



Sensory Awareness Newsletter

What is it to be more fully present?

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of Sensory Awareness
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Your membership helps ensure
that the SAF can continue its edu-
cational and promotional efforts
through its publications,
website, support of leaders,
workshops and more.

For more information and membership
benefits see page 10 and 11

Being Present: Living our True Nature

our next SAF sponsored workshop April 15 -17, 2011

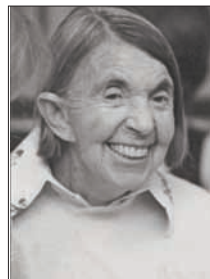


Our next SAF workshop will again be held at Vallombrosa Retreat Center in Menlo Park, California. Last year's workshop got a lot of positive feedback and was judged to be a great success.

Vallombrosa is situated on the grounds of an old mansion near Stanford University. It is not far from a major airport and is convenient for commuters. Many of last year's attendees reported that they liked Vallombrosa's intimate atmosphere and peaceful garden setting.

CEU credits will be available for California M.F.T. and L.C.S.W. psychotherapists... and for licensed massage therapists as well.

This year's session presenters will be: Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt, Terry Ray, Pat Meyer-Peterson, Lee Klinger Lesser, Seymour Carter, Pat Baxter, Ray Fowler, Jill Harris and Richard Lowe.



As in years past the workshop will be preceded by a special two day retreat for members of the Sensory Awareness Leaders' Guild. This year we will, in part, be honoring the life and work of Charlotte Selver. This coming April would have been the month of her 110th birthday.

We are looking forward to this event and very much hope you will be able to join us.

Recent News and an Explanation

Many apologies for the lateness of this newsletter. There have been some important recent developments which contributed to our delay in going to press. As a result of these developments the Foundation is pleased to now report that:

The SAF has just been certified to offer professional educational credits (CEUs) to massage therapists for its sponsored workshops. These credits are available for massage therapists practicing in the United States. This means that at the present time we are able to offer CEUs to Licensed Social Workers and Marriage and Family Therapists licensed in California, and now massage therapists as well. The SAF believes it is quite important for the future growth of this work that we can draw more professionals such as these into experiencing it.

We are excited to be in the planning stages of sponsoring a workshop in Mexico sometime in the Fall of 2011 to be taught by various Spanish speaking members of the Sensory Awareness Leaders' Guild. Many thanks to Ray Fowler and

Eduardo Maldonado and others for doing the ground work. This workshop is to be somewhat similar to our annual workshops in California in that it will be led by various Leaders' Guild members and will be promoted and sponsored by the Foundation. It will be different, however, in that it will be taught in Spanish.

Another important development is that the Sensory Awareness Leaders' Guild has just recently approved of its first new member since the death of Charlotte Selver. Up to this time only those approved by Charlotte to be leaders had been eligible to join.

After Charlotte's passing the Guild came to realize that some new way was needed to help insure that there could be new leaders in the future with the credibility of some lineage to Charlotte's legacy of teaching. Realistically neither the Guild nor the SAF can have any real control over anyone who might claim he/she is a Sensory Awareness leader, therefore, the best reliable standard of credibility that can be used is membership in the Guild.

After many years of very hard work, spirited and thoughtful debate, and finally a vote, the Guild elected to establish a mentoring process and certain criteria by which someone could become a new member. The Foundation now welcomes new Guild member Fannie Morell who lives in Queretaro, Mexico and whose primary sponsor and mentor has been Lee Klinger Lesser.

President's Message

During last year's intense Board retreat in April the board reclarified its goals and mission and through this process decided to pursue the following projects:

1) The SAF will begin to document how current leaders are using and have used Sensory Awareness in their work with people. We are particularly interested in documenting how Sensory Awareness has been used with various kinds of populations (for example, people suffering with chronic pain, the aged, convicts, teenagers, war veterans, etc.). Such documentation will show the many ways this work has proven itself useful, and can help us gain credibility and recognition with various professions and help to open doors so this work can spread.

2) We will explore possible ways of financially helping support the work leaders who offer classes to special populations in need (such as those listed above).

3) As we continue to offer annual S.A.F. workshops in California, we will also begin to explore how we can sponsor similar kinds of workshops in other regions as well. A major benefit for doing so is to help bring leaders together to work together and build a stronger sense of common effort and mutual support.(I am happy to report that we are currently working on offering a SAF

sponsored workshop in 2011 in a resort area not too far from Mexico City.)

4) We will continue to enhance our website to include changing quotations on our home page related to Sensory Awareness to be renewed biweekly. We also hope to install audio and video segments of classes of active leaders onto the website, also to be renewed from time to time. In this way visitors to the website can get an immediate taste of Sensory Awareness. We will also use our Foundation presence on Face Book and Twitter in order to attract many more new people to our website and to the work offered by leaders.

The board is committed to helping this study develop in the world and to getting more people exposed to it. To reach these goals it has been pursuing a two pronged approach: to continue to find ways to help support the development and success of leaders, and to pursue more effective ways to attract new students to this work.

Thus the Foundation will continue its focus on promoting the work through sponsoring workshops, and by actively working with the Leader's Guild. By putting on workshops and helping sponsor the Leaders' Guild retreats which precede them we hope to create greater opportunities for dialogue between leaders . We feel such an effort is essential for advancing the growth and nurturing the depth of Sensory Awareness. Past conferences have, in fact, proven to have helped in the Guild's own development and have also helped the S.A.F. better understand leaders' needs and concerns.

These are just a few of the many ways your Foundation is working to promote this valuable study. To do so takes time and energy and money. We very much need and appreciate the support of our members to keep us going.

You can help us insure the future of Sensory Awareness. Please don't forget to renew your annual membership and also consider making a donation when you can.

As a S.A.F. member you not only support our many important projects, but you also receive our newsletter plus discounts at future SAF events and sponsored workshops, books, publications, and CDs. Even more importantly your membership helps us stay connected and build a sense of community. Building community and working together are very much in keeping with the spirit of this work.

With warm regards, Richard Lowe
S.A.F. Executive Director

P.S. Check us out on Face Book and Twitter... and if you do please be sure to connect us with your friends.

You can open up again

Johanna Kulbach

an interview with Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

Editor's note:

This Newsletter explores some of the history of how Sensory Awareness came into being. Many of the most important years of its development happened during the Nazi years in Germany which Johanna Kulbach lived through. Charlotte Selver who developed this work in the United States always credited Elsa Gindler her teacher in Germany as the true originator of this study. Johanna who recently passed away studied with both Gindler and Charlotte. Here she speaks of Gindler, her own early years in Germany, and the influence of this work on her life.



Johanna Kulbach
January 1, 1912 - July 21, 2010

This is an edited excerpt of an interview which was conducted as part of the Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project.

Johanna Kulbach: I studied music in Berlin when I was very young. There was this big movement in Germany, everybody did something like dance or Gymnasik. We heard about all the people who taught, and so I heard about Elsa Gindler too, but she didn't accept anyone at that time. But then a good friend of mine said to me: "I do something unusual." She took classes with one of Gindler's students. I went with her instead of first taking the beginners class, so I didn't really understand what was going on. And then Nazi time came and she wasn't supposed to teach Jewish people anymore. So she sent me to another Gindler student but I didn't understand what was going on, and she got me to Gindler. I have to be very grateful that she did. Gindler took me to one of the beginner's classes and slowly, slowly I began to understand.

Gindler was very thorough. We had to do experiments during the week and write a report on it and send it to her before the next lesson so she knew what we had understood. I hate writing, so that was a challenge for me. But eventually I got clearer by being forced to write, which was very helpful. I stayed with Gindler maybe three or four years. But then, close to the end of the war, her studio was bombed, and we were bombed, so it ended like that.

But years later I took a 3 week workshop in Hindelang. I don't remember very much about that year and class. Everybody was still under the influence of the end of the war and where they had been, and some people from Israel came. At that time she tried very hard to get people to discover more on their own. She was eager and hopeful that people would learn how to do it, not only do what she had taught them.

I'm grateful to Charlotte Selver and to Elsa Gindler because their work was important for me, it helped me a lot.

SLG: Can you say in which way?

JK: I'm much healthier than most people. I react more positively I think. I can deal with *(Continued on page 4)*

PLEASE NOTE:

Our membership policy has changed. Membership now begins when donation is received and continues for one year from that date. Please call or email our office if you are unsure of your membership status.

Our newsletter is only mailed to dues paying members.

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Johanna Kulbach (Continuing from page 3)

things. The things which Gindler addressed in her classes. We were very afraid at that time. We had double the fear – the bombing and the Nazis. Going to the concentration camp was always on our horizon.

SLG: Why did you not leave?

JK: I was married to a German. He had polio, he limped. So he couldn't be a soldier. He worked – and I peeled potatoes for a year and a half. You don't have to think when you peel potatoes, you just sit there. But I had a very good neighbor and we had wonderful conversations. I always told her about the classes with Gindler. I was very fortunate because she had worked with one of the Gindler people. Many people knew about Gindler. She was very, very well known. Actors went to her to learn how to fall when they had to die or faint. They learned how to fall and not to hurt themselves. Many artists knew about her.

SLG: So you were able to go and see her during the war?

JK: Oh yes, it was all during the war.

SLG: And the Nazis, they left you alone because you were married?

JK: Yes. They knew about it. It was really toward the end of the war that we would have been shipped to concentration camps, but the war was so advanced, the trains couldn't take us anymore. They had to take all the people fleeing from the East.

And then we experienced the Russians. That was, on top of it, a horrible experience. Nothing happened to me. I was lucky but I was also aware of the danger. When the Russians first came I saw a neighbor woman standing there outside, watching what's going on. She was so obvious. . . .

What I learned about fear is that after the bombing is over, the bombs don't fall anymore and you don't have to stay in this situation of fear. You can open up again. I learned that with Gindler. Oh, that helped a lot.

My parents were in Berlin when I got Lisle after the war. They were American citizens. My father was a professor of art history. He was lecturing for one semester at the Berlin University in his language again, in German, and some old students could be with him at that moment. That's when Lisle was born and they got for me the things I needed for the birth. Can you imagine, there was absolutely nothing in the clinic. I brought everything. No cotton, nothing, no diapers for the baby. My sister sent me a CARE parcel with all this stuff – diapers with safety pins. It was amazing that my parents were there and I could stay with them for a few days

after the birth in an apartment which had heat, because we had no heat and we had electricity only in the middle of the night for two hours, from two to four.

SLG: What happened to your husband?

JK: He died in an accident. We had survived the Nazis and the war. . . .

I was married for 15 years. Then I got Lisle and when she was 9 months old, he died. It was devastating. And then I had to get out of Berlin and to the United States, where part of my family was. An aunt in Munich said: "You have to go to America; you have to go to America!"

I came to the US at Christmas of 1949, and I met Charlotte very soon after I arrived because my sister had worked with Carola Speads [another student of Elsa Gindler]. When Carola gave a talk with slides my sister took me there and in the audience was somebody who looked very different from other people. I asked: "Who is this interesting woman?" My sister said: "Oh, that is Charlotte Selver. I can introduce you." So she introduced me and I told her I had worked with Gindler, and she said, "Oh, that's wonderful." So we became very close friends.

Charlotte invited me to join her classes. I didn't have to pay her because I had absolutely no money and I was also at the beginning of teaching – I taught recorder. I took Charlotte's classes for quite some time. Charlotte also gave lectures with slides about the work. I heard that lecture over and over again, and eventually saw much more of what she saw in the slides, why somebody in this photo was so with the movement. It became so much clearer. I learned a lot from Charlotte. She was very generous. She liked to share.

SLG: How did Gindler work compared to Charlotte? Was it different?

JK: Gindler was very methodical. Charlotte you wouldn't say was methodical. She was intuitive. Gindler tried to be very methodical. She wanted to know what happened when we worked at home and thought very much about people's experience. And later on, in Hindelang, she said: "I'm not interested to hear about when you are feeling fine; I want to know what your problem is – that you find your problem." That was one of the striking things. Charlotte was much more intuitive.

SLG: Can you remember a particular class – what you would have done during a class with Gindler, for example?

JK: In Hindelang, the first day, quite a number of people came late. So she discussed why people are late.

Gindler went about that very strictly, and very clearly. “Why do you come late?” “How long does it take you to get ready?” “Did you wake up late?” She started even with lying down and going to sleep: “Do you lie down with all your stiffness and your flabbiness? Take a broom stick and lie on it before you go to bed to get yourself in better shape for sleeping.” Such daily life questions came up and they were taken very seriously. And relationships. “How do you react?” “Do you carry something for a long time, anger?”

SLG: Tell me about how you became a recorder teacher?

JK: I visited someone we knew from Germany and she said, “My son has a good friend. She takes the lesson with so-and-so.” And I called so-and-so, and she said, “I don’t want to teach on Friday afternoon anymore.” She taught at the 92nd Street Y. So I gave the lesson and somebody said: “You know so much more about teaching!” You know, I had taught in Germany. I had forgotten about it. After the war, we were in Weimar for one and a half or two years. In the Russian sector, where my husband had a job again. And they desperately needed teachers, music teachers. So I taught music in a boys’ public school there – 35 boys in a class. You have to have humor and patience for that. I had both. The boys went to the train stations with their mothers in the morning at 5:00 to steal charcoal briquettes. When the railroad cars rolled by some boys jumped up on top, threw down the briquettes, and the other boys picked them up. The cars were always half empty when they got to where the soldiers were living. The population lived that way. It was brutal. It was really bad, such a cold winter. Everything was frozen. It was not good. But I don’t think about it. Now, I don’t know, war certainly doesn’t solve things. And how many wars have we had since? It’s unbelievable. People don’t learn.

SLG: How did the work with Gindler influence how you were teaching the recorder? Was there a clear connection?

JK: Most children liked it. I taught at Mannes College and many times children were put in my class who had been violinists and they had done very well. But the teachers were so excited about how good the children were that they overtaxed them. They lost the joy. Then they had recorder with me and so got to enjoying it again. Then they often went back to their violin.

JK: I certainly use a lot of what I have learned with Gindler. In my trying operations and to recuperate afterwards. After the last operation, I think it was in January 2007, it took me a long time to recuperate and feel like myself again. I was worn out I guess. It was so

much – they were always big [Besides open-heart surgery, Johanna had both legs amputated in her old age]. It’s unbelievable what this work can help – how to help yourself.

SLG: Did you consciously do things or was it just working in you?

JK: I think I reacted – I did not sit there and practice. I just reacted. And I don’t complain. I’m not in misery. I have a much more positive outlook.

SLG: Yes, I can hear that in your voice too! That’s wonderful.



Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

These interviews are an important source of information for my work on an extensive biography of Charlotte Selver, but beyond that they are a wonderful collection of voices in their own right of people who’s lives have been touched by her. Thanks to the support of many I am able to collect, share and preserve these memories. You can hear an audio excerpt of this interview and learn more about the project by visiting: www.CharlotteSelverBiography.org

Johanna Kulbach, Dear Friend and Mentor

By Louise Boedecker

Whether it was when Johanna was leading a class and/or working with herself, or meeting someone for the first time, she lived the practice of Sensory Awareness and sensitively discerned what was needed.

A few years ago, when Johanna was in her mid-90s, she had open-heart surgery. I was with her in the pre-operative room. The anesthesiologist was reading some papers as he entered the room. He looked up, saw Johanna in her bed, and froze.

I said, “Oh, you haven’t yet met my friend, Johanna.” Johanna then looked at him and said very quietly, “I bet I’m older than most of the people you work with. How can I help?”

That was a little glimpse of our beloved Johanna. The Vitell family and I wrote of her more fully at the time of her passing. Lisle, Johanna’s daughter, also wrote of her for the Recorder Society publication. If you would like to receive an email of the text please email me at Louiseboe@gmail.com. I would be happy to send either or both to you.

Having Johanna in my life and memory is a profound gift.

Being HEAR Now

By *Jamie Taylor*

A personal Report from the August 2010 SAF workshop

As I lay listening to the soothing voice, I found myself striving to experience the experience of non-striving. With the voice gently guiding me, I attempted to follow my body's delicate sensory pathways to a place beyond the borders of my mind's powerful eye; to a place beyond my ego's perception of myself. I strained to follow the voice's trail of breadcrumbs that would lead me, step by step to a unique experience; an experience so curious that my mind would become quiet just long enough for my body to unite blissfully with my spirit and my soul.

But that didn't happen. I lay there awaiting the enlightenment that I had so carefully prepared for and so hopefully anticipated, and I realized that there was a part of me that was sealed. I tried over and over again to access the openness that would allow me to participate in this exercise. At last, in frustration, I followed the pathway in my body that led to the part of me that was sealed off. Reluctantly, I admitted that this seal was already well known to me. I knew what it was but I kept trying to pretend that it wasn't there, or that it would go away if I really needed it to be open. I did not want to admit that my hearing impairment was preventing me from participating in this exercise. I also felt that there was something else that had been blocking me, or "protecting" me for a long time that was causing me to avoid being present for this experience.

In the spirit of being in the moment, I allowed my feelings of frustration and despair to wash over me. This experience of frustration was so familiar. It was not the new experience I was hoping to encounter. It was all too familiar and painful. I really did not want to be trapped in this experience. I grew angry and bitter. The gentle voice went on and on. I became aware that the others in the room were moving around in certain ways as directed by the voice. I felt very lonely and left out. Though my eyes were supposed to be closed, I tried to surreptitiously look around so I could mimic what the others were doing. It seemed imperative not to be noticed, not to give away my secret. I began to panic. I began berating myself for coming here. How could I have been so stupid as to believe that I could participate in this type of group?

When the class ended and people began to leave, I found myself gravitating towards Jill Harris, the group leader. She was so warm and loving and accessible. I heard myself trying to express my earlier feelings of being sealed off when I said, "When I am in a group, there is no safe container". She looked at me closely. Then, I went on to say that I was unable to participate in the exercise because I have been hearing impaired since childhood.

Now that I am looking back upon what I felt and what I said to Jill about there being no safe container in a group, I realize that my intuition had been correct. There was something more than my hearing impairment that was blocking and protecting me. I realized that as a child, a part of me had learned to shut down when I was frightened. I realized that there is still a part of me that wants to run and hide and be invisible when I feel overwhelmed; there is a part of me that learned not to expect support, though I never stopped yearning for it. A part of me learned to expect to be left out. What I am saying is that it is possible that I learned not to hear as a way of protecting myself. Not hearing meant not being present in a world that was too scary for me. Being afraid to be present meant being afraid to live consciously.

Though I felt I had not fully participated in the sensory awareness exercises due to my hearing impairment and my other fears, I did bring something very important home with me from the personal contact at the retreat. It was something that Lee Lesser said to me. I can still see her beautiful face at the retreat when she said, "Every moment is a moment. Remember to ask, what does this moment require of me; and who responds?" Keeping these words in mind is a very helpful way of staying present. Looking within for who is responding helps me reach out to the part of me that is afraid and wants to run away. Eventually, with practice, I may begin to feel safe when I ask what this moment requires of me. And the part of me that responds, will be the part who is ready to try to live consciously.

NOTE: This was Jamie's first Sensory Awareness workshop and we thank her for submitting it.

Editor's Note: We would like to have more such personal stories such as this to help reflectand document how this work effects peoples' lives. We invite you to please send us yours.

The Early Roots of Sensory Awareness

by Richard Lowe

Just how did the study of Sensory Awareness come to be? This article is an attempt to explore some of the social and cultural developments which helped shape it.

Actually the earliest roots of this work predate Charlotte Selver, its main developer in the United States, and even her teacher in Germany, Elsa Gindler, who Charlotte credited as the work's primary originator. But how did Elsa Gindler come to it?

Towards the end of the 19th century in the United States during what is called the Gilded Age, rapid changes were happening in many areas: the booming industrial revolution, the growth of cities, the rise of the middle class, the growth of public education, mass media, and the stirrings of feminism. As the world began to approach the 20th century many began to doubt what had once been passively and rigidly accepted. Long standing repressive customs and beliefs as well as the obvious unhealthy effects of pollution, crowded work conditions, and the increasing sense of alienation and anxiety: all became popular topics of concern. Many began to hope for a healthier, modern brave new world. Out of this, and fueled in great part by new freedoms for women, particularly middle class and upper class women, there developed an intense interest in physical culture, self-improvement and non traditional spiritual practices.

The spiritual hunger of the age had already given rise in the educated centers in New England and around Boston, to Transcendentalism, an intuitive, experiential, more-than-just-rational perspective on life. The followers of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau believed that at the level of the human soul, all people had access within themselves to divine inspiration and truth.

All these factors provided particularly fertile ground around Boston and New York for the development of a popular phenomenon which was to become known as "Delsartism". This all started around 1871 with the introduction into the United States of the ideas of French actor, opera singer, and teacher, François Delsarte.

François Delsarte

François Delsarte (1811-1871) became unsatisfied with the inauthentic, posed style of acting that he learned at the Paris Conservatory and began to study how people actually moved, behaved and responded in various emotional and real life situations. By carefully observing people's nonverbal, natural behaviors in this way he discovered certain patterns of expression based on his thorough and meticulous

examination of voice, breath, and movement dynamics, which encompassed all of the expressive elements of the human body.

Delsarte went on to develop and teach an acting style that attempted to connect the inner emotional experience of the actor with a systematized set of gestures and movements based upon his observations. He was primarily a teacher of emotional expression through voice and gesture, and not the inventor of a system of gymnastics. Therefore, what later became called Delsarte gymnastics was an unauthorized modification of his theories.

Delsarte never wrote a book explaining his method firsthand, and neither did his main protégé, American actor James Steele MacKaye. However, MacKaye's student Genevieve Stebbins did write a book in 1885 titled *The Delsarte System of Expression*, and it became a wild success. It was mainly through the influence of MacKaye and Stebbins that Delsarte's teaching methods became known world wide.

James Steele MacKaye:

American actor, inventor and theatrical genius Steele MacKaye (1842–1894) studied with Delsarte in Paris and around 1871 and with Delsarte's approval imported it to the United States, where it became enormously popular in theatre training and for those interested in public speaking, singing and dance. MacKaye expanded what he learned from Delsarte to include relaxation and energizing exercises, and at one time he called this approach the "Psychologic Training of the Body".

In 1884, using its principles, he founded the first American acting school which became the American Academy of Dramatic Art. The institution survives to this day, though today its theoretical underpinnings are very different. This formal, Delsartian approach to acting can be seen in silent films such as DW Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925).

Genevieve Stebbins

Genevieve Stebbins (1857–1915), an actress who studied under MacKaye in New York, became the most widely influential teacher of Delsarte in both the U.S. and in Europe. In her popular books published in the 1880s and 90s, she further modified the Delsarte system by incorporating theories of breathing and rhythmic movement to produce what she called "harmonic gymnastics" geared to female students. Stebbins's emphasis moved away from developing a large vocabulary of expressions for use on the stage towards cultivating an ideal convergence of female

physical and spiritual poise and beauty. It was she who first associated the “natural” female body with the wearing of Grecian tunics. Many women were understandably eager to be given permission to give up their corsets and other constraints and explore greater freedom.

Stebbins’ genius was in bringing together elements from the evolving edge of modern culture at that time: the popular interest in physical culture, women’s need for a new sense of identity and self expression, the New Thought Movement’s focus on spiritual regeneration. Her work also incorporated the Transcendentalist yearning (voiced by Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau) for the true natural life. All this became integrated into an experiential format where women could explore in classes and at home various types of “harmonic gymnastic exercises”. The most important and popular of these included special relaxation and energizing exercises designed to “cleanse the body of those pathological habits that block its channels of communication”. Stebbins believed that “to express the beautiful within, one must liberate the body’s life force through relaxation and energizing exercises”.

One of Stebbins’ German students who went on to teach her style of “harmonic gymnastics” in Germany was Hedwig Kallmayer who was to become Elsa Gindler’s teacher.

American Delsartism

Spurred on to a large part by the writings of Stebbins the Delsarte System enjoyed quite a vogue through the latter part of the 19th Century, particularly in the U.S. where eventually there were well over a hundred teachers offering private classes, mostly to middle and upper class ladies. It was also offered in classes in women’s schools, physical education programs and as part of training for actors, singers and actors..

It inspired modern dancers such as Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. Its influence on the development of American modern dance was so considerable that Ted Shawn felt disposed to publish a textbook on the system as late as 1954. Rudolph Laban and F. Matthias Alexander (originator of the Alexander technique) also studied Delsarte’s teachings until they later developed their own methods.

Although called Delsarte work or Delsarte gymnastics it had evolved into something beyond what Delsarte had intended. Ironically it was the great popularity of the Delsarte System which was also its undoing. By the 1890s, it seems that no certification was needed to teach a course with the name Delsarte attached, and amongst the hundreds

of teachers worldwide the study regressed into empty posing with little emotional truth behind it. Many former Delsarte teachers, Stebbins included, began to give their work a different name.

Bess Mensendieck

Bess Mensendieck grew up in New York and took classes with Genevieve Stebbins there and also studied medicine in Zurich. Her particular concern was the improvement of posture and structure of women of her time. The focus of her approach was the self-perception of posture and movement.

The Mensendieck approach is a system of correct body mechanics, correct muscle function, and correct posture based on her research findings. Her work achieved widespread use in Europe, specifically Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands. She set up schools around Europe and in the 30’s opened her first school in the United States.

The Mensendieck system works on the premise that movements when executed in a beneficial and correct manner will result in a habitually well-functioning body. It is a comprehensive approach utilizing rehabilitative exercises to address the body’s needs, which stresses that it takes motivation and perseverance to unlearn faulty postural habits that have been a part of one’s life for years.

Other influential Figures:

Annie Payson Call (1853-1940) was one of the early American teachers of Delsarte work and a popular author who wrote several books and magazine articles (from 1888 to 1918) on the topic of relaxation and mental health. She appears to have distanced herself from the Delsarte movement soon after it became a fad and developed her own approach which she called “nerve training”. Her writing contains simple experiments for people to try in their daily lives to help them let go of chronic tensions and become more centered and positive. Many of her magazine articles are reprinted in her book “Nerves and Common Sense”.

Her popular books *Power Through Repose* (1891) and *As a Matter of Course* (1894) were mentioned and recommended by Harvard psychologist and philosopher **William James** who felt her work pointed the way to a pragmatic and positive approach to mental health that could help remedy the alarming rise in American’s anxiety, what some had called “Americanitis”. He referred this approach as “The Gospel of Relaxation”.

As James put it: “For by the sensations that so incessantly pour in from the over-tense excited body the over-tense and

excited habit of mind is kept up; and the sultry, threatening, exhausting, thunderous inner atmosphere never quite clears away. If you never wholly give yourself up to the chair you sit in, but always keep your leg and body muscles half contracted for a rise; if you breathe eighteen or nineteen instead of sixteen times a minute, and never quite breathe out at that, —what mental mood can you be in but one of inner panting and expectancy, and how can the future and its worries possibly forsake your mind? On the other hand, how can they gain admission to your mind if your brow be unruffled, your respiration calm and complete, and your muscles all relaxed?”

Early Developments in Germany

At the turn of the century there arose a great interest among German youth in shaking off the restrictions of society and returning to the freedom of nature. This grew into what came to be called the *Wandervogel* movement (*Wandervogel* can be translated as “migratory bird”). This very popular movement, similar in some ways to the Hippie movement of the 1960’s, eventually consisted of many organizations, clubs and cults.

Before the first world war American ideas about bodily movement and physical culture had become quite influential (especially in relation to female physical culture). Apparently after the war this became less so. However the Mensendieck school continued to have many disciples, but by 1920 her work seemed much more European than American. Similar in this regard was the work of Hedwig Kallmayer who had also studied with Genevieve Stebbins.

The **Loheland school** was an example of a dance-as-life cult. Hedwig von Rohden and Louise Langgaard founded the school in 1912. In 1910 they were both students in Berlin of Hedwig Kallmeyer, herself a student of Genevieve Stebbins. Rohden-Langgaard, as they were known, also incorporated Mensendieck ideas into their school, whose students were exclusively female. Loheland integrated gymnastic dance into a craft-centered, cultic lifestyle: daily performance of aesthetic bodily movement was part of a peculiar moral education that included gardening, physical labor, pottery, weaving, cooking, nudism, drawing, singing, agricultural activity, and household management.

Isadora Duncan: The influence of American Isadora Duncan (1878-1927) was primarily inspirational. Her great success helped pave the way for other dancers in Germany and Europe to express their interpretation of natural form and movement. For many she embodied dance as life. Her

spectacular and liberated style of dance combined with her tempestuous personality provoked awe in almost anyone excited by the new currents in dance. The whole idea of *Ausdruckstanz*, of the body as a powerful instrument of expressivity, seemed to emanate from her. Duncan’s idea of expressivity, of painting emotion in movement, owed much to the influence of Delsarte. One might even suggest that *Ausdruckstanz* as a whole represented an effort to free the body from imprisonment and sought to make the body “meaningful,” to make it “say” things that were easily, clearly, and unambiguously understandable.

Throughout her restless, vagabond life, Isadora opened schools in Germany, France, the United States, Greece, and Russia. She seems to have been a very poor teacher, with no patience for detail or organization. She left most teaching duties to her many faithful disciples.

Elisabeth Duncan (1874–1948): wanted a school that was independent of her sister’s chaotic personality. With the help of German Max Merz, whom she married, she sought to infuse some discipline into Isadora’s improvisatory, Grecian approach to bodily movement by incorporating into the curriculum ideas from German body culture (including Merz’s enthusiasm for race hygiene). Her school operated out of a castle in Salzburg from 1925 until 1933, when she closed her school in New York and moved to Prague (1933–1935). Then she lived in Munich before returning to America. Afflicted with lameness, Elisabeth herself never danced, and her school, unlike Isadora’s, did not strive to develop bodies for public performance: she wanted to produce imaginative teachers. Nevertheless, the school operated very much in the shadow of Isadora’s looming personality. The goal of “liberated movement” and the pseudo-Grecian image of nature and art prevailed.

Hedwig Kallmayer

And here we come to the teacher of Elsa Gindler, Charlotte Selver’s teacher. A student of Genevieve Stebbins, Hedwig (also known as Hede or Hade) Kallmeyer, opened a school of harmonic gymnastics for girls in Berlin around 1905. Unfortunately not much seems to be known about her, probably due in part to the destruction wrought by the second world war. Among her most famous students were Dora Menzler, Gertrud Leistikow and Elsa Gindler.

In her book *Künstlerische Gymnastik; harmonische Körperkultur nach Amerikanischen Systemen Stebbins-Kallmeyer* (1910) Kallmeyer modified the Stebbins method to accommodate some ideas of Bess Mensendieck, herself a student of Stebbins. Flexibility was also apparently a major feature of

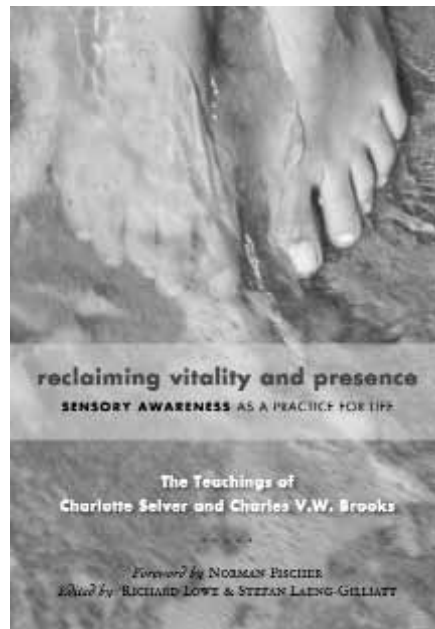
her thinking. It appears that as her work evolved the influence of Stebbins began to slightly fade over time as she worked to help her students develop a modern—and “correct”—sense of the female body.

From pictures in her book we can see much emphasis being placed on the naturalness and grace of Greek statues. This obviously Stebbins type influence apparently continued on in the early work of Kallmeyer’s student Elsa Gindler. According to the report we have of **Claire Fenichel**, one of Gindler’s earliest students, the all female students in Gindler’s original classes were encouraged to mirror such statues in such a way as to embody their naturalness and grace while they posed and moved. Eventually Gindler was to soon give this approach up as she became more interested in ways to help develop an inner sense of naturalness and authenticity.

Kallmeyer’s influence was probably greater than the scant information about her would indicate. After the first world war, she moved from Berlin to Hannover where eventually a great deal of the city was destroyed by Allied bombing. Apparently several photographs exist depicting activities at her school in Hannover around 1925. These show groups of both girls and boys between five and sixteen years old playing outdoor physical games. In some of pictures the children are nude. Taken together, these photos imply that Kallmeyer had moved some distance both from Delsarte and from the all-female, Stebbins-Mensendieck cult of idealized physical comportment.

NOTE: As to the further evolution of Elsa Gindler’s teaching and as to the many other formative influences on Charlotte Selver, we are fortunate to have the reports of former Gindler students as printed in our past SAF publications and to have the current ongoing research being done on Charlotte’s life by Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt, some of which is printed in our more recent Newsletters.

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- 5) **ELSA GINDLER, Vol. 1**. Memorial to the originator of the work we know as Sensory Awareness. Excerpts from Gindler’s letters, an article by her, and reports from her students; including Ch. Selver. 44 pages, with photos (1978). *
- 6) **ELSA GINDLER, Vol. 2**. Memories from Gindler students and an article about Heinrich Jacoby, innovative educator and colleague of Gindler. 44 pages, with photos. *
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- 9) **HEINRICH JACOBY**. The Work and influence of Gindler’s longtime collaborator, summaries of his books, interviews with his students, including his editor and colleague Sophie Ludwig. 46 pages with photos.
- 10) **EMMI PIKLER**. Dr. Emmi Pikler, Hungarian pediatrician, whose revolutionary practice and philosophy about earliest childhood upbringing has been very influential in Europe. Contains extensive selections from Dr. Pikler’s first book, *Peaceful Babies - Contented Mothers*, and a paper by Judith Falk, M.D., then director of the Emmi Pikler Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries. 48 pages, with many photos of young children.
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