How Can Eurythmy Reach Everyone

Nicolas Prestifilippo in conversation with Theodor Hundhammer

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How can people discover eurythmy as something that belongs to their own lives? Theodor Hundhammer describes his journey from aircraft engineering to eurythmy, his work with Eurythmy4you, and the relationship between online eurythmy and meeting in person. In his conversation with Nicolas Prestifilippo, he explores personal discovery, practising together, and the courage to try new ways of sharing eurythmy.



From aircraft engineering to eurythmy

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Theodor, you trained in mechanical and aircraft engineering, later studied eurythmy and eurythmy therapy, and now work therapeutically in Bern and Biel. Since 2017, Eurythmy4you has offered a wide range of online courses and opportunities to meet in person. You have also written books. How did you get from the world of machines to eurythmy?

Theodor Hundhammer: First of all, thank you, Enelin and Marianne for inviting me. I am glad to have this opportunity to talk with you.

I grew up in Upper Bavaria. When I was about eight or nine, my father gave me a wooden model aircraft kit. That sparked my interest in flying model planes. Naturally, I then wanted to fly full-sized aircraft too. At seventeen, I asked, “If I make more of an effort at school, can I go gliding?” That was the deal: I was allowed to go gliding.

When I finished school, I asked myself: What should I do? What actually interests me? So I said, “Then I will study aircraft engineering until I find the meaning of life. When I find it, I will follow it.” That is how I came to study mechanical engineering.

But I did not find the meaning of life that way, and I said to myself: If I carry on like this, I will end up an engineer, working as an engineer. After about three years, I dropped out and threw myself into the deep end, into the unknown. I worked as a stagehand at the Goetheanum. That was my first encounter with anthroposophy; before that, I had not even heard the word. Afterwards, I trained as a kindergarten teacher and worked in curative education at La Motta.

In a conversation, John Wilkes, the sculptor and developer of the Flowform method, told me I should finish my mechanical engineering degree after all. I thought: If so many people I know, whom I experience as sensitive and open to the life of the soul, are leaving mechanical engineering, then at least I will go back and see it through.

In any case, that was how I had come to know anthroposophy.

Later, when I was already working as an engineer at WALA, I had a girlfriend who was studying eurythmy in The Hague. I was not particularly taken with it, but I still sensed: This is the deepest thing there is. Around that time, I went through a crisis and said, “At heart, I am not an engineer. I am leaving. Should I go into the visual arts, or into personnel management, human resources?” Someone said to me, “Why not become a storyteller?” I replied, “What a ridiculous idea! I would sooner study eurythmy than become a storyteller!” Then a bolt of lightning went through me, unlike anything I had ever experienced. I went out onto the balcony and said, “All right, then that is what I will do.”

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Do you see a similarity between these two very different professions, aircraft engineering and eurythmy?

Theodor Hundhammer: As a student, I belonged to the Akademische Fliegergruppe Braunschweig, the university gliding group. We built our own gliders in winter and flew them in spring and summer. Later, I stopped flying and went to work.

Here in Switzerland, I took up gliding again in the Jura. You fly all day, and the air can be really rough. In the evening, you come back, the others are there too, and for the last half-hour or hour you fly together in complete peace, carried by the last updraughts, through the evening atmosphere. In one such moment, I realised: What people are looking for in the air is a memory of ancient Atlantis, when we travelled in etheric boats. That is what gives us this longing to fly. Somewhere there is a connection: The air carries us, just as the ether does.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Is there a similar experience in eurythmic movement?

Theodor Hundhammer: Where is the home of eurythmy? In this ether, in this infinite expanse. That is also what people who fly are looking for. We always look where we think we will find something. Whether we actually find it there is another question.

The social task of eurythmy

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Why is eurythmy not more firmly established in our society? We discussed this before the interview, and the question also comes up in your books.

Theodor Hundhammer: If something is not as we think it should be, there is a meaning and a reason for that. We have to work with what is there.

In the background, though, we can remember, for example, that in the fifth lecture of the 1921 eurythmy therapy course, there are twelve specific exercises that Steiner says everyone should do, in moderation. That is something we are working with. What does he mean by “everyone”? It is a mystery.

Or just after the Goetheanum fire, in January 1923, a few days later: Eurythmy would have to become the force that sustains culture. That is in the last lecture of that series.[1] There is a perspective there, but it is difficult to reconcile it with the situation today.

People often ask whether we are not doing enough publicity or simply not doing enough. But surely no one can say that people have not spent a hundred years trying to make eurythmy known. How can we possibly do more?

Perhaps we should be asking different questions: Is something still missing? Is there something that is not yet interesting enough, or not yet developed, that others would respond to? Is something waiting to be born so that the spark can catch?

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Do you feel that anything has been done that has held back awareness of eurythmy or its wider spread?

Theodor Hundhammer: Thoughts are a reality. When we think negatively about one another's work — "That is not ready yet", "We must not let eurythmy become diluted; we have to preserve its core" — I believe these are real forces that hold something back. Or when we criticise how this person or that person works: We want things to be better than they are, we discuss them, and in the process we unconsciously weaken the whole endeavour.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: What could we do to help more happen?

Theodor Hundhammer: We need to recognise how accustomed we are to thinking from the centre: If I develop myself well, I can act, and then I am an "I". The strong "I" is here, at my centre.

But there is also something in us that wants to develop, and in this respect we are really beings of the surrounding world. This is brought closer to us particularly through the eightfold path and through the way Steiner speaks about it. Perhaps we need to be open to the possibility that eurythmy contains far more than we have yet imagined, and that something might, as it were, be spoken to us.

For humanity has developed further, at least in the anthroposophical understanding; a kind of crossing of the threshold has taken place. People are in a different place and can perceive different things. What is needed now for the connection to happen?

Discovering eurythmy within the human being

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Perhaps eurythmy is already right in the midst of society, and society simply has not discovered it yet. One of your guiding ideas is that eurythmy belongs to every human being. What do you mean by that?

Theodor Hundhammer: I would put it even more radically: Eurythmy is not really anything exceptional. We consist of eurythmy. That is also how I understand Rudolf Steiner's approach. Eurythmy describes the forces of which we are made. The sounds of speech — all of it is within us.

Perhaps we could take this further: Thinking from the centre, we assume we have to teach people eurythmy. But if people already have eurythmy within them, we could develop teaching methods that say, "You have it within you. I will help you discover it there." Then I only need to help shape what is there so that it can unfold more fully, rather than put anything into the person.

That does require a change in our thinking. We have formed our concepts and unconsciously slip back into the old ones. That is unavoidable, and it takes a great deal of awareness even to notice it.

[1] GA 220, lecture 12, 28 January 1923

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Can you give an example of an encounter where you notice: I am trying to bring my concepts to the other person? Or where you recognise: What this person is doing is also eurythmy?

Theodor Hundhammer: I think I am still right at the beginning there. I have started in a way that makes me say to myself: This is not really working yet. And I still use terms that make others ask, "What is he talking about?"

But I am making a start. And I try to remain open to the possibility that it can develop in such a way that this moment of connection happens. I am trying to discover what lies behind the concepts. I am looking for a way to express it that makes it truly interesting. Something is already beginning to emerge, but ultimately no one can develop this alone. It is like Sleeping Beauty: Who is the right prince, for whom the hedge opens? All that matters is that the hedge opens for someone.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: The world of eurythmy is vast. When we want to learn something new, we open ourselves to the unknown. How do you make eurythmy accessible to people who do not yet know it?

Theodor Hundhammer: Today, almost everyone can actually move their etheric body directly. I do not know what it was like a hundred years ago, but today I can say to someone, "Take your hands and stream upwards." No one asks, "What does he mean?" I do not know what people would have said a hundred years ago, but today this applies just as much to eighty-year-olds as to thirty-year-olds; age makes no difference. That is an important first observation.

Then you stream upwards: "Can you feel that? Do you notice how it brings you into your feet?" People say, "Yes, it brings me into my feet." The etheric body involves the principle of counterflow: Water flows into the sea and returns to the mountains on another level. People can experience that. These are phenomena we can observe. I find that exciting.

Or take the difference between radiating and streaming: I stream into the A ("ah") gesture, then radiate from the heart through the arms. People can do that. I believe we can develop tools for approaching such phenomena at the level of inner activity rather than as outward movement, so that we can increasingly convey their capacity to bring insight as well.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Where does it become more difficult: when greater subjectivity is called for, or when it becomes more complex?

Theodor Hundhammer: My difficulty is this: People experience the phenomena and can work with them, but soon take them as a given. Really, it is all a miracle. Yet once you have experienced it, it becomes completely normal. Then the interest falls asleep again. Those who are already interested in such wonders stay with it. But someone saying of their own accord, "I want to explore this further; this interests me" — that does not happen by itself.

Personal discovery and imitation

Nicolas Prestifilippo: You say you do not want to teach eurythmy through imitation. Why? And what takes the place of imitation?

Theodor Hundhammer: It is not an either-or question; it depends on the situation. Either can be right, depending on the circumstances. As Steiner says, the opposite of anything you say about relationships in the world is also true. Only when you see both together are you within reality.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: If I say, "Gravity makes stones fall", where is the opposite?

Theodor Hundhammer: The air rises. When I drop a stone into water, its weight makes the water rise. A young person once tried to disprove this on the spot: “But when someone is born, they do not die!” That had me beaten. It was not until the next day that it occurred to me: Yes, on the other, spiritual side, that person dies for the beings there. But it had not occurred to me at the time. We always have to look for the truth in the opposite as well. Only then are we within reality.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: We should keep that principle for Eurythmie im Gespräch too. The idea that a statement also has its opposite could help us in our conversations.

Theodor Hundhammer: But then there is a third thing: It is not enough for it to be true; I have to find it too. And how can I then see the two together? Only then do I arrive at the real perspective.

I am saying this simply in relation to the question: Is imitation right or wrong?

With children, with young people, it is exactly the right principle, is it not? They join in and are fully involved. The etheric body and health simply come along with the movement and the joy.

For example, I spent five days this year at the youth eurythmy festival in Witten, just watching. And I realised: Nothing is missing. I was utterly frustrated, because nothing was missing; they did not need me. That was simply my experience: There was such joy, such strength, such musicality.

But what about adults who join in and copy? What is eurythmy actually seeking to bring about in them today? I often say: The arms only show what is happening within me. I engage in an inner activity, and that moves the arms. Discovering this brings joy. When I imitate, I forget that process.

For me, this is connected with the eurythmy meditation “I seek within …”. Eurythmy actually takes place within the body, within the middle human being. In the Mysterium Magnum, this is the region between Gemini, the collarbones, and Sagittarius, the thighs. That, one could say, is the eurythmist.

This is the approach I am looking for: How can I guide someone so that a movement arises within the inner human being, the arms move there of their own accord and radiate, and I suddenly experience the angle instead of picturing it? These are the inner activities I mean.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: If I understand you correctly, eurythmy becomes more interesting to society when it arises from within each person. Its teaching then depends on how well we can let it emerge from the person’s own being. To me, that is a comprehensible step away from mere imitation.

How Eurythmy4you began

Nicolas Prestifilippo: What is Eurythmy4you, and how did the platform come about?

Theodor Hundhammer: Eurythmy4you is an online platform. It now has thousands of videos in different languages: English, German, French, Spanish and so on, with a great deal in Russian and Ukrainian too.

Yet I am not an internet person at all. I very rarely watch other people’s videos, and if I do, not for long. Now I make videos and ask other people to watch them. I do not reproach myself for that; I simply observe it. To my mind, it has something to do with the mystery of the human being: We are human precisely where we are full of contradictions. So, for a start, I find it interesting that this is how I work.

But let us go through it chronologically.

In 2010, I went to see Harald Haas, a psychiatrist in Bern. In the exercises from “Nervousness and I-hood”, he had discovered what is essentially a condensation of the eightfold path. There we have the

planets for each day of the week, and we said: We can do eurythmy with this. That is how we began to discover many connections. The exercise of deliberately putting an object somewhere fits the A exactly: watching, forgetting and letting it come back, and so on. Everything fitted together.

We gave courses, and people asked, “May I film the eurythmy? May I record it?” A session like that lasts an hour and a half. First there is discussion, then the material is introduced, and at the end there are ten minutes left for eurythmy, which people who have never seen eurythmy before are then supposed to practise at home. I said: If we consider this so valuable, we should develop it more systematically. That was the starting point.

But it was important to me not simply to head straight for the exercises in what we now call our ABSR courses. First, we filmed the fundamentals of the vowels, rod exercises and all sorts of other things. Then we introduced these courses and began exploring them further.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: If I live in China, for example, and want to get to know eurythmy, I find your website and watch the videos. How is the programme organised?

Theodor Hundhammer: Exactly. The first thing you find is the course platform with the videos. They are arranged in courses: the zodiac, the fundamentals of the vowels, consonants, the exercises from the fifth lecture of the eurythmy therapy course — everything developed in the studio or together with participants.

Yesterday was our ninth birthday: We went online on 14 October 2017. In the first few years, we filmed videos and spent days working on each one until people could recognise what it was about. These studio videos are developed systematically, with animations that let you see the streams and recognise what you are meant to experience: Now it radiates, now it brings me back, now something arises within me that helps me stand upright.

Then we thought: It is time to start working live. We had just set up the technology for live courses when Covid arrived. Since then, we have offered live courses on particular themes, with edited recordings of the courses available to the public in the library.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: How are the live courses organised?

Theodor Hundhammer: A live course might have forty participants, for example. We meet on a particular day, and people are given a task: “Please practise this for a week.” From one meeting to the next, we introduce further material, take questions and so on. That continues for six, seven or eight weeks. Afterwards, people can work through the course again.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Do you also meet people in person, or does everything happen online?

Theodor Hundhammer: Some of the people here today are people we first got to know online. Suddenly, a reason arises to meet in person. For example, we need help because we can no longer keep up with the work. Then someone says, “I will help you”, stays with us for four weeks and gets me out of a muddle.

Or someone criticises the way I teach a sound. With the eurythmic vowel I, for example, it is important to use the German pronunciation (“ee”) even when teaching in English. It must not be confused with the English word “I”. So I go to England to meet the person and discuss how we can convey it better. Our principle is: Take everything seriously! Personal relationships grow out of that.

Or someone asks, “Why do we not do something in person in London?” That led us to spend a week there doing eurythmy on the theme of trauma. We also spent a week in Zugdidi in Georgia, were in

Soest this summer, in Moscow, and just recently in Bangkok. People who work online meet in person to take the work to another level.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: What does participation cost, and what is available free of charge?

Theodor Hundhammer: Fundamentally, the purpose and aim of Eurythmy4you is for everyone in the world to be doing eurythmy before long and to have access to this knowledge. It is not primarily about giving online courses to earn money. That is not possible at the moment anyway: The project costs more than it brings in. That is normal for any business in its early stages; others invest a great deal too.

One thought behind Eurythmy4you is this: Imagine millions or billions of people suddenly becoming interested in eurythmy. Where is the material they can study? Development is not linear in the spiritual realm either. Suddenly, something changes. The material has to be there when it does, otherwise it would be a minor catastrophe. The few thousand people currently waiting in the wings could not cope with it.

We do not know when a switch will be flipped. That is why we are preparing a body of material for an unknown future, so that this interest, if it arises, can be met quickly. At least people will be able to work and ask questions. That is one impulse.

The other is that everyone should be able to have access, whether or not they have money. Anyone who has no money can write to us and take part free of charge, without any argument. Of course, we also ask, “Can you contribute something in return?” That is our way of gauging whether people really want what we offer, or whether we need to do something differently.

Last year, we changed the way we present our work. We no longer sell most courses individually. Instead, we say, “Become a member so that we can start working together, exchanging experiences and meeting one another.” Access to everything is then included.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: If I have understood correctly, this is not a professional training, but first of all a way to get to know eurythmy — rather like deciding to take a yoga course. Is that right?

Theodor Hundhammer: Yes, and things develop from there. First of all, it is about people discovering eurythmy for themselves. It has the potential to do me good. That could have a multiplying effect: If I notice that it helps me, perhaps I will do more.

Then there is our approach, which is not yet very widespread: If you notice that something has done you good, there is no reason not to show someone else what you have experienced. The important thing is that you are not teaching the other person eurythmy; you are sharing your experiences in an encounter. You offer one another eurythmy and what can be experienced through it: “Look at this!”

Today, we are actively working to encourage people: “Practise, share it! We will help you develop the inner confidence to dare to share it.” In that sense, we are not providing a professional training. But we do want to support this way of spreading eurythmy.

What online eurythmy makes possible

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Does it work online at all? After nine years of experience, what works, what works less well, and what is new?

Theodor Hundhammer: “It” covers a lot: Does it work? We often receive feedback such as, “That did me good. I am deeply moved by this self-study course. I did it for six weeks and learnt to feel a great deal of myself. It really helped me get through a crisis.”

Then I am surprised, because I often do not even know that people are working with it. But suddenly you hear, “I did something with it, thank you.” When someone says thank you, something is evidently working.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: What is it like for you to stand in front of a camera and film exercises when no one is directly in front of you?

Theodor Hundhammer: We have practically stopped doing that. For the first three years, that was the process: Get dressed, set up the cameras, put the script ready and film. Then we edited it and put everything online. It takes an enormous amount of energy. A fifteen-minute video can take days or weeks before the quality is right and you can feel what it is about.

When you work live, authenticity matters. People know: I am trying something. I also approach teaching eurythmy less as “I can do this; this is how it works”, and more as an inner activity. I say, “Try doing something from the heart that allows the arms to stream out. What do you need to do inwardly so that the arms are filled with radiating light and extend?”

This sense of “We are trying something together” is what connects us.

There are several people in the live courses, not just one. I cannot build a relationship with them in the way I can with you here. The screen is a flat surface with small tiles, and some people are not visible. During the lesson, I do not look at the screen. I explain the movements and, in doing so, really turn inward.

Suddenly, I have an idea for explaining a movement differently or doing something another way. Where does that come from? Online, you connect with eurythmy in a different way. I have the feeling that we meet in a shared space above ourselves rather than directly through the “box”, as I might call it. And I think the others somehow sense that too.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: The online courses allow you to reach a great many people. At the same time, I imagine there are limits to what can be conveyed. Where do you see them?

Theodor Hundhammer: That certainly varies from person to person, depending on how each individual approaches the work. Online eurythmy makes an encounter with eurythmy possible, but through it also an encounter with yourself. I can encounter eurythmy within me.

However, I cannot correct anyone. I do not really see the people. All I know is that they are there and say hello beforehand. Then I begin the work and make suggestions. Everyone does it as they wish, entirely according to their own inner feeling.

The guiding principle for participants is this: It is not about perfection. We can let go of the idea that eurythmy works through perfection. Above all, you need to know what you are trying to do, and that has an effect. Otherwise, eurythmy therapy would not work either. Especially there, people cannot manage many things at first, and yet something is already taking effect.

This has to do with thinking. Thinking and the etheric body are closely related, if not the same thing. If I think it and know what I am trying to do, even when I do not do it correctly, my body still knows what I am trying to do and says, “I can do that much better than you.” And then it does it. That is a major step towards self-perception, strengthening and recovery through eurythmy.

If people like this find one another in small groups, online or in person, and work together, they can help correct one another: “What are you doing there? Your B is so much more beautiful when you stay upright.” You sense that in one another. That is our hypothesis: We can learn to trust. We have the forces of correction within us. If we meet one another from the heart, they can become effective.

In the intensive courses, I alternate between working with people in larger groups and working more intensively, often with two people. I am there with them and can offer corrections.

Even so, it becomes clear how selective our perception is. For example, in the videos on the sevenfold rod exercise, I have often shown how the hands move flat out to the sides. Something comes towards me from there, and I can really feel myself coming up against a wall. Yet there are people whom I know to be working seriously who still turn the hand so that the back of it faces outwards.

When we meet, that can be corrected very quickly. The ground has been prepared, and it is a joy to meet one another there, to offer a helping hand and guide the movement further towards its truth.

For local groups to form, there needs to be a certain concentration of people — enough people in the same city for it to happen. That is what we are working towards, but for now people still have to travel to find one another.

Working artistically in space

Nicolas Prestifilippo: What are you working on at the moment? What possibilities do you see for the next few years?

Theodor Hundhammer: My own particular concern is this: The eurythmy we have taught so far has inevitably been relatively static in front of the camera. You demonstrate something, perhaps take a few steps forwards or backwards. It is either eurythmy for well-being or eurythmy for learning basic principles.

Now I am trying, together with others, to explore how we can develop movement through space. Among other things, our members have a monthly “Eurythmy with Theodor” session. There I try to convey the musical basic form through different pieces of music: How do we move in space? How do we work in a truly artistic way? We need to explore this and develop the right thoughts for it.

We are also working with the Apollonian forms. That is our second area of research. In Moscow, we worked with people in person on the Apollonian forms for a Russian ballad. Eurythmists and people without eurythmy training always work together; we make no distinction there. The work and the final performance were deeply moving. There is a great deal in this that we might be able to draw on to help people work independently.

Why eurythmy should reach everyone

Nicolas Prestifilippo: The question for our evening is “How can eurythmy reach everyone?” Why is this “everyone” so important to you?

Theodor Hundhammer: Honestly, I simply want it. I have no idea why. Then you also discover a few passages like that in Steiner.

The reason I want it comes from experiences in eurythmy therapy. There, people have become ill because of a weakness. We try to transform that weakness into a source of health — in other words, to turn it around and make a strength out of the weakness again.

In eurythmy therapy, you recognise that people often become ill because they are not living their potential. I have an ability, but hold it back for someone else's sake. That leads to our potential beginning to turn against us, like children who become disruptive when they do not receive the attention they deserve.

We need to take seriously the fact that each of us has eurythmy within us and today has the capacity to experience and move our etheric body. If we do not enter into a relationship with this world of the beings of the spiritual hierarchies who sustain us, this potential turns against us out of necessity, so that we discover it.

I would like to prevent that potential from having to turn against us first. Instead, now that things are already becoming critical on so many other fronts, I want it to begin to blossom. That is my reason for saying "everyone".

I would like us to reach about a billion people — meaning us together with everyone else who wants this too. Then everyone will know eurythmy. By now, I would even like to reach two billion, because the world has grown a little larger.

To get there, we may need to learn to think more flexibly beyond our present conception.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: What do you mean by that?

Theodor Hundhammer: What does eurythmy want? It belongs to the etheric cosmos, to the Word. The etheric body — that is evolution. We human beings, by contrast, are really beings of soul and spirit who live here. The etheric body can become a kind of mirror in which we become conscious of ourselves as such beings.

Perhaps eurythmy can enable us, through bodily activity, to awaken to our soul and spirit — at a time when tendencies are gaining power to bind soul and spirit to matter through artificial intelligence, virtual reality and robotics. Those are the two directions.

Eurythmy's contribution would then be to help people discover that we are beings of soul and spirit, and begin to perceive that too. So we should not mistake clever thinking for the human being! By now, others can think cleverly too; that is not actually who I am.

Finding our way forward in this, and being able to experience ourselves as such beings, is a fundamental human need. And eurythmy could make an essential contribution to it.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: What leads you to think that we should conceive of eurythmy differently?

Theodor Hundhammer: I travel by train. At the station, I see all kinds of people and ask myself: What kind of eurythmy would interest this person? Nothing comes to mind. That pains me. But this person, too, consists of eurythmy. So what is needed for them to receive something as well?

Practising together and sharing experiences

Theodor Hundhammer: We were in Moscow in August and had conversations with our people there, particularly in the closing discussion. The same question always comes up: What are we allowed to do? Are we allowed to pass eurythmy on or not?

There are very strict views on this, and our course participants struggle with it. I push them forward: “Go ahead!” — and then they get their knuckles rapped. That is difficult. How do you protect them?

They experienced such joy in working together that they said, “There is music, and there are musicians who study at a conservatoire. They know exactly how it works and can develop music further. And then there are the people who make music in living rooms and on the street. Those are the kind of musicians we would like to be: taking eurythmy to friends, doing something together and enjoying it.”

That is the direction of our efforts. We carried out a survey among our participants: Where do you come from, and what are you looking for with us? I have analysed the survey and would be happy to make the results available to anyone interested.

Our average age is fifty-plus. I would say about ninety per cent are women. Half come from Germany; the rest are spread across the world. Centres develop where circles of friends form. People register in order to have access to the courses. We can see roughly which area they come from, but we do not track this individually.

Most are people who already know eurythmy from somewhere. In their responses, we encountered the wish to “find your own path in eurythmy”. That is something many people need: “I learnt it in this or that way, and there I can develop my own path. I can organise my time as I wish and develop my own approach.”

We are currently working on how people can feel at home with us. I have even employed someone to look into this question.

An important new step last year was the change to the Eurythmy Community Circle, a community project. You become a member, pay fifty euros a month and have access to everything. There is a forum, a monthly eurythmy session with Theodor, another with Anastasia, and so on. We want to encourage people to engage with eurythmy and the material, and support them in doing so.

Now we need to find out: What do people need in order to feel at home? Once we know, we can begin to communicate it. So we do not take a theoretical approach and ask: How do we draw more people in? We already have people, and we ask them: What helps you feel at home? With eurythmy, we cannot just dream up the answer; we have to discover what it is. We can build on that. In that sense, it is a long-term project.

Making eurythmy understandable

Nicolas Prestifilippo: How do we make eurythmy known more widely, so that people associate it with more than “I dance my name”? In the media, that is quickly what you encounter when someone does not know eurythmy.

I find it interesting how firmly name-dancing has taken hold, even though it is the very last thing one would actually want to do with eurythmy. It has clearly had a certain pull. How can we communicate other approaches in a way that makes them appealing?

Theodor Hundhammer: Humour is a good example: I can only laugh at something if I know and understand it. If I do not know it, nothing responds in me. There needs to be a certain familiarity. We have to take that seriously.

We have made a discovery in this area that we want to keep experimenting with: We were in Soest in the summer, and afterwards in Moscow. We run workshops there lasting about ten days. They bring

together people who already work with us and others who would like to get to know us: eurythmists and people without eurythmy training.

Then we work, for example, on the musical basic form, on Apollonian forms and other elements. Eurythmists know these things; for the others, it is almost too much to take on.

But we have a mantra: Eurythmy is there to help you come home to yourself. You cannot get it wrong. You simply try as honestly as you can. Working like this creates a particular atmosphere. At the end, we give a performance, show one another what we have done and invite a few friends.

Here is the bridge: You know what the others are trying to do, because you have just tried it yourself. That is why you are so moved by what you see in the others, while an outsider might find it boring.

There were about thirty of us in Soest, and twenty in Moscow. Ten or twelve sit and watch while eight do something. Then you do not look at how they do it, but at how they open themselves. This opening becomes an almost sensory perception that moves you. It does not even happen all that consciously; you simply share with one another. Then you change over.

I see a possibility there: If this becomes a culture — meeting, taking a course and showing one another something afterwards — you cross that threshold. Suddenly, you notice: What we are doing is exciting. At first, only within this circle, but from that a new setting can emerge in which we can grow beyond this threshold.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Marketing is often understood as something external, something about money. By it, I initially mean finding a way to make something known to a person who does not yet know it. What I show should touch a feeling or a longing that the other person has too.

The question is what you present and how. If I show it in a way that makes it appear elitist, that is the impression I convey. In eurythmy, we work very much out of a particular tradition. It has an attraction for those familiar with it; for others, it remains foreign. How do we bring it into view so that the corresponding perception and feeling can arise?

Theodor Hundhammer: That is right and important. A stone falls into water, the effect spreads, something happens and movement is created.

But eurythmy has another potential: It can explain the world. We can reach a point where, through eurythmy, we help another person understand where they stand. They suddenly notice what is going on within them. Then eurythmy becomes a service to them.

You experience: “Now something is becoming clear to me.” After a brief exercise or a longer sequence, I feel different, or I recognise something about myself through it. There is a potential there, even if it has not yet been fully developed. Eurythmy could offer that kind of service.

Art and technology as polar opposites

Nicolas Prestifilippo: The poster behind you shows the Leonardo da Vinci principle. What do you mean by that?

Theodor Hundhammer: It goes back to Horst Wedde, the professor of computer science from Dortmund who discovered it. It is not so important for the practical work, but from the perspective of art history, it shows that, given the time of its emergence, eurythmy is intended as a counterpole to computer technology.

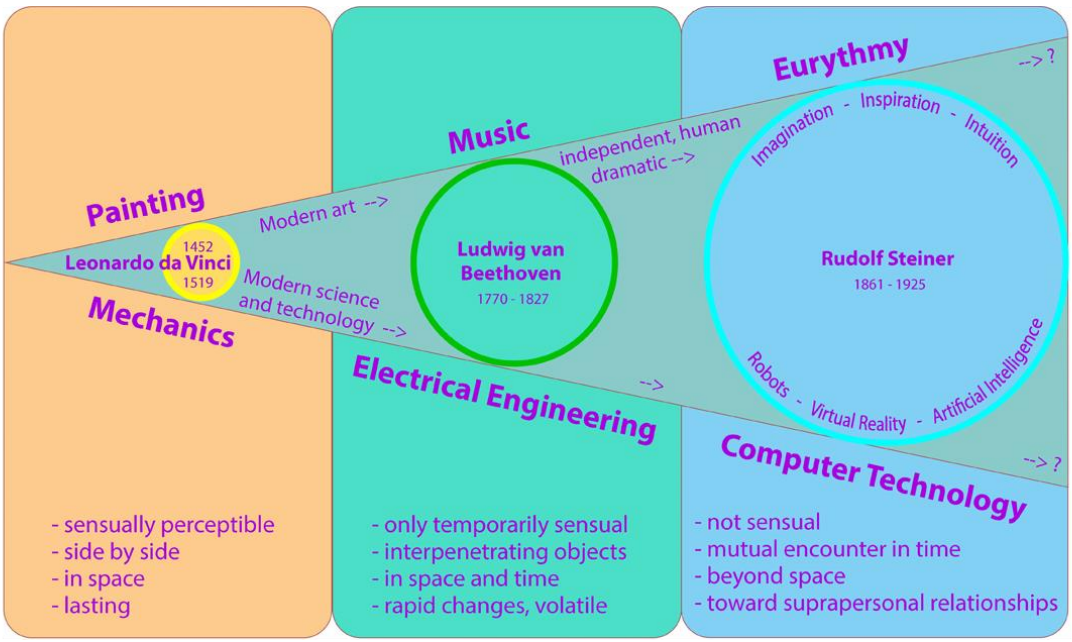
In the time of Leonardo da Vinci, who worked with painting and mechanics, the science of mechanics emerged. In his paintings, the human being suddenly becomes visible as a personality. Painting is different after Leonardo da Vinci from what it was before.

In Beethoven's time, electrical engineering appeared. Particularly in Beethoven, the drama of the human being suddenly comes to the fore in music. The essential point is that it remains music; it does not become programme music. The human being emerges within the music. Where previously you still heard heaven in music, suddenly the human being is there.

Eurythmy emerged in 1912, eurythmy therapy in 1921. From the mid-1930s onwards, Zuse began developing his early freely programmable computers. To me, these belong roughly within the same cultural and historical period.

Now we can ask: Might this be a basic principle? Art is first given in allegorical form; the divine reveals itself there. Then a moment comes when the human being, as it were, moves into it and emerges from it. That is what happens in painting and, later, in music.

Perhaps Steiner also had to give eurythmy initially as an image of the spiritual. We all know the idea: Eurythmy shows us what heaven looks like, how the angels move. It is the language of the archangels. "Come to a eurythmy performance so that you can look into the spiritual world."



Now perhaps the next step is due: How does the human being emerge from eurythmy? And how does it remain eurythmy? It is not being used to make drama or something else more interesting; rather, the human being emerges from within eurythmy itself. Rudolf Steiner could not do that for us, because first he had to bring us eurythmy at all. That could be the task before us: How can the human being become perceptible, as well as the spiritual world?

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Is there anything else that matters to you in this connection?

Theodor Hundhammer: Perhaps one thing: Google established a parent company for its many businesses and called it Alphabet. For me, Google also stands for the development of artificial intelligence and robotics. I remember reading that Eric Schmidt, who was in charge at the time, did not like the name. I no longer remember where I read that. My interpretation is that this choice of name contains a declaration of intent.

Among eurythmists, the word “alphabet” has another meaning: Steiner says the alphabet is the etheric body, the etheric human being. Are we witnessing a tug of war over mastery of the ether? Are we binding ourselves to matter through thinking, or can we find a way for eurythmy to open a new dimension for thinking?

Millions of people devote all their thinking to advancing technology. Our children who are now studying are entering this development. Where are the same numbers of people working with the same intensity to advance eurythmy?

We need to be clear: Bringing eurythmy to its full potential, not merely withstanding the pressure of computer technology but outwitting it, is a project that calls for intelligence. It is like being in a war: You need to think tactically, be clever about it and find the switches that make things happen.

So the question is not only: How do we improve our marketing? It is also: Where are the manpower and the intellectual resources we need for this?

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Do you mean that regardless of the financial resources available?

Theodor Hundhammer: With computers, you no longer need that much money to blow something apart. Hackers show us that.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: I mean in the eurythmy world.

Theodor Hundhammer: It has to be possible without money too. It takes intelligence, will and manpower — lots of people. Then we can do it.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Manpower and womanpower.

Theodor Hundhammer: People power.

Working with new media

Nicolas Prestifilippo: Working with new media also raises the question of the dangers. What can happen, and how do you deal with it?

Theodor Hundhammer: For me, that belongs to this Leonardo principle. If you do this work, you suffer to the point of despair. I work day and night. One hour live means fourteen to twenty hours of work at the computer: writing emails, correcting something, discovering a mistake and fixing it in German, English and Russian.

There has to be a balance. You ask: What keeps the balance? Perhaps that is also why many people are not so deeply involved. If you take this path, there is no getting around the suffering. I am a melancholic. For me, that is not so bad; I live on it. And suffering pays off somehow. That is good; you have to make use of it.

The courage to experiment with eurythmy

Theodor Hundhammer: What do I wish for eurythmists? Being authentic always means taking a risk. For example, for a year I ran a project called the “Eurythmy Request Concert”. We met online. In the ten minutes before the start, those present could send in all kinds of questions. We stopped at ten. Then we began, and three of the ten questions were chosen by a vote.

Questions or tasks submitted included: “What is gold?”, “What is freedom?”, “What can I do for my back?” or “Ecce homo”. There you are — now deliver! I then had an hour, about fifteen to twenty minutes per question, to respond spontaneously through eurythmy.

How does that work at all? People know I have had no chance to prepare and have to come up with something. Perhaps I could quickly stick the text up somewhere to avoid making a fool of myself. Then I simply had to begin from a place of “I do not know either”. I ran this project for a whole year, week after week!

Later, I suggested it as an in-person project to someone I know could do it. She did not want to take it up.

For example, there could be a eurythmy request concert in the main auditorium at the Goetheanum every Friday afternoon. Ten questions are submitted, and the audience chooses three. On that day, one person takes a turn and has to answer them; the following Friday, someone else.

People are curious: How will he or she do it? You can tell whether someone is merely giving a quick answer or begins to search, and you search together. Something of substance arises directly out of the movement: How do I do this?

This courage to develop new tools — we need to develop tools like these. “Need to”, well, yes. I stopped after a year because it was so stressful. I was always afraid of it. But it is an example of how you can enter into this substance of will.

That is one example of what has come about in my work. I believe that, if we want to move forward, we need inventions like these and others that take us beyond our limits.

Nicolas Prestifilippo: For me, the question that remains from our conversation is: Where do we find our creativity and our power to shape things so that we can bring more out of eurythmy? Thank you for coming and for taking the time for this conversation.

Theodor Hundhammer: There is one more thing I would like to add: We have a free app. Anyone with a smartphone only needs to type “Eurythmie” into the App Store. With the app, you can do a one- or two-minute vowel exercise at a time, choose from different exercises and work your way up through twelve levels.

Just use it and try it out. It is free and really beautiful. You do wonder: Why has it not had millions of downloads, rather than just a few hundred? These things are a mystery. But do give it a try.

eurythmy4you.com
Online courses and trainings for every body

Find your own way to Eurythmy

Support our project, make a donation

Enjoy the Eurythmy Request Concert