

EURYTHMY AVANTGARDE

In 1992 a group of eurythmists in Europe got together with the intention of developing an artistic project and trying to push the boundaries of eurythmy. In a productive, collaborative and explorative way performances of the contemporary composer Heinz Stockhausen's Zodiac were realized.

There had been precedents of different kinds from the end of the 70s on in Europe. The first group to emerge was Ashdown Eurythmy based in England which toured the continent extensively, and had an enormous impact on the eurythmy world not only because of the choice of material that they performed but also because of the evident way of collaborative productivity. Later this group became English Eurythmy Theatre, under the leadership of Philip Beaven, and toured not only the continent but also in the US. Another example is one of the more established eurythmy companies: the Eurythmeum, Stuttgart, headed by Else Klink, which took part in the production of "Paradise Lost", an opera by the contemporary Polish composer Penderecki. This was a mammoth production at the Stuttgart Opera and toured in Europe the beginning of the 80s. Numerous groups and individuals have now been working for about 13 years in serious efforts to expand and deepen the movement vocabulary of eurythmy in the performing sector.

One of the big, joyous events was the generous and liberal eurythmy festival at the Goetheanum in August 2001 where eurythmy in all its different stages of development was presented and communication and discussion was welcomed. Together with those who organize and carry such international festivals at the Goetheanum a group of avant-garde eurythmists were the co-creators in 2001 of this highly successful event. Unfortunately a repetition has not happened up till now

Concentrated into a picture the general idea is that eurythmy, the way it was given by Rudolf Steiner, can be likened to a bowl full of yeast. The yeast can be preserved the way it is so that it remains available. However it can also be used to bake a whole variety of interesting new loaves of bread.

Through diligent and tenacious research by Hans Fors in Järna, Sweden, where he was a teacher at the eurythmy school from 1979 to 1999, we know that the outer appearance, the manner of performing, the way of movement, the mood around the gestures and the costumes in eurythmy, the idea of moving to language and to music are definitely reminiscent of dance forms at the beginning of the last century. Even the name eurythmy was widely used in Europe at that time. Rudolf and Marie Steiner no doubt participated in cultural events of their times and naturally clothed the growing seedling of eurythmy in then contemporary ways.

It is amazing to experience the dedication and enthusiasm of these avant-garde eurythmy artists in Europe as they search for a more naturally grounded and personally connected form of eurythmy. Paired with a sense of responsibility for the foundation of Steiner's indications the collaborative effort to uncover and expand the expression of eurythmy in a more existential, authentic and contemporary way is impressive.

In recognition of a reorganized and more integrated form of eurythmy training the Academy of Living Movement opened its doors in the Fall of 2004 in Vienna.

As we can see in art history there has always been the necessity to preserve the initial form of an art movement. And then there have been offshoots, the avant-garde, that gradually develop a new level and expression of the same art form. Movement and development go on and this transformative way of art is what infuses humanity with the mobility, inspiration and nourishment to keep going.

Helga Mattke-Michaels

Helga Mattke-Michaels has experienced and been part of 45 years of eurythmy history.

Currently she travels on 3 continents teaching and coaching eurythmy and doing choreography. She is developing a new form of movement based on eurythmy: ATMA!, that is an integration of movement and personal development. She is a senior member of the avant-garde movement.