

Because Charlotte lived such a long life, many – in fact most – of the people who knew her, are long gone. Thus, in researching her life before the 60s, I will largely depend on archival materials. But then there is serendipity too: A few weeks ago, a violinist from Germany contacted me because she needed information about a somatic practice for a paper she's writing. My brother, who is also a musician, had given her my address. So we had a conversation in which I told her about Sensory Awareness. A few days later she contacted me again to let me that know she had told a fellow musician about Sensory Awareness and Charlotte Selver. It turned out that this musician is the granddaughter of Erika Donner, who was a student of Charlotte in the 20s and later became colleague and friend with whom Charlotte kept in touch until the end of her life. I had known about her but assumed, rightly, that she was dead. I knew she had a son but wasn't sure if he was still alive and how I could find out. Well, this woman is his daughter and Dieter Donner is still alive and eager to have me visit when I go to Germany this summer. He already sent me an account by his mother, in which she wrote about her life and Charlotte. Learning more from Mr. Donner will be very helpful in shedding light on Charlotte's early years.

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

## You know the way.

By Hannes Zahner

*(A long time student of Ruth Matter writes about his impressions of her. Ruth studied with Heinrich Jacoby who next to Elsa Gindler was Charlotte Selvers' most influential teacher)*

Hannes writes: "I send you a little story about my time with Ruth Matter in Switzerland. I did work for many many years with her.. She did not work with groups and so it was a very intensive experience to work alone with her. May be you have to correct a bit the language-errors. Mit ganz herzlichen Grüßen, Hannes."

*Editor's note: since I don't know German I took a few liberties to adjust some of the language for clarity, attempting not to diminish too much its heart felt charm*

"You know the way". This is what Ruth Matter often said to me when I once again left my individual session with her with open questions. She handled words sparsely and carefully. Just like her suggestions and directions, nearly primitive: "lift a foot. Feel how the hand weighs on the thigh, lift her and let her sink again. And repeat – no: do it once more, new".

Simple was the law . This was also reflected in her vocabulary: "Weight, pull, gravitation. "Let affect fade away.", " and get ready" . "Get ready to lift a finger." Often in an experiment for one hour nothing, for one hour, nothing but getting ready to lift a finger two millimeters and let it sink again. And then the experience, that in these two millimeters the wholeworld moved.

Her conveying of the work was persistent and seemed to flow in a logical progression From time to time there was, when I looked at the death mask she had on her piano,

a hint to the Swiss educator Pestalozzi\*, This death mask of Pestalozzi was a heirloom from Heinrich Jacoby.

"You know the way!" The way for Ruth Matter was 'the Work' and she did not like to give long explanations on it. 'The Work of Heinrich Jacoby' was a declaration of love for her. She embodied this phrase with every part of her being; in the dignity of her person, in her alert and authentic interest. It was in her warm presence, which she showed during my time studying with her, it was in the soothing patience to leave something not yet in tune as the best at hand for now. Then from time to time she would give me a handshake that took a little longer than usual, indicating that something had changed in this session.

Sometimes she asked me to be passenger in her car when she drove on Saturdays to Kolliken. Well into in her eighties she didn't want to drive alone any more. At the steering wheel her normal leisureliness left her and the speedometer climbed above the allowed speed. With child-like pleasure she took shortcuts when there were too many cars; and her eyes had a young glow, when she talked about her first Mercedes cabriolet, at a time there where only two of them in the country.

Later I had the privilege to be her driver – sad to be not any more in the open Mercedes – on excursions to the favorite spot of Heinrich Jacoby. In memory this was a little nostalgic, but you could feel it was a good time for Ruth Matter as she remembered driving to a cosy seaside restaurant with Heinrich Jacoby to listen as he talked about 'the Work', listening, as now I did to her.

\*(Editor's note on Pestalozzi from wikipedia.com : "His method is to proceed from the easier to the more difficult. To begin with observation, to pass from observation to consciousness, from consciousness to speech.")