

Gateways

Newsletter of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America ♦ Issue 83, Fall 2022



Books and Resources for Parents and Educators

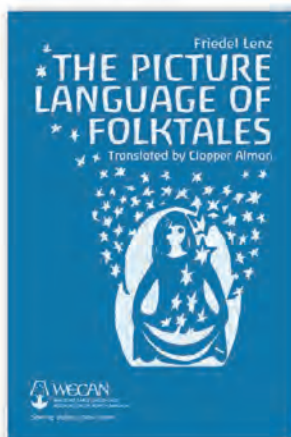
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Birth to Three in Education and Care
Rudolf Steiner, Emmi Pikler and the Very Young Child
Edited by Heather Church

Birth to Three in Education and Care: Rudolf Steiner, Emmi Pikler, and the Very Young Child shares its title with the theme of the first conference of its kind. The keynote speakers, who have devoted their life's work to understanding the young child, what the child's needs might be, and how we, as conscious adults, can welcome them warmly into their physical bodies and onto their paths as human beings, explored how Emmi Pikler and Rudolf Steiner inform educators' work with very young children. We are very fortunate that these two insight-filled streams have found each other, and those who take up their indications, continue to work with and for young children so that developing humans might be as free as possible to choose a path in life, to be who they came here to be.

While creating economic safety and security for their families, twenty-first-century parents absent from the family and home for longer and longer working hours face the classic problem of our times: how can we give the best we can to the children we love, while also satisfying personal needs as well as the demands of society? This book offers perspectives from several adults who care for young children in different ways.



Fairy tales speak in a visual language - but what do these pictures speak of? In *The Picture Language of Folktales*, Friedel Lenz looks at traditional tales, originally collected and retold by the Brothers Grimm from 1812 to 1857, and their original images as part of the development of human consciousness. The characters of these stories are human beings living within two worlds - one which is physically visible and experienced through bodily senses and another that is not visible but nonetheless sensed.

Eurythmy in Kindergarten is a beautifully illustrated answer to the question, "Why eurythmy in kindergarten?" This unique, artistic form of movement, with its deep connection to the formative power of speech, is especially important for young children's speech development, which is increasingly under threat in our times. This lovely booklet is written for kindergarten teachers, eurythmists, students in training programs, and parents.



The mission of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America is to foster a spiritually-based impulse for the work with the young child from pre-birth to age seven. WECAN is committed to nurturing childhood as a foundation for renewing human culture.

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Gateways is published in spring and fall by the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America
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Spring Valley, NY 10977
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Annual individual membership, which includes subscription, is \$50.

Back issues are available for purchase from WECAN, and as free downloads from the Online Waldorf Library at www.waldorflibrary.org.

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Deadlines for Issue 84, Spring 2023:

Articles: January 15, 2023

Advertising: January 15, 2023

Cover Art:

Watching a Mystery by Lise Meijer

About the Cover Artist:

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For the WECAN Calendar of Events, please visit waldorfearlychildhood.org/events-calendar.php





Betty Peck, 1921-2022. Photos courtesy of Anna Peck Rainville



Dorothy Olsen, 1931-2022 (with Diana Hughes and Waldorf Teacher Education Class of 1991)

From the Editor

— Nancy Blanning

What really matters?

Distilling the life stream of Waldorf early childhood education

What a collision of events the last three years have brought to us—an unbelievable trembling of the ground upon which we stand. Rudolf Steiner emphasized that we need to be attentive to “the signs of the times” as we plan how to act in response to the things facing us.

We see both obvious and subtle effects of these stresses and strains in the children who have joined us this fall in our early childhood classes. Along with joy in being together, children are showing “disregulation,” an unsettledness and agitation in their moods and behaviors. It is hard to find calm and a true state of safety and security into which they can relax. And we can likewise observe that this is true for ourselves as their teachers. We must forge a pathway that affirms for ourselves and the children that goodness, beauty, and truth still exist in our world and that we can make them happen through our intentions and our actions. How can we do that?

Creating a “new normal” is an opportunity and a huge responsibility. What makes this education truly Waldorf? Of the many changes the pandemic imposed upon us, what do we keep of the heritage we have received from the past? Diversity, equity, inclusivity? How can this be of utmost consciousness in our awareness and planning? How do we begin to organize our thinking about all of this *and* bring some comfort and healing to our scraped, bruised, and tattered selves? This issue of *Gateways* is dedicated to helping us find our way toward reassurance, soothing, and healing by distilling our practices down to what is essential.

Waldorf early childhood was given a gift by WECAN Coordinator Susan Howard in the form of her essay, “The Essentials of Waldorf Early Childhood Education.” Written fifteen years ago, this essay is as relevant today as when it was written, if not more so. (You can download a PDF from the Resources section

of waldorfearlychildhood.org, under “Early Childhood Educational Practice.”) It begins with asking what it is that makes our education “Waldorf”—bread baking, beeswax modeling, watercolor painting, Lazed walls, soft colors, natural materials, festivals? Rudolf Steiner never gave an outlined curriculum, but said the content is always founded upon the self-developing being of the teacher. The teacher’s relationships with the children, families, and colleagues also are fundamental. These lovely activities and environmental surroundings are means for conveying “inner qualities, attitudes, capacities, and intentions for the teacher—all of which can have a health-giving effect on the children, both in the moment and for the rest of their lives.”

These essential qualities are:

- Love and warmth
- Care for the environment and nourishment of the senses
- Creative, artistic experience
- Meaningful adult activity as an example for the children’s imitation
- Free, imaginative play
- Protection for the forces of childhood
- Gratitude, reverence, and wonder
- Joy, humor, and happiness
- Adult caregivers on a path of inner development

What really matters? Experience of these essential qualities is what we want to offer to the children and their families. The articles of this issue offer suggestions as we distill answers for our individual situations.

Leading this issue is a keynote address given by Philipp Reubke, Pedagogical Section co-chair at the Goetheanum, to the International Puppetry Conference held this past July. “Living Thinking for a Lifetime” suggests simplicity in our approach

to classroom presentations, puppetry in particular, supporting the inherently healing qualities of puppetry presentations.

Karen Imhof, kindergarten teacher at Rudolf Steiner School in NYC, describes the journey taken by children and teachers when a Ukrainian refugee child joined their class last year. The article takes us into a study of child trauma, a very important topic for our consideration. While not all may be traumatized in any clinical sense, all of our children are in shock from “displacement” in their lives due to the pandemic, and in need of healing reassurance.

Other people who have been displaced and traumatized are the Indigenous communities of the North American continent. Appropriately acknowledging and honoring these groups is sensitive. Dr. Joaquin Muñoz, professor and co-keynote speaker at the February 2022 conference, accepted an invitation to write about Appreciation vs. Appropriation. This thoughtful article poses hard questions for us. Finding the right indigenous story is not the simple answer to acknowledgement and appreciation. It is a much longer road toward which Dr. Muñoz offers us some beginning steps.

It is not only the children who are tattered and worn at the edges. We adults are so ourselves. It is necessary that we also find ways to refresh and renew ourselves. Louise deForest offers a compendium of ideas for realistic, doable self-care to help us carry on our work with good energy and joy. We need to bring the right inner mood to the children, for they imitate not only what we do but who we are and how we are interfacing with life.

We continue to explore how to develop and not give only lip-service to cultivating tolerance, resilience, true caring, empathy, and a sense for justice. The article “Movement toward Tolerance” has come out of the study of Henning Köhler and his book, *Working with Anxious, Nervous, and Depressed Children* (available from AWSNA Publications). When the four senses of touch, well-being, self-movement, and balance are supported and well-developed, they literally provide a physical foundation upon which these social soul capacities can develop, a reassuring fact on which we can build much of our work.

Puppeteers Janene Ping and Aimee de Ney both had articles in the spring issue of *Gateways*. While

the articles discussed different ways of portraying the Michaelmas festival, the intent of both was to discuss the use of puppetry as a healing and community-building opportunity for collaboration. Janene presents a follow-up article, and Aimee shares her reflections on this community-collaboration opportunity in puppetry, emphasizing that their different perspectives have a common aim in view.

As we look to the future and to the essentials, we also have an opportunity to honor the past. Two prominent early childhood pioneers crossed the threshold this summer: Betty Peck and Dorothy Olsen. In both cases, their accomplishments were monumental and their legacy an honor to describe.

For the Classroom has practical treats. Suzanne Down offers a description of the “Protection Story,” giving healing and reassuring images of security, safety, and “being home,” along with her own story “Grandmother’s Hat.” Holly Koteen-Soulé and colleagues at Sound Circle Center training have been working with creating stories and imaginations that bring forth DEI messages implicitly. Holly offers a description of their process and a model story, “Blackberry Bunnies,” which pictures diversity and inclusivity in a gentle and artistic way. And eurythmist Wendalyn von Meyenfeldt from Canada contributes an autumn imagination that is lovely material for a circle time as well as a eurythmy lesson, offering more pictures of shelter, protection, shelter, and inclusivity.

In our Book Review section we present the new *Birth to Three in Education and Care—Rudolf Steiner, Emmi Pikler and the Very Young Child*. The four keynote presentations from the first-ever North American Birth-to-Three conference, held in 2019, form the content of this book. The material is rich, and the approach to this special care of the very young child is informative for all teachers, no matter what the age of the children we care for.

Since trauma is so heavily considered in our articles, we also want to briefly recommend the book *Educating Traumatized Children* by Bernd Ruf (available through SteinerBooks). And we are pleased to announce the forthcoming publication *Toward a Kinder, More Compassionate Society: Working Together Toward Change*, which will consist of workshop summaries compiled from the February 2022 online conference. These are expected to be available as

preparatory reading for the 2023 WECAN conference in Spring Valley, NY dedicated to “Finding Our Ways—Toward a Kinder, More Compassionate Society.”

What really matters? When we distill things down to essentials, we see “qualities, attitudes, capacities and intentions from the teacher.” In each of our programs we can look at these and ask how these are offered in digestible, accessible ways to these tender, little children in our care. Are love, warmth, and care coming through to soothe and reassure their disregulated selves? Does the play environment offer an opportunity to “play through” and digest recent stressful and confusing experiences? Do practical activities give the children a chance to actually be doers and see the results of their efforts in cooking,

cleaning, and caring for the environment indoors and out? Do they see process—rather than an emphasis on end product—and sequential order in how our work and circle imaginations are done? Are they carried by the rhythms of life that create a harmonious hum underneath and around each day in the class? Do they experience tolerance, inclusion, and appreciation for every individual, with all of our differences?

With these as our essential goals, this is the Waldorf early childhood education for the next one hundred years that I will be proud to tell the world about. So may it grow and be.

Be well and secure in feeling the blessings of care we share with one another. ♦

Focus—Healing Gestures

Simple Puppetry as a Pathway to Living Thinking

~ Philipp Reubke

In the media and in many schoolbooks today, there’s an assumption that the human being and the whole solar system are mechanisms—just causes and consequences. Claims that there are living beings in our universe whose intentions influence what happens are called ridiculous. But those defending the mechanistic outlook don’t recognize that it comes from a weakness in our thinking and in our will forces. Adults who claim that all around us is lifeless and mechanistic cannot perceive their own blindness for life.

The small child is just the opposite. Children see in every little piece of wood many different beings and forms—a horse, a fox, a trumpet. Their dynamic imaginative ability allows them to continually add something to their perception of an object and to picture what it could *also* be, or become. Young children’s willpower, which shows itself above all in their movements, also lives very strongly in their thinking, giving them a marvelous capacity to imagine

life everywhere. Steiner’s pedagogical aim for the young child was above all to preserve this power of imagination for as long as possible.

How is this to be done? By surrounding the child with materials, objects, figures and toys that are very simple. The child’s tenderly awakening imaginative ability is given the opportunity to continually supplement what is missing and to add something new. Steiner often emphasized this kind of simplicity, as in this excerpt from *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*:

Give a child a handkerchief or a piece of cloth, knot it so that a head appears above and two legs below, and you have made a doll or a kind of clown. With a few ink stains you can give it eyes, nose, and mouth, or even better, allow the child to do it, and with such a doll, you will see a healthy child have great joy. Now the child can add many other features belonging to a doll, through imagination and imitation within the soul. It is far better if

you make a doll out of a linen rag than if you give the child one of those perfect dolls...What are you doing if you give the child such a doll? You are preventing the unfolding of the child's own soul activity. Every time a completely finished object catches the child's eye, the child has to suppress an innate desire for soul activity, the unfolding of a wonderfully delicate, awakening fantasy. You thus separate children from life, because you hold them back from their own inner activity.

By presenting toys which are too perfect, too beautiful, too finished, we hold the child back. We set the child's imagination free by way of simplicity. The task for puppetry is the same. The puppets and their décor—and also our way of storytelling—should first of all be simple. By leaving free space for the children's imagination to fill in what is missing, we help them develop reality-based thinking infused with will activity and liveliness. Otherwise, one cannot connect to reality or to spirituality; the thinking is weak and one lives in the belief that the world is only a machine. I think if we realize puppetry in this way—in addition to giving children simple toys to play with—we can contribute strongly to our children's development of reality-based thinking.

As a kindergarten teacher, this way of considering puppetry gives you a very practical advantage: you don't need to prepare long hours into the night to be able to present puppet shows in your classroom. Where you really need to invest your energy is in living with the story, building up its inner pictures within yourself, and carrying the story in your heart and mind. Then the facts of making the puppets and décor can be done simply while the children are engaged in their morning play, because you know that outer perfection, as opposed to focusing your inner attention, can become a problem if it's too much. If through your simple dolls you can express your intentions and the images living in you, then the child will receive this inner activity.

Sometimes I would make a knot doll—or in a little bit more sophisticated way take silk or cotton and put wool in the center for the head and make knots for the hands. Since I couldn't hold all the figures at once, I put them on little wooden supports so they could stand up for themselves. Or I could take only stones,

pinecones or other natural objects—with perhaps a little spot for the eyes and mouth—and very simply play out the story.

When I started teaching kindergarten, I was afraid that these children, who'd seen fantastic shows on screen or in the theater, would be annoyed to watch such simple plays. I didn't dare do it. Then I saw a colleague using very, very simple puppets, and her group paying attention with such a respectful and devotional attitude. Even children accustomed to seeing televised soccer games could attend to a 10- or 15-minute puppet show with deep respect. I realized then that it's not the outer fantastic effect that counts.

Rudolf Steiner said of the nineteenth-century French writer George Sand that she had given to the French what Goethe had given the German-speaking world. That is, both writers depicted human beings coming to know themselves not only through what happens out of their own thoughts and actions, but also through what life brings to them and through the influences of their environment. In Sand's *The Snowman*, the protagonist is pursued by the police in Italy; she hides herself in a puppet show in the marketplace. For some days and weeks our protagonist participates in moving a *burattino*, a classical, simple Italian marionette:

Of course, one can imitate the human figure and its movement by many technical means. But the more you make it resemble a human being, the sadder and more sinister the performance becomes. I understood this *burattino* is not a machine, it's not a puppet, it's a being. And why is it a being? Because it is very simple. It was as if the intention of my hand, the intention of my soul, can express itself completely in the simple puppet because my soul can flow completely into the puppet. The more complicated it is, the more difficult it is for my intention to express itself in the doll.

As George Sand describes, not only do simple puppets allow children to add what is missing and activate their imagination, but the puppeteer with a simple doll can more easily express what is living in her soul. If you take something which is not too perfect and doesn't too closely resemble a human being, you create in the children the feeling, "The puppeteer is magic—she can make an inanimate object into a living being!" This is the impression we can create



Photo courtesy of Philip Reubke

by choosing simple materials, elements and objects, and moving them in such a way that the spirit, the soul, can speak to the audience.

I hope you will agree that in order to grasp the essence of life, for instance of a plant, you cannot just stay with the image of, say, the sunflower you are perceiving right now in your garden. This is not "the" sunflower; it is "a" sunflower. To more closely approach the essence of the sunflower, you need to remember all the developmental stages the sunflower has gone through in the past, and to foresee its future states. You would have to bring all these images into flow and imagine the whole evolution and movement. And you need to think, see and feel all this movement

in one instant! With your thinking and feeling, you perhaps then encounter the being, the archetype of "sunflower." To know living beings, you need to connect fixed present states over time—to take into account what was, and what may become.

We can nurture these capacities when we prepare a puppet show for children in their presence. During playtime you can prepare your dolls—perhaps over some days if you have several characters. And you also prepare your décor for the puppet show in the children's presence. The morning comes when you are ready. You set up your stage and place your figures there. Something that was visible before—that the children observed you making—became. You cover the set—it's invisible again—then uncover it, and it's visible now once more.

You play out your story, then cover it again with a beautiful gesture. The whole process is made visible to the children and they are not fixed to one static state. Every time they experience the whole process you are helping to encourage living thinking.

Puppetry prepares the inborn forces we need to have living, reality-based thinking. This is linked to our bodily senses. We all know that if we have a mental thought but not the physical ability to express it, we cannot really serve that thought. We've all worked with children who have fantastic, wonderful spiritual capacities but who cannot express them. We need a harmonious, healthy bodily grounding to be able to fully express our imaginative and spiritual selves.

Photo courtesy of Philip Reubke



Can puppetry foster the bodily senses and help a child to incarnate? Steiner refers to one of the basic bodily senses as the “sense of life,” which we can also call the sense of well-being. With the newborn, we help cultivate this sense by helping the baby to overcome the unwell states of hunger and pain that often occur during the first weeks and months of life. By meeting a baby’s needs in a rhythmical and loving way, we help the child develop a basic confidence in knowing

that states of unwellness, of crisis, can be overcome and made right again. We don’t need to panic. The nervousness and restlessness people experience often come from resisting “just being,” because when they are quiet they feel their unwell-being. In the kindergarten, we need to consider how we can help the children, even at three-, four-, or five-years-old, not to panic when they are in a state of *unwell-being*. Puppetry can help.

Through the puppeteer’s caring gestures, the child can feel that there is someone helping this puppet-character overcome its difficulties. These gestures and pictures influence the children, making them feel that this caring is happening to them and that, “OK, it’s all right; difficulties will be overcome.” The caring relationship includes how you lie the puppet down, or put a coat or crown on the figure. And the simple fact that you showed, in images, the hero overcoming crises and disorder also builds the sense of life. This is done in a non-stressful, very calm way so as not to trigger problems with the sense of life. The children become fascinated, not by a spectacle or quick action, but by your intentional gesture. They are captivated through calmness.

Let’s come now to the sense of touch, which helps us develop understanding of our own perimeter, our outer shelter. Touch also develops the feeling for the other and for the world. Through touch I can come to trust that I am now within the shelter of “my house,” and through touch I can reach out with interest toward the world. I learn that all that is coming from the world is not my enemy. I can approach the world with warm interest, and don’t need to become a tyrant and lash out at it.

The way you touch your puppets, your sets, your silk cloths—all this has a bearing on the child’s sense of touch. The puppeteer’s sense of touch is awake and sensitive during a performance. And I think it’s important that we use different materials—wood, silk, wool, stone, pinecones—and different kinds of puppets; then the sense of touch can become differently nuanced. The puppeteer is doing the touching, yet the children’s sense of touch is stimulated. And, of course, it’s important that your puppet touches the ground; only flying beings should fly. Otherwise, puppets should be grounded and not lose contact with the stage surface. When a puppet lies down or touches something in the play, really feel inwardly the contact between the doll and the set. And when you cover your play at the end, feel with your silk how it is covering the stage. All this is nourishing to the sense of touch.

The sense of movement is fundamental to children as they learn to use physicality to carry out their intentions. In the spiritual world, intentions were easily carried out, but with this physical body our intentions meet obstacles. By learning to master movement, children learn that the physical world is

not a prison; it has the possibility to allow us to express our soul intentions. Rhythmical, musical movements in puppetry help cultivate this. We don’t only speak the story; there are sequences in which our figures move without any speech—with only music, or even silently in a dynamic way. In this way we foster through puppetry the development of the bodily senses and help children see that their spirit can express itself in and through their bodies.

The simplicity of your sets and your puppets not only nourishes children, it also stimulates your inner activity as puppeteer. Puppetry allows you to express your soul-spiritual activity more than in everyday life. And by showing the children the whole development of your puppet play—beginning, middle and end—you can help them see that life is not a succession of static moments but rather something that evolves in processes and that involves the child. By allowing children opportunities to make these connections, you help prevent them from becoming stuck in limited, mechanistic thinking.

It’s a marvelous opportunity to perform puppetry for small children; they are completely absorbed in what you are doing, fully resting in the story in a dreamlike state. If there is a small accident you can immediately see how they react in their bodies. The soul and spirit of the child is living in the puppets, in you, and in your soul and spirit. And while children are so fully absorbed, the effects of your gestures and the puppets’ actions can work deeply into their physical bodies and bodily senses. Through the power of the images you as puppeteer create—and through your strong sense of the story—you can give children a solid, warm ground for their healthy development and for vibrant, living thinking. ♦

This article is shared courtesy of the World Association of Puppetry and Storytelling Arts. Visit puppetryandstorytelling.org for more information.

Phillipp Reubke has worked for several decades as a Waldorf kindergarten teacher in France and serves as the Early Years pedagogical section leader at the Goetheanum. The above article is excerpted from his keynote talk in August 2022 given at the summer conference of the World Association of Puppetry and Storytelling Arts, “Wisdom, Wonder and Enchantment.”

Welcoming a Child Refugee from Ukraine

~ Karen Imhof

This spring a fortunate opportunity arrived to welcome a little Ukrainian boy in our classroom just a few weeks after the war in the Ukraine had begun. While there are many children from different countries and cultures in our classroom, this was the first time that we were caring for a child who had escaped from war. This new little kindergartner was a particular gift to the class community. He gave teachers a much-needed opportunity to learn about the effects of war and trauma on the physical and psychological development of a young child and a chance to learn what can be done to help remediate trauma in a classroom setting.

This article shares not only what teachers have learned by caring for a young refugee but also describes the anthroposophical view of trauma as it forms the basis for the development of educational methods that have been employed by Waldorf educators to successfully care for traumatized and emotionally distressed children in crisis areas around the world. Through understanding trauma and its remediation according to this methodology, important insights can be gained for our work in a Waldorfskindergarten, and for the emotional healing and growth of traumatized and distressed children and families.

An anthroposophical view of trauma and emotional stress

Experiences that cause trauma and stress in refugee children include living in and fleeing violent situations, losing friends and family members, and undertaking dangerous journeys to safety. In addition, not knowing if one's status in a new country is permanent, living in poor housing with limited resources, and also living with family members who are suffering from trauma themselves can contribute to refugee children's daily stress and further aggravate the trauma they may have already experienced (UNHCR 2022).

The anthroposophical perspective on trauma looks at the effects that trauma has on bodily integration. When trauma or emotional stress occurs, the different levels of organization of the human being are no longer able to function or interact with each other in a healthy way, therefore causing

developmental blockages (Ruf 2013). Children who undergo trauma break off connection with their physical bodies and surroundings. As a result, their basic senses (touch, life, movement and balance) stop developing or remain immature.

Trauma and stress also cause the etheric or life body to detach. When the life body is not functioning properly, it cannot nurture, heal, and maintain the physical body. The organs still forming cannot grow and function normally. Consequently, the body's biological rhythms (sleep, digestion, breathing, heartbeat) are disturbed, which again undermines a child's whole sense of wellbeing.

Trauma and stress also influence the functioning of the astral body, the seat of our feelings and our soul life. When the astral body is affected by stress and trauma, the soul faculties of cognition (or thinking), emotion (feeling) and actions and behavior (willing) are disturbed and unable to function adequately. As a result, stressed and traumatized children often show insecure attachment behavior, emotional instability, and other disturbances of their emotional and social organization.

Finally, childhood trauma almost always disrupts the development of the child's individuality or the incarnation of the "I." A child's capacity for empathy, for establishing relationships and for developing self-trust and trust in others is impaired. The regulating effect that the "I" has on emotions and impulses is blocked. As a consequence, children are flooded by all kinds of impressions and fears, leaving them feeling exposed and overwhelmed (Ruf 2013, 21).

Clearly the effects of trauma and emotional stress on the human organization of a young child are severe and devastating. However, there are many factors that affect the depth of the trauma and determine a child's ability to cope with it. Not everybody who experiences trauma will develop long-term physical and psychological problems or post-traumatic stress symptoms. There is, indeed, a good chance that traumatic experiences can be resolved and even be transformed into an opportunity for inner growth. Experience shows that many methods of Waldorf education can bring healing and prevent post-traumatic stress when applied early enough. Waldorf

educators and eurythmists have been helpers in war and disaster areas around the world, effectively using educational methods based on anthroposophical human studies when caring for traumatized children and families. Termed "Emergency Pedagogy" or "Emergency Education," these educational-artistic methods have proven to be very successful in activating and strengthening the child's powers of self-healing to prevent, or at least assuage, pathological development (Ruf 2013, 69).

Many insights can be gained for our classroom work if teachers familiarize themselves with the practical tools for remediating trauma that Waldorf education offers. Many of the children coming to our classrooms exhibit forms of emotional stress and trauma and struggle with obstacles and difficult life situations, even without having experienced the traumatizing effects of a war. Emergency Education and curative Waldorf education are not completely new methods, but they constitute a deepened and more radical application of Waldorf pedagogy which can be used in any Waldorf classroom to the benefit of all children.

Pedagogical tools for trauma prevention and resolution

Trauma disrupts the incarnation process of a child by disturbing the integration and functioning of the different levels of the fourfold human being. Therefore, the holistic stabilization of traumatized children also has to work with all four levels of the human organization. Many of the therapeutic methods used for trauma remediation are already well known and available to us in our classroom work. What we need to do is to adapt them to the specific needs of the child and be open to working with them in new and unconventional ways.

Physical stabilization

Traumatized children have to feel physically safe because they need to reconnect with their physical bodies. This means that children need to be brought into a space where their physical needs are met and where they can connect safely with the surroundings. Schools in general and Waldorf schools in particular

are ideal spaces for young refugees. Research has shown that regular school attendance by itself can help to resolve trauma in young refugees: "School and most importantly the relationships formed at school can be an incredibly stabilizing, positive and nurturing experience in a refugee child's life, which can help them move on from more challenging times. Paired with supportive help at home or in out-of-school life ... many refugee children and students will overcome the challenges they are experiencing without additional help" (UNHCR 2022). It is of utmost importance that our schools are open to refugee children, and that we integrate them into a stable classroom rhythm and routine as early as possible.

The stabilizing effect of regular school attendance was visible with this child right away. The little boy loved to come to school every morning, despite the fact that the structure and rhythm of the classroom was new to him and there was a lot he had to learn. When his mother came to visit the classroom one day, he proudly showed her around, his face beaming with joy. He had made the classroom his home away from home. Knowing that the classroom always looks the same every morning must have been a great relief after experiencing the loss of his home and moving to a different country. In the initial days after his arrival, he also saw the older children in the school building or the administrators in their offices. Learning that the school is a safe space for everyone and everybody has a place there to work, learn, and play was important for his feeling of safety and to rebuild his trust in the world.

Somatic stabilization

After regaining a feeling of security in a safe space, traumatized children have to reconnect with their bodies again. To restore sensory integration after shock or trauma requires nurturing the foundational senses. The senses of balance, proprioception, life, and touch are disturbed in almost all traumatized children. Emergency Education places a particular emphasis on nurturing the sense of touch because the protective sheeting of the skin as the organ for touch makes us feel safe in our bodies. Providing traumatized children with sensory experiences can reconnect them with their bodies and restore their

body awareness. However, while massage and applying gentle pressure on a child's skin can release blockages and release frozen energies, these applications can also cause adverse reactions. Touching the body of a traumatized child can possibly trigger a memory of physical violence (Siebert 2020, 25f.).

Additionally, it is also necessary to nurture the life processes. Warmth, healthy nutrition, and a strong daily rhythm can help traumatized children reconnect with their bodies. Some families in our classroom donated extra clothes, and a set of warm clothes and shoes were in the cubby of our little friend so that extra warm layers were always readily available.

Traumatized children lose their orientation and rhythmical bodily organization, disturbing their sense of well-being. Therefore, anthroposophic trauma therapy places a strong emphasis on offering clear time structures to traumatized children. A structured school day with strong rhythms and rituals conveys safety and restores the bodily rhythms. It takes a while to reestablish a regular rhythm of resting and eating when working with a traumatized child since many of them show sleeping and eating disorders. Developing a smaller rhythm within the general rhythm and offering smaller snacks at regular times outside of the regular kindergarten snack rhythm helped to bring our new kindergartner into the classroom rhythm.

Rest does not come easily to a traumatized child and overstimulation happens quickly. Regular breaks throughout the day—a quiet moment on the lap of a teacher or a moment of handwork or drawing away from the play—were needed to reduce his fear of resting. During our short rest time in the morning, a special sleeping house or a secluded space under a table covered with silks offered the protection needed to make him feel safe. During the afternoon nap time, rhythmical movement helped to settle him. The dedicated co-teacher learned that when she carried him on her back and walked around the classroom for a while, he was able to settle for a nap more easily. Similarly, sitting in the rocking chair for a bit when he felt overstimulated also helped to calm him.

Regression is part of trauma and it is necessary to adjust expectations accordingly. How can a young child who has just lost all of his playthings happily clean up the classroom toys after play, or share those classroom toys with another friend? Teachers learned quickly that extra help was needed during play and transition times. Cleanup went a lot better when the

child had a preview of what was going to happen every day. The close presence of a teacher was reassuring and needed during a transition. Furthermore, the trauma-induced lack of sensory integration and the disturbed "I" incarnation make it difficult for emotionally stressed children to cope with too many external stimuli. Not only the transitions but every free play situation had to be carefully observed by teachers. Creating a safe space within the classroom, where he was allowed to play exclusively with some of the classroom toys, helped to restore his feeling of safety. When overstimulation occurred, stepping outside the classroom for a moment or visiting the nursery classroom to watch the calmer and dreamier play of the younger children helped to soothe his overtaxed senses and restore peace again.

Formative rhythmic movement exercises are very helpful to restore the disrupted biorhythm of traumatized children. Musical rhythm exercises that require a crossing of the midline strengthen the connection between the two hemispheres of the brain, which often become disconnected during trauma. Furthermore, eurythmy helps to restore the connection between body and soul and release the blockages of trauma. Yet moving together in close proximity with other children can be challenging because it requires trust in the others—an area that is also disturbed by trauma. The times that this child was able to join for eurythmy and circle were few, but the difference that it made for the rest of his school day was visible. However, there was good success offering finger games and clapping games outside of circle time and working with movement during time outside. Emergency Education emphasizes the importance of all physical movement as a way to free energies that have become frozen through a traumatic experience. Being outside and moving freely in nature, offering rope jumping and skipping exercises in addition to movement games, are particularly helpful. Being outside in nature and moving around freely was where this boy was the happiest. When he was upset or angry, walking up and down the stairs in the school building was most helpful to bring him back into his body.

Restoring social relations

Because trauma causes children to lose trust in the world and people around them, their attachment behavior becomes loose or insecure. They often take refuge in oppositional behavior or activate

their fight-or-flight response. Emergency Education emphasizes the importance of adult role models who provide the children with healing images and experiences that are needed to restore their trust in the world and themselves.

Restoring trust in oneself is the basis for trusting others. Traumatized children are plagued with feelings of helplessness. Replacing this helpless feeling with experience that raises their self-confidence helps them to heal. Artistic activities and handwork make traumatized children realize that they have an effect on the world and that they can take hold of their own life again. Drawing, painting, and modeling can also help children express feelings, thoughts and fears that they might be unable to speak about. Storytelling that provides healing pictures to replace the horrible images of war is a proven tool of trauma pedagogy. It was a blessing that this child spoke and understood basic English. He could listen to and understand the puppet plays and stories told in the classroom. He was also a very skilled artist and enjoyed drawing and painting. While his mother reported that his drawings at home initially showed war scenes, helicopters and fire, his drawings in school depicted mostly houses, trees and birds—a hopeful sign that he had processed some of his negative experiences. He also greatly enjoyed participating in handwork projects. Because flexible fingers restore and enhance the formation of synapses and neuronal networks in both halves of the brain, handwork and string games are well-known therapeutic tools in the work with traumatized children. To create something real with his own hands to bring home was a wonderful experience for a child who had just lost all of his belongings.

We know the importance that imitation plays in our anthroposophical understanding of child development; teachers must be worthy models for imitation. When working with a traumatized child, teachers need to examine themselves and their relationship with others extra carefully. A child who has lost trust in others particularly needs to experience harmony, trust and acceptance in his surroundings. The teachers took working with this special child as an opportunity for personal growth—a chance to examine personal biases and to do the inner work that is needed when caring for a young refugee. A willingness to work completely flexibly and to shift activities and roles according to the needs of the individual child and group are basic prerequisites

for successfully working with a traumatized child. Critical reflection upon a teacher's own biography is equally important. "If helpers don't sufficiently reflect on their biographical experiences and motives, there is a possibility that traumatized girls and boys are used by professional helpers to work through their own trauma. Sometimes the wish to help other people is an attempt to heal oneself" (Ruf 2013, 175). Moments of self-care and taking breaks from stressful situations are essential in order to remain a reliable helper.

What about the others?

Rudolf Steiner demanded repeatedly that teachers take a true interest in individual children (especially those who need extra help) and observe them specifically in all of their aspects. He emphasized that only then will an exact understanding of the child be possible. This deepened relationship, filled with the powers of love, would put the individual child at the center of the teacher's consciousness, even in a large class. "If you thus enter lovingly into the kind of human insight presented here, you will soon find it possible to have the needed attention for every child, even in a class with many people" (Steiner, GA 310, quoted in Selg 2008, 21). The question for the teacher is how to turn the individual work of healing a traumatized child into a learning experience for all the children in the classroom.

Steiner describes how children absorb morality through language, actions, and through their experiences of gratitude. If children perceive meaningful gestures, he says, a feeling of gratitude arises in them, forming the foundation for devotion and love (Steiner 2003, 274, 275; Steiner 2004, 114f.). Can our modeling of unconditioned acceptance and compassion for a refugee child help to build morality in all the kindergarten children?

Working with a traumatized child requires teachers to modify routines and rules and to also devote more attention to an individual child. To do this, teachers had to ask more of themselves and had to ask more of the children too. It was wonderful to see how the other children lived up to the higher expectations set for them. From the beginning teachers explained to the children that their new friend would need help to learn kindergarten ways. While teachers did their best to model compassion and acceptance, it was heartwarming to see how the children tried to work along with this intention. They welcomed the boy into

the group and took on the task of teaching him what they already knew. Surely there were conflicts, but little gestures of the children showed that something had shifted in their consciousness. One day when our friend had a particularly hard time getting dressed to go to the park, a little girl approached him, stretched out her hands, and said, “Come to the park with us. You are happy there.” This invitation was all that was needed for him to get ready. Gratefully he took her hand and walked out the door with her. Many friends lent a helping hand to him when a transition was not going well. During a playtime conflict, one little boy showed patience with his rough behavior, saying, “It is okay, he is a good friend and he will learn how to play gentle soon.”

By learning about his needs, classmates also learned to take care of their own needs more independently. Accepting the need to give a friend more space during play taught them to reconsider their own needs for space. One child who was particularly noise-sensitive learned to find a quiet place in the classroom all by himself when it became too loud for him. Some children who needed a teacher’s attention when doing chores or needed an extra reminder to clean up were suddenly able to do it by themselves. Everyone was able to do circle together even when there was distraction. This friend had come to help us rise to a higher level of self-competence and compassion.

Conclusion

As devastating and destructive as trauma is for the overall health of a child, we also know from mainstream and anthroposophically-informed research that trauma can be prevented or resolved when addressed in a timely and systematic manner. All schools, but particularly Waldorf schools, can be places for healing traumatic experiences in young children. It is up to us to open ourselves to this experience and to enhance and deepen our understanding of Waldorf trauma education. This will not only benefit those children escaping from war and disaster. Trauma has many faces and can occur on many levels of the human organization. Developing an eye for the signs of childhood trauma can help many children in our care. ♦

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Living in Our Times

~ Louise deForest

Mary Oliver once wrote: “All things are inventions of holiness – some more rascally than others.” We are all, indeed, living in very rascally times! If the spiritual life is living the ordinary life extraordinarily well, as my friend Bill Coffen claims, how are we to live today? How are we to navigate the surplus of information, anxiety, demands and fear that surround us; how are we to find our footing when we are so buffeted by events that are out of our hands?

What we do everyday in the kindergarten is healing and strengthening. It is so wholesome that, if done rightly and with love, it is a healthy foundation for our physical lives for the whole time we are on earth. Imagine! This applies to us, the adults, as well as to the children. The rhythms, repetitions, the beauty, the gestures, the processes, can strengthen and ground us if we take them up as a genuine part of our lives and not just something we do for our job, between 8 in the morning and 3 in the afternoon.

Of course, all of this takes discipline and will; it doesn’t just happen because we want or need it to. In the work with the children in our care, we know that only through our patience and deep trust in who they really are can we effect any change over time, and that every morning when we walk through the door of our classrooms, we are starting over. The training of the will that happens in our classrooms every day is also the training of our wills, as long as we are not asking the children to master something that we have not yet mastered. So always we are working on ourselves as we work with the children, and we know that when there is something out of balance in the class, we have only to look to ourselves, if we’re honest, to find the source of the problem.

Our kindergarten classrooms are places where children feel safe and do not want to leave. After the isolation of the last year, and even after the weekend, they breathe a sigh of relief to be back in a space where life is cared for, predictable and the adult can be trusted. Do we feel safe when we are in the classroom? What do they get that we don’t? How can we give ourselves what we give them?

Beauty

“We need beauty because it makes us ache to be worthy of it.”
—Mary Oliver

We are real artists when it comes to creating a space that breathes goodness and beauty, but often we forget that we can do this at home, too. One thing that helped me enormously when I had small children and juggled work, home and family, those “delightful struggling years,” as my friend Mrs Robb described them, was to every day create one small place of beauty. The laundry could be piling up, the sink full of dishes and the floor dirty, but there was one space in my house where I could rest my eyes and sink into peace. Perhaps it was a windowsill or a corner of my desk, fresh flowers in a vase or a beautiful postcard, a crystal and a lovely cloth, but it was something I did for myself and each time my eyes rested there I was nourished.

Nourishment

“Beware when the so-called sagely men come limping into sight.”
—Chuang-tsu

What are we feeding ourselves? What images do we carry around within us from day to day? Do those images nourish or deplete us? It’s important that we are informed of current events. but how we inform ourselves is important and makes a difference. Instead of listening to the latest news, with its anguishing images, find a news source that is reliable and impartial and read what you need to read and create your own images and thoughts. There are some things that, once seen, cannot be unseen, and those are the images that paralyze us and drain us of our hope and trust in life.

When I was a child, I woke up every morning to the sound of the news on the radio. I didn’t listen to what was being said, of course, but I objected to having the voice of a stranger in my cozy house and I didn’t like it that my parents wanted to hear that voice rather than the voices of my brothers and me. Sometimes there was an urgency or tension in that radio voice and, while I didn’t know what caused it, I often felt

slightly nauseated and ill at ease. Pay attention to how you wake up. Keep a book of your favorite poetry by your bed and read something that nourishes your soul. It might make you laugh or smile or just feel settled inside but it's something worthy that you can carry through your day.

Movement

"Our Father, which art in Heaven, Thy will be done. Our Mother, which art in Earth, Thy love be fulfilled and love and will made one." —Mopani

Get out into nature every day. If time in nature is healing for the children and a daily necessity, it is that for us as well. Take a walk, listen to the bird calls, look for the green shoots now coming up, and simply look around you. Nature will always remind us to breathe and the fear and anxiety so prevalent today are signs of not breathing consistently and deeply. Sink into the goodness and wisdom of nature, think of it as a nature bath. Actually, try not to think at all. Leave all that you know, all the information you carry around, the definitions and opinions, and just breathe. Even if you can only manage a few minutes a day, go outside and breathe deeply. But really, can't we all find time for a good walk?

Purposeful work

"Great peace is found in little busy-ness." —Chaucer

As early childhood educators we often cannot see our work. If we compare our children at the end of the school year to who they were when they started school in September, we can see a change and it is a substantial change, but on a day-to-day basis, that transformation is not visible. Do something physical as often as possible, something where your work is visible: stack wood, clean out a cupboard or an attic and stand back and see what you have done. Ahhh!

In a time when hopelessness is so palpable, making a difference somewhere, even if it is in a corner of your yard or house, is empowering. And as soon as we are living in our wills, our anxiety lessens, and our thinking becomes quiet. It is an honor and a privilege

to do work on earth, especially when we can work for the benefit of others and not just our own, so check in on a neighbor, or volunteer; the important thing is to use your time in a meaningful way. Many of us stay on our phones in our free time, filling ourselves with troubling images, platitudes, and a constant bombardment of disconnected information. Train yourself to not look at your phone each time a text or email announces itself, allowing you to be present and engaged and not distractible. This, too, gives us power and helps us put our lives and activities in the proper perspective.

Look for opportunities to be delighted

"It loved to happen." —Marcus Aurelius

There are wonderful things all around us, happening at all times. On a half-hour break from teaching once, I was watching an active anthill. There was a stream of ants removing grains of sand and dirt from the interior of the anthill and placing them at some distance from the entrance before returning to get more. A guard ant stayed at the opening as the ants streamed in and out. One ant came out and dropped the grain of sand on the edge of the entrance. The guard ant hurried over, tapped the worker on the head and would not let her back into the hill until she picked up the grain of sand and put it in its proper place. As the ant returned to the opening, the guard whacked her on the behind as she again entered the hill. How relatable it was, and suddenly how connected I was to those ants!

And the other day I was sitting in a class of three-year-olds as they had lunch. One little one asked, "What's a violin?" The child by her side said, with all authority, "It's a music talker." We may consider these things merely cute, but they are actually much, much more. These moments open the door to a world that is no longer our world; a world full of shining truths and delightful perspectives, where anything is possible. Children are always inviting us into their creative world where things are undefined and do not easily fit into the little boxes we have assigned them to, but rather burst forth, fresh and alive, truer than true, and for a moment we are back in the Garden of Eden.

Remember why you are here

"I must be willing to give up what I am to become what I will be." —Albert Einstein

Each one of us is here on earth to try to accomplish certain tasks, both personal and generational. We have come to work on certain themes in our lives and to develop ourselves accordingly. For those of us working in Waldorf education, we have also come to earth to work practically with spiritual realities. One of our tasks in this is to look beyond physical appearances to discover the inner truth of things; who am I, really? And who are you? That is the question that underlies all our work. Every experience we have in life is offering us an opportunity to deepen, to learn and, hopefully, to grow. When life gets difficult, ask yourself, "What is this situation (or person) asking me to develop?" This question takes us out of the victim role and gives us power to act; the difficulty is not happening to us, it is inviting us to take another step in our own inner development, to grow beyond whatever the situation is.

Personal transformation is never an easy process; it takes courage and often comes out of pain and suffering. "Just push through it," a friend of mine would say when I complained about the resistance I felt when trying to meditate or study, and that is good advice. Just push through it. It is obvious that the future is bringing with it something new; we know that through the mysterious and marvelous children who are in our classes each year. These are our times; we came to earth to live these times, to be challenged by them and to, hopefully, push through them into what waits beyond.

In closing, I would like to share with you some thoughts and words from Howard Zinn:

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history

will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory. ♦

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An Introduction to Cultural Appropriation, Appreciation, and Celebration

The Work of Diversifying the Waldorf Curriculum

~ Dr. Joaquin Muñoz

In my work with schools and teachers in the Waldorf education movement, one of the most frequently asked questions relates to cultural appropriation. This is not a new question, nor is it one that has been resolved completely. The complexities of understanding culture and what appropriation, appreciation, and celebration are lead us along a path of making a lifelong commitment to engaging communities, understanding the intricate nature of culture, and being willing to learn and practice. The question of cultural appropriation has not been resolved because the nature of culture is constantly in motion. No culture is ever set in stone, but is always in flux and transformation. And one way that this transformation manifests is in the changing conceptions of what is and is not acceptable to be taught in school; what is and is not acceptable to be shared with those outside of the culture; and, in the United States, what is acceptable to teach about, period.

Another reason why the question “Is this cultural appropriation or cultural appreciation?” is a challenging one to answer is because the answer is often a painful one to hear. In some cases, the answer is dismissed completely. Chelsea Vowel, a Metis scholar from Alberta, Canada, includes a list of the most frequent responses to the concern of cultural appropriation in her 2016 book, *Indigenous Writes*. There are often knee-jerk reactions that occur when the question of cultural appropriation arises. I have heard some of these in my own work with Waldorf teachers, ranging from an attempt to show appreciation, as in the “I’m just showing my appreciation for the culture!” response; to the patronizing “You should be happy people care about your culture and want to celebrate it!”; to references to vague notions of freedom of speech or freedom of artistic interpretation. What these knee-jerk responses communicate is a lack of interest in engaging the conversation from the point of view of the other person—often a BIPOC person—in pointing out when a boundary may have been crossed.

Complicating this situation is the difficulty in distinguishing when an action is a form of cultural appropriation or a form of cultural violence. Oftentimes the two are lumped together in unhelpful ways. One example is the frequent conflict over Native American mascots and Indigenous people calling for the end of their use. The hurtful racist chants and responses made by fans of the imagery pose a different kind of problem than a teacher attempting to share a story or a song or an artistic style in the classroom. However, both can cause hurt because of lack of understanding or lack of legitimate engagement with the community represented that stands behind it.

A crucial concern for many teachers is clear definitions around cultural appropriation and how this is different from forms of cultural violence. The two are interrelated but different. Cultural appropriation often takes the form of sharing, repackaging or communicating information without an awareness of the proper protocols, practices or context from which those cultural expressions came. This can often mean teachers or educators sharing stories without the context of origin or why they are important. This can also mean the sharing of cultural elements without proper credit, acknowledgment, or compensation to the creator.

Cultural violence, on the other hand, is a far more problematic practice and often involves the communication of harmful stereotypes and prejudices with no move to redress those harms. Examples of cultural violence related to cultural appropriation often include school mascots depicting Indigenous People, or the example of a California school teacher who used a construction paper headdress and stereotypical “Indian” war chants to teach a math lesson. These examples are egregious versions; but smaller acts of cultural appropriation should not be ignored as being less problematic or traumatizing.

I hope to help teachers learn more and develop an understanding of culture, cultural appropriation,

and cultural appreciation and celebration. As an educator committed to social justice, anti-racism and anti-oppression, I think about what an education for the future means, in the light of our diverse world. I consider that social change is happening—it’s a fact of life—and that this has an impact on how we engage in teaching and learning. And I think about all of the ways that I impact social change: whether my actions contribute to greater and greater freedom, or promote old practices that can oppress and hurt. We need to rethink our work of diversity not only in terms of the people around us, but also as a way to challenge our own worldviews. We need to develop our awareness of our structural power—our privileges—to support all people to self-realize and self-actualize. Only then can we all be our most complete selves. Then diversity can actually be acknowledged and appreciated, and inclusion effectively practiced.

What does this mean for the questions of culture, appropriation and appreciation? It means that our understanding of culture—the patterns of shared basic assumptions, behaviors, and experiences within a group of people that are learned and taught—must be understood through the lens of history and its internal logic. It means we have to understand that our actions as educators have in the past erased cultures, and continue to do so today. At the same time, we must also see that our attempts to remedy this historic wrong can be problematic as well, as educators often engage cultures in our classrooms without full respect and understanding for what we are bringing, and why. We may create the conditions for cultural appropriation, which Maisha Z. Johnson defines as the “taking of intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, or artifacts from someone else’s culture—including dance, dress, music, language, folklore, cuisine, traditional medicine, religious symbols—without permission.”

Start with Capital “C” Culture

In order to come closer to awareness of cultural appropriation, and move towards cultural appreciation, we must begin with an understanding of culture, because culture encompasses so many different aspects of our life experience; and culture shapes the ways we make sense of the world. It is important to start with culture in order to be able to have a better understanding of what exactly it means when someone says this is cultural appropriation or that is cultural appreciation.

Let’s begin by considering cultural awareness and how we think about cultures. We often think about some of the surface level aspects of culture, the things that are easily accessible and easily seen as being differences. Often when we focus on culture, we can ignore or miss some of the more fundamental pieces because it is easier for us to access and understand what is on the surface. We misinterpret or misunderstand aspects of culture in two different ways. One is to claim universalism and a belief that, in essence, all people are the same or identical with some small differences. This, however, is not an accurate assessment given that all groups of people have distinct characteristics and practices that make them unique human beings. Added to this is asserting the assumption that cultures are the same because we are interpreting them using our own cultural lenses and giving hyper-attention to similarities and downplaying differences.

In education we often focus on the surface levels of culture and this can be seen in lessons or content that explores the surface level differences of communities: things like stories, dance, dress or outfit, food, and other elements that are easily visible. Often this is the safest level to engage in; it requires less awareness and knowledge on our part. This level of culture is the least complex because it is the most easily accessible. Deeper examination of culture, however, points to multiple concepts and themes which are harder to understand and more complicated to integrate in a space like a classroom. Examples are different conceptions of physical proximity and comfort, or different perceptions of tone of voice and meaning, to name just two.

Knowledge and understanding are central to bringing diverse cultural experiences into the classroom. We cannot only focus on the surface level, but we must be willing to explore further down. This is particularly true if teachers who represent dominant social identities are examining the experiences of cultures that have been minoritized or oppressed. It is always helpful to remember a few crucial concepts when exploring culture for its inclusion in the classroom:

- 1) All aspects of culture, even those aspects that we disagree with or don’t like or don’t understand, have a logic that makes them function.
- 2) We have to remember that all aspects of culture require knowledgeable carriers. Knowledge keepers have often suffered—and continue to suffer—for carrying the cultural knowledge they have.

- 3) It is important to remember that all aspects of culture inform each other. Another way to say this is that every experience of culture, whether it's food, psychology, music, or ways of knowing the world, is interrelated to every other.

An Understanding of Cultural Appropriation

With this as a starting point, we can begin to explore why the topic of cultural appropriation is such an important topic as well as a sensitive one. If cultural appropriation is the act of taking songs, stories, dress, food, etc. from a marginalized group, usually without respect for or knowledge of their culture, then any connections to cultures different from our own should be carefully explored. We should immediately turn to some key concepts like history, power, and oppression. In thinking about cultures, we have to think about the history of the treatment of different peoples, especially Black, Indigenous and People of Color, who have unique histories in relation to the United States. This history includes enslavement, genocide, forced removal, and kidnapping. This history must be considered when planning to engage these communities in the classroom.

Power must also be considered: how power has been used historically and in contemporary situations to demonstrate dominance and control. In this way, decisions we make about cultural artifacts, stories, or histories being brought into the classroom should be considered carefully with relation to power. Whose identity is considered to have power and decision-making capability? And what does that mean for including or excluding others? Finally, we must attend to the complexity of cultures. This means that we must attend to the rich diversity within communities as well as the constantly changing nature of culture. Teachers often ask about the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' stories in their classroom content, which frequently means the inclusion of stories which frame Indigenous Peoples as historic relics. Little or no attention is given to the contemporary expressions of Indigenous peoplehood and this can communicate to young people that "real" Indigenous People are in the past.

Some common practices of cultural appropriation in school settings include:

- Monetizing or profiting off of another person's culture without appropriate compensation.

- Viewing a community member practicing their own culture as deviant or problematic, but seeing this as interesting or creative when practiced by someone of dominant culture. Examples of this include hairstyles or artistic expressions. When practiced by African American youth, these styles are seen as negative, while white youth engaging the same practices are seen as interesting or creative.
- Carefully selecting elements of culture to share that are seen as positive and inclusive, but are actually problematic because they only share carefully curated examples of diverse communities. This curation can often uphold certain people's visions of power and privilege as well as framing certain members of diverse communities as being the "true" representations. For Indigenous Peoples, this often comes in the form of a hyper focus on spirituality, or connection to the natural world, without sharing other aspects such as contemporary authors, artists, or political activists. In African American communities, this is often seen as the focus on peaceful agitators such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. without attending to other expressions of African American culture.

These examples help to uphold biases and stereotypes because they do not challenge status quo visions and interpretations of reality. To move toward appreciation, we have to begin to investigate an alternative way of being with people, which means understanding and healing wounds, while working to prevent future trauma. As we move from cultural appropriation practices and cultural violence, we must begin to consider all aspects of culture and work to see how all peoples have developed practices for the survival and development of their communities.

We must begin to think about power. We must begin to think about context and place. And we must remember that cultural interactions and exchanges do not occur in a vacuum, they occur in relation to power, privilege, and history.

Towards Appreciation and Celebration

The move towards cultural appreciation is a generative love that calls for relationship and community and demonstrates a drive towards unification. This drive is not a force towards conformity or assimilation but rather a joyful celebration of the uniqueness of all peoples. We must try to bring aspects of culture into our classrooms that are framed not only by the

practitioners themselves, who speak through their own lenses of culture and reality, but through the lenses of originators. We must remember that all aspects of any culture are what groups have created and adapted to stay alive and to thrive in the world in which we live. While some aspects such as dances or regalia may be displayed or shared now, these often originated to achieve survival or as a crucial component of a culture's existence.

There are things we can do and questions we can ask when considering different cultures and their inclusion in our curriculum. Fundamental to the project of cultural appreciation is the need to be in relationship. If we are interested in Indigenous stories, we need to engage the Indigenous communities that the story originates from. Are we inviting or connecting to Indigenous communities for the purposes of classroom inclusion and looking to be in reciprocity? Put another way, are we engaging communities in a balanced and equitable way, or are we only engaging communities when we want or need something from them? We must think about elements of power involved when thinking about culture. Who is credited for the creation of the element? Has anyone been compensated appropriately? Are we contributing to the continued support and relationship of the community or have we only taken something and given nothing back? Has the culture that we are seeking to share been freely given or is it an element that we may have found and are using out of context? And am I attending to a key component of relationship, permission and consent, or is my action one of entitlement?

We must think about context and place when engaging cultural inclusion. We have to ask ourselves if we are attending to the immediate, local communities and contexts around us and if we are engaging the specifics of place. Or is our attempt at inclusion stretching beyond my context and potentially overlooking those in my community? Frequently, I am asked by teachers about permission, protocols or appropriateness of utilizing stories, songs, or artistic production of Indigenous communities. However, teachers in one part of the country ask about the practices of an indigenous community on the other side of the country! Teachers will also inquire about the use of story, culture, or artistic production of the more well-known, or well-documented Indigenous

communities. It is an unfortunate act of erasure for a school in Texas to inquire about using Anishinaabe stories for example. (The Anishinaabe White Earth Nation is located in central Minnesota.) Part of our relationship work must be to pay attention to the folks who are immediately around us, the history of our location. We must hold awareness of the experience of the people where we are.

Finally, we must remember that cultural exchange does not occur in a vacuum. We often must contend with a history of racism and oppression when considering diverse communities. And we must know our history around the experiences of the communities around us. This includes the history of other schools or institutions taking from these communities, and acknowledging controversies or historic traumas of practices like mascots or other forms of cultural violence. When asking permission, we must also be ready to be told "no" and to accept that "no" for an answer. And while there may be conflicting points of view around inclusion of certain content or ideas, we must continue to explore and navigate.

The answer is not for us to disengage from communities completely because the going is challenging. The answer is also not to rely on safe or general history and culture at the expense of local context. Instead we must consider how we enter into relationship with the communities around us and how we bring that rich diversity to the children who are in front of us. ♦

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Movement Toward Tolerance: Emphasizing the Four Foundational Senses as a Pathway to Healthy Social Life

— Nancy Blanning

Our times call us to equally address two critical goals. We are committing ourselves to truly engage in practices of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ). At the same time, we are committed to considering the gradually unfolding development and consciousness of the young child as we understand it in Waldorf education. Where and when is it our responsibility to explicitly present guidance to cultivate respect and tolerance for diversity? When and how do we hold the space for implicit offerings showing respect, kindness, and generosity through stories, puppetry, and artistic imaginations?

There is also a parallel question. What developmental experiences provide children a foundation upon which all these urgent messages can take hold? What prepares the human being to develop reverence, tolerance, empathy, compassion, and a sense for justice in social life? Child development viewed through the lens of anthroposophy offers an answer.

The first seven years of a child's life are dedicated to growing a strong physical body. This includes building healthy nerve-sense (thinking), rhythmic (feeling), and metabolic-limb (willing) systems. Rudolf Steiner described this in the first pedagogical lecture given in 1907, years before the founding of the first Waldorf school (Steiner 1907). While growth and development continue throughout life, what is developed in these early years provides a critical foundation for the unfolding of capacities and skills, not only physically, but intellectually and socially as well.

In 1919, Steiner extended this picture of the human being in lectures given to the teachers of the first Waldorf school (Steiner 1919). In briefly describing the human senses, he expands from the traditional five or six senses to a group of twelve: touch, life or well-being, self-movement, balance, smell, taste, sight, warmth, hearing, word or speech, thought, and sensing the ego of the other human being. In this ordering, touch is listed first, culminating in the ego-sensing of the other human being as the highest of the sensing capacities.

These senses can be divided into three groups as follows:

Highest / Social / Spiritual Senses

- Ego-sensing—Sensing the humanity and individuality of another; sensing the ego-being of another person
- Thought—recognize that words are sequenced to convey thoughts expressed by other people
- Word / Language / Speech—sensing that sounds, hand movement, or gesture in particular sequences convey meaning. Sense of word takes sound (or hand movement) and gives it meaning
- Hearing—experiencing sound through the mechanism of the ear

Middle / Feeling Senses

- Warmth—sensing external temperature as warmer or cooler in comparison to our own body temperature. Warmth is a transitional sense
- Sight—taking in visual impressions through the eyes; connected to light
- Taste—experiencing sweet, bitter, salty, and sour by taking in substances through the mouth with help of a watery element (saliva)
- Smell—experiencing outer world through airy element in smells, aromas

Foundational / Will Senses

- Balance / Equilibrium—sensing uprightness and body position in relation to the earth and gravity
- Self-movement / Proprioception—sensing the cooperative movements of one's limbs and coordination, learning body geography
- Life or Well-Being—sensing the health and balance of inner organic life
- Touch—learning boundary between self and world

Through the first four senses of touch, life, self-movement, and balance, we learn about the well-being and position of our own physical bodies and how we relate to the earth's gravity. These are often called the foundational or will senses and are the primary, critical focus areas in our early childhood education for the first seven years of life. These senses are primarily

educated through physical movement, as indicated by Steiner over one hundred years ago. The importance of movement is now being acknowledged and confirmed by neurological research. A motto these days could be that "movement builds the brain." What is accomplished in neurological development through movement (especially well-ordered, purposeful movement) and the opportunity to explore the environment in the first seven years prepares the foundation for future cognitive, emotional, and social life.

The second, middle group of senses—smell, taste, sight, and warmth—gives us information about the nature and qualities of things external to ourselves in the world. These senses are described as the middle or feeling senses, as our experiences through these senses often result in our liking or disliking (forming sympathy or antipathy) toward what we encounter.

The third group of senses was new in Steiner's time and identifies subtle sensing capacities as our birthright. These can be called the social and even spiritual senses, through which we recognize and come into relationship with other human beings. These senses are the well-known sense of hearing and newly described senses of word or speech, thought, and sensing the I-being or ego of other human beings.

Another important aspect that Rudolf Steiner shared is that the four foundational senses and the four highest, social senses have relationships with one another. In subtle ways these foundational senses, which are all associated with physically identifiable sensory organs, are the bases out of which the subtle realms of sensing other people and relationships in the social realm metamorphose. This is a very important point to be further developed.

In another lecture, Steiner gave characterizations of "soul states" associated with the senses of touch, life, self-movement, and balance (Steiner 1920). These "soul states" open the door to discovering more subtle qualities carried from the foundational senses to the highest senses in this "metamorphosing" relationship. In brief, the senses and the associated soul states are:

Touch—Permeated by the feeling of God; the sense of being "touched" by God

Life—Feeling of comfort

Self-Movement—Feeling of freedom or being free in one's soul

Balance—Inner rest; feeling oneself as Spirit

From these brief indications, other anthroposophical researchers have expanded upon the picturing and understanding of the senses. Prominent among them are Karl König, the founder of the Camphill communities for special needs children and adults, and Henning Köhler, anthroposophical counselor and author of *Working with Anxious, Nervous, and Depressed* (2001) *Children and Difficult Children: There Is No Such Thing* (2003).

In building upon the soul states and his observations of children's mood-dispositions and sensory development, Köhler takes another step toward explaining how the healthy development of the foundational senses prepares the pathway to reverence, tolerance, empathy, and a sense of justice in the social domain.

The senses are complex and deserve deep study. Rudolf Steiner reflected on the senses for decades before he made any public statement about them. The following are only brief characterizations of these foundational senses to facilitate our picturing of this sensory path to reverence, tolerance, empathy, and justice.

Touch gives us a sense of boundary. It tells where we stop and where the rest of the world begins. Other conventional views of touch say that it is through touch that we explore the world and learn about what lies outside of ourselves. While this is true, this is not the full picture. Steiner emphasizes that touch gives experience of "boundary." Whenever we touch something outside of our body, we also have an inner experience. This inner experience, caused by something exterior, gives the first experience of boundary, of self and not-self, of self and world. It gives an experience of feeling enclosed.

Life is an organic sense. It provides for us with the experience of well-being. We are consciously aware of this sense when we are unwell with a headache or stomachache, or feel overly tired. When all is well in our organic and metabolic life and we are well rested and not under stress, we are quite unaware of this sense. The life sense can also be called the sense of well-being. A healthy life sense helps us feel secure and cared for, knowing that "all is well." We have a sensation of comfort.

Self-movement is not the ability to move. It is rather the inner faculty that senses when we have moved. It is the sense that helps us to perceive the position

of our body parts. Through this sense, we develop body geography and understand how the body is organized. Self-movement allows us to know where the different body parts are in space and in relationship to other body parts without needing to see or to touch them. The sensory organs for self-movement are tiny receptors in the joints, called proprioceptors, that experience the pressure, tension, and angle and position of our limbs. This information is sent to the brain and informs us of body position. This sense is now recognized and confirmed by mainstream research as well.

Balance gives us our experience of uprightness. It informs us, on the one hand, of where the body is in relation to the earth and the force of gravity. The ampulla at the bottom of the inner ear senses this relationship. Another part of the sensory organ for balance is composed of the three semicircular canals within the inner ear. We must have accurate and consistent information from this sensory system to maintain our uprightness and feel secure in standing and moving on the earth. To achieve and maintain uprightness, the human being must have experience of living and moving in the three planes of space—above/below, forward/back, and right/left. The semicircular canals are themselves arranged in these directions and are like miniscule sensory compasses that inform us of where we are in space in relation to these directional pairs.

We usually have a dim consciousness of these lower senses unless something goes wrong through illness or injury. Stiff muscles, for example, can make us more aware of the limbs and their movement and position. Balance awareness is negatively affected by motion sickness.

Each of these senses has characteristic experiences that help build healthy strength in its domain.

Touch is made whole by many, many different touch experiences of texture, shape, density, size, roughness, smoothness, prickliness, squishiness, density, and so on. Exploring a great variety of touch sensations confirms that experiences are different, not good or bad. Children in our groups have daily encounters with natural materials, practical work, cooking, and exploring the natural world outdoors. Warm and comfortable clothing assures children that they have an enclosing, safe boundary around their skin. Gentle, secure, appropriate touching in the infant and

toddler years is the most essential experience for young children to gain security from touch—to subtly know that they are “touched by God” (see, e.g., Köhler 2001, 46-48). Another word we can use to describe being “touched” or “held” by God is trust.

Life / Well-being is nourished by regular rhythms, routine, and predictability in the child’s care. Babies may cry frantically when cold, wet, or hungry. But when response comes reliably from a warm and loving caregiver, the baby begins to develop a “positive peacefulness.” While gratification may not come immediately, the child learns that care will come and can be relied upon. Little by little, the child can tolerate delayed gratification in incremental stretches. A well-tended life sense “gives growing children the agreeable sensation of inner restfulness and the security of self-containment . . . of being sheltered and stable” (Köhler 2001, 27-29). One feels comfortable in one’s being.

Köhler goes on to describe how loving care provided in this way, coupled with the example of peacefulness and patience demonstrated by those around the child, along with the support of spiritual forces carried by the child’s angel, provide the groundwork for developing tolerance in moral and social life.

In speaking of tolerance, Köhler states: “It is possible to listen to and understand others in their individual difference, to accept them as they are, and take real interest in them, only if we stand firmly on our own ground while meeting them with inner collectedness and circumspection of a confident life sense orientation that has been built into our personality structure [which shows itself as a certain degree of selflessness.] We can forget ourselves only when we are firmly self-grounded; otherwise, self-forgetting begets fear, fear that [creates a hurried and intolerant mood], seeking refuge in our accustomed opinions and prejudices, sympathies, and antipathies” (Köhler 2001, 38).

“Active tolerance” is the goal. “Active tolerance means not only leaving others free to be themselves in all their individual differences, while taking a gentle and unprejudiced interest in them, but really wanting to understand them sufficiently to honor their ways of being and behaving without judging by one’s own standard” (Köhler 2001, 39).

The predictable rhythmic routines and schedules of our days, weeks, and yearly festival celebrations provide strong support to a healthy life sense. Nourishing foods; natural materials; clothing appropriate to the

season; carefully chosen colors to nourish and not shock the senses; and a warm, friendly, inviting mood in the classroom support the life sense on a daily basis. The more we more consciously carry the power and importance of these reassuring rhythms, the more powerful they become in supporting the children.

Self-movement finds its joyous expression in movement of the limbs. Self-movement educates itself by feeling the position of and pressure within the joints of the limbs. Whenever we push, pull, hang, lift, jump, stomp, hold our body weight on our hands and arms, wring water out of a towel, stir a thick batter, chop vegetables, knead a big portion of bread dough, hammer, saw, rasp, shovel, carry heavy objects, climb, and so on, we are supporting healthy self-movement. This sense is only educated through physical movement. Through self-movement we acquire body geography. The more the body moves in repeated, purposeful sequences, the more coordination and control the child acquires. In other words, the body does what the child wishes it to do with “a dreamlike sureness” (Köhler 2001, 84-85). Having this capacity “is what gives us, even in seemingly hopeless situations, the confidence to summon up a new impulse to move on in life, to change direction, to develop initiative” (Köhler 2001, 86). We have the perception of being free in our own mobility. Steiner’s connection of self-movement with “being a free spirit” captures this.

On a soul or social level, what does this capacity transform to? “When we have some gripping experience, we speak of it as ‘moving.’ What is being moved? It is the inner human being . . . Our ability to perceive our own inner stirrings also enables us to understand and participate in the soul stirrings of others” (Köhler 2001, 87). If we imagine this further as the child matures, being able to move into the inner experience of the other is the beginning of empathy and compassion, soul virtues sorely needed in our troubled and divisive times. Whenever we give the children opportunity for meaningful, sequential movement in circle imaginations, ring games, purposeful work, and all the things named above, we are paving the way toward social empathy and compassion.

Balance is the companion and complementary partner of self-movement. Henning Kohler states: “Our whole feeling of being at ease, our whole capacity for coordination, would be as good as useless if we were unable to keep our balance. In every sequence of

movements, in every moment of just standing upright, balance has to be continuously maintained” (Köhler 2001, 107). But while the body is in movement, balance provides the sense of inner quiet. With this inner quiet, the human being is always the same self no matter what time, space, or position the body is in. Steiner says that it is a sensing of oneself as spirit.

How is balance educated in the physical body? As with its partner self-movement, balance is also strengthened and matured through movement. Balance loves all movements that circle and spin, swing, twirl, rock, bend, sway/nod/rotate the head, and climb. Balance thrives on its practice through walking on beams, logs, wiggling rocks, uneven ground, and so on. As the body and balancing or vestibular systems go through all these gyrations, the “inner quiet” practices keeping itself steady.

The word “balance” brings forth another picture, too—the old-fashioned scales with weighing pans on either side to sense the relative weight of what one side holds in comparison to the other. We can balance our body physically to find a centered stance. When things are out of balance, we can readjust to re-create equilibrium through movement of body position. In the soul realm, this physical balancing becomes the capacity for judgment. “Making judgments means arriving at an outlook that resolves or rises above a problem, a process in which what at first seems insoluble is brought into harmonious accord . . . We try to restore symmetry in our thinking and feeling.” This is what we know as a sense of justice. “The sense of justice is simply a sublimation of the sense of balance coupled with the capacity for empathy transmitted by the sense of motion. Fellow feeling and compassion are indissolubly bound up . . . with the sense of justice. Far from a moral standpoint, a feeling for justice is feeling for symmetry, an inner impulse to bring restitution in restoring human dignity where it has suffered” (Köhler 2001, 115).

These descriptions provide a more complete picture of each foundational sense and what capacities—trust, tolerance, empathy/compassion, and justice—healthy development supports. The next step is to return to Rudolf Steiner’s insight that the four foundational and four highest, social senses stand in paired relationship to one another.

- Touch is related to sensing the I-being of the other
- Life/well-being is related to sensing the thought of another

- Self-movement is related to moving with the word or speech of another
- Balance is related to the capacity for hearing

A healthy **touch** sense provides experience of boundary. I am secure in myself and can approach another person with trust, sensing where I stop and the other person begins. Security from my physical touch rises to the social sphere in sensing the I-being of the other; I can trust our sameness and not be fearful or anxious of the other person's differences from me.

A healthy **life sense** provides a sense of well-being that supports development of tolerance. Other thoughts, attitudes, cultural experiences, religious orientations, gender expressions, and racial identities may be different from mine. Yet I can feel secure and comfortable in my own being through well-nourished touch and reliable life rhythms. I can not only tolerate this diversity but find it interesting.

Self-movement affects both our outward physical and inward social or emotional movements. My physical body knows how to move with coordination through self-movement. Through self-movement turned inward, I can do this within myself and I can also move inwardly with others, sensing how an experience may feel for them. This capacity opens the door to empathy and compassion with others. Through my feeling, I can sense my way into another's inner life in a respectful and tender way.

Balance provides an experience of equanimity, of symmetrical, even-tempered equilibrium of the physical body through finding a centered point of intersection in the three planes of space. Steiner described balance as affording an "inner rest." In order to elevate my hearing to listening, I must find the inner quiet that allows me to encounter the words, feelings, actions, and thoughts of the others. I sense my way to achieving an inner balance of what I observe. This expresses itself outwardly as a sense of justice. What I sense inwardly as a balanced and fair view, I can project outwardly into the social world in which we all live.

The physical and neurological development of the senses creates the foundation upon which important non-visible intellectual, emotional, and social capacities can grow. Attention to supporting the sense of touch, life or well-being, self-movement, and balance is foundational. In our times, this support is essential to the future years of growing, thinking, feeling, and willing as a full human being.

There are explicit DEIJ messages that we must stand for with bravery and moral integrity. And children also need a chance to dream into imaginations where they see themselves as being recognized, cared for, and safe and sheltered. Their souls crave to know that goodness is always present, even when we cannot see it.

For all of this to take root and flourish, children equally need dedicated support to grow robust, secure, reliable grounding in the four foundational senses as the preparation for the more compassionate, kind, and just world we all working together to manifest. ♦

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Ecology of the Social: An Exploration of Collaborative Arts

~ Janene Ping

From where do we gain the courage and strength to meet the complex challenges in the world today? In contemplating this question, a thought recently came to me. The first step comes from coming to peace with our vulnerability, from accepting and knowing ourselves and all of the ways we may feel small, helpless, and at risk, like little children. But children are not yet self-conscious of their vulnerability. Our often-intensified individual identity unfolds as we grow older. So perhaps, if we pay attention to the wisdom that works through the child, we find that the second step lies in seeking connection with all of creation. Such presence opens the door to wonder, awakening awareness, and we intimate the numinous. Through the spirit, our soul is connected with a greater whole, with that which is eternal.

These themes were very present in the World Association of Puppetry and Storytelling Arts collaborative conference that was held this past July. On-line or in-person, over 90 participants joined in an exploration of Wisdom, Wonder, and Enchantment. Our need to experience wonder in the world, the laming of will when we fall out of relationship with our true self, the wisdom that is a fruit of our striving endeavor when we overcome challenge—these explorations were embraced through activities of willing, feeling, and thinking as we came together in a unique constellation of colleagues and friends.

One aspect that came to the fore was that collaboration is not easy. Rudolf Steiner states that the birth of the consciousness soul requires the paring down of personality—to quiet the self, and widen our understanding of the other. Collaboration is a practice of this. To be able to share our vision and also welcome that which lies in the heart of the other requires the honing of this skill. It is a kind of ecology of the soul, where relationship in context is key. The holding of a festival or event in which the healthy social life is found and the virtues of each can resonate in the whole is a worthy endeavor! In my experience this has become more challenging, and more crucial, in this 21st century.

There were two main stories that were highlighted in performance art during the conference and each was a testament to the human spirit that is able to overcome individual despair through service to the whole. One was *Kayteck the Wizard*, presented by Brian Hull and Mary Tanner. These professional puppeteers brought a multi-media performance for older children and adults that highlighted a story by Janusz Korczak. Dr. Korczak was a physician, author, and humanitarian who advocated for children's rights and cared for orphans in Warsaw, Poland, continuing through the WWII German occupation until he accompanied children to Treblinka, where he perished. It is interesting that in the spirit of



Participants in the 2022 World Association of Puppetry and Storytelling Arts conference. Photo courtesy of Janene Ping

collaboration, Dr. Korczak collaborated with the children of the orphanage in his writing of stories, as well as in the management and leadership of the orphanage that he created. The story of Kayteck the Wizard shows how the arts can open doorways to education about history, social justice, and the great courage of inspired individuals who are the heroes of our times.

The other story highlighted was *Hambakahle and the Enchanted Waters*. In two-and-a-half days, in-person participants explored the evolution of this tale from Eswatini through marionette making, movement, music, storytelling, colored light and shadow, eurythmy, and puppetry. The archetype of the lead character, Hambakahle, stands for all who, inspired by the spirit, tirelessly work for social justice and freedom day after day, even when it does not seem to make a difference, countered by the racism and depravity of cruelty that can manifest in the world. The understanding of service in honor of humanity is a capacity that I hope to deepen for myself and my community. The beauty of such an archetype working within the metaphor of story is that it reveals the truth of human potential which is universally available for all.

When we join together with others in artistic presentation, there is a joyous exploration of creative possibilities. This is then grounded in the difficulty of weaving together the threads of individuality. It leads us toward the art of the social, where we creatively enter into relationships with others out of our inner being. We experience the giving over of our own design and desire to that which benefits the good of the whole.

Letter to the Editor: A response to the Spring 2022 issue

Dear Nancy and colleagues,

I am writing in regard to last season's *Gateways* (Spring 2022). While I knew that my article questioning the Michaelmas festival would be printed alongside another article that discussed the festival from a seemingly contradictory point of view, I was taken by surprise when I saw the article. It was written by Janene Ping, a colleague whom I respect and have had the honor and pleasure of working alongside for a few years, despite our living across the country from each other. Besides being puppetry colleagues

Increasingly, life calls for us to pay attention to our interdependence, out of which we awaken to new ways of being human.

In a lecture on October 10, 1916, "Psychological Distress and the Birth Pangs of the Consciousness Soul," Rudolf Steiner said, "This is how humanity is developing now. We no longer come with a ready-made mind or feeling aspect that works instantaneously. Nor do we have a ready-made intellect that can penetrate everything. The consciousness soul is giving us something much more separate and individual, with greater tendency towards egoism and loneliness... the remedy for the difficulties we encounter in one another is: social understanding." Steiner believed that storytelling and puppetry arts hold the potential of healing the ills of our modern humanity.

I am grateful to fellow collaborators who shared their talents, insight, and imaginative vision with our conference community through the works mentioned above as well as in on-line, practical, puppet making sessions. For more information about such artistic explorations, please check out www.puppetryandstorytelling.org. ♦

A Kindergarten teacher at the Hawthorne Valley Waldorf School in upstate NY for over 30 years, Janene Ping is the founder of the Magical Puppet Tree Theater (1992–present) and president of the World Association of Puppetry and Storytelling Arts. She is a core faculty member at Sophia's Hearth Teacher Education Center in Keene, NH.

and working together on the west coast (and online) puppetry festival, we each have family near to where the other lives (I went to college with her nephew over two decades ago, in fact), and we share a birthday! All this to say, when I saw that my article was printed in contrast with hers, I was taken aback.

How grateful I was a few days later to receive an email from Janene expressing the dismay I also felt. Along with Nancy, we discussed the vulnerability we each experienced in publicly offering an experience of

friction to the wider movement. In particular, Janene and I both love and deeply value the art of puppetry, the intended topic of her article. We experience and practice it as a healing art and an opportunity to bring stories, pictures, gestures, colors, music and moods that bring the audience a sense of the (supposed) other and our interrelatedness one with the other. We work through questions of appropriation and appreciation (as discussed by Joaquin Muñoz at the 2022 conference), research authenticity, and actively work with intent and impact through this work. So for us, having puppetry standing within this friction—this needed and supportive if uncomfortable friction—was unfortunate and disconnected from our commitment to this work and the opportunities for collaboration and healing it offers.

After a few months had gone by, Janene and I finally found the time to sit down together and talk at length. We asked how we wanted to handle this friction amongst our work, amongst our colleagues. We asked how we could create the space to disagree and discuss the experience and thoughts of the other. In larger culture, the ability to speak seemingly opposing points of view without judgment or defensiveness is becoming rare. We are surrounded by a sense that we need to take sides and disagree vehemently with those who hold different views from our own (not to negate cases in which silence is violence). This apparent spectrum of ideology is in actuality, like all either/or/ binary constructs, a circle in which we all reside and can meet each other. In my experience, discovering that a spectrum is actually a circle opens me up to understanding that both can hold truth and we can honor the complexity of what it is to be human.

Growing into middle age at this moment when the potential for transformation is ripe, I am cognizant of standing in the present moment through embodiment and presence, while carrying the multiplicity of truths of the past and a vision for a loving and healing future for all, including the land.

After talking with Janene, I found myself relating these thoughts to our conversation. Our movement is multigenerational. Just as the children teach us so much, so do our young teachers. They are holding the future in their hands, and I stand to support them in bringing about needed transformation. I simultaneously remember that many of our elders worked hard through the 60s and 70s, working towards cultural transformation that created space for this next stage of

liberation that is upon us. How can we hold and honor the wisdom of our elders and all the good work that has happened (and continues on) while also holding the flame of a transformed future? I am grateful to be standing at this crossroads of not yet being an elder, but also not of this rising generation of activist educators. I resolve to stand in the present, as a conduit for both our elders and our youth, holding the truths of the past and the inspiration and hope of together building a loving, equitable, and sustainable future.

I write this letter out of respect for the work of *Gateways* in allowing space for conflicting points of view that can lead to discourse that brings us together in our similarities and differences, and makes way for something new to emerge.

With thanks,

—Aimee de Ney

Post Script:

Aimee sent her letter to me on the eve of a new school year's beginning. Crickets were singing to the stars overhead...and as I watched the crescent moon hover on the horizon just after sunset, I felt grateful for the thoughts shared. We are hovering too, resting just for a moment on the horizon between past and future—as is the truth about every moment of presence.

The word friction has been used often in referring to the diversity of points of view. That is interesting, but really, for me the unfolding of new ways of teaching is welcome, as long as we are authentic and carefully in tune with the children we guide, seeking discernment as we balance between form and freedom. It is a wonderful thing that as far as we go, there is still more to discover.

Blessings on all the children of this beautiful earth and to each and every devoted teacher who seeks the truth in the times we live in.

—Janene Ping

After teaching in Waldorf schools in Washington State since 2001, Aimee de Ney founded Bird Song Children's Garden in Olympia, WA in 2012. Aimee is a doctoral student at Antioch University in the Multicultural and Antiracist education specialization, researching pedagogy that prioritizes fostering love and healing for the Land, the Other, and the Self.

Transitions—In Memoriam

In Memory of Betty Peck, 1921 – 2022

~ Anna Rainville



Betty Peck, beloved kindergarten teacher in public and Waldorf school communities, crossed the threshold into the spiritual world at the age of 100. After years of public school teaching, she encountered the ideas of Rudolf Steiner and Waldorf education through biodynamic gardening. She brought these inspiring ideas with energy, endless creativity, conviction and joy to countless children, families, and Waldorf teachers. Gateways joins in the celebration of her long life with gratitude for the inspiration she endlessly shared with all who love and work with young children. Following are remembrances of Betty by her daughter, Anna Peck Rainville.

Betty Ruth Wesson Peck, December 18, 1921–June 18, 2022

When my mother was twelve years old, her family moved from the city lights of Los Angeles to a ranch in California's Central Valley. The story goes that when they arrived, my mother's mother took one look at how small the farmhouse was and called for a hay wagon to be brought where her six children would sleep outside until the house could be significantly enlarged.

From the top of that hay wagon, my mother saw the night sky for the first time. She always told us that it was then she was "caught up in the Milky Way and became one with the universe."

If there is one experience that defines my mother and her deep connection with the mystery and beauty of life, that is it. She carried that wonder and sense of beauty during every year of her long and purposeful life.

She loved stars. In her classroom, the golden alphabet letters were gifts from the stars, she traced around her kindergarten children to show them that they, too, were five-pointed stars, and she was particularly fond of the North Star, making sure that there was one shining high in the north section of her kindergarten classroom for 30 years.

After retiring there was a North Star in our home library, her bedroom, and then in her room at the nursing home where she lived the final four years. Whenever I left her to work with kindergarten teachers, she would call out, "Remember to tell them about the North Star."

She had a strong inner compass. She was constantly on her way. Her everyday was a journey and adventure. She took every opportunity to learn and to celebrate. I remember a goodbye party for the majestic oak tree when it died. Before it was removed from our garden, she invited the county historian to tell everyone what the tree had witnessed during in its 200-year lifetime. And she invited a Native American drummer to drum and sing farewell.

Every year my brother and I knew important holidays would be wondrously celebrated including a Halloween spook house with a resident (real) skeleton and coffin and then on the first day of May early morning dancing with friends and neighbors around the May Pole with fiddles and strawberry shortcake. Newly married, my mother started a beloved caroling

tradition with my father's friends who had sung together in the UC Berkeley Cal Glee Club. To this day on the Saturday before Christmas four generations gather to sing in four-part harmony to our elders, shelters, and nursing homes.

To be a teacher was my mother's true calling. For her, teaching children was the way to celebrate life. She began teaching third grade in Los Gatos after graduating from the San Jose Normal School (now SJSU). Next, as a supervising teacher for the county, she discovered a special love for the young child and parent education.

My brother and I spent our earliest school days on a farm in a unique educational program founded by our mother, who wanted all children and their families to experience the lifelong benefits of playing and exploring in the natural world. Parents took notes on their child at play and attended monthly meetings on child development. We remember walking through corn rows, catching sunbeams in the barn's loft, and playing in the farmyard on a retired tractor. The highlight was a cargo net hung from the mighty oaks. She had somehow procured this treasure from the San Francisco docks, and we loved climbing. So did the parents. Her granddaughters, Sarah and Merina, were fortunate to attend this school which is now in a new mountain location where it continues to thrive as the Los Gatos Saratoga Observation Nursery School.

My mother's years as a kindergarten teacher widened, polished, and deepened her creative spirit and sense of celebration. In her first years, she welcomed 25 children in the morning and another 25 for the afternoon session—without an assistant. Even then, her sense of style and appreciation for her educational roots and inspiration showed in the way she dressed: Italian leather shoes in honor of Maria Montessori, colorful skirt and black velvet bodice as in a German dirndl for Frederick Froebel, and antique lace white blouses from my father's aunts who were all teachers. Later she wore beautiful Afghan walking dresses in the seasonal colors. She had exquisite taste, dressing for drama, comfort, and mystique—her closet was filled with handmade, antique, re-purposed, and ethnic treasures.

Photo courtesy of Anna Peck Rainville



She was a true believer in the power of play, especially outdoors, such as in the prune orchard and field of tall grasses behind the classroom. Each time the sprayer rolled through, my mother described how she had to throw herself in front of the tractor to stop the poison. Finally, she drove over the mountain to the University of California in Santa Cruz where she was a long-time admirer of the remarkable garden project founded by Alan Chadwick. In her matter-of-fact way, she invited Alan to start a garden for her kindergarten. Amazingly, he said, yes. And he told her that, of course, it would be biodynamic. So began her introduction to Rudolf Steiner. The garden turned into a ten-acre demonstration garden bursting with flowers, vegetables, apprentices, master gardeners, and children. My mother declared she wouldn't be caught inside on a Monday morning, so off they went each Monday to spend the day in the garden. It flourished for 14 years until the land had to be sold.

Meanwhile, the garden led her to Steiner's other works and ultimately to Waldorf education, where she met kindred spirits, especially Margret Meyerkort, a lifelong friend. The ideas found a home in her public school kindergarten where they delighted the children and their families and confounded the administration. She called the principal "Prince" or

In Memory of Dorothy Olsen, 1931 – 2022

~ Recollections shared by Ruth Ker, Flora Suel-Jacklein, and Dorothy's children

“Princess” accordingly. One day the Prince came in with the latest packaged language arts program. “No!” my mother said, “I am my reading kit.” Another year, the Princess demanded that the stumps in her play garden be removed because they were too dangerous. “No!” my mother said, “I stand for danger.”

She believed passionately in what it means to be a teacher—the responsibility, deep learning, and joy. She wrote a creed to express this passion and mailed it off to educational and political leaders, including several presidents. She was invited to design a new kindergarten room and program allowing her to develop her ideas further, all of which are refreshingly shared in her book, *Kindergarten Education*. During this time she held weekly parent evenings in her home and began the quarterly Kindergarten Forum where educators and parents gathered to discuss topics at the heart of early childhood education.

When she retired from teaching kindergarten, she journeyed onward to become a grandmother, a doctoral student, and an author. She hosted a weekly salon, whose motto was “cultural change through conversation.”

With our father, she found a loving partner to match her enthusiasm. Together they created a magical realm where family and community were welcomed to celebrate life and death and everything in between.

There was a quiet rhythm to her otherwise public life. Reading the paper in the morning, the pleasure of preparing very healthy meals (we were raised on Adele Davis, raw milk, and whole grains) and setting the table, tending to the ever-changing garden, afternoon tea, and reading in bed. She read with a pencil underlining passages, noting some with N.B., jotting page numbers and reminders inside the back cover for her own index. She would often call me up to say, “Listen to this!” and read to me from her latest favorite—always non-fiction.

She loved poetry. Every time she took me to the airport, she would stand and wave goodbye while boldly reciting lines from “Old Ironsides,” a poem she had memorized in eighth grade: “Give her to the god of storms, the lightning and the gale.”

And on the return, she would always bring to me a rose from the garden. But there was one time when she was so much in a hurry she didn't have time to pick the rose. She arrived and said, “I am the rose!”

I remember when my father opened a fortune cookie and when I asked what it said, he replied, “It says I am going to die.” He handed it to me, and I read the words, “You will go on a great adventure.”

But for my mother, life was the adventure. It was a celebration. Her favorite Bible verse was John 10:10, “I have come to give you life and life more abundantly.”

She truly loved life in its fullness, taking challenges as an invitation to reconsider, realign and reinvent.

She surrounded herself with beauty. During her monthly doctoral classes in Oakland, she filled the car with baskets of shining orange persimmons, branches of spring blossoms, garden bouquets, and colorful cloths. Arriving early, she would set up the room, transforming it into something marvelous and inviting. “I can't learn, otherwise,” she'd say.

She also lived in gratitude. As part of the kindergarten birthday celebration whenever someone said, “Thank you,” the adults in the room rang little, tiny bells. On other occasions when a child spontaneously said “Thank you” for a kindness, my mother would say, “I can hear the chimes ring.” With my father she walked around the garden three times before tea and sat on the bench overlooking the creek to count their blessings. They are still counting as they sit on the blessing bench, commemorated in bronze, in the Saratoga town plaza, ever grateful.

The colorful banner welcoming everyone to the celebration of her life captured her lifelong sense of connection to the universe: “Betty Peck: Stardust to Stardust.”

I wish you could have met her. She was extraordinary. Please find more stories in the following article and film by one of her former kindergarten children. ♦

<https://www.conversations.org/story.php?sid=333> or

<https://www.conversations.org/story.php?sid=333&op=pdf>

<https://www.karmatube.org/videos.php?id=8167>

On August 11, 2022 one of the inspiring and well-loved initiators of Waldorf education crossed the threshold. The schools and teacher training institutes in our movement have been fortunate to have her continued interest throughout the years. She was present at the founding of the Waldorf Kindergarten Association in 1983 and a long-time WECAN board member thereafter.

Born April 26, 1931 in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, she was the eldest of three girls. Dorothy grew up in a household where responsibility, strength and perseverance were highlighted. Her parents, particularly her father, a South African farm manager, held his children and everyone else to a high standard of being responsible and capable. As their home was often on the large commercial farm where he was employed, Dorothy and her sisters had to attend boarding school, which she did not much like. This is likely where she began learning to be independent and responsible for her needs. She was strong, and life's challenges, while sometimes inconvenient or unwanted, never put her off.

She met her husband, Ray, in South Africa and their five children were born there as well.

They moved to Canada in 1967, and Ray and she were instrumental in forming several initiatives on this continent, notably the Vancouver and Halton Waldorf schools. She was the proud grandmother for seven grandchildren whom she adored. After 50 years of marriage, her husband Ray passed away in 2004 and Dorothy continued to be a pioneer of Waldorf early childhood initiatives and students in training.

Dorothy's role in founding the Waldorf School in Halton, Ontario, unfolded in this way. After her time in Vancouver when most of her children were out of high school, she and husband Ray moved to Whitehorse, Yukon, where she was lead teacher in a public nursery/ kindergarten. This experience of bringing Waldorf ideas to a government guided set-up was quite important for her. It showed, she said, that you can do a lot with Waldorf in many different settings. When invited to guide establishing the Halton school, she

and Ray arrived in late August 1984, all their earthly belongings on a homemade trailer, having driven two weeks from the Yukon. Through the challenges, tensions, and joys of guiding the school in its growth, she fulfilled many different roles. No matter what the situation, she always was kind and gracious, navigating opposite viewpoints and finding the common thread: the children. She did this not so much in words, but through her example of being humble, seeing the potential and rising above any fray.

She was an extremely avid and quick reader starting at a young age, and this lasted her whole life. Her children, husband and friends were amazed at how quickly she finished book after book—novels of varied styles and authors and, later, long lists of anthroposophical references for teacher training courses. Dorothy had several jobs as a librarian, and this skillset informed her well-organized and detailed approach to record-keeping. She used these skills as well as her warm, loving, and well-developed, socially-adept nature in her pioneering endeavors. Dorothy was truly interested in others and those around her felt bathed in her warmth and acceptance. One of her children said, “I never saw her give up on anything or even express such a sentiment. It was always an attitude of ‘What's the next step?’ and then to engage with the process of working through it.”

Dorothy also loved to travel and had many adventures in Europe and on the North American continent. There is a story about Dorothy and Ray and their five children arriving late one night in Paris in their Volkswagen camping van with a tent that everyone thought was a circus tent (it had to be big enough to house them and their five children). They pitched their tent after parking by the Eiffel Tower, only to be greeted by the *gendarmes* the next morning. In later years she was an avid hiker and loved especially to walk in gardens, by the seashore or on forest trails. In the last week of her life, she made her last trip to the beach with friends.

As mentioned, Dorothy was involved in many Waldorf initiatives. Her persevering nature and

Protection Stories

~ Suzanne Down

attention to details, as well as her personal warmth enabled her to be instrumental in the success of many endeavors. As well as helping to start schools in South Africa and Canada, she also was an initiator of Waldorf teacher training and began courses for Rudolf Steiner Centre, Toronto (1991–2002) and later mentored Jan Patterson to begin their part-time training in 2010. After a move to Duncan, BC in 1994, she began the founding of West Coast Institute for Studies in Anthroposophy in 1995 and later mentored Ruth Ker, the current WCI Director, in 1998. Dorothy was Co-Director for WCI from 1996 to 2011.

In the early 90s Dorothy also began mentoring Waldorf early childhood teachers all over North America. Waldorf practitioners worldwide have much to be grateful for because of the great number of children and adults who have benefited from Dorothy's wisdom and compassionate approach to life.

Here are some words from one of her children, "In all this activity you would hardly expect to find such a sweet, kind, sensitive, and vulnerable person—you

might expect someone with a harder shell and a dominant approach, but that was not her way at all. She was gentle and could wield the power of gentleness in a way I have never seen and I'm sure I'm not the only one. A rare and wonderful quality. Very passionate. Very gentle. Very strong. She was genuinely interested in everything and everyone and loved conversation, parties, and good jokes for a wonderful laugh. She believed in joy and sought after it and spread it wherever possible."

Many people have benefitted from working alongside Dorothy Olsen. She was not only a pioneer of initiatives. She was also an example that many of those she mentored learned to esteem and model. Her hardworking, enthusiastic, joyful, inclusive approach to life is something she leaves as a legacy to all of us. As one of her children expressed it, "She was a flower always looking to open. A courageous, generous tree under whose shade many came to rest, or begin something new. A shelter."

Thank you, Dorothy, for all you have given to us. ♦

We who have a love for stories and for the visual puppet show know they can be a healing gift for children. However, children and their parents have become increasingly overwhelmed and anxious in a very unpredictable world. Breathing deeply and rhythmically, the basis for our inner balance and equilibrium, has become endangered. As we confront this "shallow breath" epidemic, a child's knowing that the world is a good and safe place has become threatened.

We can help by telling them stories that intentionally bring back a sense that all is well in the world. I have been developing stories for many years that specifically hold children in the metaphorical "mother's arms." I call them Protection Stories.

This story direction began for me when people started contacting me with requests for a healing story after 9/11, after the hurricane and flooding from Katrina, after the great Tsunami, after the continual violence and mass shootings in this country. I increasingly thought, all children need a story that will make them feel safe, that will surround them with story pictures, like layers of gentle sheaths of protection. This kind of story would give each listening child extra "skins" to meet the world of today. With the worldwide Covid crisis changing our lives forever, and now the horrific situation in Ukraine, these stories are needed more than ever. We all need them to be a vital part of our story and puppetry curriculum.

We tell healthy stories and little tales all the time, but we can make our intention more conscious. A deeper understanding will guide us in how we hold this kind of story inwardly, how we speak it aloud, and how we reveal it through visual images in puppetry.

For instance, Mama Bird is making a nest; she carefully weaves in twig and moss, grasses and leaves. She is wise in her creation of a home for her baby birds that will withstand wind and rains. The nest is nestled on a sturdy branch up high in a tree, hidden safely by leaves. If she is lucky she has found some thistle down or sheep's wool to make the nest soft and warm.

You see, layer after layer of protective story sheathing is already established, even before the little tale begins. Then Mama Bird sits on the nest, where the warmth of her plumped-up feathers, along with

her wings, like a blanket, warms the eggs and later the wee baby birds. Mama Bird singing a sweet melody, the warm rays of the golden sunset, the gentle rustling of a breeze through the leaves saying, "Shhhhhh, shhhhhh, time to sleep little ones"—all add more picture layers that offer a soothing quality. Our own observations of the listening children will tell us what is needed. The children's breathing becomes rhythmical and deep. All is well in the world.

We can specifically create protection tales, and we can also rethink some of our traditional and favorite stories to make them more therapeutic. When we see tenderness and vulnerability in the children, or when the hardening of their inner lives arises as the fast pace and intellectuality of the adult world presses in, we can look for stories that have a "shelter" in the story, a sturdy and safe home. We can choose an old favorite like "The Mitten," or "The Little Clay Pot," or any number of folktales about the animals who, one by one, share a cozy home.

But what of the traditional ending? A bear comes along and sneezes, sending the image of a cozy, reliable home for all asunder! From the viewpoint of a Protection Story, we can re-picture the ending image to be something stable and wonderful. Something like this: A bear comes along, let's say Rumbly Bumbly the Bear, and tries to push his way into the mitten. In the chaos, a bee ends up on the bear's nose. Instead of making the bear sneeze, which sends all the animals up in the air and out of their warm shelter, imagine Bee telling Bear, "Follow me, I know where there is a hollow tree that is golden full of honey!" Bear follows the bee to a feast, yum, yum! There is also a hollow log on the ground by the tree covered with soft moss, where Bear curls up for his winter sleep. You see where I am going. Bee returns to the "mitten" with her friends. Order is intact in their beloved home, and friend Bear is happy with much more than he had hoped for.

Harmony reigns. All is well in the world.

This is not to say that all your stories will have this intention. But adding Protection Stories to your repertoire of tales to tell through the year will serve the children well.



Illustration by Jo Valens from Tell Me a Story (WECAN, 2013)

The story that follows is a true tale, inspired by my own mother who lost her straw hat in the wind one day. The seasons came and went, and one day, on a walk with my dad on their land, they came upon the hat. As in this story, it was covered with growing plants, and they found a mouse nest inside. It was magical. My mom still wears straw hats—I wonder if more adventures in nature await her.



Illustration by Deborah Grieder from *Tell Me a Story* (WECAN, 2013)

Grandmother's Hat

Once there was a grandmother who loved to garden. It was a lovely summer morning, and she went outside to work there. The garden beds were already overflowing with fresh, colorful vegetables and flowers. Butterflies and ladybugs nestled on the leaves and blossoms, and bees happily buzzed as they sipped the sweet nectar. Grandmother knelt down to weed the rows of carrots and beets, and then started to pick enough lettuce for a salad for lunch. Already the sun was hot, and she took off her straw hat to cool off.

Suddenly, a gust of wind whirled and twirled over the garden, and picked up her hat and blew it here and there, high and low! Grandmother started to chase after her hat, she reached high, she reached low, but the wind blew it higher and higher, and finally away from sight.

"Oh, my old straw hat," laughed Grandmother. "It was a good hat for many years, now it deserves a little adventure!" She kept on laughing as she picked up her basket of lettuce, and went inside to make her lunch. "What a fun little tale to tell my grandchildren!"

Meanwhile, the wind blew the hat far away from the garden, over a forest of aspen trees, and finally settled it down in a lovely peaceful meadow full of summer wildflowers. It was a happy place to land, and the hat was content to sit there and enjoy the blue sky, and sweet smells of the flowers.

Summer turned to Autumn, and the golden leaves of the aspen trees fluttered in the breezes and settled

down all over the meadow, and covered the hat with a blanket of gold.

Autumn turned chilly and soon after the first frost, beautiful white snowflakes fell over the land, and the hat was covered with a blanket of white snow. The snow fell all through the winter months, and the hat rested still, under many blankets of snow.

The spring sun began to warm the snow, and slowly, slowly, the snow began to melt, and the straw hat was able to peek out at the meadow in springtime. The rains of spring came, and the grass greened, and spring flowers started to grow all over the meadow. Some of the grasses and flowers started to grow in and out of the straw hat. The hat was pleased to become so lovely.

And when summer came again, with the sun high in the sky, and long hot days filled the meadow, the straw hat had become a beautiful garden. How happy the little hat was. Then one day a little mouse appeared in the meadow. When mouse saw the straw hat garden, he thought, "This might make a fine house for me." Mouse went closer and climbed all over the straw hat, and even nibbled a little hole in the hat, like a window, and looked inside. Oh my, what a big room and high ceiling there was. Yes, indeed, mouse had found a wonderful house. A gold straw hat, white mouse, colorful flowers and green leaves.

He went all through the meadow gathering soft feathers, and flower petals. He went into the forest to

find some moss and brought them all back to his new house. He went through the little window and made a soft nest to sleep in on the floor of the big room.

When his nest was finished, mouse looked out the window of his house. The sun was beginning to set, and the last warm golden rays of sunshine settled on the meadow and on the straw hat house. Mouse looked out for a long time, until the night sky began to grow deep blue, and the stars twinkled over the meadow and the straw hat house. All was well, and mouse was happy in his new home. He had one last look out at the beautiful world and said, "Good Night, Meadowland." Then he settled down in his wee, soft, cozy nest in the big room with the high ceiling of his new straw hat house. How peaceful it was. ♦

This article is reprinted with kind permission from Kindling, the UK journal for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education and Care.

Suzanne Down is the founder/ director of Juniper Tree School of Story and Puppetry Arts. She offers extensive on-line courses in all aspects of puppetry and story-writing. Information about these offerings can be found at junipertreepuppets.com.

Bringing Cultural Consciousness through Stories and Circles

Can implicit messages be as effective and powerful as explicit ones?

~ Holly Koteen-Soulé

For those of us who carry responsibility for building inclusive and caring communities in our early childhood classrooms and with the families in our Waldorf Schools, the current social questions loom large. Out of our understanding of child development, we know that young children learn through imitation and modeling. So, our continuing inner work with our own unconscious biases and assumptions is essential. We also need to be prepared to respond appropriately to specific situations that arise in our classrooms which need explicit statements that support differences of all kinds and invoke a gesture of inclusion.

At Sound Circle teacher training, two of my colleagues and I facilitated an online early childhood workshop in which we explored creating stories and circles to bring important themes and healing gestures to the children in our classes. Working groups of four created stories to carry suggested themes. By week's end, stories that lent themselves to movement became beginnings of movement circles. Others became new puppet plays.

Colleagues identified healing gestures that we can model and illustrate in our stories and circles. We wish to strive to:

- Recognize and work through antipathy or discomfort with things and people that are different from us.

- Stop labeling and shunning or shaming others because of labels.
- Listen to one another.
- Move past an "us and them" orientation.
- Solve problems by collaborating with others.
- Show ways for everyone to get a share, even if we feel fearful that there isn't enough.
- Redeem hurt or conflict by making it better.
- Breathe as a healthy community with a permeable boundary.
- Live by grace, love, forgiveness, and humility.

Stories included appreciating differences of skin color, family constellation, gender stereotypes, developmental or ability differences, and multi-language situations. Offering pictures of belonging and inclusion was an overarching theme throughout.

There was a great enthusiasm among the workshop participants for creating new material that supports the reawakening of cultural consciousness that speaks, not didactically, but in a heart-felt way, to young children and their families. The following story, "Blackberry Bunnies," served as an example for the workshop participants.

Blackberry Bunnies

Once upon a time, there was a rabbit named Poppy. She did not live on a farm or in the wild, like other rabbits. She lived in a small village near the sea. How Poppy and her family and the other rabbits came to live in the village was a mystery. It is possible, some of the villagers said, that a few rabbits escaped from the County Fairgrounds when someone forgot to close the door to their pen.

If that was so, then it made sense that some of the rabbits made their home in the meadow next to the Fairgrounds. After a few years, there were more and more families of rabbits living in burrows around the edge of the meadow. There were rabbits of all colors living there: chocolate colored rabbits, caramel colored rabbits, dark-as-night colored rabbits, rabbits as white as the summer clouds and rabbits as soft and grey as pussy willows. Some rabbit families were all the same color and others had baby bunnies of all different colors. Life in the meadow was good and there was lots of grass to eat.

When Poppy was a baby bunny, Mother Rabbit taught her to come running back whenever her mother thumped loudly on the ground with her hind leg. That was a sign that danger was near. The rabbit families were safe enough when they were snuggled in their burrows, but when they were grazing in the bright green grass, they could be easily seen by the high-flying hawks and eagles. On sunny days, Mother Rabbit kept a close watch on the ground for the shadows of the big birds who lived in the nearby forest.

One day, Poppy's mother and all her baby bunnies were grazing in the meadow when a hungry eagle spied the baby bunnies below and began to dive. Mother Rabbit thumped loudly, and all the baby bunnies ran toward her. Their burrow was on the other side of the meadow, but close by was a thick bramble of blackberry bushes and Mother Rabbit and all her children ducked quickly into this shelter. The hedge was so dense that the eagle could no longer see the rabbits and flew away. Mother Rabbit found the safety of the blackberry thicket so comforting, that she dug a new burrow beneath the prickly canes.



Illustration by Deborah Griener from
Tell Me Another Story (WECAN, 2019)

When the other rabbit families realized that the blackberry thicket was the safest place to live, they all moved in as well. Poppy liked her new home, especially after all the other bunnies moved in and she and her brothers and sisters had lots of new playmates.

Sometimes the children of the village came to visit the rabbits and brought carrots for the baby bunnies. The children liked all their different colors. There were chocolate colored rabbits, caramel colored rabbits, dark-as-night colored rabbits, rabbits as white as the summer clouds and rabbits as soft and grey as pussy willows. Some of the rabbits were shy, but some came right up to the children and nibbled at the carrots that the children were holding in their hands. If the children were too noisy or moved too quickly, all the bunnies would duck quickly into their blackberry bush. Life in the meadow was good. There was lots of grass to eat, a thicket of blackberries to keep everyone safe, and a colorful collection of bunny friends. ♦

This article is reprinted with kind permission from Kindling, the UK journal for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education and Care.

Holly Koteen-Soulé is Early Childhood Director for Sound Circle Center in Seattle. She served as kindergarten and parent-child teacher for 25 years at Seattle Waldorf and Bright Water School in Seattle. She is a member of the Pedagogical Section Council and a WECAN board member.

The Little Squirrel Story

~ Wendalyn von Meyenfeldt

This story has been used in early childhood eurythmy lessons and will also work as a circle imagination when brought by a classroom teacher who creates beautiful, meaningful gestures appropriate to the group of children.

Bringing rhythm and flow with free play of the arms and hands will help communicate the story in a healthy way. Well-formed speaking carries consonants and vowels as “medicine” to the children. This “medicine” not only helps fashion the children’s speech but will help form their bodies and movement as well.

Young children learn through imitation and repetition. This autumn story emphasizes rhythm, repetition and rhyme so the imagination can “breathe” and dance with the seasons. The story includes activity and rest, speech and song, and some suspense and

humor too. These alternations, along with the refrain, strive to offer a balanced movement story. The tale can be shortened as needed; different animals can be introduced over time as well.

Some themes in this tale are:

- Finding safety, protection and reassurance
- Overcoming or acknowledging fear and worry
- Helping each other and waiting for each other (social cooperation & community)
- An Autumnal theme of seeking quiet and rest with the Earth; connecting the children with the changing year and the whole of life

May we all know and find the warm and safe “secret place” that awaits us as we experience joy with the children in these movements.

Begin sitting down and accompany the narration with gestures.

Deep in the forest, the loving Earth Mother
Awaits her small children—each sister and brother.
She builds them soft and cozy nests,
For Winter is coming and they must rest.

Stand up.

Where trees stand tall, and on the branches
Pretty leaves still do their dances.

Join hands and walk around the circle, singing a fairly short or abridged Autumn song. See Waldorf Music Resources. You might also improvise a melody to the following verse.

“Wind in wood, breeze and blow.
Call Earth’s Children home to go.
Home to go-oh-oh.”

Stand and continue telling the story, accompanied with movement and gestures.

Squirrel Nutkin too was ready
To find a cozy nest,
Where he might hide his nuts and seeds
And sleep and dream his best.

Move with quick steps around the circle as “little squirrels,” with the verse that follows. Hold rounded arms in front of you like a little squirrel’s paws, and if you wish, you can gently roll your arms around as you go. With a younger group, you might take hands and move around the circle together.

He ran among the tall, tall trees
Along the forest track
And there he met a little deer:
A little deer with soft, soft ears
And spots upon her back.

Stand and continue telling the story, accompanied with movement and gestures.

"Oh dear, oh dear," she murmured.
"I fear I've lost my way.
The wind is bold, and nights are cold.
Oh, where can a small deer stay?"
"Come follow me," the squirrel then said.
"I know where we can find a bed."
He waited there for her to follow
And off they went o'er hill and hollow.

*Join hands.
Begin walking around the circle.*

**Walk around the circle, repeating the Autumn song of your choice (see page one), or sing:*

"Wind in wood, breeze and blow.
Call Earth's Children home to go.
Home to go-oh-oh."

Stand and continue the narration, accompanied with movement and gestures.

They went among the tall, tall trees
Along the forest trail,
And there they met a little rabbit:
A grey and jumpy little rabbit
With a soft and fluffy tail.

Jump each time you say "rabbit"

"Oh dear, oh dear," she murmured.
"I fear I've lost my way.
The wind is bold, and nights are cold.
Oh, where can a small rabbit stay?"
"Come follow us," the others said.
"We know where you can find a bed."
They waited there for her to follow
And off they went o'er hill and hollow.

*Join hands.
Begin walking around the circle.*

Walk and sing the Autumn song or the "Wind in wood" melody, as before.

Sit down at the end of the song. Continue telling the story, accompanied with gestures.

The day was growing darker as they made their way along.
The forest night was quiet, for all the birds had flown.
The worn and tired little worms hid under rock and stone.
The busy bugs and beetles small—all hurried, scurried home.
The eensy weensy spiders wove and spun their silken webs,
Then said: "good night" and curled up tight within their dainty beds.
The little snails tucked into sleep, all safe inside their shells.
They said "Good night," while from the heights the Autumn leaves now fell.
And there beneath the tall, tall trees
Along the forest trail,
They met a little mouse-kin:
A small and furry mouse-kin
With a long and curly tail.
"Oh dear, oh dear," she murmured.
"I fear I've lost my way.
The wind is bold, and nights are cold.
Oh, where can a small mouse stay?"
"Come follow us," the others said.
"We know where you can find a bed."
They waited there for mouse to follow
And off they went o'er hill and hollow.

Stand up.

Walk around the circle, taking small steps on tiptoes like a little mouse. Each child can move their arms and hands like little "paws," or with a younger group, you might hold hands and move all together around the ring.

The mouse-kin crept on tiny feet
With the rabbit and deer and squirrel so fleet.

Continue on tiptoes around the circle, either speaking or singing the little verse below.

"Tiptoe, so, so. Through the forest we shall go.
Tiptoe, so, so. Through the forest we shall go."

Stand and continue the narration, accompanying with movement and gestures.

The Autumn night loomed dark and black
And it was hard to see the track.
No matter how they rushed and hurried,
Small mouse was looking rather worried.
Just then an owl called from his bough:
"You-whoop are getting closer now.
You-whoop are getting closer now."
He dropped a feather, like an arrow.
It pointed to a path, straight and narrow.
Then down they went along the trail,
Beneath the branches woven veil,
To find at last the secret place
Where Mother Earth waited, warm and safe.

Note: pronounce "wh" as "h" in you-whoop.

Sit down and continue telling the story, accompanied with gestures.

Upon the earth, serene and brown,
Amid the tree roots, sheltered 'round,
She made them soft and grassy beds
With mossy pillows for their heads.
The four friends crept beneath the covers
As softly sang the dear Earth Mother.
I'm sure that mouse-kin slept the best,
Curled up in her little nest.

Sing a quiet evening song or lullaby to complete the story circle. See Waldorf Music Resources. You might enjoy "Sleep my Little Mousie" by Peter Patterson in the Gateways collection from Wynstones Press. If desired, you can gently rock your arms with the song, as if rocking the four little friends to sleep. ♦

Wendalyn von Meyenfeldt is a eurythmy teacher and therapeutic eurythmist on the West Coast of Canada with a strong background in Waldorf Kindergarten work, having studied under the "wise wings" of Margret Meyerkort. It was her work with younger children and her interest and delight in "circle work" which led her to study eurythmy! After many years of Waldorf teaching in British Columbia, she now lives on Salt Spring Island. There she continues to write stories and teach part-time in several Waldorf Teacher Training Institutes in Canada.

Book Reviews

Birth to Three in Education and Care: Rudolf Steiner, Emmi Pikler and the Very Young Child
Edited by Heather Church
(WECAN, 2022)

Reviewed by Nancy Blanning

The publication of WECAN's new *Birth to Three in Education and Care—Rudolf Steiner, Emmi Pikler and the Very Young Child* is a real breakthrough in Waldorf Birth to Three work. This book marks two momentous events. The content of this book was drawn from the first-ever birth to three conference held at Sophia's Hearth in October 2019. This conference slipped in as an accomplished fact before the descent of the pandemic, gifting participants, and now readers, with four inspiring and stimulating keynote addresses.

The second momentous development is that this conference and this book mark a purposeful coming together of early childhood principles and practices that are affirmed by both Waldorf and Pikler pedagogies. This book explains that even though Rudolf Steiner and Emmi Pikler did not know each other, their views about the nature of the young child are complementary. Both held the utmost trust in the developmental wisdom that lives within each human baby and urged environments where the children are left free to achieve their own milestones—without a rigid expectation of timeline.

Rudolf Steiner again and again reiterated that each adult, each teacher, should be completely committed to respecting and honoring the being of the child and to not impose adult expectations that interfere with the child's healthy, natural unfolding. Steiner described the body-soul-spirit nature of every human being from before the first breath onward. Emmi Pikler did actual research in her home for children in Lóczy that implicitly confirms the wisdom of Steiner's insight into child development for the very youngest. It is essential that adult caregivers recognize children's right—and developmental need—for freedom of movement to find their own ways, along with warm, interested, respectful caregiving. Seeing these two complementary pictures of infants and toddlers placed together is reassuring and empowering to read.

The first keynote address was presented by Susan Weber, a pioneer who achieved her vision of a Birth to

Three care and training center with the founding of Sophia's Hearth, in Keene, NH. Susan's presentation revolved around the concept of "wayfinding." Indigenous people of the distant past navigated their way in unknown geographic regions and across oceans without any mechanical or technological instruments. They developed a sensitive relationship with the stars and planets, sun and moon, and swells of waves. In giving themselves over to the presence of these natural, guiding forces, they intuitively knew where they were and had no fear of being lost. Susan describes the very young child as one who is "wayfinding." Through the innate wisdom of movement, anchoring oneself in space through one's own "body compass" sends the child forth with a sense of freedom and confidence to find the way to uprightness, a major step toward true human personhood. Our job is to watch the children and offer environments which allow children to find their own way. The children experience that caring adults trust them to find their way, and are assured that their trust is safe to give reciprocally to the adult. Relationship grows.

Adult touch, gaze, and speech are the elements of caregiving discussed next by Katherine Scharff. Katherine's background includes having been a hospice nurse as well as an early childhood educator. As a nurse she helped the elderly make their passage to the spiritual world, and she sees the role of the early childhood educator as being to warmly welcome the new human from the spiritual to the earthly world, in as warm, gentle, and encouraging a way as possible. To build strength in this new relationship, the caregiver must become an attentive observer who learns to understand the baby's cues and communications. Babies learn through what they feel, see, and hear. These experiences should be the most inviting possible, in order to assure the baby that the choice to incarnate on the earth was a good one.

A quotation describing Dr. Pikler's approach describes this well: "Dr. Pikler suggests that every time an adult has an interaction with a child, she has the opportunity to speak to him, to address him, and to let him know that he matters; that she is there for him, that she is present, available, and accepting of him. She observes that the adult's gestures are imperative in creating a dialogue between her and the child."

Many examples of interactions with young children follow to illustrate the validity of this statement. Hand movements and gestures need to be gentle, slow, and tactful. Warm and non-confronting gaze is another avenue for building trust and relationship. Careful, unrushed speech with a warm tone of voice is also reassuring. Children confirm again and again that they experience these as kind and respectful invitations into the world.

Pediatric physical therapist and teacher trainer Jane Swain's deep knowledge of child development further confirms the need children have for self-initiated movement. Wending their way through their own sequential progression of movement achievements builds a strong, sensory-healthy body and also the beginnings of personal autonomy. Jane points to the compatibility of both Steiner's and Pikler's views on development: "Both Steiner and Pikler advocated that the infant be allowed the freedom to negotiate their own motor journey up into verticality at their own pace, in their own individualized way, without overt instruction and without encouragement from the adult. They trusted the infant's innate ability to learn to roll over by themselves, to know when to spend a longer or shorter time belly crawling, and ultimately how quickly or slowly to progress up into standing and walking."

This section explains how each step—back-lying, side-lying, tummy-lying, belly crawling, getting onto hands and knees, sitting, kneeling, squatting, and standing—all work to develop balance and security in movement and posture. While it is usually not recognized, all of these positional accomplishments develop balance and lay the foundation for orientation in space, directionality, and sequencing—all essential for success in the study of reading, writing, and mathematics. Giving children freedom to achieve

these motor milestones on their own is an important investment in their future capacities.

The final contribution to this rich collection comes from Debbie Laurin, PhD. Her study of child development and extensive study at the Pikler Institute in Budapest give her a strong grounding in Pikler pedagogy. In her presentation she shares research conducted on diapering practices and attitudes toward this caregiving. Research results confirm that different approaches either contribute to or undermine the positive relationship between child and caregiver.

Pikler caregiving emphasizes that moments of care—diapering, dressing, feeding—are precious opportunities to build a positive relationship with the child. These are seen as moments for the caregiver and child to bond in a cooperative, mutually respectful partnership. Speech can be unhurried and personally address the child with warmth. The adult explains what is going to happen and invites the child's participation as well. The whole procedure is a chance to acknowledge and appreciate the child as opposed to giving a perfunctory, quick diaper change that is efficient but impersonal. The conclusions of this research point clearly to the positive relationship building of this more gentle, interested interaction.

Each of these four presentations offers evidence that gentle, involved, warm, unhurried caregiving builds positive relationships between children and adults. Mainstream research is also confirming that positive relationship with a caring adult is key to healthy social-emotional growth. Unrestricted freedom of movement in a safe environment builds autonomy. The child implicitly experiences that they have the inner capacity to find their own way in childhood and adult life beyond. What a blessing this little book is, as it describes so well how we can participate in this healthy unfolding with very young children. ♦

Toward a Kinder, More Compassionate Society: Working Together Toward Change Forthcoming 2023 from WECAN

In February 2022, the conference of the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America focused on bringing greater awareness of Black Lives Matter and other efforts in radical empathy and inclusion to Waldorf early childhood programs. Keynote speakers and workshop leaders, speaking from a wealth of Black, Brown, Indigenous, LGBTQ+ experience and

more, adapted their presentations for this unique and urgently needed anthology.

Introducing the book, the WECAN board offers an accountability statement, professing, in part:

To educate our children in and toward freedom we must understand not only the developmental needs

of children but also the context of the society and structures that influence them and us . . . As Waldorf early childhood practitioners, we are invited to develop the spiritual attributes of greatheartedness, humility, curiosity, interest, wonder, and integrity. In these unique and challenging times, we are being asked to see clearly, without any veil of illusion, what influences us. We are being asked to be willing to change, to respond, and to transform. This is potent, painful, powerful, essential work. With collaborative, sensitive, and honest activity, we can go forward together.

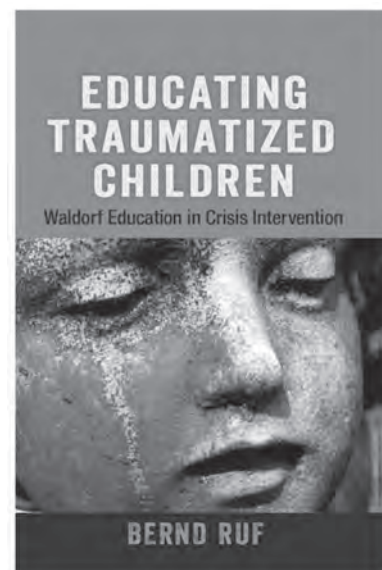
As a biracial parent who brought her first child to the Waldorf kindergarten in 1999, I wish I'd had this scholarship to comfort me and make me feel less alone in my concerns about what's come to be known as "representation." I could bring dolls with darker skin and clothing that evoked the Philippines, my mother's birth nation, to my home; I could incorporate stories about Asian and Italian immigrants and world mythologies into our bedtime routines. But it was painful to experience anew, on my son's behalf, the separation between what was true at home and

what was represented as true at school. The "world is good and beautiful" philosophy of the Waldorf early childhood classroom came mostly in hues of pink and gold, and through stories that featured people who did not look or act much like my ancestors. For families that have histories and experiences that involve racial diversity, gender fluidity, expansive sexualities, and more, the question of whether a Waldorf education will be true to the challenges they face in the world is posed daily and intensely.

The Waldorf nursery and kindergarten classrooms and their loving guardians, the formidable and fiercely human early childhood faculty, will be all the healthier and stronger for exploring the vulnerabilities exposed in Toward a Kinder, More Compassionate Society. For readers like me who feel a little shiver to read phrases like #sayhername, "decolonize" the classroom, "radical empathy," and "racial identity development" in a text about Waldorf early childhood education, Toward a Kinder, More Compassionate Society is a long-awaited glimpse into the expanded horizons of an "education for the future." ♦

—Donna Miele, WECAN Publications Coordinator

Recommended Reading



Educating Traumatized Children **Waldorf Education in Crisis Intervention** By Bernd Ruf (Lindisfarne Books, 2013)

Since this book was published in 2013, the world has seen increasing crises and trauma. The book's author, Bernd Ruf, has organized teams of teachers to go to places of crisis with Emergency Pedagogy. With therapeutic understanding and artistic activities, such as painting, drawing, modeling, puppetry, storytelling and movement, it is possible to lessen the traumatic impacts on children and point them on a pathway toward healing. What is described in the first portion of the book under "Psychological Trauma" gives insightful information to all teachers. Everyone in our world is unsettled and some truly traumatized. This book gives information for recognizing, understanding, and responding to trauma, much of which we can apply to our own classrooms. ♦

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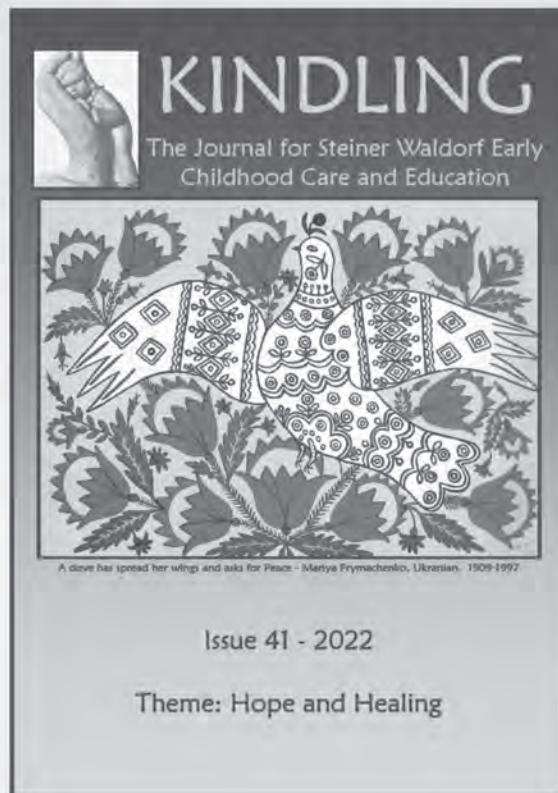
Birth to Three: Debbie Laurin
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KINDLING



The Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Care and Education

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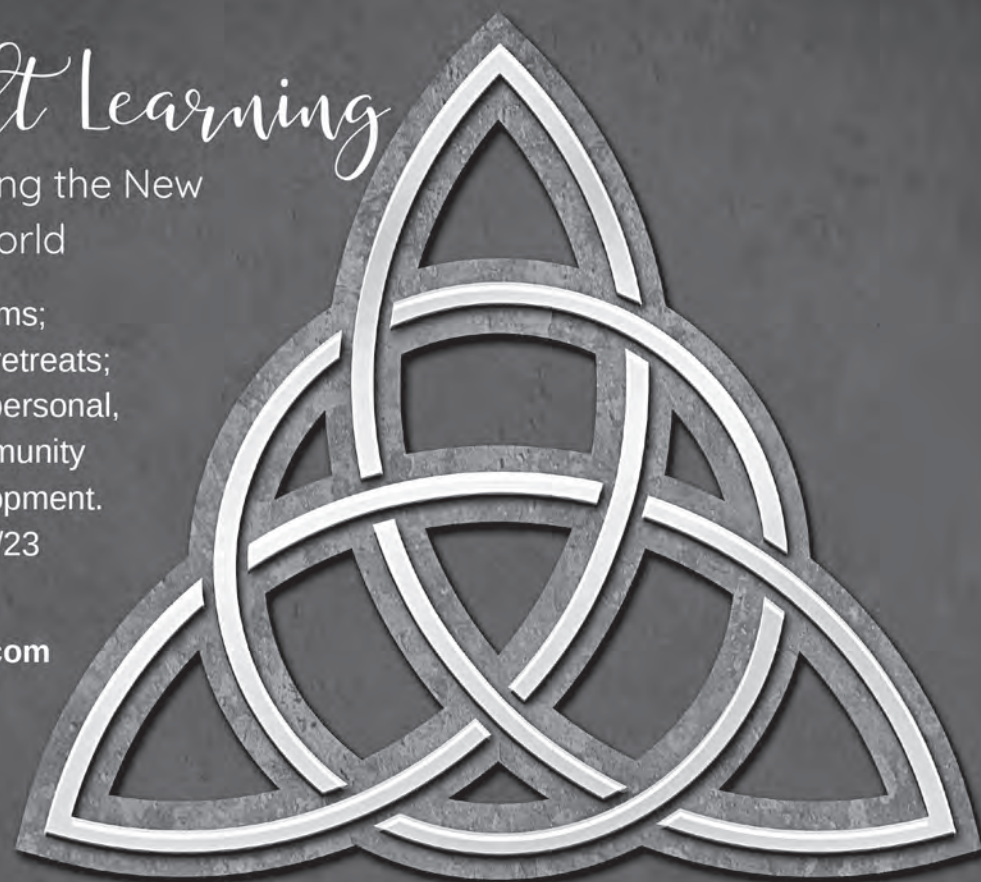


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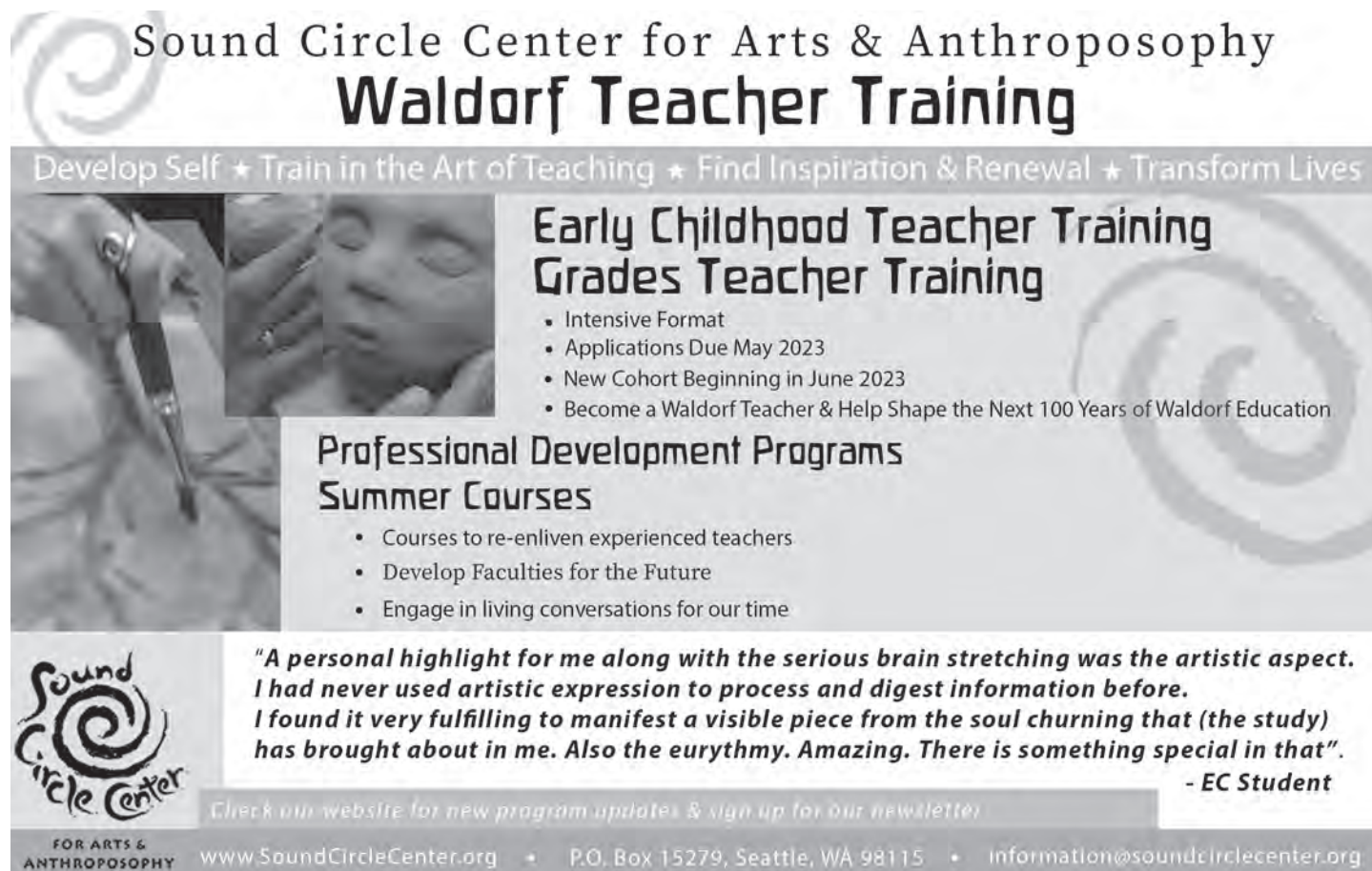
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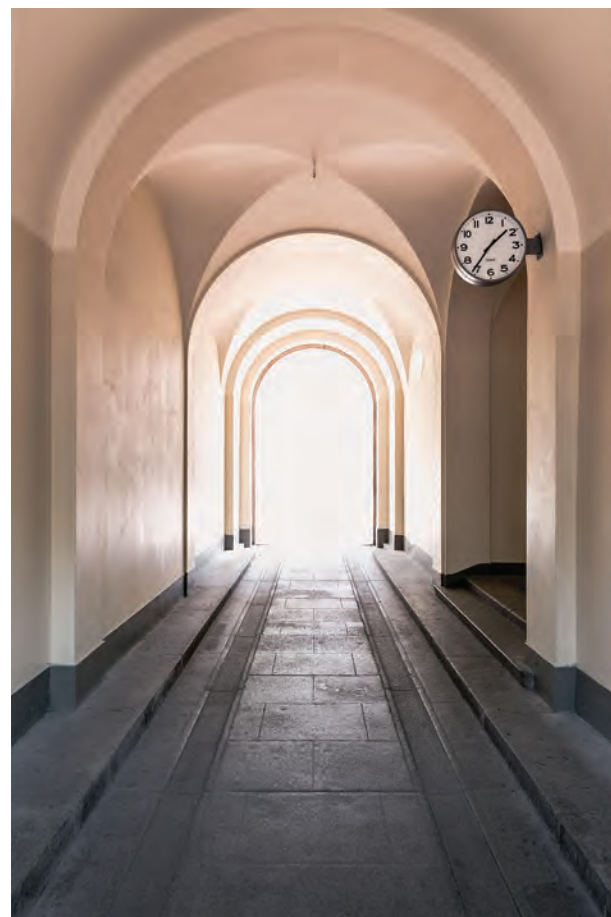


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