



Spiritual Science and the Principles of Music: A Study with Emphasis on the Zodiac and the Circle of Fifths

Music feels like an essential part of life for many, and for me I have long harbored the question of what makes music feel any particular way. What is happening so that my soul moves to experience lightness, or joy or humor or sadness, or real angst? I made this inquiry into the Zodiac and the circle of fifths as a way to investigate this question, not just through the lens of music theory but also within the artistic container of eurythmy and Anthroposophy. From the peripheral vastness of the Harmony of the Spheres and the formative influences that Spiritual Science observes as the encircling zodiac, I wanted to explore the patterns that we hear in music. My research encompassed a wide range of distinct disciplines: from the cosmic historical origins of our Earth incarnation, to Spiritual Scientific considerations of the structures in music, alongside an effort to bolster my grasp of “regular” music theory.

I set out to study these patterns both geometrically and musically. While this kind of analytical activity could be quite deadening for the immediate, soulful experience of a piece of music, it also showed me the potential it has to be part of a more sophisticated ear training. In the most intensive research period during this project, I felt a dawning in my ability to hear more immediately the patterns I was working to understand.

Rudolf Steiner correlated the 12 signs of the zodiac to the 12 key signatures that proceed along the circle of 5ths. I set out to examine the way the arithmetical factors of the number 12 sound in relationship to each other. The first factor of 12 taken one 1 time moves sequentially around the Circle of Fifths itself, and is a key building block of comprehending music theory. It is also an audible expression of a continuous spiral of development, not a closed circle, but a never ending progression. This mirrors the great cosmic picture of evolution as represented by the mighty beings of the Zodiac, who hold the peripheral orientation to the development happening inside the cosmos. In my paper, I describe 6 patterns of the factors of 12 and their musical structure. I also examined a portion of Beethoven’s Sonata Pathétique to see what patterns are revealed in an actual musical composition.

What might a highly proficient music theorist be able to discern by doing a thorough examination of a piece of music through the lens of the zodiac? A comprehensive structural understanding of a musical composition could be applied to making eurythmy forms and gestures. Just as we work with the consonant and vowel circles in speech eurythmy, tone forms could also be developed in relation to the zodiac circle.

Further study within this theme could be to explore how we might convey or emphasize the color mood of the zodiac signs when key changes occur, and compose musical pieces for practicing elements in eurythmy with their corresponding tones and keys. As an aid to biography work, compositions could be structured on a person’s astrological chart, and develop them further with how planetary positions affect that composition.

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