

Eurythmy: An Art That Makes Visible the Inaudible, Invisible and Unsounded Contents of Poetic Speech and Wordless Singing

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Because of my book-writing activities, I've necessarily had to make some coherent statements (hopefully) about what the art of eurythmy means to be, especially since it is the public-at-large with whom I want to communicate, not just my colleagues in the sister arts of eurythmy and speech. I know that we are all challenged to answer this question, so here is my contribution to it at this time. I've enlarged upon what I wrote in ENDNOTE 2 of my detailed report on the speech sound etudes and my eurythmy gesture work, and ENDNOTE 8 of my book, *The Speech Sound Etudes, Volume I*. (The report is newly-revised and re-posted at our EANA website, artistic category and is available as a booklet: *The Speech Sound Etudes: Feeling the Gestures and Finding the Figures*.)

The etymology of the word, 'eurythmy,' is: 'eu' – good, well or true, plus 'rhythmos' – proportion, measure, recurring motion, rhythm. The name is therefore taken to refer to harmonious movement. But many forms of movement can be characterized as being a kind of eurythmy when they are harmoniously coordinated, such as in modern dance and ballet. But the art of movement that Rudolf Steiner began to usher into being in 1912, is not this kind of eurythmy. Its harmony is to spring from a different source altogether, as is pointed to in my report.

In the expression of poetry through eurythmy movement, the harmony to be expressed by the performers is to have its origin in the nature of our own being and of all living things. And in specific, it is to spring from the fact that each performer has been able, independently and together with each other, to grasp in spirit the movement-impulses of the speech sounds – the vowels and consonants. These distinct impulses are expressions of the life forces, the formative etheric forces through which the Logos – the Word – lays hold of the mineral world to continually create and maintain the orderly organic form and functioning of plants and animals, and of our own form and soul nature as human beings. The aim in eurythmy is the harmonious expression that is possible when through direct, objective, inner perception and cognition of this higher reality, which is all around us and in us but not perceptible to our five lower senses, eurythmists grow to meet each other within

the moment-to-moment necessities of this reality as it expresses itself in the elements of poetic speech – and of music, or song without words. Therefore, this eurythmy is not self-expression, nor is it to be a coordinated set of agreed-upon movements or a catalog of inherited gestures, no matter how pleasing or personally meaningful these might be. Nor is it a kind of mime. In expressing the sound-architecture of the gesture-impulses of the sounds themselves in their forming of words – of sounding-meanings – we make visible the processes at work in nature, in poetic speech and in our soul experiences.

In music eurythmy, our goal is to make visible our objective and richly-differentiated experience of our own singing of melody. All manner of musical *relationships* are borne by each musical tone: its role in the scale to which it belongs, its relation to other tones as a temporary upper or lower tone in the movement of melodic intervals, its membership in three different triad harmonies that it holds as potentials that 'sound' to inward perception in the context of the other tones of the melody, its role in the melody's movement in time, in the meter, and in rhythmic motives, etc. Our task as eurythmists is to express all of these inaudible relationships that are present even in a single line of melody.

In eurythmy performance, a speaker or musician will express the audible flow of the poem or piece of music in unison with what the eurythmist(s) present as movement. Together, they bring out the key features of each piece in the creation of an artistically-integrated whole. This gives the onlookers the best chance of grasping the inward union between the audible expression and the silent eurythmy expression. The eurythmists' role is to express their richly-known experience of the inaudible elements of poetic speech or of music as discovered through their own speech, singing and movement activity and research.

Because eurythmy can bring the vitality of the formative forces forth through the speech sound gestures and through the gesture-expression of the intervals and other elements of musical experience, it is included in the Waldorf school pedagogy to foster the healthy development of children; and it is applied in modified form as therapy for disease conditions and developmental needs. And when extended in the broadest ways, eurythmy's reinvigorating power can revitalize not only our language and musical expression, but our entire earthly realm.

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