

## ***About the Author-Composer of the Speech Sound Etudes and the Reports and Articles on Speech-Art and Eurythmy***

Kate Reese Hurd

From the end of the report, *The Speech Sound Etudes: Feeling the Gestures and Finding the Figures*, posted at the *Eurythmy Association of North America* website, autumn 2014; revised August 2024.  
[www.eurythmyfoundationmatters.website](http://www.eurythmyfoundationmatters.website)

Here is a glimpse into the author-composer's background and the life path that has led her to undertake this body of work in speech and eurythmy:

Kate was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and grew up in the Hudson Valley of New York in a family of five children, raised by parents who spoke 'general' American English well. Her young life included plenty of music, art and physical activity. She began to play the piano at age eight, though only as an adult did she have serious lessons on the instrument. She played the clarinet and violin in school band and orchestra, tried the cornet and took up the flute, guitar and recorder. She also played string bass for two summers at an arts and music camp where she taught handwork and thrived on the remarkable synergy of the staff meetings that infused camp life.

Her musicality played a crucial role in essays for school: by circumstance she missed the lessons on grammar and diagramming sentences, so she did her writing not by the force of rules but by cultivating a musical sense for the structure of language, where the sounding of the words is heard inwardly and the parts of speech and phrases meet and work together to form a rhythmic flow of ideas. Working through the relationships and processes of mathematics had always given her joy, but she did not pursue math at the college level. Instead, her degree was in English literature with a focus on dramatic works, including Shakespeare. Her minor was in drama. She sang in choruses and chamber groups throughout all of her college years. One of her striking childhood memories is the sense of shock she felt at finding that the school books in second grade no longer contained pictures – that these images were now to be found

through the words alone. But she found the pictures and the sounds inwardly, and she has always felt this as a need: to see the images and hear the words inwardly while reading. In grade school she read as many books of Grimm's fairy tales as she could lay her hands on.

Kate took a second bachelor's degree, this time in music. Though it was wonderful to have the chance, finally, to study music earnestly, she found that the student's deeper experience of the nature of music – intervals, harmonic progressions and so on – was not actively fostered. No particular means were provided for this beyond what might develop through playing and singing music and becoming skillful at sight-singing. For example, little attention was given to the qualitatively-distinct feeling-experiences of the scale degrees, the melodic intervals between them and the much different character of the two tetrachords that make up the scale, none of which can be accounted for through music theory analysis and measuring whole- and half-steps or learning pitches. With disappointment, she finished this degree and let music lay dormant for a few years.

In the period that followed, Kate had the opportunity to join a group of people who were studying Rudolf Steiner's book, *A Theory of Knowledge*. They were taking up Chapter 13, "The Act of Cognition," and she dove in and swam. Soon after beginning this study, she was invited to attend a lay speech eurythmy class as a guest on the bench. At the close of the lesson, the teacher performed a short poem in eurythmy movement. Even though it was not music that she saw, she immediately grasped that within the musical branch of this new art might be found the means of evoking, clarifying and strengthening the inner musical experiences that were neglected or taken for granted in traditional musical studies. She soon moved to Spring Valley NY, and enrolled in the four-year program in speech eurythmy and music (or 'tonal') eurythmy there. During these four years, she served as a pianist for the practice classes and solo work of her school mates and performed when these solos were shown to the public (pieces by Bach, Chopin, Beethoven, Kodaly and Liszt, etc.).

In the eurythmy program, attention was given to the qualitative characteristics of the elements of music and of the spoken word; but here again, as in music studies, there were insufficient means for awakening the student's direct, inward experiences of

these deeper facts. She graduated and taught speech eurythmy to the general public with some amount of success in the work, but found that she was limited to leading her students as they more-or-less accepted and followed her learned movements and descriptions, just as she had done in school. She felt ill at ease with this approach, but knew that she was not equipped to get to the heart of the matter: she had no means of guiding them toward experiencing the movement-impulses of the sounds themselves. After a number of years, she stopped teaching and let eurythmy lay dormant.

The body of speech sound etudes referred to in this *Speech Sound Etudes* report is the result of Kate's recent efforts toward renewed work in eurythmy, which began in late 2012. To lay a secure foundation for herself, she found it essential not only to re-master basic exercises in eurythmy, but also to find the means to be able to enter the speech sounds deeply enough to find the resonance and characteristics of each one of them through perception of their gesture-impulses as direct, inward experiences. The need for these means led her to compose the etudes, which in May 2016 she began to share with the public in her book, *The Speech Sound Etudes, Volume I: Revelations of the Logos; Poetic Miniatures for Sounding Our Language: A Body of Speech-Work for Speakers, Actors, Eurythmists, Poets, Writers, Singers, Teachers, Therapists and Philologists*. In the book, the etudes are accompanied by detailed sections on the nature of the etudes, the sounds and their migrations, poetic speech, how to work with the etudes, the importance of our hearing activity when speaking the etudes, and perceiving the inaudible, unspoken and invisible aspects of the spoken word. A pithy APPENDIX addresses the gesture-impulses of the sounds – i.e., the work of the art of eurythmy – and includes a section that gives many of her findings thus far for the roughly fifty-two sounds that we utter in English, to support the reader and student's discovery process.

Since the posting of the report concerning the speech sound etudes at the EANA website in autumn 2014, her articles have been appearing in the *EANA Newsletter*. The first of these are: “‘The Word of My Feet:’ The Three Parts of Walking,” “The Seven Rod Exercises: Honing the Agility of our Conscious Awareness,” and “Ethereic Bodies are Moving in Response to the Speech Sound Etudes” (which reports on her prepara-

ions and success in bringing the fruits of this speech-work to the public through poetic recitations at local poetry forums), and “Eurythmy as a Critical Art: What This Means for Its Future” (autumn 2016). These four are available as a booklet also: *A Quartet of Articles*.

For Kate the etudes she has composed and works with are an expression of her sense of the musicality and joy that lives in the spoken word. She will be continuing the composition work she has already begun on *The Combination-Consonant Etudes* (to be *Volume II*) and *The Vowel-to-Consonant Etudes* (to be *Volume III*), while also orienting toward sharing this speech and gesture work in lecture-demonstrations, workshops, classes and individual lessons. Her artistic presentations of poems framed by these poetic etude miniatures at poetry forums are ongoing. She will, of course, continue her work in the art of eurythmy, which includes the seed-beginnings of an inwardly-secured foundation for renewed work in both speech and music eurythmy. Her hope is that in partnership with able speakers and musicians, the performance of eurythmy will more and more form a part of her unfolding activities. At some point, she might publish the larger sets of etudes that she has composed, plus the special collections she made of the words that she gathered for their composition – others could then make use of them to plumb the depths of the sounding-meanings of our language. These collections cover the single vowels and the single consonants, the combination-consonants and the vowel-to-consonant transitions. She would like to bring out a children's volume of etudes as well, perhaps with illustrations, though the published etudes in *Volume I* can easily be used with children or adapted for them.

Kate has also created sculptures on an intimate scale using wool yarns and knotting techniques. These works are complex and organically-developed, each with its own textural, color and form dynamics that appear to speak in warm and friendly tones to those who make their acquaintance.