

# Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics as a field of study in Vienna

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## Early traces

The artistic-pedagogical field of Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics as we know it today has its origins in movements for cultural renewal at the beginning of the 20th century. Breaking away from traditions in the arts at this time, these movements cast the human body with its diverse forms of expression in a new light.

Against this background, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, composer and professor of composition and solfège, introduced musical movement exercises to his students at the Geneva Conservatory. He observed that when music and movement were combined, students were able to develop a deeper musicality and increase the expressiveness of their instrumental playing. Dalcroze expanded his exercises, which were initially carried out as experiments, into a method of his own. He called his method 'rhythmic gymnastics' ('rhythmics' for short), since he saw rhythm as the link between music and movement. In a short time, the new method of 'music education through movement' according to Dalcroze became internationally known.

**1909** Jaques-Dalcroze received an invitation to present his work at the K & K Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. As can be seen from the archives, his lecture, which included a teaching demonstration by his Geneva students, is likely to have convinced the college of its significance:

Heller (1994, p. 62) writes that Dalcroze developed a method of music education for children and young people that broke new ground throughout Europe, a method that allows one to experience the form and essence of music through body rhythms and thereby to release creative forces of the soul at the same time. He held the opinion that the music pedagogical significance of this method gave new impulses to elementary music education.

The idea to introduce the new method for the benefit of students in instrumental classes, as well as of those in opera and drama training was born (Heller, 1994, p. 62).

**1911** a school for Dalcroze was established in Hellerau near Dresden, where people interested in the new method could receive an education 'to music and through music' (Dalcroze). Within a short time, the school acquired a glittering reputation and attracted students from numerous European and non-European countries as well as renowned artists and public figures. (Ring, Steinmann, 1997, p. 110) One of

these students was Gertrude Wiesenthal, who was sent to Dalcroze in Hellerau on a scholarship from the Vienna Academy of Music and Performing Arts. She was trained in Hellerau as a teacher in his method (Heller, 1994, p. 64).

**1914** Dalcroze returned from Hellerau to Geneva after the outbreak of the Second World War and subsequently founded his own institute where he devoted himself to the development of his method (Ring, Steinmann, 1997, p. 110).

**1914/15** the plan of the Music Academy in Vienna could be realised: 'Rhythmic Gymnastics according to Dalcroze', led by Gertrude Wiesenthal, was introduced as a compulsory, subsidiary subject in the preparatory courses in piano and violin. Students of the teacher training courses attended the same courses as observers (Heller, 1994, p. 65).

In the following years, the teaching of rhythmic gymnastics was extended to the lower study years of the drama and opera school (Archive of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, 1919, Kt.14/09-45), as well as to the training in artistic dance, with children and adults taught by the Wiesenthal sisters – Gertrude in rhythmic gymnastics and Grete in dance (Heller, 1994, p. XVII).

**1919** the Hellerau school was continued by two Dalcroze students, Christine Baer-Frissell and Ernst Ferand (Ring, Steinmann, 1997, p. 110).

**1923** a guest performance by the Hellerau School took place at the Vienna Konzerthaus as part of the 'Week of Modern Music'. In their artistic programme, which was very well received by the audience and the press, the pupils presented choreographies to the two first performances of *The Wooden Prince* by Bela Bartók and *L'homme et son désir* by Darius Milhaud (Chladek, 1975, p. 62). A second evening featured a presentation of the school's pedagogical work, which led to the invitation to relocate the Hellerau school to Laxenburg near Vienna (Chladek, 1975, p. 64).

**1925/26** the Hellerau School relocated with pupils and teachers from Dresden to Laxenburg near Vienna, where it was called 'Schule Hellerau-Laxenburg'. The School Hellerau-Laxenburg offered three training courses: *rhythmics* (director: Christine Baer-Frissell, and from 1932 Brigitte Müller), *gymnastics* and *dance* (director: Valeria Kratina, and from 1930 Rosalia Chladek) (Witoszynskyj, Schindler, Schneider, 2011, p. 8).

The head of the school, Baer-Frissell was a charismatic personality. Her artistic-pedagogical orientation towards rhythmics was convincing and her open-mindedness towards progressive educational concepts opened doors to the educational institutions in Vienna. She led further education courses there and worked together with Montessori teachers. In addition, she presented lectures in

Austria and abroad, wrote articles and created radio broadcasts through which she wanted to introduce rhythmics teaching to her listeners (Tervooren, 1999, p. 238). With the impressive variety of her public relations work, Baer-Frissell made a significant contribution to the awareness and further dissemination of rhythmics as an artistic-pedagogical subject.

The School Hellerau-Laxenburg organised annual summer courses and further training for teachers, musicians, music teachers, dancers and dance teachers and other interested persons from various professional groups. Guests from abroad were also invited to the summer courses and training, guests such as Mimi Scheiblauber (Zurich) for rhythmics and Carl Orff (Munich) for percussion (Witoszynskij, Schindler, Schneider, 2011, p. 8).

The school achieved artistic success and international fame with numerous performances in Austria and abroad. The Hellerau-Laxenburg dance group were permanently engaged at the classical festivals in Paestum and Syracuse and was awarded a prize at the First International Competition for Choreography in Paris in 1932 (Alexander, Groll, 1975, p. 100).

**1939** The closure of the School Hellerau-Laxenburg was a result of the pressures of the political situation. The offer to continue the school under the new rulers were not accepted, as the existing ideals of the school with regard to the image of the independent, creative person would have had to be abandoned (Oberzaucher, Giel, 2002, p. 81).

**1941** the Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna appointed Brigitte Müller, who was trained in Hellerau and Hellerau-Laxenburg, to the Department of Music Education (Archive of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, 1942, Kt.47/09-45). In the following years, she taught ear training to the students in the school music programme as well as rhythm and ear training in the dance department (Müller, oral history).

**1942/43** the Department of Music Education established a three-year seminar for rhythmics education under the direction of Brigitte Müller. Together with this seminar, a rhythmics course for lay people was also offered (Heller, 1994, p. 782f). However, more and more students were called up for military service, so that the number of students was constantly dwindling (Archive of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, AHM ME P5 K).

**1944** a performance by the rhythmics students took place at the Music Academy under the direction of Brigitte Müller. The head of the Department of Music Education, Erich Marckhl, wrote to that Brigitte Müller and mentioned that the

Evening displayed in a comprehensive and convincing manner the value and nature of her work (Marckhl, 1944, not published).

**1945/46** the Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna discontinued the training in the subject of 'Rhythmic Education' which had been under development until then (Heller, 1994, p. 94).

**1947** state examinations in the subject, a subject which no longer existed, were approved, (Archive of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, Zl.207/Res 1947) in order to enable students who had had to interrupt their studies in previous years to graduate.

**1952** Rosalia Chladek was appointed as the new head of the dance department at the Vienna Music Academy after ten years as head of dance education at the Vienna Conservatory (Alexander, Groll, 1975, p. 100).

After her training in Hellerau, Chladek successfully turned to expressive dance and dedicated herself to her choreographic work. In her pedagogical work, she developed her own 'Modern Dance Education'. She had a high regard for rhythmic and remained a strong advocate for its approaches. After years together with Brigitte Müller at the School Hellerau-Laxenburg, the two subject representatives continued their collaboration at the Vienna Conservatory from 1941. They then continued their collaboration at the Academy of Music.

In the years that followed, Chladek encouraged Brigitte Müller to set up her own rhythmic training in the rooms of the dance department in the Gardetrakt/Schloss Schönbrunn, in Vienna's thirteenth district (Müller, oral history).

**1959** Brigitte Müller proposed the establishment of a main subject at the Department of Music Education at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts, which was to serve the training of teachers for rhythmic education, as one of the most modern, successful educational methods in the musical field (Heller, 1997, p. 93). In the draft curriculum for the subject Rhythmic Education the following is written:

*Rhythmic education focuses on the experience of movement, and trains the body to become a skilful instrument. It brings the gradually developing sense of movement, which has been lost in almost all people, into a continuous, direct relationship with hearing. It leads the person who moves to the physical experience of musical processes and provides an inner view of the forces and laws of music. Since rhythmic by its very nature extends beyond the boundaries of music education into other artistic areas, it could form the basis for all areas of education due to its universality.* (Heller, 1997, p. 93)

### **On the development of rhythmic studies since 1959/60**

(annual reports and study guides for the years 1955–2006 can be found at [www.ac.at/mbm/mbe](http://www.ac.at/mbm/mbe))

**1959/60** the Department of Music Education established a major in Rhythmics Education. The duration of the study was six semesters, analogous to the studies for instrumental teachers.

The head was Brigitte Müller, who taught the subjects Rhythmics, Ear Training and Piano Improvisation. Rosalia Chladek, head of the dance department, took over the movement classes that the rhythm students attended together with the dance students. Due to difficult study conditions in the early years, there were no degrees awarded in Rhythmics for the first few years.

**1964** the first female graduates successfully completed their studies with the teaching qualification examination for rhythmic education.

**1964/65** parallel to the existing branch of study of six semesters (study programme DI), a second branch of study of four semesters was established for teachers who completed their training (study programme DII). This measure, in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for Education and the Arts, was intended to meet the shortage of teachers so that the recently established subject of “Rhythmic-Musical Education” could be taught at educational institutions for kindergarten education (Niegl, 1989, p. 43f). In a simultaneous curriculum reform, the area of ‘pedagogy’ was reorganised and given more weight.

**1970/71** the Academy of Music and Performing Arts received university status through the Art University Organisation Act of 21.1.1970. Ingrid Giel (Berlin) took over from Brigitte Müller as director of the rhythmic education programme.

**1972/73** saw changes in the curriculum: analogous to the study programme for instrumental teachers (study programme B), the study programme Rhythmic-Musical Education was extended by one year: DI from three to four years, and DII from two to three years. This made it possible to expand the study content to include ‘Rhythmic-Musical Education in early childhood’ and ‘Rhythmics in Special Education’. In both these areas, increased career opportunities had been emerging for some time.

**1979** saw the discontinuation of the DII branch of study. This meant that only one D branch of study over eight semesters remained.

**1982/83** the curriculum was reformed again in terms of a reorientation of the content of rhythmic and movement teaching. Rudolf Konrad (Hanover) was called to Vienna as a visiting professor and arrived with a team of his graduates, among them Angelika Hauser and Ralph Illini.

**1983** the Arts University Studies Act stipulated that artistic studies had to be permeated by scientific work. Ralph Illini became the new director of studies.

**1989/90** at the beginning of the academic year, the new study regulations according to the Arts University Studies Act 1983 came into force. It provided for two stages of study:

After eight semesters, the teaching qualification for rhythmic-musical education was obtained after passing the first diploma examination.

The second stage of the programme, which lasted four semesters, allowed the academic title of Magister/Magistra of Arts (Mag.art.) after passing the second diploma examination. The second stage could not be offered in Vienna at the time, as the necessary classrooms were not available.

**1995/96** the main subjects (potential majors in the programme) were introduced: Elementary Musical Education, Ensemble Leading, Improvisation and Movement Accompaniment, Instrument, Popular Music, and Rhythmics in Special and Remedial Education.

**1998** the Federal Act on the Organisation of the Universities of the Arts (KUOG) gave all art colleges, and thus also the University of Music, the status of universities (Study Guide of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna 2001/02, p. 18).

**2002/03** as a result of the KUOG, institutes were established at the University of Music. Rhythmic studies were offered at the Institute for Music and Movement Education and Music Therapy. Angelika Hauser became the head of the institute, and Ralph Illini headed the department of music and movement education/rhythmics.

As a consequence of the Bologna Declaration, the first study section of the previous diploma study programme Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics was converted into a baccalaureate study programme over eight semesters to conclude with the academic title Baccalaureus/Baccalaura artium (Bacc.art.). The curriculum reform according to the Bologna Declaration has as its aim the internationalisation of studies in order to bring about an increased mobility of students and teachers at European universities. Structural standardisation (in terms of Bachelor's and Master's degrees) and mutual accreditation are intended to promote studying abroad and the exchange of artistic-pedagogical and scientific research results.

**2003/04** the Master's degree programme Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics was introduced to run over two semesters, and to allow students to obtain the academic title Magister/Magistra artium. The increase in teaching venues at Rennweg brought a significant improvement in terms of available room space for the field of study. In the bachelor's degree programme, the focus on 'voice' and on 'movement' were introduced.



**2010/11** after relocating from the classrooms in the Gardetrakt Schönbrunn (used for many years) to the first district, the academic year began with an opening ceremony in the newly adapted rooms of the Institute of Music and Movement Education and Music Therapy in Singerstraße 26A.

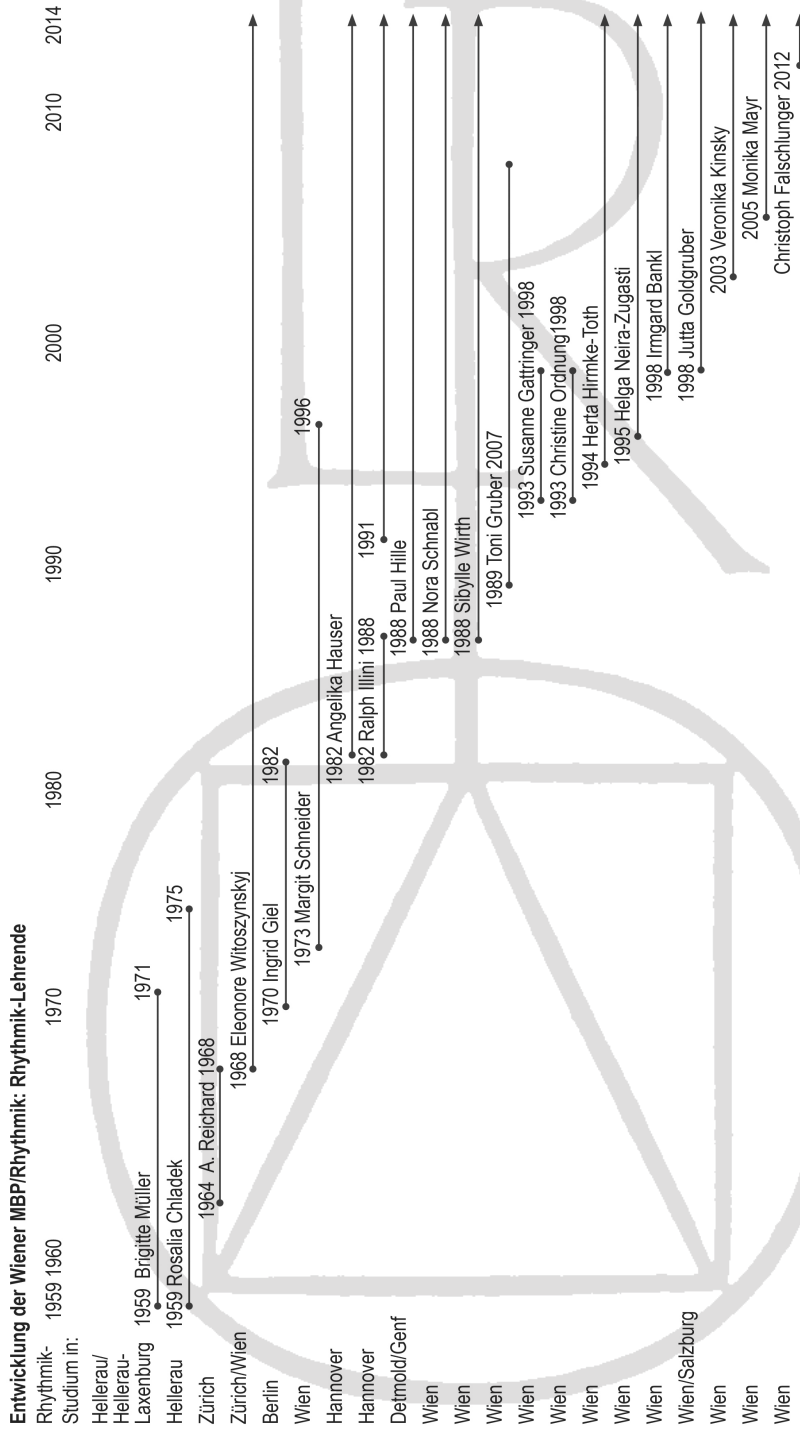
**2015/16** saw the renaming of the previous Bakkalaureat and Magister degree programmes into bachelor's and master's degree programmes in music and movement education/rhythmics. As part of a curriculum reform, the master's programme was extended to four semesters. At the same time, the potential programme focus 'Rhythmics in Special and Remedial Education' was renamed 'Rhythmics in Inclusive and Remedial Education', and the course 'Introduction to Rhythmics in Geragogy' was added as a new compulsory subject to the Bachelor's curriculum.

## Summary

Enveloped in everchanging social and educational-political currents, the artistic-pedagogical subject area of Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics shows a dynamic development. Legal regulations, changes in higher education policy, initiatives by teachers and students, as well as influences from other professional fields have all led to multiple changes in the curricula over the decades and have kept rhythmics as a subject field in motion.

Thanks to their versatility, imagination and enthusiasm, our graduates were gradually able to introduce music and movement education/rhythmics into more and more areas, also non-musical areas. The resulting expansion of professional fields between art, (music) education and therapeutic settings did not remain without influence on the approaches followed in the training of students. As a result, the professional goals and contents of the original 'music education through movement' were further developed in the direction of education and development of the personality, whereby the areas of sensorimotor skills, communication and creativity were given increased weight.

At present, the study of music and movement education/rhythmics offers our students a highly qualified artistic-pedagogical professional preparation with an academic degree, and more: with the choice of potential programme focuses, they also have the chance to develop an individual profile according to their interests and talents. Their development is, among other things, also connected to current professional fields. Vienna's MBP/Rhythmik is one of the largest programmes for this study in the world and it attracts students from other European and non-European countries. Initiatives such as study days and weeks with students and teachers at sister institutes in Austria and abroad, as well as public relations activities – such as performances of final theses, musical performances, rehearsals of artistic-pedagogical programmes at schools, exhibitions of the Department of Rhythmics, etc. – expand the range of studies and are additional attractions of the 'Wiener MBP/Rhythmik'.



Weitere Rhythmiklehrende, die für kürzere Zeit an der Studienrichtung MBP/Rhythmik tätig waren:

Rudolf Konrad 1982, 1983 und 1988-89 (Braunschweig), Daniela Borst 1982-83 und 1988-89 (Hannover), Anne Weidmann 1982-83 und 1988-89 (Hannover), Claudia Kauffeldt 1982-1986 (Hannover), Heidemarie Klimpfner 1986-88 (Wien), Christine Batik-Wegenstein 1988-89 (Wien), Lutz Elisabeth 1993, 96-97 (Wien), Ruth Klicpera 2008-2012 (Wien), Berenike Heidecker 2006-2009 (Wien).

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Fig. 1.1 Chronological table: Witoszynskij, Göhr. Sources: Annual reports of the Academy or University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna 1959/60-1986-87 as well as study guide 1974/75-1998/90 and information of the teachers.



The scientific research work carried out as part of the degree programmes increasingly ensures the theoretical foundation and legitimacy of our department. This strengthens the external representation of Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics and thus also the professional self-image of our graduates. The publications of master's theses of the department 'Music and Movement Education', which started in 2012, make a further contribution to promotion of our work in the public realm.

The teachers provide lively insights into the current state of development of Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics in Vienna. They do this through their publications, numerous artistic and artistic-pedagogical presentations, contributions to the professional development of others, projects and workshops at international congresses and presentations at specialist conferences in Austria and abroad. By organising their own congresses and symposia at the Department of Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics and Music Physiology, and through other diverse contributions (also within the framework of Erasmus programmes at European colleges and universities, for example) they provide stimuli that advance professional discussion and the exchange of research results on an international level. Teachers as well as students and graduates are repeatedly awarded prizes and thus they also receive recognition for their extraordinary achievements.

In retrospect, we can observe the impressive development of our field of study, a field of which the basic foundations are also confirmed by current research results in neuroscience. However, we should also point out that Viennese music and movement education/rhythmics owes its qualified character and international reputation not least to the decades of competent and committed work of the team of teachers (see time table 1959–2014, fig. 1.1). In addition, our students and graduates have repeatedly given the teachers valuable impulses and made constructive contributions through critical questions and suggestions. In this context, special mention should also be made of the decades of successful cooperation between the education programme and the Austrian Professional Association for Rhythmics (ÖBR), which was founded in 1973. Furthermore, regular evaluations of the institute aim to ensure the quality and innovative development work of the study programme as well as the future opportunities of our rhythmic educators.

This development of the department of Music and Movement Education/Rhythmics – a development which gives great satisfaction in its entirety – encourages us to continue the productive cooperation between teachers, students, and our graduates, in order to remain open to current social developments and also to find convincing answers to future challenges.

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