

## ‘For the price of a new shirt...’

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Rudolf Steiner, *Eurythmy as Visible Singing*, tr. Alan Stott and Foreword by Dorothea Mier, with *A Companion to Rudolf Steiner’s ‘Eurythmy as Visible Singing’*; The Anderida Music Trust, Stourbridge 1999; pp.169 & 199; 61 figs.; cloth boards, with slipcase. £22 (= 55 SFr., 68 DM) + p & p £3.50, overseas £5; obtainable from <eurythmy.wm@ukonline.co.uk>

The famous pianist Artur Schnabel once congratulated Neville Cardus, a leading music critic, for his book on the English summer-sport cricket. ‘I didn’t know you liked cricket,’ he retorted. ‘I don’t,’ replied Schnabel. ‘I read it for the quality of your prose!’ With this lecture-course, however, every word will be valued by artists (eurythmists, musicians and music-lovers) of the twenty-first century for reasons *beyond* that of style. For in answering J. M. Hauer’s manifesto *Deutung des Melos* (1923) – ‘Interpretation of *Melos*’ – for a spiritual music, Rudolf Steiner (1924) helps his followers to achieve a *new* spirituality. ALL the arts, Steiner hoped, would become ‘more musical’, getting beyond the earlier ‘plastic-painterly, sculptural’ stage.

This translation of the modest-sized lecture-course GA 278 (made with Barbara Schneider-Serio) first appeared in 1995. It is now corrected and revised, and comes with a commentary. The translation is one of several by Alan Stott, whose other translations (some in MS) include Hauer’s book, and texts on music-eurythmy and basic anthroposophical studies on music by Hermann Beckh, Christoph Peter, Hermann Pfrogner, Ralph Kux, U.-I. Gillert, Armin Husemann, Lea van der Pals and Annemarie Bäschlin. He is currently working on ‘the pink book’ (‘The birth and development of Eurythmy’. GA 277a). All this amounts to a concentrated attempt to appreciate and accompany the renewal of the Goetheanum impulse. The translator is a musician who has played for eurythmy for over thirty years, and is also well-acquainted with the Waldorf school movement and with adult education.

This edition of GA 278 is arranged in two volumes. Vol 1 includes an introduction by Alan Stott on the historical significance of music; Steiner’s eight lectures; and a facsimile, transcription and translation of the lecturer’s personal *Notebook* published now entire for the first time. Not only some details, but whole pages of *Notebook* 494 were omitted from all its previous editions. (A completed study of *Notebook* 494 will be published in due course.) Vol 1 also contains a useful index, where the reader can survey how in eight sessions Steiner ranges from the origin of music to the challenge represented by the atonal conception; experience of the ancient Hebrew and Greek alphabets to meditation in eurythmy – as well as comprehensively covering the elements of music and the basics of ensouled movement.

Vol 2 is prepared by Alan Stott. It consists of 63 endnotes to the lectures, ranging from points of information and clarification, to longer discussions to ascertain Steiner’s meaning. Here the translator becomes ‘a compiler’. Specific crucial or difficult topics are given space in eight appendices covering nature and art, the angle-gestures, the concepts of tonality and atonality, the renewal of mystery-tradition, and so on. The ‘compiler’ now becomes a commentator. By avoiding a tendency to teach eurythmists their art, he nevertheless helps the reader to appreciate that art from the inside. He faces the issues. Through appropriate quotations, he attempts to show how Steiner thought. The research uncovers sacred and religious themes. No wonder! when ‘the basic force’ of astral body, ‘the musician in us’ (R. Steiner, Stuttgart 10<sup>th</sup> April 1924 a.m. GA 308), is ‘faith’ (R. Steiner, Nuremberg, 2nd Dec 1911. GA 130). Some pages are inspired, most are inspiring, some are both of these things. We are challenged by at least three, crucial leading-ideas for the source of eurythmy:

(i) Space and time were reconstituted on Good Friday, 3rd April, 33 AD (Vol 2, pp. 16 & 184);

(ii) This atoning Deed is available to everyone: ‘The One suffered for all, so that through the world-historic initiation a substitute has been created for the old form of initiation... through inner vision, through true mysticism, community with Christ is possible’ (R. Steiner, Berlin

27th Oct, 1905, quoted in Vol 1, p. xxv).

(iii) The further the initiatic path of *concrete* thinking penetrates within, even to ‘the interior of the bones’, so much further does the path *spiritually* unite with the world, that of stones, plants, animals and other human beings (R. Steiner, 12th Jan, 1924), quoted in Vol 2, p. 142. The reader is led to see how ‘the carrying out of the TAO-exercise, and eurythmy in general, is the very opposite of an isolated occupation’ (Vol 2, p. 121).

The significant endnotes emphasize how Steiner introduces a practical path for the movement-artist. He/ she too can become a Tree of Life (lectures 1 & 2), that is the universal three-dimensional cross (lecture 3) which summarizes everything to do with initiation. The spirit in music is named, and having realized the redundancy of naturalism (lecture 4), he/ she can begin to move with others (lecture 5) in an imaginatively renewed, etheric space ‘to show your soul and spirit’, enlivened through a meditative consciousness (lecture 6). This leads to the point of departure of movement in the frozen instrument of the bones (lecture 7), from which proceeds a differentiated art of music-eurythmy enlivening and ensouling the transformed space (lecture 8). The evolutionary stages are named in Appendix 8. The links to sacred tradition and the many references, help support the claim that eurythmy is indeed a ‘strong civilization impulse’ today, despite its low profile almost everywhere.

Several emphases today are apparent in the attempt to forge a future for music-eurythmy, or ‘Tone-eurythmy’. Some eurythmists concentrate on the early indications and the ‘Doctor-forms’ (choreographic creations by Rudolf Steiner). Others concentrate on feeling the music and their own response, consciously ‘ignoring’ all the elements that they have learnt during their training. Is there a middle way, that by recognising necessity and freedom, leads beyond to creativity? The angle-gestures, for example, come in for devastating criticism today. No wonder these days when the spirit is under attack, that this system of spiritual light-rays is doubted as the basis for a spiritual expression of music! The *Companion* insists on the importance of the three-dimensional cross of light, the centre of which is the point of departure of movement. This is indeed to link with the eternal heart of the world. In the heart region

*[y]ou will find the intervening regions... between the onsets from before and behind and from above and below... where Yahweh created the human being, as it were in the form of a cube, so filled with his own being, with his magic breath, that the effect spreads into the regions of Lucifer and Ahriman. Here in the midst, bounded by right and left, above and below, before and behind, is an intervening space where the breath of Yahweh enters directly into the spatial, physical human being* (R. Steiner, Dornach 21<sup>st</sup> Nov, 1914 in *The Balance in the World and Man*).

The *Companion* adds: the four Hebrew consonants of the Tetragrammaton [YHWH] etymologically represents a slight modification of the Hebrew verb ‘to be’, which also signifies ‘to breathe’. In the above lecture, Steiner renews some biblical and cabbalistic ideas. His concept of artistic creation links directly to God’s creative inspiration, His breath. We meet it again in lecture 1 of the speech-eurythmy lecture-course (GA 279). The commentator suggests *Sepher Yetzirah; the Book of Creation* could represent ‘that remarkable tradition’ to which Steiner alludes. Eurythmists are not only *belle Hellenes*, it appears, but also join with the Psalmist’s war-songs of the Prince of Peace (hinted at in GA 279, lecture 13). Hauer’s *Deutung des Melos*, then, was the exoteric stimulus to GA 278; *Sepher Yetzirah* could represent the esoteric tradition. This no doubt links to the unpublished spiritual science ‘truly overpowering in its greatness’ (R. Steiner, 12th Jan 1924. GA 233) of Plato’s foremost pupil, Aristotle, which was taken east by Alexander. In short, God creates by uttering the sounds of the alphabet: ‘God eurythmises, and the result of his eurythmy is the beautiful human form’ (R. Steiner, GA 279, lecture 1). A ‘natural gift’ of eurythmy is worthless because by its very nature eurythmy was (and has continually to be) ‘wrested from Ahriman’ (R. Steiner, 9th Jan 1915. GA 161). This refers to the act of centring that works against the Fall of Man.

In tracing the path to anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner could conceivably have taken the

history of music to illustrate the evolution of consciousness. Yet he chose to show the path 'from philosophy to anthroposophy', by treating 'philosophers as artists in the realm of concepts' (R. Steiner, *The Philosophy of Freedom*, Preface 1894, rev. 1918). The equivalent thinkers of the English-speaking tradition can certainly be more broadly termed 'theological', or 'Neoplatonic'. That 'old loving nurse, Platonick philosophy' persisted in the Anglo-Saxon world longer than on the continent, and it significantly nourished the poets. Some British philosophers may have developed the empiricist branch of naturalism too, yet the idealism of Coleridge and the Anglo-Saxon idealistic philosophers of Steiner's day was a *return* to their own traditions (as J. H. Muirhead demonstrates). Romantic European thought too, it is suggested in the *Companion*, refound the TAO philosophy in Goethe, Hegel and so on. The universal law of polarity sums it up. We recall that lonely genius Blake, for whom 'opposition is true friendship', and for whom the Imagination reveals 'everything as it is, infinite'. Indeed what Blake called 'the human form divine' is both lovingly and scientifically described by Steiner (lecture 7) in a crowning achievement of creating the new art of eurythmy that is the *revelation* of whole human being, here and now. It is emphatically not a question of metaphysics or not, but *which* metaphysic – we are all involved. Eurythmy itself, like everything else today, is not in a crisis, the commentator claims (Appendix 7), but *we* certainly are! It is hard to deny that recognition of what we have been given is essential for progress. This is not to ignore the results of artistic research. After all, 'music is the self-creating [power] in the human being' (lecture 4). But recognition and research are two faces of the same activity. In a word, we become what we THINK. Humankind will either allow itself to be recreated in the image of God, or else it will produce something arbitrary. The references in the *Companion* can be ignored by eurythmists, just as the world generally has been trying to ignore all of Steiner's work. Again, a one-sided existentialist attitude from some eurythmists is curiously limiting.

Crisis, the writer suggests, is to be welcomed; it is essential for all growth and development. But he shows this process belongs to the essence of the artistic path. The aberrations of naturalism and abstraction in art are met by Steiner. One-sided tendencies are also clearly possible in the tension between tradition and experiment; necessity and freedom; form and expression. 'In order to get away from a pure improvised, random movement and to get away from a dictionary-style translation of music into movement, we have to apply a lot of work,' writes Ursula-Ingrid Gillert (quoted in Vol 2, p. 69). Is this the path beyond that Steiner indicates? – the path to 'true humanity', of the middle way of TAO, of the musical scale, also of all the elements of music as introduced in GA 278, and indeed of the very form of the lecture-cycle itself (as Elena Zuccoli perhaps first discovered, *Ton- und Lauteurythmie*. Dornach 1999, p. 39)? If so, it is the path to accept lawfulness, to accept the nature of mystery art, to make the yoke of humanity the throne of perfect freedom. The writer doubts that we can deny our origins, both eurythmic and human, and truthfully call ourselves eurythmic artists.

A further study is announced on Steiner's 'asides', those down-to-earth humorous admonitions, which directly follow the sequence of the Eightfold Path. This study with that on *Notebook* 494, form the substance of a second *Companion* (forthcoming), to be published when funds are retrieved from the sale of the present work. The Anderida Music Trust offers it at COST PRICE, which is that of a good shirt, or a meal for two, or the price for a single good shoe. There are no plans for a cheap paper-back edition for this 'companion' of a lifetime.

A specialist's text – even sectarian? Well, check again what Steiner said about (i) putting *Occult Science* into music. We realize where he poured out his own musicality. And (ii) the musical construction of the bones – not simply those of eurythmists. These things are universal! Pedantry and sectarianism has no place, claims Steiner. East and West; psalmist and philosopher; artist and scientist – a rich culture has evolved, and now, must it all fall apart? *A la carte* tone-, or music-eurythmy, or isolated bits mixed with whatever we like, produces fleeting fashions. But do they express the singing Tree of Life, once described by Steiner (*Zweites Schlußwort*, Dornach 7<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1921. GA 283, quoted Vol 2, p. 10, and

sketched in *Notebook 494*)? The reader, however, may want to take a step on the musical pathway to meet the lecturer's idealism. Steiner was realistic in calling his lecture-course 'possibly an attempted beginning' (lecture 8), but he *also* called eurythmy 'an art for everyone' (R. Steiner, Dornach 7th Oct 1914. GA 277a, p. 61). 'The musical future,' as Rudolf Steiner pointed out in Torquay, England, 'all depends on people' (22nd Aug 1914. GA 243). A *new* art – even more basically human than, say, English cricket?

*Rudolf Steiner*

## **Eurythmy as Visible Speech**

[GA 279], tr. by Alan Stott, Coralee Schmandt & Maren Stott, with an Introduction, a Companion consisting of 57 Notes & Excursi and 5 Appendices. Anastasi Ltd, Weobley 2005. ISBN 0-9541048-8-9. Sewn paperback with over 150 illustrations; pp. 384, £ 30 (on offer till Whitsun £ 26). <enquiries@anastasiltd.co.uk>

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This third improved and extended edition of Rudolf Steiner's lecture-course of summer 1924 is a fresh translation, appearing 50 years after the revision of the 1931 English translation. It feels like an Old Master restored to its youthful self. Some awkward phrasing, questionable emphases and occasional mistranslations fall away in the process, making this truly an edition for the new century. The other major feature is the considerable section of endnotes, source material and essays that shed much light on the English language and how eurythmy can express its subtleties and idiosyncrasies. The translator and 'compiler' Alan Stott and his team of eurythmist co-workers are to be congratulated in making this rich material available to the English-speaking world. Moreover, those working in other languages will find here much to enhance their work, including stimuli towards relating it to the cultural life of our times.

Although the fifteen lectures form the centrepiece of this volume, they are flanked by an in-depth introduction 'What is Eurythmy?' by Alan Stott, as well as 130 pages of Notes, illuminating chosen remarks of the lecturer. The Appendices include a substantial essay by Annelies Davidson 'Eurythmy and the English Language', supplemented by Barbara Beedham; Reg Down includes a suggestion on the eurythmy soulgesture 'Hope' for which no eurythmy-figure by Steiner is extant. This invaluable material has hitherto not been readily available. A useful index relating to the lectures is also included in this splendidly produced volume. In the introductory lecture, Steiner takes up the tradition that the Godhead creates the world through uttering the sounds of the entire alphabet. Exalted spiritual beings communicate through "a singing-speaking, speaking-singing". The Logos tradition was known in the early Mystery centres which, as Alan Stott mentions, were at the same time the then equivalent of church, school and art-centre. Eurythmy, present unconsciously in Paradisal humanity, lived on in temple practice, that is, in meditative work not simply its expression in the temple dances of yore. As Steiner claims, eurythmy was ever present, coming to birth as a new art that has been "wrested from Ahriman".

Steiner alludes to the preparation for this art born in modern times. About the renowned 19th-century historian of art Herman Grimm, he says that "there is something like an inner eurythmy in the way [he] wanted to lead his life and how he had the wonderful ability to transform". Taking up this hint, Stott follows up other leading thinkers in the English-speaking world. Steiner's own Logos philosophy culminates amongst other things in the building of the Goetheanum: "The Goetheanum was musical, it was eurythmical." Here in modern Europe was a true home of the Word. The point is made that eurythmy is neither a mere intellectual study nor a new dance style. Eurythmy is a language, a practical philosophy, indeed practical anthroposophy.

Since Steiner's lectures will be familiar to most readers (the additional lectures included in the

German edition and the previous translation now appear complete), we now take a look at the section of 'Notes to the Lectures' and the in-depth studies. The main Editor sheds light on those many spirits who over the centuries have worked within the Johannine stream, expressing the living word. From Paul and Augustine, through many poets and writers—Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Goethe, Tolkien, and so on—our attention is also drawn to important modern commentators such as J. Middleton Murry and G. Wilson Knight. We read T.S. Eliot's acknowledgement of Steiner as the spiritual leader of our time, and we are directed towards the independent theologian Margaret Barker who convincingly shows that Christianity is a conscious continuation of what lived in Solomon's Temple. One striking parallel is found in Paul (2 Cor 3:3): "you are a letter... written on tablets of human hearts." Steiner continues this with his Foundation Stone Verse which was "laid in the hearts of the Members". Earlier he spoke (Dornach 7th October, 1914. GA 156) of us human beings as "an intermediate member between the cosmic letters, the cosmic sounds and those human sounds and letters which we use in our poetry. A new art will come about in eurythmy. This art is for everyone".

Lovers of Shakespeare will enjoy the extensive, deeply interesting and challenging note on our greatest dramatic poet. Stott approaches the mystery of "the son of an illiterate butcher whose daughter remained illiterate and after whose death left neither book, manuscript nor letter, nor indeed any memory of his literary prowess in the countryside around bookless Stratford". The question is pertinent: did Steiner not research the question of 'who held the pen?' to compose the works of the Bard? He preferred, as we know, to concentrate on the artistic merits of the plays, remarking: "Nothing human was alien to the genius who stood behind Shakespeare's plays and the characters in them." From a kind of self-education, Shakespeare rises to the highest spirituality. With an observation on "the Stratford industry... recognised as a late eighteenth century invention", the Editor points out that the authorship question resembles that on the inspired origin of the gospels, that is, the Mystery traditions which of course continue in the Rosicrucian stream to which it seems clear Shakespeare belonged. The above summary of this one endnote will give some indication of the thoroughness and also scholarship that lies behind much of Alan Stott's work in this part of the Companion. Other examples are the Notes on dancing (exploring the links and contrasts between the dance and eurythmy), on the larynx, on Darwinism, and perhaps above all on the alphabet itself where Owen Barfield's insights emerge supreme.

Of the essays on English eurythmy, Annelies Davidson expresses her gratitude for one of the great eurythmists of the 20th century Marguerite Lundgren, who enabled her students to develop an intimate relationship to the English language. Marguerite could show how English is a vehicle for what is most sublime and also for the most droll absurdities. The language is fluid yet muscular, archaic yet modern, deep yet light, abstract yet substantial. Its wonderful elasticity, she also points out, has made it also the main vehicle for electronic communication.

Davidson leads us into details, into the world of vowels and consonants, skilfully steering through the tricky area of the Great Vowel Shift and the subtleties of English diphthongs. Working merely with the printed text, with nothing sounding on one's ears, demands much concentration, though those who make the effort will find it most rewarding. This eurythmist draws the reader's attention to an important image for the essence of the English language, given by Marie Steiner to the eurythmist Marie Savitch (assuming it originated from Dr Steiner himself): "Lightning into the earth, be above on the wave." This indication ultimately refers to the three-dimensional cross; you are to be in yourself and at the same time in your surroundings. This valuable passage (p. 360f.), which indeed summarises the practical essence of all eurythmy, will repay careful study.

Barbara Beedham who also worked with Marguerite Lundgren supplements these thoughts, looking at the consonant 'r' in particular and the way it influences its neighbouring vowels, concluding with a short study of the rhythmical life of Blake's 'The Tyger'. An Appendix by Eva Froboese gives a concise history of how eurythmy first came to England (beginning in May, 1914); she also mentions some reports of Steiner's indications.

For the present writer, two of the best discoveries by the Editor are almost-forgotten articles by Owen Barfield, one appearing as the first article in the very first number of *Anthroposophical Quarterly* (Spring 1956), 'Israel and the Michael Impulse'. Barfield "finds it hard not to associate [the] blessing [given to Jacob]" with the divine-human alphabet itself. He thereby gives a key to the heart of eurythmy. The second article on 'The Art of Eurythmy' (*The Golden Blade* 1954) confirms that "Eurythmy should not be thought of as re-expressing what the music or words are expressing in another way... it fashions a fresh work of art altogether." Such insights, and not least the thinking leading up to them, are a fine legacy for eurythmists all over the world.

This great lecture-cycle and its new Companion (following the similarly organised study-edition of *Eurythmy as Visible Singing*, available from the same publisher) will surely help eurythmy to move into ever wider circles. Art-lovers, some perhaps daunted by certain developments and debates, will welcome these thought-provoking volumes. In the face of a widespread tendency of dumbing down today, they can be heartily recommended. Not without touches of wit and humour, the lecturer strongly advocates—and his commentators confirm—the path of experience, acknowledging many poets, artists and friends to be met on the way. The extra material (as the name says) aims to be a real Companion—other commentators may now be encouraged to add theirs. Eurythmy needs many new friends who recognize how the spirit is revealed through ensouled movement, that is, who know what they are doing in today's world. Already in 1924 Steiner notes "that people cannot listen and will become increasingly less able to do so in our age unless the power of [active] listening is re-awakened by eurythmy".