



Martina Hornstein (1933 – 2009)

An Obituary by Marianne Ebrat.

Translation by Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

I must have met Martina for the first time in a workshop with Charlotte Selver in Winterthur in 1987. Martina had just finished her 4-year training as a breath therapist with Hildegund Graubner and Ilse Middendorf. She had already experienced the work of Elsa Gindler through Mieke Monjau. Martina was planning to attend Charlotte's 1988 Study Group in California and encouraged me to come along.

This where we got to know each other really well, housed together in a small space on two mattresses. It was a difficult time for Martina. Just after her departure her husband had to undergo life-threatening heart surgery and it was unclear what the outcome would be. This is when I experienced for the first time her strength and endurance. She was always fully present in class and afterwards she would jot down her experiences and then go work in the kitchen – and how! One could see that she was used to cooking for a big family. It was something to see her chop chives, very finely, very fast!

I later learned that she had also cooked for the school during her demanding training as a breath therapist. And she didn't just cook there: thanks to her presence the kitchen became the room where everyone gathered, students and assistants alike, and this was where all the important questions were addressed.

Martina later went back twice to the US, once for a study group and another time for a Sensory Awareness leaders group. Besides the Sensory Awareness classes and individual lessons in her house in Gauting near Munich she also worked in the South Tyrol in Northern Italy, where she had grown up.

For more than 15 years Martina offered workshops as part of a training for day care providers (Tagesmütter). Being a grandmother of five and because of her thorough knowledge of the work of Emily Pikler she had a deep sense for how to best relate to children in their development.

Her longtime student and colleague, Frieda Schaiter, once told me how touching it was to see the changes in the faces of the women with which Martina worked. Frieda Schaiter will, by the way, continue to offer Sensory Awareness classes in the context of the training for day care providers, together with Annemarie Gartner another longtime student of Martina.

In the South Tyrol, Martina also offered energy work which she had learned from Rosalyn Bruyere over the years and she was able to help many people. Sometimes she would say, with a twinkle in her eyes, that she had "made another child": Women who had longed for children in vain for years often got pregnant after being treated by Martina.

With no other colleague and friend have I exchanged and experimented as extensively as with Martina. When we spent our vacations together we could discuss anything and everything deep into the night. And the next morning after breakfast we always first pulled out the mats for "sensing" before going out to indulge in the pleasures of vacation.

In April of 2009 Martina was in Zürich for the last time. She had just had a serious flu, which was unusual for her. A few days later she called me and told me that she had a persistent cough and that she wanted to see a doctor. Then came the diagnosis: Acute myelogenous leukemia. The doctor wanted her to immediately start a four week chemotherapy treatment. She refused, luckily, as they told her later. The blood tests showed worsening results and a blood transfusion did not bring the expected result.

In spite of her weakened condition she traveled one more time to the South Tyrol to work with her favorite group. On August 18 she was admitted to the hospital after collapsing in her home.

On August 22 I took a train to Munich to say goodbye to her. Three students left her room crying when I arrived. Martina was composed and told me that she was not worried. "When you feel a wind on your ears you will know that I'm gone" I did not feel the wind but I received a call from my bookseller who told me that the book I had ordered had arrived. I first did not know what he was speaking of until he mentioned the title: *The Forgetting of the Foot Means the Shoe Fits Comfortably*, by Zhuangzi, Martina's last book recommendation. The book had been out of print and came now, a day after her death, to me.