

Rhythm as Aesthetic Criterion (Part 2)

Monday 15 October 2018, by [Pascal Michon](#)

Sommaire

- [The Spread of Eurythmie and Eurythmique in French between 1600 and 2000](#)
- [Eurythmie from Architecture to Sculpture and Painting \(French Dictionaries - 1690-1832\)](#)
- [Eurythmie from Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, to Medicine, Music, and Dance \(...\)](#)

[Previous chapter](#)

The Spread of Eurythmie and Eurythmique in French between 1600 and 2000

It would certainly be very instructive to extend to the whole Modern period this first inquiry into the use of the concept of eurhythmie in aesthetic practices and theories. But I will here confine myself—hoping that a larger investigation might be conducted in the future—to two quick surveys of the spread in French language of the term *eurythmie* and the adjective *eurythmique* between the 17th and the 20th centuries, first as it appears through statistics of use and, secondly, through the definitions recorded in French dictionaries.

As one may know, the Google Books Ngram Viewer charts frequencies of search strings using a yearly count of “*n*-grams,” or contiguous sequence of *n* items, found in millions of books (450 millions words) printed between two given dates. Although it has been criticized—the corpora it uses are probably not sufficiently well diversified, they are marred with OCR and metadata inaccuracies, and are uncontrolled for bias—I think it can yield interesting results if handled with care and, before all, crossed with other sources. I used it to check on the frequency of the noun *eurhythmie/eurythmie* and the related adjective *eurhythmique/eurythmique*, in French between 1600 and 2000. The traditional spelling was replaced by the current one during the 1880s and 1890s but the latter was already used by the Académie française since the 17th century (for the sake of clarity and accuracy I restricted the graphs to the period 1700-2000 and I chose a light smoothing of the curve by 3).

From 1600 to 1800, the frequency of the noun *eurhythmie* or *eurythmie* in French books is close to zero with a few exceptions at the end of the 17th century (which does not appear here in fig. 1) and in the second half of the 18th century. From 1800 to 1848, it oscillates around a low but constant mean. Things are notably changing at the end of the 1840s. Between 1850 and 1880 there is a first limited increase which becomes very strong after 1880 and lasts until the beginning of the 1920s. Eventually, the curve declines erratically until the 1980s before stabilizing around a medium level four times higher than that before 1850.

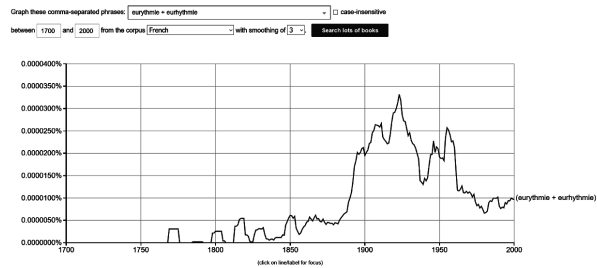


Fig.1 - *eurhythmie* and *eurythmie* (1700-2000)

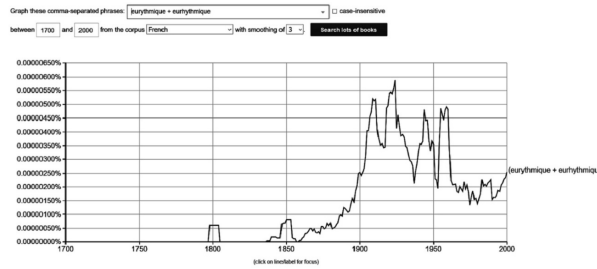


Fig. 2 - *eurhythmique* and *eurythmique* (1700-2000)

Concerning the adjective *eurhythmique* or *eurythmique* (fig. 2), after two brief surges around 1800 and 1850, an exponential growth starts a few years before 1860 which lasts until the curve reaches a first peak in 1908-1909 and a second one in 1924. This success lasts, through ups and downs, until the end of the 1950s, when the curve slides down again and reaches an almost constant level which lasts till today.

In short, the noun *eurhythmie/eurythmie* and the related adjective *eurhythmique/eurythmique* seem to have been rarely used between 1600 and 1850, and become commonplace in French only in the second half of the 19th century with a most remarkable spreading between the 1880s and the 1920s.

***Eurythmie* from Architecture to Sculpture and Painting (French Dictionaries - 1690-1832)**

Let us turn now to our semantic enquiry (for practical reasons, I will limit it to the period between the 17th and the 19th centuries). Unless I am mistaken, the first entry for “*Eurythmie*” in a French dictionary can be found in the *Dictionnaire universel de Furetière* (1690 - I am using the 1701 edition). There is nothing similar in Jean Nicot’s *Thresor de la langue francoyse* (1606), in Gilles Ménage’s *Les Origines de la langue françoise* (1650), in Pierre Richelet’s *Dictionnaire françois* (1680), nor in Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697).

It significantly endorses the classical sense of “nice proportion” between “the members of a body.” Surprisingly, it does not mention architecture. However its typically Vitruvian wording clearly alludes to the use that has become common among architects since the 16th century. It records anyhow an interesting extension of the concept to sculpture and by the same token a remarkable twist in the relation between arts. Whereas in the Renaissance the buildings were compared to human bodies, statues were now considered as pieces of architecture. There is no entry for the adjective *eurhythmique*.

EURHYTHMY. f.n. Term of Sculpture. It is a majestic and somehow easy and undemanding appearance, which appears in the composition of all the members of a body, and which results from their beautiful proportion. (my trans.) — EURYTHMIE. s.f. Terme de Sculpture. C'est une apparence majestueuse, & je ne sçai quoi d'aisé, & de commode, qui paroît dans la composition de tous les membres d'un corps, & qui resulte de leur belle proportion.

The *Dictionnaire des arts et des sciences* (vol. 1) sponsored by the Académie française and published by Thomas Corneille in 1694 demonstrates an obvious plagiarism, using quite clumsily and not without introducing a bit of obscurity the very same phrases as Furetière: “un je ne sçai quoy d'aisé, & de commode.” But it provides the Greek etymology and rightly reintroduces the reference to architecture which obviously was lacking in its predecessor. It shows that, at the end of the 17th century, the Vitruvian-Albertian definition of *eurhythmie* as an aesthetic effect resulting “from the pleasant and congruent proportion of all members of a body in architecture” was commonly accepted in French.

EURHYTHMY. f.n. Beautiful proportion. It is said of an easy and undemanding *je ne sais quoi* which has a majestic appearance and results from the pleasant and congruent proportion of all members of a body in architecture. This word is Greek, εὐρυθμία, and composed of εὖ, well, and, ῥυθμός, order, arrangement. (my trans.) — EURYTHMIE. s.f. Belle proportion. Il se dit d'un je ne sçai quoy d'aisé & de commode qui a une apparence majestueuse, & qui résulte de l'agréable & juste proportion de tous les membres d'un corps dans l'Architecture. Ce mot est Grec, εὐρυθμία & fait de εὖ, Bien, & ῥυθμός, Ordre, arrangement.

Our semantic corpus seems to confirm our statistical findings. *Eurhythmie/eurhythmie* was still very rarely used in the first half of the 18th century. The first three editions of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* published in 1694, 1718 and 1740 do not mention it. During the first part of the century it remains confined to specialized dictionaries.

Yet, there are two important exceptions to that rule. The *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (1721), directed by Jesuits, obviously borrows from Furetière the “je ne sçai quoi d'aisé, & de commode.” But it also provides the Greek etymology as Corneille, and refers, for the first time, to uses concerning sculpture, architecture, and painting. It also gives some particulars concerning Vitruvius. The definition is unchanged, though. *Eurhythmie* “results from the beautiful proportion” of an art work, whether a statue, a building, or a painting. As in the Académie's dictionary, there is no entry for the adjective *eurythmique*.

EURHYTHMY. f.n. Term of Sculpture, Architecture, Painting, etc. *Eurythmia, elegantia*. It is a majestic and somehow easy and undemanding appearance, which appears in the composition of all members of a body, a building, a painting, and which results from their beautiful proportion. This word is Greek, and means a nice consonance, a beautiful harmony, and, so to speak, the harmony of all parts. It comes from εὖ, Well, and, ῥυθμός, which means cadence, agreement of sounds, numbers and other similar things. Vitruvius puts *eurhythmia* among the species or essential parts of Architecture. He says that *Eurhythmia* is the beauty of the assembling of all parts of the work, which makes its appearance pleasant, when the height corresponds to the width, and the width to the length, the whole having its fair measure. (my trans.) — EURYTHMIE. s.f. Terme de Sculpture, d'Architecture, de Peinture, &c. *Eurythmia, elegantia*. C'est une apparence majestueuse, & je ne sçai quoi d'aisé, & de commode, qui paroît dans la composition de tous les membres d'un corps, d'un bâtiment, d'un Tableau, & qui résulte de leur belle proportion. Ce mot est Grec, & signifie une bonne consonance, un bel accord, & pour ainsi dire, l'harmonie de toutes les parties. Il vient de εὖ, Bien, & ῥυθμός, qui signifie la cadence, l'accord des sons, des nombres & d'autres choses semblables. Vitruve met l'eurythmie parmi les espèces ou

parties essentielles de l'Architecture. Il dit que l'Eurythmie est la beauté de l'assemblage de toutes les parties de l'oeuvre, qui en rend l'aspect agréable, lorsque la hauteur répond à la largeur, & la largeur à la longueur, le tout ayant sa juste mesure.

The second exception is Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopædia* published in 1728. I introduce it in our corpus because it borrows heavily from the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* and has been in turn very influential in France during the 18th century. As his predecessors, Chambers extends the Vitruvian-Albertian definition from architecture, to painting and sculpture, provides the Greek etymology, and some information concerning Vitruvius, including a quote from John Evelyn's (1620-1706) *Account of Architects and Architecture* (1664). He does not provide any entry for *eurythmic*.

EURYTHMY, EURYTHMIA, in Architecture, Painting, and Sculpture ; a certain Majesty, Elegance, and Easiness appearing in the Composition of divers Members, or Parts of a Body, Building, or Painting ; and resulting from the fine Proportions thereof. See PROPORTION.

The Word is Greek, and signifies literally a Consonance, or fine Agreement, or as we may call it, a Harmony of all the Parts ; being compounded of εὖ, *well*, & ῥυθμὸς, *Rythmus*, a Cadence, or Agreement of Numbers, Sounds, or the like Things. See RYTHMUS.

Vitruvius ranks the *Eurythmia* among the essential Parts of Architecture : He describes it as consisting in the Beauty of the Construction, or Assemblage of the several Parts of the Work, which render its Aspect, or Whole Appearance graceful : *E. gr.* when the Height corresponds to the Breadth, and the Breadth to the Length, &c.

"From these three Ideas, (or *Designs*, viz. *Orthography*, *Scenography*, and *Profile*) it is, that the same *Eurythmy*, *Majestica*, and *Venusta Species Edificii*, does Result ; which creates that agreeable Harmony between the several Dimensions ; so as nothing seems disproportionate, too long for this, or too broad for that, but corresponds in just and regular Symmetry, and Consent of all the Parts with the whole." *Evelyn's Account of Archit.* &c. See SYMMETRY.

The 6th volume of Diderot's and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* published in 1751 explicitly refers the reader to the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* and Chambers' *Cylopædia*. As his predecessors, the unknown author (the article is unsigned and is not from Diderot's hand since the latter signed all his contributions) extends the term *eurythmie* from architecture to painting and sculpture but wrongly attributes this extension to Vitruvius. Then, he recalls the Vitruvian-Albertian definition, provides the Greek etymology (translating as Chambers, probably because the second is obvious for the 18th century reader, ῥυθμὸς with the Latin *rhythmus*) and equates *eurythmie* with *harmonie*, whose entry refers back to *eurythmie*. As in all contemporary dictionaries, no entry for the adjective *eurythmique* is provided.

EURHYTHMIE (*Lib. Arts*), is, according to Vitruvius, in *Architecture, Painting and Sculpture*, a somehow striking majesty and elegance in the composition of the different members or parts of a building, or a painting, which results from the appropriate proportions it has been endowed with. See PROPORTION.

This word is Greek and literally means *harmony in all parts*; it is composed of εὖ, *well*, & ῥυθμὸς, *rhythmus*, cadence or convenience of numbers, sounds and other similar things. S. RHYTHMUS.

This author places the *eurhythmie* among the essential parts of Architecture; he describes it as something which consists in the beauty of the construction, or the assembly of the different parts of the work which render its appearance agreeable: for example, when the height corresponds to the width, and the width to the length, etc. *Dict. by Trev. & Chambers.* (my trans.)

EURYTHMIE, (Arts lib.) *c'est, en Architecture, Peinture, & Sculpture, selon Vitruve, une certaine majesté & élégance qui frappe dans la composition des différens membres ou parties d'un bâtiment, ou d'un tableau, qui résulte des justes proportions qu'on y a gardées. Voyez PROPORTION.*

Ce mot est grec, & signifie littéralement une harmonie dans toutes les parties ; il est composé de εὖ, bien, & ῥυθμὸς, rhythmus, cadence ou convenance des nombres, sons, & autres choses semblables. V. RHYTHMUS.

Cet auteur met l'eurithmie au nombre des parties essentielles de l'Architecture; il la décrit comme une chose qui consiste dans la beauté de la construction, ou l'assemblage des différentes parties de l'ouvrage qui en rendent l'aspect agréable: par exemple, quand la hauteur répond à la largeur, & la largeur à la longueur, &c. Dict. de Trév. & Chambers.

HARMONY, *in terms of architecture*, it means a pleasant relationship between the different parts of a building. See EURYTHMY. (my trans.) — HARMONIE, *en terme d'architecture, signifie un rapport agréable qui se trouve entre les différentes parties d'un bâtiment. Voyez EURYTHMIE.*

An entry for *eurhythmie* finally appears in the fourth edition of the Académie française's dictionary (1762), endorsing the reference to architecture and the Vitruvian-Albertian definition but without referring to sculpture and painting. The same wording is reused in the 1798, and 1832 editions. There is still no entry in these editions for the adjective *eurhythmique*.

EURHYTHMY. f.n. Beautiful order, beautiful proportion. It is said of the beauty that results from all parts of an architectural work. (my trans.) — EURYTHMIE. *Substantif f. Bel ordre, belle proportion. Il se dit de la beauté qui résulte de toutes les parties d'un ouvrage d'architecture.*

If we associate these first results to what we learned by looking at the translations from Latin and Greek into modern European languages, the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries seem to have used the term *eurhythmie/eurhythmie*—at least in French but it is likely that the same is true for German, Spanish, and English, as Chambers already strongly suggests—mostly in a Vitruvian-Albertian architectural guise which was extended to sculpture and painting during the first decades of the 18th century.

***Eurythmie* from Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, to Medicine, Music, and Dance (French Dictionaries - 1842-2008)**

The 19th century French dictionaries—at least those published after 1840—demonstrate the continuation of this extension process, and consequently new semantic hybridizations, but they also record sudden changes and the emergence of entirely new meanings.

The *Complément du dictionnaire de l'Académie française* published in 1842 is the first to document the

radical change that just occurred during the preceding decade. Cutting loose from the previous architectural Vitruvian definition, it starts by exposing the new medical sense of *eurhythmie* (for the transformations of the medical uses of the term *rhythm* see vol. 2, chap. 2) and—in a second move which is no less innovative—extends it to music. Due to the new intellectual atmosphere developing after 1830, empirical and positive science and its concepts have visibly become more important than art and the traditional categories of aesthetics. Moreover, among the fine arts, architecture, sculpture and painting, are left aside to the benefit of music. *Eurhythmie* begins to shift from space to time.

EURHYTHMY. f.n. (med.) Regularity of the pulse, of functions. || It is sometimes said in music for the pleasant choice of rhythm and movement for a piece. (my trans.) — *EURHYTHMIE. s.f. (méd.)*
Régularité du pouls, des fonctions. || Il se dit quelquefois, en musique, de l'heureux choix du rythme et du mouvement d'un morceau.

The *Complément* also introduces, for the first time to my knowledge, the unheard-of adjective *eurhythmique* which, significantly, does not refer any more to “appropriate proportion” but is, instead, clearly related with the new medical acceptance of the term based on “regularity.”

EURHYTHMIC. adj. for both gend. (didact.) Having a regular rhythm. (my trans.) — *EURHYTHMIQUE. adj. des 2 g. (didact.) Qui a un rythme régulier.*

As its predecessor, the *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* (vol. 7 - E) published by Pierre Larousse in 1870 also refers, yet as second meaning, to the new medical acceptance. Concerning the fine arts, on which he first concentrates, the definition he provides, does not mention architecture any longer. It aims now mainly at music and dance, while the quote by Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) mentions Eugène-Louis Lequesne (1815-1887) a by-then-renown sculptor. This lack of the architectural reference must not however be overinterpreted but it certainly reflects a decreasing use. As a matter of fact, the traditional Vitruvian acceptance remains, in a ghostly state, in the quote referring—though without any supplementary explanation—to sculpture. However, the new association of *eurhythmie* with music and dance, which now comes first, is based on the quality of “the rhythm,” i.e. on the temporal organization of the musical flow or the dance movements. It implies also an interesting hybridization process by which the architectural concept is reintroduced into music and dance as “harmonious combination”.

EURHYTHMY. f. n. (yu-rith-me - from Gr. *eu*, well; *rhuthmos*, rhythm). Fortunate choice of sounds, harmonious rhythm, pleasant movement. By ext. harmonious combination: *M. Lequesne has found the EURHYTHMY of movement, the balance of lines which was the secret of the Ancients.* (Th. Gaut.) - Med. Regularity of the pulse. (my trans.) — *EURHYTHMIE. s. f. (eu-ri-tmi - du gr. eu, bien ; rhuthmos, rythme). Mus. Heureux choix de sons, rythme harmonieux, mouvement heureux. - Par ext. Combinaison harmonieuse: M. Lequesne a retrouvé cette EURHYTHMIE du mouvement, cette balance des lignes dont les anciens possédaient le secret. (Th. Gaut.) - Méd. Régularité du pouls.*

The entry *eurhythmique* follows the same direction since it wraps the traditional concern for appropriate proportion into a much more recent emphasis on temporal regularity in music as well in medicine—which are significantly put on the same level. Larousse records an extension of this new adjective to “composition,” which significantly reduces the old Vitruvian-Albertian meaning to sheer regularity.

EURHYTHMIC. adj. (yu-rith-mik - root Eurhythmy). Being regular, having a regular rhythm.

EURHYTHMIC *composition*. EURHYTHMIC *beat of the pulse*. (my trans.) — EURHYTHMIQUE. adj. (*eu-ri-tmi-ke - rad. Eurhythmie*). *Qui est régulier, qui a un rythme régulier*: Composition EURHYTHMIQUE. Battements EURHYTHMIQUES du pouls.

The *Dictionnaire de la langue française* published by Emile Littré in 1874 suggests the largest and also the most precise definition of the 19th century series. According to Littré, *eurhythmie* is now used indifferently for architecture, painting, sculpture, music and medicine—he does not mention dancing. But he subtly records differences, which he clearly presents in chronological order, between “order” and “proportion” in architecture (from the 16th-17th centuries); “harmony of composition” in painting (from the 18th centuries); “fine choice of rhythm and movement” in music, where the architectural acceptance as “nice proportion” is also used (from the 19th century); and “regularity of the pulse” in medicine (from the 19th century as well).

EURHYTHMY. (yu-rith-me. The Academy writes erroneously eurythmy), f.n. || 1° Nice order, nice proportion, speaking of all parts of an architectural work. || 2° Term of painting and sculpture. Harmony in the composition. || 3° Term of music. Fine choice for the rhythm and movement of a piece; nice proportion between the parts. || 4° Term of medicine. Regularity of the pulse. - ETYM. εὖ, well, and ῥυθμός, rhythm. (my trans.) — EURHYTHMIE. (*eu-ri-tmie. L'Académie écrit à tort eurythmie*), s.f. || 1° *Bel ordre, belle proportion, en parlant de l'ensemble des parties d'un ouvrage d'architecture*. || 2° *Terme de peinture et de sculpture. Harmonie dans la composition*. || 3° *Terme de musique. Heureux choix du rythme et du mouvement d'un morceau; belle proportion entre les parties*. || 4° *Terme de médecine. Régularité du pouls*. - ÉTYM. εὖ, bien, et ῥυθμός, rythme.

As the *Complément* and Larousse before him, Littré records the sense of the new adjective *eurhythmique* as “being regular.”

EURHYTHMIC. (yu-rith-mic) adj. Having a regular rhythm. (my trans.) — EURHYTHMIQUE. (*eu-ri-tmi-k'*) adj. *Qui a un rythme régulier*.

In the 20th century, the definition of the term *eurythmie* seems stabilized. Paul Robert in his *Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* (1955, vol. 2, p. 1783), endorses all subentries provided by Littré eighty years before. He adds only two quotes. The only difference concerns the adjective *eurhythmique*, which does not indicate its medical sense and now refers only to an harmonious musical composition. The presentation is exactly similar in the 2008 edition of *Le Nouveau Petit Robert*, except for the first occurrence of *eurhythmique* dated 1838.

EURHYTHMY. f. n. (1547; Gr. *eu*, well, and *ruthmos*, rhythm). Talking about an architectural work, a sculpture, a painting..., Fortunate harmony in the composition, the proportions of the whole. S. Agreement (II), balance, harmony.

“When, he says (Vitruvius), this chain of proportions ... expresses ... an appropriate agreement of the members between them, and the correspondence of each part with the whole, ‘as we see in the human body,’ the architect reaches *eurhythmy*, an harmonious success analogous to that sought by the musician in the composition of a symphony.” M.C. GHYKA, in ENCYCL. EN. (of MONZIE), XVI,

28, 6.

— *Mus.* Fortunate choice of sounds.

— *Med.* Regularity of the pulse.

— *Fig.* Balance, harmony.

“This is a fairly broad picture, and banal enough to be symbolic, of a natural and happy life. See, then, the eurhythmy of the human existence in its useful movements.” MAETERLINCK, *Life of Bees*, p. 245.

DER. — Eurhythmic. adj. (1864). Whose composition is harmonious. (my trans.)

EURYTHMIE. *n. f.* (1547; *gr.* eu, bien, et routhmos [*sic*], rythme). *En parlant d'un ouvrage d'architecture, d'une sculpture, d'une peinture...*, *Heureuse harmonie dans la composition, les proportions de l'ensemble*. *V. Accord (II), équilibre, harmonie*.

« Lorsque, dit-il (Vitruve), cet enchaînement de proportions ... traduit ... un accord convenable des membres entre eux, et la correspondance de chaque partie avec l'ensemble, “comme on le voit dans le corps humain”, l'architecte obtient l'eurythmie, *la réussite harmonieuse analogue à celle que recherche le musicien dans la composition d'une symphonie*. » M. C. GHYKA, in *ENCYCL. FR. (de MONZIE)*, XVI, 28, 6.

— *Mus.* *Heureux choix des sons*.

— *Méd.* *Régularité du pouls*.

— *Fig.* *Équilibre, harmonie*.

“C'est le tableau assez large, et assez banal pour être symbolique, d'une vie naturelle et heureuse. Voyez donc l'eurythmie de l'existence humaine dans ses mouvements utiles.” MAETERLINCK, *Vie des abeilles*, p. 245.

DER. — Eurythmique. adj. (1864). Dont la composition est harmonieuse.

*

Let us recapitulate our findings. From the 1840s, the use in French of the terms *eurhythmie* and *eurythmique*—it is not necessary to differentiate here between the spellings—underwent a series of

significant transformations.

1. The term *eurhythmie* has been appropriated by medicine and life science which, as a matter of fact, benefited from a very ancient and largely autonomous rhythmological tradition (see vol. 1, chap. 4 and 7, vol. 2, chap. 1).

2. In this case, its meaning, naturally, did not denote any longer an aesthetic quality and was not borrowed either from the fine arts, but was directly derived from the medical and physiological concept of “rhythm,” under the new guise it was now endowed with, and therefore associated with the concept of “regularity,” particularly that of the pulse (vol. 2, chap. 2).

3. This change was reflected in the sudden emergence of a new adjective *eurhythmique* which, in the 19th century, usually denoted the regularity of the pulse, although Larousse noted, in the second part of the century, a possible aesthetic—and secondary—use.

4. Concerning the fine arts, *eurhythmie* underwent a radical change as well. It seems to have been applied less and less to architecture, sculpture and painting (which is recorded only once, by Littré in 1877), and henceforth preferably used for describing the aesthetic quality of music and dance.

5. Consequently, in the artistic field, the meaning of the term *eurhythmie* shifted during this period from the aesthetic effect resulting from the appropriate proportions of the parts of a work of art (be it a building, a sculpture or a painting) to that produced by the well arranged rhythm of a piece of music or a choreography. There was a significant tilt from spatial to temporal concerns.

6. This fast growing reference to *time* and *regularity* after 1840 seems to have resulted in two opposite hybridization processes. As the musical example given by Littré demonstrates (“*belle proportion entre les parties*”), this mutation was accompanied by the re-affirmation in music and dance of the order-and-harmony concern proper to the Vitruvian-Albertian definition.

As a matter of fact, a new attention towards the overall segmented arrangement or arranged segmentation of a piece developed during that period and became the basis for the differentiation between *rhythm*, conceived as an articulated overarching structure, and *meter*, which was then reduced to the basic repetitive pulsation. *Rhythm* could then be understood as a sort of structural compensation for the new primacy of meter and time.

7. Poetry does not seem to have been directly influenced by this move because it had, since the 18th century, developed its own categories, but one could certainly find comparable concerns for an integration of the poetic whole from the largest to smallest units and the opposition between *rhythm* and *meter* in the most important poetic theories from the 18th and 19th centuries (see vol. 2, chap. 3, 4 and 8).

8. The second hybridization movement was going in the opposite direction. Once the term *eurhythmie* had been stripped of its spatial, metaphysical and mathematic connotations inherited from the Ancient and Medieval conception of music, and introduced into music and dance, now understood as temporal practices organized around a metric base, it could support in turn the introduction of the *rhythm* concept, defined this time as regularity, into architecture. Architects and, as we shall see, art historians started to talk about *rhythme des colonnes/des fenêtres* to denote a regular succession of columns or windows which became the support of a new kind of *eurhythmie*.

Although it is difficult to draw qualitative interpretation only from frequency figures, we may get a glimpse into this new conceptual turn by looking, with the Google Books Ngram Viewer, at the frequency of the expression *rythme des colonnes* – rhythm of columns between 1800 and 2000. The Viewer does not yield any results before 1910, which we know is quite untrue. A simple research through any search engine shows occurrences multiplying during the 19th century in French, in fact as well as German and English. But, since positive results cannot, by contrast, be doubted, it seems to suggest that a spreading occurred in the first half of the 20th century. The expression *rythmes des fenêtres* – rhythm of windows/windows rhythm followed the same path.

Naturally, as in music, some theorists like the English architect and practitioner of the Victorian Gothic revival George Edmund Street (1824-1881) emphasized the need not to fall into sheer mechanic regularity: “Arrange the columns with perfect regularity and without any thought, and there is no rhythm.”

The next quality at which we must aim is, like the former, one which is common to our own and other arts. The poet cannot afford to neglect style in his work any more than he can venture to trifle with its rhythm, and a perfect building has its rhythm as well as its style. It is a quality very difficult to describe in words, but in architecture it is an art depending on numbers and proportions. [...] No doubt it is sometimes secured by direct application of geometrical figures, at other times by that instinct for the beautiful which makes a trained eye go so near to the figures or proportions which might be drawn by rule, but to which the charm is added of something which is fresh, human, and suggestive in its very departure from exactness. Take the simplest case conceivable, that of a Greek portico. Arrange the columns with perfect regularity and without any thought, and there is no rhythm ; but arrange them so that a dominant point in the base shall be placed in a certain relation to another, as, e.g. the centre in one of the column's or capitals, or in the pediment, and that the line which connects these two points be one which, if repeated again, connects other marked features, and you at once have a simple and admirable sort of rhythm. (*Memoir of George Edmund Street*, London, 1888, p. 345)

[Next chapter](#)