbund, an association united workmen, artists, and businessmen, Dohrn was planning an ideal community in Germany, near Dresden, with optimal conditions for work, health, education, and the arts. The ideology was an early, positive form of planned communities in Germany. Dohrn saw Jaques-Dalcroze as an ideal leader for the artistic life of his new community. Dalcroze would be responsible for both for the aesthetic recreation of the workers and the education of their children. For Jaques-Dalcroze, the invitation represented an opportunity to have a campus designed and built to specification; an educational program organized according to his own judgment; vast potential for the implementation and development of his ideas; and a ten-year contract. He accepted.

In 1910 he resigned his position at the Geneva Conservatory and moved to Dresden along with his wife, Maria-Arna Starace (professional name Nina Faliero) and son, Gabriel. Soon his good friend and colleague Adolphe Appia (1865-1929) joined them.

By 1911, Jaques-Dalcroze was teaching in his school on the campus known as the Bildungsanstalt Jaques-Dalcroze. The Hellerau campus was the first of its kind in Europe and remains intact today. The united German Government has restored the campus to it original luster.

Hellerau Campus
Dresden, Germany, 1911
as designed by Heinrich Tessenow

The campus consists of small cottages designed to house four or five students (complete with practice piano) as well as larger dormitory buildings and housing for the teachers. In ad-

View From Hellerau

dition, it includes such facilities as rehearsal rooms, a space for sunbathing and outdoor physical exercises, baths, and a restaurant. It formed part of a vast garden city, the first on the European continent. In the center of the complex stands a huge main building designed by Heinrich Tessenow to resemble a Greek Temple, complete with a large Yin-Yang etched into the apex of the main canopy.

The “Temple” at Hellerau, Germany, 1912

The "temple" was overwhelming in its design and size. At the dedication, architects as well as theatrical producers and directors came from all over the world to marvel at its glory. The building houses 16 classrooms two floors around the perimeter, and in the center a massive performance hall, that seat over 700 people in movable raked chairs. The hall also boasts an orchestra pit submerged in the stage that can be completely covered. In addition, the stage area has movable steps and platforms where various levels can be designed and arranged easily. The walls are covered with an off-white muslin fabric, which conceals banks and banks of various colored electric lights that dim and brighten. It is said that during performances the entire room would resonate with color moving from a soft blue to a blinding yellow all in relation to the music and the movement. Adolphe Appia, (1862-1928) the father of modern stage design and lighting techniques was responsible for the lighting scheme and the stage design.

The performance hall produced operas, Eurhythmics demonstrations, Plastique Animé (choreography) recitals, and instrumental and vocal performances of all types. Dancers, musicians, and actors from all over the world flocked to the school for the opportunity to work with Jaques-Dalcroze and to perform in this wondrous new space. Hellerau (on a high plateau) lit a beacon for Jaques-Dalcroze's work that shone throughout Europe. Beyond serving as a resource for the community, the Institute Jaques-Dalcroze stimulated a continent of artists. Among those who ventured to Hellerau were Max Reinhardt, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Ernest Bloch, Ernest Ansermet, Upton Sinclair, George Bernard Shaw, Paul Claudel, Darius Milhaud, Rudolph Laban, Hanya Holm, Mary Wigman, and Marie Rambert. In these last

three names, we begin to see Jaques-Dalcroze's significant influence on dance as well as music and drama. (See Dancers, Musicians, and Jaques-Dalcroze Eurhythmics by Monica Dale).

The Grand Hall at Hellerau, Germany, 1912

When conditions caused by World War I forced Jaques-Dalcroze to leave Germany, he returned to Geneva where in 1915 he established the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze.

Today the institute is still the international headquarters for Jaques-Dalcroze Education,

The Instiut Jaques-Dalcroze Lobby, 1915

and remains at the same location in a newly renovated facility provided by the Swiss government. In 1916 and 1917, Jaques-Dalcroze updated his method books and renamed it "Method Jaques-Dalcroze." By 1935, there were six parts to the method totaling 25 volumes. These included exercises, musical examples, and explicit drawings and photographs. Today these texts are rare and considered invaluable for the historically perspective they provide; yet, none of these volumes is of any practical use today.

However, the texts of Jaques-Dalcroze do provide proof that the "method" was then, as today, based on the Greek axiom "Music and movement are one and the same." This axiom is the one idea that unites all Jaques-Dalcroze educators and yet distinguishes us from each other.

Each of us, in our own way, is continually strives to interpret this axiom as it relates to our own lives as musicians, teachers, scholars, and human beings. Having had the experience of this axiom passed down to us from our teachers with their interpretation at a specific time, each of us in turn passes the experience onto the next generation, with our own interpretation and in our own time.

The dynamic nature of the method makes it impossible for textbooks to hold lasting value across time and culture. To capture its practical applications in written form provides a resource for a limited time and specific place, and then gives later generations a historical perspective. It is for this reason that the 25 volumes of Jaques-Dalcroze's method are historically valuable, but no longer practical. Except for two years of teaching in Paris, M. Jaques directed and taught at the Geneva school until his death on July 1, 1950. In addition to his method books, Jaques-Dalcroze was a prolific composer of orchestral, instrumental, and chamber music, songs and operas. He also authored countless articles on educational philosophy, which have been compiled into texts. He gave lectures and demonstrations throughout Europe and yet, he never visited America.

Today there are many more teacher-training centers around the world: Australia, USA, Canada, Germany, Switzerland England, France, Holland, Poland, Spain, Italy, and Japan are just a few countries where the tradition of the Method Jaques-Dalcroze is honored and given contemporary perspective to meet the needs of today's students.