

On the Kindling Character of K

Kate Reese Hurd

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Some of you might have been surprised when in my article on achieving genuine rhythm in eurythmy expression (autumn 2019), I pointed to **B** and **K** as gestures that might be confused with each other by onlookers. This is because for both sounds the gesture-impulse brings the arms into the front space and causes a bending of the elbows. However, the **B** involves Character zones in the hands and the lower and upper arms, while the **K** involves very limited arm zones. This difference and others need to come through distinctly. To give substance to these differences, I'd like to provide a fuller discussion of the **K** gesture-impulse to accompany my autumn 2017 article, "Beginning with B."

I am, of course, speaking from my new point of departure – that of grasping the speech sound gestures directly from an inner experience of them as gained through intensive speech work. **B** and **K** are two of the gestures that I've found to be different from what I would have expected based on how I had been doing these gestures. One of the most beautiful and beneficial things about the disruption of my pre-existing gestures is that my new experiences are bringing me into intimate accord with what Rudolf Steiner depicted so deftly in his Figure drawings. There is such a wealth in them and I am not for a moment saying that I have encompassed everything that is there; but truly, in the real nature of each gesture-impulse I have found that my perceptions are in ready agreement with his. I want to add that I've also felt gratified to learn that my inability to grasp these spiritual realities in full and all at once is in keeping with what Dr. Steiner explained about the nature of spiritual perceptions: unlike the way earthly phenomena present themselves in their particulars to our material senses, spiritual perceptions *only gradually* become more distinct. (I've been unable as yet to relocate where he made this comparison.)

With **K**, as always when seeking to experience the gesture-impulse of any of the sounds, I began by cultivating my speaking of the sound. To my surprise, I did not like what I heard! My utterance of **K** was rather messy. This was disconcerting, for I thought my speech was already quite well articulated. It would take a long work with the etudes to be able to speak this consonant cleanly. The **K** is produced at the middle-back of the mouth. I use the rear portion of my tongue to make a backing within my mouth, touching only my back-most upper teeth and gums and pressing the roof to close off my nasal passages and throat. But when I released this firm formation, I could feel the tissue at the rear – the

uvula, etc. – being agitated and I heard an unpleasant friction. But at last, my speaking of **K** became clear, crystalline and potent without being forced or overblown.

As always, this speech-work centers on reciting the speech sound etude-studies I have composed, repeatedly sounding them while standing poised to move but not overtly moving. For **K**, I have gotten a great deal out of etudes such as, "Could cart canopies cover the cases of cups, kettles, cans, kegs and casks?" and "Cocky cavaliers recoil, cower and curse, cunningly coaxed, caught and captured!" In this way I elicited the gesture-impulse through the movement of my larynx and could begin to discern the movement that would gladly flow – if I allowed it to take full charge of my will – into my body as overt expression. I did begin to gently allow it to engage my will as my experience of the impulse grew. By degrees I learned the inward path to the instant re-experiencing of the impulse and became capable of going there again and again at will and without speaking.

In connection with this, I've reflected on Lory Maier-Smits' experience of doing "speech exercises" (see *How the New Art of Eurythmy Began*, M. Siegloch, p. 20), for which she recorded that she tried everything as she attempted to do what Dr. Steiner directed her to do at first with sentences that sound just one vowel. As you may recall, he had told her to pay attention to what was happening in her throat and then try to express in movement what she experienced there. Evidently she did not find what he had hoped she would. Why not? What I have come to is this: for Rudolf Steiner, the discrete movements being made within us by the larynx, in our throat, were no doubt readily perceptible to him as spiritual fact: "Thus our larynx performs backwards, in eurythmy, in the form of forces, what we think, feel and so on. This eurythmy really goes on within us. Our larynx eurythmizes" (*Curative Eurythmy*, GA 315, Lect. I, about 1/3 in). True as this might be, my perceptions of any of the gesture-impulses of the speech sounds have not led me to detect miniature movements of my larynx in the backward direction in my throat region. I have above all felt each gesture-impulse as it presents itself in my body as a whole wherever it most manifests when I speak the sound repeatedly, as in the etudes. *It seems that my entire etheric body responds*; and I've learned that Rudolf Steiner had said that if you keep your hands in your pockets while speaking, "your etheric body will gesticulate all the more vigorously, sheerly out of protest!" ("A Lecture on Eurythmy," August 26, 1923, Penmaenmawr). I believe this explains the success I've had through this practice of speaking while standing quietly: my etheric body strives the more strongly to make its wishes known. As a novice, and also now, I've found that focussing my attention on my larynx leads me away from the most immediate perceptions available to me, and I come

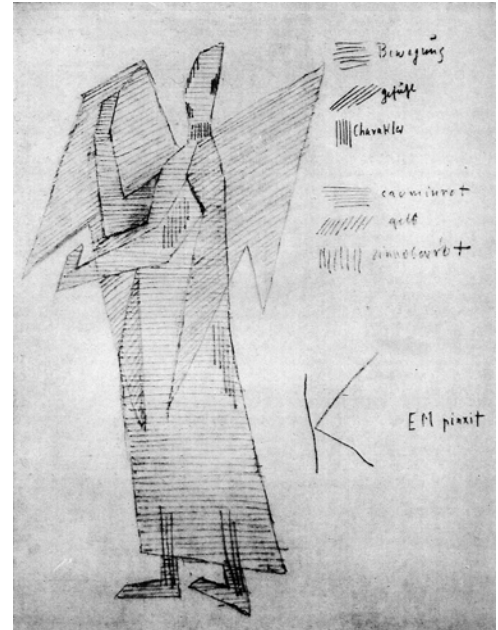
to little or nothing. Maybe it's no wonder that Lory did not discern the gesture-impulses of the sounds by doing this.

Fortunately, I did not take Lory's lack of success* in doing "speech exercises" as a no-go. Hence, I have my own reports to make. With **K**, I instantly sense my head as elongated and pointed at the top back. I feel compelled to an upright stance, and I feel in particular my buttocks area, my Achilles tendons – well-rooted to my heels and thereby supporting my upright stance – and a special awareness in the outer sides of my upper arms. I feel a flashing sensation out and back from the uppermost part of my arms. These are my primary perceptions. The gesture comes with a certain intensity, which on closer feeling-discernment is a shade of red. The flashing outward in the space has the quality of yellow; and the zones in my upper arms and Achilles tendons is also a shade of red. It has taken much color-work in movement to be able to differentiate the colors enough to identify and name those that pertain to my perceptions more accurately. I cannot account intellectually for any of these phenomena. *I do not make them happen.* *(Lory reported success on her own with the two sounds, **ü** and **sh**, by simply speaking them repeatedly and by comparing **ü** with **u**. Dr. Steiner affirmed what she found, but Magdalene Siegloch's book contains no indication that Lory did the same successful gesture-seeking speech work with any of the other sounds.)

It had been many years since I had last considered the Figure drawings that Rudolf Steiner made for twenty of the speech sounds. At last after much work with all of these sounds, I consulted his drawings. And upon looking at the one for **K**, I found many of my new perceptions depicted and elaborated! I noted that in the form he gave the head he showed the pointy elongation. Of course, the head does not elongate: it simply *feels* that way. (The lumps in the head of **G** are another example – that's just how it feels.) I noted that he indicated Character zones in the upper arms, buttocks area and Achilles tendons; and he showed the flashing of yellow Veil panels. But in addition, I noted his treatment of the lower arms and hands: he showed only the form they are felt to take; he did not show Character zone hatching in them. (In the Figure for **N** the arms are likewise crooked, but unlike for **K**, for **N** they are hatched.) What I have come to understand is that the Character zones are key features in the manifestation of the gesture-forming impulse through being actively filled with consciousness, not merely sensed in a novel form. The hatching shows this.

My work with the gesture-impulses and with Rudolf Steiner's drawings continues. More recently, the zones of awareness in and below the chin and in the neck with **K** came to my notice. I was pleased when I went to the drawing and saw that indeed this is what Dr. Steiner also perceived and had recorded. In my work this is exactly how I use the Figures; and if I see something there that I am not yet conscious of, I ask: do I perceive this as fact?

So, does it matter whether the hands and lower arms of **K** are Character zones or not? I would say that it absolutely does. Dr. Steiner affirmed my conviction when in *Eurythmy as Visible Speech* (Lect. 15, about 3/4 in), he said, "And also of special importance is the Character." The Character zones that the **K** gesture-impulse manifests give the sound the quality of emanating-from-the-core, of something that is kindled strongly from within that core; and this power is catalytic and conveyed directly. What I find is that the lower arms and hands jerk upward, elbows bent, in *passive concert* with the impulse that manifests through the Character zones.



But what happens if, contrary to this, I have the idea that the hands and lower arms *are* active in **K**, and I place my attention in them and perform a cutting or chopping movement with them? This is what I have done in the past. The hands and arms are then Character zones. My focus is on the cutting movements that I carry out with them, that I demonstrate. But when I inquire inwardly while doing this, I discover that I am drawing my head forward and I feel myself leaning forward from my hips as well. I feel strong in the back portions of my lower jaw bones and in my forehead and temples. I even feel drawn to look at my lower arms and hands. Taking this as my gesture, if I refer to Dr. Steiner's Figure for **K**, I will work to embody the elements that I see there, but interpreting them in light of the gesture I've developed, trying to harmonize them with it to the extent that I can. This was in fact my former method.

But if I am lucky enough to feel uneasy with this method – and I have been lucky – I can try to approach the gesture a different way: I can begin anew by accepting the Character zones that Dr. Steiner depicted. I send my awareness to these zones and leave off attending to my hands and lower arms. However, my experience with this approach is

that I *still* cannot rightly come to the gesture. I believe that I now understand *why* I can't succeed: the gesture I seek to express through my movements has its origin in the gesture-impulse of the speech sound itself as a spiritual reality. The *gesture-impulse* is what informs the gesture. In short, in trying to *build* the gesture, *I haven't begun at the beginning*.

The Character zones that I experience in response to speaking the sound emanate from the gesture-impulse and are therefore secondary to it and dependent upon it in every way. So are the Movement and Veil aspects, for all three appear to my inward perception together, not sequentially. For me, the appearance of a time sequence of Movement first, then Feeling, then Character only pertains to the attempt to build up the gesture from the drawing. I find that all three aspects are *effects* in me of the impulse.* Therefore, the simple truth is that I must begin with the gesture-impulse that emerges from out of the sound itself as manifested and evidenced in my speaking. I cannot begin with an idea that *K* involves the hands and lower arms in a gesture of cutting; and no amount of trying to do what Rudolf Steiner depicted brings me to truth in my gesture-making. Only my real experience of the real thing has brought me toward that truthfulness. I've found that any other process leads me at best to an approximation, a semblance of the gesture. And to my experience this includes gestures made by copying the forms and processes of Mother Nature, too, because these are dependent upon and secondary to the movement-impulse that informs each of them. In taking my start with the forms I perceive there I again fail to begin at the beginning. *(Readers might want to refer to Part 2 of my report, *The Speech Sound Etudes: Feeling the Gestures, Finding the Figures*, posted at our EANA site Fall 2014. There I discuss the color-garments of the gesture-impulses.)

Admittedly, in the absence of real soul-spiritual experiences of the gesture-impulses, these stand-ins for the gestures are the best that can be done. But I regard it as a terrible misfortune to have to rest at that, because for me, building a gesture in these ways has really built a barrier, which Annemarie Ehrlich called a "crust" (see at 46 minutes into her first of two interviews with Leo Stronks in 2014, posted at our site, but unfortunately now marked "private" – I took many notes). This repels the feeling-perceptions of my heart and allows something else to enter into what I do, in place of the true dynamics of the gesture-impulse. This is what I've experienced and now seek to help others avoid, in the event that they recognize this as their plight also. It is a relief to find that the 'crust' can be removed. As we read in *The Gospel According to John*, "In the beginning was the Word." The Word as it manifests in Nature is magnificent, but it is right within the intimacy of my own speech activity – and in a more subtle way in the speech activity of others – that I come most directly to experience the spiritual fact of its activity and learn to directly express it. Then with joy

I readily recognize its expression in Nature's forms and processes, too. I no longer build up or generate the gesture from what I think are its characteristics and from what I've placed in myself as a movement-memory for it. And indeed, I believe that this difference is exactly what Rudolf Steiner pointed to in the opening of his February 1924 course on *Eurythmy as Visible Singing*: that it is "above all things necessary that mere gesture-making and movement-production be transcended" and that experiences of "the actual sounds" must "in fact" inform the gestures in both music eurythmy and speech eurythmy. (See the end here.)

It has puzzled me that in contrast with this, in September 1912 and following, Dr. Steiner himself gave Lory a path based on intimations of certain movements to make for the gestures and descriptive scenarios for them; and these are what she worked with and passed down to others. Then in 1922 he introduced the Figure drawings and advised eurythmists to feel themselves dressed as shown. This was despite how devoted and diligent the aspiring eurythmists were in their efforts. And in his instructions at the Faculty Meeting at the Eurythmeum in Stuttgart, April 30, 1924 (see at 5/6 into the meeting report in *Eurythmy: Its Birth and Development*, GA 277), he said that "unnatural," "dislocated movements" would be prevented by imitating the Figures, that "the eurythmy Figures are there to rectify the movements of eurythmy." Since I know that gestures that have their origin in experiences of *the gesture-impulses themselves* can never be "dislocated," I can only conclude that he saw that vivid inward experiences of the impulses remained inaccessible to the aspiring artists, and therefore descriptions and imitation were all he could rest his hopes on for the art: eurythmy had to enter the earthly sphere of activity however it could. And for us looking back, we are deeply grateful to all those who helped this come about.

But in present time, as I've said, when I take up Lory's speech exercises I *can* go to the gesture-impulse of the sound itself. I open a process through which I silence my guesswork and cease engaging my thought processes in conjuring up the feelings I believe I should have and the memory picture 'imaginings' that I have relied upon to shape a given gesture; and I cease imitating anything. I dedicate my thought processes to directing myself in the steps of objective inquiry into the dynamics and feelings that belong to the actual impulses. And my developing faculty of feeling-perception and feeling-intelligence tells me whether or not I have steered myself rightly and am bringing forth the impulse purely. As Rudolf Steiner pointed out, a mental image of a hot stove and an actual perception of one are two very different things. Only the latter is real and can burn; and it is likewise with gestures: mental pictures of them are not the real thing. (See *Metamorphoses of the Soul*, Vol. I, Lect. 6, November 11, 1909, about 1/3 in.)

Turning to the gesture-impulse of **K**, I want to share that I now find much meaning in what Rudolf Steiner said about it in *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*. “In the sound **K**, we have matter governed, mastered, by spirit.” If one encounters “a regular termagant” of a person “who appears all physical strength and of whom you are somewhat afraid,” one has “the feeling of gathering one’s self together in order to confront him, but there is also the mastery over him” (Lect. 4, 3/7 in). And in describing the soul process of the Zodiac, he said we move from Scorpio, **S**, and its “expression of the understanding, the intellect,” “the mind,” to Sagittarius, **K**, and its quality of “resolve, the thought which wishes to transfer itself into reality” (Lect. 10, about 1/3 in). My sense of something being kindled in **K**, as from a core and needing little to be communicated – for instance, in the case of a true king the merest sign reveals the resolve that backs up what he has conceived of doing and makes mastery possible – is in accord with this description. With the next step, Capricorn, **L**, one “struggles” to bring the thought and the resolve “into a relationship with the outer world,” to prepare it to become deed. I have observed in myself the unfolding of these stages that enable my ideas to be fulfilled as deeds. If I don’t gather the necessary resolve, **K**, I will falter when I come to the deed. If I don’t fit my idea into outer conditions appropriately, **L**, the deed will be flawed; and so on.

With these insights, I can consider the words that involve **K**. Besides working with them in movement with a sense of welcome for their revelations, I can also take single words of all types – nouns, verbs, adjectives – as the content for the thinking exercise (the first of the six called ‘basic’), to fathom the full meaning of the word and consider more deeply the way in which the speech sounds serve to express this meaning. In light of the kindled resolve of **K**, the word, ‘kiss,’ then comes alive: even the merest sign of resolve to kiss can cause a profound response, like ‘ele-c-tricity.’ A caress carries calming in it – and where the resolve to calm is weak, so is the expected action itself when it comes. The power in the emotion of cowardice compels recoiling. A hiccup catches us, carving a space for itself right in the area in which we form the **K** at the back of the mouth. In this way I begin to grasp an unexpected depth and subtlety in **K**’s presence in words. And because of this subtlety, it serves not just words like ‘cudgel,’ ‘kingly’ and ‘cuss,’ but the whole gamut of **K**-words that includes ‘key,’ ‘cunning,’ ‘coffee,’ ‘kindred,’ ‘corner,’ ‘caution,’ ‘current,’ ‘cuddle,’ etc., and also ‘clue,’ ‘cling,’ ‘crackle,’ ‘Christ.’ I feel that the these images as well as everything that seeks to ‘con’-nect, ‘com’-bine, ‘co’-exist or ‘col’-laborate cannot be conveyed with a cutting, chopping movement. Of course it can’t! In fact, I find such an expression unseemly for many of these words. But when the kindled spark of the **K** is evident – the Character zones clearly manifested, the flashing out of the

Veils, with points up, down and to the back, and the form of the head – both the power and subtlety of its quality of resolve can be expressed. And then there is also no confusion for the onlooker as to which speech sound it is, **B** or **K**, for it is undeniably, resolutely **K**.

Here is my rendering of Rudolf Steiner’s statement on gesture-making and movement-production, which he made shortly into Lecture 1 of *Eurythmy as Visible Singing*:

... I consider it a requirement that we at the least for once [dass wir wenigstens einmal] make a beginning in the foundation of music eurythmy.

Here, however, it is above all things necessary that the bare gesture-making and movement-production in eurythmy be transcended, that within the sphere of eurythmy – also in speech eurythmy – the real sound will in fact be felt-sensed-perceived [empfinden].

Clarifying a Key Point in “Kindling K”

An addendum published in the *EANA Newsletter*, spring 2021

I’d like to take a moment to clarify something I wrote in my autumn 2020 article, where I said that a time sequence of Movement, Feeling and Character only appears during the attempt to build up a gesture from the Figure for it. I wrote this because I find that everything is different when proceeding from the sound and its gesture-impulse to the visible gesture and its triad of colors and forms instead of the reverse, i.e., beginning with concepts (mental pictures) of the visible gesture and its color-triad, and from there seeking and building up an experience of a gesture for the sound.

Upon perceiving the inward etheric movement of the gesture-impulse arising from the spoken sound itself, one can lead this impulse into visible gesture: one simply experiences and expresses it. The triad of color dynamics and the forms through which it manifests can of course be investigated and its details known. In that case it becomes clear that the Movement color is fundamental, much as the prime is in a musical triad; and this is naturally where I began my explorations of the details of each gesture that arose in my work. The Feeling is akin to the 3rd, and the Character consolidates the gesture-structure much as the 5th does the musical triad-structure. The manifestation of a gesture out of the gesture-impulse needs these three roles fulfilled, as we know. And like the musical triad, they can be felt in quick succession, in a hierarchy in time. The Movement dynamic is foremost, but the other two surely must present themselves and work without delay, otherwise no distinct gesture can manifest. Nevertheless, before and in the visible gesture is the gesture-impulse of the sound – *the Word*. It is this, I believe, which informs and guides everything in our speech and in the eurythmy movements that are united as one with our speech.