DALCROZE LESSON PLAN

Michael Joviala, Diplôme Supérieur

Grades 3 through 5, community music school setting

This is a lesson plan I might use in the beginning of the year. In my school, some students will be brand new to music lessons and Dalcroze, some will be experienced at both, but most will be in between. I try to plan activities that will allow me to gauge their experience levels and their comfort with movement and singing.

In the first few weeks, I try to incorporate dynamics and tempo into the mix, even if the main subject is something more rhythmic or metrical. In this lesson there is a lot of either matching or not matching something or someone (also something that happens a lot in the beginning of the year.)

I let them experiment on their own for a while, encouraging as many possibilities as possible, hoping that they get a good stretch too!

This age loves to be goofy, has a passion to be "right," and loves knowing and exploiting rules. They have a need for independence tempered by a strong desire not to stand out from everyone else. Yes, there are contradictions! Even though I don't always get the balance between playfulness and challenge right, it is one of my favorite ages to work with.

Movement warm-up: Dynamics

- Practice making poses with 4 body parts touching the floor; 3 parts touching; 2 parts and finally 1 part.
- Association: When the music is forte, make poses with 4 parts; mezzo forte=3 parts; mezzo piano=2 parts; piano=1 part.

I sometimes improvise at the piano for this one; I have also used Brahms's Hungarian Dance No. 5 successfully.

Tempo

Move a different tempo (or way) from everyone else. If you think the piano is playing your tempo, continue. If not, stop.

I encourage them to watch each other carefully, so that they truly have a unique tempo. This promotes a kind of "active watching" along with their active listening.

Beat & division of 2 in simple meter

- Reaction (and inhibition): Move the beat with locomotor or non-locomotor movement as you like. When you hear a set of two divisions (for example two eighth notes with a quarter note beat), stop. When you hear another set, start again.
- Group activity with Rondino by Daniel Gottlob Türk. Partner A is the left hand, and partner B is the right hand. When the rhythm is the beat (quarter notes), walk; when the rhythm is divisions of 2 (eighth notes), orbit your partner as they walk.
- Notate examples of beat and division on the board; students speak with desired rhythmic language rhythmic unit that is being pointed to.
  - Variation: make two groups (and two sets of rhythms on the board); each group follows their leader, speaking (or playing with percussion) the desired rhythmic unit.
- Dissociation: practice stepping beats and (with sticks or chopsticks) clicking the divisions. Practice the reverse.
  - Variation: (reaction) "Change" = reverse hands and feet.

Cool down + vocal technique

- Lie down. At the signal, hum a sound as softly as you can, for as long as you can.
- Repeat with different pitches, adding the following variations:
  - While humming your pitch, see if you can hear your neighbor's pitch.
  - If you think your pitch is higher than your neighbors, raise both hands; if lower, cross both hands; if the same do nothing.
  - Slide up or down until you think you are singing the same pitch as your neighbor.

Anatomy of a Lesson

We've published a lesson plan created and used by an experienced Dalcroze teacher, making some annotations along the way to help deconstruct the activities and the ideas behind them. Annotations by the author.

This age loves this game: it isn't overly expressive; there is a clear way to "get it right"; and if they are unsure, they can immediately see when to stop and start by watching their peers.

This piece has a good mix of quarters and eighths in both hands with just the right amount of predictability. You might only be able to get the first 8 or 16 bars with some groups. Find the score for this piece on the next page.

Try this variation only if the class has good facility in both configurations.

Even children who are advanced musicians will sometimes be very self-conscious singers. In the beginning of the year, I like to do very exploratory vocal exercises so that they begin to get more comfortable with their singing voice. In addition to giving them a chance to cool down, this also gives me clues as to pitch perception.

Dalcroze Teaching Strategies & Techniques in this Lesson

association: coordinating two or more simultaneous elements (musical or otherwise—a beat, a rhythm, a touch, or a gesture)

dissociation: coordinating two or more dissimilar acts at the same time

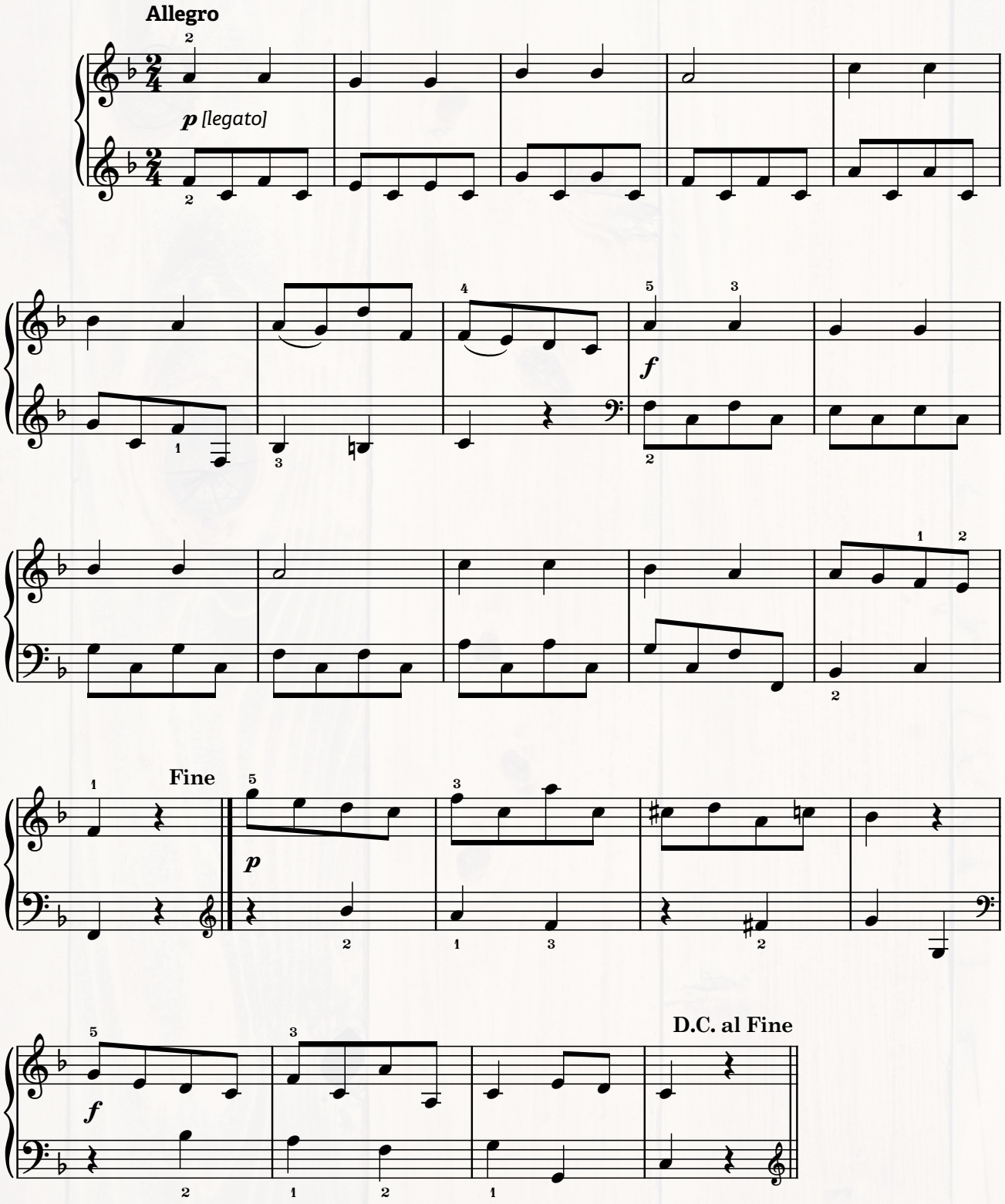
group activity: when students move, interact, and learn together

incitation refers to the sensation that inspires the body to move or to do, while **inhibition** refers to the desire to stop

reaction: responding to a signal (musical or otherwise)

Michael Joviala is a composer/improviser/performer and educator in New York City. In 2020, he earned the diplôme supérieur from the Institut Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva and is the director of the Dalcroze Teacher Training Program at the Lucy Moses School in New York. He teaches Dalcroze eurhythmics to students of all ages at the Lucy Moses School of Music, the Diller-Quaile School of Music, the Dalcroze School of Music and Movement in Dallas, Texas, and in workshops worldwide. He is the creator and music director of the improvising music and dance ensemble, Locomotors. He has called Brooklyn, New York, home since 1992.

Rondino

Group Activity Example

Daniel Gottlob Türk (1750–1813)