

Eurythmy as Visible Speech: The Gestures of Sounds

When Rudolf Steiner, the originator of eurythmy, described this new sacred art, he said his intention was to inaugurate a movement art that is unlike anything that has ever existed. This would not be a dance that would focus on the elegant lines of the body, on its athletic prowess, or on symbolic gestures. Like the ancient arts of movement, it would draw upon not only the physical body, but would follow the lawful movements of the etheric or life-body. But more than that: in this most modern of all movement arts, in eurythmy the soul *speaks and sings* through the body. The gestures of eurythmy are drawn directly from the forces of language and music.

What can this possibly mean? That which we hear through our ears as sounds are really wisdom-filled vibrations. Only here on the earth do they become audible sounds, and only when they are spoken from human larynxes do they become human speech. But the formative forces that live in these vibrations come from and live in all dimensions of space. Philosophers and mystics of old said that the Creator “spoke the world into existence.” In expressing His/Her inmost being, the Creator created the first Word, the language that shapes and penetrates everything that would ever become.

When we speak, we re-create these same formative forces out of our own mind and body and imprint them on the air as shapes that ride on the exhaled air. For this reason, it is said that language is our most divine capacity as human beings. In speaking, we have the tools to express our most sacred inner selves through the Word.

This speaking, however, is not unique to the larynx. This speaking is found in the mute utterances of all of nature around us. Rocks and plants are all “speaking” without a voice as the result of the first creative Word. Wind and rain and stars “speak” with their own voices, audible to those who have learned to listen to the inner life of things without words.

When we do eurythmy, we move these same formative forces with our limbs. We embody the same forces that made the rocks and earth and fire and water. We dance with the forces that made the world, and the Word becomes artistic expression. When we speak, we shape the air with our mouths. When we do eurythmy, we shape the living fields around us with our limbs.

Our entire world, both around us and within us, has come into being as the result of cosmic formative forces. These forces exist on all dimensions of being, from pure spirit consciousness, all the way through wisdom, movement and form, and into the deepest levels of material existence. To understand these as the expression of the Cosmic Creative Word means to understand what we are as human beings.