



What
truly moves
you?

What truly moves you?

An introduction
to the essence of eurythmy

Maartje van der Wees

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Contents

Preface	5
1 Why this book?	9
2 Listening with your entire being	15
3 The dance of life	17
4 Harmonious togetherness	20
5 Dancing to words	23
6 Coming home	28
7 When bodies listen	31
8 Making the invisible visible	35
9 The vitalising effect of eurythmy therapy	38
10 Balanced	42
11 Swimming against the tide	44
12 All in one house	49
13 The space of not knowing - the in between	54
14 The source of renewal	62
15 Scientific research - where to now?	65

Acknowledgements

About the author



Preface

*'Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass.
It's about learning to dance in the rain.'*

Vivian Greene, from the poem 'Dancing in the rain' (1979)

January 2023. The time to publish this e-book has arrived and change is afoot all over the world. There is a storm brewing between the old and the new. Developments from the future are rushing towards us at break-neck speed and all things old have become unsustainable. All things new are very much uncertain.

As I prepare to write this preface, I suddenly remember a quote about dancing in the rain. I'll tell you what sparked this memory. Dancing. Dancing is movement. Movement is change and eurythmy is movement. Eurythmy is something for us to hold onto when the world around us is changing. Global change or closer to home: the small, personal storms of everyday life. The storms within ourselves. And eurythmy. Eurythmy can teach us how to dance in the rain.

As we try to cope with life, some of us clamp on tightly to old ways whilst others of us try to force the new into existence before it's even ready to be born. But I am convinced there must be another way. And that's what this book is all about.

I sincerely hope it will help you to find balance between the old and the new, to remain or become connected to the most essential values in life: to those things that life's really, truly about. I hope it will help you to discover 'what truly moves you'.

Are you ready? There will be no sitting about, waiting for the

storm to pass. Eurythmy will help you learn how to go with the flow, how to become fully conscious of the changes happening around you, how to observe and really see and feel the changes inside you. Eurythmy will guide you through the next storm. Which is why I am so happy that after the first two paper editions of my book, this e-book has now made my writing accessible to a wider group of people. I hope it will introduce you to eurythmy and its power to help you change. Its ability to guide you through the process of change as well as informing you about the background: about what makes eurythmy so valuable. Because whether or not you have heard of eurythmy. Whether or not you are an eurythmy student, an eurythmy teacher, an enthusiastic amateur or someone who practises eurythmy for its health benefits, I have written this book for you. I have written this book for everyone.

I would very much like my words to inspire you to move through life fluently, as it greets you. As it moves you this way and that. With grace. With energy. With quiet satisfaction. Even if there's a storm brewing.

Eurythmy will help you through any storm. It will help you dance until it passes. In rain or in shine.

Join me.

Maartje van der Wees
December 2022

A note from the translator

As the translator of this book, I have spent many hours deliberating over the words that would convey Maartje's message. I have pondered with great pleasure on the choices and combinations that would match Maartje's style of writing, especially her use of punctuation: punctuation that suits the way Maartje has made the Dutch original flow just as her work does. We have worked together closely on crafting a translation that gives both and each of us a sense of calm satisfaction, accuracy too of course, as well as putting in the extra time to make sure the words work: whether or not they feel 'just right'. Our collaboration has been an evolution, 10 months in the making, with life continually getting in the way. The project and I have been thrown from left to right, forwards and backwards, yet here we are, still standing. Now I know what Maartje means by dancing in the rain.

Once you read your way through the first few chapters, you'll note that the punctuation goes against the grain: the positioning of the full stops, commas, hyphens and brackets may well upset sticklers on English grammar, but it is not without reason. In fact, it is a reflection of their use as a way of providing rhythm. They help you to stop when Maartje wants you to stop: to reflect when it will help you to understand what she is trying to say, before rushing on to the next sentence. This, you will realise, has an inherent link to eurythmy: the gestures, the movements, the dancing, the necessity to feel, to dare to do things differently. Daring to change. For me, that is what this book is about.



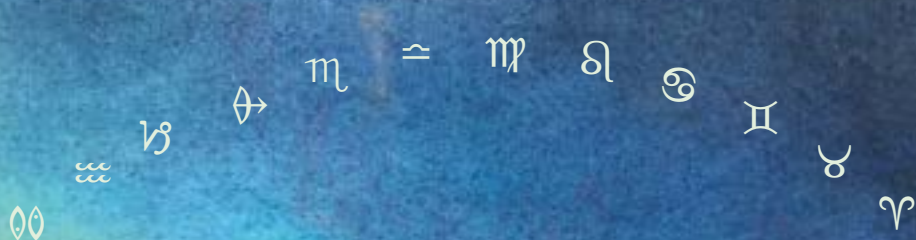
At the end of 2020, I put a call out into the world for personal change: a new way of living (read surviving) and especially a new way of working (or giving it up all together). At the end of 2021, I received an email asking me if I would think about helping someone with a translation. After tentatively and very carefully contemplating what effect such a project might have on my life (this time), I read up a little about the subject and thought maybe, just maybe, this book might help me on my path towards healing: towards change. What it has actually done, is much, much more than that.

Maartje and I have danced through weeks of good health and bad, family tragedy, life's trials and tribulations. Maartje has accepted me and given me time to be me. Time to think about looking after myself and an unexpected way of retreating: quiet time at my desk and a way of clearing and healing my mind and body. This is something I could never ever imagine my work would do.

What truly moves you? - Maartje's book - has moved me. Working with Maartje has changed me. I'm inspired. Now I know where I've been going wrong all these years (42 to be precise), my eyes are open. My body is healing. My feelings are fragile. Yet my resolve. That's unwavering.

Sarah Schenk-Thompson





1 Why this book?

“What exactly is eurythmy?” I have been asked this question many, many times over the years. And I can tell you that I’ve worked with eurythmy with great enthusiasm for a very long time. Yet to my continued surprise, I still find it a difficult question to answer. I’ve always been able to talk about eurythmy of course, but my answers are either passionate and enthusiastic or flustered and interrupted. It’s often quite difficult to find the right words.

When I was teaching eurythmy to children, I found myself talking about it to their parents. I have tried explaining it to my family, to managers and CEOs before in-company training days, to psychology and medical students and to dancers at the dance academy. Then, when I started offering eurythmy therapy, I worked with individuals who would ask me the very same question: “What is eurythmy? Can you explain it to me? In just a few words...?” And I realised time again that it was hard, because a few words were never enough. In fact, a few sentences were never enough either. This is exactly what brought about this book.

So, to start at the very beginning, eurythmy is all about movement. And the most important aspect of movement is change. Moreover, eurythmy manifests itself through whoever is

carrying out the movement. Each and every one of us expresses this differently, which is a reason why eurythmy can take such varied forms. It depends in part on who is doing it and where they are. So, when I'm explaining to a client what eurythmy is, I always start with examples from their own experience, environment and surroundings. If I happen to meet another client an hour later, then I'll often choose to explain its meaning from a very different perspective. And then differently again for the next person: each a different answer to the very same, essential question: "What is eurythmy?"

How should I tell my partner?

Then, soon after having managed to describe eurythmy quite succinctly, I often find that a week later, the same person will come back and ask: "Do you have something about it for me to read? You did such a great job of explaining it to me last week, and when I'm here it all makes perfect sense, but when I get home to my partner and he asks me what eurythmy therapy is, I can't remember what you said. I just can't explain it as well as you did."

I have written this book for all of those people. And of course for all of you who are interested in the topic, new to it or familiar to it alike. So, I am going to guide you through the diverse spectrum of aspects associated with eurythmy. I'm going to do it in my own unique way from my own personal experience. And the result, you'll find, is a glimpse into the rich pallet eurythmy has to offer.

Follow me

Whilst I ask myself whether or not I'll be able to pass on my experiences to the full in writing, I'd really like to give it a go. You see, writing uses letters on paper. Eurythmy, however, is

all about bringing letters to life. For me, the transformation of these letters (I call them sounds) is a miracle. It represents and manifests the power of these sounds into motion. And it reveals the movement which is hidden in language. A miracle is often inexplicable. But I'd still like to invite you to follow me as I try. I am going to do it by 'dancing' around it.

Let's set sail

First of all, I am going to take you to a eurythmy performance I once went to at the Fish Auction in Scheveningen. ❶

We, the audience, were asked to board a fishing boat before unmooring and setting off on the water. It was dusk, and after about a quarter of an hour crossing the harbour, we noticed the contours of twelve warehouse doors lining the quayside of the fish auction, looming in the distance. In front of each door, we could see the silhouette of a person draped in a magnificent robe. I counted twelve of them spread along the quayside. They were lit up majestically as they each performed one of the twelve signs of the zodiac. By this time, we were surrounded by darkness with a fantastic view from the boat. A view of all twelve primordial gestures being performed in utter silence.

With every light gust of wind, the lights glistened in the ripples on the surface of the water. It was impressive to say the least. Awe-struck from this opening scene, we all got off the boat and went into the packaging area. There was a pungent smell of fish, crates and boxes stacked high and dancers moving across the slippery floor, converging to create a feeling of busyness. There were fishermen and fishermen's wives dressed in traditional clothing, singing as they walked by, calmly, almost serenely. They led us through various rooms and moved us further and further into the heart of the building. As we followed, we were drawn straight into the heart of the story. It was a journey, literally from the outside in.

This is the kind of journey I would like this book to provide you. I would like you to experience something similar. A journey that takes you from one embankment to the other, through the architecture of eurythmy, heading towards its heart and straight to what truly moves you.

Understanding the word eurythmy

‘What truly moves you’ is connected to the meaning of the word eurythmy. In its entirety.

The term eurythmy was used a lot in the 19th century in medical circles to describe a regular and strong heartbeat. Its etymology is from the Latin words *eurythmia* (rhythmical movement) and the Greek *eurythmos* (rhythmical), with eu meaning good, well or pleasant and *rhythmos* or *rythmia* meaning rhythm. ②



The first known use of the word eurythmics according to the Merriam Webster dictionary was in 1912. This is the same year in which eurythmy was given as a performing art by Rudolf Steiner. 3



The most beautiful translation of the word I have found is in my own Dutch dictionary of art: *Kramers Algemene Kunstwoordentolk*, also published in 1912.


It translates the word eurythmy as: 'harmony of a living organism, born from a perfect collaboration between underlying particles.'

Life's heartbeat

Its definition leads us to the heart of the matter. Literally: blood, the pulse, your circulation and the harmony of living organisms. The pulsating power which each of us possess and are barely conscious of. Life's heartbeat. That is what eurythmy is about. It is nature in art form. Eurythmy is a dance which brings us in unison with everything that literally and figuratively moves us. That sounds good doesn't it! But how do you write about something like that? How do you explain to someone from Africa what it's like to ice skate if they have never even stood on ice? You really need to have seen it, done it and felt it. Eurythmy is no different. Trying it for yourself works much better than reading about it. However, if I manage to tell you all about it using my enthusiasm for eurythmy as my departure point, in such a way that you can almost see it in your mind's eye, I might just succeed. I may even trigger your curiosity to such an extent that you want to find out more. Or even try it for yourself! It's a blossoming art form with plenty to offer. When you practise it, your body, mind and soul comply with the laws of nature. Those surrounding you, as well as those inside your body.

Inside your body, eurythmy helps you to tune or calibrate the body's various functions: its organs, tissues, cells and substances. In other words, creating harmony within. In a group, each person moves and the impulses from within are felt and maintained as one whole: one organic whole continually attuned to each individual. Completely present in the here and now. Its applications are numerous and it continues to develop and grow. In the 40 years that I dedicated my working life to eurythmy, I never got bored of it. I am no longer active in a professional capacity, but eurythmy is still a never-ending source for me: a source of inspiration - spiritual and creative. My driving force.

All aboard. The tide is in.



*Eurythmy
is a dance
which brings us
in unison
with everything
that literally
and figuratively
moves us.*

2 Listening with your entire being

Those who practise eurythmy listen - they listen to the changes in the music. They hear the motion of the language and feel the potential of the body.

Those who practise eurythmy are at one - they are at one with their body as an instrument: the most beautiful instrument in the world.

Those who practise eurythmy allow language and music to penetrate deeply into their bodies - they listen with their heart and soul, subsequently letting their bodies speak or sing. Arms, legs, feet, pelvis, chest, neck and shoulders; every finger tip and every toe speaks. When the body becomes an instrument, every single fibre and every single cell listens. The body translates these sounds into movements, making them visible.

Those who practise eurythmy sing - they turn their bodies into resonance chambers in which tones, intervals, harmonies, rhythm and melody are captured and transposed into movement.

Those who practise eurythmy move in an invisible yet tangible field of sound, colour and form.

Their bodies vibrate similarly to how a violinist makes the strings sing with each stroke of the bow.

Their bodies sing and their souls
sing through their bodies, working
together to turn the invisible - the
sound - into the visible. A subtle and
sublime dance.

Arms and hands move as if they are making
tiny transparent balloons dance to the melody.

Feet move to the beat, quickly and pointed, or slowly
and carefully.

The body is carried by the cadence towards the right
gestures, the right timing.

Those who practise eurythmy are in tune - they are in
tune with the music. They transpose the sounds into
visible movements and listen, constantly.

Their entire being is listening. They are truly
hearing what is moving and changing around
them. They move. They speak. They sing. Without
making a sound.

Those who practise eurythmy, renew
themselves. They renew life right from the
source and stay in motion, flowing on all
fronts. Continually.

Give it a try.

It never bores.

It renews.

3 The dance of life

What is the difference between eurythmy and dance? Is there really a difference?

If you ask me, there is. There's a definite difference between the two. Yet in some respects, there really isn't. There isn't any difference at all. I guess there's little you can do with an answer like that, but there you have it!

Dance comes in all shapes and sizes. There's classical ballet and modern dance, bhutoh dance, expressionist dance, ballroom dancing, streetdance, you name it. Moreover, there are other forms of movement like tai-chi, spiral dynamics, the Franklin method and many, many more that don't fall directly into the category of dance but are fascinating forms of movement nonetheless. So that would imply that eurythmy can be seen as a form of dance.

Should anyone expect to be able to go completely wild when practising eurythmy, they will be sorely disappointed. More often than not, those who think dancing is all about 'losing your mind' will be unlikely to view eurythmy as a form of dancing. Having said that, eurythmy does give you a sense of 'letting go' - in a sense of space and flow. That is the beauty of eurythmy, I think, that in addition to flexing your physical muscles, you get the opportunity to flex your 'etheric muscles' too. In a metaphorical sense of course, because the etheric body is an intangible part of our system: instead of muscles, there are energy channels that allow our subtle, moveable structures to function.

We should bear in mind that our bodies are well aware of which form and structures they need to maintain. Without having to think about it. Our cells die and new cells are formed which simply merge themselves into our bodies' 'old' state, creating

renewal. This 'dance of the cells' is rooted in the subtle, moveable structure of the etheric body and is in itself true eurythmy, creating a harmonious agreement of every part of a whole.

Blueprint

Each of us has an invisible blueprint. The etheric body holds part of that blueprint and passes it on continually to the physical body. When it's all working properly, we feel healthy and energetic. However, in a similar way to when the physical body is out of kilter, the etheric body can be knocked out of balance too. Especially in our western culture where we sit a lot, work a lot (monotonous and one-sided work) and live in a 24hr economy that has eliminated a lot of the supporting rituals of everyday life. The negative side effects of this western culture on the etheric body are considerable. Almost like an unintentional attack, every single day, on what goes on inside the etheric body.

After time, this can be felt in the physical body. This can make you stiff, negatively affect your circulation and your digestion. Eventually, this can upset your immune system and your level of fitness. Anyone wanting to do something about it, usually starts with physical exercise: going to the gym, cycling, walking - which is great, because the body needs physical exercise - but when the etheric body is off balance, it needs exercise too. Etheric exercise.

Eurythmy is a very good way of moving the etheric body in a way that unmuddles this blueprint. It doesn't call for any wildness or dancing until you lose your mind. In fact, it's all about internalisation, not about living life to the full. It is about empathising, living in the flow and moving in similar ways to those taught in certain types of yoga. If you give yourself over to

the power of sound and rhythm,
expressing these with your body,
then you will support the very
structure, the very nature of
the etheric body. With it, you
will revitalise your physical
body. It may feel a little
like the long way around,
but I can assure you, the
effects are longer lasting.

Eurythmy is a form of dance
that follows the movements
going on inside the body.
It mirrors the rhythm of the cells,
the circulation, the metabolism,
your breathing and your heartbeat.
It supports and corrects where
needed: eurythmy is the dance of
life.

4 Harmonious togetherness

When I'm practising eurythmy I don't just move my physical body. I move much more. I move my etheric body. This etheric body is something I like to call the light body or energy body. It's what I dance with. I dance with my light body. And it's what I teach. Moreover, it is something you can learn simply by practising every day, just like musicians do.

I teach amateurs how to dance with their light bodies during courses and workshops. I also teach it to individuals in private eurythmy sessions. This may sound a little abstract but in practice it's much more down to earth than you might think. Let's take an exercise that teaches you how to interact with the space around you for example. When I was doing my training and heard about this 'space inbetween' for the first time, I wondered what they meant. Maybe you are wondering too. Well, the space in between and all around you is often seen as empty: a nothingness. "A What?!" Yet when I was practising and learning how to interact with the space around me, I noticed that it became something I could actually experience. Something I could feel. And as I went on, I began to truly feel the space.

I can tell you, it's not empty at all. It's full of movement and undertones. And contrary to being a so-called 'nothingness', it is a place where vital connections are generated. Eurythmy has therefore taught me how to make the invisible visible and to perceive what is happening in that invisible: what takes place in between humans and around humans. From this perspective, eurythmy is a way of learning about spirituality too.



Nourishing energy

When I practise eurythmy, I work on exercising my three bodies: my physical body, my emotional body and my light body. We can also call the latter the energy body. And as we all know, energy is everywhere. But because it's invisible, it's more difficult for us to talk about.

So energy is ethereal (intangible or bodiless). And if it's going to be of any use in the corporeal (tangible or physical), it needs a material to conduct it. Just as electricity needs a wire, life force energy needs a conduit. It needs a body to flow through: through our individual bodies and through the universal field to subsequently become active within it. And this is what I do when I practise. I work on my etheric body (light body or energy body) as well as my physical body.

My movements rise up out of my physical body, which is what makes each eurythmy exercise appear light and free flowing. Subsequently, my etheric body continually nourishes my physical body with energy. As a result, by taking good care of my etheric body, I also, in a roundabout way, look after my physical body. And this body of mine does very well by this. It helps me to maintain my vitality for longer. I don't just exercise my body, I nourish it.

So this too can be learned. You can learn to dance using your muscles and your light body. You only need a minimum of physical strength to make this happen. However, contrastingly, eurythmy calls on your consciousness and requires you to be truly mindful - right here and right now. It calls upon your soul too: you learn its essence and learn how to feel each movement inside you.

Eurythmy is very much like a quest. A quest for the ultimate movement that links all of the different fields together. The material and the immaterial. The ethereal and the corporeal. The bodies and the soul. If you are able to achieve this, you will achieve a harmonious togetherness between every part of the whole.

5 Dancing to words

Eurythmy is dancing to words. How do you do that, you ask? First, we need to look at the difference between the audible sounds we make when we speak and the inaudible yet visible letters we use to write them. Like many other people, you may be inclined to think that letters are language. But eurythmists think of language in terms of how the letters sound when said out loud - the audible sounds - and this is vital. This is language.

If you can connect these audible sounds to movements, you will find yourself closer to the motion of language. For example, a movement for the sound L is made in eurythmy with a flowing gesture using your arms; a graceful motion moving upwards then tightly drawing your arms inwards then fanning them out wide. It looks a little like a fountain forcing water up into the air followed by a fan-like descent back to the ground.



When I teach someone this movement, I generally expect to hear a question sooner or later as to what this has to do with the letter L? I often feel an overwhelming desire to exclaim "Everything!", which to me is the right answer. Yet to most people, that's not very helpful. For most people, the letter L makes them immediately think of the written letter: a sort of 90 degree corner, especially if you have the capital letter in mind. And that L is not very fluid at all.

A spark of creation

As you're reading this, your mind is absorbing the letters I have written here. Every circle, stripe and combination thereof. The lines create letters which we use for making words and for expressing concepts and meaning. And at the same time, we often hear those words being spoken in our minds as we read. As we hear these sounds, we're actually surpassing the abstract nature of the lines and circles; symbols which have been agreed upon. An agreement that originally derives from spoken language.

It is this spoken language that is the real, living language. Because at the very moment I say something, I make miniscule, very complex movements. My larynx and vocal cords move. My breath is formed in a particular way as I align my jaws, tongue, lips and teeth to a specific position, in just the right way to make the sound I want to. It could be safe to say that every word we speak is a tiny spark of creation. Time and again, we make new sounds from 'nothing'.

Re-experiencing language

If you would like to experience the qualities sounds have to offer, then why not experiment for yourself right now! Why not? Try pronouncing an O. Do it slowly and thoughtfully. Make the O

sound as you breathe out and concentrate on how it feels as you make the specific shape with your mouth. Note how you need your breath to produce the sound combined with this shape. And listen to how there is a build up to the sound, the sound itself and how it dies off again afterwards.

Now try it with a different sound. Try the R for example. Try to make the R sound without adding a vowel beforehand. A guttural, rolling Rrrrrrrr. Right at the back of your throat. Observe the shape of your lips, your jaws, teeth and tongue in comparison to the O sound. Feel the movement your body needs to make in order to produce the R - a rolling R. Without it getting stuck in your throat! (In Dutch this is a sound we learn to make when we are children. See if you can do it too!)

You can try this experiment with every letter of the alphabet. In fact, you can do it in the very same way you did as a child when you started learning to speak. Babies experiment all day long with new sounds, new movements and trying out new noises. They listen to the sounds around them, copy them and practise them endlessly: ba-ba, ga-ga, d-d-dada, m-m-ma-ma... Babies are unaware of the sense of meaning and are simply surrounded by sounds. They are also completely unaware of circles and lines which have been agreed upon as the representations for these sounds. Unhindered by this lack of awareness they experiment non-stop. The endless experimenting eventually turns into speech.

A treasure chest

I still find myself surprised time and again when somebody thinks about a written letter when I'm talking about a sound. But I guess this is quite understandable. So why am I still so surprised?



Probably because my life is all about the original power of language and has been for such a long time. Perhaps it would be a good idea for me to realise now and again how different my perspective is and much more obvious to me than to others.

"The original power of language?" "Oh yes!" For me and every other eurhythmist, the alphabet holds the power of language. You could think of the alphabet as a treasure chest filled with 26 opportunities for personal development. Original principles of form which, when applied therapeutically can bring you healing and harmony in the body and the soul.

Healing sounds

The healing nature of sounds and their corresponding movements is the most important tool for eurhythm as a form of therapy. Shaping specific movements for specific sounds influences bodily functions and internal organs. And I continue to be impressed by the way these movements can affect the physical body from

within the etheric body - if repeated over a certain period of time that is. Eurythmy can normalise intestinal function whether it be too fast or too slow. It can regulate a heart arrhythmia. It can also help with psychological issues such as anxiety and compulsive disorders. Good results have been achieved with hyperactive children too. If you would like to read more on this, then take a look at eurythmytherapy-medsektion.net 4

Our premise remains that those who practise eurythmy work with the same creative force that is necessary for speech. The creative force of living language. For anyone not used to thinking about language in this way, it may take some time to get used to the concept. Whilst for others, such as spoken word artists, it's self-evident how language can be viewed as a creative entity, as demonstrated in the text below by the Dutch writer and poet Bert Schierbeek:

*Because man breathes...
because he breathes he knows of rhythm
because he can pant, gasp, stammer
because he wonders he falls silent
because he can talk, whistle, howl, cajole, babble,
blabber, shut up, stutter
because in all he's a ball of swelling motion
his breath
his voice
his rhythm
are native to him...*

*We get moving again in the shape of the voice
it's the movers who form the word.*

Bert Schierbeek

(English translation by Charles McGeehan) 5

6 Coming home

Eurythmy feels like coming home. It's like stepping into the warmth of my house after a cold cycle home.

Eurythmy is a simple, comforting movement. A gesture that I make using my body. A gesture that my body speaks. That I bring to life. That has the power to transport me to a place I know well. Where? My first answer would be home. It transports me home. Yet it's not my house, because that's where I am right now. I am, literally, physically here at home. So, perhaps eurythmy takes me elsewhere. Perhaps it takes me somewhere that feels a lot like home.

Creative gestures in the etheric plane

During one of my workshops, I asked those taking part why they had signed up. And one of them, an engineer by profession and enthusiastic, amateur eurythmist in his spare time, paused to think. He seemed to be looking for the right words. He eventually answered: "Because it reminds me of something...", and then he paused. When I asked him what it reminded him of, he hesitated again before saying: "It reminds me of the time before I was born...".

He explained how eurythmy enabled him to remember the time before he was born. However strange that may sound, he experienced a healing, fluid dimension, and each time he practised, he would feel like he was being transported to somewhere very similar to that place: to the time before he was born. "So that's why I join in any chance I get," he added. As soon as he said that, I was reminded of a time when I was talking to a friend of mine, an anatomist and embryologist actively devoted to discoveries in embryonic development and all

things connected to it. In addition to the wealth of knowledge he has in his field, he is intensely passionate about it too. So much so, that when you listen to him speak during one of his seminars, he makes you feel just like a 'fly on the wall', as if you're actually there, in situ, witnessing the secret phases of life inside the womb. If you are interested in his work you can follow this link: [6](#)

What seemed to puzzle him at the time, was the fact that an embryo constantly moves inside the womb and makes movements which are very much incomparable to our own.

We talked about this once. And afterwards, he said he would have to give the idea more thought. At which point, I said - possibly a little too presumptuously and thinking I knew exactly what he was talking about: "It sounds to me like the embryo is practising eurythmy!"

He looked at me in astonishment whilst I wasn't astonished at all. The movements we make in eurythmy are formative gestures in the etheric field. From this most active of fields, the gestures converge in the physical. This is just how to describe what happens when eurythmy is used therapeutically. Whilst the movements do not call for very much physical effort, after a number of weeks, they will have an effect on your physical body.

This is caused by the conscious changes we make in the etheric field. Our etheric body is the source from which the physical can renew itself continually, and we can direct this energy with precision using eurythmic gestures.



A plane for renewal

The movements of an embryo in utero take place in the amniotic fluid and in an etheric field. The embryo takes on its physical form, first in movement then in growth. Finally finding a restful state in its definitive form as a foetus. Admittedly, this is no scientific explanation. In fact, it sounds more like poetry: a fairy tale. Those in conventional science whose minds follow the purely physical/material have no room for the etheric body. And for those who believe in the physical as the only true reality, this perspective sounds quite understandably like a figment of the imagination. However, in my practice over the years, I have seen people experience so many physical changes with just a couple of specific eurythmy exercises that they have practised every day. So many, that this has turned the 'fairy tale' very much into a reality.

Going back to this feeling of coming home: where does eurythmy transport me to? The answer is to my etheric home: to a place that gives me space. That helps me renew. That's infinitely in motion. And from that motion, I sustain my own unique form.

Eurythmy takes me home to my etheric body: to the layer in my energy field where the power of creation makes renewal a real and viable option. A little like the time before we were born.

7 When bodies listen

All of a sudden, completely out of the blue, I discovered scientific confirmation for everything you just read in the last chapter!

It was when my husband told me about Tom van Gelder's work, a biologist, researcher and later lecturer at the Warmonderhof school for biodynamic agriculture and gardening in Dronten, the Netherlands. And on Van Gelder's website [7](#), I read about a study by an American communications scientist William Condon [8](#). He had researched what the body does when we speak and listen. Apparently, the person speaking and the person listening make tiny micro movements with his/her bodies. These movements are so miniscule that they are invisible to the naked eye.

Analysing audio and video footage recorded over a long duration at a microscopic level, Condon was able to prove that the movements a body makes are not random. In fact, they are synchronised with the sounds it hears and speaks. Moreover, all of the cultures around the world do the same. The same sounds trigger the same movements in each and every one of us! Asian, European or African alike.

This discovery corresponds very closely with the theories published by Rudolph Steiner in 1921 in which he talks about the etheric body and how it moves when the body truly listens. [9](#) This then became the cornerstone of the fundamental principles of eurythmy.

Then fifty years later, William Condon introduced his discoveries on the synchronicity of movements, speech and listening. In his research, Condon shows that the same sounds trigger the same response from the body, each and every time. In fact, according to his theory, listening mirrors speech.

In his research, Condon saw that even on its first day of life, a baby almost dances in response to the sounds made and spoken around it. Condon noted that these movements appear to be the same universally for all languages. Hearing a 'K' for example, makes a baby move its elbow, shoulder, hips and even its big toe differently than on hearing an 'L'. In a way, the baby is 'dancing' to the language he or she hears around it. It is already actively acquiring language long before it starts to speak.

Science meets movement art

I must confess to looking up the dates when Condon had been working on this research. And he started it in 1963. As a result, I'm slightly ashamed of myself. Why? Because I've always been trying to find the right words for explaining eurythmy and all that time, somebody had been exploring how language and movement relate to one another. Serious scientific research. And I didn't know about it. Worse than that: when I was studying, I never heard about it and I admit that when I was working intensively as an eurythmist, I had little interest in this side of things... A considerable shame in hindsight really.

Eurythmy has such enormous potential and still, now, there are very few people who have heard of it. Similarly, there are very few people who know how much they could benefit from practising eurythmy. Not only for relaxation and vitality but also for their physical health and their spiritual development. Scientific research such as this could contribute to a wider audience appreciating the potential practising eurythmy has to offer.

Training

Let's step back in time for a moment, to the 1970s when I was studying. The call for research at that time was minimal. Enthusiasm, talent and a focus on all things arty were more important. Since then, educational programmes worldwide have broadened their scope. Students in the first foundation year are still taught about eurythmy in its purest art form. Simply because performing is fundamental to eurythmy, whether it be practised in a corporate environment, in pedagogy or as therapy. The students train their bodies (their instrument) to such an extent in the first year that they are able to adopt the physical/etheric as a tool for teaching. In subsequent years, further study and additional subjects help them and inspire them as they delve into other art forms, train their observation skills and expand their knowledge of anatomy and physiology. This combines to form a 4-year Bachelor degree. On graduating with a BA in eurythmy, there are also various Masters programmes in pedagogy, therapy, business and/or social eurythmy, performing arts or choreography to choose from.

Take a look here: [10](#)

Moving with the times

Nowadays, the Masters programmes encourage students to investigate and carry out research from the onset. It's their way of ensuring that eurythmy moves with the times. The enthusiasm of the pioneers of 1912 has even paved the way for a PhD in eurythmy. Whilst I find the idea of a 'Professor of Eurythmy' quite a difficult one (it conjures images of long hours at a computer rather than the suppleness and grace of a eurythmist) the training as a whole includes the essential aspects of performing arts right from year 1. So if carrying out research can go hand in hand with the fluent motions of a skilled eurythmy teacher, then it's all good. In fact, it's a great

example of how head, heart and body can collide to literally shape and explain this versatile dance form. Who knows. Perhaps in a hundred years' time we'll all find it perfectly acceptable that babies dance to the language they hear around them. And perhaps we will all understand that this kind of dancing, from birth, enables us to develop much more than speech alone.

8 Making the invisible visible

So, language is not just brought to life in audible speech, it is also brought to life with movement. Something similar could be said for music. As music is a living, creative process in which you make the audible and invisible movements visible. In most types of dance, music is adopted as an accompaniment, i.e. the music 'carries' the movements. In comparison however, the idea that I can also 'carry' the music with my movements is a much lesser-known fact.

When you practise eurythmy, you don't dance to the music, you dance the music - literally. Just as you can dance spoken language. You give yourself over to the powers of creation hiding in language and music, form and rhythm. It is never an automatic sequential pattern. It is about the living forces: the essence of all that lives. That is eurythmy.

Our essence

Now, our essence. That's not really something we're all comfortable with. Our societies urge us to put on a front and keep our essence more or less hidden: to create an image that is superimposed upon it. This can vary from tough guy to sex symbol and everything in between. But eurythmy is not about being tough or sexy. In fact, it's simply neither of those things. Eurythmy is all about who you are - who you truly are inside. And sharing that can call for considerable courage.

I have seen a particular kind of embarrassment during my workshops. Like one of the participants in a corporate workshop. I was working with a group of managers and one of them approached me in the break to confide in me. He told me: "When I'm in your workshops, I don't feel like the cleverest kid in the

class anymore". In fact, the workshop environment called for him to hold himself in a very different way to the way he was used to. He needed to put his smart, successful exterior to one side and reveal what was really on the inside. He needed to focus on his own essence and those of the others in the group.

When he finally dared to really let go of his 'I'm better than you' image, he felt liberated. It made way for a feeling of respect and equality. Then gradually, within this initially competitive group of coworkers, they took the way that they worked together to another new level: one that encompassed a very different set of values to those they had been used to working with.

Adopted outside of the eurythmy workshops and transferred to daily duties, this newly-evolved form of collaboration can improve the quality of corporate life within an organisation. This is the most important reason why eurythmy is valued in the business world. After all, you can't create a more dignified corporate culture whilst discussing policy models. It needs to evolve, literally, by learning how to move with and alongside your coworkers.

Four questions

In reality, eurythmy is calling us to wake up four parts of ourselves. You could say it is inviting us to ask four questions.

The first question is: Are you willing to get to know your body as an instrument? To tune it and to practise to such an extent that you feel completely at home inside it? This is an invitation from your physical body.

The second question is: Are you willing to become more aware of the space in between you and another? What if you were to discover that it's not an empty space after all, but a space full

of movement, a space that breathes with every footstep? What then? This is an invitation from the etheric body.

The third question asks: Are you willing to give yourself over to the emotional layer found in language and music? And to then express these emotions with every movement you make? That is an invitation from the soul.

And the last question then: Can you put your image to one side and allow others to see who you really are? This is an invitation from your inner self.

Four questions. A summons to let go of your ego and focus on your essence. To be present in the here and now. If you can move your entire being in all four of these layers, you'll be dancing your way straight through the physical. You'll be making the invisible visible.

Physics

Earth

Etheric

Water

Soul

Air

Self

Fire

9 The vitalising effect of eurythmy therapy

Words and sounds have more influence on us than we think. Sounds can bring about change in our entire physiology. Examples of this are our brain activity, blood pressure and heartbeat. When the body transforms a sound into its related movement, as we do during eurythmy therapy, it goes even further than that: it has a vitalising effect too. Which is one of the reasons why I find eurythmy as a form of therapy so fascinating.

Eurythmy as a form of therapy is very different to the eurythmy people practise in group sessions. In a group environment, eurythmy has a more general harmonising effect. However, in its therapeutic form, eurythmy targets the individual's physical body (organs and organ functions). The gestures affect the wellbeing of a person's etheric body (energy body) as well as his/her psychological and mental health. Eurythmy therapy is therefore shaped to the individual's needs and is not given in groups.

Our bodies don't lie

Every eurythmy therapist has his or her own way of working. How I like to work is this: at the start of a new series of therapy sessions, I offer my clients a number of exercises which help me analyse that person's individual movements. I assure you that it's impossible for a body to lie about what's going on inside it. And I can detect even the minutest of movements - a tiny twitch of a finger for example - which will tell me something about the person I'm working with - right there and right then. My conclusions are sometimes so accurate that I am often asked if I'm a clairvoyant. "No", I say. "We are all capable of seeing the same details as I do. If you pay the right amount of attention

to how someone moves, then you'll find that we're all like open books. We just haven't been taught how to read them. We've learned how to value what comes out of someone's mouth more than what they do with their bodies." And that's my starting point - the body and how it moves.

I have taught myself to pay attention to the minutest of movements and that really isn't clairvoyance. It's observing. It's seeing. And then learning how to point it out. Needless to say, once I've seen how a client moves his or her body, I share and explain my observations. I ask them if they can relate to what I've seen and we work together on a definitive set of exercises; exercises which are built on this authentic pattern of movements on the one hand, and on the client's reason for coming to see me - what they would like to be treated for - on the other.

Daily practice is the key to eurythmy therapy. In order for the body to get used to them and for them to work effectively, each exercise needs to be practised every day for a long period of time. Compare it to medicine: if you only take it once in a while, it doesn't work. If you integrate your personal series of movements into your daily routine, there'll be no more need to see the eurythmy therapist. You can do the exercises quite easily on your own, repeating them when you feel it's necessary. You can reduce the frequency eventually too.

Examples

Question: can you think of any examples of physical change?

Answer: take a child who has a squint for example. If under the age of 6 and practising every day (with his/her parents), the child can improve the strength and alignment of the muscles in his/her eye to such an extent that the problem can be rectified without having to operate.

Another example: Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) - a special series of movements can harmonise this condition, reducing cramping, flatulence and normalising bowel movements. We also look carefully at the cause of a complaint. That's a given. And an eurythmy therapist will always consult a doctor so that they can start the therapy in conjunction with the given diagnosis.

People are often unaware of just how powerful the effect of the eurythmy exercises can be on the physical body. Initially, a client may come to me for eurythmy therapy as a way of helping them with their personal development. Yet my preliminary analysis of their movements shows me they are also struggling with back pain, migraines or shortness of breath for example. So as they work on their inner development, they can also tend to their physical complaints at the same time. It is not often the case that a psychological issue is fully independent of a physical complaint, and vice versa. A person is, after all, one entity made up of the body, mind and spirit.

Mindful motions

Question: why doesn't everyone do this? It sounds relatively simple and you can make yourself less dependent on medication.

Answer: possibly because it's not very well known.

Another reason could well be that as a form of exercise, it requires action. You are the one who needs to do it, and you are the one who needs to do it every day, which is difficult for a lot of people.

Having said that, I've seen a growing number of people more recently who have their own exercise regimes or who meditate every day. Eurythmy exercises combine really well with such existing habits. In fact, eurythmy works well as a form of

meditation. It's wonderful to see when someone manages to achieve a sense of mindfulness in their movements and the considerable level of peace that comes with it. You could call it 'mindful motion'. Moreover, practising eurythmy in this way gives you a growing sense of autonomy enabling you to become less dependent on medication. I am not opposed to medication, just the fact that some medicines also, in addition to their intended positive effects, have side effects which can be quite unpleasant.

This makes it important for us to discuss medication choices with our doctors: to consider what is absolutely necessary and which bodily functions we can support ourselves. Then we can manage with fewer medications and expose ourselves to fewer side effects.

Growth and vitality

It's quite uncanny, but when children have practised eurythmy in this way, they often head straight into a growth spurt. This just goes to show how powerful the vitalising effect of eurythmy therapy can be. It stimulates growth in children. And in adults, the same force brings back their vitality: the vital energy that is hidden in sound, rhythm and form. In the language we hear. In the language that we speak. And again, in the etheric body that surrounds us.



10 Balanced

Here is a remarkable example of how eurythmy can stimulate vitality. Not so long ago, I met a colleague who is 85 years old. She is still working - with great zeal, flying around the world giving eurythmy courses at an international level. She looks young. Not in an awkward way: too much makeup and clothes fitting of someone 30 years younger, but in such a way that she keeps up with new developments. She manages to teach lessons every day. To groups of 40 people over a two week period. And she does it in a healthy and balanced fashion.

That's what she is. She is balanced. Literally and figuratively. She gave us a demonstration of how to do a complicated set of gestures requiring movement from one leg, one arm and our heads in a variety of ways, independently of one another. There she was, standing on one leg, concentrating on what she wanted to show us. She moved her limbs in harmony, in front, above, left, right, up, down and in between.

She also exudes peace, interest and enjoyment in life. I asked her how she does it, at her age. And she answered, quite simply: "That's eurythmy." "My life is eurythmy. If I were to stop, then I would wither away. Or deteriorate healthwise quite quickly in any case. Physically and mentally."

It's to be admired. Despite her years, she has youthfulness that is in harmony. Balanced. She moves with the flow. She keeps up with new developments, is never idle but does not rush. Let's not forget: she is 85 after all. An amazing example of how it can be done.



11 Swimming against the tide

Let's take a look at eurythmy from some slightly different perspectives. Starting then with a question: Is there anything negative about eurythmy? My answer would be that eurythmy 'isn't cool'.

I sometimes hear comments from parents whose children are given eurythmy lessons at school. Their children seem to be convinced that nobody actually enjoys the lessons. And for the parents who have followed lessons themselves, this seems hard to understand, because they'd enjoyed it so much. Yet for me, it really isn't all that difficult to imagine why some children say they don't like it. After all, eurythmy is a subject that you have to learn to love. It calls for us to go against the grain. And it's not cool like juggling, riding a unicycle or doing dare-devil tricks on a waveboard. Eurythmy isn't glamorous either. Having said that, whilst eurythmy may not be 'good looking' to most people on the outside, it does hold magnificent beauty on the inside.

We should remember that inner beauty doesn't scream loudly for attention. Neither does it receive the same kind of attention when it gets noticed. When children at that all-too-familiar age want nothing more than to fit in, it's easy for me to believe that eurythmy is an absolute no no.

Just think of the trends that go around in schools. They more or less dictate what's to like, and what's not. Most children wouldn't dream of saying they actually like something that's not mainstream or popular. Even if it is the truth. In my experience, this applies to children who favour their looks above other aspects of life. Those with the most bravado often have the most difficulty valuing eurythmy.

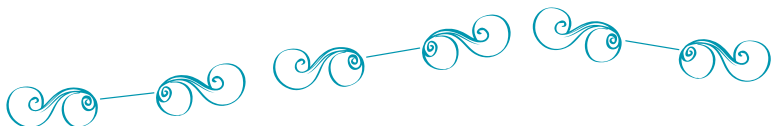
Out of touch

In general, our culture has the habit of focussing on what we look like. On showing off our bodies and choosing what to dress them in. This is reinforced by the influence of the media. Not only its influence on the way we think we should look, but also on the way we witness other people's feelings and emotions.

It would seem we find other people's emotions fascinating. There are plenty of documentaries on television about serious subjects which get punctuated with emotional stories: stories overflowing with what I like to call 'instant emotions'. Emotions that have been exploded out of proportion, simply to get better TV ratings. And if you ask me, that feels like exploitation.

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against emotions. But I do have a great disliking of them being scripted, made-to-order, and at worst feigned. Faking emotions, showing them off even. It impairs our ability to feel what we actually feel. In real life. It also tarnishes how we behave and how we think we should be. Consequently, we live in a culture where people don't feel their true feelings anymore. Some people have even lost all contact with what is going on inside them. A bit like functioning on autopilot.

Focussing on your own feelings, your own movements, real pain and your real power within seems to be 'not done'. You could say that we have lost touch with what we are truly feeling inside. It seems difficult to make contact with what's happening inside. And truly feeling what's going on. Yet it is very important and a key part of eurythmy. And in my opinion, a key part of life as a whole.



Emotionally grounded

So I ask myself, why isn't eurythmy offered in more schools? I think it's because eurythmy is still viewed as a precarious subject and there aren't very many eurythmy teachers around. When a teacher wants to help children overcome the hurdles of society and cultural acceptance, he or she needs to be skilled and experienced. They need to teach their students to look past the accepted to see what possibilities lie beyond. They need to teach the children to swim against the tide. Against the tide of everything encompassed in our culture.

Wouldn't it be amazing to see a group of young people on today's media channels, talking passionately about the sounds, gestures and shapes which are hidden in the written word for example? I would be really pleased to see that for a change. To see them telling us enthusiastically about what they are interested in, why, and what it means to them. And what moves them to do it. Grounded in their choices and their emotions.

This does mean that they would have to dare to show the world who they really are. Without a need to boast about fashion or trickshots. Swimming against cultural norms, general acceptance or approval from others in this way calls, very importantly, for a warm-hearted and committed eurythmy teacher.

Emotional intelligence

If we look back at the manager on [page 36](#), his sense of 'I don't feel like the cleverest boy in the class anymore' is just how some children feel in the classroom. Yet whilst the feeling may be precisely the same, a child is unable to express themselves as well, and will simply say "I don't like it". In contrast to the standard definition of cleverness, i.e. cognitive intelligence, eurythmy offers you a completely different kind of

cleverness. One that is just as important. Eurythmy helps us to develop social, emotional and spiritual intelligence.

For some, it may well be the case that teachers at school, parents or guardians don't show any interest in these forms of intelligence. Too much emphasis may well be given to cognitive intelligence and academic achievement. And in an environment like that, children will find it more difficult to learn eurythmy. Or other non-mainstream activities. If, on the other hand, a child lives in a home where social, emotional and spiritual intelligence is valued, in addition to developing cognitive skills, he or she will find it easier to appreciate and enjoy eurythmy.

Realising what truly moves us

So, appreciating eurythmy is very much dependent on your home environment and your teacher. It is his or her passion for the subject and skill in being able to bring this passion across in a creative fashion that makes all the difference. Also his or her empathic ability to appreciate the worlds in which children live. Fortunately, I can think of plenty of examples where this is the case. I've seen classes full of children presenting the most amazing eurythmy musicals. Really going for it. And as a parent, performances like that really move you. They give you the opportunity to see your child as they truly are. And that is what eurythmy does. It's an immensely powerful tool for discovering who you are.

Your truest form

Eurythmy allows you to appear in your deepest truest form - in absolute authenticity. That is priceless. Yet sadly, it happens so very rarely in day-to-day life. As a result, I have a wish. A sincere wish for every child:

I wish for every child to be given the opportunity to experience eurythmy lessons from an inspirational teacher. And that eurythmy be introduced in every school. Because this amazing subject contributes enormously to the physical, emotional and spiritual development of each and every one of us. And, because it can help children develop a lifelong, deep awareness of what truly moves them.

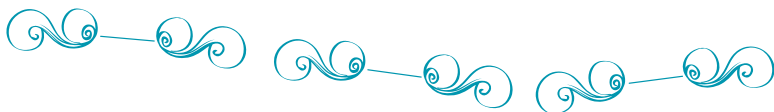
*'Eurythmy allows you to appear in your
deepest truest form
- in absolute authenticity.'*

12 All in one house

If you think back to what we touched upon on [page 38](#) about the vitalising effect of eurythmy therapy, you'll remember that the words and the sounds we make have considerable power. Let's see if I can tap into your imagination to help us with this concept.

Just imagine: you are in a house that you've never been in before. It's a large house with a large number of rooms and in between the rooms are hallways that lead you from one room to the other. Imagine that you find yourself in a stylish room where everything has been put into just the right position. You can tell it has been designed by an interior designer.

There are bold reds and oranges throughout the room. Underneath the sofa, the contrasting blueish grey of its legs glisten, complimenting the same blueish grey framing on the table top. The lines are crisp and the shapes distinct. Simple. And the furniture plain. This well-organised environment may well make you feel clarity and a sense of orderliness. The red and orange accents may energise you. Let's stop for a moment and let it all sink in.



Now go back into the hallway and stand there for a moment. How does this feel compared to the room you were just in? There's very little light. And whilst a hallway is not usually a place you would spend a lot of time in, it's an important place. It leads you from one room to the next.

The room across the hall is completely different: the colours, the furnishings and the mood. It reminds me a lot of the rooms in the traditional English bed & breakfasts I used to stay in. It has flowery curtains and flowery bedspreads. There are ruches, lace and pleats all over the place; thick carpets and piles of cushions and pillows. The room is lilac and pastel blue with accents of reddish pink. The cushions on the sofa call to you, just as you allow yourself to collapse into their cosy embrace. Their softness engulfs you and you can feel yourself drifting and moving with them as they settle. The blues and lilacs evoke different feelings compared to the reds and oranges in the previous room. Yet here you are, in the very same house.

The words we speak

If you could compare each of these rooms to the letters used to spell a particular word, then each letter would have a similar selection of characteristics: an individual sound, its own appearance, shape, tone, and mood even. And when you move through a word as you would move through a house such as this one, you can feel and visualise the differences.

In eurythmy, we move from one letter to the next. We feel each letter as we transpose its characteristics into a gesture. And whilst each gesture corresponds to the letter as 'written', what the gesture and our movements actually portray is a combination of characteristics just like those of an interior. To do this, you need to be fully aware of what you are doing. You need to be truly mindful. And that's not easy.

Take the word WILL for example (its meaning as your own will is important here too). If you look at the letters that make the word WILL and say them out loud, you'll notice that each of the letters is different. They have their own shapes, colours

and essential characteristics. As I just said, we use these in eurythmy. We observe them, feel them and express them in our movements. The differences are even more noticeable if you speak the sounds relating to the letters, rather than the names of the letters. Give it a go! It'll help you to follow what I'm about to write.

Let's take the letters in their purest forms. So not Double U (W) or EL (L), but 'wuh' and 'luh'. When you speak the three sounds out loud in this way, the W (wuh), the i (not 'eye' but 'i' as in 'if') and the L (luh), you can really hear the difference. You can also feel the different movements your cheeks, your tongue and your lips make. And in eurythmy you make these differences visible. Which is precisely what it's all about.



The moves we make

For the W (wuh), you make a wave-like motion going from front to back with your arms, your legs, your back and your shoulders. You can use your entire body in this movement as it continues to flow. Then all of a sudden, you need to turn the W into an i. This one is straight, crisp and stretched out, more so than any other letter in the alphabet. And this gesture is one to be made with formidable gusto: the i gesture (it is your will after all). Compare them to the two rooms you have just imagined. One is cosy and fluffy. The other, pristine, straight up and down. Clear.

For an impression of the L movement (you'll find it described on [page 23](#)), we will have to head out into the garden where there's a fountain. There's water gushing up and down, again and again. And if you look carefully through the transparent greyishness of the water, you can see the golden, orange glow of the sun. There are lilac trusses of blue wisteria in full bloom on the arbour just behind. And now pause. Take your time to appreciate the colours and the effervescence as the water flows on and on.



Finding the flow - Transitional movements

Now try the gestures again and allow them to resonate. Allow your movements to make their own way to the next gesture. Welcome it into your mind and as you do this, you'll notice - if you look and feel carefully - that a new movement is evolving. One that is different from the gesture before and different to the gesture to come. You are creating a bridge between the space and time in between each gesture. In between each letter.

This transitional movement functions in much the same way as the hallways in our imaginary house. They connect the rooms: each of the three different rooms with their differing characteristics, moods and effervescence. And in order to feel these differences and maintain the flow of your movements, you need to be mindful. Because in between, there is no audible sound. We make a connection of our own - a transition - or to stick with our analogy, a hallway. This is something I teach in my eurythmy workshops. It's an essential part of the essence of eurythmy.

I have witnessed people feeling a kind of amplification of the power that flows into the next letter's sound movement, one that wakes up and activates their insides. The effect as they create these vital transitional movements is remarkable. It calls for full clarity of mind in what you are doing, where you just were and where your body's parts are moving to next.

It's exciting. It's energising. It's electrifying almost. The silence is like an echo of what was and a feeling of what is to come. It is mindfulness in motion.

I have already said that this isn't easy. Yet once you have mastered how to harness the power of these transitions, you can apply it to all kinds of aspects of your life. Anytime and anywhere.

13 The space of not knowing- the in between

There are plenty of examples of what I mean by the space in between. Take this book, or any book for example. What happens when you turn a page? What happens in between the paragraphs or in between the sentences and words even? There is literally a space in between. Try feeling it. Right in between the words and chapters I've written here. There are spaces. Transitions. Cryptic? I don't think so. Each time you turn a page you're actively creating a transition. You're creating an energy transition. And as you do so, you have no idea of what's coming next. So the trick then, is to let the echo of the chapter you are closing resonate for a moment. Before turning the page and opening yourself up to a new one. As you turn the page, you create a space in between - just for a moment. One where there's nothing. One in which you are waiting. Expecting.

Whilst you might think this amounts to not doing anything, simply passively waiting, it really isn't. In fact, it's the ultimate form of actively doing nothing. You can learn to observe them, you can learn to let what just happened resonate. This will help you to look for the spaces in between and help you to appreciate them. And if you can do this and enjoy it too, you'll be able to transition in other areas of life. Creating, experiencing and appreciating the transitions will put you in the here and now. Right in between what was and what is coming. I like to call this the space of not knowing: the in between.

All around us

Beyond creating transitions in between our movements and activities, there are other spaces in between. They are all around us. In between me and the chair opposite me: space in between. In between the piano and the piano stool: space in between. In between the window and my garden: space in between, and I could go on.

The space in between is always there yet we're not used to consciously acknowledging it. It requires us to look at things differently. And in order to notice it, we have to look beside things instead of at things. We mustn't focus on the chair or on ourselves, but on what's in between. Where there is nothing to see.

When practising eurythmy, you learn to feel what the space in between is. It's an elastic space that fluctuates, disperses, shrinks and expands. When I focus fully on the space in between, I feel it changing with every step I take and with every movement of my arms. The space never stays the same. When working in a group you can experience this even more. When you're aware of the space between you and the others in the group, the space starts to carry you. The group moves as one organism, yet with no-one directing or coercing. This is a perfect example of how to keep your individual autonomy while working together: allowing this organism to thrive.

Trust instead of control

It's simply one motion, cohesive and free. A little bit like a flock of birds. The birds twist and turn at great speed whilst staying in more or less the same configuration. They can feel the space in between and maintain contact with one another through it. The birds behave like a swarm.



Humans on the other hand behave quite differently. They behave as individuals. And this individuality is the reason why people find it much more difficult to move in such perfect cohesion. It would mean letting go of your own image of what the situation should look like and allowing it to evolve. Simply being aware, rather than trying to control things.

It doesn't mean letting go of your responsibility though. Quite the opposite in fact. Your feeling of responsibility as a member of the group becomes essential. You need to exchange any need for control for an unwavering sense of trust in one another. There are no orders to follow. Instead, it is vital that you make as few agreements as possible, as orders inherently call for agreements to be made which removes an individual's freedom. It triggers a kind of automatic pilot. This has no place in eurythmy. The individuals in the group need to work on the same assumption: that everyone will allow the space in between to guide them as they move.

Eurythmy in everyday life and work

The great thing about eurythmy is that when you practise it regularly, you can develop a keen eye for what's happening in the space in between. It can heighten your insight into how you communicate with others. It helps in social interactions. In any environment where social skills are needed: at a family dinner, talking to neighbours, bumping into people on the street, at work or in the shops. Eurythmy makes us take a better look at how we interact with our friends, how to improve contact with others and gives us a better idea of how we behave: our strengths and our failures. In other words, eurythmy can contribute to improving our social skills. Not just the words we use, but also how our bodies talk - the minutest of our movements. This makes eurythmy a fantastic tool at home, in everyday life and at work. Anywhere where people come together, work, learn and collaborate together.

The pentagram experiment

Let's look at the pentagram experiment. This is an exercise used in the workplace to help groups of people improve their social interaction: their teamwork. We'll take a group of 5 managers. The task is to practise walking along a specific line in order to create a pentagram.

Each of the managers is allocated a position at a point of the pentagram and is given a direction to walk in. One along each of the 5 lines of this five-pointed star. The aim is to create a pentagram whilst functioning as one organism. There isn't a starting signal. They have to feel when the time to start walking, as a collective, is right. As they do this, their inner awareness magnifies. There isn't a leader to rely on, which gives each individual the same level of responsibility. This is where the eurythmy begins, even before anyone has moved.

If you could see the energy in between the managers at this point, you'd see lines flashing to and fro, agitated and alive, all trying to find one another. Then, the group starts to move - as one - and if you've ever tried this before, you'll know that there is always one perfect instant to start moving. You can all feel it. And it's just as obvious if you miss it or if anyone forces it and you start too soon. It's all about the right timing (which applies to life in general really).

Once they start, the five managers move in different directions and remain aware simultaneously of the space in between. The space appears to get smaller. It feels like the pentagram is twisting whilst they walk, as if a circle is forming in the middle. Yet each individual is walking in a straight line. The group creates the twisting effect as it moves. It's not something you can draw, but as you watch, you can see the shape evolving. Eventually the space in between expands, taking on the original shape of a pentagram.



Discordance

This isn't as easy as it might sound. What do you think happens when it doesn't work? When someone in the group is perceived to have made a mistake? The discordance causes a breakdown in the flow. The movement comes to a halt. And unavoidably, someone (or more than one) will start looking for someone to blame. "Someone's making the wrong shape", "Someone's walking too fast", or too slow even, etc. This is what happens when people try to work together and we are all too quick to shout "It's not my fault". It is nearly always someone else's fault, isn't it? No. Is the answer. It really isn't. A lot of the time we only have ourselves to blame. But as we all know, that is much more difficult to see, and more difficult to feel. Not to mention to accept.

Eurythmy makes us take a step back. It makes us take a look in the mirror. A bit like the mirrors in a ballet studio. You can see exactly what you are doing - the emphasis is on you and not the person next to you or around you. A reflection doesn't lie.

A reflection of your own actions

The good thing about learning self-awareness through eurythmy, is that it's gentle. It's a gradual awakening to what you are like inside and how you behave in interactions with others. With the right guidance, you can address areas that you need to work on with kindness and grace.

It has taught me to observe and really see who or what is in the space behind me, in front of me, to the left and to the right of me. As I move. As I talk. As I am. I have learned how to change myself and not those around me.



Eurythmy offers a reflection of your own actions, helping you to stop struggling with those around you. “Am I the one blocking the flow?” “Am I only looking at a fraction rather than the whole picture?” This is a lesson I learned a very long time ago and have been living by ever since. Because trying to change others or order them to do things differently, rather than adjusting my actions, undoubtedly ends up as a never-ending duty. A job almost. One which continually interrupts the flow. The flow of all things. And if you marry this to the idea of teamwork and the pentagram exercise above, maintaining the flow in everyday life only works when you trust each other. When you rely on others. And when you let go and move with the flow. Without losing your own individual sense of responsibility.

In-company

A pioneer in this area and an inspiration to me as a eurythmy teacher, is Annemarie Ehrlich. Annemarie Ehrlich established the Institute of Eurythmy in the Workplace over 40 years ago and has developed partnerships in the field of eurythmy and social cohesion across the world. I was lucky to have been one of her first trainees. I learned how to use eurythmy as a form of in-company and management training. Really harnessing its power and impact on social interaction. I am still very grateful for her insights, because they gave me in-depth knowledge which I was able to draw upon in the amateur courses I have given over the years as well as my work as a guest teacher. At the age of 95 (2021), Annemarie was still training people [11](#) and wrote a very easy-to-read description of the Essentials of Eurythmy in Social Life [12](#). In her own description of her work she writes:

“Throughout this book, I speak about eurythmy, or eurythmy in the social life. Though it is clear that I want to bring attention to the social task of eurythmy, I cannot speak of ‘social eurythmy’ because in principle all eurythmy is inherently social. It is not

just about moving the body. It is about what can be moved within a space, through your body and awareness.'

As Annemarie Ehrlich teaches, it works both ways. What you change during your eurythmy exercises, also changes in everyday life. Eventually, more eurythmy finds its way into your everyday life. With, as a result, this all-so-essential harmonious togetherness between every part of the whole.


*Eurythmy is gentle.
It's a gradual awakening to what you are like inside
and how you behave in interactions with others.*

14 The source of renewal

I was fifteen. I went along with my mother to my first eurythmy performance. Just to keep her happy really. And quite honestly, I expected it to be boring. But from the moment I saw that very first dancer move, I was mesmerised. It was breathtaking. I watched it from start to finish in absolute astonishment. When we got home, I just knew it. I was hooked: I wanted to dance like that too.

I have of course been to many, many eurythmy performances since then. I have danced in a few myself too. It soon taught me that if you want to be a eurythmy dancer, you have to learn how to juggle the pure, untarnished movements you make when you're dancing without an audience, with the unavoidable influence an audience has on you. This is a constant balancing act. And in order to keep that balance, I need to be fully aware of what is going on between me - the artist - and the audience. And there you have it: another type of space in between.

Which brings me back to eurythmy's intention of making the invisible visible. Does this fit into modern-day life? Can we create this kind of balance in a world like this one? Where we are all so obsessed with material things? I would have to say "Why not?". We are, after all, made of physical matter and of spirit. We are all able to learn how to interpret those things audible yet invisible. And if we do so with our hearts and our souls, as long as we are open to it and willing to look for the space in between, we can. By doing so in a performance, we can portray a pure etheric movement and make it tangible for others. With the premise of creating something from nothing with each new beginning, as well as the learned ability to be well and truly in the here and now. This, for me, makes every eurythmy performance fragile. There is no place for routine.



Each creation is new. Each performance is new.
Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

A chain of pearls

I have considerable admiration for all of the people all over the world who have dedicated themselves to the development and evolution of this subtle artform. Most of them can be described as people who swim against the tide. Who do things a little differently. And I am very much impressed by the level of creativity and knowledge that is keeping eurythmy alive.

As an artform, eurythmy has moved in leaps and bounds over the past one hundred years. I have seen such a variety of projects which bring balance to the essence of eurythmy and its innovation as performing art. Each project is like a pearl on a necklace - each one glistening in the sunlight. Of course there is always the odd discoloured pearl - a performance that doesn't quite work. But, that is just as valuable. It's just as essential in a process of development where people push the boundaries, cross them, and sometimes upset the balance. Each pearl has its own place on the eurythmy necklace which has been growing and glistening for more than a century.

Eurythmy performance - 'Japan 2011'

I'd like to highlight one of the pearls which I was able to admire during a eurythmy symposium in Switzerland in 2011. At the start of the first session, we were told that one of the participants from Japan wanted to give a short performance. He hoped to move us to channel our thoughts and our intentions for his fellow people of Japan.

(At the time, Japan was in a national state of shock in the wake of a tsunami and its horrendous devastation.) Here is a description of what his performance gave to me:

A small man came on stage. He was wearing a white pair of trousers and a white shirt with a torn jacket over the top. There was no music. No words. He simply moved in silence. His size was accentuated only by the enormity of what his gestures portrayed. It was as if he was carrying the entire nation with him. He filled the space in between. You could feel it. It was a mix of strength, compassion and immense sadness. It simply hit us. Not just me, but the entire audience. We were dumbstruck.

Then the man on the stage fell. Slowly. The torn jacket he was wearing slid off his back. And lying in his white clothes on the stage floor, he made his final gesture: stretched out, open, and reaching upwards. It wasn't pitiful or over the top. It was full of emotion and in some strange way, it was hopeful. He lay there for only a few seconds. Yet I still feel it now.

Time for renewal

This eurythmist didn't just make the invisible visible. He managed to portray more than you could ever portray using words. In 8 minutes, he said volumes about the effect of the disaster in Japan. Much, much more than anyone could ever do in a speech. How? With Eurythmy.

Eurythmy is a universal language that the heart understands. So come on. Take up the challenge. It's time for renewal. I can assure you it won't disappoint. For those of us who practise, create an on-going process on all fronts of profound, heartfelt motion. Renewing life directly from the source. Continuously and unequivocally.

15 Scientific research - where to now?

My husband was making himself a sandwich in the kitchen when I asked him out of the blue: "Did you know that as soon as a baby is born, it dances to what it hears?". As I hear the words come out of my mouth, I find myself glancing at the label on the pot of jam he's using. I see the list of ingredients. Everything that went into it. "Typical for today", I think, because we all seem to want to weigh and measure everything. Yet if we look back in time, the pot would have been simple with a pretty label on it. With fancy writing maybe. Or in the time before that, it would have been a blank, empty jar brought into the grocery shop for filling from a large pan. Paid for. And without any need to write on it what it contained. Without any need for accountability.

In contrast, over the past century, we want to know what everything is. What the choices are. Where it comes from and what it does. We have become more conscious individuals. My husband too, who is now particularly interested in how babies move. So we talked about the research I was thinking about.

We came to an agreement that the research by W.S. Condon (discussed on [page 31](#)) illustrates the fundamental effects of eurythmy on the body very well. We agree how good it would be if this research were continued. And it looks promising. Because since my first edition was published in 2011, more research has been carried out and the results are good. Projects for example, which could be expanded upon to include the benefits of eurythmy lessons in primary and secondary schools, to show how eurythmy can support language development as well as developing social and communicative skills.

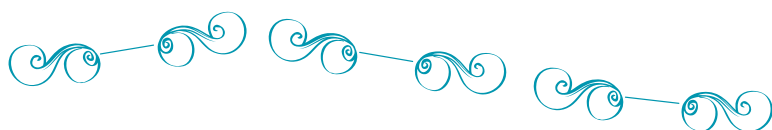
A crucial point to make here, is that eurythmy calls on the power of the etheric body. So the question is, how do you research the workings on the non-physical plane when current research methodologies only look at the physical? Well, I can assure you that there is research being carried out in this field. Tanja Baumgartner is one example. She is a eurythmist pioneer who is researching the effect of eurythmy gestures on plants, fluids and more recently, also on food. Her research is fascinating and uses scientific methods. Her research is truly valuable, because she is managing to unveil even more practical applications for eurythmy. There is a lot of information available on the Institut Artenova's website. ¹³

Eurythmy now and in the future

It should be apparent by now that I would very much like eurythmy to find a more popular place in society. Hopefully in the not-all-too-distant future. Firstly for healing and for the prevention of illness. Especially now. (The reprint of my book was published in 2021, one year after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic). Because vaccinating is one thing, but a well-functioning immune system is just as important if we are to beat this (or any) pandemic.

Preventative eurythmy has a lot to offer here. With a number of specific daily exercises amounting to 10 minutes at the most, we could all boost our immune systems. For those who have already suffered from Covid-19, there are various combinations of exercises which can be adopted in addition to the regular treatments. These can help reduce the severity and length of the long-lasting effects of this or any other virus. If you are interested in this topic, then you are sure to find an eurythmy therapist near you who can show you which exercises will help. ¹⁴

Moreover, people have been spending more than double the number of hours using digital tools since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. And not everyone is as good at withstanding so much screen time. So you'll be pleased to know that there are eurythmy exercises which you can use to rebalance. This is especially important for children who are now expected to spend far more time on screens than ever before. The other side of the Covid coin is that children are playing outside more too. They are moving their bodies. And if we were to add a couple of eurythmy gestures into their play every day, we could help them to maintain their etheric bodies too. We could strengthen and support the power source they draw on for growth and good health. We really shouldn't forget then, that eurythmy is a useful tool at school too, for stimulating physical and social-emotional development. Eurythmy should be a constant addition, not just one for when there are serious circumstances to worry about.



Eurythmy at work

One more idea for the future is an increase in the number of companies adopting eurythmy as part of their in-company training. Wouldn't it be amazing to see employees doing half an hour of eurythmy during their working day? It would reduce the need for sick days. It would improve the atmosphere at work and it would show how much the companies care about the welfare of their employees. Moreover, it would combat the societal trend of being on your own. Detaching ourselves from others, relying less and less on help - thinking, feeling and acting as fragmented entities rather than a whole - a group. This tends towards superficiality. It means we aren't as involved in what is going on around us. It makes us wonder what the

point is. If we spend less time stuck in our heads and more time experiencing things with our bodies - inside and out - then we will realise that there is a point to it all. That our contributions are worthwhile. Your contributions are worthwhile. For you and for the greater good.

Eurythmy - a performing artform

Now we come to one of my last thoughts or wishes even for the future. Eurythmy as a performing art. For all of those working on the continuance of eurythmy as a performing art, I wish a future with countless and varied performances. Not only in theatres, but in all kinds of unexpected venues and locations: professionals, amateurs, children and adults alike. Because eurythmy can help you to realise just what life is all about. Your life. Your world. And in life all around you.

What about an eurythmy project in a centre for asylum seekers? Something like that could create and strengthen bonds - a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood in a relatively short time. And it could help these people heal from all of the awful traumas they carry with them as refugees. Or small villages where the average age of the inhabitants is rising and the traditional social activities are dwindling. A eurythmy project for all of the villagers, no matter how old they are, would give them something to join, something to help organise or simply to watch from the audience. Projects like this have always had a place in village life, but have lost popularity. Music, drama, dance and then eurythmy, to introduce this vitalising art of movement to help combat loneliness. To give a personal power to boost each and everyone's energy. Whether it be a serious performance or simply a bit of fun, the positive effects on everyone's wellbeing will be noticeable. Believe me.

Eurythmy takes on many forms.

*Its magic is in its ability to make the unseen
seen.*

To make it tangible.

*It's a special element that when added to any
activity, makes you realise what life is all about.
Why you do the things you do, or don't do.*

*Eurythmy can lead you to the answer for one
very important question:*

What
truly moves
you?

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To find out more...

- 1 <https://www.stichtingboilerhouse.nl/projecten/expeditie-vishartslag-2009/>
- 2 'This definition comes from the Collins English Dictionary. If you have a look at the link, you will find an interesting graph of the word's usage over the years. Its peak was in the middle of the 19th century and again in the early 20th century.'
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/eurythmy>
- 3 Rudolf Steiner (1861 to 1925) was an Austrian philosopher, writer and spiritual teacher. During his lifetime, he founded a number of social reform movements based on the premise of humans not being only physical beings, but spiritual ones too. He wove his spiritual insights into a variety of fields including education, medicine, agriculture and art, amongst which, a reform at the beginning of the 20th century in the art of dance. The latter, becoming eurythmy as we know it today.
- 4 <https://eurythmytherapy-medsektion.net/en/>
- 5 Fragment from: 'The breath and the spaces of the word' from the book: 'Pants for an Octopus', written by Bert Schierbeek. Original title in Dutch: 'De adem en de ruimten van het woord', which was probably inspired by the essay: Projective verse, van Charles Olson
- 6 <https://www.embryo.nl/english-1?sitelang=EN>
- 7 <https://tomvangelder.antrovista.com>

- ⑧ <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.183.4120.99>
- ⑨ Steiner, Rudolf: Eurythmy therapy GA 315, Dornach 2003 6th lecture (17-04-1921)
- ⑩ <https://eurythmytherapy-medsektion.net/en/trainings-and-accreditation/places-offering-accredited-eurythmy-therapy-trainings>
- ⑪ Annemarie Ehrlich-Liefmann, Essentials of Eurythmy in Social Life, written by Rebecca Streng
- ⑫ <https://www.ewl-institute.com/home-du>
- ⑬ Artenova Instituut <http://www.unternehmen-eurythmie.de>
- ⑭ <https://eurythmytherapy-medsektion.net/en/network/professional-associations>
- ⑮ <https://www.iona.nl>
- ⑯ <https://www.hsleiden.nl/docent-dans-euritmie>

About the author

Maartje van der Wees has been self-employed in the field of eurythmy for more than 40 years. She has taught eurythmy at schools, in theatres and as part of management training courses in combination with her own practice for eurythmy therapy. Maartje has enjoyed organising amateur eurythmic dance courses on location and as a guest teacher in the Netherlands and abroad. After moving from place to place for a long time, she found her forever home in the hills of South Limburg in the Netherlands where she founded her own therapeutic centre, Flow Motion. Here, in addition to her work with eurythmy, Maartje developed her own lifestyle training course based on the twelve senses: the 12+1 model.

What moves you? In her own words:

“Movement has fascinated me ever since I was young. For me, it gets really interesting when I’m able to finetune my movements to those of others. What subsequently happens in the space in between us, what moves along with us, is so surprising that no one could’ve ever predicted or imagined it beforehand. This phenomenon of ‘the space in between’ is the essence of all of my work and as such, the essence of what truly moves me.”

Truly grateful

This book is about movement and writing it, has been like a dance. Just as I thought I had reached the end, a query or a casual comment would inspire a new phase. Then another and another. Yet here we are. We've made it - under the assumption that this really is the finish line - and with a tremendous and warming sense of gratitude. Gratitude to all who have contributed to its production. I cannot mention everyone by name here, but I would very much like to thank everyone who has helped me bring this book to life. Especially José, who inspired me to write down my experiences of eurythmy. Alex, who illustrated, printed and bound the first edition with unrivalled excellence and exquisite skill. Gia, who requested the reprint and John from Uitgeverij Nearchus who made it happen. Bert, who handled everything to do with the subsidies. Mariëtte who worked with me on the second paper edition as well as this e-book, for her ability to design with such synergy, grace and beauty. Susanne, the eurythmic mediator for this digital edition. Sarah, who translated the text with endless patience, precision and creativity. Professionally, lovingly and attentively, she connected with this book and by doing so, ensured my message as well as my writing style remained intact in translation. It has been a harmonious collaboration which became eurythmic in its own right.

My warm gratitude also goes out to Iona Stichting (The Iona Foundation) ¹⁵ and the faculty of Dance Education/Eurythmy ¹⁶ at the University of Applied Sciences Leiden. Both institutions have supported and financed this project, meaning that we can make this ebook available for download for free.

And last but by no means least, I would like to thank all of the people who have moved with me over the last 40 years. From whom, and with whom, I have learned and shared so much.

As always, I feel immensely grateful for what truly moves us all.

Maartje van der Wees, December 2022