

The Scale Degree Intervals Give Rise to our Tonal Music Gebilde

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Many doors have opened to me while working on my report, *Singing and Jumping Opens the Way to a Vital Music Eurythmy Foundation*.^{*} The work has drawn me to an ever deeper understanding of the tonal music we seek to give expression to in our eurythmy. However, the report keeps being held up because of unexpected aspects that still need to be explored. One of these explorations has involved looking carefully at the original German of certain passages in Rudolf Steiner's lectures on *Eurythmy as Visible Singing (EVSing)*. As a result of this I've had a pleasant and fruitful encounter with the German word, '**Gebilde**.' ^{*}(Parts of this report are posted at the EANA website.)

I find that the meaning of this noun, Gebilde, cannot be summed up in a simple word or two. In his lectures on eurythmy,¹ Rudolf Steiner used this word in reference to spoken and musical sound: the **Lautgebilde** and the **Tongebilde**. I'd like to share what I've written for my above-mentioned report as an introduction to this term which points to the core of what our eurythmy movement is meant to express in relation to music and to poetic speech. This word, Gebilde, needs to become dear to our hearts! (I'd like to note that an important ally to me in my work with the German is the 1910 *Muret-Sanders Encyclopedic Dictionary*.)

'Gebilde' has multiple nuances. Its direct relation to the verb, 'bilden,' indicates forming, creating, building, constructing or structuring, shaping, moulding, fashioning or arranging. Hence, one could say that a Gebilde is the result of these activities which have led to the created form or shape and all of its interrelated structures and functions. On account of this obvious connection with the verb, bilden, one might think that a Gebilde is much the same as a Bild. But the noun, 'Bild,' refers to a picture, image or portrayal, not a deeply formative structuring. The verb expressions that one must use to describe the making of a Bild stay more so at the surface level: 'abbilden' – to copy, portray, depict; 'abmalen' – to paint; 'beschreiben,' 'schildern,' 'darstellen' – to describe, depict, sketch, represent. The scope of the word 'Gebilde' is far more dimensional and fundamental than these meanings.

'Laut' refers both to sound in general and to a spoken sound or to phonetics in particular; and 'Ton' refers to a single tone or note, but also to sound in general. Hence, both terms as Rudolf Steiner used them, Lautgebilde and Tongebilde, would refer to the formative structuring

that pertains to spoken and musical sound phenomena in the broadest sense, not narrowed to specific sounds in either realm. In English we translate 'Lauteurythmie' into its general meaning as 'speech eurythmy,' rather than 'speech-sound eurythmy.' I believe that we would also do well to translate 'Toneurythmie' into the general as 'music eurythmy' (or 'tonal music eurythmy').

Spoken sound (language, prose, poetry) and musical sound (sung and instrumental) are earthly mediums for this inner Gebilde structuring, plasticity and activity. When we work effectively with spoken and musical sound as artists, we make use of and abide within the lawful Gebilde that is built into these phenomena, that informs them whether or not we are conscious of it. We do not create this Gebilde. And in eurythmy – this new art of movement that involves the formative life forces of the etheric world – what we usually do instinctively in our speech, music-making and movement is to be unfolded consciously. The aim is to reveal the objective, living and lawful Gebilde and cooperate with it knowingly and more and more completely and beautifully.

So, what does this mean for our music eurythmy work? Basic to the Gebilde in tonal music is the **scale-Gebilde**; and I've found that this phenomenon is really something of a miracle. Therefore, I'd like to encourage all of us to work at mastering each piece we approach as an experience of its actual scale-Gebilde; in other words, mastering its expression according to its movement within the musical structure of **scale-degrees** or **scale-steps** as revealed to our direct experience. We have *exactly* the right idea when we understand these steps as the 'do - re - mi' of music that Maria von Trapp taught the children in the film "The Sound of Music." To begin with we can simply sing 'do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do' up the scale, just as she did ... and back down again. These are the **solfège syllables**^{*} Their use is common practice in music (e.g., see Michael Kaulkin on "The Case for 'Movable Do'"). But rather than the 'do-re-mi' syllables, I *strongly* encourage singing number names instead: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8. ^{*}(The word, 'solfège,' derives from 'sol'-'fa'.)

It's best to begin honing our ability with melodies that stay in one key. And if they are notated in 'C' major, it will be easier to confirm what we sense regarding which scale-degree the melody is visiting at any given moment. If the written melody stays in its home key (and it is in the major mode of the scale, not the minor mode), no extra 'sharp' or 'flat' symbols (# or b) will appear that are not already shown in the key signature.

Here is a good melody³ to learn to sing using the numbers for the scale-steps. The melody moves scale-wise, meaning that within each of the four phrases it does not skip over any of the scale-degrees. For singing, contract 'seven'

to ‘sev’n’ or just ‘sev.’ And take any starting pitch that is comfortable for your voice. (Singers transpose melodies at will, to suit their vocal range. This is totally acceptable.):

Canon for 4 voices

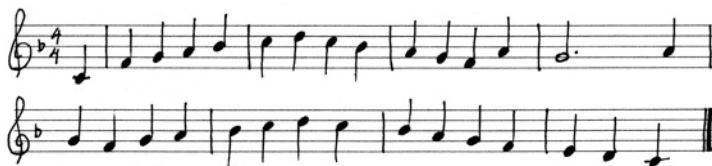
W. Hayes 18th century



This melody is especially helpful at the beginning of working with the musical scale, because in the first phrase, it moves within the first four steps – the **lower tetrachord** (1 2 3 4) – with a sense of gently breathing away from prime-do and then back to it. And in the third phrase, it moves within the last four steps – the **upper tetrachord** (5 6 7 8) – strongly reaching for the octave-do. Hence, I call this tune the ‘tetrachords song.’ You’ll find that the melody gives a clear sense of where its musical home is, the ‘do’ of its scale. This ‘do,’ 1, is so important that it is called the **prime** or the **tonic**, also the **keynote**. Later on you can also sing this tetrachords melody as a round with fellow singers. Then you will experience other elements of the music-Gebilde – the **harmonies** – which also point to its home center, ‘do.’

And here is the melody that Rudolf Steiner provided early on for eurythmy practice (so I’m thinking this was in 1915). You’ll see that he indicated the key signature of ‘F.’ In this range of notes no one’s voice is strained (tenors and basses transpose an octave down; but again, take whatever starting pitch suits your voice). You’ll discover significant differences between the tetrachords melody above and this one, relative to where it travels in the scale, how it frames where home is, ‘do,’ and whether it ever really settles there:

Rudolf Steiner



Experiencing where home is in each piece is of primary importance! To sense how the melody leaves the prime, ‘do,’ the tonic, and returns to it, and to experience all of the cues that the other scale degrees give as to where ‘do’ is in relation to them is the very first area of work. This experienced structure is the core of **tonal** music: it is the **tonal-Gebilde**. We need to learn to sense the distinct role that each member of the scale plays and experience how the melody visits them, emphasizing or skipping certain ones. And if non-scale-member pitch-tones suddenly enter, we can begin to understand what they are doing within the tonal-Gebilde.

After gaining some mastery in singing the scale-steps of simple pieces as numbers, we can take up pieces that *change* which pitch-tone serves as ‘do’ – i.e., pieces that **modulate** to closely-related keys. (Note: the equal temperament tuning of our present day makes it possible for pieces to shift to keys that are very ‘far’ indeed from their original tonal center, ‘do,’ set at the start of the piece – unlike in earlier times in tonal music when pieces could only shift to the closest keys. The music went more and more out of tune if they ventured further!)

It is usually through the entrance of **non-scale members** that a melody is able to change keys; and how we acknowledge them in our singing of the scale-step numbers matters. The numerical solfège syllables must express what is now happening. And for this, I suggest brightening or darkening the vowel in the number syllables. Once we become familiar with this approach, we will find that it is not at all so difficult; but instead, beautifully helpful! Here is the **fully-chromatic numerical solfège** that I have developed and use. (‘Chromatic’ means not just the seven steps in the tonal scale-Gebilde, but the five non-scale members also – all twelve from ‘do’ to ‘octave-do.’) In this chart, the normal scale-steps are in the middle, with their next-higher neighbors above and next-lower below. I indicate the next-higher neighbors of the 3rd scale-degree with the vowel *āi* (eye, indicated by the diacritic, *~*) and the lowered 2nd with short ‘èh.’ (Note: in **minor**, the **natural mode** is taken as normal.):

ween	tee	thrȳ	feer	feev	seex	seev’n	eet
one	two	three	four	five	six	sev’n	eight
wayn	tay	thray	fayr	fayv	sayx	sayv’n	èt

These altered syllables only enter service for non-scale member passing tones or for ornamentation, for transitions – **modulations** – between **tonal centers** (keys), and when we work with minor keys, also for the changes that occur in **harmonic and melodic minor**. *I have found it absolutely essential that except for these changes, the normal scale members – the steps 1 through 8 – will always be expressed with the normal numbers, thus revealing the actual scale-Gebilde structure that belongs to the melody, which the melody traverses during the piece.* And direct musical perception can increasingly make us aware of the normal steps.

While it can be relatively easy to gain a feeling for the qualities of the scale degrees when singing simple major and minor scales, ascending and descending, it is quite a lot more difficult to feel them in their distinctiveness when they appear in melodies where they do not occur scale-wise and where the Gebilde is complex and challenging. But our perception of the musical impulses of the scale degrees *will grow* with persistent cultivation, and our experience of these scale-dependent relationships can become deep and sure.

Experiencing how melodies travel within the scale Gebilde – each visiting the scale steps in their own fashion – can begin to reveal many musical secrets to us. In my work

in this direction, I've found that each scale degree only gains its character by merit of our experience of its *relationship* to the prime, the keynote of the scale. By itself, a specific, named pitch-tone is no such thing as a '2nd' or a '5th.' Sounding alone, it only holds a *potential* for being a member of a scale. Another pitch-tone must come into relationship with it. (See the *EVSing*, Lect. 2 discussion.).

Our work with the relationships of the scale-degrees in singing can also take us beyond the fundamental scale-Gebilde **archetype** that expresses itself in each piece, to reveal other archetypes that inform our tonal music. Arising out of the scale, out of the prime or keynote of *each piece* (I want to say, out of *its own* 'C'), is a complete set of *relationships*: the **Circle of Fifths**. My finding is that there is no absolute Circle of Fifths such as the conventions of our material notation seem to suggest, in which the pitch-tone we call 'C' appears to be the one and only 'home' to the phenomenon of this Circle of Fifths. Instead, myriad audible manifestations are generated and informed by this scale-dependent archetype. By their very nature, archetypes of any kind are imperceptible to our earthly, material senses. They are a *supersensible* facts. So, too, the Circle of Fifths.

With the process of mastering the scale-Gebilde of each piece, we can gradually gain the ability to discern exactly when a shift is being made from the home tonal center to any other tonal center during the course of the piece, and from center to center according to their relationships all along the way – to know whether the piece has gone in the direction of the key of its 5th scale-degree (the **dominant**, V), or in the direction of the key of its 4th scale-degree (the **subdominant**, IV); or perhaps to its **parallel minor** (which shares the same prime, 'do'), or its **relative minor** (whose 'do' is its 6th scale-degree).* We can begin to recognize the lawful differences in character of these centers and their directions of movement in relation to each other – energetic and direct, open and yielding, brighter, calmer, freer, lighter, darker, etc. We will feel the various harmonic structures and become an intimate knower of the melodic figures which bring phrases to a close. And if the manner of getting where we go in the piece is unusual, we'll sense and know it.** And when we expected to come back home at the end but we're sent somewhere else instead (perhaps in advance of the next movement in a **sonata**-Gebilde), we'll be totally awake to it. Modulation is a marvelous process! *(The *Singing and Jumping* report and some of my other articles explore these processes.) **(Again, see Michael Kaulkin's article.)

Never fear: this tonal, numerical singing work will not at all destroy our eurythmy-movement. It will deepen the very experiences that are to be expressed. When these are strong as *gesture-generating experiences* we will cease to have any desire to sing while moving. Then we will simply choose which to do. And here is how: when the scale-

Gebilde of a melody has become clear to us through singing, then we can gently, without hurry, and with total attention inwardly, sustain our experience of these scale degrees and work toward feeling the **interval gestures** arise in us (see *EVSing*, Lect. 7), allowing them to replace the singing. I call these gestures the **bones-sequence gestures**. This is singing made visible. (At this time we're leaving expression of the melodic intervals between the scale degrees out; and we're also leaving aside the angle-gestures which Rudolf Steiner brought in 1915 as interval-expressions of the "prime, 2nd, 3rd, 4th," etc. of the major and minor modes of the scale.)

I say, "gently, without hurry, and with total attention inwardly," because the gesture-impulses that real experiences generate are so very easily overridden by every personal movement-intention we hold in us, by every personal movement-imagination we entertain of what the movement should be and what it should feel like. We want the real impulse direct from the source. I believe that it is helpful – even necessary – to have a general sense for what certain types of gestures are like. We then have some idea how to focus our attention when we're seeking these gestures within our direct experiences. In the world of the five senses, too, our explorations are helped when we understand the nature and general differences, for instance, between plants and animals. But in our actual perceiving activity, each phenomenon itself must claim our devotion and be our sole guide if we are really to know that particular phenomenon. This applies to all fields of inquiry, including our inquiries into musical phenomena and the eurythmy movement-impulses that belong to them.

Going further, when we're ready we can build up a simple-but-dynamic form for the melody by allowing the **interval forms**⁴ to come forth – those distinct movements in space that belong to each degree, that arise directly out of the experiences. And in addition, when the time is right – but I would say not too soon – we can also explore angle-gestures as expressions of the actual scale-degree intervals of the melody. To my feeling now, in relation to the scale degrees the angle-gestures and the bones-sequence gestures are two sides of the same experience: the angle-gestures are from the cosmic-objective perspective, the Apollonian, while the bones-sequence gestures are from the human-objective perspective, the Dionysian.

At the opening of his lecture course on *Eurythmy as Visible Singing*, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the necessity of basing our movement-expression on direct experiences of musical fact. In these lectures he used the words, 'Tatsache' and 'Tatsächlich,' a number of times, repeatedly pointing us toward that which is founded in fact: factual, actual, real. He augmented this with his use of the words, 'wirklich' and 'eigentlich' – actually, really. Here is one of the key passages, with the German also. Note that in speaking, Dr. Steiner at

first left out *what it is* that must be experienced; but in the next sentence he filled it in: the *what* is the Gebilde. I've placed an asterisk where this omission is made. To my feeling, by at first withholding this key factor and only afterward supplying it, he created a spoken rhythm that laid special emphasis on the key factor, the Gebilde:

The onlooker perceives in the eurythmy not only the bare movement or the gesture that the eurythmist presents, but actually [wirklich] perceives what the eurythmist feels and inwardly experiences. And for this, with this, it is necessary that in the act of eurythmy by the eurythmist * is in fact [tatsächlich] experienced – is experienced above all things in the case of anything that is indeed to be presented. That is the speech-Gebilde in speech eurythmy; in music eurythmy, of course, the music-Gebilde.

Der Zuschauer nimmt an der Eurythmie nicht etwa bloss die Bewegung oder die Geste wahr, die der Eurythmisierende darstellt, sondern der Zuschauer nimmt wirklich an der Eurythmie wahr, was der Eurythmisierende empfindet und innerlich erlebt. Und dazu ist notwendig, dass * tatsächlich im Eurythmisieren von dem Eurythmisierenden erlebt werde – erlebt werde vor allen Dingen dasjenige, was ja zur Darstellung kommen soll. Das ist in der Lauteurythmie das Lautgebilde, in der Toneurythmie aber das Tongebilde.

(Note: 'act of eurythmy by the eurythmist' is my rendering of 'Eurythmisieren von dem Eurythmisierenden.')

And so, in response to the illumination of these words from Rudolf Steiner, *I am encouraging us to seek at the outset the strongest possible experiences of the archetypal scale as fact in each piece of tonal music we approach.* This is our most potent pathway into experiencing *all* of the archetypal relationships that hold sway in our music-Gebilde. In my four-part *Singing and Jumping* report, my goal is to show how this is so and to share more of the steps I've found that can help us become more deeply conversant with this vibrant Gebilde in our experience and expression. To help with this, in my report I take up in detail a number of the pieces my class worked on in eurythmy school.

I want to add that I believe that it is very important that we translate 'Toneurythmie' as music eurythmy rather than as 'tone' eurythmy. Why? My experience tells me that if we equate the inner, higher experience of musical sound with audible pitch-tones sounded according to the written notes, we easily become confused. We unwittingly set foot on a slippery slope, dragging the musical down to the level of the material, rather than clearly perceiving and expressing it as the spiritual phenomenon that it is. Furthermore, I do not have real, verifiable higher experiences of specific pitch-tones. I know no form of gesture-expression for such things. *Most of our pieces of music are tonal: they are purely about relationships. They require a purely tonal eurythmy.*

In my past role as a pianist (and in playing other instruments and in choral singing, too), I know how easy it is to read and sound the notes fluently, while only vaguely experiencing the tonal-Gebilde archetypes that hold sway in each piece. Eurythmy has *so much* to give through its power to uncover the spiritual realities of music and restore them to our experience and expression. Through the gift of revealing these realities we can help musicians most especially to consciously permeate their music-making with the truly musical in ever greater significance.

I believe that Rudolf Steiner was quite right, that our entire culture in all its aspects needs this re-finding and renewal of the musical. And as he said at the end of *EVSing*, "by its very nature, eurythmy will compel people to return more and more to what is truly musical." This is why it is so essential that in our eurythmy we do in fact achieve the expression of the truly musical – and only that – having become permeated with it through experiencing it ourselves.

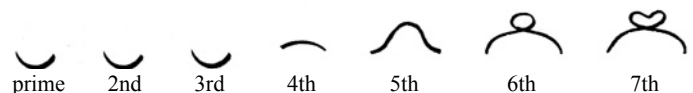
NOTES:

¹ Regarding the concept, 'Gebilde.' Rudolf Steiner first used it shortly into *EVSing* in the German, 1-2 pages into Lect. 1. This concept was appropriately conveyed as "structure and formation" in the translation by the Compton-Burnetts for the 1977 edition of *Eurythmy as Visible Music [Singing]*. However, in the 2013/2019 Anastasi edition, the concept is given as "portrayal," suggesting instead some sort of depiction and some sort of content whose origin is not at all characterized as to whether it is subjective or objective. But the speech-Gebilde and the music-Gebilde are *objective* realities and *lawful* structures, just as Rudolf Steiner indicated throughout his lectures.

² In Rudolf Steiner's January 1, 1915 Dornach lecture (halfway in) in *Art as Seen in the Light of Mystery Wisdom*, GA 275, he spoke of 'tones' (Töne) and immediately described experiencing the prime, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th. He named no specific pitch-tones and did not designate a pitch-tone as THE prime, as the one and only. The interval forms which he introduced in his March 8, 1923 Stuttgart lecture, and the bones-sequence gestures which he brought in *EVSing*, Lect. 7, are also identified by him as 'prime, 2nd, 3rd,' – intervals, scale steps, not named pitch-tones.

³ I encountered this melody in *Music for Sight Singing*, 2nd edition, by Robert W. Ottman, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967.

⁴ Regarding the interval-forms. In his March 8, 1923 lecture in Stuttgart, Rudolf Steiner described the movement-expression of the intervals in space and gave drawings of these expressions – see *The Inner Nature of Music and the Experience of Tone*. Here are the forms as in Elena Zuccoli's *From the Tone Eurythmy Work*, Walter Keller Press, Dornach, 1981, but with the curve-form for the 4th shallower, as Rudolf Steiner described:



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