

# *Moving in Etheric Space* *Developing Spatial Awareness for Adults and Children*

## *1. Introduction for Adult Learners*

In our first blocks we have been exploring how to become conscious of the space that we occupy.

*What is space?* It seems almost too obvious for words to draw attention to the fact that one of the basic attributes of living in a physical body is that we live in space. This is as true for us as human beings as it is for all the other physical things of the world. Yet the way that different kingdoms *interact with* the space they occupy is one of the things that differentiate them one from another.

What we call the mineral kingdom, including rocks and crystals, and even our own bones, appear to show no self-generated movement. They exist in space, but do not move themselves from one place to another. They do not grow of their own accord; nor do they experience death. Yet over the course of eons they may slowly fall apart and deteriorate, because no field of life holds them in a self-regenerating system. The minerals belong to the world that we can research and understand through material science.

Progressing through the transitional layers of micro-organisms, we come at length to the plant kingdom, which shows a different way of living in space. Even to our human eyes, we can see that plants change their shape and size as they grow. They come into being, grow, metamorphose, reproduce, and die away. Because they are rooted to the ground, their movement is chiefly a vertical growth that plays out between the earth and the sun. In the plant kingdom we cannot perceive a self-generated intentional movement, but we can sense a morphic or holonic field that encompasses the wisdom of the plant and regulates the shapes that the plant will become.

Going further, we arrive at the animal kingdom. We discover that *movement in space* is one of the chief characteristics of animals. They are driven by their desires, their instincts, their need to eat and drink and procreate. Because their needs are usually not fulfilled where they are, and because they are not rooted like plants are, they move through their environment in pursuit of fulfillment. Animals also have *sense organs*, which allow them to take the outer world into themselves.

The way that humans occupy space and move through it is once again different than the animals. You can stand in space and know that you are here. You can be aware of your gravity, your height, your weight, your shape, your size. You can of course become aware of how you breathe, the movements of your chest. You can be aware of yourself as a being of consciousness inside a mineral body. You can be aware of the stream of life inside yourself. You can be aware of the instincts and desires that drive you. And you can be aware of yourself being conscious. Moreover, you can be aware of yourself consciously filling your space! This is truly em-bodying your spirit!

Take a moment, right now, to practice moving your body, and becoming aware of the movements you make. Start with your hands, as you trace forms in space. Extend your movements: move your arms and do so consciously, feeling how you are able to use them in so many manifold ways.

Now try to feel the field around you. Every movement you make affects the space you occupy. You can imagine wind currents created by your gestures.

In eurythmy, you actually become a creative artist in the way that you use these movements. Even more: you sculpt the space with movements that have meaning, because their sculptural quality is related to the original forces of creation, the movements of language.

### **First Step: Playing with space**

The next step in your eurythmy practice is learning how to increase your awareness of the space you move through. Begin by invoking the first feeling we have practiced, by standing straight and tall. Imagine the light above your head, and your connection to the core of the earth below you. Let the line that connects the two of them pass straight through you and resonate with it. Connect with the light of your spirit.

Become aware of the dimensions of this line of light filling your whole body. Now practice walking through space in different directions. As we practiced in the peace exercise, feel the difference between walking forward and backward. Also practice walking right and left. In each direction you move, feel your whole body pressing into the space, changing it. Occupy your space consciously, as you move through it with the power of your presence.

As you move, feel free to play a bit. Move your arms as well, and practice synchronizing them with your legs. Practice also contrasting them with your leg movements. Fill space and feel it.

### **Learning to be free in three-dimensional space: Facing forward**

You will notice that it is natural for you to turn your head, and especially your eyes, towards the direction you are moving. Why? In our sense world, we have become forcefully attached to looking at the world through our eyes. This means that we are constantly drawn into and relating to the things of the visible world. There are, however, other ways of feeling the body, other surfaces of space that you can feel. What if you had eyes---or ears---on all the surfaces of your body? How would you move through space then, perceiving how every surface feels different?

Now practice that whenever you move, you always face in one direction. Establish for yourself what is the front of your practice space, and practice moving towards it, away from it (and to the back wall), or to the sides. Your moving body is like a pencil writing you into space. As you do this, experience the real adventure of awakening to space with each and every surface of your body.

You may have seen that eurythmists almost always face forwards when they move. Initially, this may seem awkward, or forced, but as you develop this feeling, you will be delighted at the enormous sense of freedom you gain as you learn to feel space with your whole body.

Perhaps before you were born, you could sense space in all directions simultaneously. In our condition on the earth, however, we become increasingly reliant on our visual sense, forgetting the other dimensions that are around us. When you learn to move in this way, you become much more free. You become more *human*.

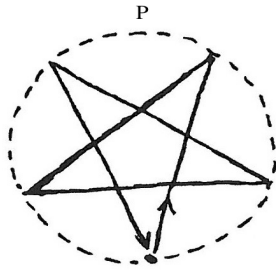
So, what does this have to do with eurythmy? Everything that we think and speak and create unfolds in time. In eurythmy, what unfolds in time has to appear in space, which is our medium. As eurythmists, we strive to understand how lines of poetry and thoughts and even sounds themselves live in space. They may call for movement in straight lines or curves; they may be jagged or smooth, in-winding or out-streaming. The eurythmist does not make arbitrary choreography for poems or music, but develops a sensitive awareness for how the piece itself needs to unfold in space and time according to artistic lawfulness. The performing eurythmist thus needs to practice diligently how to move according to real etheric lawfulness, so that the habits of normal physical movements do not get in the way.

These will be the elements that we need to play with as we practice moving geometric forms in the next exercises and discovering how the intrinsic quality of each comes alive as we move them with our unique human consciousness. When you work with eurythmy as a personal practice, you may not need these exercises. However, this is a chapter that is well worth diving into, if you really want to understand the world of eurythmy.

### **How to read eurythmy forms**

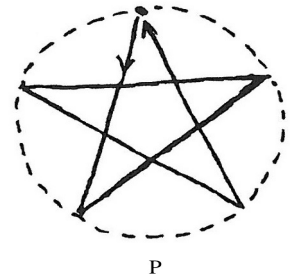
In this section you will find diagrams of eurythmy forms. The first thing a eurythmists will look for is: “Which way is the front of the room?”

Every form has a small “P” on it, either on the top or the bottom of the paper. The “P” stands for “public,” and signifies that that is where an audience would sit. Whenever you pick up a form, hold the paper so that the P is at the top of the page, which sometimes means that the paper must be turned around. Then you will be “facing” the audience when you move the form.



If you look at the form on the left, s/he start at the bottom of the form, where the small circle is, and then begin moving the form on the diagonal going forward to the right.

If you look at the form on the left, the small P on the bottom tells you to turn the paper around 180° so that the P is at the top of the paper.



## 2. Addendum for Working with Children

The approach for moving forms with children is radically different from working with adults.

We can consider that children are born out of “another dimension,” a spiritual space which probably does not include up/down, right/left, front/back. Indeed, the first tasks the young child confronts involve coming to terms with three-dimensional space and how to move in it.

If we watch children move, we can clearly see how they are relating to space differently than us. They normally run with their hands in the air, barely touching the ground. They only gradually “grow down” into their bodies as they overcome their inborn primitive reflexes and learn to coordinate their limbs. We can watch them learn to balance as they begin to jump rope, and learn to “cross the midline” in coordinating right and left sides, learning to skip, hop and stand on one leg. These are all developmental milestones that teachers and doctors look for, and are indicators for when a child is ready to learn to read.

In the younger grades, children are not yet ready developmentally to stand alone in space and move independently. Up until the middle of third grade, we allow the children to stand in a community circle when we teach them all of their eurythmy forms. We may dissolve the forms for some exercises, but then only have them face and walk forwards, never asking them to consciously walk forwards or backwards. This is our approach when we do Mirroring Exercises with young children, practicing straight lines and curves in movement.

In the middle of third grade, however, the children go through their “nine year change.” This is always a huge developmental step for the child: they act as if they have shed a skin and are no longer as held in the dream-stage of the young. We meet this stage in the eurythmy curriculum by giving them the new challenge of being able to walk consciously in the four different directions of space (forwards, backwards, right and left) and then eventually also in a star, always facing forward. Gradually, as the children get older, we can ask even more of them by engaging them in *feeling the dynamic* of the different forms. Forwards and backwards should *feel* different, although a child probably won’t feel this until seventh grade at the earliest. Likewise, inwinding and outwinding spirals will feel different, but the young child doesn’t have the awakened soul artistry to feel that yet. Thus, in the eurythmy curriculum, we carefully moderate the kinds of movement lessons we give the children to match the developmental stage they are passing through.

As teaching parent, your job is to *internalize* the lessons yourself *first*, not over days but over weeks, before you introduce them to your children, using stories or poems or (live) music to guide their process. *For more information, contact me at [info@eurythmyonline.com](mailto:info@eurythmyonline.com).*