



SAF

NEWSLETTER

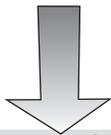
What is it to be more fully present?

The Sensory Awareness Foundation

Fall 2008

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Help support the future of Sensory Awareness

Renew your SAF yearly membership now for 2009

... or become a new member. With your membership you ensure that the SAF can continue with its work through publications, conferences, sponsored workshops, its web site and more ...

Memberships are by calendar year.

If you have not renewed your membership for 2009 please do so now. Thank you!

For more information and membership benefits see page 10 and 11

Springtime Conference

Stress and Renewal: Coming to Our Senses

May 29 -31, 2009

Mt. Madonna Center, Watsonville, CA

Please mark your calendar for what promises to be a rich, life renewing experience held within the beautiful and peaceful retreat setting of Mt. Madonna.

We hope you can join us as we explore how the practice of Sensory Awareness can be a valuable and health promoting counterbalance to the distressing effects of modern living.

More information about this conference will be sent to you in future mailings and will be posted on our website www.sensoryawareness.org

Exploring the Life of Charlotte Selver:

News about the Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project.

By Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt



Ten months into this amazing journey, I am grateful every day for the opportunity to study Charlotte Selver's life and times and to share what I learn with you. Not only do I learn much about Charlotte but I also have the chance to gather the memories of the many people who are as eager as I am to share with a wider audience what has been so important for us about Charlotte and her work.

Research for this project happens on different levels at the same time: I conduct interviews, I study history (currently about early 20th century Germany and its varied reform movements), and I also work through a wealth of archival materials.

Most recently I started to tackle the letter exchange between Charlotte and her first husband, Heinrich Selver. These hundreds of letters, most of them written between 1921 and 1932, contain a wealth of information about Charlotte's formative years. Going through them I realize how fortu-

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We Have Moved

The SAF has moved to a new location. Please note that our phone number and fax have also changed. Our new address is:

Sensory Awareness Foundation
23 Wallace Way
San Rafael, CA 94903

The Life of Charlotte Selver (Continuing from page 1)

nate I am to have Charlotte's voice - in writing and in interviews - covering much of her life and guiding me in my work. Many of the letters give detailed information about her interests, her studies, her whereabouts and her professional life. Having started with Charlotte's letters to Heinrich first, I recently completed 1922. This is a crucial year in Charlotte's life. She studies photography in Munich and also begins her training with Rudolph Bode in Bode Gymnastik; she meets artists and intellectuals going to "tea" at Dr. Ludwig's; she falls in love with the Bavarian alps and becomes a passionate hiker and she sees Mary Wigman dance. This is quite possibly a crucial moment in her life and it is the first time she writes about the field of work, which will soon become her passion and profession.

In a letter dated November 17, 1921, we read: *"Last Sunday I saw Mary Wigman, the dancer! It is impossible to describe how people are affected by her. She is supernatural and her simplicity and strength - foreign to us - her ultimate sincerity, show more about the connection of body and mind than ever before. How this woman, her gesture, moves away from the body with her body, is a miracle. All the arts seem to unite in her when she dances without music, harmonies emanate from her, her gestures show the ultimate truth of the poets; her lines, the structure of her body, its language and spirit are more beautiful and ravishing than sculpture. Her dance is completely detached from gravity. Though nothing is difficult for her and all technique transcended, she dances in uncompromising form."* (You can read the German original online)

I am now working through 1923, the year of the great inflation and much turmoil in Germany. Sadly, it is also the year in which Charlotte writes about the first shocking signs of things to come, as she encounters grave anti-Semitism. Charlotte continues her training with Bode and she studies art history at the university of Munich. She mentions Heinrich Jacoby and Elsa Gindler for the first time. In the letters, Charlotte goes not into much detail about them, though it is clear that they immediately become important to her.

Because the letters are a record of the times when Charlotte and Heinrich were not together, there is much about which we do not hear. Naturally, they do not reveal much about the times they spent together, though one gets a good sense of the

many ups and downs in their long-distant relationship before they got married. Often, what we learn in the letters are only fragments of experiences and encounters. To give an example: in a letter dated June 6, 1923, Charlotte writes about a trip to Hellerau, today a part of Dresden, at that time a center for cultural visionaries in Germany. In Hellerau, Charlotte just visited the reform pedagogue Tami Oelfken and her school. This fascinating letter offers glimpses into a life rich with new and exciting experiences at the edge of cultural developments in Germany.

But only 'en passant' does Charlotte hint at the fact that she studied with Heinrich Jacoby there and that both she and Heinrich Selver had met him before: "Jacoby: You wouldn't recognize the man as the one we met before, when having a lesson with him. To write about that would be useless, you have to experience it yourself." We do not learn anything about the nature of these lessons. This is one of the many entry points for research into the fascinating times in which Charlotte lived and about which I have the great opportunity to paint a portrait.

Interviews have been a priority in my work this year and I have had a chance to hear from some 45 people to date. I am very happy to share an excerpt of one of these interviews with you in this newsletter as an example for the many fascinating conversations I have had this year. For more excerpts, both audio and transcripts and much more go to www.CharlotteSelverBiography.org.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who have supported this project in its first year. The Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project depends entirely on your generosity. As this year comes to a close I hope that you will continue to support my work. Tax-deductible donations can be made through the SAF.

Sincerely,

Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

<p>If you want to learn more about Charlotte's life and hear and read excerpts from interviews, go to www.CharlotteSelverBiography.org. There, you can also find out how you can support the Charlotte Selver Oral History and Book Project.</p>
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