

# A WAY TO TOUCH

Using Touch in Eurythmy Lessons for Students with Special Needs

Master's Thesis Module 8

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Photograph by Consuelo Kanaga, Hands, 1930

*gentle.  
a gentle touch.  
you touch my hand.  
do you trust me?  
pull away -  
close,  
too close...  
who can get near?  
near.  
try!  
on tiptoes - there.  
i will be there!  
you are safe.  
you are.  
you.*

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## **Abstract**

The focus of this thesis is the use of touch in eurythmy lessons. The setting of my research is a Waldorf School for students with special needs within a Camphill Community in North America. I have found that in general touch is often avoided as a teaching tool as it is seen as being risky. Many writings acknowledge the benefits of touch and I have read about the great need for further research in this field. I could find no literature on the use of touch in eurythmy lessons.

I used a phenomenological approach to come to a deeper understanding of the experience of touch. I also conducted interviews, offered training sessions and gave out questionnaires.

The findings of this research include the wide variety of experiences we can have through touch. I discuss reasons for touching and not touching, location and pressure of touch and the importance of the deepening of our understanding for the other person.

I conclude by stating that through my work with the students I am using touch much more than I otherwise would, and that we can all benefit from the healing power of touch. My main recommendations are that we foster our interest and understanding in the other person, remain open to new and unexpected possibilities and encourage touch when and where appropriate.

*'There is a power to touch, and a magic. Some call it mystery.'*  
(Pelóquín 1989, 15)

## **Table of Contents**

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Context of the Area of Study .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Research Approach .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>4. Questions of Ethics.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5. A Eurythmy Lesson.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. Observations and Reflections .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>7. A ‘Touchy’ Subject .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>8. Touch as a Tool for Learning.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>9. No-Touch-Policy and the Importance of Touch.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>10. Cultural Aspects.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>11. The Experience of Touch.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>12. Findings and Discussion.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>13. Creating Space .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>14. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Thesis Declaration.....</b>	<b>65</b>

## 1. Introduction

I teach eurythmy, an art of movement, to students with special needs. I often make use of touch during my lessons, and out of my wish to help in the right way, the following questions arose in me again and again: *How* am I helping the students, and can I give them an experience of a gesture by helping them to move, by touching them? How am I touching them and *why*?

While I was looking for information on the subject, I found that there is a 'Touch Research Institute' in the US, and in a book by the director of the institute, Tiffany Field, read that research is needed in the realm of touch:

'Although touch is an effective healing agent, it is underused by healing practitioners, from neurologists to social workers, and has been generally ignored by institutions and neglected by researchers.' (2014, 13)

Why is it ignored? If touch is so effective, why is it underused?

In this thesis I explore ways in which we use touch in eurythmy lessons at Camphill Special School, Beaver Run, in Pennsylvania, USA. The setting of my research is very unique, and because of that also sets limits to this research. Compared to other schools Beaver Run is relatively small, and is the only school in the USA combining the fields of eurythmy, teaching, intellectual and developmental disabilities. I found that this topic of research lies between the realm of education and therapy. I work with a whole class, although the students require a lot of individual attention and differing approaches.

There are two distinct aspects to the element of touch: On the one hand it gives me an awareness of myself, on the other I come into contact with the world around me. Am I able to get a deeper understanding of the experiences of others in relationship to these two aspects?

I found no literature on the use of touch in eurythmy lessons, and needed to search in related areas.

## **2. Context of the Area of Study**

I live and work at Camphill Special School, Beaver Run, a Camphill Community and Waldorf School for children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I teach the subject of eurythmy, an art of movement that is an important part of the Waldorf School Curriculum. In eurythmy we carry out meaningful movements that express music and the sounds of speech in a visible way. It develops listening and observation skills and teaches about social interactions through moving together. It can create a flow through rhythm, and by working on the breathing has a nourishing and healing effect.

The eurythmy lessons in Beaver Run are between 30 and 45 minutes in length, and a pianist is present at all lessons. Generally the class teacher and several other adults are in the room, helping the students to meaningfully participate in the lessons. The abilities of the students vary greatly, the help that is given is very individualized, and touch is frequently used.

The experience and background of the helpers is very diverse, and in this thesis I will generally refer to *all* adults assisting in the lessons as helpers. There are teachers with many years of work experience, co-teachers, classroom assistants, co-workers with one or more years of experience, employees who help a specific student, (some with years of experience, some very new to Beaver Run), volunteers who come for a year and helpers who come for a few weeks to absolve an internship. Many people come from other countries to work here. Most of the helpers are accustomed to touching the students, as they assist during other lessons and with personal care. All of us who work with the students are required to have a training that teaches how to use touch in a safe manner, how to avoid risks and how to create a safe environment.

### **2.1 My background**

From as far back as I can remember I always enjoyed movement and music. I grew up with music and singing, stories and long walks, a love for swimming, rowing and folk dancing. When I encountered eurythmy for the first time, in a Camphill Community in Scotland at the age of nineteen, I immediately took to this way of moving to music and the spoken word, and the lawfulness of specific

forms moved in space. At the same time as my first encounter with eurythmy, I also began working with young adults with special needs. Up until that point I had not had any contact with people with disabilities. Learning how to take care of the daily needs of others was a challenging and new experience to me. I learned how to use touch in the realm of care and work. I made many mistakes and often got frustrated, and life in the community was challenging yet rewarding to me.

Out of these experiences I decided to take up a four-year training in eurythmy within the setting of two Camphill Communities in England. Later I lived at a Camphill Community in the south of England and gained my first experiences as a eurythmy teacher, teaching groups of adults with and without special needs. These groups did not require me to use touch as much as I do now. Most of the adults with special needs were able to participate in the lessons independently, at least to some degree. During all these years I continued to physically assist many people with daily tasks and personal care, using touch in whatever form seemed helpful and appropriate.

In August 2005 I moved to Camphill Special School, Beaver Run. Since that time I have been teaching eurythmy to students who have special needs, mainly in middle and high school. I currently live in a house with high school students and co-workers. We eat our meals together and share social time. I assist some students with daily tasks and aspects of personal care. Through this I have come to know some of the students that I teach very well, and am able to observe them closely outside of the school setting. I also meet many of the other students at community events and have plenty of possibilities to interact with them. These are times when I can build up trust and relationships outside of the eurythmy lessons. It is out of this background that I explore the theme of touch.

## **2.2 The Camphill Movement and Camphill Special School, Beaver Run**

The place where I live and work, Camphill Special School, Beaver Run, is part of the international Camphill Movement. Camphill was founded in Scotland in 1940 by a group of refugees, and its main task was that of curative education out of a background of anthroposophy. (Koenig 1993, 15) The child with special needs stood at the center, being cared for and educated in a residential setting. Other



Camphill Communities developed, these included villages for adults with special needs and training centers. The emphasis was that of living together and helping each other, regardless of the ability of a person. (Steel 2011)

The Camphill Movement came to America in 1961, and in 1963 Camphill Special School, Beaver Run, was founded. Today Beaver Run is a children's village, where children with special needs live with co-workers - and also within families who live together in house communities. Touch is an important aspect of this close way of living together and of providing care. When going for a walk, the helper might hold the hand of the student, and brushing teeth often requires that the helper guides the hand of the student to make sure that all teeth get cleaned. These are two examples of how we use touch in the home. Some helpers assist in the home and at school. Apart from the students and co-workers that live in Beaver Run, the life of the school includes day students and employees. The program consists of a kindergarten, grade school and transition program for students up to the age of 21. (For more information please see: [www.camphillspecialschool.org](http://www.camphillspecialschool.org))

### **2.3 Eurythmy**

I will give a brief background on eurythmy in order to give a picture of what we are actually trying to do when we help the students:

Eurythmy is a relatively new art, it began in 1912 and originated out of spiritual science - out of anthroposophy. Eurythmy is visible speech and visible music. Every spoken word and every musical sound possesses its own shape in movement. (Steiner 1982) Eurythmy has also been called mindful or meaningful movement, and can have a harmonizing effect.

There are two possible movement approaches we can take: We can let a movement arise out of an inner experience, or we can carry out a movement and come to an inner experience out of the movement. (Steiner 1984) In regards to this study, as we are physically assisting the students to move, the second approach is the one we generally make use of. By helping a student to do a gesture there is the possibility for the student to gain an inner experience. What does it feel like when I carry out a specific movement?

Touch in the eurythmy lessons takes place when we assist the students in carrying out specific movements, when we walk forms in space, when we skip, run, stamp and clap, and when we use objects like copper eurythmy rods, balls, silk cloths and beanbags. Touch is also used to give the students an experience of their own body and to manage behavior. I might hold the hand of a student so that they walk the form of a square with me, or I might help him or her to lift the arms up high by standing behind the student and touching the upper arms, encouraging an upward movement. Clapping the rhythm of a piece of music might involve me holding one or both hands of the student in mine to encourage a clapping motion.

More examples and descriptions follow in chapters five and six.

### **3. Research Approach**

In this chapter I describe the different journeys I took in order to discover more about my chosen theme of touch. They opened up a wide field of possibilities to me and led me on many exciting – and difficult – paths. Here I describe what I did, and my findings will follow in later chapters.

#### **3.1. A Phenomenological Approach**

For this thesis I am working out of a phenomenological approach and look at the ordinary moments in order to become more conscious of them and to be able to reflect on what is happening. Did the student block my approach or go with it? How did I touch? What did I experience and what might have been the experience of the student? I do many actions out of habit and routine, without really being conscious of them. Max Van Manen, author of the book *Phenomenology Of Practice*, states: 'What makes phenomenology so fascinating is that any ordinary experience tends to become quite extraordinary when we lift it up from our daily existence and hold it with our phenomenological gaze.' (2014, 38)

In my experience, this approach can bring new enthusiasm and a breath of fresh air to a situation that might have become routine. Van Manen describes this opening up as wonder:

‘A good phenomenological study almost always starts with wonder or passes through a phase of wonder.’ (2014, 37)

I can suddenly appreciate details, or become aware of something that was always there and I took for granted. These moments can enliven the teaching situation and can bring great benefits to students and teachers alike, as new possibilities open up. I am aware that this very open approach can have many challenges. Van Manen tells us that ‘...it requires sensitive interpretive skills and creative talents from the researcher.’ (2014, 41) It is also a process that will not come to an end, but will continue to uncover more and more. The often seemingly contradictory, surprising and unusual life situations can be hard to approach through logic, and might require a more artistic or otherwise unusual approach. (Van Manen 2014, 213)

### **3.2. Poetry, Quotes and Pictures**

While working on this thesis it became clear to me that I did indeed need an unusual approach. While I was searching for ways to express the different experiences of touch, I explored how I could use language to help me in this endeavor. I began by collecting words and sentences, tried to create a mood, imagined a certain situation, and soon some poetry began to emerge. I use some poems throughout this thesis to express particular situations, moods and feelings, and include quotes to emphasize my point of view.

I found it of great help to live with some images and visual imaginations. In this thesis I include some pictures that have accompanied me throughout this project.

### **3.3. Interviews, Questionnaires and Training Sessions**

To complement the very open approach described above, I conducted interviews, used questionnaires and offered two training sessions.

Through unstructured interviews I tried to find out what experiences and needs the helpers who assist in the eurythmy lessons have, and how touch is

experienced and used. I interviewed people with a wide variety of backgrounds. People I spoke with include a high school student, class teachers, the pianist present at all eurythmy lessons, classroom assistants, and co-workers in their first and second year in Beaver Run.

I gave out questionnaires (see appendix A) to ten employed helpers whose work experience in Beaver Run ranges from a few weeks to several years. With these I wanted to get information about the reason why they use touch, and about pressure and location of the touch they use while assisting students during eurythmy lessons. I also asked about what they would find helpful in this work with the students.

I offered two training sessions to employed helpers. My intention was to give them an experience of various eurythmy movements, and to explore how we can use touch to help with movement. During these sessions we started by moving a small wooden ball around ourselves in a circle, and then related this movement to another person, who followed the movement of the ball. This meant we had to adjust the speed and distance of our own movement according to the movement of the other person. In this way we formed a relationship to others and I was then able to build on this in the next exercise. We worked with contraction and expansion, an exercise all helpers were familiar with. Starting in a circle, we moved forwards and backwards and the circle got smaller and bigger as we did so. This we accompanied with arm-movements, bringing the hands close to our chest while going forwards, and stretching the arms out while going backwards. With the same exercise we then worked in pairs, one person standing behind the other. When asked what they preferred, most people said they felt more comfortable standing behind the other person and not so comfortable standing in front. I found this interesting to hear, as many of our students get help with the adult standing behind them. I wondered how they might feel.

Next, I asked the person standing in the back to enhance the experience of the movement of the person in front through touching them. After trying this we switched roles and then talked about our experiences.

We also did some gestures with the arms only, and I asked everyone to pay close attention to the movement of the upper arms, bearing in mind that we often assist the students by touching their upper arms.

I contacted eurythmists in Europe who work in similar settings as myself, teaching eurythmy to students with special needs. I asked them how they use touch in their lessons and what their experiences were (see appendix B). I received four replies, two from Great Britain and two from Germany.

I had some informal conversations with local eurythmists about their experiences and the use of touch. These helped me to broaden my point of view.

### **3.4. Observing Eurythmy Lessons**

While my research is mainly about the eurythmy lessons I teach, I also observed other eurythmists teaching lessons. This enabled me to compare the way touch happens during other eurythmy classes with the way I teach. I asked three colleagues if I could be present at their lessons.

I observed a lesson with the third grade at Beaver Run. There were six students, five helpers and the eurythmist taking part. When coming into the room all were holding hands. They soon sat down on stools arranged in a circle, with the helpers sitting next to or behind the students. Many helpers used touch to help the students to put their feet and hands together. Two students leaned back against the person helping them. I observed many ways in which touch was used. Hands, arms, legs, feet and the back and shoulders were touched the most. Even though I had time to observe, there was so much happening that I still missed many moments when and how a helper used touch. In the end, the teacher shook hands with all the students to say good-bye.

I went to observe eurythmy lessons at a nearby Waldorf School for typically developed children, in order to be able to compare how touch is used in other educational settings. I observed six lessons given by two different teachers. In the younger grades the class teacher was present for some or all of the lesson, some sitting down, some joining in. During the high school classes no other adults were present apart from the eurythmist and the pianist. The students touched each other a lot, while the teachers used a handshake for a greeting but

otherwise had very little reason for touching. No touch was used to assist with movements.

In Beaver Run a lot of touch happens between some of the helpers and the students, while touching between students seems to me less frequent than at the Waldorf School, although there are exceptions.

### **3.5. Experiencing Touch**

I searched for ways in which I could deepen my own experience of touch. How do I feel when I am being touched? Can I compare this with what the students experience? In order to find out I went to the hairdresser, the chiropractor, enjoyed a massage and had a reflexology session. Also the experiences of being helped and touched during the training sessions (see above) made me more aware of the way in which I use touch.

I observed how difficult it could be for the students to carry out some of the eurythmy movements. Although there are plenty of situations where I feel challenged by having to do something difficult, I tried to do some specific tasks that are challenging for me in order to focus on this experience. I tried to write with my feet by holding a pencil between my toes, and I tried to get dressed using only one hand. What hindrance do I need to overcome in order to do them? What might stop others from doing something?

### **3.6. Literature**

I read many books and articles to deepen my knowledge, to find facts and compare. I found opposing views and confirmation of my experiences. It was an exciting path of discovery from literature on research, anthroposophy, special needs, education, therapy, eurythmy, the senses and Camphill, to the abundance of material about touch. It was difficult not to get lost as there were so many possibilities opening up to me.

### **3.7. Limitations**

I had hoped to gather more material from other eurythmists, but time constraints and poor feedback did not allow this. I also had the intention to conduct more

interviews and to follow up on some of the conversations I had. I do believe this could have provided valuable material to add to this research. Due to time constraints, a busy community life and my personal limitations this did not happen.

#### **4. Questions of Ethics**

Having chosen the theme of touch, I am aware that it can be a 'touchy subject'. There are risks involved in the way we use or neglect to use touch. (See chapter 7.) My hope is that this research is for the benefit of all involved, the students as well as the helpers. I did not use names and made participants of interviews and questionnaires aware of the research process and their involvement. (See Appendix A, B and C)

I asked the group of long-term co-workers in Beaver Run for permission to include the name of the school. I also asked the teachers' group for permission to carry out the research.

## 5. A Eurythmy Lesson

I will now describe a typical eurythmy lesson with a high school class at Beaver Run, with the emphasis on when and how touch is used:

The pianist is in the eurythmy room with me, and together we wait for the class to come in. It is 9.15 am, and the sun is shining brightly. The first student comes running in, out of breath. I go over to greet him with a handshake, his hand is warm and he grips my hand firmly. More students enter and I shake their hands. Some hands are cold, some are warm and one student pulls the hand away quickly. I hold my hand out to the next student, and I need to wait a while until she takes my hand. A gentle and brief handshake, then she quickly looks away. Everybody has arrived and some helpers assist the students so we can all sit quietly for a moment.

I ask everyone to stand in a circle and this takes a while. I offer my hand to one student to enable him to get up and join us. One helper holds the hands of two students, in order for them to stay in the circle. We begin by moving our arms while standing still. I see some helpers lift the arms of the student they are with. Next we start walking along in a circle, and I hold the hand of a student so she starts moving. Once she moves with us I let go of her hand. I take a moment to look around and notice two students who are holding hands. I ask them to let go, as I know that they can both move on their own. We stand still again and begin clapping the rhythm of the music we hear. Some helpers assist the students with clapping by placing their hands around the hands of the students. Someone else claps the rhythm with one hand onto the hand of the student, supporting the hand of the student with the free hand. Suddenly the student pulls away and runs to the window. The helper goes over to guide her back, taking her hand.

On the other side of the circle one student is squeezing the arm of a helper tightly, probably because he is getting agitated. I try to figure out why, but before I can react the helper takes the student by the hand and guides him out of the room.

I ask everyone to sit down. Most students do this on their own, but some are led to a stool by holding hands or a gentle touch on the back.



I call up one student to move the form of a five-pointed star. The student knows the form well and can move it without any help. The next student hesitates to get up, but a classmate gives her a push and she reluctantly gets up. She comes over and takes my hand. I start moving with her and then let go. She is able to carry on alone, only needing my reassurance and a pointer in the right direction. Another student gets up but does not go to the right starting point. I go over to him and take his hand. He starts laughing and pointing at another classmate, and is getting into a silly mood. I take hold of both his hands in a basket hold, standing next to him, and we move the form together. I have to hold his hands firmly and we move quickly in order to manage walking the star. By now he has stopped laughing and I lead him to his place so he can sit down. When all students have had a turn, everyone gets up to stand in a large circle together. We do the same arm movements as in the beginning, and again some students are helped to lift their arms. One helper is holding on to two students, trying to help both of them at the same time by lifting up one arm for each of them. Both of the students would very likely walk out of the circle if the helper would let go, but I am wondering what kind of experience the two students are getting, being helped with one arm only for a movement that should be symmetrical.

We finish the lesson by standing still. I see one helper holding on to the shoulders of a student to keep him in his place, some others hold hands.

When we say good-bye one student comes over to shake my hand firmly, others go straight past me without looking at me. One student is lingering in the room, not wanting to leave. I place one hand on her shoulder and guide her to the door. I look out and see that the sun is still shining. A student comes skipping into the room and I call him over to greet him, the handshake is floppy and quick. The next class is coming in.

## 6. Observations and Reflections

In this chapter I give some examples and reflections of my experiences with touch in eurhythmy lessons, and I describe some of my limitations and frustrations that I encountered.

We were walking sideways, first to the right and then to the left. The student next to me dreamily walked along, turning in the direction in which we were going. I asked her not to turn, but to walk sideways. When we did it again she still turned and I took her hand, trying to guide her. Although she willingly held my hand, she was still turning each time, stepping forwards instead of sideways. I decided to place my hands on her shoulders while standing behind her. For a few steps she was unsure, but then was able to carry out the steps to the side. (I had to look after my feet, making sure that she did not step on them.)

In this example I tried different approaches, starting with verbal instructions. When I noticed that she did not respond, I held her hand and as a next step placed my hands on her shoulders. I often need to try what might be of help to a student, and in this case I gradually increased the amount of help I was giving. There are situations when it might be the other way around, when I am giving more help than the student needs, and if I notice it I can decrease the help I give.

Touch is not always pleasant, and here is a situation where I was touched in a way that I did not like:

I asked a student to get up and come over to me. She walked over and pinched my arm. I did not know why. Keeping a slight distance to each other we were able to move a form together while she observed me closely.

I wonder what she thought and felt when she came over? Did she understand why I asked her to come?

Sometimes I need to create space between my self and a student:

A student stepped on my foot. Apparently he was very interested in the shoes I wore. He kept coming close to me, trying to touch me. I repeatedly needed to ask him to step further away into his place in the circle.

In this case I only realized later what could have helped in a more effective way. Although talking to him worked after several attempts, it might have been easier for me to draw the attention of the student to something else. By doing that the problem might have disappeared, as his focus would have shifted.

While reflecting on some of my experiences in the eurythmy lessons, I wrote the following poem:

Open

*I invite you  
I say your name  
my hands are open  
and reach towards you.  
Will you come?  
What are you thinking?  
You hesitate.  
I look at you  
my hands are still open  
still empty  
you wait...  
  
stepping forward  
you place your hand in mine  
trusting that I will lead you  
yet you lead me  
sure where to go.*

While the poem above describes a situation that worked well, I also experienced moments of extreme frustration during some of my lessons. Many times I was not able to focus on how the helpers were touching the students. I needed to concentrate on what I was doing, what I was saying, how I was moving. Maybe I

was helping a student myself. This made it difficult for me to truly observe what was happening elsewhere.

On days like these, when nothing seems to work out, I can feel overwhelmed, or maybe I am not feeling well. The following poem expresses a mood like that.

Closed

*I was so busy today  
I did not notice  
I did not notice what you needed.  
What did you try to show me?  
I missed it...  
Your hand pulled away.  
My hand suddenly empty,  
I had no time  
I was looking the wrong way.  
I felt tired  
so many people  
I did not see.  
Everyone was talking  
someone was coming in  
and who was that just then???*

*I did not realize what you needed  
I tried too hard  
did not stay open  
closed off to my own ideas  
thinking that surely you will follow  
-but no-  
I did not find the path today  
could not follow the way I was meant to go  
the door stayed closed.  
Will you let me try again  
another time?*

Through focusing on touch and observing more consciously, I became more aware of my ability (or inability) to perceive how the students express a mood and how receptive they might be to touch. Are they holding back or reaching out? My own well-being and mood can influence this experience significantly.

## **7. A 'Touchy' Subject**

We can be 'in touch' or 'out of touch', we can 'loose touch' and be 'touchy', I can 'feel touched' and I can 'touch base'. The word 'touch' is used in many different ways and on many different levels.

I have chosen to study an area that receives a lot of attention. In our present culture, touch is frequently seen as something to avoid or to keep to a minimum. Touching others involves the risk of inappropriate touch. But if we do not help when possible, it might be seen as neglect. The image of a double-edged sword comes to me, of walking on a tightrope: if I touch another person, especially a person seen as being vulnerable, it might be a problem, but if I do not help through touch, it might be a problem, too. What is the right way to touch someone? Can I find the right path without feeling under constant pressure?

### **7.1. Rules, Regulations and the Fear of Touch**

Out of the experience of abuse and misuse, touch receives a heightened awareness, receives too much attention. We are extremely awake and alert in this area. There is a fear of inappropriate touch, sexual touch and exploitative touch. Touch can express power over another person. These fears are discussed in the article titled 'To Touch Or Not To Touch', by Zur and Nordmarken. In it is mentioned that there is often a difference of the position of power between two people, but the following conclusion is made: 'Power is, in itself, neither positive nor negative; it is neutral. Parental power facilitates children's growth, teachers' authority enables students to learn...' (2011, 22) It is up to me not to misuse my position and to be responsible for my own actions.

How do I decide when and how to touch? Touch is seen as being risky. As a teacher I can perceive the risk involved, the possibility of misusing touch and the

suspicion that surrounds this topic. It can create a culture of fear, which in turn will require more rules and regulations.

In response to my questionnaire, one eurythmist wrote that she works with students who have a behavior support plan that states how an individual student should be supported. These highly individualized plans usually work with the idea that touch should be used as little as possible and reduced to an absolute minimum. I experience a plan like this as a restriction to my possibilities, not as something that helps. It limits me in how I am able to support a student, and it might not allow me to make use of touch in a way I might perceive as helpful. I believe that these plans are written with the intention of ensuring the best possible care and help for the student, and to prevent abuse, but it lacks the element of trust and the possibility of a genuine human encounter.

## **7.2. Interpretation of Touch**

All of us have a very unique background and we need to keep the following aspects in mind which are stated by Elkiss and Jerome: ‘...the interpretation of touch ranges by emotion, sex, age, culture, circumstance, religious custom and the perceived intent of the touch.’ (2012, 514) Is my reason for touching clear to the student? I often wonder what the student thinks about my reason for touching, especially if I try to be gentle and slow, yet the student pulls away from me in what seems to be fear.

I write more about the cultural influence on touch in relationship to North America in chapter ten.

## **8. Touch as a Tool for Learning**

In order to look more closely at how we help the students at Beaver Run, it is important to know how children learn. This includes knowledge of child development and age appropriate learning. Here is a brief outline:

A young child learns through imitation, by doing what others do. It begins to form inner pictures and gains the ability to follow instructions. The child learns through the authority of the teacher and by about fourth grade learns to create concepts.

By grade eight the student is expected to work more independently, out of his or her own inner judgment. In High School a love of learning and own interest are the main driving forces for learning. Observations, questions and self-motivated learning develop a critical way of thinking. (Adams 1997 + Russell 2009)

At Beaver Run I observe all levels of learning, but the chronological development described above is often very mixed up. Students on the autism spectrum might show little or no imitation skills. In my experience, many students rely on the authority of the teacher well into high school, and self-motivated learning and critical thinking develop only to a very limited degree. In order to involve all students in the learning process I need to include many different approaches. One of these approaches is touch. I might use touch if a student does not imitate a movement, or if a student moves in an uncontrolled and jerky way. Does the student have a concept of a movement? Can I convey an idea of the movement through physically assisting the student? What if there is no interest and no motivation to move? How is touch used in other teaching situations? I began looking at the use of touch in other educational settings.

## **9. No-Touch-Policy and the Importance of Touch**

When I looked through a book titled 'Differentiating Instruction for Students With Learning Disabilities', I did not find a single reference on how one could use touch for teaching purposes. (Bender 2008) Have we developed such fear of touch that it is not included as a teaching tool?

Most schools in the US have a policy on touch. Some ban certain kinds of touch (usually sexual or aggressive touch), some ban touch all together. The argument for this is that safety is more important than the benefits of touch. Some children have been given warnings and detentions because they hugged a friend. Parents and students question how children can learn appropriate touch if they do not have the chance to use it. (NBC News.com, 2007)

How can children find out what is right or wrong and develop a sense of morality?

Touch teaches us about connection and separation. Touch is very powerful, and in my opinion many of the problems we experience in our culture today are closely related to a lack of human touch.

Zur and Nordmarken clearly state the close link between a lack of touch in early childhood and aggressive behavior. It is also known that children deprived of touch due to institutionalization often do not thrive well. (2011, 5+6)

Tiffany Field states that children might 'engage in more self-stimulating behaviors, perhaps to compensate for receiving less physical affection from their peers.' (2014, 76) When children are touched more, they tend to be more affectionate towards others and show less aggression. This is a very convincing argument for me to use touch whenever it seems appropriate. Many findings encourage an increase in the use of appropriate touch. (One example: Carlson + Nelson, *Reducing Aggression with touch*, 2006)

There is an abundance of literature describing the benefits of touch. Here is one example:

Touch is a unique form of communication, and numerous studies have demonstrated its value. It lowers blood pressure and raises self-esteem; babies gain weight and sleep better; and even the individual who applies the program of touch benefits. Both physically and psychologically, touch comforts, reassures, and heals us. (Kunz 2007, 40)

So why are we so careful to use touch? I feel encouraged about the use of touch in eurythmy lessons, especially as the risk of abuse seems very low in a class setting where several adults are present.

*'Sometimes, reaching out and taking someone's hand is the beginning of a journey.*

*At other times, it is allowing another to take yours.'*

*(Nazarian V.)*



## 10. Cultural Aspects

As I wrote above (chapter 7.2.), cultural aspects influence the way we interpret touch. North America is described as a 'low touch culture' (Zur and Nordmarken 2011, 7), meaning that we generally do not touch each other much. By reading about the cultural influence on people, I became aware that I needed to be well informed about the background of each student I teach. Some students and many helpers come from other countries and might be used to very different ways of touching.

Here in America, within our 'low touch culture', we have found acceptable ways to access touch: We can go to people who have made touch their profession. There is a wide realm of therapies available that involve touch, for example massage and reflexology. There is also a large amount of lesser-known therapies. Christine Caldwell, editor of the book 'Getting in Touch', lists many that were not known to me before. (1997)

Going to the doctor, hairdresser, manicurist, dance instructor etc. can also be seen as a way to receive touch. (Field 2014, 137)

In contrast to this realm where we seek to be touched by another human being, we can observe a rise in technologies that involve touch: the touch screen (through which we are able to 'keep in touch' with large amounts of people) and virtual touch, which promises us that it will feel *as if* it is real. Here we do not touch a person or object. What do we touch? There can be a big gap between what we touch, our experience, and the result of the touch. Although this might not directly relate to the research topic, I do feel that it is extremely important to look at the current situation. Where do we find ourselves in relationship to touch, and what experiences do children grow up with today?

## 11. The Experience of Touch

How does it feel to touch and to be touched? As we each have our own, individual experience, it can be hard to perceive how *different the experiences of other* people can be.

Here is an example from a lesson in high school about the experience of touch, using an object: I had put copper eurythmy rods on the floor and we were all stepping on the rods, trying to take small steps. One student said that it was a 'nice foot-massage', while another told me that it hurt and felt painful. Both students had done the same exercise, yet they were able to voice two very different experiences.

### 11.1. In Literature

As many of our students are not able to verbalize their own experiences, writings by other people can give a good picture of what touch might feel like for them. Temple Grandin, a woman with autism, describes her own and others' experiences of touch: 'Being touched triggered flight; it flipped my circuit breaker. I was overloaded and would have to escape, often by jerking away suddenly.' (2006, 58)

This description can explain some of the behaviors I see on a regular basis in eurythmy lessons, the jerky movement of a student pulling away or running to the other end of the room. Grandin also goes into the differentiation of touching and being touched: 'It is much easier for a person with autism to tolerate touch if he or she initiates it. When touched unexpectedly, we usually withdraw, because our nervous system does not have time to process the sensation.' (2006, 58)

Regarding the pressure used in touch, Grandin writes about the benefits of deep pressure. She developed a 'Squeeze Machine' and reports that this helped her to reduce her anxiety levels. (2006, 59) She also describes the benefits of the use of weighted vests, massaging and the use of soft brushes, and in this context stresses the importance of relatively firm pressure. She writes: 'A light tickle must be avoided, because it triggers fear in the child's immature nervous system.' (2006, 75)

The sense of touch can be greatly influenced by an 'immature nervous system', by an excessive sensitivity. A need to experience boundaries can manifest in tapping, touching, slapping, biting and smelling. This might be because the '...eyes and ears function, but they are not able to process incoming visual and auditory information.' (Grandin 2006, 62)

What can it mean to be influenced by an 'immature nervous system'? The senses give us an experience of ourselves and of the world around us, and disturbances can occur in the development of the senses. I will give an example by looking at the sense of touch:

The sense of touch gives us the feeling of security, of boundary and of separation. This makes it possible for us to be self-conscious. (Soesman 1990, 14) A lack of this safety, of this knowledge of our selves, shows itself in anxiety. (Koenig 2006,183) It is a sense that is deeply unconscious, all-permeating, and it confirms our existence. It is nurtured with trust. The image of the Madonna and child comes to my mind, expressing the trust and feeling of safety and security, yet also the separation of the two human beings.



Detail from: Ninetta Sombart, 'Glanz der Seele'

The sense organ for touch, the skin, is described as the largest sense organ. (Field 2014, 49) There are many detailed descriptions of the skin, but to go into this lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Here I will only mention that there are different types of receptors in our skin. (Rohen 2007)

*'Touch comes before sight, before speech. It is the first language, and the last, and it always tells the truth.'*  
(Atwood M.)

I repeatedly found it stated that touch is the first sense to develop. Development begins prenatally, and it plays an important role during labor and delivery. When I look at the medical history of many students at Beaver Run, I can find indicators that the sense of touch is compromised. This can be through the experience of trauma or substance abuse by the mother during pregnancy, through birth by caesarean section, or an early childhood where the child was neglected or abused. Not feeling held can lead to an incomplete body image or other boundary issues. The sense of touch teaches us about setting limits.

In addition to problems we can experience out of one of the senses being compromised, there can be a 'Sensory Mixing', a heightened sensitivity in people where the person is not able to keep the different sense impressions apart. Being tired or upset can exaggerate this. An example tells how this mixing of sense impressions can be like: 'Sound came through as color, while touching his face produced a sound-like sensation.' (Grandin 2006, 72)

In the same paragraph is a description of how some people can only process one sensory experience at a time. This can explain why situations can be very confusing and why ritualistic behaviors can give security in this mix of impressions. It also means that it is important for me to look closely at the environment I work in. What does the room look like? What lighting is used and what objects are in it? Karl Koenig, a medical doctor and co-founder of the Camphill Movement, writes about fixations that children and adolescents can

have in relationship to their environment: 'These fixations are the result of the loss of security in their own body, especially in the organ of the skin and therefore these children have to look for security in the space of their environment rather than in their own body.' (Koenig 2006, 185)

He goes on to describe that the child can suffer from severe anxiety, might be restless and show defiance and resistance. He links this to a sense of touch that is not fully developed, and points to our task as curative educators to strengthen the bodily organization of the child. One way to do this is through the environment that surrounds the child. (Koenig 2006, 185+186) Can I create a space where the child can feel secure and held, and is allowed to establish trust? Rudolf Steiner describes a hyper-sensitiveness in children who find it difficult to make contact with the world around them. He gives the example of how it feels like when we hurt our skin: 'Suppose you then grasp hold of some object with the sore surface, where the skin has been rubbed away. You know how it hurts!' (Steiner 1981a, 76)

It is as if we make too much contact and we are very careful in how we touch the object. Steiner goes on to describe how this sensitivity can also manifest in what the child does, how movements can be restless because the child feels pain when the surrounding is felt much more intensely. I see a lot of restless movements in the students I work with and they often seem distracted to me. I have noticed them close a window, pull at the curtains or move the blackboard. Out of her research on touch, Field concludes that an area to research further is how children can benefit from touch, even when they seem to have an aversion to being touched. (2014, 83)

What can this aversion be? Naoki, a thirteen-year-old boy with autism, writes:

More generally, for a person with autism, being touched by someone else means that the toucher is exercising control over the person's body, which not even its owner can control properly. It's as if we lose who we are. Think about it – that's terrifying! (Higashida 2013, 32)

Other conflicting ideas emerge if we return to the problems described above concerning "Sensory Mixing": Although I described how confusing it can be for people to take in different sensory impressions, there is also a shown benefit if touch is used together with other sense impressions. More areas in the brain can

be activated in this way, and that can lead to a better learning experience. (Hannaford 1995, 41) This points to the very individual ways in which we learn. There is not one right or wrong way, but many different methods that can be used. Touch is an individual experience and we all have our unique background.

## **11.2. My Personal Explorations with Touch and Movement**

I tried to gain different and new experiences in the realm of touch. How do I feel when I am being touched?

- **Massage:** I felt very comfortable with being touched. It helped that the hands were in constant contact with my skin, so I did not get surprised. I was able to trust the person doing the massage and was able to relax. The element of trust was very important to me as many areas of my body were touched.
- **Reflexology:** I experienced a session of reflexology where relatively firm pressure was used on the feet and legs. Most of the time the firm pressure felt good, but at times I experienced pain, which nearly made me feel nauseous. I tried to breathe into the pain and to stay relaxed. This was not easy. I also was able to see how I could have detached myself from the process when it became painful. I could have chosen to think of something else in order to try and avoid the pain. I had not expected to be touched on the upper legs and this took me by surprise. It made me realize how important it is with touch to know what is happening.
- **Chiropractor:** Again it helped that I felt comfortable with the person doing the touching. Some touch led me to experience pain, but as I felt that there was an immediate response to what I said or did, I felt safe with this.
- **At the hairdresser:** I enjoyed having my hair washed by someone else, and especially liked the head massage that is part of shampooing. At times it was a bit too much, as my head was tilted back and I did not find this a comfortable position to be in. The pressure used was relatively firm throughout. Having my hair brushed also felt good. As these are tasks I usually do myself, I needed to be able to trust the hairdresser. It made me feel a little lazy, as I handed over responsibility to someone else.

I can easily relate these experiences to the classroom setting. Without trust I hesitate and am unsure of how to help. If I have the feeling that a student does not trust me I will try to give him or her space and the possibility to get to know me. The more I can show my interest and warmth towards a student, the more I am able to gain an understanding of their needs and feelings.

This is a process between two people, and by touching another person we share something. My wish to help can make me feel vulnerable, and it can make the person receiving the touch feel vulnerable, too. (Peloquin 1989) It can provide a space between two people so that something new is allowed to enter. What is this that can enter when two people are together? I have often experienced something that I would call grace, an opportunity for something new and fresh, not planned out before. In the Bible I find it described in the following way: 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' (Holy Bible, St. Matthew chapter 18, verse 20)

Showing interest was also helpful when I engaged with the helpers. Through offering the training sessions and through the interviews and conversations, I began to see small changes, began to notice that they made a difference. I believe this has to do with my interest and engagement with the other person. It provides an opening and allows for new possibilities. Following the training sessions, I observed how one helper gave a student more space. He tried a movement by himself before helping the student and seemed more receptive and gentle towards the student.

I would like to turn to the senses again, as it is through the sense of warmth that we are able to meet the world with interest and warmth. 'When we get nothing back we experience cold, but when we do receive something we experience a sense of warmth.' (Soesman 1990, 96)

When I help another person I need to do so out of interest and warmth. If I do not have this interest, my efforts will be in vain. (This does not mean that I show strong emotions, as this can make the other person shrink away.)

All the senses are closely linked to our emotions as we experience likes and dislikes. Koenig states that '...no other sense is so imbued with feeling and emotion as the sense of warmth.' (2006, 144)

It is difficult to name a sense organ for the sense of warmth. Generally we are pointed to receptors in the skin, but it is really the blood circulation, influenced by the sense of balance, that is the sense organ for the sense of warmth, with the heart at the center. (Koenig 2006, 143) Am I prepared to open up my heart towards the other?

*Do I understand what you need?*

*Do you?*

*Do I understand what you feel?*

*Do you?*

*Will you help me understand?*

*Will you?*

*With a sparkle in your eyes*

*like a sunbeam,*

*you show me a hidden,*

*delicate path*

*with lots of rainclouds...*

*and a rainbow.*

*Will you explain the colors to me,  
so that I can learn to understand?*

*Will you explain the rainclouds to me,  
so that I can learn to understand?*

*A little piece of blue sky  
and a bird soaring up above.*

*Let us fly.*

*We can learn to touch the sky together.*

In the beginning of this chapter I described my experience of being touched in a way that I did not expect. It literally made me jump. Experiences like these can trigger what is called the 'fight or flight response'. In these situations we focus on survival as blood flow increases to the large muscles and the lungs, and



decreases to the brain. 'No wonder it is difficult to focus and remember under stress.' (Hannaford 1995, 162)

As unexpected touch can cause stress and anxiety, this is not helpful if I want to encourage a student to learn and do something, especially if it is difficult for them.

While working on this thesis I have become much more aware about how I approach people. I now generally try to make sure that a student can see me as I come closer. Being within their visual field can give them a clue about my intent, about why I am coming. Touch should not come as a surprise unless I have a specific reason for it.

I am also much more aware about times when it is important for me to ask some students for permission to touch them. This I especially do with students whom I do not usually touch. With others, I do not always verbalize it, but try to come with my inner question if the student will accept my touch. Sometimes I touch students very quickly, and it would be a burden to always ask for permission to touch. Some students are not able or willing to answer such a question, so asking is not necessarily always helpful. It could also take away from the flow of the lesson if I would ask every time I want to touch someone.

It was very important for me to know *where* I was going to be touched when I went to have a massage or reflexology treatment. There are some areas of my body that I would not expect others to touch. The face is an area that I do not usually touch during eurythmy lessons, but then I read that there are people who experience the same kind of sensitivity over the entire body that I might only experience in the face. (Weihs 1988, 66) How can I prepare myself and touch these individuals in a way that is gentle and appropriate, and how do I know that they are so sensitive? Knowing about this sensitivity, it does not surprise me when people pull away from touch.

To carry out a movement can be difficult, and as the students are often asked to do movements that are difficult for them, I did some things that are a challenge to me:

- Writing with the feet: Placing a pencil between my toes while sitting, I wrote on a sheet of paper that was lying on the floor. I did this with the left and the right foot. Although I had done this many times before, it was still a challenge to me and my writing did not seem to improve much. At times I found it frustrating to have so little control over the pencil.
- Dressing using one hand: I tried putting on clothes only using my left hand. It took me much longer than usual to get dressed, and many movements felt awkward. The clothes easily got twisted and I felt impatient, uncomfortable and annoyed.

I want to include two memories of my experiences in relationship to movement: The first is when I had a cut on my hand. I was much more conscious of my hand with all I did, and many movements were painful. (This is also referred to in chapter 11.1.)

The second experience is the following: I went to pick up an object that I expected to be heavy. When I actually picked it up, I was surprised that it was very light, but I needed time to adjust my movement and lifted it up faster and higher than I had planned. This made me realize how difficult some movements are for the students, and how important our perceptions are in the realm of movement. It gave me a glimpse of what might be meant when Naoki writes: 'But I don't always know what my arms and legs are up to, not exactly. For me, I have no clear sensation of where my arms and legs are attached, or how to make them do what I am telling them to do.' (Higashida 2013, 52)

How do we perceive the movements of our body? It is through the sense of movement that we are '...aware of the way parts of the body move with respect to each other'. (Steiner 1990a, 83) It informs us of our position in space, of the stretching and bending of our limbs. The human being is always in movement, and the sense of movement can enable movement through inhibition, through not allowing some movements to happen. It can work by bringing unwanted movements to rest. I often observe uncontrolled or rigid movements of students, and an arm or leg that does not seem to know where it should be. I have seen

students hitting out without really intending to do so, not knowing how their limbs are moving.

Koenig discusses the importance of movement for children with special needs. He tells us that children with movement disturbances need to gain an experience of movement, and suggests that objects and passive exercises can be of great help in this. (2006, 222) This encourages me in what I am doing, as I am often questioning just how much I should help a student to move.

What does it feel like not to be in control of your own movements? Naoki writes: 'We don't even have proper control over our own bodies. Both staying still and moving when we are told to are tricky – it's as if we're remote-controlling a faulty robot.' (Higashida 2013, 21)

### *Again*

*My body  
Not moving  
Moving where?  
Clumsy hands  
Sorry  
Sorry I hurt you.  
I did not mean to.  
Feet!  
My feet?  
Where to step?  
Can I try again?*

Depending on how a person experiences being touched, reactions can vary. I have observed and experienced many different reactions, from being comfortable with touch or seeking to be touched, to tolerating or avoiding touch and aggressive behavior. Out of this the following questions arose in me: When is touch appropriate and when not? What kind of touch is right for a particular person? Do I need to use touch at all? In the next chapter I discuss some of the themes that emerged out of my gathered data.

## 12. Findings and Discussion

I began to find some answers to my questions by analyzing data I had gathered through the interviews, questionnaires, training sessions and conversations, and by summarizing my own experiences. Out of this some themes developed which I chose to look at and discuss in more detail:

### 12.1. Reasons for Touch

There are many different reasons why touch can be used. Out of my own experience and through the information I received from others, I concluded that the main reasons for touching a student during a eurythmy lesson are:

- Assisting the student to carry out a gesture.
- Assisting the student to move a form in space.

Other reasons include giving the student an experience of boundary, of the body, and to manage behavior. In rare occasions, the helper uses touch to protect him/her self.

I also use touch a lot to greet a student, this I usually do with a handshake.

Many other forms of touch are possible. Zur and Nordmarken list 20 different types of touch, and here I include those which might occur in class, but which I would not think about immediately when considering eurythmy lessons.

- 'Consolation touch'
- 'Celebratory or congratulatory touch'
- 'Inadvertent touch: This is an accidental form of touch...' (2011, 9+10)

Already in the next lesson after I had read this, I observed a lot of 'accidental touch', and I was surprised that I had not noticed it much before.

I was more aware that I occasionally touch someone's hand with a 'high five', to express that a student did something really well.

I would like to go back to what I mentioned as one of the main reasons for touching: Assisting the student to carry out a gesture.

During an interview, one teacher mentioned two aspects in regard to how she helps:

- a. She uses touch to help initiate or prompt a gesture. In this case the main reason for touch is the starting of a gesture. I often observe that the helpers touch the upper arm to accomplish this.
- b. She uses touch to help complete a movement that the student started. An example of this is when the student raises the arms up and the helper touches the hands to bring awareness to the fingers, so that they straighten up, too.

I can look at a movement, a eurythmy gesture, in relationship to time. To begin a gesture I need an impulse, an initiative to start. Once I have started I can carry on the movement, for example moving the arms in an upward direction. There is a moment when a gesture comes to completion, when my arms are fully expanded upwards. Do I know which student needs help when? Is the student unable to initiate a gesture, but once he got help to start it can carry on independently?

Can the student start the movement, but maybe she needs help to continue, to find a flow in the movement in order to carry on?

Is the student able to complete a gesture, to come to a conclusion? Does he know when to stop?

All these questions point to how important it is for me to observe, and this can help me to assist a student in an appropriate manner. If a student is able to stretch the arms up, but the hands or fingers are bent, then I can touch the upper arms and move my hands to the palms or fingers of the student. I can also hold my hands above the hands of the student and ask the student to reach up and touch my hands. In this example I provide a visual help. It can feel satisfying to reach a goal, and by touching my hands the student might have the experience of achievement, of 'I did it'.

## **12.2. Location for Touch and Kinds of Touch**

There are studies that map out the different body parts in relationship to where we feel comfortable to be touched and where not. (For example: Field 2014, 29) During eurythmy lessons various areas of the body might be touched. The most common are the hands, arms and shoulders. The back, feet and legs can also be included. All other areas are usually not touched. The helpers mainly use their hands to touch the students. An exception can be when a student leans against a helper, as then many areas of the body are touching.

From two people I got the feedback that they did not find touching the feet helpful, especially when trying to move rhythms. On the other hand, one eurythmist wrote that she helps students who sit in a wheelchair with foot and leg movements, as they are unable to move their legs by themselves. This way of touching confirms what Koenig wrote: That children with movement disturbances need to gain an experience of movement and suggests that objects and passive exercises can be of great help. (2006, 222) (Also see chapter 12.3.)

These two experiences seem to contradict each other, yet to me they confirm how important it is to approach each person as an individual. An approach that works for one person might not work for the next. If a student is able to walk, it is not easy to try to touch the feet in order to help them step in a rhythm. I have tried other ways of helping, and found that one possibility is for me to walk beside them, trying to show the rhythm by stepping it myself. I can also clap the rhythm onto a hand of the student while walking, or convey it by changing pressure of my hand while holding on to theirs. I also want to add that walking itself is an experience of touch, as our feet touch the ground we walk on.

Various kinds of pressure can be used, from a gentle to a firm touch. From the questionnaires I got the feedback that helpers mainly use gentle to medium pressure. I am wondering if these answers might be influenced by fear of the wrong kind of touch. (See chapter 7.) I do observe the use of – what I perceive as – firm touch. I also use firm touch myself and find it necessary and helpful in some situations. Earlier on, (in chapter 11.1.) I write about the benefit of deep pressure and how the sensation of squeezing can reduce the level of anxiety in

some people. Firm pressure should certainly only be used when it is of benefit to the student. I do agree that gentle touch, supporting the movement and impulses of the student, can leave the student free to show their initiative. One eurythmist wrote that 'my touch is always light and without pressure.' I was surprised about the word 'always', as it is very important to me to use the pressure that is of the greatest benefit to the student, and in my experience some students *do* benefit from firmer pressure. This is confirmed by the feedback from another eurythmist who reports on using deep touch with a lot of people on the autism spectrum.

In Beaver Run I often observe the use of firm pressure outside of the eurythmy lessons. For example brushing of hands and arms, massaging hands and feet, a squeeze of the shoulders and upper arms, and the use of objects that can be squeezed tightly. I frequently observe that a student gets calmer and is able to relax a bit when this is done.

### **12.3. When not to touch**

At times a student will show that he or she feels uncomfortable with being touched. The general feedback from other eurythmists is:

- Do not force any movement.
- Back off when touch is not wanted.
- Give some space and time.

Generally I agree, and can confirm these suggestions from my own experiences, but there are some exceptions. I was asked about one example by a helper:

What do I do if a student has behavior issues and tries to avoid participation? If a student wants to 'try and get out of doing something', I cannot overcome the problem by backing off. One idea to avoid direct touch is the use of objects. Through the use of objects I can build up a relationship with the student, for example by passing and receiving a beanbag, or by throwing and catching. This does not always work and can be difficult to do in the middle of a lesson.

For students who need initial help to overcome resistance, and where not helping through touch can lead to problematic situations, a very individual approach is needed. Can the student and I feel safe? Do we know each other well enough? Can I increase expectations gradually? What kind of touch should I use? It is not

always easy to find the right way to do this, and it is not always right to avoid using touch.

There are students who do not actively engage in a movement. They often appear as being lazy. Some lean back on the helper taking no control or responsibility of the movements. I have observed that some students take the hands of the helper, wanting the helper to carry out the movement. A eurythmist described this in the following way: ‘...they would often like me to take their hands as then they do not need to do anything, they would like me to do all the movement...’ It is a question to me how I can engage these students in the right way. Often I feel that touch is not successful in these situations, as the students end up depending too much on the help I give. I tried to explore other ways to engage the students, including verbal instruction or visual materials, peers and helpers setting an example, or by using objects (as described above).

I already wrote about my observation of students leaning back on the helper (see above and chapter 3), and this topic also came up in two interviews. One helper had found that increasing the distance between him and the student had helped, and another had eliminated the problem by standing beside the student. By doing this they decreased the amount of touch they used.

Here is another situation where it was helpful for me not to use touch: I was holding the hand of a student while we were walking the form of a square. Suddenly he sat down on the floor. At first I offered him both my hands so he could get up again, but he giggled and lay down on the floor. As all other students were sitting at that time, I decided that it was safe for him to stay where he was. The moment I turned away from him he got up by himself and went back to his place. I had the feeling he was looking for attention, for a reaction from me, and when he did not get it any more he was able to be part of the group again.

There are situations when I do not realize that something is not going well, where I do not notice what is upsetting a student:



## Unexpected

*How did it happen?*

*I did not see it coming.*

*It was so sudden.*

*You reached over,*

*a fast move,*

*a scratch.*

*You turn away.*

*Fast*

*I decide on a safe place for you,*

*guide you to sit down.*

*I look at my wrist,*

*see marks where your fingernails were,*

*feel shaken,*

*it hurts.*

*A moment to reflect, to collect myself,*

*Then we can go on -*

*You still look worried.*

*It was so sudden.*

*I did not see it coming.*

*How did it happen?*

Following an incident when someone gets hurt, usually both people involved need some time. In the example described in the poem above, I needed time to take in what had happened and only felt the pain after a while. The student involved needed to sit for some time before joining the class again. In some instances it might be necessary for the student to leave the room in order to calm down.

At times it appears to be that not touching is the right thing to do, but I don't think I always understand why a student turns away and seeks to be left alone.

Naoki writes:

No, for people with autism, what we're anxious about is that we are causing trouble for the rest of you, or even getting on your nerves. *This* is why it's hard for us to stay around other people. This is why we often end up being left on our own.

The truth is, we'd love to be with other people. (Higashida 2013, 27)

NO

*It is too loud.*

*I cannot hear you.*

*What do you mean?*

*Is it over yet?*

*Let me go!*

*I do not understand.*

*Too much.*

*Don't come near!*

*But please help me.*

*Help me understand.*

*Let me try again.*

I have observed that some students lean towards a helper or away from them. Leaning away does not necessarily indicate that the student is uncomfortable and does not want to be touched. It might have to do with the way in which gravity and balance are experienced. The sense of balance, if disturbed, means that our perception of how we are positioned in space in relationship to our surroundings is compromised. Can we stand upright? When we are out of balance our emotional life can be unstable, we can lose our uprightness and we can feel heavy. (Koenig 2006, 244+245)

In this case, touch with the intent to make the student more aware of his or her body might be of help. Wearing a weighted vest can also improve the relationship

to gravity and balance, although in my experience some students do not tolerate extra weights.

There are physical limitations as to how we are able to use touch. During interviews, two helpers made me aware that they were not able to help in certain ways due to their size. Both were smaller than some of the students, making it impossible for them to guide the hands and long arms of the students. One helper described some of the touching she does as physically demanding. When talking about it, we decided that it might be good to try to touch the upper arm, as that part of the arm is easiest to reach. There are also movements that they should not try to physically help with. They can do the movement by themselves while standing close to the student, or let someone else help. This can be a frustrating experience when, as the helper, I have the wish and role to help. Not being able to help can be difficult to accept, and I have experienced myself how I can have difficulties asking for help while I am in the role of the helper.

Above I described how physical limitations of the helpers could be a reason not to use touch. I found myself in situations where the arms of a student felt so heavy that I could not lift them, or was only able to do so with great difficulty. A helper also described how the arms of a particular student can 'feel like bricks'. Together we talked about other possibilities ranging from giving the student some time and the helper doing the movement alone, to exploring what might motivate the student to move.

#### **12.4. Guiding students to move a eurythmy form**

I observed myself in how I am guiding the students to move a eurythmy form. Out of this process and my observation of other helpers, I came to the conclusion that the following ways to touch and guide the students are generally the most effective. I start by describing ways in which I touch students who need a lot of help, and then go on to describe how I help students who are able to move more independently.

- a. Basket-hold: Standing next to the student, I hold both hands of the student. Our arms reach out sideways and cross over, right hand holding right hand and left hand holding left hand. This hold works well for

- students who need a lot of help, especially with forms where walking backwards is needed. It is also possible to turn around without letting go.
- b. Standing next to the student, I place one hand on the shoulder or upper back of the student, the other hand is open for one hand of the student to be placed into. This hold is good if the student needs a fair amount of help. I can indicate the direction of the movement through the contact on the shoulder or back. Once the student moves more independently I can easily remove my hand from the back.
  - c. Standing behind the student, I place my hands on the shoulders or upper arms of the student. If the student does not mind me standing behind them, this works well when going sideways.
  - d. I approach the student from the front with open hands. The student can place their hands into my open hands. This hold works well for students who need a lot of guidance and do not like to be approached from the side or behind. It is easy to withdraw from the hold by moving away from the student, and once the student moves more independently the movement can be carried out without touching. It is a good hold when we move forwards and backwards. This way of standing and facing each other can be too close for some students. It does not work well if they tend to be impulsive and pull away quickly. On the other hand, this way of holding the hands allows me to feel into the movement of the student. It also allows me to have eye contact.
  - e. Standing next to the student, I hold one hand open and the student places one hand on top of mine. It can also be that I need to actively take the hand of the student in mine. This way of holding hands is very familiar to most students, as it is used in many different settings. The student needs to have some confidence when moving sideways or backwards. It is easy to let go if the student is ready to move alone.
  - f. Standing next to or behind the student, I touch the hand, arm, shoulder or back of the student with one hand. I might use this form of touch if a student needs help to initiate a movement. After the initial touch the student might be able to carry out the next step of the form alone. This

touch on the arm or back can be replaced by a gesture in the direction of the form, by a verbal prompt, or I can step back and wait if the student finds the way without my help.

- g. Using an object: I occasionally use a copper eurythmy rod or a longer wooden rod. The student holds the rod with both hands and I stand in front of the student, touching the rod when necessary. This is a good way to guide students when moving more complex forms. It does not require me to touch the student, but by touching the rod I can guide and initiate direction changes, and I find it particularly helpful when moving forms that include lots of direction changes and diagonal movements. The rod gives the student a visual help and can assist in taking the focus away from the student to the rod.

If a student does not like me to stand opposite them, I can use a longer rod and stand next to them, although I have found it not as easy to guide the rod in this way. I have also used longer rods with up to four students standing next to each other, each holding on to the same rod with both hands. In this way they can guide each other. This is a good way to make relationships visible. One example is when the group moves the form of a circle together: The person on one end of the rod will need to move very slowly, while the person on the other end will need to move fast.

When I use these different ways to guide students, a lot depends on my ability to choose the one that is most helpful. I often have to make this choice very quickly, and at times I changed my way of helping during an exercise. This happened if I realized that the way in which I was helping was not working very well. In one lesson I helped a student move a form that involved moving forwards, backwards and sideways. He had done quite well in the past and I was surprised when he seemed confused about what to do. When I reflected on this I realized that I was standing next to him before, and this time had tried to help him while standing opposite, facing him.

## 12.5. Repetition

A helper voiced that she often feels a response from the student she works with after repeating a movement many times. The student might then follow the movement or even initiate it. Out of my own experience I can confirm that repetition is a key element, and I have observed many students who were able to carry out a movement independently after they received help over a longer period of time. When speaking of education, Steiner talks about the connection of feelings and actions in relation to repetition:

We must ask ourselves how we can have a good influence on the feeling nature of the child. This we can only achieve by introducing actions which have to be constantly repeated. You direct the impulse of the will aright, not by telling a child once what the right thing is, but by getting him to *do* something to-day and to-morrow and again the day after. (1990b, 68+69)

I experience it as a challenge to find the right balance between how much I use repetition, and when it is time to move on to something new. I have observed helpers and students getting bored because we did something many times. In these situations I experienced it as helpful to bring different images and points of view. I can also choose a new poem or piece of music to accompany the movement, or I do something different for a few weeks and then bring it back.

Here is an example from a high school class of how repetition can show positive results: I taught a variety of movements to a piece of music, including walking forwards and backwards, and bending down and stretching up. We practiced this many times as a group. One student was helped to move in the right direction by holding her hand, or by placing a hand on her arm or back. At first she did not move down or up and needed to be encouraged to walk backwards. After ten lessons this student stood beside me when we started and I initially took her hand, but I let go after the first few steps. I noticed that she moved forwards and backwards with the group, not needing any help. When it was time to move downwards, she slightly bent her knees and moved her hands down. When we repeated all the movements she again did them without any assistance. In the following lesson she moved independently within the group, laughing and smiling. It was wonderful to see how she was able to express the joy that can come through movement.

## **12.6. Humor**

I often experience humor as something that can be very helpful. Steiner, speaking about the child with special needs, tells us about humor as ‘...the first and most essential qualification for a teacher.’ (1981a, 119)

A helper wrote that we should have ‘a little more fun time’. I have observed how humor can ‘break the ice’ and make it possible for people to get closer to each other as they loosen up. It can break up an awkward moment and can lighten a difficult situation. It is easier for me to touch someone when they are in a good mood. If someone is in a bad mood I might give the person some space, or I might try to find out the cause for the bad mood. A good hug can help one student to feel better, while a joke can be right for another. Maybe I am too serious at times and need to become more aware about when and how I can bring more humor into the lessons.

On the next page is my attempt to bring some fun into the subject of touch.

*Touch can be touchy*  
*I'm touched by your care*  
*Touch can be cozy*  
*And risky, beware!*  
     *Touch can mean trouble,*  
     *'Don't touch me', you say.*  
     *I turn over double*  
     *And get out of your way.*  
         *I'm in touch and I know of*  
         *All things that go on.*  
         *I'm out of touch with everything*  
         *And life's going wrong.*  
             *I touch base with myself*  
             *But the touch screen tells me*  
             *I lost touch with some friends now*  
             *Oh dear, deary me...*  
                 *Your touch can surprise me*  
                 *And I get a big fright.*  
                 *Your touch can be ticklish,*  
                 *I squeal with delight.*  
                     ...  
                     *The space that's created*  
                     *Between you and me*  
                     *Creates a good feeling for us,*  
                     *Don't you see?*

### **12.7. Deepening our Understanding**

During the interviews and with the help of questionnaires I asked:

'What would help you in this work with the students?' (See appendix A + C)

One answer that featured strongly was: 'Understanding the end goal and benefits of eurythmy.' What is eurythmy and why do we do it?



Helpers asked for examples of how to help a particular student, and it was voiced that it is necessary to know the student well.

Here two themes emerge: The necessity for the helpers to know more about eurythmy, and the wish to get to know the students better. To me, a third element gained importance: That of me getting to know the helpers better. I noticed that I was becoming more aware of what they were doing, and there were times when I wondered if I had set expectations too high. Because I tried to challenge and engage everyone in the lessons, some students were not able to carry out all the movements. I realized that not all the helpers were aware that I did *not* expect all students to do everything.

In two interviews the subject of expectations came up. One helper felt that I expected the student to do certain things and to be in the 'right' place. I was very glad that he was able to voice this, as it made me aware of the issue. It also made it possible for us to talk about it. It was my impression that the helper felt under a certain pressure regarding the behavior of the student. Should I step in and deal with challenging behavior or do I let the helper do this? When is this appropriate and when not?

I was able to address some of the aspects mentioned above during the training sessions. (These are described in chapter 3.3.) The helpers were able to do various eurythmy exercises, and we had time to talk about what eurythmy is and why we do it. I was able to respond to questions about particular students, and by trying to help each other we explored different ways of touch. For me it was an important opportunity to get to know the helpers better and to listen to their questions, struggles and concerns.

Another way in which I tried to make my expectations clearer was during the actual eurythmy lessons. I found various possibilities to do this:

When I introduce a new exercise I can let each student have a turn. In this way I can get to know how much each student is able to do and can provide help that is appropriate. The helpers have the chance to observe and get to know the exercise. They can also see what kind of assistance each student needs.

When working with the whole class, I sometimes show two or more possibilities of how to do a movement. If I want the students to cross the midline I have many

ways in which this can be done: Some students will be able to lift up the right knee and touch it with the left hand, then lift the left knee and touch it with the right hand. Some students can clap on their legs without lifting their feet from the ground. Others can get help to cross their arms while standing or sitting. There are many more possibilities. It is a learning process and through it new possibilities can emerge, and we can deepen our understanding of each other.

There are moments during lessons when a helper asks me how they can assist a student. If possible, I try to give advice straight away. Sometimes I need to wait until the end of the lesson to respond. Either way I have found these short moments very helpful and of great value. I do not always have the answer in how to help best, so it can give me the chance to focus on a particular student. The helper often has good suggestions, and together we can explore and find creative and new ways of helping.

### **13. Creating Space**

Shining a light on this particular aspect of the use of touch, and putting my focus on it in such detail, I wrestled with many of my experiences and observations. I saw people helping in ways that I perceived as inappropriate, not effective or awkward. I saw some of my own attempts in the same light. It seemed to me that I noticed all the moments that did not go so well as if highlighted, and one question after the other appeared. But diving deeper into the subject also gave me many avenues to explore, and I began to see small but 'touching' moments that made all the difference to me. Here is one example. It was a brief moment, and I could have easily missed it: At the end of a lesson I stood behind a student who was often getting help through touch and was frequently seeking out touch. While standing still I moved my arms up high, then down low, then out to the left and right just above the shoulders. These eurythmy gestures expressed the tones B, C and E while they were being played. The student turned her head slightly, so she was able to see one of my hands, and then she followed my movements with her arms. She did this twice, and the third time she stood

without moving. I was very happy that she had moved on her own two out of three times.

I am sure that a key part of getting to this special moment was repetition and the help (through touch) she had received in the past. We had done these movements many times before. I also want to state that I am convinced that my intention and the way in which I stood behind her played a major role. I do not always need to physically touch a person, but my intent, my inner involvement and my inner picture are important. Am I open and engaged? What space can I create between us? The drawing of two spirals that are not touching can express this well. There is a space left free which holds potential, vulnerability and possibility. I can try to make myself more aware of this space.



Up until this point my main focus has been on actually touching and the experiences connected with it. The last example I gave refers to an instance where I did not use physical touch. Through the trust we had created together, and through the possibility of that moment, the space between us was filled and alive. I remember that moment clearly, because I felt that I was inwardly with the student and we were able to move together.

One idea to get a feeling for the kind of space I am referring to is to try the following: Rub your hands together vigorously for at least half a minute. After that, separate your hands slightly so that a space is created between them. Move your hands slowly and feel the 'substance' you created between your hands. You might also experience a tingling sensation.

This relationship between my hands, and in a wider sense the relationships I can enter into with other people, I found beautifully expressed in the sculpture by Rodin. I experienced a tender and open space that is safe and yet full of potential:



Auguste Rodin, The Cathedral, 1908, Rodin Museum, Paris

How do we learn to create a space like this? Much in our culture focuses on the physical aspect of touch and makes it difficult for us to experience relationships in which we can build up trust and interest in each other. Looking at the past, we can find historical evidence that touch was used to heal body, soul and spirit. (Zur + Nordmarken 2011, 4) The full human being was taken into account in regard to touch. There are many recent developments that consciously work with an approach that includes a spiritual perspective, a 'wholeness' that can leave us vulnerable and at risk. (Laloux 2016, 95) We have the option to open ourselves or to close off. Just as touch gives us a feeling of security, it also gives us a feeling of separation. (See chapter 11.1.) Laloux, writing about organizations, tells us of two options: 'All spiritual and wisdom traditions speak to the fact that we can live from two places: from fear and separation, or from love and wholeness.' (2016, 95) He goes on to explain the need for 'safe spaces' that can enable us to truly be who we are, without hiding part of our being. To me he speaks about a similar kind of space as is expressed by the sculpture of Rodin.

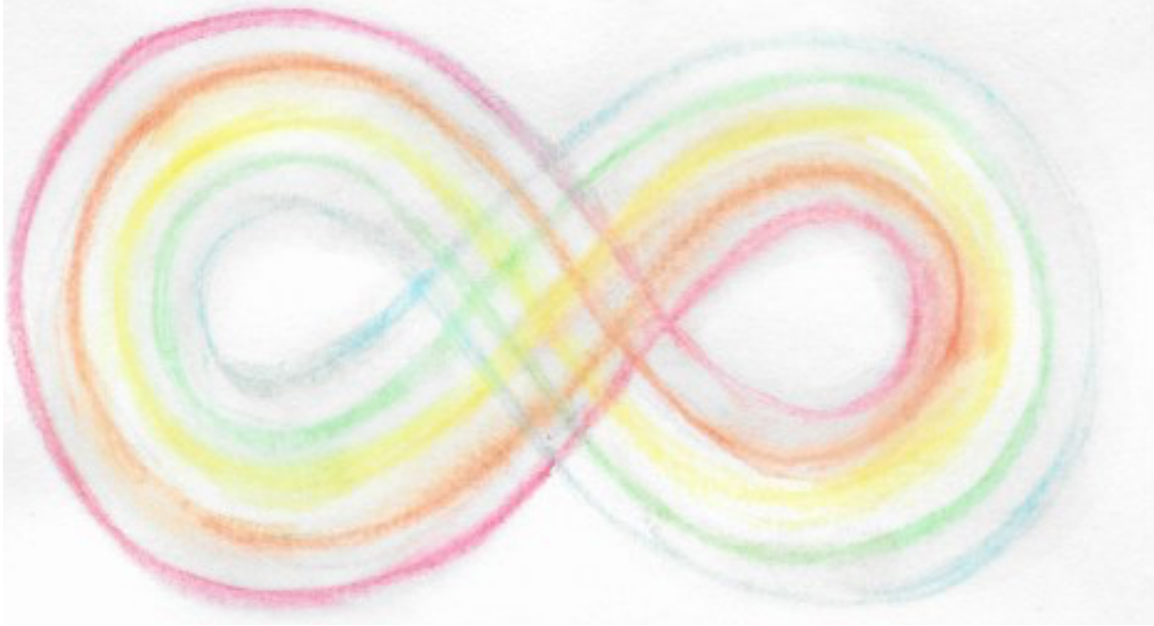
The word 'separation' could easily be perceived as something negative, as it is mentioned together with fear in the quote above. I have experienced separation as an important element within the realm of touch. For someone who is not able to feel secure within their own body, where the boundary to other people and objects is unclear, an experience of separation could be very important. I can create a space between us and consciously, inwardly, withdraw myself. In this case it is my inner attitude that is most important.

What inner pictures can I create and what is my intent? What kind of space do we create together? It is up to me to develop myself so that the student can feel safe with me.

'In the sense of touch, as in the experience of no other sense in the same way, the experience lies in the reaction of your own inner being to an external process.' (Steiner 1981b, 13)

The well-known symbol of the figure eight helped me to make this quote more accessible. The outside turns into the inside, as the red line does in the drawing. (See page 54)

It matters what is around me, and it matters what I feel. Both influence each other and are in continuous motion. There is a flow and a space between the two, where the inside turns into what is outside, and the outside turns into what is inside.



By working with these transformative images and by acknowledging our inward, spiritual experiences, I believe we can bring a healing power to our physical body, and through this element of healing we can have an influence on the senses. We create with our body, we move with our limbs and we work towards our future. It is our actions that transform us and have an influence on others.

## **14. Conclusion**

In this thesis I explored ways in which touch is used in eurythmy lessons for students with special needs. In this chapter I summarize my findings and conclusions. I make recommendations that arose from this work and discuss some of the limitations. I end with a self-reflection and final thoughts on the outcome of this thesis.

### **14.1. Summary of findings and resulting conclusions**

Through this research I discovered the risks and fears that are perceived in the realm of touch, and I looked at ways in which touch can be interpreted. I found many sources that speak about the benefit and importance of touch, yet despite of this North America is described as a 'low touch culture'.

By reading about many different experiences of touch, and by reflecting on and analyzing the data I had collected, I came to a deeper understanding of the effects of touch. Touch is a fundamental experience and it shapes who we are. I made some practical suggestions about how touch can be used in eurythmy lessons. Some of these could be transferred to other settings. The location for touch, the pressure we use and our inner attitude are all relevant to caregivers and others who use touch on a regular basis. Learning through repetition would be an interesting subject to explore in any teaching situation.

It was of value to me to analyze the reasons why we might refrain from using touch. I also tried to show that avoiding touch could harbor problems that we are not always able to foresee immediately. I stressed the importance of the need for those of us who work in this realm to deepen our understanding for other people and for eurythmy. It is my responsibility to continue to learn and grow.

### **14.2. Recommendations**

Based on my findings of how beneficial the training sessions were (see chapter 12.7.) I want to recommend that they should take place early on in the school year. More helpers could be invited to join, and I could develop the content of the sessions further. Putting myself in the role of the student, being helped and

touched by someone else was a direct and strong experience that showed me how I would want to be helped. It is also important that helpers understand the core issues and principles of eurythmy. A training session gives them the experience of doing eurythmy without having to assist a student, and it gives the space to ask questions.

I would like to highlight an opportunity that I increasingly became aware of: The opportunity to create and make use of moments for short conversations that can take place before, during or after a lesson. These moments can give me the possibility to deal with a concern or question right away and do not involve extra time commitment. I also have the possibility to give movement examples in those moments.

I am very aware that I sometimes need to lower my expectations. High expectations can hinder helpers and students to join in and to experience joy in the movement. (Why try if it is too difficult anyway?)

As a teacher I might have my ideas of what the students should learn and do. It is my recommendation to never forget a sentence that I have heard repeatedly during my time in Camphill: 'Start where the student is!' I can ask myself: What can you do now and how can I build on this? Who are you and what do you need to meet in this moment?

Being a eurythmist, I feel committed to practicing eurythmy on an ongoing basis. Through my personal work and study I try to explore the essence of a movement or exercise. This can help me to find a variety of approaches to one movement and can open up new ways of teaching for me.

I am committed to educate myself further in order to be increasingly aware of the needs of the students and helpers I work with. To anyone working in a similar situation I can highly recommend a meditative practice. (Many possibilities are given to us through the study of anthroposophy.)

Coming to the end of this research I realized that it has only just started. There is a whole number of areas that could be investigated further, and there are other areas I have not even touched upon. Here I mention a few of them:



- How do substances change the way in which we perceive touch? Many of the students I teach take medications that have a dulling or stimulating effect.
- Is there a difference in the perception of touch in regard to different age groups? My main focus for this thesis was middle and high school age.
- Where does a movement originate and how do I help accordingly?
- When I embarked on this project I originally had the wish to study the senses in much more detail, especially the sense of touch, but also the lower senses in relationship to the higher senses. (For example Steiner, 1981b)

### **14.3. Limitations**

This thesis is strongly influenced by who I am, by my experiences and by my personal points of view. The setting of a small and unique school sets further limits due to a relatively small number of people involved in this research.

I did not look for numbers and amounts, but rather for qualities and experiences. The phenomenological approach I took shines a particular light on my chosen theme of touch and by that highlights certain areas. There is a lot left to discover.

### **14.4. Self-Reflection and Final Thoughts**

When I set out to explore the theme of touch I worried that this was a subject that was too wide and that there were too many aspects to explore. I anticipated that it would be difficult for me to remain focused. My choice of a phenomenological research approach only added to this problem. What I had not anticipated was that this freedom to lose myself in the many directions and possibilities would also open up unknown and unexpected dimensions. I had not planned to include poems, but at one stage they simply belonged there. I learned by doing and opening up to what is described so well in the book 'Theory U' by Scharmer: He tells us of the benefits to stay open to what is to come. We can learn from the past, but also from the future. (2009, 56)

The structure of this thesis has been a continuous process and challenge, as every aspect seemed to link to everything else. It was a long, yet creative and exciting process to connect all the pieces and at the same time not to lose touch of the most important aspects.

This thesis reminded me again and again that by teaching I am called upon to be creative, imaginative and to keep looking for new possibilities.

As we live in a culture with no-touch policies, a strong awareness and fear of touch, and technology involving touch, this work calls upon us to use real touch in real time, to engage and be 'hands on'. I can only find the right breathing, connection and warmth through trust, engagement and love in the here and now. In this way education can become a 'healing education', and we can come to understand what Steiner means when he says: '...all the healing forces reside originally in the human breathing system.' (1996, 63)

Through this research I have touched on a small fragment of a very large issue we face. I believe we will need to look closely at the consequences of how we use (or do not use) touch in a conscious way. Many of the students at Beaver Run need us to touch them, and through that we develop closer relationships, foster a healing process and can work towards our future together. The students call on us to do something that is greatly neglected and feared in our society. Would we be touching as many people as we do, if it was not for the students calling on us to do so?

*'Our finger prints don't fade from the lives we touch.'*  
(Blume J.)

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## Appendices

### Appendix A:

#### Eurythmy Assisting Children with Movement

Thank you for participating in my research project. I am researching how we use touch during eurythmy lessons at Camphill Special School, Beaver Run. My aim is to gain a clearer understanding of how we assist the students through touch, and to improve the way in which we help them.

It is your free choice to take part in this research, and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

All answers will be treated confidentially, and no names will be mentioned in the final project.

#### Questions:

- A. Why do you touch a student during a eurythmy lesson?
- To assist with a gesture
  - To help the student move in a specific direction in the room
  - To manage behavior
  - To give the student an experience of their own body / boundary
  - To protect yourself
  - Other
- B. Which areas of the body do you touch?
- Hands
  - Lower arm
  - Upper arm
  - Shoulders
  - Back
  - Legs
  - Feet
  - Head
  - Other
- C. What kind of touch do you use?
- Firm pressure
  - Medium pressure
  - Gentle pressure
- D. What would help you in this work with the students?

## Appendix B:

### Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this research project. I am researching how we use touch during eurythmy lessons at Camphill Special School, Beaver Run. As you are working in a similar situation, I would appreciate input out of your experience of teaching eurythmy to students with special needs. My aim is to gain a clearer understanding of how we assist the students through touch, and to improve the way in which we help them.

It is your free choice to take part in this research, and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

All answers will be treated confidentially, and no names will be mentioned in the final project.

Questions:

- A. What are reasons for you to touch a student?
- B. What kind of touch do you feel is helpful / not helpful, and why? (Place, duration, pressure...)
- C. How does a student respond to your touch?
- D. If you have other adults helping in the class, what knowledge of eurythmy do they have? Is there any training for the adults in regards to them assisting in eurythmy lessons?
- E. Do you have a policy or any set rules on how to use touch?

Please take these questions as a suggestion and feel free to add anything you feel is relevant to your work.

Thank you for participating in this research.

Ute Heuser

P.S.: You are welcome to read my thesis before it is published.

## Appendix C:

### Interview

I am researching how we use touch during eurythmy lessons in Beaver Run. My aim is to gain a clearer understanding of how we assist the students through touch, and to improve the way in which we help them.

It is your free choice to take part in this process, and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

All answers will be treated confidentially, and no names of students and helpers will be mentioned in the final project.

You might be asked to try new approaches, but none of them should involve a risk to yourself or others, or at least not more of a risk than you usually face by working with a student.

Any new approaches will be tried with the benefit of the student in mind, and with the intention of improving your relationship with the student.

List of possible questions:

How long have you been working in Beaver Run?

How long have you been working with a particular student?

What kind of help does the student need?

What kind of touch do you feel is helpful / not helpful, and why? (place, duration, pressure)

How does the student respond to your touch?

What might help you in your work with a particular student?

Thank you for participating in this research.

You are welcome to read the project before it is published.



## **Thesis Declaration**

I certify that this thesis is entirely my own work except for those sources that have been identified. No material in this thesis has been submitted previously in support of any degree qualification or course.

Date: September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017

Signature: 