

How MEDAU began...

You have been enjoying your class for some time now, and perhaps you would like to know more about how it all began.

Hinrich Medau (1890-1974) opened his Movement College in Berlin in the 1920's. He had studied music, sport and gymnastics and travelled widely in Portugal and the US. In Portugal he had been impressed by the natural grace of the farmers working in the fields, and in the States had noticed how the best basketball players seemed at one with the ball, and how their movement was affected by it.

Within the area of modern gymnastics there are some four distinct areas of influence, the Educational (Pestalozzi 1746-1827, Ling 1776-1839), the Theatre and Health (Delsarte 1811-1871, Carl Orff 1895-1936), Dance (Isadora Duncan 1878-1927, Rudolf Laban 1879-1958) and lastly Music (Dalcroze 1865-1950, Bode 1881-1971, Medau 1890-1974). Dalcroze had used movement to help his music students play better, Bode took this movement and used the music to emphasise and underpin it, thereby helping non musicians achieve good movement. Medau worked with both Bode and Dalcroze, and refined Bode's work further, simplifying the music played on piano, lightening up the heavy Bode swing and introducing small apparatus to extend the desired movement.

When Medau opened his own school in 1929 he started to explore his theories, using a variety of rhythms and improvisation on the piano, and experimenting first with the ball, and later, with the help of some of his female colleagues, including Senta his wife, with other light hand apparatus, especially the club and the hoop. Each of these had its own intrinsic qualities, and was used to develop resilience, swing, spring and good posture. His students qualified as both movement and sports teachers to work in schools. His influence grew, the trend moving away from formal exercises and drill, and being replaced by harmonious whole body movement, flow and economy of effort, which are still the hallmarks of Medau work today. In Germany, the Medau College went from strength to strength, and moved to its current home in Coburg in 1952. When Hinrich died in 1974 the running of the school was taken over by his son Jochen, a doctor, and later a Professor of cardiac medicine, and gradually changed its priorities, dropping sports and introducing physiotherapy in 1979 and much later speech therapy in 1999. The students are much sought after to work in spas, hospitals and health centres across Germany.

In the early 1930's Medau was introduced to England when Peggy Secord, who had trained with both Bode and Medau, gave a demonstration in Cambridge which was attended by Molly Braithwaite, who was so inspired that she went on to train herself, before coming home to start regular classes and eventually, with the support of the Central Council for Physical Recreation, start the Medau Society in 1952 to link all those people interested in the work. Gradually their work prospered, and help was provided by teachers from the



movement

Medau College who came over for a year at a time to help. While plans for a Medau Training College in England had to be abandoned with the outbreak of war, teacher training started in earnest afterwards, with the first externally examined course established with the support of the Central Council of Physical Recreation in 1955. Since then classes and teacher training have spread through out the country. More recently the Medau Society has joined with the KFA (Keep Fit Association) and the Fitness League under the umbrella of the EMDP (Exercise, Movement and Dance Partnership) to ensure long term funding and pooling of joint resources. Medau work has appeared regularly at CCPR Festivals at Wembley and the Royal Albert Hall since 1958, and the National Display Team travels every three years to perform at the World Gymnaestrada.