

“Am I Paying Attention? Increasing Focus with Dalcroze Eurhythmics”

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Focus activities are used at the beginning of general music classes, and ensemble rehearsals to center the students and prepare them for the activities. They are also the cornerstone of a Dalcroze inspired class, which manipulates the elements of time, space, and energy to help develop sensitive and focused musicians. These activities help to get students into their optimal learning environment, where their complete focus is on the now. In this session, participants will experience several kinesthetic means to understand, perform, and focus on music by thinking ahead of real time, such as additive phrases, or reflecting back on the immediate past, in singing or moving in canon. The goal is to help students move into their optimal focus more quickly.

ACTIVITIES

- A-1/B-2 (steady beat, thinking one beat ahead, patterns)
 - A-1—standing in a large circle, participants have elbows relaxed at the side, but the forearms extended palms up.
 - Designate one hand for the letters of the alphabet, the other for corresponding number.
 - Speak and move hands through the sequence; A-1, B-2, ... Z-26.
 - Variation A-1 Inner Hearing - repeat the above exercise, but do not speak out loud every other 2 measures.
- Opposites – Yes/No
 - Teacher asks participants questions and they answer with the correct answer out loud but the opposite head gesture.
- Passing the Beat (steady beat, creativity in phrasing, socialization)
 - Divide participants into their birth month - stand in clumps around the room. Teacher stands in the middle with a drum.
 - Teacher plays six beats on the drum and physically passes the beat onto January.
 - January plays/improvises six beats and passes it along to February, etc.
 - After December, teacher improvises five beats, and passes - continuing down to one beat.
Note: Face the group you are passing the beat to or receiving the beat from. Reinforce musical tapping.
- Additive Memory (quick reaction, steady beat, recall, socialization)
 - Teacher calls out a number, i.e. 5. Participants walk five more steps, then stop and tap their head for five counts—resume walking (teacher plays steady beat on hand drum).
 - As they are walking, a participant will call out the next body part to tap, i.e. hips.
 - Teacher calls out a new number, i.e. seven. Participants walk seven more steps, then stop and tap head for seven counts, then the hips for seven counts. Resume walking.
 - Continue until there are five or six items to tap or move (head nod, knee bends, tongue clicks, etc.).

- Harmonic Dictation (quick reaction, decoding chords)
 - Walk forward when hearing a tonic chord.
 - Walk backward when hearing a dominant seventh chord.
 - Walk in a circle when hearing a submediant (vi) chord.
 - Walk sideways when hearing a subdominant (IV) chord.
- Complementary Rhythms (steady beat, focus, decoding rhythm, music memory)
 - Teacher plays “Scherzo on Tenth Avenue” (Kraehenbuehl) several times.
 - ❖ Walk beat
 - ❖ Walk melodic rhythm and pause/tap rests
 - ❖ Tap melodic rhythm, walk beat on rests
- Melody – Solfege and Rhythm (focus, decode melody and rhythm, music memory)
 - Teacher plays “Schaff/s mit mir, Gott” (Anna Magdalena Bach) several times.
 - ❖ Walk beat
 - ❖ Sing melody on solfege and walk beat
 - ❖ Sing melody on solfege and walk bass rhythm
- Additive Scale (sequencing, conducting, focusing ahead, crisis, independence)
 - Conduct a four-beat pattern.
 - Sing *do* on beat one; next four-beat pattern sing *do* on beat one and *re* on the & of one.
 - Continue adding on pitches until singing the whole scale twice.
 - Peel back the last pitch on each subsequent pattern until the last pitch, low *do*.
 - Repeat in two-part and four-part canon.

References:

Butke, M. A. & Frego, R. J. D. (2021). *Dalcroze Eurhythmics in the Choral Classroom*. Milwaukee, Hal Leonard. ISBN: 978-1-70513-344-6 (Amazon)

Butke, M. A. & Frego, R. J. D. (2016). *Meaningful Movement: A Music Teacher’s Guide to Dalcroze Eurhythmics*. Cleveland, Music is Elementary. ISBN: 978-0-9910656-7-7

The American Eurhythmics Society, www.americaneurhythmics.org

Marla and David’s website: www.butkefregodalcroze.com

Alliance for Active Music Making: <http://www.allianceamm.org/>