

The Swedish Eurhythmics History

Kersti Larsson & Eva Nivbrant Wedin
Photos from the KMH Archive

Where it all started

In autumn of 1907, Anna Behle opened the first Dalcroze inspired institute for “Eurhythmics gymnastics and plastic” in Stockholm, a long-prepared plan.

Anna Behle (1876-1966) was studying to become a singer. After graduating as an organist in 1896, she studied singing in Paris between 1901 and 1903, and there she also studied Plastic for Isadora Duncan, which left a big impression on her.

However, in 1906 she read an article that was to change her life. Many years later she writes:



Anna Behle

“One day I read an article in the newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, describing a remarkable new development. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, a teacher at the Geneva Conservatory of Music, had devised a method which quite revolutionized the teaching of music. By this method, music education should not begin with the playing of an instrument. First the ear should be trained, and the sense of pulse and rhythm developed through body movements to music. I sat there astonished, reading the article many times, over and over again. ‘This must be right,’ I thought, ‘if only I could have started this way.’”

Anna Behle, December 1963

In the summer of 1907, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze was holding an international summer course, and Anna Behle travelled there with her good friend Louise Wikström, a gymnastics teacher. Isadora Duncan’s dance school near Berlin was their first port of call, and from there they went on to Émile Jaques-Dalcroze’s Institute in Geneva. Anna Behle was much taken with the teaching and had several talks with M. Jaques-Dalcroze, in which he urged her to continue her rhythmic studies because she had such talent, for example for improvisation. He was keen to hear how they did things at the Duncan school, and he asked her to show him their exercises.

She writes in her memoirs:

“The time seemed ripe for Dalcroze’s ingenious ideas to be accepted. The well-merited success of his ideas all over the world shows his method to be original and of great importance, not only for music teaching but also for the theatre, artistic dance and – last but not least – mental training. To me personally, the Dalcroze method has been of inestimable importance, and it gives me great joy to have been a part of it almost from the very beginning.”

Anna Behle, December 1963

Anna Behle became Sweden's first Eurhythmics teacher. Her *Institut för rytmisk gymnastik och plastik*, which was active between the years 1907 to 1934, attracted many children of prominent families in Stockholm, but also many actors who sought Dalcroze training. From 1913 she also taught at the Opera School and from 1916 at the Academy of Music in Stockholm, both in Eurhythmics and "Solfeggio".

Parallel to her teaching at the Institute, she gave notable Eurhythmic performances with her students, as well as herself performing as a romance singer.

First generation Eurhythmic teachers in Sweden

More Swedish women followed Anna Behle's example by going to Hellerau and later Geneva to learn Jaques-Dalcroze's method. They all came to be of great importance for the spread of Eurhythmic in Sweden and for future opportunities for education. One of them was **Paula Müntzing**. She was of great importance for students starting out in Göteborg.

Also traveling to Hellerau from Göteborg was **Karin Fredga** (1884-1972), who came to play a significant role in the "Dalcroze world of education in Sweden" (as an evening paper written at that time). Already in 1933 she received the right to train teachers in the Dalcroze method and issue certificates. Such institutes with certificate rights were at that time only found in Geneva, London, Paris, and New York.

At the same time as Karin Fredga was nearing her end of the education in Geneva, **Dagmar Wide-Unterkircher**, **Ebba Burton** and **Hjördis Lundén**, also went there.

Dagmar Wide-Unterkircher, was a student and friend of Anna Behle. She took her Eurhythmics teacher degree in 1923 with M. Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva and then returned for diploma exam in 1951.

Dagmar Wide and Karin Fredga became friends in Geneva and when Anna Behle began to scale down her institute in Stockholm in 1925, Dagmar suggested that Karin Fredga should move to Stockholm and take over.



Dagmar Wide-Unterkircher



Karin Fredga

Karin Fredga's school of Eurhythmics

Karin Fredga attended a course in Hellerau already in 1914 but had to go back to Sweden due to the Great War. But in 1921 she returned and made her way to Geneva to train as a Eurhythmics teacher. Although trained as an art teacher in Sweden and Italy, she had also taught music and was an accomplished pianist. The teachers at the Dalcroze Institute spotted her talent, and she and Jaques-Dalcroze became close friends for life. Karin Fredga took a Certificate at Institute Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva and a Diploma at his Paris school. Moving to Stockholm in 1925, she succeeded Anna Behle at the Opera School and the Academy of Music. Following completion of the Stockholm Concert Hall, Konserthuset, in 1926, Karin Fredga started a Eurhythmics school there.

Émile Jaques-Dalcroze visited Karin Fredga in Stockholm and was so impressed by her work that he invited her to become principal of the Dalcroze school in Paris. She spent two years working in Paris and was very happy there, but in 1933 she returned to Stockholm and started a teacher training programme at her own school.

A contract with Jaques-Dalcroze entitled her to train teachers in his name, and they corresponded regularly, with Jaques-Dalcroze giving her advice on teaching activities.

Karin engaged other Eurhythmic teachers as herself, to teach at her school. Both Dagmar Wide and Ebba Burton were teachers.



CONTRACT BETWEEN JACQUES-DALCROZE AND KARIN FREDGA, 1933

THE LETTER BEGINS: 'Mr E. Jaques-Dalcroze of the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute in Geneva authorizes Miss Karin Fredga to personally open a school in Stockholm offering advanced pedagogy courses in the Jaques-Dalcroze method and entitled to issue a national training certificate in the subject.'

Paula Müntzing and developing Eurhythmics education in other parts of Sweden.

Paula Müntzing (1890-1967) studied piano and music theory in Gothenburg, among others she studied for the Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar. In 1911 Jaques-Dalcroze visited Gothenburg, where he gave a performance and seminary. Wilhelm Stenhammar noted the event with a very positive review, and he also advised Paula Müntzing to study the "Dalcroze system". She followed his advice and went to Hellerau where she studied 1911 - 1914. She took her certificate in Geneva in 1915 and her diploma in 1923.



Paula Müntzing's teaching in the late 1930s
Hjördis Lundén assisting

Paula Müntzing taught at many schools, both regular students and the disabled. As early as 1915, she started her private Eurhythmics school and in 1923 she began teaching at the Music Conservatory in Göteborg – later the University of Music in Göteborg. Eurhythmics at the conservatory was supplementary courses within the education programs and there was no pedagogical education at the time.

For some time she also taught at Lorensbergsteatern's actor training program, where she staged Gluck's "Orpheus" together with director Per Lindberg, who had met and was greatly inspired by the scenographer Adolphe Appia.

Among Paula's students were **Hjördis Lundén** – who, after studying with Jaques-Dalcroze in Geneva, moved to Stockholm and became head of the Swedish Dalcroze Seminary, which she started together with Ebba Burton and Dagmar Wide-Unterkircher (Teachers program pre KMH).



Paula Müntzing's teaching 1947

Another of Paula's students was **Angelica Sjöström-Kjellberg**. After studying with Elfride Feudel in Stuttgart, she got married and moved to Gothenburg and took over Paula's teaching in 1966, both the private courses and the teaching assignment at the Music Conservatory. Angelica eventually (1978) became head teacher and professor for the new Eurhythmics teacher training program at the University of Music in Göteborg.

Another significant student was Kerstin Lindgren, who furthered her education at the Dalcroze Seminary in Stockholm and became a teacher at the new Eurhythmics program at KMH (from 1978).

The Foundation of Swedish Dalcroze Seminary

When Karin Fredga closed her Institute Jaques-Dalcroze in 1959, there was no longer any Eurhythmics teacher training in Sweden. At the same time, the development of the municipal music schools began to gain momentum, and there was a demand for this kind of music and movement teachers.

Dagens Nyheter, one of Swedens most influential newspapers, wrote:

"the municipal music schools are calling for this kind of teaching force – which means that the society have to start rapid training of teachers".

"Music and movement are intimately connected with each other, and this is what was discovered in the meeting with the municipal music schools."

On the initiative of Dagmar Wide-Unterkircher and Ebba Burton, the Foundation Svenska Dalcrozeseminarieret was founded in Stockholm in 1960 with the aim of training new Eurhythmics teachers. The program was a three-year education according to the method of Jaques-Dalcroze. Hjördis Lundén, who was trained by Jaques-Dalcroze together with Ebba and Dagmar, was already involved in the municipal music schools and, together with her husband, a skilled advocate for children's right to music education. Hjördis soon became the principal of the Swedish Dalcroze Seminary.

Many influential music educators and cultural personalities in Sweden were on the board of trustees and formed the Seminary and the educational program. The Seminary operated from 1960 to 1980 and it became a model for today's Eurhythmics teacher programs at higher institutions in Sweden.

After closing, the trustees of the Swedish Dalcroze Seminary left a “will” with a sum of money which since 1980 has been distributed as scholarships to active Eurhythmics teachers.

Elfride Feudels influence on Swedish education and a visionary principal

At the same time, in 1961, when the municipal music schools expanded, there was a visionary principal Malmö Music Conservatory (later Musikhögskolan i Malmö) who started a cooperation with a Danish Eurhythmics institute and its founder: Eurhythmics teacher and musician

Gerda von Bülow

1961, a three-year pedagogical program started in Malmö led by Gerda von Bülow. In the beginning as a cooperation, but soon more independent and in harmony with other music education programs at Musikhögskolan.

Gerda von Bülow (1904-1990) was trained in Germany, and was very influenced by the former Dalcroze student Elfriede Feudel. Feudel emphasized the general educational task of Eurhythmics and that it also could be used for non-musical goals in other school subjects, e.g. mathematics and language. Gerda von Bülow named this Danish-Swedish variation of the Dalcroze method RMU – Rhythmic Musical Upbringing.

In 1975, Gerda von Bülow retired and another Danish educated Eurhythmics teacher, **Gertrud Kaiser-Nielsen**, came in her place. By the end of the decade, the educational program developed to suit the needs of the society. Eurhythmics teachers were highly asked for in all kinds of schools, which led to training in didactics and pedagogic to prepare for teaching Eurhythmics from babies to adults (age related didactic).

A stronger Eurhythmics Education

In the 1978 university reform, the 3-year Eurhythmics education was changed and became a variant of the Music teacher educational program in Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö. Some years later also Musikhögskolan Ingesund and Musikhögskolan i Örebro started the same program for Eurhythmics teacher education.

When the Eurhythmics teacher education program became one of the specializations in the Music teacher programs, it was expanded with more subjects and extended. At first to 4 years, then 4,5 years, and by the 2011 university reform to 5 years.

Today

When the reform for higher music education was carried out in Sweden in 1978, universities and colleges welcomed the Eurhythmics teacher education with open arms, and it was not perceived as a problem to incorporate the education within the framework of the music teacher education. But in 2011, it was the opposite situation. At that time, the Swedish education system within universities and colleges was changed, and all teacher education programs, regardless of subject, had to be reshaped and accommodated in a common structure. All degree rights had to be reapplied by each institution. Also, all teacher training programs should be based on scientific research and clearly directed towards teaching in primary school and high school.

It took hard work to adapt the Eurhythmics teacher training to the new system, but after a few years Eurhythmics students could finally be welcomed into the new program. It was a difficult task finding ways to start the education again, but the teachers who worked on this received great support from Eurhythmics colleagues from other countries. Here, the international network was very important.

The current Eurhythmics education is an optional profile within the five-year music teacher program (300 ECTS). After graduation, the students receive a teacher's license, which gives them the opportunity to teach music in all Swedish primary and secondary schools. They also have an in-depth profile in Eurhythmics, and a readiness to teach in many different contexts and in various educational systems.



Kungl. Musikhögskolan i Stockholm

Now, you can study to become a Eurhythmics teacher at two HEIs in Sweden; at Kungl. Musikhögskolan i Stockholm, and at Musikhögskolan i Malmö.

