

## PANEURHYTHMY AND EURHYTHMY – PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

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### **Abstract**

*The paper acquaints with paneurhythmy. It is a Bulgarian kind of gymnastics, dance or method introduced by Peter Deunov (the Master Beinsa Douno) in the first half of XX century. Some authors determine paneurhythmy as a science as well: "science of the harmonious, conscious movement, based upon the laws of the Living Nature". Translation of the term means "Supreme Cosmic Rhythm". Paneurhythmy consists of a sequence of exercises, danced under music accompaniment with poetic text at the same time. Paneurhythmical gymnastic complex (=28 exercises or paneurhythmic forms) is fulfilled early in the morning from 22 March until 22 September for the people from the North Hemisphere. Logically for the people of the South Hemisphere it must be played from 22 September to 22 March. As paneurhythmy is already built and unchangeable system nobody has the right to introduce some changes in it. But in practice correct performance of exercises even nowadays leads to many heated debates. Contribution of this material is the spreading of the system, explanation of its philosophy, seeking its place in the school system. Another system precedes the Paneurhythmy and this is the system of Rudolf Steiner called Eurhythmy. The paper is also an attempt a comparative analysis between the two systems to be done.*

**Key words:** *paneurhythmic forms, comparative analysis*

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### **Introduction**

Since the dawn of humanity movements always have been an attractive centre of cognition. During the first half of XX century were founded two new scientific systems for physical activity of people. The name of the first system whose author is Rudolf Steiner is **eurhythmy**. The name of the second system is **paneurhythmy** and its author is Peter Deunov/Петър Дънов/Petar Dunov. Both systems are non-religious and enhance many Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, and other traditional knowledge by the special attention paid on the spiritual part of physical exercises.

### **Methods and Results**

The paper is based on the methods **retrospective/historical** and **comparative analyses**. The first comparison will be among the curriculums vitae of the two authors. We will start with Rudolf Steiner as he precedes Peter Deunov. **Rudolf Steiner** was born in 1861 in Murakiraly in Austro-Hungary (now Donji Kraljevec, Croatia). He died in Switzerland in 1925. In 1883 he graduated from the Technische Hochschule (Technical University) in Vienna, where he studied

mathematics, physics, and philosophy. In 1891 Rudolf Steiner earned a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Rostock in Germany. Steiner is defined as a philosopher, literacy scholar, educator, artist, playwright, social thinker, and esotericist. He was the founder of Anthroposophy, Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, anthroposophical medicine, and the new form of movement art named Eurhythmy. Rudolf Steiner is author of almost 30 books. He also gave approximately 6000 lectures on a wide range of subjects. The complete edition of his published works numbers over 330 volumes. They are with contribution to various areas.

**Peter Deunov**, the founder of paneurhythmy, was born in 1864 in the village of Nikolaevka near Varna in Bulgaria. He obtained his secondary school in Varna and his higher education in medicine and philosophy in the United States. He returned to his country after an absence of 8 years and engaged himself in systematic study of the phrenology of the Bulgarian people. Peter Deunov was also a musician and a composer of spiritual songs. Somewhere in 1918 he founded the so called "White brotherhood"

and turned to spiritual deeds to preach his views and understandings. Meanwhile somewhere at the 20s of XX century he started to show and play his first exercises of Paneurhythmy. Peter Deunov is author of totally 184 books, containing his lectures and musical works. They were published from 1896 to 1948. He died in 1944. The second comparison will be over the philosophic views of the two eminent scholars.

**Rudolf Steiner's Views and Understandings:** As a founder of anthroposophy he describes it as "a path of knowledge, to guide the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe... Anthroposophists are those who experience, as an essential need of life, certain questions on the nature of the human being and the universe, just as one experiences hunger and thirst" (1924). Steiner worked in the realm of consciousness and cognition. He had techniques for the development of awareness to nature's cycles, daily meditations and concentration practices, about which he thought will lead to clear critical thinking, so that the individuals will reach spiritual levels safely. Steiner was completely sure that working along with the spiritual worlds enriches the life of the individual and the world. He called anthroposophy "this science of spirit", meaning also "wisdom of human being". Rudolf Steiner derived his understandings from Johann Wolfgang Goethe's views where "thinking is no more and no less an organ of perception than the eye or ear. Just as the eye perceives colors and the ear sounds, so thinking perceives ideas" (R. Steiner, 1883).

**Peter Deunov's Views and Understandings:** The fundamental principles of his teaching are Love, Wisdom and Truth. "There is nothing greater than these principles; there is no straighter or surer path. In these three principles lies the salvation of the world." and "Love brings life. Wisdom brings knowledge and light which help in the study of the Laws of Nature. Truth shining within the soul brings freedom from all weakness and vice." The third comparison will be on the nature of the two sciences or movement arts.

**Eurhythmy** appears in 1911 and earlier than paneurhythmy. Eurhythmy is a movement art originated by Rudolf Steiner in conjunction with his wife Marie von Sivers. Primarily it was a performance art but later on it was

used in education, especially in Waldorf schools and as a movement therapy. The word "eurhythmy" has Greek roots and means beautiful or harmonious rhythm. Aim of eurhythmy is "to bring the artists' expressive movement and both the performer's and audience's feeling experience into harmony with a piece of content". Sometimes eurhythmy is called "visible music" or "visible speech".

For Rudolf Steiner it will always be "art of the soul". Further views are: "Movement is life's signature, its own language. Every moment we breathe is filled with pulse...rhythm. It permeates the substance we are made of. Physical form is built out of movement come to rest. So, too, our feelings, thoughts, and inspirations have gestures that are matched in the forms we find in the world. It is one of the great mysteries that inner experiences and outer form come from the same source. Recognition of this connection sits just beyond our consciousness. Yet, we develop it to make our way through life. We learn to read the world and other people through the language of movements ... alongside the language of sounds. Form – Movement – Language all "sounds" the essential nature of the world in different ways. *Eurhythmy is a movement art that brings all three together.* It gives expression to the whole voice of the human being and the world language, through movement, color and form. When this integration takes place through eurhythmy, the spiritual nature behind each living thing begins to have a clear voice, a visible reality."

Eurhythmy is also a tool of anthroposophy, used to reveal and bring about a certain "spiritual impulse". When a child practices eurhythmy, it practices an art form, designed to elicit a special spiritual impulse in it and in the others. While we practice eurhythmy we have to support the dialogue between audience and performers. Eurhythmy is made up of different movements that represent various phonetic sounds. Eurhythmy is very often compared to modern dance, martial arts (e.g. tai-chi), physical therapy, and performance art but eurhythmy is none of these things. Nowadays there are many training centres and artistic ensembles in many countries.

**Paneurhythmy** appeared in 1927 but some of its exercises (e.g. "The sun rises") were played still in 1922. The whole book was published in 1938.

Its author the Master Peter Deunov/Beinsa Douno states: "PanEuRhythmy is the key to my teaching which brings peace to human souls. The Great Souls must receive this key from you: you must give it to them, so that they can open the door and offer a helping hand to souls still plunged in the world of oblivion.

The consciousness of these beings will be illuminated, and they will grasp the meaning of their life. The Great evolved Souls will implant in them the graft of Love, and this world, granted from within, will acquire a new light and a new impulse towards all other aspirations: from involution to evolution; from unending wars towards eternal peace; from hatred towards Divine Love; from egoism towards self-abnegation."

The fundamental principles of the teaching of Peter Deunov are Love, Wisdom and Truth. Paneurhythmy is a sacred dance. The word paneurhythmy means "supreme cosmic rhythm" (pan = whole, all over, cosmic; eu=true, supreme, the essence from which everything arises; rhythm=periodicity, correct regularity of movement). Each exercise of paneurhythmy has a symbolic significance and expresses a particular thought, feeling and action. The dancing circle is a symbol of the great wheel of life and the way of human consciousness towards perfection.

Paneurhythmy imposes physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Exercises increase the capacity of the organs and regularize their functions. They stimulate the awakening and development of the spiritual gifts such as mercy, compassion, love, faith and hope. Furthermore, this sacred dance develops the musical capacity and sensitivity. It promotes expansion of consciousness and has a very strong curative power.

"The effect of Paneurhythmy on people is enormous and many-sided. It influences physical development. The movements are smooth and graceful, all parts of the body participate. Breathing and circulation are

improved. The nervous system is strengthened, too.

Paneurhythmy serves as a real, concrete and, at the same time a beautiful method for physical renewal and for the strengthening of mind, emotions and will." "These exercises should be performed in the school and in the community in order to prepare a completely new generation with a physical health and endurance, with noble thoughts, spiritual progress, strong will power and initiative."

Through them people can be trained physically and spiritually to a new creativeness. Firstly, one should learn the basic movements and then to proceed to the more complicated. One has to spend at least 10 to 15 minutes a day for exercise. "There are movements that develop the mind; others – the heart; and still others – the hands while exercising."

One of the most practical aspects of Peter Deunov's teaching is the practice of dance outdoor in harmony with God and Nature. Special attention is paid to the Sun. Music as a means of harmonizing the human spirit is also a key to practice the circle of joy. Nowadays there are many centres to study paneurhythmy not only in Bulgaria but also in the USA (San Francisco, St .Louis and Chicago), Russia, Germany, etc. For the purpose the texts of the songs are translated in English. The preferred instruments for the music to be played are the violins. Obligatory demand is the white color of the clothes. In eurhythmy colors are different and correspond to the idea of the movements.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly both systems Eurhythmy and Paneurhythmy have their well-proved virtues. It is more than good for them to find their place at schools. As physical education programmes are already occupied, the best place for them will be as outdoor activities. Enthusiasts and teachers are needed too.

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## PANEURITMIJA I EURITMIJA – FILOZOFIJA I PRAKSA

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### **Sažetak**

Ovaj članak se bavi paneuritmijom. To je bugarska vrsta gimnastike, plesa ili metode predstavljene od Petera Deunova (the Master Beinsa Douno) u prvoj polovini XX vijeka. Neki autori određuju paneuritmiju i kao nauku: "zbog harmoničnih, svjesnih gibanja, utemeljenih na zakonima Žive prirode". Prevod ovog termina znači "Vrhovni Svemirski Ritam". Paneuritmija se sastoji od sekvenci vježbi, plesanih pod pratnjom muzike s poetskim tekstom istovremeno. Paneuritmiki gimnastički kompleks (=28 vježi ili paneuritmičkih formi) se koristi rano ujutro od 22. marta do 22. septembra kod ljudi na sjevernoj hemisferi. Logično, ljudi na južnoj hemisferi trebaju "igrati" od 22. septembra do 22. marta. Budući je paneuritmija već izgrađena kao nepromjenjivii sistem niko nema pravo predstaviti neke promjene unutar nje. Međutim, u praksi, pravilno izvođenje vježbi čak i u današnje vrijeme vodi do mnogih žestokih debata. Doprinos ovog materijala je u širenju sistema, objašnjenju filozofije, traženja prostora u školskom sistemu. Jedan drugi sistem je prethodio paneuritmiji, a to je sistem Rudolfa Steinera zvan Euritmija. Ovaj članak također pravi komparativnu analizu između ta dva sistema.

**Key words:** paneuritmijske forme, komparativna analiza

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