

Gateways

A Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America

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From the Editor

Nancy Blanning

When we began work on this issue of *Gateways* in the glory of midsummer, I never gave a thought to the approaching tenth anniversary of September 11. I have an admittedly poor memory for dates or how long ago something happened, focusing rather on the needs and callings of the present moment. We were collecting and inviting articles to continue our commitment to picture the diversity and richness of our Waldorf work with young children in North America and worldwide. I was following that plan and intention in selecting content for this issue.

But then something very curious began to happen. This issue of *Gateways* seemed to have an intention of its own. The articles began to speak and weave together in an unexpected way. Each *Gateways* has the same thematic thread running from issue to issue rather than an announced subject theme. The research and pedagogical articles, artistic activities, and practical suggestions are all directed to help us understand the growing child in body, soul, and spirit and help educate him and her into the wholeness of life. That remains true with all you will read in this Fall offering. But there is perhaps more as well. And here the story unfolds.

Some years ago a colleague, Lincoln Kinnicutt, sent me an addition he had written to expand upon a multicultural Advent circle. He had a Muslim child in his class for whom he wanted to include something familiar from Islamic tradition in an Advent journey of finding light in the winter darkness. He consulted with the child's mother for ideas. With her help, the *Hajj* circle resulted. I have held on to this since that time, wanting to share it with other teachers. With *Gateways* calling for ideas to enrich our experience of diversity and with Advent around the corner when this issue comes to you, this seemed a perfect time to share this imagination.

More background information was needed to put this piece in proper context. One conversation led to another. Ultimately I was talking and emailing with the Muslim mother with strong Waldorf connections. What an amazing and privileged experience this has proven to be. I have been humbled in recognizing my

ignorance of Islamic culture and belief, awestruck by the beauty of the stories, and inspired to see similar imaginations and story threads common in Christian and Islamic stories. In the midst of this wonder, suddenly it struck—the tenth anniversary of September 11, a time of such tender sensitivity—was coinciding with this publication. The mood of our country and world seems to be the most divisive, fractious, and rancorous I have known in my lifetime, with accusation, suspicion, and intolerance burgeoning in every corner. In contrast what I was learning about the *Hajj* imagination had been imbued with respect, reverence, and expression of a deep desire to be mutually understood and recognized without prejudgment. The challenge of how we can honor one another as human beings and peoples is an urgent consideration for ourselves, our Waldorf education, and our world.

With these thoughts in mind, I began to actively look for what the other articles might offer to help us deal with our post-September 11 world. I have been surprised and encouraged to see how our general thematic thread is also very specific to these challenges. The first two lead articles on movement—the second part of Renate Long-Breipohl's "Movement with Soul" and a summary of one keynote lecture on movement from last February's East Coast WECAN conference—emphasize how sensory development through movement creates not only the essential foundation for stable, objective orientation in space and time but also for healthy social life. We also have an excerpt from a little known volume, *Ideas and Encouragement for Teaching Eurythmy* by Nora von Baditz. This expands upon the importance of eurythmy for young children's healthy development, which Renate Long-Breipohl refers to in her article. Rudolf Steiner is quoted as saying, "If one does eurythmy with little children under seven they acquire an ego force that neither school nor karma can give them." Goodness knows that our future world will benefit from this.

To live together in community, we have to be supported and gently and gradually guided into living

with others. The description of the Cottage Garden home program and the excerpt from the new WECAN publication, *Trust and Wonder*, describe this first step into social life. A report of international work in Costa Rica reminds us of cultural differences and the diversity of our work but also the common intent we have for helping healthy children grow into healthy and generous world citizens. Thank you to Celia Riahi and Barbara Audley of Cottage Garden and Joyce Gallardo and Teresa de Jesus Savel for these contributions.

The *Hajj* circle insert and the brief support articles speak for themselves. To me they have proven to be small but mighty, having become the beginning and end point for organizing this issue. Lincoln Kinnicutt and Alexa Clark Abdelatey have been tireless resources and inspiration with their work. These are accompanied by a playful hand gesture game from the new Ellersiek publication, *Dancing Hand, Trotting Pony*. These hand games stimulate the speech center in the brain and promote speech development, an essential for effective social interaction. Additionally, they are filled with joy. We must all have joy to develop optimism in our lives and the capacity to see different and unexpected things in life as interesting variations on human experience rather than as irritations or threats.

Finally we have three book reviews. Peter Selg's *Unbornness* reminds and reassures us that we all come from the same divine, universal source that remains constant in us no matter what geography, folk soul, language, culture or religion our destiny prescribes for us. *The Tear* by Nancy Jewel Poer is a tender story

about the death of a beloved grandmother and how a young child is helped to see this loss as a great transition. Birth and death are universal experiences we all share, which can bind rather than separate us. Thank you to Susan Weber and Laurie Clark for providing looks into these new resources for our work.

The final review features *Connecting with Young Children: Educating the Will*, by former *Gateways* editor Steve Spitalny. Steve observes how ours is a world of increasing isolation, which Waldorf education was founded to counter and heal. This book strongly reminds us of how profoundly the experiences we offer to children affect their development. The children imitate what they experience of both outer activity and inner attitude of the people around them. Steve states that for teachers "the task is to help the child relate to and connect with all aspects of life in ways suitable for [his] development, so that later as an adult many realms of connection are available to him. This is a social path toward cultural renewal and a more peaceful world, one individual at a time."

The images we share with the children through story and circle imaginations are powerful in quiet ways. All pictures of outer activity and inner attitude that honor, respect, and appreciate the diversity of our world help to build these "realms of connection." In this post-September 11 era, it is quite a thought that a circle time could change the world. If we work with our quiet tools strongly enough, perhaps a new Nobel Prize will have to be created for "outstanding contribution to world peace and tolerance through Waldorf Circle imaginations."

Seeking Your Contributions

As always, *Gateways* is open to submission of your contributions of all kinds as well as questions and comments regarding past issues.

For the next issue, we are particularly seeking articles on the topic of ***Practical Work in the Kindergarten***.

Please submit articles via email to publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.

The deadline for the Spring/Summer 2012 issue is **February 15, 2012.**



Moving with Soul: Supporting Movement Development in the Early Years (Part Two)

• Renate Long-Breipohl

This article is an extended version of a lecture given at the National Early Childhood Conference at Ringwood Waldorf School in England on October 17, 2009. Part One of the article was published in the previous issue of Gateways.

One of Wilma Ellersiek's gesture games, which are mentioned in this article, is included in this issue starting on page 22.

Self-directed movement for the child under three

The development of movement, speech, and thinking in the first three years of life is guided and protected by spiritual beings. Yet there is a role for the human being as a model as well. Without experiencing upright human beings the child will not learn to be upright; without the unconscious will to be upright and walk, the model would be of no avail. Both have to come together. In the early years the child seems to be guided “from inside” and seems to intuitively “know” what he needs to do: an endless practice of the most varied movement combinations. Rudolf Steiner advises us to leave the child undisturbed and “uninstructed” at this early stage of development. The child educates himself. (See *Soul Economy and Waldorf Education*, Lecture 7, and *The Spiritual Guidance of the Individual and Humanity*, Lecture 1.) The undisturbed exploration of movement “from the inside out” is the precondition for the development of a sense of freedom in the human being.

The situation changes around the age of three. At this time in the child's development, when the foundations for thinking have been laid and I-consciousness stirs, Rudolf Steiner recommends eurythmy as being of great benefit for children. The child has reached a level of development where he not only unconsciously absorbs what lives in the environment but also is eager to follow an adult, who guides a movement sequence.

I would like to stress that in the work with children under three there is no need for a formal movement program as we practice it in the work with children

aged three to six in Steiner/Waldorf kindergartens or preschools. Whenever one experiences circles in play groups for toddlers, the circle seems to be more directed towards the mothers' experiences and learning while the child is “taken along.”

In a group situation with children under three, be it in childcare or in toddler groups, the play area is the space for free movement and the child's play time is the movement program. The space however needs to be carefully prepared with the possibilities for climbing, for exploring different heights and ways to get up and down. It is a space for practicing differentiated, child-initiated movement.

The adult accompanies the child's “movement work” with warmth, love and reverence and as much as possible, without interference. Steiner warns that adults should not impose their will on the young child under three, as this may damage the development of the child's will.

The research of Sally Goddard Blythe on the importance of vestibular stimulation in the very early years should be taken seriously in the work with young children. Mothers have always intuitively stimulated the baby's vestibular system through cradling movements. Later the child is rocked on the lap to the rhythms of nursery rhymes. Once the child has achieved the upright position, the child delights in being rocked more vigorously backward and forward, sideways or up and down in a see-saw motion. Swinging up and down or being whirled around will stimulate the organ of balance as well. As of the third year of life the child will find pleasure in rolling in the grass, in jumping and sliding, sitting on a swing, or turning and spinning in the upright position. Many of the traditional outdoor games contain vestibular stimulation. It seems that being outdoors for a certain part of the day is conducive for self-directed, explorative movement of the young child. The outdoor environment also seems very suited for an individualized rhythm of times of activity and play, balanced by times of rest. The age of up to three years is the prime time for

children to become confident in their bodies and to develop a healthy sense of self. It is of course understood that self-directed movement has a place in the child's play throughout the time of early childhood.

I would like to acknowledge at this point the work of Helle Heckmann, Denmark, who has pioneered the outdoor kindergarten in Steiner early education and has documented in publications and video presentations the importance of self-directed movement for the healthy development of children. See the reference list for some of her work.

Guided movement with children from age three to seven

As of the age of three the child displays an increased natural desire to participate in group activities. The child is filled with interest in what happens around her, enjoys experiencing social situations, and imitates out of a natural devotion and trust in the goodness of the world.

Kindergarten teachers work with this natural desire. Rudolf Steiner indicates that adults imprint their way of doing things into the still malleable physical organs of the child by way of imitation. Hence he places such importance on the quality of the gestures performed by adults in the presence of young children. These gestures enter into the physical body of the child more deeply than the spoken word or singing.

One can observe various stages in the process of imitating movements: from the purely inward moving which may show itself only in the facial expression, to the small occasional hand movement and then to movement which involves the whole body of the child.

The impulse to move lives much stronger in children than in adults. It is a natural expression of the strength of their will forces and their healthy etheric forces. Yet while the child is active in movement, the consciousness of the child is still dreamy. Healthy young children are not yet self-conscious of the quality of their own movement. The three-to-four-year-old child naturally has no desire for self-expression, but moves out of sympathy for his surroundings. Therefore his movement is not self-centered, but has a devotional quality. By participating in guided movement the element of devotion and sympathy can be strengthened in the children and can counteract the tendency towards an early awakening of self-consciousness. When the child becomes self-conscious about his movements, it often weakens the natural vitality and the will forces of the child. A self-critical element comes in: "I can't do it."

Kindergarten eurythmy, as well as the daily morning circle based on imitation, leads the child away from self-feeling towards an interest in and a feeling for what lives in the surroundings. This can be achieved by working with the feeling quality of language, of vowels and consonants, and with the rhythm and the musical quality of words and sentences.

Today there is an increased interest in research about working with children through speech, following on from the working with movement as described previously. In his article "Ringtime as Pedagogical Opportunity" Stephen Spitalny has presented some initial thoughts on this. In early childhood movement education the conscious use of the sounds and rhythms of language is still to be developed.

Wilma Ellersiek has done pioneering work in this field. Her work is a wonderful example for supporting the development of the ability to discriminate in the child, which Karl König has described in connection with the movement of the hands and the development of feeling. (See Part One of this article.) Ellersiek's hand gesture games carry the cultural impulse of refining speech and movement, of becoming sensitive for the subtle variations in rhythm and tone of speech in unity with appropriate movements of arms and hands. Thus movement and speech become helpers in developing the fine aspects of humanness, in "moving with soul," which the child may not be able to achieve otherwise. The child can develop a strong will and confidence through self-directed movement, but the thinking and feeling, which refine willed movement and bring it into relationship with archetypal forms of nature and of human action, have to be brought to the child through the example of the adult and through imitation.

In addition, the hand gesture games are a help for incarnation into the body as described in Part One as well. Many hand gesture games are based on the practice of expansion and contraction and will be a help for the incarnation of the ego into the body. Eurythmy, in its educational and curative form, has always worked with the harmonizing and balancing quality of the archetypal movements of expansion and contraction. In the educational work expansion and contraction movements can be practiced by a variety of games based on the opening and closing movement of the hand. Later on the whole body can be involved with movements such as curling up and stretching high, or with moving between the center and periphery. Wilma Ellersiek's hand games are a wonderful help for working with the young child towards a harmonious interplay between these two poles of human existence.

Archetypal movements and their relevance in movement with children

There are movement patterns which express in image form the process of incarnation. They are “archetypal” in that they evoke the experience of the essence or primal quality of an object, process or being in the human soul. All “expansion and contraction” movements are archetypal, and so is the experience of breathing in and breathing out. In spatial dimensions they appear as the polarities of above–below, front–back and right–left and evoke very different sensations within the soul. In early childhood the most important archetypal experiences are those that relate to the front space and the space of above and below.

In supporting the exploration of the front space the kindergarten teacher can work with different ways and paces of walking, running, skipping and coming to a standstill. The occasional step into the backspace may be added to encourage the child’s use of his senses of balance and hearing.

In working with the modes of in-breathing (tension) and out-breathing (releasing) and the polarity of contraction–expansion there are manifold images, which lend themselves to express this polarity, such as opening–closing (performed with hands or as a group in a circle), going out–coming in (flying birds), lifting–pressing (the different walking of fairies or giants), jumping up and down (connecting with the earth gravity), sleeping – waking, growing–withering, hiding–reappearing. These experiences must be brought to the child by the teacher in such a way that they speak to the soul.

One can discover archetypal gestures in all realms of nature, the seasons, the weather, the plant world, and the animal world. In the realm of the human being one can work with the gestures of care and love for other human beings, plants and animals.

It is one of the great benefits of guided movement that one can bring the rhythmical element back into the movement patterns of a child. Children of today do not find their way easily into rhythmical, lively movement. Modern life has lost the rhythmical quality and children are surrounded by mechanically generated movements. They are drawn into imitating mechanical movements and quite easily fall into repetitive, lifeless movement patterns themselves. Through guided movement and through images which speak to the child’s soul, it is possible to invite back natural liveliness into the movement of children.

Movement as activity of the human soul and spirit

Steiner describes movement as a will process, which involves all four members of the human being before becoming visible as action. Movement originates as intention in the I, yet often this intention is hidden to the moving human being and therefore overlooked in explanations of what causes movement. Steiner states that the I cannot convey the intention to move to the limbs directly, even though the I is to be regarded as the final “mover.” He continues that movement appears first as inner movement through the activity of the astral and etheric bodies, which are the “transmitters” of movement into the body. Through the astral body the intention of the I will take on the quality of interest, which is a quality of the soul, physically represented in the nervous system. Through the activity of the etheric body intention and interest receive the quality of life, physically represented in the watery processes of the entire body and the limbs so that life-filled movement can arise. In the act of becoming outer visible movement, the intention of the I is fulfilled and will as a process of inner and then outer movement comes to completion (Steiner, *Study of Man*, Lecture 4).

When searching for an understanding of movement in the young child one needs to take into account all these four aspects of the process of movement: the activity of the I, astral, etheric and physical bodies. In mainstream psychology this is not recognized. (Sally Goddard-Blythe describes the superior role which music can play in alleviating learning difficulties, but she does not make the link to music as a soul experience, or to the spiritual dimension of movement. See *The Well Balanced Child*, chapters 5 and 6, on music and the overcoming of learning difficulties.) The discovery of physical movement being preceded by the movement of the soul is Steiner’s contribution to a spiritual psychology of movement. “It is significant that we must work on ourselves to develop from beings that cannot walk into ones that walk upright . . . In human beings. . . it is the soul that establishes the relationship to space and shapes the organization,” he says in *The Spiritual Guidance of the Individual and Humanity* (p. 6).

However, it is possible to merely move physically without participation of the cooperation of the soul-spiritual members of the human being with the etheric body. Then movement takes on a lifeless, mechanical character. In Lecture 6 in *Curative Eurythmy*,

Rudolf Steiner indicates that the etheric body cannot participate in movement which is derived entirely out of the physical body. Then the movement of the etheric body does not occur and thus is not able to accompany physical movement. This will have serious consequences because the normal human condition of the etheric body mediating between the soul-spiritual human being and the physical organization is then disrupted.

Kindergarten teachers can strive to guard the child against this tendency towards mechanical movement by imbuing their own movements with soul and life so that the children are able to absorb these qualities through imitation into their inner experience of movement.

In Chapter 1 of *Being Human*, Karl König compares the activity of moving with performing music. He uses the image of the I being a musician who plays on the instrument of the body. Movement is the music that arises in this process. This picture of the musician describes the soul-spiritual quality of movement well and is a key to the understanding of the mystery of movement. It is the soul and spirit in the human being who moves the limbs and thus enables the individual signature of a human being to be imprinted onto the body. It is a task and a challenge at the same time to learn to recognize this individual signature in the movement of children.

In his lectures to teachers Rudolf Steiner also characterizes the soul experience of moving as musical. Here he speaks about not the preconditions of movement but of the consequences of movement for the soul. He indicates that the soul belongs to the realm of stillness and does not experience physical movement directly, but rather reflects movement as “tone” in the soul. Steiner states that it is the lawful cosmic movement that creates the most harmonious experience for the soul.

What is “cosmic movement”? The rhythms and forms of the movements of the stars and of the etheric realm of the earth, which are expressed in gestures and movements in order to let archetypal cosmic qualities be experienced by the human soul.

Our purpose is to imitate, to absorb the movement of the world into ourselves through our limbs. What do we do then? We dance. ...All true dancing has arisen from imitating in the limbs the movement carried out by the planets, by other heavenly bodies or by the earth itself. [The head rests and the soul, being related to the head, must participate in the movements while

at rest.] It begins to reflect from within the dancing movement of the limbs. When the limbs execute irregular movements, the soul begins to mumble. When the limbs perform regular movements, it begins to whisper. When the limbs carry out the harmonious cosmic movements of the universe, the soul even begins to sing. Thus the outward dancing movement is changed into song and into music within.

(*Study of Man*, p. 144).

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Eurythmy with Young Children

• Nora von Baditz

This excerpt is from an undated, out-of-print booklet called "Ideas and Encouragement for Teaching Eurythmy," translated by Pauline Wehrle. We are grateful to Estelle Bryer for bringing it to our attention and to the Rudolf Steiner Library in Ghent, NY for finding a copy and making it available for borrowing.

Eurythmy with the little children under the age of seven began because Dr. Steiner told us "If one does eurythmy with little children under seven they acquire an ego force that neither school nor karma can give them." The day after he said this I began with a few little ones. The only indication for the build up of the lesson for this age was: One should do "primitive eurythmy."

Now Dr. Steiner has said of eurythmy in general that it unites us with those forces which are working in the child during the first three years of his life. Whoever has reflected on the first three years and has also studied *The Spiritual Guidance of the Individual and Humanity*, among other books on the subject, will be able to fit the two together and judge of what tremendous value it is to do eurythmy with the child as early as possible.

Eurythmy can begin about the third year, when the child wants to join in of his own accord, sometimes a little earlier, and does the first elements of eurythmy in a form corresponding to this age, with images arising out of joyful love. Little elves whisk by—the children do a lot of tiny steps on their toes to light, gentle music, and do shorts with their hands. Then dwarfs with bent backs come stamping, hammering silver and gold with their clenched fists as the music gets stronger.

As teacher one notices straight away that the children can still have an almost transparent heavenly lightness in the quick movements, and that as a grownup one has to enter into this light sun-filled world of movement. Dr. Steiner expected that, before starting to teach, the teacher should always leave all his worries and thoughts concerning his own life behind him, but where these lessons are concerned, it is of

very special importance. For the teacher has to be so cheerful, so full of creative joy that she is vital almost to the point of sanguinity. Never expect anything from the little ones in the way of achievements, or for that matter corrections, which would be quite impossible anyway. They should just live happily in the world of eurythmy.

One is reminded by the word "primitive" how simple it all has to be. It was difficult to discover what is meant by "primitive eurythmy." But the little ones themselves showed exactly what was suitable for them and one learnt from life. Everything that demanded more faculties in the way of thinking or counting was rejected, that is they could not do it. I was enlightened in this way when I wanted to do a short-short-long rhythm: some did four shorts, others three shorts, two longs. And I realized I could not expect that of them, but I must remain in the elements, that is just shorts or just longs. Then it went very well. The longs became giants with long powerful strides. The shorts were little dwarfs with nimble feet. The children loved it! They must be left quite free, I thought, to let them live their way into it, each in his own way. The will, which is the basis of this age, must also be protected in the lessons, and the children must never be forced into anything. Just let imitation work, the loving imitation of movement they enjoy.

In answer to the question as to why the little ones and the lower classes should only have eurythmy once a week, Dr. Steiner said: "The children should live in joyful anticipation. They should look forward to the lesson, and it should be harmful if that were not the case and they were overfed with eurythmy." Anyone who has introduced little ones in the right way to movements in which they are quite at home can experience this joyful expectation.

Without naming the sounds at all, they are woven into the happenings in the lessons. The work with little children consists mainly of workmen's games and fairy tales. When I asked Dr. Steiner whether it would be all right to do fairy tales in eurythmy with this age,

he replied: "Yes. That would be very good, but the fairy tales should be done in rhymes, never in prose." So short fairy tale poems like "Briar Rose," "Snow White," or "The Frog Prince" can be done with a lot of rhythm and just a few sounds.

The workmen's games given for the kindergarten change their forms in eurythmy. The dynamic of the work on the earth is presented in rhythm and eurythmic movement. Thus, the shoemaker hammers the nails into the soles of the shoes with little hammer beats. The postman carries the parcels with heavy steps. Although the little ones couldn't name the sounds, they do them in imitation of the activity of the work. Just as they do not read and write at this age, neither is the child introduced to a head understanding of the sounds and tones, but he lives with them and sustains them through the primal element of rhythm.

The soul food in the fairy tales and the strength which leads the children down to earth in the work movements is of special help to children under the age of seven. Besides this, it is essential to do the *interval of the fifth*. First of all, they move to music, and then comes a fifth and they listen to it, are happy to recognize it, and do the lovely round movement with enthusiasm. It can be called the "golden gate." That is appropriate, and the children love this name that arose out of the lessons. The teacher knows as well what formative importance the fifth has up to the ninth year: "The world helps to form man," "Man within the divine," "the experience of the fifth is man becoming conscious within the world order." The eurythmy teacher should show them a large fifth gesture reverently.

Dr. Steiner's indication that the little ones should do a lot of *B* gives rise to a variety of possibilities. He describes the eurythmic *B* as a movement in which one puts one's arms protectively and lovingly round something—and he named a small child. How the children love doing it! One of them stands in the middle and the others lay their arms and hands over him to protect and shelter him. Outside, the wild wind blows (done by the teacher) and the rain pours down, and one of them looks to see: no, the child has not been buffeted by the wind, no the rain has not made him wet—they cheer each time! They all want to be protected like that. It is clear that this sound belonging to the zodiac sign of the Virgin encloses the child that is struggling with the difficulties of incarnating as though with a heavenly cloak of blue.

A supplementary indication says that *B* can also

be placed around an object. So I took a cushion and threw it, a child caught it, and his arms actually lay in a perfect *B* around the cushion. What joy! Everyone wanted to embrace it; if the cushion fell on the floor it cried out (done by me) and they were all eager to pick it up and embrace it. One can bring the *B* in many ways.

It is not good to do an *I* (ee) sound at this age, for it would make them egoistic, so leave it out. You can also understand this when you know that the primal virtue of gratitude should be the fundamental force of the child's life up to the change of teeth. The love of God will arise later on out of this gratitude. Gratitude should grow with the child as the body grows. To stress the ego by means of the *I* movement would not be suitable yet.

As everything at this age is orientated toward removing hindrances and helping the physical, bodily nature to develop healthily, the lesson is built up in such a way that, without the child noticing it, the eurythmy penetrates every part of the body to enliven and strengthen it. The abundance of etheric life forces in eurythmy stream into the feet, preventing flat feet; stream into the fingers, draw from the teeth the excess of life which would cause decay, expand the chest, regulate the breathing, stimulate the metabolism. In short: they bring health. In joyful creativity, the teacher is aware of this effect. He takes care to see that light, freshness and love fill his own soul, so that only health-bringing forces touch the children. For the soul impulses in the environment are constructive or destructive forces in the development of the organs, tissues, circulation, etc.

It is necessary to bear in mind the three stages in the life of the child. Around the age of two years and four months, the stage of development of the head-organism is completed. Around the age of four years and six months, the etheric body frees itself from the rhythmic system and the chest. And towards the seventh year, the metabolic-limb system has been formed by the etheric body.

When one receives the children for eurythmy they are just at that age when the rhythmic system should be developed by dance-like movements. Rhymes in which the rhythm and not the word content is predominant are, according to Dr. Steiner, formative for the child. (Suitable ones can be found among very old texts.) Rhymes for the beating of longs or shorts, with clapping or tapping can also be used. The whole lesson is built on such rhythms.

Towards the fifth year, the children require more

energetic movements suitable for the development of the limb system. This can be allowed, for these bigger children can be given more difficult work.

Whoever teaches eurythmy to this age group should concern himself with the remarks in the pedagogical courses and the book *The Education of the Child in the Light of Spiritual Science*. All the teaching is based on warmth, real warmth of love being necessary for the healthy development of the child and joy should be there too, bringing light in which body, soul, and spirit can flourish.

It is obvious that a lot of other things besides fairy tales and workmen's games can be done. After all, there is free scope for the imagination. A great deal can be given to children with such a beautiful old poem as:

*When the little children sleep
All the stars awaken,
Angels bright from Heaven come
And till dawn has broken
They will watch the livelong night
By their beds till morning light.
When the little children sleep
All the stars awaken.*

How much the little ones like crossing their arms reverently over their hearts afterwards. Then, keeping it "primitive," contraction and expansion can be done

in such a way that the child forms a bird's nest with both hands, and the little birds are quite quiet inside, for they have not come out of their eggs yet. They look through the tiny opening—listen—all is quiet. Then suddenly they hear: cheep. . . cheep. . . one flutters out a little way (like laughing with the fingers) and goes back to the bird mother. Then two; fly up to the sun, warbling as they go. This first beginning of the power of initiative delights them all. Another tiny bird can hop about on the rod (then the fingers dance on the rod, but do not do Qui-qui yet).

No fixed forms come at this age as yet. Geometrical forms like the triangle and pentagon, spirals and eights belong to the curriculum of the first grade. So let the little ones jump about quite freely in natural simplicity.

Do not fight shy of having quite a large number of children in a lesson. I began with fifteen children and went on taking them until there were eighty. There was not the slightest difficulty. They all imitated the teacher and were happy to be doing eurythmy. Because of shortage of space I had to divide the group when there was a further increase in numbers. The more courageous, natural and down-to-earth one's attitude is the more devoted the children will be to the work.

Nora von Baditz taught eurythmy to young children in the time of Rudolf Steiner.



Movement—A Path Toward Freedom

From the 2011 East Coast WECAN Conference

♦ Nancy Blanning

We begin with a vast question. What is the intention of the soul coming into a human life, of incarnating? Rudolf Steiner describes that the soul in the spiritual world reaches a point where it can no longer develop. The individuality must return to human experience in order to keep evolving, to purify, refine, and distill the essence of his being and give this expression through physical, earthly life. Rudolf Steiner states in *Study of Man (The Foundations of Human Experience)*:

...Man evolves through a long period between death and a new birth and that then, within this evolution, he reaches a point where he dies, as it were, for the spiritual world—where conditions of his life in the spiritual world oblige him to pass over into another form of existence. He receives this other form of existence in that he lets himself be clothed with the physical and etheric body. What he has to receive by being clothed with the physical and etheric body he could not receive if he were simply to go on evolving in a straight line in the spiritual world (p. 17).

Now when this descent is made, how does the individuality actually “take up residence” in this new physical body and make the body a “home”? Our language clues us that we “move in.” It is literally through movement that the child begins to take possession of the body and make it a worthy instrument to express the uniqueness and intentions of his being.

Movement is the signature of life. Rudolf Steiner describes that the individuality, between death and rebirth, journeys out to the farthest reaches of the cosmos to digest and distill experiences from the past. When this is complete, he resolves to incarnate and moves back through the zodiac and planetary spheres to collect his capacities and intentions for its next adventure on earth.

Physical conception occurs through movement as the mother’s egg makes its passage from the ovary and is met by the sperm swimming towards it. Fertilization unlocks a process of astonishing growth. At pregnancy’s end, the baby descends through the birth canal to emerge into the earthly world after it has practiced

moving, twisting, and kicking in the womb. The newborn explores all kinds of movement. Initially erratic and uncontrolled, these are first brought into order by infantile reflexes that let the body experience its first predictable, guided physical responses to gravity and body position. The baby continues to move, explore and strengthen so that by age three she has achieved uprightness, taken first steps, spoken first words, and begun to show awakening thinking, all through gifts bestowed upon the child by the spiritual hierarchies.

These developments are meant to unfold in a predictable, healthy manner. But as educators we see more and more children for whom this development is compromised. Children are less coordinated, secure, and confident in their bodies. Increasing numbers are described as having sensory processing difficulties where integration of the sensory systems is disordered. It is through movement that these systems are strengthened and matured. The rich movement possibilities that have been the hallmark of healthy childhood now lie in jeopardy.

We can suggest many reasons why this might be so—over-arching fearfulness about injury so children are overly protected, passive life style, technology and conveniences replacing the need to be purposefully active, to name a few. Further detractors from healthy development include over-stimulation of the senses, hurriedness that allows no time to digest and consolidate experience, and truthful sensory experiences being replaced by “virtual” substitutes on screens.

Audrey McAllen, the late originator of the Extra Lesson therapeutic support work within our Waldorf schools, summed up the situation in a potent way. Children who come into life with a handicapping condition, such as Down’s Syndrome, are carrying personal karma. Yet the children we see with sensory integration issues and subtle impediments and learning challenges she described as “victims of world karma.” Through the ways that human beings have changed the world in a race to master and exploit the earth and the heavens surrounding it, the world has become a less friendly and supportive place for children’s healthy

development; and these children are innocent victims. As we look at these “signs of the times,” it is important to neither despair nor adopt a “Don’t worry, be happy” attitude. We need objective appreciation of what is confronting the children and ourselves to be clear and courageous in meeting these challenges.

In the three previous WE CAN February conferences, Dr. Gerald Karnow asked us to make *Study of Man* our pedagogical foundation. How do thoughts from these lectures guide us to help the young child to healthy incarnation? Rudolf Steiner first states that this is a spiritual as well as a physical task.

We will be conscious that physical existence here is a continuation of the spiritual, and that we, through education, have to carry on what has hitherto been done by higher beings without our participation. This alone will give the right mood and feeling to our whole system of teaching and education, if we fill ourselves with the consciousness: here, in this human being, you, with your action, have to achieve a continuation of what higher beings have done before his birth (Study of Man, p. 17).

Further on in Lecture One, Rudolf Steiner states that education has the task of helping the child learn to breathe rightly. Each breath presses the cerebro-spinal fluid up into the brain and then releases it to flow back down into the body, transplanting the rhythm of breathing to the brain.

Breathing is the most important mediator between the outer physical world and the human being who is entering it. . . The most important measures in education will consist in paying attention to all that rightly organizes the breathing process into the nerve-sense process. In the higher sense the child has to learn to take up into his spirit what is bestowed on him in that he is born to breathe. . . By harmonizing the breathing with the nerve-sense process we draw all that is soul and spirit into the physical life of the child. . . The child cannot breathe in the right inner way, and education will have to consist in teaching the child to breathe rightly (Study of Man, p. 20-21).

In physical breathing there is in-breath / out-breath, a movement between contraction and expansion. We utilize this rhythmic flow to form the kindergarten day as in-breath of focused activity alternates with out-breath to more relaxed consciousness. Thus we form the breathing “movement” of activities within our day. Rudolf Steiner describes this same polarity in the tenth lecture of *Education for Special Needs* as **point**

and **periphery**. Looking back to the task of incarnation, we could say that the child is striving to move from the cosmic “periphery” to develop in earthly life the concentrated “point” of his individuality. Each human being is striving to find and consolidate the stable center point of his being-hood from which he can move to fulfill his destiny in the world. Alternation back and forth between these polarities brings us back to movement as a form of breathing. Literally through physical movement, the child comes to experience the stable center point from which she can explore the world and find her secure place within it.

Earlier in this article the gifts of infantile reflexes as a first movement “educator” were described. These pave the way for the cosmically bestowed capacities to achieve uprightness/walking, speaking, and thinking. In the eighth lecture of *Study of Man*, Rudolf Steiner presents the Twelve Senses, gifts the zodiac bestows to each human being as avenues to experience the physical and social world. In simple listing, these are the senses of touch, life, self-movement, balance, smell, taste, sight, warmth, hearing, word or speech, thought, and ability to sense the ego-being of another. Our educational goal is to offer nourishing sensory experience in all twelve. But as early childhood educators, our focus is to help young children develop health and strength in the first four, known as the foundational or will senses. Two that we work with daily in circle activities are **self-movement** and **balance**. Cooperating with the other senses, these two enable the child to find a center point, expand to the periphery of the world, and then contract back into a stable center again. These two senses have the most to do with physical movement as well. In grasping the archetypal gestures and the physical movements associated with these, we have a guiding image of how we can help the child learn to breathe rightly both literally and figuratively.

Mainstream terminology calls balance the **vestibular** sense. Steiner describes it as an inward sense through which we “relate ourselves to right and left, to forward and backward [and] hold ourselves in balance so we do not fall over” (*Study of Man*, p. 119). Its sensory organs are the three semi-circular canals of the inner ear along with a chamber, called the vestibule, just below where the canals meet. These let us know where our body is relative to earth’s gravity. Every movement of the head causes fluid within this system to move and stimulate nerve cells that inform us of our position in the three planes of space. When we are standing in equilibrium in these three spatial planes, we are in the upright posture of the human being, holding ourselves in the concen-

trated point. The pathway to a healthy and reliable vestibular sense lies in doing all kinds of movements that stimulate or challenge our balance. Paradoxically, we have to move to educate the balance system so it can know what upright stillness—being in the point—is. Whenever we circle in a ring, twirl, step up and down, rock, sway, roll, somersault, walk a beam, balance on a tippy river stone, teeter-totter, swing, or climb, we are stimulating and strengthening the vestibular system. By imitating the peripheral, spinning movements of the cosmos and the earth, we guide our balance to be able to find the center point and stability in uprightness. Attaining uprightness in all spheres of life is really the human goal.

Self-movement Steiner describes as the sense which lets us know “whether we are at rest or in movement, whether our muscles are flexed or not” (*Study of Man*, p. 119). Self-movement lets us experience the relation of body parts to each other and gives us a map of body geography. In mainstream terminology this is known as **proprioception**. Its perceptive organs are sensors in all joints that register the position of each body part. Whenever we allow gravity to pull us to the “point,” we are working as well with the proprioceptive system. As we jump and land, carry heavy objects, donkey kick or wheel-barrow with hands on the floor, hang from a bar, jump rope, or feel pressure in any joint, we experience the proprioceptive sensory system. These movements pull us to a point of concentration, weight, and stable physical control of the body, which is also a goal in gaining intentional control of the physical body.

Children in our classrooms reveal to us daily their need to strengthen and mature the vestibular and proprioceptive systems by all the movements and antics they seek. They become squirmy and restless, tipping chairs, wiggling, sometimes becoming virtual dervishes as they seek enough vestibular stimulation to help them know through balance where they are in space. When they lose experience of their body parts through inefficient, under-developed proprioception, they clump and bump, hug, dog pile, and wrestle as means for gaining reassurance of where their limbs and body parts actually are.

These two senses are intimate partners which constantly inform each other of any need to adjust position and posture to breathe rightly between point of self and periphery of world. It is critical to remember that these two work together. Stimulating only the vestibular can spin us too far out into the periphery. Emphasizing the proprioceptive to an extreme binds us to gravity and makes us heavy and stone-like. But we

cannot stay frozen there; we must breathe out into the periphery to keep our sense of orientation. As we work with these two as partners in movement imaginations, we are educating movement and sensory breathing, as *Study of Man* mandates as one educational task.

This movement education, however, touches on something far more vast than we could usually imagine. Rudolf Steiner indicates that there are relationships among the senses. He states that these essential will senses we are considering are the foundation from which the four highest senses of hearing, word, thought, and ego develop. These Steiner also denotes as the spiritual or social senses. How these develop either extends or limits our capacities in social life. The health of the foundational senses directly influences how well the upper senses will develop. If the lower ones are weak, the upper ones are endangered. The health of the highest senses depends upon how the child grows health in the lower senses in the early years.

Some years ago Arthur Zajonc, physics professor at Amherst and former General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in North America, described building the medieval cathedrals as the social deed of that time. Generations of unnamed, dedicated workers followed the direction of master builders to erect these structures. Group commitment to build to the glory of God united people in this effort. Dr. Zajonc then questioned what the “cathedral” of our time might be. He suggested that it is the healthy social life.

If social life is the cathedral, then the senses we strengthen each day in our movement work are the foundation on which it stands. If we can carry these images of breathing—expansion/contraction, point/periphery, proprioceptive/vestibular with us—we realize the magnitude of what our simple movement work with the children may mean. Giving health and strength to the foundational senses through movement also builds the capacities of the highest senses for healthy social life for each individual. Movement education and the qualities it embraces—imagination, flexibility, truthful archetypal movements, and joy—also lays the basis for our social life. This matters not only for the welfare of each individual but also for the future of humanity.

*In breathing, grace may two-fold be.
We breathe air in, we set it free.
The in-breath binds, the out unwinds
And thus, with marvels, life entwines.
Then thanks to God when we are pressed
And thank Him when he gives us rest.*

—Goethe

The Cottage Garden Home Nursery Program

• Barbara Audley and Celia Riahi

We are a licensed large family day care in Amherst, MA. We feel honored in having this opportunity to share a picture of our program with our Waldorf early childhood colleagues. While we both are individual WECAN members, we are currently pursuing full membership in WECAN as a home program. This process has become very important to us. We want to be able to tell the world what we stand for and be able to use “Waldorf” in our advertising. We speak—in our conversations with applicants and parents and in our current advertising—of having our personal educational philosophies rooted in anthroposophy, but we feel that membership would grant us a different level of standing in our community.

We are housed in a lovely home with a large, fenced-in back yard and two rooms dedicated to the children, although we use the whole first floor. We are licensed for ten children, with nine enrolled for next school year, seven or eight per day; their ages range from sixteen months to four-and-a-half. We would like to share a picture of us and of our day with our wonderful children and describe why we have come to offer this program after many years in other Waldorf settings.

Celia was led to Waldorf education with the birth of her daughter thirty-five years ago. She ran a licensed Home Day Care, called “The Other Mother,” in New York City for ten years, then taught in established Waldorf schools in New York and Massachusetts for the next twenty-three. Barbara was led to Waldorf education indirectly, through her work with children and families in inner cities. After a time, she began to wonder if a method had been developed that would serve to educate the souls of children. As a response to this question, she discovered Waldorf education and knew she had found what she had been searching for. Barbara also has a diploma in Speech Formation from the Goetheanum.

We decided that we wanted to use our energies and experience now, in this stage of our lives, to provide a warm and cozy place for the littlest children to have a

first group experience. Doing this in our home allows us to provide what we think is important for this age group. We can organize the rooms, our rhythm, and our lives around what we do at The Cottage Garden. We often tell parents that we offer “slow childcare.” Here things are implicit rather than explicit—we sing, tell little stories, do tiny puppet plays, and do housework that needs to be done. We cook with the children, we wash hands with them; but truly, we are helping them learn social skills and self-care skills so they can begin, in their sweet little ways, to build a sense of their own independence within a loving community. Patience, warmth and love are the skills and qualities necessary to provide this for the children. We are able to make decisions, changes, and adjustments to the program that we feel are right for what we do. It is pleasant to have this independence and flexibility in deciding how to form our program after many years in schools where things are necessarily more structured.

The children arrive between 8 and 8:30 each morning, Monday through Thursday. We play inside until 9:15 when we have our snack of hot cereal—rice cream and oatmeal, each, twice a week—and fresh fruit. We grind rice during the week with the children for our rice cream cereal. We eat family style at our child-sized table, singing a blessing to begin and a thank you to end our meals. It amazes us how even the littlest children reach out their hands and sing the songs. One little girl, during her first week with us, held out her hands to her parents at their supper table, expecting them to do the same and to know the songs. After changing diapers or going to the potty, we have what we call our “tummy rest.” Each child has a pillow with his or her symbol on it, and we lie down for ten minutes while one of us sings some lullabies and then tells a nursery rhyme story before we go outside.

We then go to our porch, where the individual cubbies are. We dress to go out, which can take up to thirty minutes with the little ones who need lots of help. We sing and have little rhymes as we dress and often go out in shifts so the ones who are ready do not have

to wait. Then outside we go to the sandbox, climbing logs, slide, tunnel, hammock swing and the beloved lounge chair, which has become a favorite plaything. It has been a boat, a house, bunk beds and a restaurant. In the warm weather there is the wading pool and sprinkler—whew, our water bill has gone up this summer! They play with everything out there—the little ones just finding their balance in walking on our sloped lawn, digging in the sand or the mud, looking under logs for “squirmy-wormies,” planting in their real and make believe gardens, grinding rice or felting with Celia. We rake leaves in the fall, slide on the snow in the winter—and winter is long here in Massachusetts—and play in the water in the warm weather. There are “boo boos” and hugs and kisses, and rhyming games and little snacks for the “horsies.” We found that we needed to provide snacks for the “horsies” because the children actually began to chomp away at the grass! The children are always moving—crawling, running, jumping, busy bees. Happy little busy bees!

We try to go out whenever we can, but there are icy cold days when we do stay in. We are lucky enough to have an inside climbing structure with a slide attached. It fits in our living room and has become a fixture there all winter. The rocker boards*, a rocking boat and all the simple toys we have keep everyone busy inside. Most of the soft toys and dolls have been handmade by Celia or by our friend, Elisabeth Radysh, toymaker extraordinaire!

We come inside by noon so we can wash, change diapers, go potty and then have lunch. Lunch is always a thick, blended vegetable soup with a grain added. After lunch, when one child leaves at 1:00, we all go to sleep. The littlest ones are put in their playpens with their own down throw and sheet or sheepskin. The older ones each have a mat, covered in a flannel sheet, a pillow and an individual down throw. Barbara usually sings to the little ones, while Celia goes to the older ones, tells a made up story and sings them lullabies. Everyone goes to sleep within 15 minutes and sometimes we lie down, too, for a short rest. When we wake the children up at 3:00, we have a little snack prepared; then it is time to go home again at 3:30.

This picture is just a little more than bare bones. So much happens in between what we have described here. We are also active in supporting the families and children in learning everyday skills and with community building. Additionally, we have the business side to our enterprise with licensing, paperwork, contracts and all that goes with the administrative side of this work, which we hope to share with you in the future. Also, please note our website for more information and photos: www.thecottagegarden.org.

*Rocker boards can be ordered from Larry Fox at the Fellowship Community in Spring Valley, NY. Contact the Fellowship Community office at 845-356-8494.



A Toddler Group within a Kindergarten

• Eldbjørg Gjessing Paulsen

The following is an excerpt from the book *Trust and Wonder: A Waldorf Approach to Caring for Infants and Toddlers*, newly translated from the Norwegian and published by WECAN in 2011.

Here is an example of a day in the kindergarten [with toddlers], one way of doing it. The model is the toddler group in our kindergarten in Norway, with ten children ages one to three.

7:30	The children arrive and play freely
8:00	Breakfast
8:30	Free play
10:15	We wash our hands, and have singing and movement in a “ring”
10:30	Lunch
11:00–2:00	Care (changing diapers, preparing for sleep), followed by nap
on waking	Small fruit meal and drink when children wake up, followed by care
1:30–3:00	Free play, outside or inside, depending on season and weather. Some children go home between 2:00 and 3:00.
2:30	Meal for afternoon children
3:30	Free play, or a quiet time
4:15	Kindergarten closes

To provide one example from our kindergarten, we will follow two-year-old Pia during a regular day. Pia is the second of three siblings. An older sister is in another section of the kindergarten and the youngest brother is still at home.

It is eight o'clock and Pia arrives with her sister and mother. *A joyful Pia comes through the door and runs straight away to her place in the locker room, sits down and starts taking off her shoes. She wants to put on her slippers by herself and she tries, but needs a little help from her mother before they are on comfortably. Now Pia is ready to go in. The educator carefully opens the door to the main room where breakfast is being served. Mum stands in the doorway and says goodbye. Pia*

first looks into the room before she turns around to her mother and says “cuddle.” Mum gets a cuddle and Pia runs to the table.

At mealtimes, the children have their fixed places. They sit in high chairs around the table. The ones who are able to climb up have permission to do so. *Pia climbs up by herself, but needs a little help to get into the chair. Once most of the children are in place, we light the candle and everybody sings: “The soil nurtures the little seed; the sun ripens the grain to bread. Dear sun and dear earth, thank you for the gifts on our table. Bless the food.” We all hold hands (this is voluntary) and then we start eating. Pia wants crispbread, and with a little help from the adult, she gets butter and cheese on her piece and starts eating. Pia can manage two slices of crispbread or a slice of regular bread for breakfast. Pia enjoys her food, frequently puts a hand on her neighbor, and often has lots to say.*

After breakfast, while we tidy up, is the time for free play. *Pia climbs down from the chair, but needs a little help to get right down onto the floor. She runs to the adult and asks for a dishcloth; she wants to help clean the table. This takes a while and the dishcloth lands on the floor. Then she is in the corner with the dolls, where she has found a knotted doll that she carries around with her. She spots Jacob who has a little cat. Suddenly she really wants that cat. She lets go of the doll and takes the cat from Jacob. This results in screaming and objections. Pia looks impervious and holds on tight. The adults want to help. They find another cat, give it to Pia and together they return the cat to Jacob. It is not quite what Pia wanted, as she'd rather have the cat that Jacob had, so after a bit of coaxing Jacob accepts the new cat and Pia gets to keep the one she wanted. Big smile, and a few seconds pass before Pia returns the cat to Jacob. Now he has two cats and Pia has already moved on to something else. Free play among the little ones is constantly changing; sometimes it's not possible to follow all the details.*

When playtime is over, the adults tidy up before opening the door to the bathroom where everyone has

to wash hands. *Pia has found a bag that she has filled with blocks. She is sitting on the floor engrossed in emptying the bag. Then she realizes that the door is open. She leaves the bag and runs into the bathroom to wash her hands. Someone is already standing at the basin. She wants to push him away, but is stopped by the adult. She protests a bit, but accepts having to wait for her turn. At the basin, she lets the water run across her hands and wants to linger there, but there are others waiting behind her. She gets help with drying her hands, then runs into the room again and sits down on the carpet.*

One educator helps with the washing of hands and another sits down on the floor to gather the children for song and play, while the third makes sure we have all we need for the meal.

Pia wants to sit close to one of the adults. If someone is already sitting there, she tries to sneak in between so that she is sitting alongside an adult or on the lap. Sometimes this works, but at other times she has to find another place. Most of the time Pia participates in singing, rhymes, and jingles, but at other times it is more fun to hide under the table or run around a bit. Depending on the child and the situation, we bring the children back to the group, or we let them be and they come back when are they ready. Most of them participate in all the songs and enjoy the repetition. Often we sing the same songs throughout the year. The latest one is "We are traveling to Eating land" and all the children are mentioned by name in the song.

Pia is one of the first to run to the table and sit down. She would prefer to climb up by herself, but needs a little helping hand. When everyone is in place, an adult walks around and puts a drop of oil (lemon or lavender oil) in the children's hands, while we recite a verse. We massage the oil into the hands; feeling the warmth and smelling the wonderful fragrance and sometimes touching each other's hands. Pia sits and waits for the oil; she loves the fragrance and warm hands of the adult. She would really like to massage the hands of Preben sitting next to her, but he will not allow it.

The children are wearing large bibs. The candle on the table is lit. We sing the same song we sang at breakfast, "The soil nurtures the little seed." Each child receives a plate of food according to the daily menu and we start eating. We try to keep a peaceful mood at the table, so the adults do not talk more than necessary. There is generally a little prattle going on, as someone is usually repeating and practicing new words just learned. *Pia loves to natter, even though she does not have all the words to express her meaning. However, through her body language and mimicry she*

succeeds in expressing most things.

Not everyone finishes eating at the same time, but we close off the meal with a verse that expresses, "Thank you for the food, it was very good and we are all satisfied." The children who want to will hold hands. After the meal, they are all cared for before having a nap. This is the time of day where each child gets his or her own time with the adult. One by one, they are taken into the baby care room for a diaper change before a nap. The parents decide whether the child should sleep outside in a pram or inside in a bed.

We try to use as much time as we can for this part of the day. Rhymes, jingles, and songs are used when removing the socks and finding all the toes, or getting the arms through the pullover. If there is time, we use a little oil for massaging legs or arms, which helps foster a sense of well-being and calm before falling asleep. *Pia sleeps inside and she happily follows the adult to the care room to get a clean diaper before lying down. Again, she wants to climb onto the washbasin by herself, which she manages most of the time. With a little help, she gets ready and finds a clean diaper on the shelf. The diaper is changed, but before the long pants are put on, we play a little game with her toes, saying Tip, Tip, Tip every time we touch one of them. We could repeat that over and over again and she would never get tired of it, but now she must sleep.*

Each child has a favorite song, which we will sing at this time. Some want the same song twice; others want two different songs or maybe even three different ones. A children's harp tuned to the pentatonic scale D-E-G-A-B-D-E will calm the children and help them sleep. The soft and tender tones of the harp are soporific. Some enjoy being tucked in, while others are happy with a touch on the cheek; others again need a bear hug before settling down. The needs of the individual children vary and as we get to know each and every one, we come to understand them. It is very important that the children bring their own familiar bedding from home, or at least a scarf from Mum or a T-shirt from Dad, especially in the beginning. The smell of home can create a feeling of safety and help to make sleep easier. *Pia has two songs that she wants to hear before going to sleep, "Hum to me, Mummy" and "My guardian angel." Both songs are repeated a couple of times before she gets a cuddle and is then tucked in. She falls asleep easily. Sometimes we need to play on the harp a little, but as a rule, she falls asleep quickly.*

Waking up is just as important as falling asleep. Again, we need time for each of the children, in order that they enter peacefully into our world again. They

meet us in individual ways when they wake up. Some children are wide-awake straight away and stand up shouting; others stay under the covers and need a long time to waken. The way that we interact with them at this point will often determine the rest of the day. As adults, we feel very privileged to be part of this segment of the child's life, when they come from a deep sleep to an awakened state. Sometimes it is necessary to have children on our laps for a while, to give them enough time to wake up. A touch on the cheek or stroking the back makes it easier for them. One way of "waking" the child is through songs or fingerplays that are connected to rhymes and jingles. *Pia normally sleeps one to two hours every day and she wakes up as peacefully as she falls asleep. Happy as a little bird, she often stands up in the bed waiting to be picked up. She does not need much time before she is ready to be dressed.*

Most of the children need help to get dressed. As they grow, they become more independent and want to do it themselves. This can take time, but that is something we can provide. It does not matter if it takes a long time to put on a sock or trousers. Usually when given enough time the child will succeed, but we adults have the tendency to do it for them in order to speed up the process and, therefore we rob them of the chance to do it themselves. Later on, they might not want to dress themselves, although by then we expect them to, and they might need the help they did not want when they were younger. *Pia is a girl who wants to dress herself, but does not always get it right. With a little help from the adult, she has the impression that she*

has managed by herself and is beaming with satisfaction when all the clothes are on and she can join the other children.

The children also get a piece of fruit and something to drink at this time, before they go out to the others. The time outside depends on how long the child has been sleeping, but everybody gets some time outside before they are either picked up or return inside for the afternoon meal. Weather permitting, they are allowed outside again after the meal and do not return inside until the end of the day. *Pia loves being outside and the first thing she does is to look for her sister. Normally there is mutual joy when they see each other unless big sister Linda is busy with something special. Pia thrives outside in the sand pit, which is the most popular place. An adult is always present. She spends much time digging or filling the bucket with sand. In between, she walks around, but mostly with an adult or big sister. Pia is one of the children who stay until the very end of the day. If she has had a good sleep during the day, she is in a good humor throughout, but if she has had too little sleep, we notice that she is very weary in the afternoon. She is extremely happy when Mum or Dad comes to fetch her and her big sister. She waves goodbye to the educators smiling and happy, and sometimes she gives a hug to those close by.*

Eldbjørg Gjessing Paulsen started Stjerne-glimt Waldorfskindergarten in Arendal, Norway in 1984 and has been there ever since. She works with Waldorf education nationally and internationally.



Honoring Diversity: Images from Islam

• Lincoln Kinnicutt

It can often be a challenge to bring elements to the classroom which truly reflect and acknowledge the children in meaningful ways, especially if they come from diverse cultures. In the 2006-07 school year as the Advent season was approaching, I was preparing a circle by Nancy Blanning called “Searching for the Light”* in which the circle journeys, looking for light, and finds it in the realms of many cultures. It is a wonderful circle and easily adaptable to the children before you. Though several cultures are included in the journey, there was not a visit to the Islamic realm.

That year there was a boy in the class whose father was born into a Muslim family in Egypt and whose mother, an American Waldorf graduate, had converted to Islam. Islam was very important to this six year old who, though not required by his family, would do his best to fast during Ramadan and would talk with great affection of his own prayer rug which his father had brought for him from Egypt.

It seemed natural to create an insert to the circle with this boy and his tradition in mind. I did not really know where to start, so I phoned his mother. As a Waldorf graduate and a teacher of children herself, she was very in tune with Waldorf kindergarten. She told me she had been doing a circle at her mosque for the children there about the pilgrimage of *haji*, the journey each Muslim is charged to make at least once to Mecca. We talked about the festival, and she shared with me what she had been doing.

The circle insert which follows grew out of what she had written and notes I had taken from our conversation about the festival, trying to reach the universal gently yet directly. I was fortunate to be able to work with this mother to create images about the Islamic pilgrimage, which seemed to be meaningful to this child but not awakening. When the circle was presented, the child stopped and said, “I know this.” This was an important moment of acknowledgement and confirmation for this boy.

* from *Movement Journeys and Circle Adventures* by Nancy Blanning and Laurie Clark, available from WECAN.

Editor’s note: I was lucky to be able to speak with this mother, Alexa Clark Abdelatey, by phone. One obvious question for her was how she found a compatible interface between the family’s devoted commitment to their religious life and Waldorf education; the family’s four children are all in Waldorf schools after having spent some time with a Waldorf-oriented home schooling. She replied that every day in their Waldorf classes the children experience reverence, appreciation and understanding of creation and the Creator that is held in a beautiful way. The daily and yearly repetition of wonderment and joy in God and the beauty of creation gives her children the foundation upon which everything else can grow in their spiritual life.

For herself and the other Muslim families in the school, she stated that it means so much to have “our stories” represented. She also shares stories of the Islamic heritage when she is invited to her children’s Waldorf school twice a year to present stories for two major Islamic holidays. For Ramadan and Eid ul-Fitr, she presents the story of Muhammad in the Cave, when Angel Gabriel came to him with the first Quranic verses. For the Hajj, it is the story of Abraham.

Lincoln Kinnicutt is lead teacher of a mixed-age kindergarten class at Potomac Crescent Waldorf School in Arlington, Virginia. He completed the Waldorf Early Childhood Teacher Training at Sunbridge Institute in 2010, where he did project work on Diversity in Waldorf Kindergartens.

Hajj Circle Insert

Note: this is intended as an insert to the circle “Searching for the Light,” by Nancy Blanning, found on page 49 of the book Movement Journeys and Circle Adventures. From Nancy’s introduction to the circle: “This is a traditional circle meant to be built up over weeks. Four different images of light are offered: A Hanukkah celebration, a mother and child under the stars of Africa, a Native American mother dedicating her child to the sun, and the manger scene of the Nativity. The images can be presented in a different order—always ending, however, with the final manger scene—if that suits the needs of a particular class or the festival dates for a particular year.”

Many tents are gathered here
In a desert sacred and far.
This is the land of the
Crescent moon and star.

Before the sun rises
It’s dark and still.

The call from the minaret
Rolls over gentle hills.

Here in this tent

So quiet and still,
A family looks to the east,
Their hearts to fill.

They roll out their rugs
And look to the east.
Here we are all friends.
No one is the least.

As the sun rises
We journey together
Around and around.
Warmth and light we have found.

Thank you, thank you, dear friends all,
We are warmed now one and all.
May stars’ blessings shine on you
And on these friends good and true.

Arms spread out before you

**Hold heels of hands together stretched overhead,
forming a crescent with hands, then join pointer fingers
and thumbs to form diamond (star) still overhead**

**Raise arms up then lower palms down in slow motion,
coming to stillness**

“Roll” arms in forward gesture

**Form tent door with arms and look in,
bowing head to door**

**Bow; spread arms outward then
bring inward to heart.**

Hands rolling out, away from body

Inclusive gesture to all in circle

Raise arms as sun, then hold hands to form circle

**Stroke / rub / hug upper arms to gesture warmth
Hands raised, fingers “twinkling”
Hands slowly descending, dropping blessing on those below**

Hustle Hoosh!

♦ Wilma Ellersiek, translated by Kundry Willwerth

The following is an excerpt from the book *Dancing Hand—Trotting Pony*, recently published by WECAN. The first half of the book is devoted to games for hands, fists, and fingers, which bring dexterity and flexibility into this most important realm for the development of language and thinking in later years. Renate Long-Breipohl points out the manifold benefits of such games in her article in this issue.

The second half of the book portrays many different animals in a series of verses, songs, and gesture games, some for hands only, some for the whole body. One of these is reprinted in full below.

Ellersiek's approach to the animal world has a very rare and special quality. As Ingrid Weidenfeld points out in her introduction to this section, "the animals

are shown through play, acting in their natural way. They never begin to speak; never move in ways they would not be able to move; never are they portrayed as quasi-human." Thus, she says, "the children learn and experience, through imitation, something characteristic about the animal portrayed through play." They experience the true, living essence of the animal, rather than an intellectual description or emotional interpretation.

Through Lyn and Kundry Willwerth's devoted work of translation and editing, these games have now been made available in English. WECAN is very pleased to present them in the hope that they will inspire many joyful hours of play and fun, while bringing forces of life and health to the children.

Hustle Hoosh!

Hand Gesture Game

FROM HER HOUSE PEEPS THE MOUSE: FEEP – FEEP!

HUSTLES: HOOSH – HOOSH – HOOSH – HOOSH!

FINDS A LITTLE NUT:

P P P P P P P! NIBBLES THE MOUSE.

P P P P P P P! NIBBLE – NIBBLE – NOUSE.

FEEP! FEEP!

HUSTLES: HOOSH – HOOSH – HOOSH – HOOSH!

FINDS A LITTLE ROOT:

T T T T T T T! GNAWS THE MOUSE.

T T T T T T T! NUBBA – NUBBA – NOUSE.

IN THE FOREST IT GOES: CRACK!

HOOSH – HOOSH: SHE RUNS BACK! FEEP!

TEXT:

1 From her house

2 peeps the mouse:



3 feep – feep!
left right

4 Hustles: hoosh – hoosh –
↑ ↗ ↖
 hoosh – hoosh!
 ↗ ↖

HAND GESTURES:

1 Lay your rounded left hand on your right thigh, close to your body, palm down. With your right hand, put your pointer and middle finger on top of your thumb, your fingertips extend slightly over your thumb tip, forming the "mouse's nose." Hide the little nose under your rounded left hand.

2 At "peeps," the little nose suddenly appears from under the "mouse hole," the rounded left hand.

3 The little mouse looks left and right at: "feep – feep."

4 At "hustle," the little mouse leaves its hole and runs quickly along a short stretch of your thigh toward your knee. Then he stops suddenly. At each "hustle" or "hoosh," again move him quickly forward, but in changing directions, so that the mouse runs in zigzags towards your knee. At your knee, stop the movement again. While the mouse hustles, dissolve unnoticed the mouse hole gesture of your left hand.

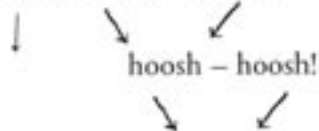
5 Finds a little nut:

6 P p p p p p p!
nibbles the mouse.
P p p p p p p!
Nibble – nibble – nouse.

7 Feep! Feep!



8 Hustles: hoosh – hoosh –



5 At the word “finds,” lightly press the little nose down into the ground (your right knee.)

6 With your pointer and middle finger tap with quick, tiny, rhythmic movements on the tip of your thumb. This movement shows the nibbling of the mouse. For the “ppppppp” pucker your lips as if giving a kiss, opening and closing your lips very fast while sucking in the air a little. This creates a nibbling noise. Movements of the “mouse” should be coordinated with the sounds. Take a brief break at the end of each text line.

7 The little mouse looks left and right, and each time he does he calls “feep!”

8 Suddenly the little mouse hustles back to the left, running along the inside of your thigh, but still close to your knee. (Don’t turn your “mouse hand,” the little nose is always pointed to the children.) Then stop suddenly. Run him zigzag along your thigh toward your body. Stop suddenly.

9 Finds a little root:

√ √ √

10 T t t t t t t!

gnaws the mouse.

T t t t t t t!

Nubba – nubba – nouse.

11 In the forest it goes:

12 Crack!

•

13 Hoosh – hoosh: she runs back!

14 Feep!

9 Bend your pointer and middle fingers so that they can scratch your thigh or other surface. Also bend your thumb. This gesture suggests the “teeth of the little mouse.” Scratch the surface at each “√.”

10 Rhythmically gnaw an imaginary root with your “mouse teeth.” In other words, the finger nails scratch on the support surface. To make a gnawing sound, press your tongue against the roof of your mouth directly behind the upper teeth. Suck in the air a little, and very quickly move your tongue back and forth from the roof of your mouth. Pause at the end of each line.

11 Speak the text: “in the forest it goes” quickly, softly, well articulated, and at the same pitch.

12 Suddenly call out short and high: “Crack!” tapping your thigh quickly with your left pointer. This “crack” is an acorn which has fallen down.

13 The little mouse disappears behind your back in zigzag. Take a brief pause.

14 The mouse nose appears once more at “feep.” It looks boldly around the corner, then disappears again behind your back.

A Visit to Costa Rica

• Joyce Gallardo and Teresa de Jesus Savel

In March 2011, we traveled to Costa Rica, Central America, where we visited five Waldorf early childhood initiatives throughout the country. We experienced this beautiful, army-less country's unique character and vision reflected in its peace-loving, conservation-minded people. Everywhere we visited, we were received with hospitality and heart warmth by our Costa Rican colleagues, for which we are most grateful. Here we will describe our visit to the Sea Heart School, which initiated our visit. A longer version of this article with further details and descriptions of our visits to the other four initiatives can be requested from the WECAN office.

Sea Heart

The Sea Heart School (named after the sea heart pod, shaped like a heart, that drops from a tree in the jungle in Costa Rica and is deposited in the sea by streams and rivers, where it is carried to beaches all over the world) has a five-morning-a-week program, housed in a small, wooden, one-room house on an unpaved road one mile from the beach. This little schoolhouse has a certain endearing charm to it, with its paneless windows and wide shutters open to the soft tropical breezes and the filtered sunlight. Toys are somewhat sparse, but the teacher, Ellen McRobert, has been making several lovely new additions to the toy collection. The adjoining small house on the property serves as the living space for the teacher and two volunteers from Germany.

The outdoor play area is small and spaces to explore are few, due to the size of the property. Outdoor water play in this tropical climate is very popular at Sea Heart and basins of water are carried out onto the grass each morning for the children to play in. There is a sandbox for digging. Once a week the teachers walk to the beach with the children for a morning of play in the rivulets of salt water that have formed on the sand. Another morning, after snack, they walk to the botanical garden to play in the shade of towering trees and ferns, the fragrance and vibrant colors of the

tropical flowers and the scent of the fruit and spice trees providing an exquisite delight for their senses.

Languages spoken

Eleven children, ages two years to five-and-a-half years, mostly boys, are enrolled in the kindergarten. This area of Costa Rica, Puerto Viejo de Talamanca, has become "home" for many expatriates, and the children come from culturally diverse families, many of whom are trilingual. German, Swiss German, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, English, and Bri-bri—the indigenous language of the area—are spoken. Ellen, the North American Waldorf-trained lead teacher, speaks only English. Her assistant, Ashley, who moved to Costa Rica with her family when she was a child, speaks Spanish and English. Ancel Mitchell, the administrator and one of the school's founders, is a Waldorf-trained class teacher with several years' teaching experience.

Pedagogical theme

We met with the teachers almost every afternoon to share our observations of the kindergarten morning, with a pedagogical question and answer time and conversations on the importance of the inner life of the kindergarten teacher. The underlying theme of our work with the teachers in each of the initiatives was the importance of tending and cherishing the living spiritual forces in childhood through the care and nurturing of the four basal senses, particularly during the first three years of the life of the child—the sense of life, the sense of touch, the sense of self-movement, and the sense of equilibrium or balance. (Each of the programs in Costa Rica has several children under the age of three). We shared many pedagogical insights from the work of Hungarian pediatrician Dr. Emmi Pikler and from the work of Dr. Rudolf Steiner. Teresa modeled conscious and respectful caregiving for the teachers during hand washing and drying, diapering, dressing, etc., always conscious of protecting and nurturing the lower senses, as well as the nurturing of the

relationship with each individual child. We noted that the teachers immediately implemented our suggestions the following day.

The positive and joyful reactions of each child as his teacher gently washed his hands in a basin of warm water that had been heated on the stovetop (there is rarely warm water from the tap in the bathrooms in Costa Rica) was enough to convince the teacher that it was well worth the extra time needed to heat water on the stove for hand washing. One child smiled widely and said, “Ah, *el agua esta calentito!*” (“Ah, the water is so nice and warm!”) Another child, who is just eighteen months, asked several times throughout the morning, after his hands and face had already been gently washed with a small washcloth moistened with warm water, to have them washed again. He wanted to carry the little washcloth around with him. In the bathroom sink, the children washed their own hands as quickly as possible, which left no possibility for creating a special moment of contact and relationship building with each individual child. This moment of the teacher paying exclusive attention to each child during hand washing and during diapering, of addressing him by name, of looking into his eyes as she spoke, became a cherished moment for the teachers in the kindergarten morning.

We gave suggestions for the artistic and nutritional presentation of the food served to the children—nourishing the children’s sense of life (and our own, as well) through the delicious-smelling aroma of the food we cook, the colors, the arranging of the food on the plate. The children helped in the food preparation—they kneaded the dough for the *tortillas*, they helped to wash *el arroz y los frijoles*, they chopped vegetables for the soup, etc. They also helped to set and clear the table, to serve the food, and to wash and dry the dishes.

Parent meetings

At Sea Heart, as at each initiative we visited, a parent meeting was offered, a time of open sharing and questions from the parents in which overall their genuine interest and support of Waldorf education for their children was apparent. With this came the realization that there was much work to be done in order to better understand the Waldorf pedagogy and how to complement at home what the teachers are trying to create daily in the kindergarten. We spoke of anthropology as the pillar of Waldorf education and there was interest expressed by several parents in each of the meetings in forming a study group together with the

teachers.

Many of the issues that parents are facing in Costa Rica are the same as the ones we face in the U.S.—how to protect our children in a media-saturated world from the onslaught of electronic devices; even if we try to keep our homes media-free, there is always the friend’s house next door where parents set no limits. The academic pressure placed on older siblings by the public schools they attend is affecting their children’s health and well-being. What happens when their kindergarten child is of school age and there is no Waldorf-inspired school for them to attend? (There is only one school in all of Costa Rica that is striving to work out of the insights of Waldorf pedagogy and has a kindergarten and four grades).

After the parent meeting at Sea Heart, one mother, who is Afro-Caribbean, said, “I don’t know much about Waldorf—I’m a bush girl—all I know is that it has transformed my Fabio into a lovely child.”

Birthday celebration and farewell

On our last day at Sea Heart we participated in a birthday celebration for one of the children. Ellen had made crowns for all of the children and a special crown and cape for the birthday boy. The whole room was filled with the beauty and fragrance of deep pink hibiscus flowers from the front yard and Ellen told a birthday story with lap puppets as the birthday boy listened wide-eyed from his mother’s lap. *Feliz cumpleaños!* was sung and everyone had birthday cake.

“*Feliz cumpleaños!*” “*Adios!*” “*Hasta luego!*”

Joyce Gallardo is an early childhood educator and mentor. She is the director of *Los Amiguitos*, where she works out of the insights of Waldorf early childhood education, offering a kindergarten-nursery program that is enriched by the work of Dr. Emmi Pikler. She has completed RIE Level I training in the U.S. and introductory and advanced training at the Pikler Institute in Budapest, Hungary, as well as Spatial Dynamics training in the U.S. Joyce has worked with children internationally in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua and Peru.

Teresa de Jesus Savel, who is Cuban-American, is an early childhood educator and founding member of the Green Valley School in southern Vermont. The school serves children three months old to grade six and works out of the insights of Dr. Rudolf Steiner, Dr. Emmi Pikler, and the natural world. Teresa has completed introductory and advanced training at the Pikler Institute in Budapest, Hungary.

Connecting with Young Children: Educating the Will by Stephen Spitalny (2011). Available at www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/2079685

During his tenure as *Gateways* editor, Steve Spitalny distinguished himself as a seeker of truth. He stimulated the journal's readers to ask deep questions about how we interact with young children to truly educate the developing human being. He always looked deeply at Rudolf Steiner's indications to distill what is truthfully essential, sorting out "Waldorfisms" and practices and opinions that may have started truthfully but become sentimentalized.

In his newly published book, *Connecting with Young Children: Educating the Will*, Steve shares the fruits of his own quest for these essentials through his many years' experience as Waldorf mixed-age kindergarten teacher, parent and grandparent, researcher, thinker, and student of Anthroposophy. The opening chapters give a broad view of the nature of the child from birth to seven as he or she journeys toward human being-hood with help of the four foundational senses—touch, life, self-movement, and balance. Long-time students of child development will likely read this section with head-nodding assent to the accuracy of a familiar picture. For someone new to these ideas, these pages give a panoramic view upon which to ground the more specific and concrete chapters which follow—"Imitation, Life Activities and the Role of the Adult as Example and Guide" and "Language and Communicating." These chapters particularly are recommended for everyone's reading. There are philosophical and practical treasures on these pages.

The chapter on imitation reminds us of how profoundly the imitative models in the child's environment affect physical, mental, emotional, and social development. "The sense impressions being received by the child . . . are the building blocks for the body and soul and need adult attention to ensure they are supportive to the child's development." [p. 72] The quality and amount of materials and toys ("It is even possible to have too many 'Waldorf' style toys"), coupled with an unhurried pace of the day, are critically important. But the most essential requirement for healthy growth through imitation is the purposeful, will-engaged adult. Witnessing an adult making something from raw materials "stimulates the child's imagination into

creative mobility. The imagination resonates with the activity of making when encountering it. This resonance works deeply into the child's soul and into the physical body. It stimulates the formative forces working in the brain and works deeply into the developing breathing and circulatory systems. The activities of making nourish and energize the young child's will forces" (p. 73). This chapter is filled with other observations and encouragement to remind teachers how urgent it is for young children to see adults engaged in "making" and other human work. "Kindergarten has to take on some aspects of what the home once stood for; the home is no longer the heart center of the family, but is a resting place in between the errands, responsibilities, and activities where parents and children are often on their way to" (p. 81).

The chapter "Language and Communicating" is equally a gem, but not a delicate one. Steve demonstrates deep regard and sensitivity for the use of language. He challenges to us to observe and evaluate how we use language ourselves. Choice of words and tone of speech to children reveal much about our attitudes as adults toward them. Is our language objective and truthful? Is it brief and comprehensible, matching the developmental state of consciousness of the young child? Do I sometimes make statements sound like a question by tagging "Okay?" onto the end? Topics of giving choices, questioning—"What did you do in kindergarten today?"—and praising are also given a critical look. The book's subtitle, *Educating the Will*, reminds that our use of language must leave open the possibility and opportunity for the child to do what needs to be done out of his own will, not as the result of a subtle or implied coercion. This objective use of language is an art for each teacher to develop.

This book is permeated with respect for the nature of young children and invests them with dignity. The young child is just beginning the journey into human physical and social life and making connection with others in our modern world of isolation. "A truly human education attempts to overcome this isolated quality of modern life by developing the capacities for connecting within each child, which will remain latent until later stages of life. We can plant the seeds in early childhood for faculties of relating; but it is important to be conscious that we are working to nurture and fertilize what will bear fruits only in the child's later years.

The task is to help the child relate to and connect with all aspects of life in ways suitable for [his] development, so that later as an adult many realms of connection are available to him. This is a social path toward cultural renewal and a more peaceful world, one individual at a time. If you want to change the world, change yourself so that when the children who imitate you grow up, they will change the world” (p. 19).

Years in the classroom reveal that much, if not most, of our task as educators is self-development. This subject fills the final chapter. Whether this is a new consideration or a path we have been treading for a while, this book gives us lots to consider in taking a further step. Thank you, Steve.

—Review by Nancy Blanning

Unbornness: Pre-existence and the Journey Toward Birth by Peter Selg

(SteinerBooks, 2010).

Peter Selg’s *Unbornness* is a seed-like gift to all of us as early childhood teachers. It is as if he has responded to Rudolf Steiner’s admonition in the first lecture of *Study of Man (Foundations of Human Experience)* in which he offers that “We must become more and more conscious of the other end of man’s development on earth, namely birth” (p. 17).

Selg has deeply devoted himself to elucidating Steiner’s insights regarding this crucial aspect of the human journey, and he brings it to us with artistic reverence. In truth, this little book is a meditation. The broadest picture of the human being, brought together with the clarity of the description of the most minute spiritual processes, enable each of us a path of study to understand what stands before us in the individual child in our care.

Initially this little book was a lecture offered in 2009 to midwives at the Ita Wegman Klinik in Arlesheim, Switzerland. As those who protect and prepare the threshold of birth more than any of us, the midwives’ presence enables one to feel the nearness of their work with the threshold of birth. For those in our own educational work who meet expectant mothers and fathers as well as parents with very young children, the background in this book brings us essential pictures to strengthen our awe—and support—for the courageous journey that each incarnating child coming to birth in our times must take.

Selg begins with Raphael’s Sistine Madonna to frame his own content, with moving detail of those who observed this painting over the years. He then leads the reader to the contemplation of life before conception. Poet, painter, and spiritual scientist offer their gifts to us. I was moved deeply by these lines from Christian Morgenstern:

*Present longing shall grow to will,
And present will to strength will return
After the quiet so rich and still.
Strength creating what is willed,
Will that out of this creating
Gives us new momentum, bears us on.*

From this welcome, through our immersion in the realm of Raphael’s painting, we are led on a journey to the world of the individuality between death and a new birth: the human soul enters the great cosmos. We each find our own biography in these contemplations, of course, in addition to our possibility for gaining insight into the journey of the children who come to us. Now in my sixties, I personally found myself newly engaged in relationship with the reality of the short time we spend in the freedom of the earth sphere in contrast to the centuries of reflection and preparation in worlds of spirit beyond. A feeling of wanting to be as conscious as possible of this earthly time, to enter into the sphere of its possibilities within my own biography, became ever more tangible!

In the third section of his monograph, Selg leads us from the cosmos back toward the life, in the intricate and delicate processes that accompany the soul’s re-engagement with the earthly side of its existence. Steiner himself acknowledges that the soul-spiritual processes involved here are complicated ones: how does spirit become matter in the instance of ourselves as human beings? When we stop to contemplate, it will surely be that once again we recognize that we stand before primal mysteries.

I would like to quote directly from Peter Selg to reinforce the tasks of those working with the child in the first seven years, and most particularly in the first three years.

*In his anthroposophical and pedagogical lectures
Rudolf Steiner repeatedly described how the*

experiences before conception and the life-processes of the human spirit-soul still reverberate during early child development when the child learns to stand upright and acquires the skills of walking, speaking, and thinking.

Each step we take in understanding and *standing* for these processes of the *full* human journey enables the child before us to feel seen in his fullness and wholeness. These processes are still very much present: the child has only just begun his or her descent into matter: life before birth is much closer than we can easily see. It may sometimes feel difficult for the teacher to recognize, acknowledge, and embrace the wholeness of the child who struggles in his or her path of incarnation into the physical body. But to the degree that

we can do so, we become teachers truly working out of the spirit in a highly practical way. Answers to our questions around the children's daily needs will come to us.

I do feel that we cannot educate children toward freedom without a full view of the purpose of the individual's journey round the cycle of birth and death, birth and death. For me, this means to enable the children to connect with their pre-earthly intentions, to integrate their soul-spiritual beings into their life-bodies with adequate strength and capacities to bring these intentions into being. If we bring to life within ourselves the contents of this lecture / monograph, we will gain newfound strength for this task.

—Review by Susan Weber

The Tear: A Children's Story of Transformation and Hope When a Loved One Dies

by Nancy Jewel Poer (2011). Available at www.nancyjewelpoer.com

"You know, Joey, when we die we can go up the rainbow bridge back to heaven."

"You mean like we come down the rainbow bridge when we are born?" said Joey.

Grandmother's eyes twinkled. "Oh, yes, the golden sun lights a rainbow path so we can go back home to our star."

Nancy Jewel Poer offers a rare gift to children and adults in this stunning picture book. Often we are at a loss in helping a child come to terms with the death of a loved one. This book provides a true spiritual picture of death that can guide a child towards a profound understanding that is developmentally digestible. The sadness that comes with such an event is not overlooked in this story but finds transformation through images that bring hope and a continuing trust in life.

The love that is shared between a Joey and his grandmother is described and the many things they loved to do together. The wonderful times from picnics and festivals to sleeping under the stars beside one another bring a picture of joy and the fullness of life as the boy and his grandmother say to one another after



each event, "Now wasn't that a beautiful time!"

When grandmother's life is over on the earth, the sad and lonely feelings find solace in the special journey that Joey's tears create as

a path to growth and new discovery.

This is a book that should live in every Waldorf kindergarten classroom. The teacher can take it out when a child in the class experiences the loss of a loved one. This story provides a living picture that brings solace for the child and his or her family. It also plants a seed of gratitude in the heart for all that the loved one has given that can grow and blossom into the future.

Nancy Jewel Poer is the mother of six and grandmother of seventeen. Her teaching career spans nearly forty years. She is an author and artist and her work celebrates the beauty and spirit in all of life. Nancy is known nationwide for her warm and lively lectures on parenting, child development, Waldorf education, women's issues and the spiritual American and threshold work. Her recent documentary on conscious transition has won two national film awards.

—Review by Laurie Clark

October 14–16, 2011, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, Keene, NH: **Supporting Integration of the Primitive Reflexes in Children, Birth to Six: Practices and Interventions.** Friday evening 6 - 8 pm, Saturday 9 am - 3 pm, Sunday 9 am - noon. Cost \$180, \$75 deposit required to hold space. In this weekend course we will learn to recognize the normal progression of reflex integration, how to support this process and what to do if it is not occurring including use of Spacial Dynamics interventions that every teacher and parent can incorporate into daily activities with the child. Contact info@sophiashearth.org / 603-357-3755.

October 22, Austin Waldorf School, Austin, TX: **Texas Early Childhood Teacher Meeting.** Activities include pentatonic songs for the season, eurythmy for the care of etheric forces, and exercises from the Extra Lesson on the harmonizing of the physical/astral body of the teacher. For further information contact Betty Jane Enno, WECAN Regional Representative, 512-922-5577. Fee: \$6.

October 29, 2011, Emerson Waldorf School Chapel Hill, NC: **Parents as Partners—Forging a New Way of Working Together,** WECAN Southeast Regional Gathering with Louise deForest. The gathering will include a morning talk, an afternoon workshop with time for questions and conversation with Louise, plus breakfast/snack, lunch, and a snack-to-go at the end of the day. The cost to attend this gathering will be \$50, but participants who register before October 7 can save \$10 (\$40 early registration.) If you have additional questions, please contact Karen Smith – 404-417-9522 karen@kevinandkaren.com and Annie Sommerville-Hall – 404-627-1093 - somhall@earthlink.net.

November 4–5, 2011, Rudolf Steiner Centre, Toronto: **From Orality to Literacy: Best Practices for Literacy Mastery from Early Childhood to High School.** WECAN sharing Conference and Waldorf Development Conference. This is a topic we are working with daily in our classrooms and our discussions with parents. Linda will provide helpful information for E.C teachers and there will be workshops geared towards early childhood educators. A morning snack and lunch is included in the \$80 fee. Visit www.rsct.ca for details.

November 11–13, 2011, Rudolf Steiner College, Fair Oaks, CA: **Building Resiliency: Keys to the Kingdom.** Early Childhood Symposium with Nancy Mellon, Linda Thomas, and Suzanne Down. Join leading researchers and educa-

tors in exploring the therapeutic aspects of movement, puppetry, storytelling, and self-development. Professional puppet show, eurythmy fairy tale, and vendors' bazaar. Contact Lauren Hickman, 916-961-8727 x 117, lauren.hickman@steinercollege.edu / www.steinercollege.edu.

February 10–12, 2012, Spring Valley, NY: WECAN East Coast Conference, **Offering Support for the Incarnation Process: The Relationship of the "I" and the Body in Early Childhood** with Susan Weber and Philipp Reubke. Detailed conference information will be sent to WECAN members by email in late November and will also be available online by December 5. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Register early to ensure a place! Registration closes on January 23. Contact: conference@waldorfearlychildhood.org or visit www.waldorfearlychildhood.org.

April 1–5, 2012, Dornach, Switzerland: World Early Childhood Conference, **Journey of the "I" into Life: A Final Destination or a Path Toward Freedom?** There will be a wide variety of workshops and activities at the conference, with keynote speakers Louise deForest, Dr. Michaela Glöckler, Dr. Edmond Schoorel, Renate Long-Breipohl, and Claus-Peter Röh, one of the two new leaders of the Pedagogical Section. The conference fee, including meals, will be 350 Swiss francs or approximately \$400. Some discounts are available for those traveling long distances to the conference—for details contact the conference organizers through the website below. WECAN is also working to raise funds to help with travel support. We will announce further details later this fall. For further information on the conference, visit the website of the Pedagogical Section at www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch.

For more events sponsored by WECAN and our member organizations, please see our web calendar at www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/calendar.asp.

Please also contact our advertisers in this issue for information about their upcoming events: *Sunbridge Institute, Rudolf Steiner College, Eurythmy Spring Valley, LifeWays North America, Rudolf Steiner Centre Toronto, Sophia's Hearth Family Center, West Coast Institute.*

To submit or update an event, email Lory Widmer at publications@waldorfearlychildhood.org.



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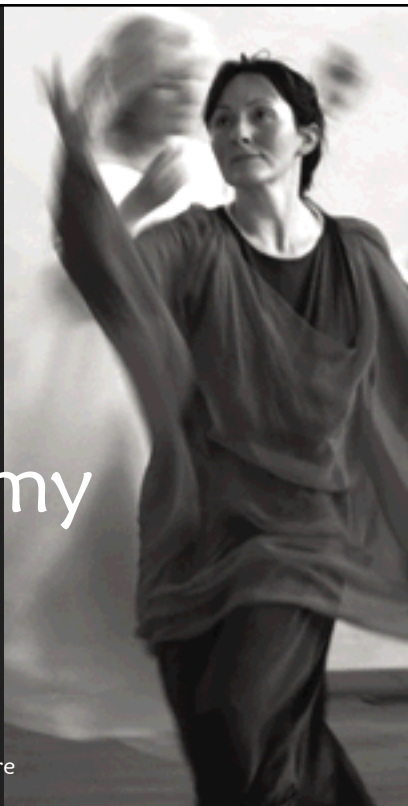


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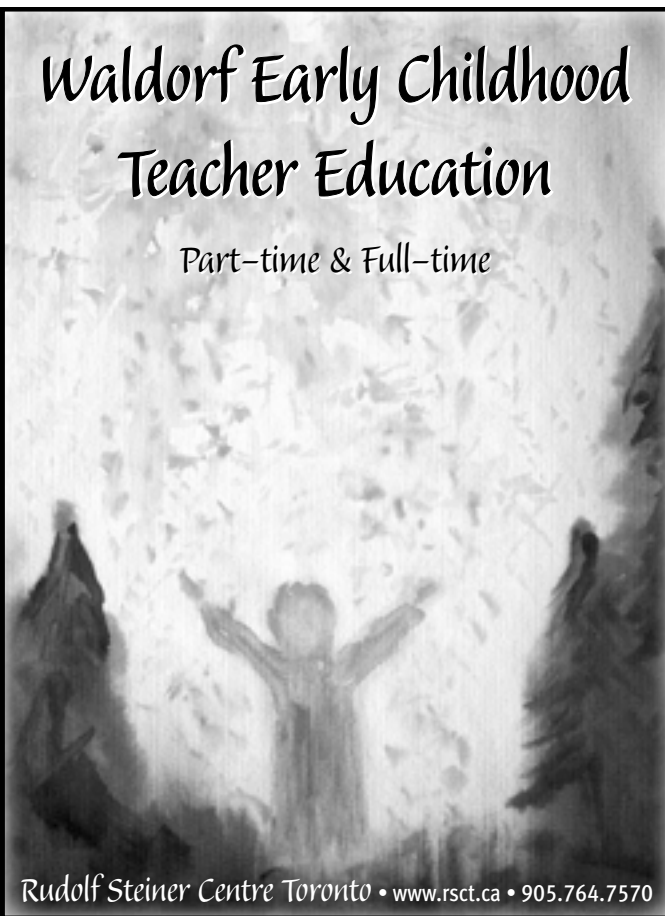
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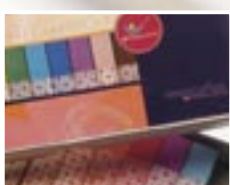
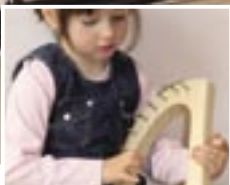
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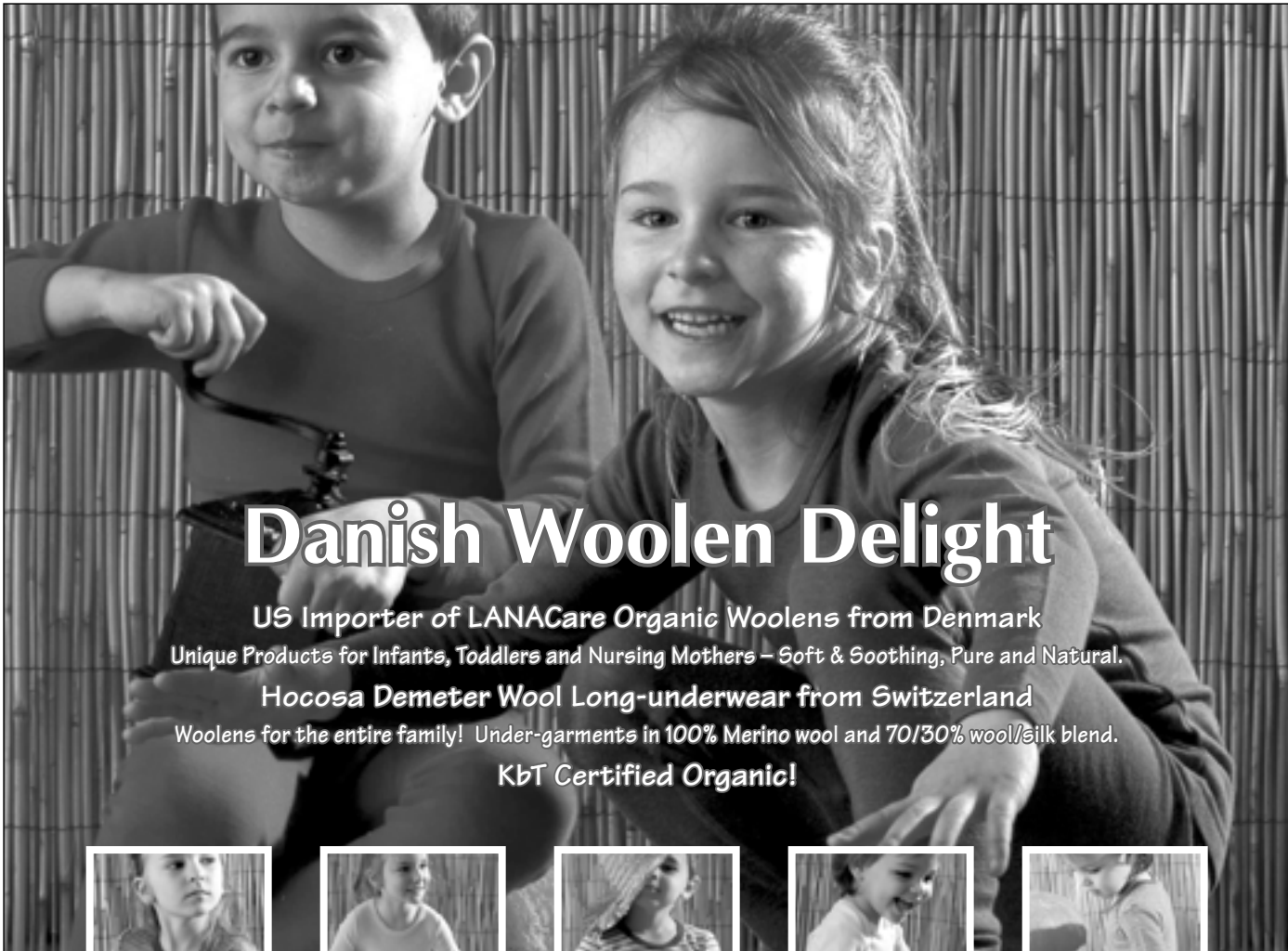
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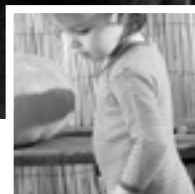
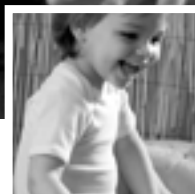
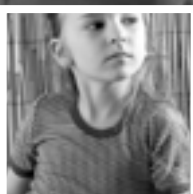
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