Editor's Introduction

Ilan Safit

The Waldorf universe is abuzz with the approaching one hundredth anniversary of the opening of the first Waldorf school, and so are we at the Research Institute. Work is currently in progress to analyze and present data and insights collected from the latest Survey of Waldorf Graduates, which will be reported in a self-standing, book-length volume coinciding with 100 years of Waldorf education.

In the meanwhile, the current issue of our *Research Bulletin* opens with a chapter from a much-anticipated history of Waldorf education worldwide, composed by Nana Göbel, the co-founder and executive leader of the *Friends of Waldorf Education* (known as *Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners*), an organization that has been supporting hundreds of Waldorf initiatives throughout the world since 1976.

Göbel's book, *Die Waldorfschule und ihre Menschen Weltweit* (*The Waldorf School and Its People Worldwide*), is a three-volume tome, soon to be published by *Verlag Freies Geistesleben*, and is in the process of being translated into English by Jan Kees Saltet of the Hartsbrook School in Massachusetts. The chapter we present here, in two installments, reviews the first 50 years of Waldorf education in North America, from the first school founded in New York City in 1928 to a "change of guards" in Waldorf leadership taking place around 1979.

Göbel's history reviews the main figures, organizations, and events that led to the foundation of school after school, from New York to New England to Pennsylvania to the West Coast, and finally to the Midwest and Canada, giving rise to a network of independent yet collaborative schools and eventually to the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). While moving quickly between events, names, and times, Göbel's chapter resonates with the drama of influence and identity, as the Germanic origins of Waldorf education, often arriving on this side of the Atlantic through the efforts of pioneering visitors and emigrants, slowly takes on a unique American form.

We offer a closer look at a segment of this unique narrative by tapping into the institutional history of the first Waldorf school in North America and the personal memories of one of its graduates, who became a high school teacher, a class teacher, a school parent, and an administrator at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City. On the occasion of the school's 90th anniversary, Carol Bärtges recounts personal and collective memories from the early days of the school. Her account and reflections, at times overlapping with moments from the wider history told by Nana Göbel, conclude with a view for the future of the school and of Waldorf education in America as a whole. Referring to AWSNA's first Core Principle, Bärtges states, "We will stand at the forefront of innovative initiative only if we can keep alive the idea that 'The image of the human being as a spiritual being informs every aspect of the school.'"

If these first two articles trace the metamorphosis of anthroposophical insight and the Waldorf impulse into a specifically American practice, the piece that follows, written by Michael Holdrege from the Chicago Waldorf School, tracks down another meeting point of Anthroposophy and the American Spirit. In his article, "Collegiate Collaboration," Holdrege quickly surveys the historical features of American commonality and community. He finds an affinity between an American impulse of collaboration, dating back to the original colonies and the spirit of the Constitution, and Steiner's designation of collegial, collaborative leadership for the Waldorf school. Holdrege's multifaceted exploration taps into some contemporary models of management, some of them Steiner-inspired (for example, Otto Scharmer's *Theory U* and *Leading from the Emerging Future*), to offer an interpretation of the kind of Waldorf leadership suggested by Rudolf Steiner. "I think the future of Waldorf education in America," Holdrege concludes, "will depend greatly on Waldorf faculties developing the capacity to dialogue in a new way, in such a way that they become sensitive to 'an emerging future.'"

Turning from history to philosophy, this issue continues with an article by anthroposophist Fred Amrine, professor of literature at the University of Michigan, who sketches out with great excitement some parallels between the thought of the iconoclastic, late-20th century French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, and that of Rudolf Steiner. In this article, reprinted from the anthroposophical journal, *being human*, Amrine draws a broader

map, or a longer legacy, if you will, that leads from the late 18th century works of Schiller and Fichte to Steiner to Deleuze. A central claim in Amrine's piece, beyond the synoptic overview of similarities between Deleuze and Steiner, is that the philosophical breakthroughs of the thinkers surveyed always came in response to failed social revolutions. With this conclusion, Amrine emphasizes a connection between major social interactions and historical breakthrough moments advancing our modes of thinking.

A second philosophical exploration is offered in Arthur Auer's essay, "The Image Problem." Auer, former Director of the Waldorf Teacher Education Program at Antioch University, New England, matches a millennia-old philosophical question with recent psychological and physiological research, asking: How can we characterize mental images and what role do they hold in the processes of consciousness? Auer begins with Rudolf Steiner's indication that teachers must help children develop the capacity for mental picturing. Steiner makes this suggestion to the newly-appointed faculty of the very first Waldorf school in the second of fourteen lectures later published as *Study of Man*, and follows up this idea with a detailed analysis of mental images. Quoting heavily from recent psychological and neurological studies, Auer demonstrates how contemporary thinking on mental images is coming closer to the perspective advocated by Steiner, and that a re-understanding of mental images lies at the heart of a new understanding of consciousness itself. He further suggests that Waldorf education, in which mental imaging is cultivated and nurtured, might just be a seed for such a transformation.

One of the questions that Auer explores concerns people who lack the capacity to create internal sense-images, whether these are qualified as visual, aural, tactile, or other. David Gable, a musician and Waldorf teacher, takes a similar starting point in his article, "Extra Support with Music." Gable, who has been teaching music and main lessons at the Waldorf School of Cape Cod for over thirty years, begins his practical article with the condition of tone-deafness: the inability to discriminate pitch and tell notes apart from each other. This would mean, according to the terms explored in Auer's article, an inability to produce a sensory image of sound internally, where an observing consciousness could discern, discriminate, and operate on, for example, by singing or playing music in tune. Tone-deafness, however, is less frequent than assumed, and Gable himself testifies that during his extended career as teacher and musician he encountered only one person who truly lacked this capacity. The article leads us from exercises that would demonstrate to students their ability to hear tones and discriminate pitch to detailed instruction on how to bring less confident students into the musical fold of their peers.

The goal of musical instruction in the Waldorf classroom, Gable emphasizes, is not the training of perfect musicians as much as "the engagement, the activity, and the collaboration with peers" in the shared music-making effort, an effort to rise to a plane where differences are overcome by listening to each other and striving to harmonize.

Finally, Van James, an artist and seasoned art educator with over three and a half decades in various Waldorf classrooms, recalls the term "Waldorf misunderstandings" and puts it to critical use in his field. The term, originally coined by Christof Wiechert, refers to entrenched practices in Waldorf education based on misunderstandings of Steiner's initial instructions and the wider developmental picture it draws. Rather than admonishing teachers for straying from authoritative law, James shows the pedagogical futility of certain visual practices, such as excluding black from the paint box offered to children, or presenting students, during main lessons, for example, with finished visual pictures, rather than a set of daily developing renditions. As a result, James' article bears important lessons not only for its own field of art instruction but also for other aspects of Waldorf education that may have become subject to unchecked orthodoxy.

Given that our *Research Bulletin* is dedicated to – if not avoiding then at least growing from – new understanding of Waldorf misunderstandings, we find this a good point to conclude the article sections of the issue before moving to the regular reports from recent Research Institute initiatives and the world of Waldorf Publications, both online and in the physical world.

We hope you will find interest and support for your work in this springtime selection.

Authors who wish to have articles considered for publication in the *Research Bulletin* should submit them directly to the Editor at: theresearchbulletin@gmail.com.