In This Issue:
- Johanna Kulbach Interview
- Be HEAR now
- Important Recent News
- The Early Roots of Sensory Awareness

**Being Present: Living Our True Nature**
Vallombrosa Retreat Center, Menlo Park, CA
April 15-17, 2011

An experiential workshop with sessions offered by Members of the Sensory Awareness Leaders' Guild.
Exploring and celebrating the legacy of Charlotte Selver on her 110th birthday.
Please see the dates.
CEU continuing education units for MFTs, LCSWs and massage therapists.

ORDER / MEMBERSHIP FORM (PLEASE PRINT)

As a member of the SAF in the year 2011 you will receive:
- the SAF newsletter twice a year
- a discount on SAF conferences and sponsored workshops
- a 15% discount on all of the publications of the Foundation
- your donation is tax deductible (in the USA)

☐ Yes! I would like to support the Sensory Awareness Foundation with my membership.
 ☐ New  ☐ Renewing
  ☐ Regular: $50  ☐ Friend: $75  ☐ Supporter: $110*  ☐ Contributor: $250*
  ☐ Benefactor: $500*  ☐ $110 or more will receive a special DVD
                      of Charlotte Selver teaching in Mexico.
  ☐ Low Income: $35
  ☐ I do not wish to be a member at this time but I include $10 to subscribe to the newsletter.

You can also pay by credit card at wwww.sensoryawareness.org or by calling our office at (415) 507-0996. This is especially convenient for those living outside the US.

NAME__________________________ ADDRESS__________________________
CITY ______________________ STATE ______ ZIP ______ COUNTRY ________
PHONE ___________ E-MAIL __________________________

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 Caracas, Venezuela 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 Selsey. 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 names were needed and 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 thoughtfull 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 Fatine Moredi who lives in Mexico City 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 reaffirmed 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 SAF 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 reversed 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 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 pursing 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 Leaders’ 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 money. We very much need and appreciate the support of our members to keep 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 SAF member you not only support our 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 SAF Executive Director

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

12) EVERY MOMENT IS A MOMENT. A Journal with Words of Charlotte Selsey from her 102 years of living and over 70 years of offering the work of Sensory Awareness. 125 pages, with many color and black-and-white pictures...

13) WAKING UP: THE WORK OF CHARLOTTE SELVER, by William C. Littlewood with Mary Alice Roche. Talks about Sensory Awareness, Reports, Experiments, and Exchanges with Her Students. 140 pages.

* available in German translation

14) RECLAIMING VITALITY AND PRESENCE: SENSORY AWARENESS AS A PRACTICE FOR LIFE. The Teachings of Charlotte Selsey and Charles Brooks (270 pages, with many pictures)

Charlotte Selsey Workshop audio cassettes and CDs:


BECOMING READY - BEING TUNED IN, Leaders Study Group 1990, class 7-19-90

FINDING MOVEMENT THAT IS TRUE, Green Gulch Study Group 1993, class 1-4-93.

LEARNING TO RECEIVE, Morhegan Island, 7-30-92.

LEARNING THROUGH SENSING, Green Gulch, 11-14-77.

FREEING THE EYES - BEING OPEN FOR SEEING, Green Gulch Study Group 1993, class 3-31-93

WAKING UP - BECOMING RESPONSIBLE, Green Gulch Study Group 1988, class 5-2-88

PERMITTING INNER ACTIVITIES, Morhegan Island, 7-31-80.

BREATHE AND FULL ACTIVITY, Morhegan Island, 7-28-92.

EXPLORATIONS ON SITTING, Green Gulch, 2-27-90

16) CHARLOTTE SELVER TALKS ABOUT HER EARLY LIFE AND STUDY, Green Gulch, 1-15-69

17) ALAN WATTIS ON THE WORK OF CHARLOTTE SELVER, and CHARLOTTE SELVER ABOUT HERSELF Green Gulch, 1-24-99

18) HIP JOINTS AND LEGS, Santa Barbara, 4-1-00

19) COMING BACK TO EXPERIENCING, Santa Barbara, 4-2-00

20) BREATHING AND THE DIAPHRAGM, Study Period, Green Gulch, 5-12-00

21) GIVING UP DOING, Barre de Mexico, 1-19-91

22) BEING FULLY PRESENT, Morhegan, 8-16-01

23) ARE YOU TOLERATING? Mare Island, 8-4-01

24) BREATH AND HEARTBEAT, Morhegan, 8-13-01

25) NATURAL OR PERFORMED? – A TIGHTROPE WALK Morhegan, 8-3-01

Audio Tape in German:

VOM NACKEN ZUM GANZEN MENSCHEN, St. Ulrich, 10.7.01

ALL RECORDINGS IN BOTH CD AND CASSETTE FORMATS NOW COME WITH TRANSCRIPTIONS.

Check our website for a complete list of publications.

For faster mail service to Europe for the above publications, and for a list of German publications related to Sensory Awareness, (including several translations of SAF publications), write to: Wege der Entfaltung e. V., Mauerkirchnerstrasse 11 81679 Munchen, Germany.

Order online or send your order and payment to:

Sensory Awareness Foundation, 23 Wallace Way, San Rafael, CA 94903

If you have any questions call: (415) 507-0988, or e-mail: sensoryawareness@rocomcast.net

(Please make checks payable to Sensory Awareness Foundation)

ORDER / MEMBERSHIP FORM (PLEASE PRINT)

Please include your payment with the order.

SAF Members receive a 15% discount on publications. CA residents add 9.50% sales tax.

SAF Members receive a 15% discount on publications. CA residents add 9.50% sales tax.

Please check items you want to order and indicate if you want to receive the entire order in one constant item:

A Taste of Sensory Awareness: $10

Elisa Ginder Vol. 1: $12

Elisa Ginder Vol. 2: $12

Elhade Hengstenberg: $12

Heinrich Jacoby: $12

Emmi Piker: $12

Chitee Selver Vol. 1: $12

Every Moment is a Moment: $22

Waking Up: The Work of Charlotte Selsey $15.50

Reclaiming Vitality and Presence: $19.95

Individual Tapes and CDs are $19 each and come with written transcripts. Please indicate below if you want a tape(T) or a CD (C) of the workshops listed above.

16 CD6 DT10 DC10 DT14 DC14 DT17 DC18

17 CD7 DT11 DC11 DT15 DC15 DT19 DC19

18 CD8 DT12 DC12 DT16 DC16

19 CD9 DT13 DC13 DT17 DC17

16 CD6 DT10 DC10 DT14 DC14 DT17 DC18 $20

17 CD7 DT11 DC11 DT15 DC15 DT19 DC19 $20

18 CD8 DT12 DC12 DT16 DC16 $20

19 CD9 DT13 DC13 DT17 DC17 $20

Total Order from Price List $320

Membership Discount (15%) $48

CA Residents add 9.50% Sales Tax

Total Order $376

Shipping & Handling: $7 for the first item, $2 per additional item (Mexico & Canada $10 for the first item, $4 per additional item. All others overseas $18 for first item, $5 for each additional item.)

Membership for 2011 (see reverse) $25

Total Payment Enclosed
You can open up again
Johanna Kulbach
an interview with Stefan Laeng-Gilliat

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.

Reclaiming Vitality and Presence
Sensory Awareness as a Practice for Life

“This is a wonderful and welcome expansion of a true classic. It teaches Charlotte’s and Charles’s remarkable way to be genuinely alive.” - Jack Kornfield

“This remarkable book is the most definitive account of the life-long work of Charlotte Selver. It speaks articulately of that which is hard to put into words.” - Edward L. Deci

Combining excerpts from Charlotte Selver’s workshops with writings by Charles Brooks, no other publication so completely captures the essence of Sensory Awareness. Here’s an invitation to wake up and experience life firsthand again, with the freshness and wonder we once had as children—to regain our senses, and come more fully to life.

Support our efforts to promote this book by asking your local bookstore and library to carry it.

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 Gymnastics. 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

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.

Sensory Awareness Foundation
Board of Directors
Sara Bragin
Sara Gordon
Ray Fowler
Richard Lowe

Advisory Board
Russell Delman
Norman Fischer
John Travis
Don Hanlon Johnson

GAF Newsletter
Editor: Richard Lowe
Send your comments to: Richard Lowe, P.O. Box 0411
San Rafael, CA 94916; email: richlowe@earthlink.net

The deadline for the next newsletter is May 1, 2011.
© 2011 Sensory Awareness Foundation
23 Wallace Way, San Rafael, CA 94903
www.sensoryawareness.org

1) A TASTE OF SENSORY AWARENESS, by Charlotte Selver. An overview of the work, with a detailed transcript of a session from the 1967 NY Open Center workshop. 38 pages.

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 (1938). *

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. *

8) ELFRIEDE HENGBERGSTEIN. This issue embraces her own studies with Gindler and Jacoby, her work with children, and biographical notes. She was closely involved with Emmins Piker’s discoveries. 46 pages, with photos.

9) HEINRICH JACOBY. The Work and influence of Gindler’s longtime collaborator, summary of his books, interviews with his students, including his editor and colleague Sophie Ludwig. 46 pages with photos.

10) EMMI PIKER. Dr. Emmi Piker, Hungarian pediatrician, whose revolutionary practice and philosophy about earliest childhood upbringing has been very influential in Europe. Contains extensive selections from Dr. Piker’s first book, Peaceful Babies – Contemplative Mothers, and a paper by Judith Falk, M.D., then director of the Emmi Piker Methodological Institute for Residential Nurseries. 48 pages, with many photos of young children.

11) CHARLOTTE SELVER, Vol. 1. Sensory Awareness And Our Attitude Toward Life. Contains collected lectures on Sensory Awareness and Our Attitude Toward Life, Sensory Awareness & Total Functioning; Report on Work in Sensory Awareness & Total Functioning; To See Without Eyes...; On Breathing; On Being in Touch With Ourselves.
Johanna Kalbach (Continuing from page 3) things. The things which Gindler addressed in her class were for 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 polo, 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 just sit and work. 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 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 our classes for two hours in the day.

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 Spreads [another student of Elsa Gindler]. When Carola gave a talk with slides and 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 Siverson. 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 doing this 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.

SLG: Early Developments in Germany

At the turn of the century there arose a great interest among German youth in shaking off the constraints 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 1960s, eventually consisted of many organizations, clubs and camps.

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 Mensedeck 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. Robert Longgaard, as we were known, also incorporated Mensedeck ideas into their school, whose students were exclusively female. Loheland integrated gymnastic dance into a craft-centered, cultic lifestyle daily practice of aesthetic bodily movement was part of a peculiar moral education that included garden, thrall worked on pottery, weaving, cooking, drawing, singing, agricultural activity, and household management.

Isadora Duncan: The influence of American Isadora Duncan (1878-1922) was primarily inspirational. Her great significance lies in helping 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 everyone excited by the new currents in dance. The whole idea of Asasukabatai, 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 Debussy. One might even suggest that Asasukabatai 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 clearly, 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 opened 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. Affiliated with lazeness, 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 Siverson’s teacher. A student of Genevieve Stebbins, Hedwig (also known as Hedda or Hade) Kallmayer, opened a school of harmonic gymnastics for girls in Berlin around 1902. Hedwig was also known as “Isadora’s mother,” probably due in part to the destruction wrought by the second world war. Among her most famous students were Dora Menzler, Gertrud Leisewitz and Elsa Gindler.

In her book Künstlerische Gymnastik harmonische Körperkultur nach Amerikanischen Systemen (Rehn-Kallmayer) (1910) reformulated the Stebbins methodology to accommodate some ideas of Bess Mensedeck, herself a student of Stebbins. Flexibility was also apparently a major feature of
physical and  
spiritual  
poise and  
bility. It was she who first  
associated the “natural” female body with the  
weaving of  
Greek tunics. Many women were understandably  

eager to  
be given permission to  
give up their  
conventional  
and other con-  
straints and explore greater freedom.  

Stebbins’  
genuity 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 experimental 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 education and exerci-  
ging exercises designed to  
“cleanse the body of those pathological habits that block its channels of communica-  
tion”. 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 Ballmer who was to become Elsa Gindler’s  
teacher.  

American Delsartism  
Sparrowed 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 US 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 educa-  
tion 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 pos-  
ing 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 move-  
ment.  

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

The Mensendieck system works on the premise that  
movements when executed in a beneficial and correct man-  
er 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 moti- 
vation 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  
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 move-  
ment soon after it became a fad and developed her own  
approach which she called “sleeve 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 Group (1894) were mentioned and recom-  
pended 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 rem-  
evolve the alarming rise in American’s anxiety, what some  
had called “anarchism”. He referred this approach as “The  
Good Gospel of Peace”.  

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

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 how about 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 les-  
sion with so-and-so.” And I called so-and-so, and she  
said, “I don’t want to teach on Friday afternoon  
any more.” 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  
respectfully needed teachers, music teachers. So I taught  
music in a boy’s public school. 165 boys in one class.  
You have to have humor and patience for that. I had  
both. The boys went to the train stations with their  
mother in the morning at 5:00 to steal charcoal bri-  
quettes. 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, was certainly doesn’t solve things. And how many  
war 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 get 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 sur-  
gery, 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  
where 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 Kubbach, Dear Friend and Mentor  

By Lanie Bucheker  

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 sensibly  
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 pages  
as he entered the room. He looked up, saw Johanna in her bed,  
and froze.  

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

That was a little glimpse of our beloved Johanna. The  
Vineil family and I wrote of her more fully at the time of  
her passing. Lisl, 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 Louisebo@gmail.com. I would be  
happy to send either or both to you.  

Having Johanna in my life and memory is a profound gift.
The Early Roots of Sensory Awareness
by Richard Lane

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 world’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 tensions that would result in the 20th century. The younger generation of women in the 20th century 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, experimental, 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 forces provided particularly fertile ground around Boston and New York for the development of a popular phenomenon which was to become known as “Deharmisation”. This all started around 1871 with the introduction into the United States of the ideas of French actor, opera singer, and teacher, François Delarue.

François Delarue
François Delarue (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.

He 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 Delarue gymnastics was an unauthorized modification of his theories.

Delarue never wrote a book, explaining his method first-hand, and neither did his main protégé, American actor James Steele MacKaye. However, MacKaye’s student Genevieve Sebbins did write a book in 1885 titled The Delarue System of Expression— and it became a wild success. It was mainly through the influence of MacKaye and Sebbins that Delarue’s teaching methods became known world wide.

James Steele MacKaye:
American actor, inventor and theatrical genius Steele MacKaye (1862–1964) studied with Delarue in Paris and around 1871 and with Delarue’s approval imported it to the United States, where it became enormously popular in the theatre training and for those interested in public speaking, singing and dance. MacKaye expanded what he learned from Delarue to include education 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, Delaruean 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 Sebbins
Genevieve Sebbins (1867–1913), an actress who studied under MacKaye in New York, became the most widely influential teacher of Delarue in both the US and in Europe. In her popular books published in the 1890s and 90s, she further modified the Delarue system by incorporating theories of breathing and rhythmic movement to produce what she called “harmonic gymnastics” geared to female students. Sebbins’ emphasis moved away from developing a large vocabulary of expressions for use on the stage towards cultivating an ideal convergence of female...