

The Brazilian Frevo Dance

As an Influencing Factor in Brain Hemisphere Integration

by Gerardo Vale

Introduction

While attending the first period of my acupuncture course at the School of Alternative Therapy in Brasilia, Brazil, there was also being offered at the same time a subject called "Frevotherapy".

Nobody was giving the necessary importance to the subject, although the teacher was very interested and aware about the kind of therapy he was trying to convince the students to accept. Soon, after the first class, I became quite interested in the concept, since almost all the movements involved in that therapy had some similarity with the Cross-Crawl.

On the same day, shortly after class, I decided to have a private talk with the teacher to show my interest in discussing with him some common aspects that I noticed between his therapy and another kind of dance, the Cross-Crawl, that I used in my TFH Classes to check if the brain hemispheres of my students were working in perfect coordination. I also talked about the crossed movements used in both cases: in the Frevotherapy and the Cross-Crawl.

After my explanation, I felt that the teacher did not give much credit to what I had said, probably because my condition of a beginner at the school.

A year later, when I had a little more spare time to dedicate to Frevotherapy, I decided to call again on that teacher and have some private classes with him. At that moment, although my special interest was to go deep into the subject, I did not show him my real intention. In less than a month, after I had won over the teacher's confidence, I was not only able to give a reasonable show of FREVO, but also persuaded him to join my TFH courses.

This year, by January, I was surprised to receive a telephone call from that teacher

telling me that he was interested in also becoming a TFH Instructor.

The Frevo, What is it?

The frevo is a kind of dance that is part of our folklore and had its origin in the cities of Olinda and Recife, located in the Brazilian state of Pernambuco.¹ During the carnivals in those cities the frevo is everyone's most preferred dance. The people who dance the frevo are called "Passistas" and also "Capoeiristas". The Passista,² who from now on will be referred to as the "dancer", is the most common word, meaning the one who dances following the specific rhythm and keeping in step with the frevo.

All over the country it seems that people do not see the frevo as a way of therapy, but as a simple dance like the samba or other kinds of popular dances.

The frevo, in the same way as the Samba, was responsible for the upsurging of a particular group³ formed by people interested in popularizing this kind of dance.

We could say much more about the history and the evolution of it, but our main goal in this paper is to call attention to the therapeutic benefits experienced by those who have frequently practiced this type of dance, which uses many crossed movements, called "frevo dance steps", quite similar to the Cross-Crawl.

Traditional Frevo Dance Steps

In 1984, the leader of the Brazilian frevo, known by the title of Mestre Nascimento Do Passo⁴ and his follower Prof. Jorge Marino, began a survey to see how many types of frevo dance steps were practiced by Brazilian people.

Even though the survey had registered more than 130 frevo dance steps, they decided to define only 8 specific kinds, as follows:

1. The frevo step of persons in their fifties.
2. The frevo step of the drunkard.
3. The frevo step of the caracole.
4. The frevo step of the gymnast.
5. The frevo step of the puppet.
6. The frevo step of the child.
7. The frevo step of the woman.
8. The frevo step of the "Mestre Nascimento".

As we see there are great varieties of dance steps and movements in the frevo dance. However, in one musical selection we can combine only ten different dance steps and obtain a very good result.

Since not all the dance steps are easy to learn and practice, learning techniques have been developed through physical movements using the energy of the eyes. These techniques, created and organized by Prof. Jorge Marino have made it possible to learn the step movements and the changing positions of balance required by the movements very quickly and precisely.

The process of learning how to dance the frevo at Prof. Marino's classes is very easy, since he teaches in a simple, progressive and didactical way, always beginning with exercises of self-body massage, and giving special attention to foot reflexology, because the feet are the main tool of work used during the dance.

The basic Frevo Dances Steps used in Frevotherapy

The basic frevo dance steps which Prof. Marino uses to teach to his students number twelve, but here for the purpose of this work we will focus only 8 basic movements.

This whole section of Frevotherapy is preceded by a self-massage to activate all the body, with special attention centralized on foot reflexology. After this preliminary care, we begin with the 2 first frevo dance steps to heat up the feet articulations, to release the tensions from the shoulders, and finally,

when the dance is practiced in the evening, to relax the whole body from the stresses eventually accumulated during the day.

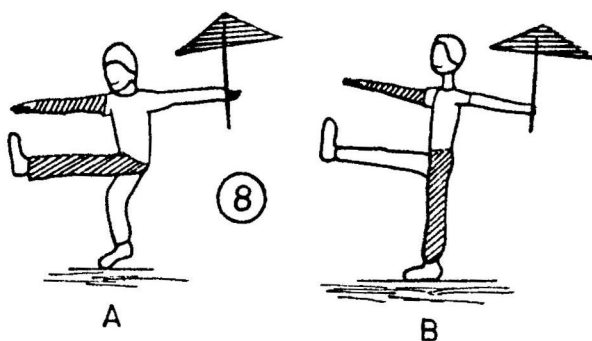
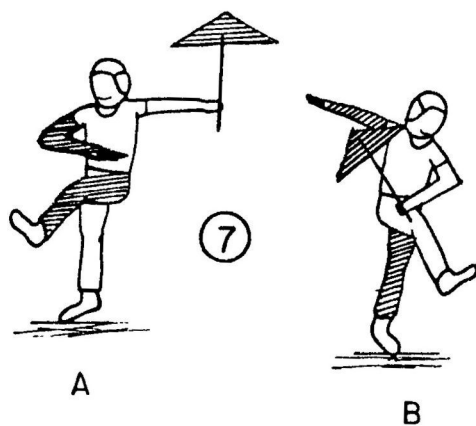
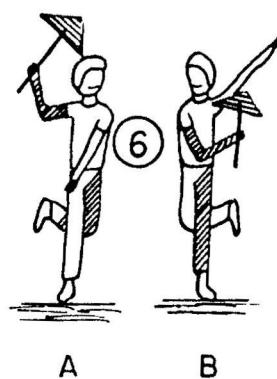
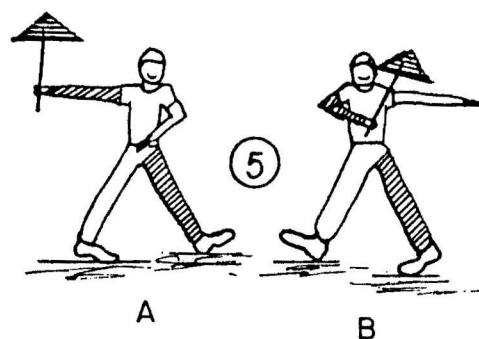
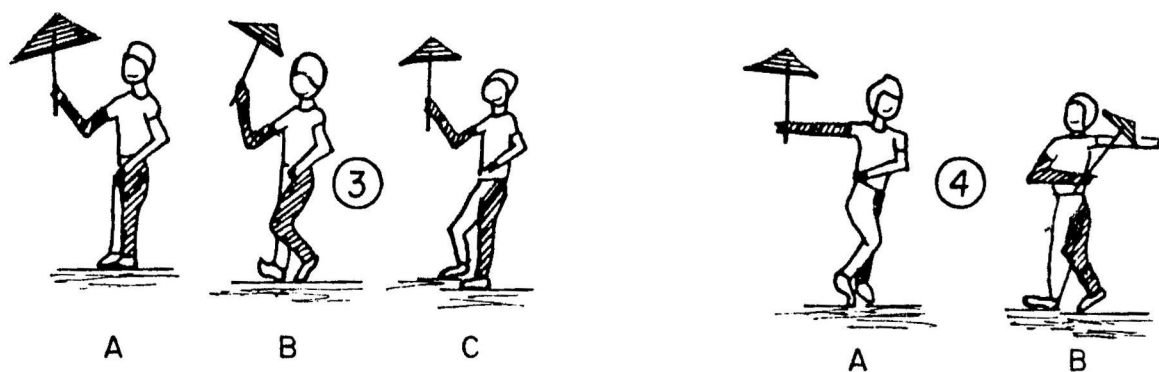
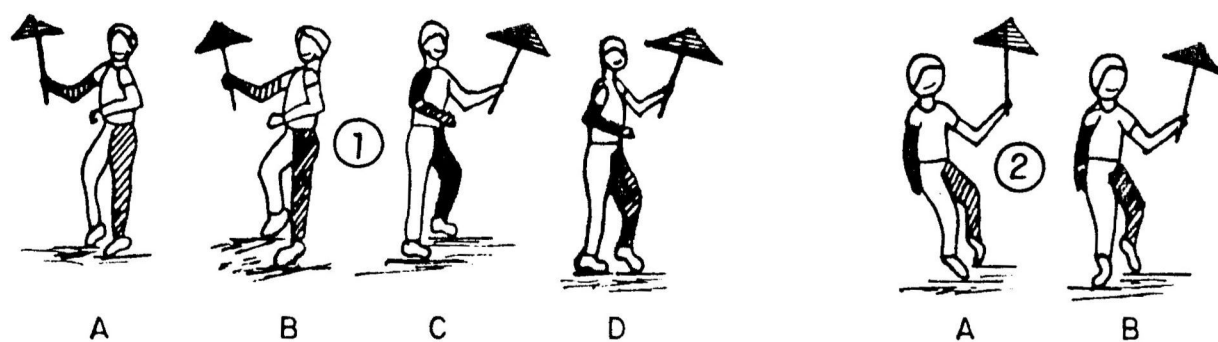
The rest of the frevo dance steps combine the specific rhythm of the dance with some crossed movements similar to the Cross-Crawl. Following this sequence, we will show and describe the basic frevo dance steps above mentioned, as we make some comments related to each movement and its therapeutic benefits in all dimensions of the body.

First: Rhythm

- a. The Goal: This first frevo dance step is the most important one, because its aim is to assimilate the rhythm of the frevo dance and to provide the necessary and quick heating to the feet articulations, shoulders and arms. While beating the rhythm with the feet, the dancer is taught to make good use of the moment to recognize his area and space that he is allowed.
- b. Movements: See figures A,B,C and D in illustration (1).
- c. Therapeutic Benefits: Improvements of the flow of energy in all the meridians that begin or end at the toes and stimulation of the energy of the eyes, ears, lungs, heart and thymus, besides the release of muscle tensions.

Second: The Tip of the Foot at the Toes

- a. The Goal: To heat and stretch the following muscles of the feet: extensor digitorum brevis, extensor hallucis and anterior tibial. The movement induced by this frevo dance step improves the flexibility of the metatarsus and ankle articulations.
- b. Movements: See figures A and B of illustration (2).
- c. Therapeutic Benefits: Stimulation of the energy of the eyes, ears, and breast. The simultaneous up and down movement of the shoulders during the dance contributes to release all the tension located in one's back.



THE CROSSED MOVEMENTS OF THE BRAZILIAN FREVO

Third: To Pretend You Are Going Forward, But In Reality You Return To Original Starting Position.

- a. The Goal: Since this is a relaxing and playful frevo dance step, it gives the dancer the chance to think about the next step and also to rest a little while changing from one frevo dance step to the next.
- b. Movements: See figures A, B, and C of illustration (3).
- c. Therapeutic Benefits: Relief of the tensions located at the upper part of the back region, and activation of the energy of the liver, eyes, ears, and chest.

Fourth: The Foot and Heel Tips

- a. The Goal: to complete the heating of the body.
- b. Movements: See figures A and B, illustration (4)
- c. Therapeutic Benefits: Stimulation of the liver and of the centers of energy of the muscles located at the back body. It is also good for rejuvenation.

Fifth: The Bolt

- a. The Goal: To develop the coordination of the physical movements.
- b. Movements: See figures A and B of illustration (5)
- c. Therapeutics Benefits: Harmonization of the left-right brain energy and stimulation of the energy in the vision, audition. It is also good for rejuvenation

Sixth: Saci ⁵

- a. The Goal: To open space in a crowd, especially at clubhouses during the carnival parties. This exercise is excellent to remodel the waistline and the legs.
- b. Movements: See figures A and B of illustration (6).

- c. Therapeutic Benefits: Activation of the energy of the back muscles of the body and balancing of the nervous system, besides the stimulation of the energy of the ears, eyes, nose, brain, hypophysis, and pituitary glands.

Seventh: Kicking to the Side

- a. The Goal: To also open the space in the crowd and to exercise the movement coordination.
- b. Movements: See figures A and B of illustration (7)
- c. Therapeutic Benefits: Activation of the muscle energy of the back body, balancing of the nervous system, and stimulation of the energy in the vision, hearing and brain functions.

Eighth: Kicking to the Front

- a. The Goal: The same as described in the preceding frevo dance step
- b. Movements: See figures A and B of illustration (8)
- c. Therapeutic Benefits: Balancing the brain hemispheric energy and stimulation of the energy in the vision and hearing as well as the energy of hypophysis and pituitary glands.

Conclusion

In accordance with Prof. Jorge Marino, all his students of Frevotherapy are unanimous in declaring that just after the first couple of weeks of practicing the frevo dance, the positive results are clearly felt, especially in the physical body. The greatest evidence in this dimension of the body is the increase in vital energy, reflecting in the general health and well-being. And after a month or more of practicing the frevo dance, other results are registered, like "losing weight, decreasing of tensions, postural and body flexibility improvements" and also, in many cases an appreciable improvement in the sexual performance.

The therapeutic benefits of the frevo dance I have experienced up to now correspond with and even transcend those reported by Prof.

Jorge Marino. After less than a couple of months of Frevotherapy I began to feel a considerable enhancement in all my organic functions and in the general well-being, besides a significant improvement in the physical and intellectual activities, without mentioning other positive results with sensible reflexes in the emotional field.

In my opinion, the frevo dance can be used as an alternative to Dr. Paul Dennison's *Brain Gym*, because people who practice it usually show high levels of improvement in the performance of their physical and intellectual activities. It seems that the variation of crossing movements they do when they dance have the power of creating the same results like those afforded by Edu-K exercises.⁶

Even though nothing has been mentioned about brain hemisphere integration in the frevo dancer's reports, I have come to objective conclusion when muscle testing children who practice frevo dance and have some dyslexic problems. At the end of some sections of Frevotherapy, after muscle testing them, I have verified that they presented a new and different result in their right-left coordination.

That was the reason why I have begun working with the hypothesis of Frevotherapy being an interesting and exciting alternative to Dr. Paul Dennison's *Brain Gym*, since this dance with its crossed movements has the power of conditioning and reinforcing the brain hemisphere integration as well as providing effective and satisfying physical exercise.

Notes

1. The state of Pernambuco is located in the Brazilian northeast region.
2. Capoeirista is the person who practices "capoeira", which is also considered a kind of exercise practiced as a way of self-defense like judo or karate.
3. School of Frevo is the name of the particular group formed by people who take part in the carnival party.
4. Mestre Nascimento is the leader of the frevo dance and he lives in Recife, the capital state of Pernambuco, Brazil. The frevo dance step created by him received the name "Frevo step of the Mestre Nascimento."
5. A small, one legged pipe-smoking negro who sets snares for travelers.
6. EduKinesthetics = Movement = Frevo dance.

References

1. Dennison, Paul E and Gail E., *Brain Gym*, published by Edu- Kinesthetics, Inc., 1986, Glendale, California.
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3. Rydl, Do-Ri, *Edu-Kinesthetics in All Walks of Life*, Collected Articles translated by Brigitte Eberle, 1989.