Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Educational Innovation and Psychological Insights
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.25416

A Review on the Development of Eurhythmics and Its Application in Chinese Primary School Music Education

Yinuo Liu

School of Music Education, Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, China
spj66@126.com

Abstract: Eurhythmics breaks away from the traditional 'desk-based' teaching model, emphasizing the experience and expression of music through body movements to promote harmonious physical and mental development. This approach has not only had a significant impact on music education but has also demonstrated unique value in fields such as dance, special education and music therapy. This paper explores Eurhythmics from several dimensions, including its origin and development, functional value, and application strategies in primary school music classrooms. It further proposes practical suggestions for applying Eurhythmics in primary school music education, aiming to provide a reference for music educators and to better support the practice of basic music education in China.

Keywords: Eurhythmics, music pedagogy, primary school music education, Dalcroze

1. Introduction

The Eurhythmics was founded by the Swiss music educator Émile Jaques-Dalcroze in the early 20th century [1]. It broke away from the traditional music education model that relied solely on a single sense and integrated auditory, visual, and kinesthetic senses in an organic manner [2]. This approach strengthened the connection between the learner's body, mind, and music, opening up new ways to experience and express music. As a result, it has been widely spread internationally [2]. Since its introduction to China in the 1980s, Eurhythmics has gradually been promoted and applied in basic education [3]. However, due to the current lack of theoretical research in China, uneven professional qualities of teachers, and limitations of the teaching environment, the development of Eurhythmics in primary school music education still faces significant challenges [4]. This article, based on the origin, development, and functional value of Eurhythmics, and considering the current situation of primary school music education in China, explores the application strategies of this teaching method in music classrooms. It also examines the existing problems and potential solutions from the perspective of theoretical research, teacher training, and teaching environment. It puts forward reasonable suggestions, aiming at injecting vitality into the development of music education.

2. The emergence and development of Eurhythmics

The Dalcroze Method was formed during the First and Second World Wars. The dramatic changes in the social situation plunged neutral Switzerland into the trauma of war, economic turmoil and

© 2026 The Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.25416

spiritual crisis. Society was filled with doubts about traditional values and a longing for the awakening of humanity [4]. This situation prompted Dalcroze to reflect deeply on the problems of music education at that time. While serving as a professor of harmony and solfège at the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève, Dalcroze found that some students, despite having superb playing skills, were unable to feel and express music [5]. Their responses were mechanical, lacking a perception of rhythm and harmony. He gradually realized the drawbacks of traditional teaching: the separation of music theory from actual sound and musical perception, and the division between technical practice and artistic expression. This led him to consider the relationship between the body and music. He gradually developed the theory that the essence of music education is the experience and expression of sound movement and emotion, which is based on the rhythmic movement of the combination of music and the body. Dalcroze believed that human body contains all the elements needed to respond to sound and emotion. Thus, any musical idea can be expressed through the body, and any body movement can be transformed into a corresponding musical form [5]. Dalcroze required learners to experience and express music by leading the body's natural movements through listening to music, emphasizing the integration of musical form elements with time, space, and energy in body movement, and cultivating learners' intuitive understanding of the essence of music.

Dalcroze's music education philosophy set a model for music education reform in the 20th century, spreading widely across the world and directly influencing the formation of the Orff and Kodály teaching methods , which holds innovative and pioneering significance [6]. To this day, the Dalcroze music education system has established training centers and music schools in many countries, and its educational philosophy and ideas have permeated the art education practices of different nations. Since the 1980s, China has begun to introduce and draw on advanced foreign music education theories and methods [7]. With the vigorous development of international academic exchange activities, renowned Eurhythmics experts have held master classes and lectures in China, and the practice and development of Eurhythmics in Chinese school music education have demonstrated remarkable vitality [8]. However, due to the lack of analysis of the Dalcroze Method from its essence and origin, and the failure to explain its value as a teaching method based on the historical environment and specific principles in which it was formed, the current understanding of the Dalcroze Method in China remains relatively partial and fragmented [9]. There are many misunderstandings in the understanding of the system from teaching philosophy, teaching objectives to teaching content and teaching methods, and these issues urgently need to be addressed [9].

3. The function of Eurhythmics in music education

3.1. Enhance emotional experience in music

In music activities, engaging in musically synchronized movement can enhance and optimize the emotional experience of the participants. Traditional music learning mainly relies on auditory, visual, and tactile senses. The participants' experience of musical emotions is limited and monotonous. However, Eurhythmics incorporates kinesthetic senses in addition to auditory, visual, and tactile senses, enabling the participants' inner emotions to be expressed through the motor system. The addition of this sensory channel makes musical perception and emotional experience more direct, richer, and more intense [4]. This phenomenon of multi-sensory interweaving is described by Merleau-Ponty as "synesthesia perception", referring to the spontaneous triggering of another or multiple sensory experiences by the stimulation of one sense. The new synesthesia that includes kinesthetic senses not only brings participants rich musical emotional experiences, but also stimulates other expression methods in the participants' practice [4]. For example, when singing the

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.25416

Anhui folk song "Fengyang Flower Drum", adding movements such as quivering knees and slight nodding helps students better experience its cheerful and joyful emotions. Through synesthesia, it can also make the students' singing timbre more lively and elastic, thus enabling a more accurate experience and expression of emotions.

3.2. Enhance the understanding of the basic elements and cultural connotations of music

Eurhythmics can enhance the subject's understanding of musical basic elements, such as pitch, rhythm, tempo, structure, etc [10].. These musical elements are abstract in nature, and they are often trained through listening and singing in traditional music teaching. However, relying solely on auditory and visual understanding of these elements is one-sided and abstract, making it difficult for students to gain an intuitive grasp of them. Eurhythmics takes auditory perception as the starting point and expresses basic music elements through body movements, converting the abstract musical form into concrete, intuitive, and visual images [11]. For example, different heights can represent different vocal ranges; different gait patterns can represent corresponding rhythms; and different parts of the body can simulate different timbres, etc. These transformations of the abstract nature of musical elements into visual and physical forms help strengthen students' understanding and cognition of the form elements of music [12].

Eurhythmics can deepen students' understanding of the connotation and culture of music [13]. The unique expression methods in Eurhythmics can reflect the corresponding era background, social culture, regional characteristics, and ethnic style of a music work [4]. For example, in the Tibetan song "On the Golden Mountain of Beijing", the music expresses the joy of the Tibetan people after experiencing peaceful liberation and democratic reform, as they finally rise up, conveying their admiration and love for Chairman Mao and their anticipation and yearning for a new life. If students only explore the emotions and connotations of the music through listening or singing, their understanding will remain relatively simple. However, when traditional dance movements with Tibetan elements, such as retreating steps, three-step leaps, and natural swinging of sleeves are incorporated into music activities, students gain a deeper understanding of the physical posture of Tibetan people in harsh natural environment, as well as the optimistic, passionate, and vigorous national spirit, and their reverence, gratitude, and praise for the Communist Party of China. In this way, students' emotional connection to the music becomes more genuine and comprehensive, and their understanding of the musical connotation of the work is also more profound.

3.3. Enhance communication and collaboration skills

Collaborative ensemble work is integral to Eurhythmics pedagogy, including group eurhythmics, call and response, community dance, and ensemble rhythm choreography. These are all processes that involve communication and cooperation among participants. During Eurhythmics activities, individuals convey their emotional states through facial expressions, body expressions, emotional states, action tension, and the use of space [4]. These insights influence others and affect their responses [10]. At the same time, variations in participants' actions help individuals recognize their differences from others, providing a reference for them and enabling them to clarify their own action expressions. According to the different requirements of teachers and students, the cooperative relationships among students show diverse forms such as leadership and accompaniment, and healthy competition [14]. For example, in group movement composition, in order to achieve the ultimate perfect effect, team members often need to participate in discussions, understand each other's ideas, go through practice and reflection, and finally reach a consensus. This is a process of

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.25416

students adjusting and adapting to each other to achieve tacit understanding, which can enhance their teamwork, communication, and expressive skills.

3.4. Enhance the harmonious development of the body and mind

Each individual is situated in a different social context and has distinct life experiences, which leads to differences in their perception and understanding of the external world, as well as in their expressions of inner emotions. Eurhythmics strengthens the connection between the individual's body and mind by engaging the body in musical practice activities [15]. As students accumulate their musical experiences in music practice activities, they gain a clearer understanding of how to use their body experiences, expressions, and emotional transmission. In this process, students develop a sense of self-identity, enhance their self-confidence, and experience great pleasure and satisfaction, thereby achieving harmonious development of the body and mind [16]. As Dalcroze said: "This method enables students to listen to their bodies and music, strengthening the dual perception of hearing and kinesthetic perception, breaking some habitual movement rules, and promoting the harmonious development of the entire personality" [17].

4. Application strategies of Eurhythmics in Chinese primary school music classrooms

4.1. Clarify the curriculum goals and determine the curriculum position

Currently, the application of Eurhythmics in primary school music education in China tends to be formalized, technicalized, and performance-oriented, neglecting the cultivation of students' core musical literacy and interest [2]. Given the background of the deepening promotion of new era quality-oriented education, Eurhythmics should return to its educational essence, focusing on developing students' core literacy, aesthetic taste, and practical ability. From a conceptual standpoint, it should de-emphasize formalized, technicalized, and performance-oriented rhythm teaching and design, and take students' autonomous, free, and natural experience and expression through Eurhythmics as the premise. This approach encourages students to express themselves individually and accumulate Eurhythmics experience [4].

At the same time, it is necessary to clearly define the relationship between Eurhythmics and dance. Dance belongs to a form of stage art performance, emphasizing formal beauty, and is presented on the stage after strict drama arrangement and character portrayal. In contrast, Eurhythmics serves as a tool for subjective experience and expression of emotions, it is grounded in autonomy and naturalness, pursuing individuality and uniqueness, and does not require outstanding physical skills and performance foundation [18]. Anyone can use their body to experience and express music. If Eurhythmics is confused with dance and drama, it will violate the musical essence of Eurhythmics and cannot fulfill the teaching function of music education.

4.2. Based on the physical and mental development patterns of students, complete the teaching design

There are significant differences in the physiology and psychology of students of different age groups. Students in lower grades are in a stage of bone and muscle development can flexibly perform simple movements such as standing, walking, running, and jumping [19]. However, they struggle with controlling complex multi-person collaboration and actions that require control, as their coordination is relatively poor. At this stage, students are easily attracted by music with a clear rhythm and intense emotions, and they tend to move freely in response to the music, often

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.25416

expressing themselves through figurative rhythmic methods. Therefore, when designing teaching activities, teachers should base on the current psychological characteristics of students, consider the feasibility and safety of the movements, as well as the students' understanding of the content, and design relatively simple elements of Eurhythmics for emotional experience and expression [20]. For students in higher grades, their physical development gradually matures, their minds become increasingly mature, their coordination is constantly improving, and they have certain experiences in Eurhythmics. At this stage, teaching should avoid the tendencies of infantilization, over-literalness, and over-dance-orientation. Instead, greater focus should be placed on teaching abstract concepts and improvisational rhythm, guiding students to consciously perceive and control body movements, encouraging individual expression, and inspiring them to use their imagination to explore the possibilities of different spatial movements with their bodies.

4.3. Based on autonomy, focus on individualized development

Eurhythmics is the process by which students, while listening to music, spontaneously experience and express emotions through body movement, influenced by factors such as the current environment and mood. Under the premise of autonomy, Eurhythmics can enhance students' musical experience and achieve the goal of education, and only by autonomously engaging in Eurhythmics activities can individualized expression be realized [15].

In teaching, educators should actively guide and stimulate students' emotions, allowing them to use eurhythmics freely for experience and expression. Teachers should build on natural body rhythms instinctively created by students as the foundation, selecting and adapting them for application. This is the most natural and comfortable Eurhythmics way for students, without technical obstacles, and can enable students to better experience, perceive and express music. At the same time, as independent individuals, students have different understandings and experiences of music due to differences in their personalities, living environments, and social experiences. The diverse expression methods of eurhythmics can directly reflect students' different understandings of music [9]. Therefore, teachers should respect students' individualized expression and encourage them to form their own unique styles of eurhythmics expression.

4.4. The current application situation and future prospects of Eurhythmics in Chinese primary school music education

Currently, Eurhythmics is at a stage of development in primary school music education that is characterized by both opportunities and challenges [21]. With the evolution of music education concepts, some schools and teachers have keenly recognized the unique value of Eurhythmics and have integrated it into classroom practice. However, from the overall application situation, the limitations are still significant. First, the theoretical research is weak. Exploration of the essence and principles of Eurhythmics in China is still insufficient. Most research focuses on the basic concepts and contents of the Dalcroze Method, lacking cross-disciplinary analysis and research on Eurhythmics and theoretical reconstruction based on the Chinese educational context. This has led to a tendency towards technicalization and formalization in teaching practice and makes it difficult to fully exert the core functions of Eurhythmics [4]. Second, the differences in teachers' professional qualities have become a key constraint [22]. Most teachers have not systematically studied the Dalcroze music education system and are unable to explore the educational functions of Eurhythmics from multiple perspectives. Teaching often remains at the imitation level, making it difficult to build a scientific and coherent teaching system. These issues prevent the unique functions

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.25416

of Eurhythmics from being fully utilized, affecting the cultivation of students' core competencies and hindering the normalization and high-quality development of Eurhythmics teaching in primary school music classrooms. Third, limitations in the teaching environment are significant. In Eurhythmics activities, both spatial range of movement training and static body expression require sufficient space [2]. However, most of the music classrooms in primary schools in China are mostly in a "desk-based" fixed layout, which restricts students' movements and reduces the flexibility of their actions when participating in Eurhythmics, leading to classroom disorder. This, in turn, limits students' music experience and creative expression.

In response to these problems, the author proposes the following suggestions:

• At the theoretical level, it is necessary to deeply explore and analyze the essence and principles of Eurhythmics from interdisciplinary perspectives such as psychology, education, brain science, and exercise physiology, conduct more scientific and systematic analysis and research on it, and thereby provide solid theoretical support for teaching practice.

• In terms of teacher training, universities should offer courses on Dalcroze Eurhythmics to students majoring in music education, systematically teaching the teaching method of this system, which can enable them to better participate in music teaching practices in the future, effectively improve teaching quality, and promote the stable development of Eurhythmics in primary school music education [8]. In-service teachers should continuously improve their professional qualities and teaching abilities through special training and teaching observation.

• At the level of resource allocation, the state should increase investment in education funds, improve the teaching environment, and create material conditions for the regular implementation of eurhythmics teaching, so that Eurhythmics can be popularized in every primary school music classroom as soon as possible.

5. Conclusion

Based on the basic concepts and educational functions of Eurhythmics, this article proposes three core strategies for effectively integrating it into primary school music teaching: (1) clearly define the subject goals and determine the teaching positioning; (2) design teaching based on the laws of students' physical and mental development; (3) promote individualized development through student autonomy. Currently, the deepening of Eurhythmics in China faces three challenges: theoretical research remains at a relatively shallow level, lacking local reconstruction; teachers' understanding of Eurhythmics is one-sided, and teaching often remains as superficial imitation; the "desk-based" classroom layout restricts the full extension of limbs, affecting the experience effect. In response to these challenges, this article suggests making efforts in theoretical research, teacher training, and teaching environment to break through its limitations in China's development. With the continuous deepening of quality-oriented education, Eurhythmics still has broad development potential in primary school music education. Only with the dual support of theory and practice can this teaching method achieve the transformation from form to substance and from auxiliary to core.

References

[1] Zhou Bei. Research on the Comprehensive View of Music Curriculum with Multi-disciplinary Penetration [D]. Shanghai Normal University, 2004.

[2] Chen Xu. Exploration of Applying Dalcroze Method to Basic Music Education in China [D]. Soochow University, 2014.

[3] Wang Lixin. Research on the Localization of Orff Music Teaching Method [D]. Northeast Normal University, 2012.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.25416

[4] Pan Meng. The View of Emotional Expression in Body Movement Rhythm in School Music Education in China. Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Press, 2025.01.
[5] Cai Juemin, Yang Limei. Dalcroze Music Education Theory and Practice [M]. Shanghai Education Press, 2011.
[6] Zhou Hui. Research on the Application of Dalcroze Music Teaching Method in Sight-singing and Ear-training Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools [D]. Hunan Normal University, 2012.
[7] Lin Yujing. Research on the Journal "Chinese Music Education" (1989-2015) from the Perspective of Teacher Education Research [D]. Fujian Normal University, 2016.
[8] Liu Kai. Prospects for the Development of the Dalcroze Music Education System in China: Thoughts on the Lecture and Demonstration Teaching of British Teacher Karyn Greenham's Dalcroze Teaching Method [J]. People's Music, 2015, (11): 52-54.
[9] Chen Rong. From Audition to Vision and Kinesthetic Sense [D]. Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2008.
[10] Leena M J, Leena H. Embodiment in musical knowing: how body movement facilitates learning within Dalcroze Eurhythmics [J]. British Journal of Music Education, 2004, 21(2): 199-214.
[11] An Zhichao. Case Analysis and Educational Suggestions on Children's Art Appreciation Activities [D]. Shenyang Normal University, 2014.
[12] Chen Wenbo. Application of Dalcroze Music Teaching Method in Primary School Music Appreciation Teaching [D]. Huazhong Normal University, 2018.
[13] Wu Bingxu, Ma Yunpeng. The Connotation and Constituent Elements of Core Literacy in Compulsory Education Music [J]. Journal of Nanjing University of the Arts (Music and Performance Edition), 2021, (02): 175-179.
[14] Liu Kai. A Brief Discussion on the Application of Jacques Dalcroze's Eurhythmics Pedagogy in Junior High School Music Classes under the Guidance of the "New System" Music Teaching Method [D]. Central Conservatory of Music, 2012.
[15] Chen Rong. On the Relationship and Function of Actions and Music in Music Education [D]. Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2019.
[16] Merwe D V L. A Theory of Joyful Experiences in Dalcroze Eurhythmics [J]. International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being, 2025, 20(1): 2468050.
[17] Dalcroze. Rhythm, Music, Education [M]. Lin Meiliang, Translated. Yang Lin Culture Co., Ltd., 2009.
[18] Li Mo. A Revolution of Moving Music Teaching - On the "Movement" of Dalcroze Eurhythmics Pedagogy [J]. Chinese Music, 2019, (05): 126-131 + 185.
[19] Pan Meng. On the Naturalistic Education View in Chinese Primary School Music Education [D]. Central Conservatory of Music, 2011.
[20] Lang Yaping. The Implications of Dalcroze Music Education System for Primary School Music Education in China [J]. Art Sea, 2009, (01): 87-88.
[21] Lin Lin. Research on the Analysis of Music Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools under the New Curriculum Standards [D]. Harbin Normal University, 2015.
[22] Jiang Shanshan. Analysis and Countermeasures of the Current Situation of Music Subject Teaching Theory [J]. Contemporary Music, 2016, (03): 1-4.