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Eurythmy of Languages



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What makes a language unique? What are the pivotal points with the help of which we distinguish languages from each other? Their sets of sounds, their specific rhythm, the melody of each one is different, the placing of accent or stress in words and sentences may vary – the list of factors that differentiates languages is indeed long. And if we call on eurythmy, the visible form of speech, manifesting in space and time for us, we find an exciting tool in our hands to perceive and present linguistic differences – as well as surprising similarities.

The main topic of my paper is to outline how the various characteristics of different languages can be made visible through movement and specifically, eurythmy. Although Rudolf and Marie Steiner created and developed eurythmy in German primarily, they also gave instructions and guidelines for several other languages very soon, with regards to how one can work with language-specific artistic expression in eurythmy. Thus, once established in German, the development of eurythmy could start in various other languages (first mainly European ones). My paper outlines these beginnings, then describes in detail the specific characteristics and interesting features of French, English, Russian and Serbian eurythmy.

In each language, the linguistic and grammatical specificities all appear in a speech eurythmy performance. My paper mentions how not only language-specific sounds, rhythm and intonation are woven into the presentation of a poem in eurythmy. The eurythmist applies the use of spatial directions, orientation and forms as well, in order to create an experience of that specific language. These arguments are supported by a performance of a poem each in French, English, Russian and Serbian. These pieces of poetry spoken in different languages and presented with the movements of eurythmy lead the viewer and listener into different landscapes of the world of spoken sounds, thus opening a new opportunity for understanding for both the eurythmist and their audience.