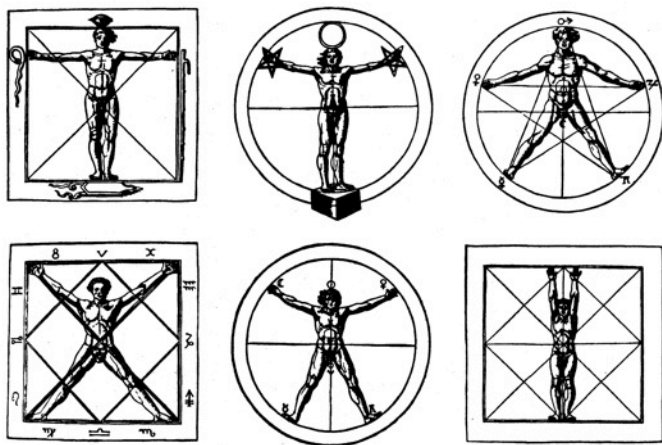


The Agrippa von Nettesheim Positions: Rudolf Steiner told Lory to Jump!

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Naturally, because we eurythmists regularly move through these six positions with our own body, we are very familiar with the Agrippa von Nettesheim drawings of the human figure. They are indeed a marvelous training ground and starting point for us. In this article, I hope to enlarge upon their value in our practice by disclosing the new experiences that I've been having with them as a result of my recent work in eurythmy. I'm very pleased to have found that they open a door into a key element of music eurythmy. (In the image of the drawings provided here, read across upper row 1, 2 and 3, lower row 4, 5 and 6.)



Since my aim over the last seven years has been to begin on the foundational level, I sought out whatever I could readily find concerning Lory Maier-Smits' beginning, looking in particular for what Rudolf Steiner had instructed her to do. Fortunately, finding these basics wasn't difficult. About a decade after my graduation, Magdalene Sieglöcher's book, *How the New Art of Eurythmy Began: Lory Maier-Smits, The First Eurythmist*, appeared in English (in 1997 – the German edition had come out in 1993, copyright 1988). Pages 14-20 lay out the initial set of tasks that Dr. Steiner had given her, beginning with the one concerning the stamping of alliterations that Lory's mother, Clara, had brought to her from him in late autumn 1911. Among the tasks that she received directly from Herr Dr. Steiner in January 1912, is this brief entry: "look for six drawings of the human being on a background of geometrical forms in the book *De philosophia occulta* by Agrippa von Nettesheim. Imitate these exactly, springing rapidly from one to the next." When I later laid hold of the volume, *Eurythmy: Its Birth and*

Development.^{*} I was able to read Lory's longer description of this task: "I was to study carefully these six postures, and having practiced each one well, I was to jump quickly and lightly from one into the next, paying attention as I did so to the relationship between the movements of the arms and of the legs, and note whether arms and legs moved in parallel or in opposite movements. All the rest of what was represented in these drawings – planets and zodiac – need not be noted" (p. 19). ^{*}(*EBD*, GA 277, first German edition, 1965; first English edition, 2002.)

In late 2012, I made my start. Now I knew that I was to learn to do this Agrippa positions task "exactly" with "jumping" and "rapidly." Right away, it became evident that striving to fulfill Rudolf Steiner's mandate summoned new kinds of awareness in me. (I have recorded my work in some detail in my report, *The Speech Sound Etudes: Feeling the Gestures, Finding the Figures*, posted at our site in 2014.)

To begin with, any time we jump we engage our will to a much greater degree than when we merely take a step. The jumping mandate called me to attention in my will. (Because of these new experiences, when reading Rudolf Steiner's lectures on therapeutic eurythmy I was impressed by how many of the exercises involve jumping!)

So, what happened when I took to jumping the Agrippa positions? I found that I was rather clumsy at this at first – I had to work to achieve a pristine skill in jumping. I had to be light and agile, able to leave the ground easily, and I had to become finely tuned in my feet so that I could land where I intended to and balance myself instantly. Of course, I also needed to have secured in my movement the exact configuration and proportions of each position, so that I would be able to hold fast in my consciousness where I intended my arms and legs to go: I needed to make each transition at once, from one to the next. And for five of the six positions I had to coordinate not just my arms but both of my legs, *and do so simultaneously*.

By doing the Agrippa positions in this manner, by jumping them in sequence, I met with quite a lot that surprised me. I've observed the following: To my feeling, it is healthy to have a basic exercise that requires me to jump, that regularly calls upon my will in such a concerted manner. And because each change of position is made via the jump, my consciousness is required to prepare each change in time to complete it together with the jump. Taking the positions as an organic sequence, the quicker the pace of the sequence, the quicker my inner preparations have to be – I can't take my time with them! And since I call upon *all* of my limbs to create each new position, actively, freshly, and with no hold-over from the last position, the quality of each transition enters my awareness with greater distinctness. Unhindered, I directly notice the parallel or opposite movement of my arms and legs. As a result, what Rudolf Steiner suggested made sense to me with an immediacy that

studying the figures and moving them contemplatively had not brought about (though this quiet practice is also valuable and important).

When I began to work with the Agrippa sequence like this, rigorously, I had already been working my way into the seven rod exercises with a fresh awareness,* so I was becoming accustomed to requiring myself to make inward shifts before I made any outward movement at all. For instance, for the rod to go up, my consciousness had to shift to an awareness of that direction, of ‘up-ness.’ I found that it was awfully easy to raise the rod while remaining unmoved or wrongly-moved inwardly. I had to work to hold myself back, to make sure that I had actually made the appropriate inward transition that justified my movement. And so I have taken the same approach to jumping each Agrippa position and to jumping the whole sequence. *(I discussed this approach in my article on the rod exercises for our Spring 2015 *Newsletter*.)

As I worked with the positions this way, I found that my feeling-perception of their nature and their relationships to each other was very much altered by entering each one with a jump. Fairly soon I came to realize that position 1, with the arms outstretched and the feet together, was not in fact my first condition of soul. A condition of poised standing had to precede this one: an enlivened fullness with an openness toward the possibility of unfolding a deed. So I took to making my start with such a condition, a condition of poise-in-standing – of course, with no jump before it. I also came to realize that, initiated as it is with a jump, position 6 possesses *a lot* of energy, nevertheless of the fact that both arms and legs are brought together, closed above and below. With this inwardly-intense quality of energy, position 6 didn’t feel final. It no longer had any touch of quietude for me. This feeling-perception was unexpected. In order to complete the sequence, I therefore felt a strong need to give expression to a release following this sixth position, and to do so simply, with no jump. Thus, I was now progressing through eight conditions of experience, with no jump when entering the first and eighth conditions.

But for this sequence, I now had a practical matter to address. By recognizing a standing condition as the true beginning and endeavoring to assume each of the conditions at a steady pace, it was necessary to have a way to initiate the sequence and set a pace for it. The standing condition needs a clear start and the same duration as the others. So I took to setting a tempo as a conductor would when leading into a piece of music. I found that what works best is to inwardly feel two repetitions of a duple meter as preparation: “One *and* two *and*, one *and* two *and*...” The sequence of conditions then begins: “One *and* two *and* three *and* four *and*,” etc. Upon setting the pace this way, I could then work toward achieving rapidity!

More and more, my perception of the parallel and opposing movements of my limbs through the sequence became more vivid. I’ve come to treasure this expression of arms and legs as a beautiful musical counterpoint being enacted between them, brought about through the action of all four limbs creating each position in concert with each other, through jumping. This is especially so because both legs are actively taking the new position, not just stepping out or in with one leg at a time as is our custom. Only with the jumping have I been able to achieve awareness of just how vital the contrapuntal nature of the movements is.

It wasn’t long before I realized that I really was embracing the sequence as a musical event. I was noticing the nuances of the changes from one condition to the next. In the barest terms, the first condition, standing, is an enlivened potential, a readiness for something. The shift to the second condition has a tentative quality, involving the arms only. For the third one, the arms raise just a little, with a sense of departure from mere tentativeness, a wakeful departure which is, importantly, supported by a parallel move with the legs – not much, but some. But then, for the shift to the fourth condition, arms and legs move contrary to each other – the arms descending while the legs jump out quite far, with a feeling of really taking a stand away from the starting point of the sequence. It is the five-star, created by head, arms and legs. This development always feels striking. Yet even more striking is the shift to the fifth condition: in unison and in parallel movement, the arms reach up and out and the legs open as wide as reasonably sustainable, the wide angle of the arms matching the wide angle of the legs. In the shift to the sixth condition, the arms drop a bit and the legs come in somewhat, moving in parallel with the arms; and to enter the seventh condition, arms and legs move opposed to each other to close, above and below. The shift to the eighth comes as a simple release, though I don’t drop my arms until I’m really done. The sequence of eight goes: standing, arms only, parallel, opposed, parallel, parallel, opposed, release. The feeling-quality of moving through the sequence is very strong: the first half involves two modest moves away from the start-in-standing, leading to a consolidation; and with the second half comes a striking expansion, followed by a sense of settling in at an obviously higher level, followed by an energy-filled tension between arms and legs, leading to a culmination, a release.

With these feeling-perceptions, I couldn’t ignore the fact that the nature of this set of eight positions corresponds to the nature of the **musical scale** in its **major mode** – though I only say, “corresponds to.” Rudolf Steiner spoke in like manner about the correspondence that can be felt between seven of the vowel sounds and the degrees of the scale; and he said, “Naturally, these are not the same: it is simply a similarity. Neither in eurythmy are the two the same.”* I

likewise found a similarity between the degrees of the scale and the Agrippa sequence when it is done as I have been doing it, with eight conditions. *(See the end of Lect. 3 in his lecture cycle, *Eurythmy as Visible Singing, EVSing*.)

Maybe on account of this correspondence that I was finding – or maybe because I simply felt that it was a good thing to do – I began to take the sequence in reverse order, too, for good measure and to strengthen inward forces. I did the eight conditions going from one to eight and then back-the-way, eight to one. It is very much a scale of sorts. So I also explored how it might feel to jump only when initiating the fifth, sixth and seventh conditions. I found that this did not feel at all arbitrary: it was in keeping with my feeling-perceptions of the sequence. And the sequence unfolded smoothly in both directions once I resolved the practical issue of which foot moves when entering the no-jump conditions. I settled on stepping with my *left* foot into the third condition and my *right* into the fourth when going from one to eight, and when going back-the-way, *left* into the fourth condition, *right* into the third, and *left* into the second.

With this development, I realized that this Agrippa-based sequence was in fact strengthening my experience of the musical scale. And this was regardless of the fact that the positions of the arms and legs for this Agrippa sequence do not match the angle-gestures for the arms and legs that Dr. Steiner brought as expressions of the musical scale. Yet, for the scale we aren't limited to the **angle-gestures**:* we can also express the scale through our experience of what I call the **bones-sequence gestures**.** So I began to wonder whether there might be any correspondence between these and the Agrippa sequence. I would not want to press it, but it would seem that the upper arm could be of chief importance in initiating the second condition, the lower arm in initiating the third condition, the sense of the compact wrist bones in initiating the fourth, and so on for the others, through the hands, fingers and in the space around and beyond them. *(See these in *EBD*, p. 71; and see the 2015/16 *EVSing* in German – this has the original sketches of the angles from August 1915.) **(Rudolf Steiner described these bones gestures in *EVSing*, Lect. 7; and I briefly took them up in my spring 2019 article, “The Scale Degree Intervals.”)

At the end of his *Eurythmy as Visible Speech* lecture cycle in June 1924, twelve years after his first instruction to Lory Maier-Smiths, Dr. Steiner presented the set of six lines of words (see at the end here) that he suggested that we speak along with the Agrippa positions. Since these words came later, I had deliberately unfolded my recent work with the positions without reference to them. But now I began to consider the words. As in my acquaintance with them before, I felt that they fit the positions beautifully; but I now felt that the words fit the positions and spoke to them even more when the positions are performed as a sequence of eight conditions in which the fifth, sixth and seventh condi-

tions are entered *by jumping*. The 5th: “I seek myself in the spirit.” The 6th: “I feel myself within myself.” The 7th: “I am on the way to the spirit, to myself.” I then had to ask: does the jumping – and the not-jumping – also have something to say to these six lines of words, to augment their significance for us?

I had to answer, “yes indeed!” When we read about the three higher levels of cognition which lie beyond our ordinary thinking – Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition – we can begin to grasp how much of our inward development of our faculties or organs of higher cognition depends upon the development of the will in some way – toward clarity of thinking and toward moral qualities. In his lecture, “Paths to Knowledge of Higher Worlds,”* Rudolf Steiner spoke about the necessary development of a greatly intensified form of courage and of an “iron will,” a “special form of self-discipline” that enables our will-impulses “to endure over the gulfs of time.” And he stated clearly the reason for these requirements on the path: “The reality which we perceive there [in higher worlds] must be verified with the aid of inwardly intensified forces.” *(Christiania/Oslo, November 26, 1921; about 2/3 in. Also see *Occult Science*, Ch. 5, section two especially.)

The will that we exert and express when jumping the Agrippa sequence, and when jumping for the 5th, 6th and 7th degrees of the scale, the **upper tetrachord**, is surely an artistic manifestation of the intensification of inner forces that true, verifiable spiritual sight and cognition requires from us – an artistic disclosure that attests to the direction of the development of the human spirit in our time, *reminding us of our descent from pure spirit and our necessary re-ascent through our own efforts*. Inasmuch as our arts can be revelations of their – and our – supersensible foundations, to the best of my ability I want to respond. Whenever my feeling-perceptions reveal the presence of the 5th, 6th or 7th – the upper tetrachord members of the scale – I want the aspect of heightened will forces to permeate my expression of them, as angle-gestures or as bones-sequence gestures. By contrast, with the **lower tetrachord** of the scale – prime, 2nd, 3rd, 4th – I feel that I'm working with what is more so *given* and customarily unfolded without greatly intensified effort. And although music isn't the spoken word, this lesser intensity is reflected in the first three lines of the words that Rudolf Steiner offered to us, “I think speech. I speak. I have spoken.”

It might help to know what Dr. Steiner said about the musical intervals of the 5th, 6th and 7th (which I understand as being both the **scale-degree intervals** and the **melodic intervals**): “The interval of the fifth is a real experience of Imagination. One who can experience fifths correctly is actually in a position to know on the subjective level what Imagination is like. One who experiences sixths knows what

Inspiration is. Finally, one who fully experiences seventh – if they survive this experience – knows what Intuition is. What I mean is that in the experience of the seventh the form of the soul’s composition is the same as clairvoyantly with Intuition. The form of the soul’s composition during the experience of the sixth is that of Inspiration with clairvoyance. The experience of the fifth is a real Imaginative experience. The same composition of soul need only be filled with vision. Such a composition of soul is definitely present in the case of music.” (See *The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone*, his March 8, 1923 lecture, Stuttgart; about 3/4 in.)

So, you see the journey on which the Agrippa positions have taken me, stimulated by Rudolf Steiner’s recommendation. They continue to offer me such good help toward bringing focus, strength and quickness to the powers of conscious transition-making that are the spiritual core of my work in eurythmy – and in my speech-work. It is wonderful to find that out of their nature, these positions can also open a door into a deepening experience of the musical scale. This in turn inspires and fosters my progress on the path toward a re-ascent into the realms of Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition, of true spiritual beholding and knowing. With gratitude for Rudolf Steiner’s enduring guidance, I am able to connect my work in the arts of speech and eurythmy to their actual roots more and more securely. A discussion of my work with the Agrippa positions is to be included in PART IV of my report, *Singing and Jumping Opens the Way to Vital Music Eurythmy Foundation*. The first third of PART I, the first half of PART III and all of PART IV are posted at our EANA website.

Since it isn’t always easy to know where to find Rudolf Steiner’s specific descriptions of the three higher levels of cognition to be developed beyond the powers of our ordinary cognition (Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition) and their requirements, here are the other potent sources from within his work that I know of:

“Knowledge and Initiation,” a lecture by Rudolf Steiner, London, April 14, 1922 (all three levels), published with “Cognition of the Christ Through Anthroposophy,” April 15, 1922 (first two levels), GA 211.

“Paths to Knowledge of Higher Worlds,” GA 79, a lecture by Rudolf Steiner, Christiania/Oslo, November 26, 1921. Here, Rudolf Steiner spoke of how a “mathematizing culture” of the human soul enables us to concentrate and to transcend illusionary elements, and then described the transformation of thinking into Imagination (or ‘morphological’) cognition and Inspiration (or ‘metamorphic’) cognition.

The Stages of Higher Knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition, Rudolf Steiner, GA 12 (in book form in German, 1931). This is a continuation of *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, GA 10 (in book form

1905). Both volumes first appeared in 1904 as articles.

Occult Science, Chapter 5. The fifth section* in particular takes up the nature of all three levels of higher cognition; and more follows in the remaining sections. *(Stars demarcate the sections.)

The Evolution of Consciousness, GA 227, thirteen lectures by Rudolf Steiner in Penmaenmawr, August 19 to 27, 1923. He discussed all three levels of higher cognition and much more.

And here are the verse lines which Rudolf Steiner gave to accompany the Agrippa positions, as in *EVSp*, Lecture 15:

I think speech.
I speak.
I have spoken.
I seek myself in the spirit.
I feel myself within my self.
I am on the way to the spirit, to myself.

– Rudolf Steiner

Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition in Relation to the Arts of Speech and Eurythmy

In tandem with the article on the Agrippa positions, here is an excerpt from Rudolf Steiner’s “Introduction to the Eurythmy Performance, Dornach, 23rd December, 1923,” found in *Eurythmy: Its Birth and Development*, pp. 129-30.

Rudolf Steiner gave a remarkable presentation concerning the arts and their supersensible foundation, and in particular, he spoke about the work of speech artist and eurythmist as an example of how the distinct qualities three higher levels of cognition can be present to us (his emphasis in italics):

Take a poem, my dear friends – a poem as it lives merely in the soul. If the human being identifies wholly inwardly with the poem, when they have taken it so much into themselves, let’s say, so strongly into themselves that they do not need the words any more but feel and can experience these feelings in their soul – this is *Intuition*. Let us assume they now begin to recite or declaim the poem. They try to express what lies in their feelings in the speaking – in reciting or declaiming – in the sound of the vowels, in the harmony, in the rhythm, in the movement of the consonants, in the tempo, in the stresses, and so on: what is experienced in this way is *Inspiration*. Through the element of Inspiration, the thing is pressed down into the larynx, gums and so on, out of the pure soul element which is localized in the nervous system.

Now we let it sink down into the limbs, so that the human being expresses in their own moving form that which was speech; then we have in the poem in eurythmy the third element, *Imagination*.

You have here, I would like to say, a picture of the descent of world evolution as far as the human being, the whole scale which the human being has again to retrace from Imagination, through Inspiration to Intuition. In the poem in eurythmy you have Imagination; in recitation and declamation, Inspiration in the picture; and in the poem experienced only inwardly, where one does not open one's mouth, but only experiences it, identifying oneself with it, becoming one with it, you have Intuition.

I find that what Rudolf Steiner said about our current stage in world and human evolution so important. A necessary evolutionary descent has been made and we are now to "retrace" our way back up through the higher levels of cognition. And our work in the arts can very much be part of and fully reflective of our path toward this re-ascent, step-by-step.

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