

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

Dalcroze Eurhythmics in music therapy and special music education

Interview

Dalcroze Eurhythmics as a psychomotor education for children with special educational needs: An interview with Marie-Laure Bachmann

John Habron & Marie-Laure Bachmann

ABSTRACT

In this interview, Bachmann recounts experiences of her childhood and training in Dalcroze Eurhythmics. She describes her university studies in Geneva, including her lectures with Jean Piaget, and how she became interested in using the Dalcroze method therapeutically. Amongst others, Bachmann shares memories about working with deaf children and what she learnt from her teacher and mentor Claire-Lise Dutoit. Bachmann also discusses the theoretical and practical aspects of the Dalcroze method, drawing on many years' experience as a practitioner and teacher trainer. Finally, she reflects on the place of Dalcroze practice within European traditions of Rhythmics/Eurhythmics and music therapy. This interview will be of interest not only to those wanting to understand Dalcrozian approaches to health musicking in practice and theory, but also to historians of music education and music therapy wishing to piece together the connections between Dalcroze practitioners and medical professionals, especially in Geneva during the second half of the twentieth century.

KEYWORDS

Dalcroze Eurhythmics, music, Claire-Lise Dutoit, psychomotor education, special educational needs, children

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As a child, **Marie-Laure Bachmann** was raised in an environment of music and Dalcroze Eurhythmics. She took her higher studies in Geneva (Diploma in Pedagogy for Disabled Children and Licence in Experimental and Genetic Psychology) and holds the Licence and Diplôme Supérieur of the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze. Bachmann practised Dalcroze with disabled children for 30 years. She taught Dalcroze Eurhythmics theory and practice to professional students at the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze for some 17 years and was Director there from 1990 to 2006. Bachmann is President of the AAJD (Association des Amis de Jaques-Dalcroze) and a member of the Collège de l'Institut Jaques-Dalcroze. She is author of *Dalcroze Today: An Education through and into Music* (Bachmann 1991).

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INTRODUCTION

The interview was recorded on 15 December 2015, in Geneva, Switzerland. The English has been corrected in places, but elsewhere left untouched to retain the flavour of Bachmann's speech. Bachmann read the transcript and made her own changes in order to clarify meanings and delete redundancies. Footnotes add useful biographical detail and contextual information. Some of these are provided, or have been augmented, by Bachmann herself during a period of email correspondence to edit the interview. My thanks to Soazig Mercier, librarian at the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze, for her help in identifying dates of birth, death and qualifications for many of the Dalcroze teachers mentioned.

INTERVIEW

JH: Marie-Laure, could you say a little bit about your background?

M-LB: My background started with Dalcroze, I would say. As a child I was enrolled by my mother, who was herself a Dalcrozian, to follow the rhythmic courses.¹ In that time I didn't even have solfège lessons, but I learnt solfège together with rhythmic without even knowing it was solfège.²

¹ Jeanne-Alice Bachmann-Borel (1915-2007). After gaining her piano diploma (La Chaux-de-Fonds, 1933) with Ernst Levy (1895-1981), she studied piano further in Geneva with Marie Panthès (1871-1955) and Rhythmic with Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (diploma 1935). Her other Dalcroze teachers were Edith Naef (1898-2007), Madeleine Hussy (unknown year of birth - 1987 or 1988), Frank Martin (1890-1974), Bernard Reichel and Jaques-Dalcroze's sister Hélène Brunet-Lecomte (1870-1965), most of whom also taught Marie-Laure (except F. Martin and H. Brunet) some thirty years later. Jeanne-Alice was Marie-Laure's first and main piano teacher. She taught piano all her life and also earned an organ diploma. In the 1960s-70s, she taught Rhythmic classes in Le Locle music school and at La Chaux-de-Fonds conservatory [M-LB].

² Dalcroze pedagogy is organised into three main, interrelated and interdependent branches: (i) rhythmic (or eurhythmic, USA) refers to expressive, rhythmic movement, enacting, analysing or making music in various ways with the whole body, coordinating the limbs in all degrees of speed and strength, and by the in-depth study of time, space and energy relationships; (ii) solfège centres on aural training (or ear training, USA), using singing, reading, vocalisation and note names to develop 'inner hearing'; and (iii) improvisation develops spontaneous creation with instruments, voices and in movement. Piano improvisation is normally the main tool

Also I was brought up with Jaques-Dalcroze's songs, I knew hundreds, and I used to sing his melodies with the names of notes. My mother trained me to do that, using Jaques-Dalcroze's *Rythmes de chant et de danse*. She played the piano part. And so I sang a lot. And each week I went to rhythmic lessons from my fourth year to 16 or 17 years old.

JH: And your teacher was...?

M-LB: My first teacher in rhythmic, since 1946, was Christiane Montandon, whom I never forgot and whom I was lucky to rediscover as a grown-up student in Geneva, in the late sixties and early seventies, where she was my improvisation and piano teacher.³ And then came Irène Reichel, the daughter of Bernard Reichel, when I was 7 or 8 years old.⁴ I had her for a long time until I was maybe 14. And with her it was very nice because we prepared shows each year, we had some public performances with Dalcroze's music and songs. In addition, she looked really fairylike! The last one was Monique Petitpierre-Rochat, who was very influential during my teenage period, a very musical person.⁵ These were my three main ones.

of the Dalcroze teacher when giving Rhythmic or Solfège classes. Typically, a Dalcroze class, although focusing on one of these branches, will also feature the others. [Additions M-LB]

³ Christiane Montandon (1920-2016) gained her Diplôme Supérieur Jaques-Dalcroze (1941) in Geneva and studied piano with Johnny Aubert (1889-1954) and Edwin Fischer (1886-1960). She was a gifted piano teacher and improviser, serving for many years as a member of the Collège de l'Institut Jaques-Dalcroze, Geneva.

⁴ Irène Boghossian-Reichel (1927-2009) took a very active part in the Dalcroze Institute's courses and festivities during her youth. She was daughter of composer Bernard Reichel (1901-1992), who gained his Dalcroze diploma in 1925 (Paris). Irène and her father, like Marie-Laure and her mother, form one of several parent-child links in the transmission of Dalcroze Eurhythmic. [Additions M-LB] [I came across Reichel's music as a child, in a children church choir where we often sang his compositions, which I loved. I was thrilled to know him, years later, as a demanding harmony, composition and improvisation teacher, and a most delicious man! M-LB.]

⁵ Monique Rochat, later Petitpierre-Rochat, (unknown year of birth) taught Dalcroze to non-professionals, first in her hometown La Chaux-de-Fonds and in Le Locle, then in the Geneva area [M-LB].

JH: And do you remember your first experience of rhythmic?

M-LB: Not exactly, but I remember many, many things we did during these lessons, namely with Irène Reichel when I was a little older than four and five. And with Monique Rochat, I remember we were two girls who set our hearts upon Schumann's piece 'Premier Chagrin'; we loved to improvise dancing to it and wanted to do it again and again and again! To the point that our teacher almost lost her nerves! But beside that we did all sorts of exercises: coordination, dissociation, canon exercises among others. And my mother, who was herself a rhythmic teacher (she didn't teach rhythmic at that time, but she taught the piano to many pupils, and to me, of course), praised Monique's teaching and musicality a lot.

JH: Your mother had been a pupil of Charles Faller.⁶

M-LB: Yes, as her first piano teacher at the conservatory of La Chaux-de-Fonds, where rhythmic was compulsory in her time, together with Dalcroze solfège, given by Mathilde Reymond-Sauvain, a contemporary of Nelly Schinz, Madeleine Hussy, Edith Naef and all this bunch of Dalcroze people, several of whom I met myself 30 years later (Mlle Naef was our main rhythmic teacher and we had Mlle Hussy as our teacher for *Plastique animée*).⁷ And as I said, my mother studied here in Geneva for the diploma with Jaques-Dalcroze himself.⁸

⁶ Charles Faller (1891-1956) was in the first generation of Jaques-Dalcroze's students at the Geneva Conservatoire, taking part in 1903 in the very first experiments of what was to become Eurhythmic (at the time it was called "les Pas Jaques" [Jaques steps]) and gaining his diploma in 1912. He founded the La Chaux-de-Fonds conservatory in 1927 and the Music school of Le Locle, where he introduced Dalcroze Eurhythmic as the basis of all teaching for all students. See Nussbaum (1967). [Additions M-LB]

⁷ *Plastique animée* is the creative realisation of a piece of music in movement, a sort of living musical analysis.

⁸ Mathilde Reymond-Sauvain (1900-1973) and Nelly Schinz (unknown year of birth and death) studied with Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva (1919-1921), gaining their diplomas in 1925 and were instrumental in the Dalcroze training at the Rue Vaugirard school in Paris (1922-1928). From 1933-1971, Schinz, who completed her piano diploma in La Chaux-de-Fonds (1942), was one of the main teachers for Dalcroze professional training in Bienne, Switzerland. Madeleine Hussy took advanced piano studies at the Geneva conservatoire with Johnny

JH: So how was it that you came to study in Geneva?

M-LB: Well, I think I wanted to go to Geneva to be far enough away not to have to come home every day after school! Also, I wanted to study psychology, which was not available in the Neuchâtel University, so I did have to come to Geneva. In fact, I looked for a training in which I might use music, maybe with handicapped children.

JH: So when you came to Geneva to study psychology, you already had an idea that music could be used in this way.

M-LB: Yes, but I did not foresee that it would be Dalcroze Eurhythmic, because for me Eurhythmic was learning rhythm with a nice lady playing with children, and it was not an academic training, and so I did not even consider that it could be a full profession. However, I was curious to see the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze, since my mother had studied there, and so during my first year in university I attended a few open courses as an outsider and I liked it, of course, and so I revisited to take a little certificate for teaching Dalcroze in kindergarten.⁹

I thought others might help me to look for what I wanted, but I was not sure at all at that stage (this was in 1962). And whilst I was studying psychology, I thought I would go to other lessons in psychology, but midway I was attracted to do this special needs diploma. And so I quit the idea of doing the psychology licence at the time, and studied for the diploma in the specialised education of mentally handicapped children, and by the end of my first year, I heard one of my teachers in the university speak about helping children who are disabled on the psychomotor side. He told us that the best thing he knew to help them was Dalcroze Eurhythmic.

And so I met him at the end of the course, and he put me in contact with Claire-Lise Dutoit to whom he was sending many of his clients for psychomotor therapy, which was then called

Aubert. As a Dalcroze teacher, she taught advanced solfège and was famous for her artistic *Plastique animée* productions, both with child and adult students. [Additions M-LB]

⁹ The Institut Jaques-Dalcroze was founded in Geneva in 1915. It is often referred to during the interview simply as the 'Institut'.

psychomotor re-education.¹⁰ And so I came into contact with Claire-Lise Dutoit who allowed me to watch her lessons. I went once a week for a whole afternoon, during a whole year, and had the chance to see her teach either small groups – there were never more than three to five children together – or individuals. And I learnt much during these observation sessions, and we spoke also a lot together.

JH: So there was a teacher at the university you mentioned who said...

M-LB: Dr Feldmann, who was deeply convinced of the Dalcroze approach's value.¹¹

JH: What can you tell me about him?

M-LB: He was a child psychiatrist. He was really convinced about the good effect of Dalcroze Eurhythmics upon children with disabilities. And he was one among several, but the most active, in sending Claire-Lise Dutoit children to work with. The interesting thing was that there was not just one kind of disability. We had the chance to observe and then to take care of children with diverse intellectual disabilities as well as children having a high intellectual potential, or those with psychosis, or autism, or cerebral motor infirmity, or sensory impairments.¹²

Claire-Lise also had a large experience with deaf children. And so this is another part of my work with her, we had a very interesting experience with the deaf, when we opened our own school in the 1970s. And with Dr Feldmann, we had bi-annual meetings where we would discuss three, four children's cases, which he had sent us. At

¹⁰ Claire-Lise Dutoit (1921-2008), also known as Dutoit-Carlier and eventually Lombard-Dutoit, gained her diploma in Geneva in 1951 and was director of the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze 1967-1971. Along with her teachers Bernard Reichel and Madeleine Hussy, Dutoit appears on a Radio Télévision Suisse video from 1967: <http://www.rts.ch/archives/tv/divers/vie-et-metier/6886921-professer-dalcroze.html>. Marie-Laure Bachmann herself speaks briefly at 20:30.

¹¹ Harry Feldmann, born in Geneva in 1919, was a psychiatrist specialising in neurology and child psychology (Dutoit 1971: 96). He collaborated with Dutoit to develop rhythmic exercises for the psychomotor assessment and rehabilitation of socio-culturally deprived children (Feldmann 1970).

¹² Cerebral motor infirmity (CMI) is a term used in francophone contexts for cerebral palsy, although some authors maintain they denote different diagnoses.

these meetings were also present the psychologists who took care of them, and maybe even the children's teachers. It was interesting to speak of these different children with different specialists.

JH: And do you know how Feldmann got to know about Eurhythmics?

M-LB: No, I'm not sure. It might have been through Claire-Lise's work with deaf children. He did not tell me.

JH: So just to complete the picture of your early years of study in Geneva, you started your psychology course with a foundation year. Could you describe a little bit about that year and who your teachers were?

M-LB: Well, this was the time when Piaget was still there, and we had a weekly masterclass with him. He was lecturing on genetic psychology and epistemology.¹³ The whole staff of teachers and collaborators was organised around him, many were taking part in his research. In addition we had an introduction to statistics, clinical psychology, research (including researching in children classes by applying Piagetian tests in diverse areas), psycholinguistics and child psychopathology, the one Dr Feldmann gave. And then we chose which direction we would like to go into more deeply.

JH: And you chose to do your special diploma for disabled children at the University and that was your second year in Geneva.

M-LB: It was the second year and third year. It was at this moment that I was in contact with Claire-Lise Dutoit, and started to be interested in what she did. I was not yet thinking of a Dalcroze diploma and she was not yet the Institut's director.

JH: So you spent a year observing Claire-Lise Dutoit's work.

M-LB: Yes. And then, about 1963 or 64, she was asked to write a chapter for the book *Émile Jaques-Dalcroze: L'homme, le compositeur, le créateur de*

¹³ Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was a Swiss psychologist who conceived child development fundamentally as a process of adaptation to the environment that results from "assimilation" and "accommodation" interactions. [Later on I realised that the reason why these concepts had seemed to me (unlike some other students) pretty easy to grasp from the beginning was due to my Dalcroze background! M-LB.]

la rythmique.¹⁴ But she was very busy, she had many children to take care of in therapy. So she asked me to replace her during one afternoon per week, so that it left her a little freer to write. And so I started doing that even before having any grade in Dalcroze, only my own Dalcrozian experience, which was long, but not yet very conscious at that stage. And we would discuss what I did and once, when she had come to watch my class, she said: "Oh, this is a catastrophe! But it's my fault, I should have come earlier to tell you this". And so she gave me advice and helped me, and during that time I could really try things with the children and get better and better, it was very interesting. A few years later she was asked to become the director of the Institut, and she was convinced that we should bring this kind of development of Eurhythmics, that is the therapeutic side, into the Institut. She would have liked me to become her assistant. And so she suggested that I do the Dalcroze studies and so I did, after having got my university diploma. I quit university to earn a Dalcroze professional degree.

JH: And it was in this licence that there was a strong element of therapy? It was like a special mention?

M-LB: No, at the time it was not yet called licence, it was called professional certificate. It was a three-year course. As I was already trained in Dalcroze as a child and a teenager, I could enter the second year, in fact the second semester of the second year. And so I had to do just one more year. And during that time Claire-Lise Dutoit entered as the director, and she established the special diploma, post-certificate diploma, parallel to the general Dalcroze diploma and called psychomotor therapy, or Dalcroze diploma in psychomotor re-education.¹⁵ And I was the first person to have it, together with Micheline Duchosal and Mireille Weber.¹⁶ But as I

¹⁴ The book was Martin et al (1965). Dutoit wrote a threefold chapter, the last part of which was about therapy. Material from this book was subsequently translated into English by a team of British Dalcroze teachers and their friends, and re-published as Dutoit (1971).

¹⁵ It was also Dutoit who introduced, one year later, the four-year Licence in the curriculum to replace the former three-year professional certificate. [M-LB]

¹⁶ Micheline Duchosal (b. 1930), a Dalcroze teacher practicing in Canton de Vaud for many years, undertook further Dalcroze studies when she heard this special diploma had been created. She practised psychomotor therapy until around 2004-05, first in the Institut, then in a private centre together with Dutoit and Bachmann, then

was more advanced, because of my former studies and of my practical experience with Claire-Lise Dutoit, soon I could help her train other Rhythmics people in this area.

JH: And if we stay for a moment with Claire-Lise Dutoit, I'm interested in her background and her lineage, because it sounds to me as though she was already interested in this before you met her.

M-LB: Yes, long before.

JH: So do you know anything about how she became interested in this application of the method?

M-LB: I happen to have a little report, signed C L Carlier and dated 1951: *l'Enseignement de la rythmique aux enfants sourds*.¹⁷ But in the late 40s, she taught 'normal' children in primary schools in Geneva, where she was among the first teachers who could do that officially on a large scale. And there are two things that I remember she told me about her teaching school children: on the one hand, she researched, maybe it was not quite a scientific research, but she did research on their musical tastes by playing them different pieces and asking them which one they liked and disliked and why; and she discovered that most children loved Mozart best. And she explained it to me, saying, "I'm sure it's because he was their age when he wrote that music". I found this was a very interesting hypothesis!

On the other hand, she had the opportunity to teach in a deaf children's institution, which still exists in Montbrillant here in Geneva, and she started at a time when she was not yet very

just with Bachmann until 1990, when she eventually continued by herself. Mireille Weber (b. 1945) was interested in child pedagogy and undertook her Dalcroze therapy diploma to deepen her knowledge in this area. She did not use this as such, but she went on studying voice with much success. She was soon recognised as a wonderful Rhythmics and Solfège teacher, working with children of all ages and teaching Dalcroze pedagogy and vocal technique to professional students for many years. Recently retired, Weber is often invited to teach internationally. She is also to be seen interviewed together with Bachmann in the 1967 video mentioned above (see footnote 10) [M-LB].

¹⁷ "Teaching Eurhythmics to deaf children" (from an unpublished typed manuscript, 1951; 16-19). This might have been part of her written work for her Dalcroze Diploma. Carlier was Dutoit's maiden name [M-LB].

experienced, but her 1951 report is quite interesting in this regard, for it shows that she really was a pioneer in the field, and an empathic observer.¹⁸ She would teach there for quite a long time.¹⁹ And so I assume she started with this kind of deprived children, even before she had to do with the other kinds of handicaps. And probably through her success with this kind of children she got interested further. She was a Dalcroze diplômée, but she also followed different courses in the university, namely with André Rey who taught clinical psychology, and she did it quite early in her adult life.²⁰ When I first met her, she was totally involved in psychomotor therapy. She did it privately, she had in her own house, in the basement, a nice studio where she received the children.

JH: So had she done some kind of psychomotor therapy qualification?

M-LB: I don't think so. She had Dalcrozian diploma and tools, plus psychological knowledge, plus collaboration with doctors and she was a very clever, even brilliant, person, but she did not have such a title. At that time there was not yet qualification for that, she invented it, in a way. Yes, she was a pioneer. In parallel, a few years before the time I was her student, and then her collaborator, psychomotor re-education started more formally through the impulse of another psychiatrist, who Dr Feldmann knew well, called Dr Ajuriaguerra, you heard of him maybe?²¹

¹⁸ She writes, on the second page: "I proceeded, in the beginning, with circumspect prudence, fearing that these children, being unsociable and reserved, might be discouraged and distressed by the presence of the piano. To my great surprise, they insisted relentlessly on doing round dances like other children and the intense joy they show when they realise that one more inequality is disappearing made me understand the deaf child's tremendous urge for entering the social circle which surrounds him"; translated by Bachmann. [M-LB]

¹⁹ Centre pour Enfants Sourds de Montbrillant (CESM). The Département de l'instruction publique, de la culture et du sport (2016) still lists 'psychomotricien' amongst the professionals working in the multi-disciplinary team at CESM.

²⁰ Psychologist André Rey (1906–1965) had been a doctoral student of neurologist and child psychologist Édouard Claparède (1873-1940), a long-time collaborator and correspondent of Jaques-Dalcroze. Rey developed Claparède's Auditory Verbal Learning Test (1907).

²¹ Julian de Ajuriaguerra (1911-1993) was Chair of Psychiatry at Bel Air hospital, Geneva 1959-1975. Particularly interested in the connections between child motor development, integration and socialisation, as well

And I was told that at the time (I suppose Claire-Lise Dutoit said this to me) the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze had missed an opportunity of collaborating with him: Dr Ajuriaguerra seemingly had offered Madame Croptier, who was the director at the time, to undertake something together, and Madame Croptier did not seize the opportunity.²² Then he found someone outside Dalcroze who was, I must say, a rather bad musician. She used the piano, but in a very rude way, as I happened to see. All the same, I think Ajuriaguerra had very valuable theories about psychomotricity and that it could have been a nice collaboration.

Also, he was influential in Geneva, so what he did together with this lady was accepted earlier than Dalcroze as an academic training. (It was not yet at the university then, it was at the school for social sciences; but it was official all the same, whereas Claire-Lise Dutoit was alone.) But we soon had more and more Dalcroze people interested. So there were two different trainings in Geneva. Nevertheless, we were also recognised on a federal level, by the disability insurance, to take care of people. So psychomotor therapy by means of Dalcroze Eurhythmics was eventually confirmed as a recognised treatment.

JH: You talked about Claire-Lise Dutoit's work with deaf children. It would be interesting if you could just describe a typical exercise that you witnessed her doing.

M-LB: Claire-Lise was asked by the Montbrillant institution for the deaf to help a group of deaf teenagers to prepare a show for the end of the year. (This took place in the 70s, after she had left the Institut together with me and Micheline Duchosal, and all three of us were running a private centre.) And so Claire-Lise Dutoit said okay, but first we needed to have a weekly lesson with them for the whole school year. And so all three of us went to the institution each week. It took place in the dining room. We pushed all the tables away and had lessons with them. And there I learnt very

as muscular tone, flexibility, balance, reflexes and relaxation, his 1000-page *Handbook of Child Psychiatry and Psychology* (1979) became widely influential (Bergeron 1994; Siguán 1994). The relationship of Ajuriaguerra's clinical practice and research interests to Dalcroze Eurhythmics, via his interest in psychomotricity, would repay further study.

²² Marguerite Croptier-Lange (1901-1990) was director of the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze, 1948-1967. She gained her diploma in Geneva in 1923.

much. Claire-Lise already knew this population well, so she taught us very useful things, namely that these people can imitate well, can observe well, but when they have to imagine and think inside, their representation can often be poor.

There was not sign language at that time in Geneva. So they had learnt to lip-read. And also they read facial and gesture expressions; they were very expressive themselves. But you had to be careful to have them always facing you when you spoke, you could not call them, "here guys, come on!". Of course, we had all the usual well-known exercises to be done with the deaf, feeling, sounding, resonance; either come and touch the piano, or have a drum and put your hand on the drum and feel the rhythm. To make them feel best what the rhythm is, you have to play quite low pitches, rather than the high pitches on the piano.

This way they feel, and they can step according to the tempo, and run, and follow all the rhythms that way. The same thing with balloons. So, they hold it and they feel very well all the tiny little sound impulses communicated by the airwaves inside the balloon. And as we were preparing this spectacle, I still learnt other things. For instance, they can move well, but if they are in the night, they don't move anymore. They just stop. They're afraid because they don't have sufficient feedback. When we are in the dark, even unconsciously we hear things, so we know that we are passing by a hole or a window or other people, but they, as we noticed, were staying motionless. So we had to train them until they could do it, because in a show you always have a time where things go to a blackout, and you nevertheless have to move.²³ We also had to train them to imagine things. For instance, we encouraged them to draw. And we said, "let's try to draw a house, but not like houses usually are. For instance, the staircase is on the roof, things like that". And one of them drew the chimney on the floor, or they put the window in the grass, and so on. And one of these youngsters, one day exclaimed: "Oh, it's like in our dreams!". And so we went on doing these things with them.

²³ For instance, at one moment of the show, they were supposed to be in a museum, some of them being visitors, some others being statues. The visitors were invited to 'reach the next room' on stage. This required a minute of blackout, during which the statues had to change their position to become new statues in the so-called 'next room'. In order to have achieve this, we proceeded in turning off half of the lights only, then most of the lights, and eventually all of them in the process of rehearsal [M-LB].

And this gave us the idea of entitling the show *For Each Day His Dream* [À chaque jour suffit son rêve]. And it ended in representing a whole week: in the daytime some event happened that appealed to their good capacity for imitation and mimicking expressions; and in the night the dream of the day would spring up. So they had to use their imagination. For instance, in the first day there was a fisherman, he gets up, he washes himself, he goes on the lake rowing in his boat, he catches a fish. And then in the night a big threatening fish comes out of the lake (there were several people representing the big fish) and eats the fisherman. Or another day was the washing day, so they washed the clothes, they hung them out, and then in the night the clothes became ghosts with the help of black light. Until we had seven double stories like this. All of them were made up by the children, and we helped them to shape their ideas. They even made up a poem!²⁴

And so it was a really very large experiment and then we were a bunch of three, four Dalcroze people to make the music and speech fit to the situation, improvising on the piano, drums, flutes: on one hand, they felt the tempo thanks to the wooden floor, but on the other hand we would also follow and musically describe their upper body movements or gestures. And the public had forgotten they were deaf, you know, by the end. When the audience applauded we had to tell them, "Lift your hands so that they can see that you are applauding!". They had forgotten that. It was very rewarding!

So I learnt much about these children. What was wonderful with Claire-Lise Dutoit was that she was a wonderful observer. She taught me really much in this regard; for instance, to tell the difference between two boys that are not able to jump or to run. She would say for instance, when they jump you'll see some people who jump with their whole body. They want to carry the whole thing. [*Marie-Laure stands up to demonstrate.*] Then you have the other one, he knows only about his legs and not about the use of the upper body; same with the bouncing and so on. So it is all these details that are so evident in deprived children. It's like looking through a...

²⁴ This poem was collaboratively written to illustrate the dream of a housewife who, while having had to overcome her covetousness in the daytime, dreamed that she was a queen receiving a succession of gifts, each one more extraordinary than the previous and one of them being, as I recall, a caterpillar skin cloak [une cape en peau de chenille]! [M-LB]

JH: Microscope?

M-LB: The one you take to read when you have...

JH: Oh, the magnifying glass.

M-LB: Magnifying glass, yes. But then when you have to work with 'normal' young people – or even professional students – you see the same issues. You can notice these issues easier once you have seen them magnified, like that. It helped me very much. If I had only worked with the 'normal' ones, I'm not sure I would have detected them. But after that you can see much more and help them better.

JH: Fascinating.

M-LB: And Claire-Lise was very well aware that to be a Dalcroze therapist is really to have a 'Dalcroze eye' – that is on time, space, energy. So this guy, if he has a problem bouncing his ball, is it a question of time? A question of energy? Is it a question of space? Once you answer these questions, you can help him; the music you improvise can help him in that very way, because the music can point out and model the movements' curves, duration, directions, nuances. It helps the child listen to the space of music, listen to the energy of music and helps him in that very way. And so I owe very much to Claire-Lise Dutoit because she was very precise and most clear-sighted in expressing this knowledge. She was the only one who did it so clearly.

JH: Besides her, are there any other figures who stand out for you, people who were influential in terms of your therapeutic work? For example, did you ever see Mimi Scheiblauber working?²⁵

M-LB: No, I never saw her. I saw her film *Ursula*, but this was later.²⁶ A book I read which was helpful was by a dancer who was also a Dalcrozian, the dance therapist Trudi Schoop: *Won't You Join the Dance*. Very interesting, it was very enlightening.²⁷ Among other things, she points out the disconnection, in some psychotic people, between different parts of the body. For instance, someone

²⁵ Mimi Scheiblauber (1891-1968), Swiss pioneer music therapist, was one of Jaques-Dalcroze's first students at Hellerau (diploma 1912). See interview with Eleonore Witoszynskij in this volume.

²⁶ *Ursula oder das unwerte Leben* (dirs. Mertens, R. and Marti, W.) is a film from 1966. It is available as part of 3-DVD set Mimi Scheiblauber (Deutsches Tanzfilminstitut and AMBR 2009/2013).

²⁷ Schoop and Mitchell (1974).

having a light joyful gait together with a fierce and tragic face; or someone with a heavy, tired attitude showing a sardonic and mischievous face. This inspired me to find some interesting dissociation exercises to do with the professional students! By the way, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze successfully applied to sighted students the exercises he devised for blind people!

Another thing that was influential was the compulsory work experience with children I had prior to entering university: I had chosen to accompany mentally handicapped children to a summer camp. My first feeling, when entering the bus where we all were sitting, was fear, joined to slight disgust. I hardly dared to lean against my seatback. But my last feeling, after the camp was over, was a great deal of admiration for these children's strength and courage.

In the meantime, I had experienced the superhuman efforts they were ready to accomplish in order to progress, and I granted big credit to each stage of their faint, tiny progress, which seemed gigantic to me by comparison with the laziness and lack of motivation encountered in numerous normally gifted children who could succeed without having to fight.

JH: So you did, I think, two years then at the university, and then in your third year was when you had this time observing Claire-Lise.

M-LB: Exactly.

JH: Then you went back to the university to complete...?

M-LB: Then I finished this diploma for children with special needs, and then I went to the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze to complete my Dalcroze studies. Then I stayed to be the attendant of Claire-Lise Dutoit during the whole period she was the director of the Institut. When she left the Institut, I quit the Institut with her and my colleague Micheline Duchosal. The department of Dalcroze re-education closed. And then we founded what we called the Centre d'Expression Psychomotrice (Centre for Psychomotor Expression). We had an apartment with a big room, plus a smaller one, where we could work with children. Dr Feldmann was still sending us clients, other doctors as well, some who worked in medico-pedagogical centres and also institutions; even the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze sent us clients. The Rhythmics teachers, when they had someone who did not 'fit', would send them to us, rather than integrating them in a very large group of 18 or more children. We always

had small groups, never more than five or six, rather four, five. And sometimes one alone, or two together. Some of them, after one or two years with us, would go back to a 'normal' course in Rhythmics. We had all kinds of people, you know, a large amount of them only had psychomotor difficulties which schools found it hard to accommodate, in spite of a broadly 'normal' or even bright intelligence. But some others had very, very complex needs: Down's syndrome, some without language, some did not walk, or hardly, some were blind or deaf. And so it was a large experience, an opportunity to experiment on very many sides.

JH: And when we were discussing at lunchtime, you made a brief comparison between what was happening here in Geneva and in German-speaking Switzerland. Did you say that these therapeutic developments of Dalcroze happened earlier in these other parts?

M-LB: Yes, I think it did. It was installed in different parts of Switzerland, like Zurich where Mimi Scheiblauber was, and where she had trained people. So Eurhythmics was almost already directed to the therapeutic side. And so it was known early as a therapeutic thing because of Mimi Scheiblauber probably. Also on the German side of Switzerland they had another mentality and – except in Biel, a bilingual city, where there were always one or two teachers coming from Geneva – Rhythmics trainings also had teachers coming from south Germany or having been trained in Germany.

In fact, we felt somewhat closer to England than to German Switzerland as for the contents of Eurhythmics, you know? To England or to the United States even. Because all the main Dalcroze people in England or in the States had come to Geneva in order to earn the diploma. So the Dalcroze practice was more unified, more recognisable, between all the people who had got their diploma in Geneva or who had studied with these teachers. In German Switzerland, they were more often inviting people from Germany who had continued Eurhythmics after Hellerau, but without being allowed or not willing to use the name of Dalcroze for many years, except for a few who remained faithful to him.²⁸

²⁸ In June 1914, Jaques-Dalcroze – who had left his Institute in Hellerau (Germany) for what should have been a mere few weeks – was staying in Switzerland when World War I broke out. It was here that he signed, with other Swiss intellectuals and artists, a letter of protest against the destruction of Reims Cathedral by the German army. This caused him to be persona non grata

And as I said, the German mentality is quite different from ours. In particular, they went more towards the body side, the dance side, body analysis, interiority. Many had dropped most of the exercises Jaques-Dalcroze had imagined for what he called the "éducation du système nerveux" and the "fight against arrhythmia".²⁹ For a long time there was hardly any contact between Geneva and Germany, until it started again, but in the meantime these traditions had time to develop in their own way. Let's not forget either that Jaques-Dalcroze himself was present in Geneva for some 30 additional years after having left Germany!

JH: It would be useful to explore a little bit the relationship between psychomotricity and Eurhythmics because from a point of view of an English-speaking music therapist, psychomotricity is not a word I've come across. And I'm wondering, is it something more developed here, or on the European continent, compared to the UK perhaps?

M-LB: I'm not so very learned in the history of it, but I know it's used in France as 'psychomotricité'. But it should be used, more accurately, as an adjective: psychomotor education, or psychomotor therapy. Everyone has his own 'psychomotricité', which means all motor functions considered in terms of their relationship with the psyche. For practical considerations, the word is used in French as a shortcut to define the profession, or the craft, of the 'psychomotricians', who dispense an educational therapy aiming to improve the synergy between the psyche and motor functions.³⁰

You see, I think it's a faulty word, I don't like it as such. But yes, Rhythmics is by definition a psychomotor education, but with music as its basis. Both in France and Switzerland they do have

in Germany and he was forbidden to come back to Hellerau, where a large part of his German students abjured him, and loudly rejected him. The German government then prohibited the promotion or advertising of his name, and many years would pass before Jaques-Dalcroze went back to, or had any contact with, Germany, except for connections with a very small number of faithful disciples [M-LB].

²⁹ For more information on arrhythmia, see Jaques-Dalcroze (1919/1967, 1942).

³⁰ More information can be found in the European Psychomotricity Journal, which was founded in 2008: <http://www.psychomotor.gr>. The 7th International Conference of Psychomotricity 'Psychomotor Therapy and Motivation to Physical Activity' took place in April 2016: <http://en.psychomot.cz>

trainings in psychomotricity, which I don't know very well except that they are somewhat like second or third cousins to a Dalcroze training! They are probably more learned than we are in all the vocabulary, the theory, the conceptual knowledge of all the neuromotor details.

I know they sometimes use music or songs, but it's one tool among others. In Dalcroze you have the music as the very fundamental tool, you know, that provokes reactions, calms or excites, or guides, channels, we say. As much as you can help him that way, you may also disrupt a child by playing unsuitably. For instance, you ask him to hit four times with one hand, four times with the other hand. After a while, if you play correctly, he doesn't need to count anymore, he feels the moment when it has to change hands because the music says so: four here, four there. This way he can put his attention on other things than counting, like feeling the nuances or varying the tempo. You see? But if you lose your regular four-bar structure, you can make him go wrong, because your music counts may be three, and he counts four. I happened to attend such a lesson, it was an Orff course in Paris, in which the teacher had the children sing a song in 4/4 while she mistakenly conducted in 3/4, quite unaware. So music has to be a help. Often you can tell a child, through music, things that he will not understand through words. Depending how you play a melody, for instance, a child who is otherwise always ready to do something else, to lose his attention, when we want him to go along on his activity, if he listens and hears that the music is not ended yet, if he expects it will last longer, he will be carried on to keep going instead of stopping after a few tries.

And so on. There are many, many ways the music will help him to find his balance also. The fact that Eurhythmics starts from where you are, how you are, at whatever stage; you have many children that are too slow, for instance, the mother will always tell them to hurry up, they are always late, always made to hurry. This is terribly uncomfortable. But if we play the piano, sustaining his own tempo, the child feels comfortable with his own slowness, and why not? And then little by little we can push it a little bit, invite him, through music, to increase his speed and accompany him at this quicker pace. And so the power of sound and music is much bigger than we expect, sometimes, and so I think this is interesting. For me it is the most interesting thing! Of course it always refers to a state of being or to organic movement.

JH: And what's the role of improvisation and creativity on behalf of the pupil or the student? Because obviously music can incite, it can stimulate, it can channel, it can guide. So in your experience, how did you encourage the children themselves to create with music or to improvise, in movement or in music?

M-LB: I didn't much. What I observed is that the children wanted to work usually in the field where they felt less able. They want to be performing, to succeed in what they are doing. So, first I ask the child. I may advise him, but I usually will make him choose. For instance, "What do you want to do today? Here are my materials, which one do we take?" So he has a choice, he often comes saying first: "Oh, I want to go and do this and that again like we tried last week!", because he badly wants to eventually succeed. Very often, children don't choose the things they are already good at, they want to get better in their weak areas.

I had a little girl who was severely handicapped in her walking; she had a motor cerebral infirmity [cerebral palsy]. To lift her feet was very painful for her. And so she wanted to be able to step across something. There was a rope at hand and she wanted to be able to cross it. [*Marie-Laure stands up to demonstrate.*] But I fixed it too high for her. I noticed it almost at once, so it was my fault. I told her, I insisted. But she would not give up. She wanted to try again and again, and I had to find a way to distract her and during that short time I fixed the rope a little lower without her noticing, so she was eventually able to cross it. Very often I had children wanting to succeed at any price, even when they could have chosen something easier.

When there was a group, it was not exactly the same because we had to agree on something we would do together or maybe we might do what one particular child chose and everyone did the same thing, for instance a ball exercise. We also did imagination games, like we take a stick and say – "Let's pretend it's not a stick, what is it?" And someone says – "Oh, it's a fork", or someone, "It's a flute", or so on, using it in the ways they suggested. Or they invented suggestions for the exercises, for instance "When I say hopp, you go backwards, and when I say another hopp what could you do?" Or, "When the piano says hopp you jump, and on the next hopp you do something else, like what?"³¹ Or they invent a position when the

³¹ 'Hipp' and 'hopp' are commands in quick reaction exercises, one of the classic elements of a Dalcroze education. The commands may be linked to any outcome (change of direction, change of speed, use of a different

music stops, they become a new statue or they invent another position, they find a new way of carrying objects, a new way of walking, things like that, for creativity. Or, with flat coloured sticks, they make up a drawing on the floor, trying to place them in time, following the tempo. Or again, they help me build a trail with hoops, chairs, benches, pieces of wood and ropes, and they walk over it (or under it) in their own manner (crawling, jumping, tip-toeing), then they do it again, with or without modification, according to my or others' suggestions.

Except for very small loud objects, like little cymbals, triangles, sticks or drums, as part of a rhythm, communication or self-control exercises, I didn't have them playing musical instruments. Some of them liked singing and I took this into account, but, with rare exceptions, this was not music tuition. It's rather the effect of music on them – and on their ability to follow, produce or invent rhythms or adapted movements, keeping them, and varying them – that I emphasised and trained.³²

JH: It's the internalisation of the music that is important. Through movement, the music is...

M-LB: Well, the final aim of therapy through Rhythmics is that success occurs once you can get rid of music, you see?! The music is here to help them become aware. It speaks for them. It gives them a sound image of what the movement is or should be, how long it lasts, how strong it is, and helps them to carry on this movement. But eventually the success occurs once the music is no longer necessary for the child being able to succeed. It is not supposed to remain a crutch forever. In other words, the aim is not that the child

part of the body etc.). Using two distinct sounds, in themselves meaningless, allows for any instruction to be attached to them temporarily.

³² The "music" we aim to, is what Jaques-Dalcroze named "music in the Greek sense of the word", that is the Harmony between Gesture (movement and expression of one's body), Word (movement and expression of one's thought) and Sound (movement and expression of one's soul). This is also what he aimed at in fighting arrhythmia. This, for him, was the main *raison d'être* of Eurhythmics. In other words, through music (mainly but not only), to try and help the child reach a better body-mind-feeling balance and, also, more concretely, help him to develop better agility, attention, sense of orientation, self-control, and help him to be able to adapt himself to different situations, to deal with the surrounding space, to get on with others. [M-LB]

becomes a musician or that he learns music, the aim is that some lasting change be brought about in his behaviour, his movements, or his acting and thinking, for the best.

JH: It develops his own resources.

M-LB: His own resources, with the help of rhythm and sound, which makes him acquire this rhythm inside himself, and then keep it inside himself.

JH: And even though you're entraining a particular movement, what would you say about the relationship of that to the mental or the emotional? Because even though it's a physical thing, is there also an element of satisfaction, pleasure?

M-LB: It depends on the children, but they mostly express excitement and/or pleasure when it is well done and when they are successful. For example, if they can bounce or catch a ball with just one hand instead of both and they realise all the progress they achieved, you know? And they feel joy when they progress from throwing a big ball to a smaller one, and they notice that it works.³³

There's always a new challenge to try, but the idea is to attain good anticipation, good sensation, the right degree of energy, and so with observation and explanation, and with the help of music, you can really act upon their use of energy, their use of space and their time awareness until they feel more alert, more empowered and consciously comfortable. I think this form of therapy through music is really effective.

And, you know, this is the aim of Rhythmics as such, not only of therapy; it's this same idea: putting the sensation, feeling and consciousness of the different parameters of music inside the body, it's what Jaques-Dalcroze wanted for his students and while doing that, they were learning music, they could study music and they soon were able to make good music. So when he says 'for the music', it means 'for the sake of music', for music's benefit,

³³ As Jaques-Dalcroze wrote, "Joy is attained with the first step towards progress"(1921/1967: 101) and "Joy arises in the child the moment his faculties are liberated from any restraint, and he becomes conscious of his control over them, and decides on the direction in which that control shall be exercised...this joy increases in proportion as our powers develop" (1921/1967: 99). In these cases, Claire-Lise Dutoit more than once emphasised how happy they looked, saying: "What is right is beautiful". The growth of their self-esteem was obviously adding to their joy. [M-LB]

you see?³⁴ But with Dalcroze therapy you can stop there (meaning that you don't need to have music learning or music playing as an aim); later on, you may want, or not, to study or to play music, or to learn arts, sports or anything else; but just being the 'best oneself' as possible, at all personal levels, and being able to use one's body and mind as effective and adaptive tools whatever the situation, this – in both cases – is the fundamental *raison d'être* of Rhythmics.

JH: Mentioning the word 'therapy' makes me think about how your work during your lifetime has existed alongside other types of music therapy in Switzerland in particular. Could you say a little bit about that? Do you feel that your work has been separated from other traditions, distinct from them? How has Eurhythmics as therapy existed amongst other types of music therapy during your lifetime?

M-LB: Well I did not know much about the other forms of music therapy. We heard sometimes that under this umbrella of music therapy you have quite a lot of things. In the 70s I happened to take part in a music therapy weekend organised by a musician called Kurt Pahlen.³⁵ Different kinds of music therapy were put forward, including Dalcroze. One of them was to have people listen to well-chosen music in order to feel better. Another one was giving them an instrumentarium and inviting them to play sounds themselves. I also met Juliette Alvin and her cello. Yet another was Steiner music therapy, based on the idea that if you have people listen to an interval of a third it doesn't have the same effect upon you as listening to a fifth or an octave, and so on, so they have people play a little harp or listen to this little harp and let the sounds act upon themselves. All of them claim to be successful and probably are. But there are some that prompted doubts. The worst I attended, in this regard, during that weekend, was a very determined lady showing us a little film in which she was blowing a crumhorn's fierce sounds into the face of a patient; she claimed it was curing him. There are so many things, good or bad, that could be called music therapy!

³⁴ The reference here is to Jaques-Dalcroze's famous dictum that his method is meant to be an education through and into music ('par et pour la musique'). See Bachmann (1991).

³⁵ Kurt Pahlen (1907-2003), Austrian conductor, composer and musicologist.

JH: I'm aware that there is some interaction between music therapists in Switzerland and the Dalcroze teachers who are practising in this area. For example, recently there was a training weekend here at the Institut, which was delivered by a Dalcroze practitioner, but you also had a Swiss music therapist. So, do you feel this is important, this sort of interaction? Why would you choose to organise a weekend in that way?

M-LB: Yes, I think it's important to know about everything that exists. On the other hand, if someone goes into a specialism strong enough and deep enough, he or she will come into contact with all the others. In a discipline like Dalcroze Eurhythmics, in itself so wide, so multi-faceted, and likely to be influenced by external theories, it is first necessary to be well-anchored. I think the more we go to the basic, fundamental things in our method, the more we are keen to meet all these other 'methods' and take them into consideration. And then we can understand all these other ways of working and maybe also be enriched by these ideas. But if you give the students or young teachers all this at once, it makes a jam. And so I would say that Dalcroze Eurhythmics already has much to offer in itself, and often more than other practices or at least as much.

So it's important to know that what we do is not a mere addition to (nor a mixture of) everything that exists, but that it has very strong basic principles; and only then can one go and discover all what exists and enrich oneself. It seems to be a tendency today to collect all that we can and put one thing into another and forget about our own strengths. And if we lose them, I'm not confident at all that other practices will give them back to us.

JH: So in terms of your own career, you have maintained and taught these principles yourself for many years. And I think it was in the mid-1970s when you were invited to be the director of the Institut. Is that correct?

M-LB: No, this was in 1990, because once I left together with Claire-Lise Dutoit, I then achieved my licence in psychology in the university while we were out of the Institut. 1973 was my coming back to the Institut, where I resumed teaching in the professional curriculum for 17 more years, something like that, until I was then asked to become the next director of the Institut after

Dominique Porte, in 1990.³⁶ Then I still taught a little bit while I was the director, from 1990 to 2006.

JH: Okay. One question that came to me whilst you were talking was to do with filming. Do you know if anybody filmed Claire-Lise Dutoit's work in therapy?

M-LB: No, I don't think so. There may have been a project, but I don't remember.³⁷

JH: Or yours?

M-LB: No, no, never in therapy. I remember we had demonstration classes at times, namely in 1965 we had the demonstration in the Institut with a group of children from Claire-Lise's studio. I don't know of any film on this. No.

JH: Photographs perhaps?

M-LB: I'm not sure. It was not the fashion at this time, it was not much used then. Even the professional students' Plastique animée performances were very rarely filmed or photographed, alas!

JH: Okay, I think you've spoken a lot and you've given a lot. Thank you very much Marie-Laure.

M-LB: Thanks to you also.

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³⁶ Dominique Porte (1928-2010) was director of the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze 1971-1990.

³⁷ A film on 'Psycho-motor re-education by means of Dalcroze Eurhythmics', by Dutoit and Feldmann, is mentioned in *Le Rythme*, the journal of the International Union of Dalcroze Teachers, now known as FIER (UIPD 1964: 66), but the authors have not been able to locate it.