Julia O'Leary's speech for the opening of the upcoming Waldorf Teachers Conference in India themed *The Humanising Education*.

The Importance of Eurythmy in Waldorf Schools

Eurythmy is an expression of Life itself. When we wish to penetrate into the nature of Eurythmy, we have to do with a penetration into the being of a human being itself. Eurythmy must be a creation out of the Spirit and must make use of human movement as its means of expression.

Artistic impulses unite themselves with the mighty Creative forces of Nature.

When we draw upon the Creative forces of Nature which draw upon the inexhaustible source of the infinite, we make ourselves an instrument for the Creative power of the Universe

True art has always been born out of Human hearts able to open themselves to the impulse coming from the Spiritual world – these impulses which are poured into Humanity from higher worlds.

In the early Greek civilisation, humans knew how to make use of the etheric body, and this is seen in the gestures and certain attitudes of their sculptures. There was an inner understanding of the possibilities of Movement. They were able to bring their inner experience to physical expression making use of stone based on Body, Soul and Spirit as the outcome of the whole human being.

This perfection, as we can see in the early Greek sculptures, has been an inspiration to us in Eurythmy. Eurythmy makes use of the Human being as an instrument to enable this connection with the Universe. Eurythmy, born out of the wings of the Anthroposophic movement, reveals to our present age that Spiritual impulse which must now enter into human evolution.

The whole human being is an etheric creation. The etheric human is the WORD which comprises the whole alphabet.

A to Z – in a word shaped in the air should have the form of the Human etheric body. The etheric body contains within it the forces of growth, of nourishment and of memory. When we speak, we have to do with an etheric creation of the human being which is also a synthesis of Human wisdom.

This perfect form arose out of movement – the form at rest arose out of movement – the Human form is the result of Divine Eurythmy. Because Eurythmy makes use of the Human being as its instrument it enables us to see most deeply into the connection between the human being and the Universe – to see that we are formed out of Body, Soul and Spirit.

It is through speech that humans are able to reveal their inner being. One can use the entire body in such a way that it really carries out those movements carried by the larynx in speech and tone. This is the Art of Eurythmy.

What shall we bring to the child in the way of movement? We must teach him/her Eurythmy for this is a continuation of divine movement, of the divine creation of the human being.

Rudolf Steiner's conception was that Education should strive to awaken the individual, making their lives open to Spiritual Inspiration rather than stumbling through life partially awake and thus unconsciously prey to other impulses.

Childhood trauma, hereditary physical impairments, the barrage of electronic media and generally too much exposure to the adult world serve to unsettle the healthy core and development of the child. Children tend to create an armour to protect themselves but this later freezes, and serves as a barrier to free movement and the unfolding of future capacities. Here Eurythmy serves as an antidote in preserving the soul health of the child because Eurythmy confronts the inflexibility of these blocks directly. It wards off tendencies that harden, cramp, withdraw or avoid, but rather guides the newly acquired forces.

Rudolf Steiner considered Eurythmy as an essential subject right from the start of school age to address the specific needs of growing children.

Eurythmy has a role in the moral education of the child. Sensitivity and listening to others, moving harmoniously with others, developing cooperation and sympathy for differences in others. It is a Social Art.

We learn through Eurythmy to move together with others, developing a sense of space and relation to others.

It helps them acquire an inner and outer grace in movement, a subtle listening, aesthetic sensibility, a feeling of beauty and goodness as guiding principles. It reminds children of their Spiritual Angelic origin manifested in graceful harmonious being in motion.

Doing Eurythmy allows children to experience with their entire body the building blocks of language and music. It deepens their experience of poetry and music.

Eurythmy's work with rhythm and geometry can aid children in their study of mathematics developing focus and improved concentration and assist mental abilities.

The task of the Educator is to help the child to breathe.

Eurythmy restores flow, movement and breathing continuity countering rigidity and warding off tendencies that harden and cramp.

They can move toward the goal central to Waldorf education of the realization of their humanity in its highest form.

Eurythmy works with the life forces helping one to be flexible, lively and energetic. Movement is the Mother of Joy.

More and more children are developing emotional and learning difficulties and the need to balance the lives of even the average child struggling with the stresses of increasingly fast pace in our unbalanced times have solicited from Eurythmy a hygienic role in addition to its educational one.

And when illness of some kind or another overtakes the human being, we must go back to the divine movements. This will work upon him in such a way that the harm his bodily form may have received will be remedied.

In the sphere of healing, Eurythmy Therapy works in the first place as the great harmoniser, bringing the powers of the Soul, – thinking, feeling and willing, into their proper relationship with the threefold human being – the three systems of the body, the Nervous Sense System, the Rhythmical System and the Metabolic Limb System, and strengthening that balance between earthly and cosmic forces through which humans realise their true Ego-hood.

Rudolf Steiner regarded the human body as a creation of the Cosmic word. The human as microcosm of the macrocosm and due to this Cosmic word speech and music are in a formative relationship to the structure and the organs of the physical body. So specific sounds and gestures as well as rhythms can help the organ affected. Eurythmy Therapy also works on psychological disturbances, mental health and removes obstacles out of the child's way helping their development and abilities to grow in a healthy way.

It is an art drawing its inspiration and its force from a modern knowledge of the Spiritual world. In becoming a free individual, we have lost this connection with the Divine – this was necessary – but now we need to recover in freedom and in full awareness. Consciousness.

The art of Eurythmy is one of the channels through which the Spirit is revealing itself in human consciousness. It is a path through which humans may again find a way to that self-knowledge which is also a knowledge of the Universe.