

BLÁTHÚ NEWSLETTER



An update for members and friends

Summer 2022

When I look out into the world, I see
Such wondrous beauty bursting forth in each
direction
When in my heart I look, I feel in me
How Nature's beauty here must find its true
reflection.
For when my heart expands and grows aright,
When, on then wings of beauty, to the farthest realms
of space I'm taken,
Then is my own self lost within the light,
In quiet joy at last within the arms of God to waken.

From *In the Light of a Child*, by M H Burton

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Welcome to the Summer 2022 newsletter!

The hedgerows that edge my home field are rich with roses. The air is perfumed: that fine, sweet, heady scent fills me as I pass. I breathe it in, and my world is filled with beauty. Delicate white dog roses, some tipped with soft pink, adorn the briars. Above them, on spiked branches, fruits are forming where bunches of may flowers covered the hawthorn trees just a month or so ago. In between these, brambles are coming into bloom, with their own slightly wilder, smaller, hairier version of a rose flower.

These three are family. These and so many more. The rose, with its five petals, reminiscent of the five



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth





We welcome your contributions to the newsletter

Whether you are a teacher, practitioner, parent, or if you are just interested in what BLÁTHÚ does - we would welcome your contributions to the newsletter.

Perhaps you would like to send in your seasonal reflections, good ideas, articles, stories, songs, book reviews, crafts, patterns, recipes.....

All your suggestions that can enrich our experience, and ultimately, nourish the children, are very welcome.

Please send your contributions to: Ruth Marshall, email:

nc.blathu@gmail.com by **Fri 27th August 2022**

Theme: mobiles, tablets, media, and young children

pointed star of Venus, is an archetype, a blueprint for all our fruiting plants.

The variety of colours, and the succession of flowers in the hedgerows, one after the other, reassures me of the uniqueness of each of us, and that everything blossoms when it is its own time. We are not all the same. We may come from a basic blueprint: human, woman, etc, but each has our own scent, our own colour, our own qualities. How delightfully, divinely-humanly unique we are!

And as the summer moves on, our metaphorical flowers may fade and die back, but we, unlike the flowers, have choice. We can remember that this is not an ending. Rather, it is a transformation! We can let our blossoms fall, consciously acknowledging where we are in the cycle of seasonal change in our lives. We can choose to make way for another phase of life to begin. Something that was within us, as only potential, waiting, now begins to make its way out into the world. We bear fruit! It just takes time, and that time will be different for each of us too.

In the more cultivated corners of my home field, there are complex, many-petalled pink roses. Peace roses. These smell like heaven to me, and remind me of a place I imagined as a child: I

called it The Roseland, a place of peace and beauty in a dull, harsh world. A place conjured by my imagination, in response to the experience of my senses. Today, I only need to smell a rose, and I am there.

This time of year, I like to gather and dry the rose petals that are so abundant. I use these in a relaxing herb tea mix (see page 8) but I also like to make an infused oil. In doing this, I 'capture' some of the essence of summer: the warmth of the sun, the long light evenings, the peace of my childhood's Roseland. And there she is again, my child-self, playing in the garden, busy making potions, filling a jar with rose petals.

There will be time enough to gather the juicy, rich, deep-coloured fruits, haws and brambles, when the season turns. For now, I take the time to smell the roses.

Perhaps this midsummer you will gather some scented rose petals before they fall, and consider what gifts does the rose have to offer you? But don't forget to play, and imagine, and enjoy the summer!

In peace,

Ruth Marshall, National Coordinator

IASWECE



BLÁTHÚ is a recognised member of IASWECE, the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education.

IASWECE gives financial and pedagogical support to projects in order to develop and maintain the quality of Waldorf early childhood education throughout the world. For this IASWECE depends on the generous help of colleagues and friends, and therefore welcomes your donations. See <https://iaswece.org/how-you-can-help/> for bank details.

For the IASWECE newsletter, go to www.iaswece.org/iaswece-newsletter/

WHAT IS IT ABOUT PLAYING?

An afterthought from the CPD workshop in the grounds of Kildare Steiner School
by Ulrike Farnleitner



We reflected on playing and how we played and engaged in play during childhood, many of us spoke about experiences of childhood in Nature and what it meant to embody play and all that comes with it. It was very informative to reflect as adults on what we had all gained from playing undisturbed, freely and unlimited in our childhood. The insight was clear: we must now consciously not disturb children when they are playing. Instead, we need to create the possibilities for them to be in an environment, an atmosphere, as well as with adults who are present and might join in sometimes. Adults who are still able to play!

Playing means concentrating, creating with almost nothing, anything, feeling joy in achievements, and sadness that the day ended already, getting engrossed in adventure, realising repetition and a wealth of applications of creativity. We all talked about bodily engagement be it through walking, climbing, swinging, digging, running fast and creeping slow, social engagements with friends and foes - all the imaginary friends and enemies we had, we were inventing tools and weapons while dealing with the unknown. We solved problems or created more. We were all actively engaging with the world. We did not know boredom, and if we did, we found something else to play with.

As adults we had almost to give ourselves the permission to be playful on a daily basis. Interestingly the daily demands have banished the playful side, we are

under huge pressure to fulfil our affirmation that only to be useful and productive, counts in this society!

Let's challenge that thought!

In games, there are rules and clear limits, which are justified, and it is important to learn these, they will strengthen the competency in children. How amazing if I child can say, "I know how this game needs to be played". Of course the ownership of each game and play activity is vital for the balance in soul.

Detrimental to this healthy activity is each and every media game, which I consider hampering the healthy activity. We will include some more about this hot theme in the next newsletter.

Children have the right to play and to express themselves through play and to develop their capacities in the best sense. As adults, we need to be advocates so that the quality of childhood can increase and support a holistic engagement with the world.

THE PURSUIT OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

by Ulrike Farnleitner

When we talk about education, especially role-modelling and all the wonderful values and virtues that we cherish, I often wonder about food, nutrition, and the impact that our way of shopping, cooking and eating has on us, our families and on our environment.

When I came across this WWF research (<https://www.worldwildlife.org/publications/driven-to-waste-the-global-impact-of-food-loss-and-waste-on-farms>) I wondered even more, and tried to think about how we might make a difference our shopping habits.

I didn't grow up in a supermarket society, my family was lucky to have a garden in which to grow and tend vegetables and fruit trees. I knew where our food came from. I saw my mother work in the garden, and it was clear that the smallest carrots tasted sweeter than the bigger ones. The size of the apples varied hugely and I did not always want the biggest or the spotless one. As children, we learnt to deal with the harvest that nature

gave to us. This was not perfect at all, but I wonder sometimes, what is perfect?

Another warm memory that I still cherish was waiting for the first green salad head that was growing the covered garden bed. What a feast when in May, we ate our first green salad! I never ever tasted anything more delicious than these lush, juicy, light green leaves.

Nowadays we tend to get our food supply not so much from our gardens anymore. We shop here and there, and think we need to stick to what is offered. But who sets the parameters? How do we get back quality and variety? What is the way forward to a society that is not driven by only the outer beauty and size of fruit and veg, but that is aware that we dictate and set examples for waste or sustainability with our choices and habits? We have more power than we give ourselves credit for. Let's become conscious of it.

What is your choice/action now?

SOURDOUGH BREAD

By Ulrike Farnleitner

Sourdough bread fascinated me for a long time, it does not at all taste sour, but has this amazing taste of joy, and is basically a slow-fermented bread. It uses the so-called starter which acts as a natural leavening agent. You can make your own starter or you get one from a bakery, a friend or neighbour. It is important – to keep “feeding” your original sourdough starter with water equal to flour, so to have it ready for the next time. It will keep for a long time in the fridge, but needs attention here and there.

What is so unique in this way to bake, is the time involved. It takes 24-48 hours till you can cut your first slice of this tangy flavoured bread with a crispy, crackly crust. As soon as you get fascinated by all these processes to tend to and to consciously accompany, any other bread is a no-go. Even gluten-intolerant people can digest sourdough bread, as the breakdown of gluten during this long fermentation process makes it so digestible.

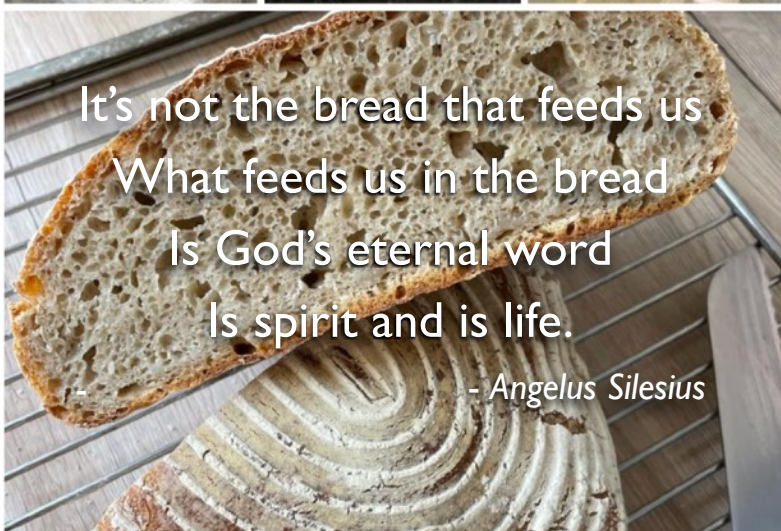
Just a word about flour and its quality and taste. There is such a variety of flours available, at least on the continent, it is almost a scientific research through your taste to find the ones and the combination that you like most. I prefer to bake with spelt, rye and emmer flour, all flours of an organic quality.

Here is a well-used recipe thanks to Monika, that we called Easy-Loaf.

Take 60g original starter and mix it with 150g flour and 150g water, stir it well with a fork and leave it until it makes bubbles - depending on the temperature in the room, that will take between a few hours, up to half a day. You then have sourdough starter of 300g that you mix with 240g water, you then add 420g flour and 10g salt. As an Austrian, I would add more bread spices into it, like ground fennel, cumin, coriander. You might want to add all kind of seeds into the dough.

I mix it with a wooden spoon and leave it resting for an hour, knead it with my hands, stretch and form it again and again. I will do this so 2-3 times until after approx. 4-5 hours but it to resting in the bowl under a cloth. I will then form the bread, put lots of flour on it and place it on the cloth in a basket and leave it overnight in the fridge.

Next day you take it out of the fridge, after half an hour you put it on a tray in the preheated oven 250 degrees, with a bowl of water for steam. It will amaze you to witness how the bread rises and breaks open - although an Irish baker once advised to cut it open slightly on top, so that the fairies are freed, and bake it 230 degrees for 35-40 minutes.



It's not the bread that feeds us
What feeds us in the bread
Is God's eternal word
Is spirit and is life.

- Angelus Silesius

You take it out and wrap it in your bread cloth and let it cool down. That might take a good while. The cloth helps to keep the moisture in the bread, softens the crust just a bit so you will be able to cut it with your bread knife.

Blessings on your Easy Loaf and on your health!

SLOWING, SOURDOUGH & TAKING TIME

By Ruth Marshall

Bread is a lovely thing to eat -
God bless the barley and the wheat!
A lovely thing to breathe is air -
God bless the sunshine everywhere!
The earth's a lovely place to know -
God bless the folks that come and go!
Alive's a lovely thing to be -
Giver of life, we say - bless thee!

- H M Sarson

For a few years, I was an organiser of an annual event, and our theme one particular year was **ARISING**. As an art installation, I brought bowls, spoons, flour and water to make a massive amount of sourdough starter, enough to share with over 50 participants. I had been feeding both a spelt and a wheat starter for weeks to build up their strength. The idea was that each participant would take a turn, over the course of the weekend, to add some flour, water, and stir in their wishes and intentions. The starters would bubble in between feeds, and at the end of the weekend, each would take away their own jar full of sourdough starter - enough to be able to start their own baking - along with my instructions for its care.

I saw making sourdough bread as an *empowering* process, and one that I saw that I could pass on as a way of helping others empower themselves. As a more *conscious* way of baking it allows me to take back some control over the nature of the food I eat.

Sourdough has been both an adventure in sustainability, and a responsibility for me. Having a sourdough starter is a bit like having a pet - it requires regular care and attention, exercise, food and water. Thankfully, it is also rather forgiving, and will survive a little neglect, if kept in the fridge for a week or two if I go on holiday.

Of course, I can buy good quality organic sourdough bread in my local wholefood shop. Sometimes I can even buy something calling itself "sourdough bread" already sliced and packaged, in

a supermarket. But there is real joy in knowing that I can start from scratch anytime I want, and create a new sourdough starter from just flour and water ... and time.

It is an exchange: a process of give and take. I do not need to buy yeast, or soda. I only need to **take** my time, and **give** my starter the time it needs to grow. Of course, I still have to buy flour... but, then, maybe one day!

My former anthroposophical doctor, a lovely man, Spanish, once told me that bullfighters had a saying: "*Dress me slowly, I'm in a rush.*" He introduced me to this notion of taking things slowly and carefully, especially when we are in a hurry. In the bullfighter's case, of course, it was dangerous to be improperly prepared before entering the bull ring, but the same applies to so many areas of life. If we slow down and live with more consciousness and less haste, we will probably still get there on time anyway, or manage to accomplish what we need to do.

These days we'd probably call this attitude "mindfulness," but I'd like to think it also includes heartfulness, and embodiedness. Perhaps "being present" is the phrase I am looking for, or "Be here now," as Baba Ram Dass would have said.

I practised this if ever I found myself pressed for time to get somewhere. I would take a breath, slow down, make sure I had everything I needed for the journey, and then set off. And I always arrived safely and on time, even if I drove relatively slowly.

If we race on day by day, never stopping to smell the flowers, we pay scant attention to the details of living. For the sake of our future, and the children who come after us, we owe it to them to take our time, so that they can take theirs.



BLÁTHÚ'S CPD PROGRAMME FOR 2022

As part of our implementation Plan for 2022, BLÁTHÚ has committed to a year long programme of CPD workshops.

These workshops are open to teachers, practitioners, parents - and anyone else who is open to learning more.

Coming up next:

10th September
Nov/December

Out of Doors; Farmyard Kindergarten, Strawberry Hill, Cork City
Celebrating Festivals. Date & venue tbc - *see below for this great opportunity*

A Great Learning Opportunity:

Would your Kindergarten or Early Years Service like to host the November/December CPD on Celebrating Festivals? This could be a wonderful opportunity.

During the season of Advent, hosting a workshop exploring how we can enrich the life of our kindergarten and homes through celebrating culturally appropriate festivals, could nourish all who attend - a gift to your local community!

Alternatives:

While we are committed to offering these four CPD courses in 2022, we can still be flexible about how we do this....

Does this sound familiar? We have all become accustomed to working on Zoom over the past two years, and this has perhaps made us a little reluctant to book and make the effort to leave home for an in-person course on a weekend, when we could be at home enjoying a family day.

We may also be able to offer some short online presentations, on a variety of themes, some of these in collaboration with other early childhood bodies.

Please tell us what you you would be interested in - what themes, subjects, etc do you want to know more about? Is there a particular facilitator or presenter whose workshop you would love to attend?

Please let us know what you need, and then BLÁTHÚ will try to include your interests in our planning.

Contact Ruth 0892411816, or email nc.blathu@gmail.com

*BLATHU presents
A CPD workshop*

Farmyard Kindergarten,
Strawberry Hill,
Cork City

10th September 2022

“Out of Doors”

**Play - Nature
Fun & Learning
in All Weathers!**

JOIN BLÁTHÚ TODAY!

As a member of BLÁTHÚ, you are part of a recognised professional body which, through its mission and actions, is committed to furthering the profile and formation of the Steiner-Waldorf Early Years services and pedagogy.

During the lockdowns, we suspended membership fees, but now that “normal service” is resuming, we need to ask you to renew your membership. BLÁTHÚ depends on your membership fees.

Types of membership:

Associate membership is available to organisations such as VCOs, Universities or Colleges who wish to associate themselves with BLÁTHÚ, receiving updates and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events.

Cost: €65 p/a

Individual membership is available to members of the general public and parents of children who may be attending one of our member settings, receiving updates, newsletters and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events.

Cost: €25 p/a

Settings Membership is open to Kindergartens/Early Years Services as organisations which allows you to avail of FULL benefits. 3 contact persons receiving correspondence, usually lead teacher, assistant teacher & the committee secretary. All members of staff/committee can avail of discounted entry to BLÁTHÚ workshops & events.

Cost: €75 p/a

New or smaller initiatives such as parent & toddler groups can take out **reduced** membership, which means they can avail of full benefits with one person receiving correspondence & discounts.

Cost: €35 p/a

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?

Benefits to All Members

- Join with members nationwide strengthening Steiner Education throughout the Early Years sector.
- Receive the quarterly BLÁTHÚ newsletter
- Receive a discount on BLÁTHÚ events and publications
- Receive regular updates & job vacancy information
- Mentoring and support

Additional Benefits to Full Members

- BLÁTHÚ is a recognised professional body
- BLÁTHÚ represents you at national and international levels
- Your service's website can be linked from listing on www.blathu.org

So, what do I do now - how do I join BLÁTHÚ?

Contact the National Co-ordinator, Ruth Marshall: Email: nc.blathu@gmail.com or tel: 089 241 1816, and request a membership form, or download the form from our website

FOR THE SEASONS - ST JOHNS DAY



Celebrating St Johns Day

The festival is celebrated on the 24th June, around summer solstice. As with all festivals there is a time to plan, prepare, to celebrate and to echo the experience.

During the days before the festival, we prepare garlands in fiery colours, yellow, orange, red.

We twist a long rope to which we tie some of the fiery paper flames, during our festival we jump over the “fire” while 2 people hold the rope and move it slightly in side waves. We adjust the heights of the fiery rope according to the age of the children.

Eating healthy food together is an important part of each festival, we aim to make the table beautiful so it is a feast for all the senses. We decorate lovingly our spotless room, with Flower filled vases, colourful cloths and pictures. On our seasonal table we show either the way nature is now, or in a more artistic way with cards and beautiful items. The core of our intention is to tend and to care for these spaces with awareness and love. You will notice how much children like to see and to feel your creations. It is food for the Soul and all the senses.

The richness of nature at the midsummer time is expressed in the fullness of creative beauty and substance that you use in this time.

Singing and dancing on a daily basis is how we practice for the festival which we then celebrate with all the families. In that way we celebrate our community and the sense of well-being and belonging; a feast for humanity which is also reflected in the stories we tell and the poetry we use.

A time of outgoing, joy, laughter, movement and connecting to the elements.

After the festival as adults, we can take some time to reflect, to look back on the past year, feel gratitude for all the occasions where we could grow in experience and in wisdom, we can notice where changes need to happen, and how we can apply these for the coming kindergarten cycle. To write all our ideas down, even to plan till December is good practice. To come back after the summer holiday and to start the new term again knowing the steps and tasks that need actions is so reassuring.

We can connect to this amazing energy of St. John. His deed was to use water in the barren desert, a task of renewing and transforming. Adults who are less inclined to connect to this biblical figure, might want to connect to the cosmic rhythms of the planetary forces and stars, which also have their language and meaning to show us.

Ulrike Farnleitner

St John's Day was known as the best time to gather many herbs, as their properties were said to be at their height at this time. Amongst those at their best around this time are: Elderflowers, yarrow, peppermint, lemon balm, lime flower, calendula, and of course, rose petals.

Make your own herb tea mix:

Pick herbs before mid day, on a sunny dry day. Dry carefully out of direct sunlight. Either lay on stretched muslin, or hang in bunches tied inside brown paper bags. Once dried, store in dark glass jars.

Elderflower, peppermint and yarrow: Equal quantities of each, this makes a lovely tea to drink when anyone has a cold or flu.

Rose petal, calendula and lemon balm: Equal quantities, makes a soothing and mildly relaxing tea.

Ruth Marshall

FOR THE SEASONS - SONGS & VERSES

Marie in the Meadow

Johann Trojan Edwin Kunz

1. Ma-rie in the mead-ow, In the mead-ow Ma-rie, All the flow-ers and
 2. Oh, I am so wor-ried, I've lost my Ma-rie; She's lost in the

grass-es are tall-er than she.
 Clo-ver, Oh, where can she be?

3. But who is it sitting 'mid the flowers so bright,
 The harebells, the buttercups, the star daisies white?

4. This can't be a flower, a little head I see, -
 I've found her, I've found her, I've found my Marie!

The Swing

How do you like to go up in a swing,
 Up in the air so blue?
 Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
 Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
 Till I can see so wide,
 Rivers and trees and cattle and all
 Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,
 Down on the roof so brown—
 Up in the air I go flying again,
 Up in the air and down!

Robert Louis Stevenson



Bed in Summer

In winter I get up at night
 And dress by yellow candle-light.
 In summer, quite the other way,
 I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
 The birds still hopping on the tree,
 Or hear the grown-up people's feet
 Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
 When all the sky is clear and blue,
 And I should like so much to play,
 To have to go to bed by day?

Robert Louis Stevenson

FOR THE SEASONS - NATURE

By Ruth Marshall

A TASTE of SUMMER - Make Elderflower Fizz !

- 7 to 10 elderflower heads
- 750g sugar
- 2 tbsp cider vinegar
- 4.5 litres cold water
- 2 lemons



Fill a large, food-quality plastic bucket with water. Add the elderflowers, sugar, vinegar, lemon juice and lemon rind (peeled off in large pieces without the white pith). Cover with a clean tea towel and leave to stand for 24 hours.

Strain through muslin, and pour into clean screw top plastic bottles. Pressure will build up as the fizz develops, so it is safer to use plastic bottles than glass.

It is ready to drink in 3 weeks. It will keep well if stored in a cool dark place. So you can make enough to last throughout the summer!

MAKE a DAISY BRACELET

The daisy gets its name from being the “day’s eye” that opens when the sun comes out and closes up at night. Daisies love to grow where we walk, so don’t be too concerned about stepping on them. They love to be picked and made into lovely jewellery by children and fairies. We probably all made daisy chains when we were young (if you didn’t you missed out on some essential finger skills and nature time!). But did you use a rush?



You will need:

- One long straight rush with a good sharp pointy tip
- Lots of daisies, as many as you can find

Instructions:

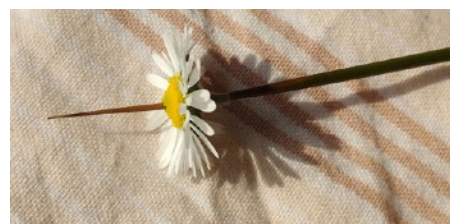
Pinch off the stalk behind the daisy with your thumbnail and index finger. That leaves a little hole in the base of the daisy’s green cup. This is where you will insert the rush.

Using the pointy end of the rush like a needle, poke it into the centre of the back of the daisy and push it right through. It will come out the front of the yellow centre

Gently push the daisy down the rush. Then add another daisy, and another and another....

You can leave a bit of a gap between each flower, or bunch them up close, depending on how many daisies you have.

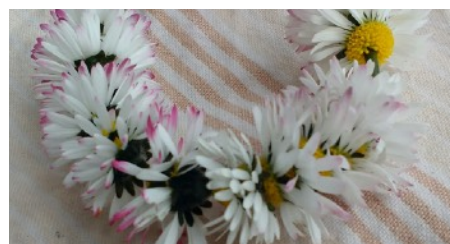
Keep going until you have used up all your daisies - or until you have enough threaded on your rush to make a bracelet.



Cut the rush so that is big enough to fit around your wrist, allowing about 1.5 inches extra at the pointy end. You need to be able to get the bracelet on and off, so make sure it is big enough to go over your hand with thumb folded in, but not so big that it falls off.

You are going to join the rush in a circle by pushing the pointy end into the white spongy stuff inside the cut end of the rush. It is soft and so it’s quite easy to insert the point inside the rush. Keep pushing till at least 1 inch of the point is hidden.

Now you can gently distribute the daisies along the length of your bracelet.



FOR THE SEASONS - CRAFTS



Make a paper spinner!

You need: thin card, scissors; pencil, a plate (5-7cm)
Draw around the plate and cut it out. Fold in half, then open it out; turn 90 degrees, repeat fold and open;

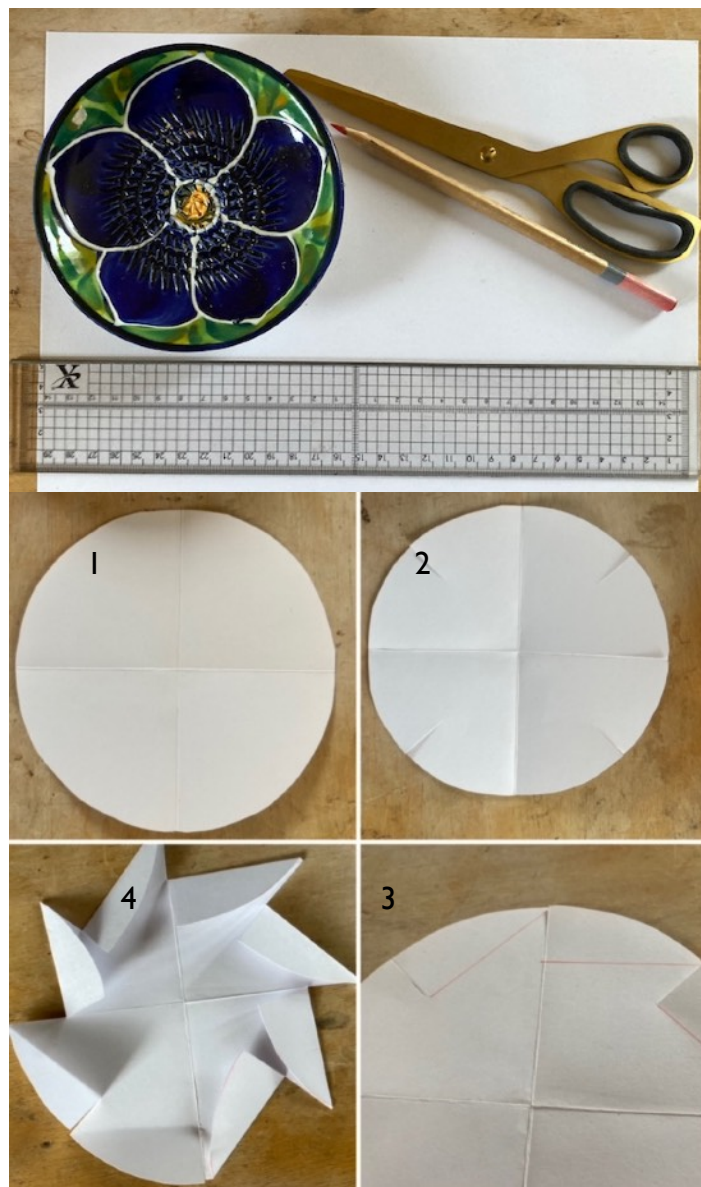
Make 4 cuts (1.5 to 2cm long) along fold lines

Make another 4 cuts halfway between the first cuts

Draw 8 lines between cuts (top-bottom, same direction)

Fold along the lines to make star shape

Place star on a table, and blow gently from directly above the centre of the star. Watch the star spin!



Memories: a seashore walk

Don't we all love to fill our pockets with treasures from a seaside walk?

Here is a crafty way to display them. You need cloth, embroidery thread, needle, embroidery hoop.

Combine found objects, such as shells, stones with holes, dry seaweed and other seaside treasures with a little bit of embroidery, to make a lovely display of memories from a day at the beach.

Seashore memories contributed by Julia Erhardt

The Shepherd's Dream

An Irish story from
**"World Tales for Family Storytelling II:
44 Traditional Stories for Children aged 6-8 years"**
by Chris Smith. Published by Hawthorn Press



Once there were two shepherds who lay down to rest under a tree while their sheep grazed the long green grass of the field. The shepherds had a lovely view down over the field, over a sparkling stream and a bed of long golden reeds. The sun shone down and all was well.

They smiled and sang a little song:

*Life is a mystery
It's very hard to see
What is real and what is true.
What is me and what is you.*

Then the older shepherd puffed on his pipe and admired the view, while the younger fell into a deep sleep.

Then something started crawling out of the young man's mouth. The elder watched in amazement. It was a butterfly! How could that be?

The butterfly hopped out of the mouth, crawled down the young man's chin, neck and belly, and down onto the path. It fluttered down the path through the field towards the stream. The old shepherd followed behind it, trying to make sense of what he was seeing.

At the stream, there were some stepping stones over the river and the butterfly hopped from one to the next till it got to the other side, with the old shepherd close behind.

Next it followed the path through a clump of bullrushes and out into a green field. The old shepherd watched as it flew to a bleached white horse's skull in the centre of the field.

He watched the butterfly fly into the eye-socket of the skull and disappear. He waited, and a while later it flew out of the mouth and back towards him, over the field, through the rushes, over the stepping stones, and up the path back to the young shepherd. There it crawled up his chin and disappeared back into the young man's mouth.

Moments later the young shepherd woke up. "I've just had the most amazing dream!" he said. "I dreamed I was walking down a road lined with tall green trees. I walked till I came to the ocean, and there I started flying, out over the sea from island to island, till I came to a new land where the trees were tall and thin and golden. I travelled through the forest of giant trees until I came to a white palace. I went inside but it was empty. Nothing there at all. So I came back home, through the forest of giant trees, over the ocean, island to island, then up the road surrounded by a green, green forest. Then I got home and woke up. What does it mean?"

"I'll show you," said the elder shepherd.

He led the young shepherd down the pathway that led through the long green grass. "This was the road through the green forest," he told him.

He pointed to the stream and the stepping stones. "This was the ocean and the islands."

He led the young shepherd through the clump of bullrushes. "And this was the giant forest," he said and then pointed out the skull. "And that was the palace."

"This is amazing!" exclaimed the young shepherd. "But what do you think it means?"

"I don't know," said the elder shepherd, "but it must be something wonderful."

They sang their song again as they walked back to their sheep:

*Life is a mystery
It's very hard to see
What is real and what is true.
What is me and what is you.*

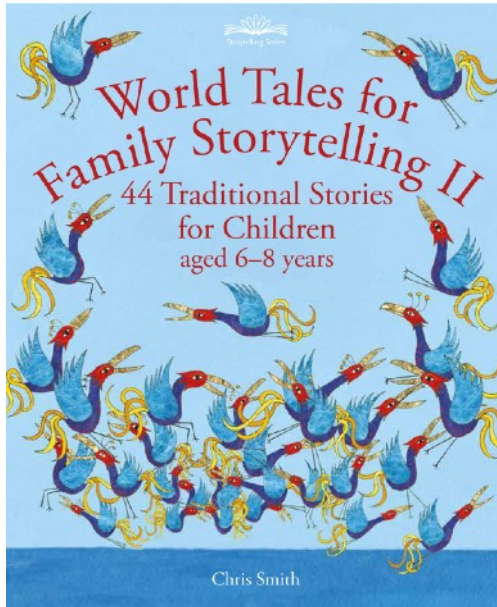
So here's a question for you:
What do you think the story means?

BOOK REVIEW

By Ruth Marshall

World Tales for Family Storytelling II

By Chris Smith, Published by Hawthorn Press,
ISBN: 978-1-912480-66-1



To encourage a love of stories is to provide a good grounding for green growth throughout life. Here, Chris Smith has selected 44 favourite traditional tales from around the world. These are short tales, simple tales that will be easy to read together, and easy to remember. These stories will lend themselves to oral storytelling, and all the embellishment that your imagination can bring to them, and can encourage both parents and children to share more stories together.

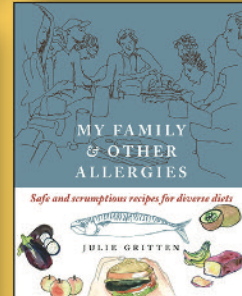
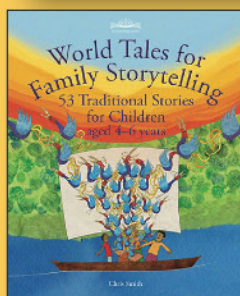
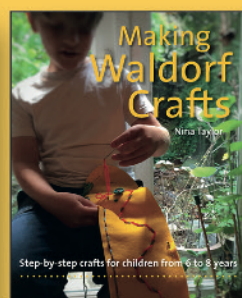
Read them aloud, if you are a novice storyteller, and before long you will know a tale or two to tell by heart! This book offers a great place to begin your storytelling journey. If you treat this book as an open door to the wonders of storytelling, those wonders will surely come thronging in and make themselves comfortably at home on your sofa, by your fireside.

The author provides helpful references to web links where you can hear other storytellers tell their versions of individual stories; and also recommends books to read where you will find further variations of each tale. This is a real gift to encourage family storytelling.



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The uplifting images that a good story well told offers us can be a torch, a candle flame against the dark.

Please send your stories to Ruth at:
nc.blathu@gmail.com

The power of imitation

by Urszula Sawicka Gamarra

Caring for a Young Child

When the child is born their senses just begin to develop. They start to perceive the world step by step and need to learn how to navigate and live in it. Their eyes see only light and dark, their movements are unconscious and limited. They experience this big world for the first time. They arrive in this world vulnerable, needing our protection and guidance. And we as the adults caring for them want to make sure they are safe and well. We want to provide for them everything they might need. We choose soft clothes for them and use creams that won't irritate their skin. We make sure they are surrounded by gentle noises and we rock them to sleep when they are tired. We give them food that won't upset their stomachs. And we want to teach them everything and show them how the world works.

However, learning new skills is based not only on us actively showing them "how to do it", but by them observing "how it is done" and repeating it. Do we as grown ups realise the importance of this observation? Are we aware that everything we do and say has an impact on our child? We seem to be so surprised when children do or say something unexpectedly. We ask ourselves then, "I wonder where they heard that or saw that?" We didn't even realise that the power of imitation is so strong!

Imitation in the Kindergarten

Rudolf Steiner describes the first seven years of a child's life as "the stage of imitation". I see imitation happening in the kindergarten classroom every day. Children cover their puppet show with the cloth when setting it up just like I do, or put flowers and a candle on the table when having their pretend meal. When, after snack, I sweep the crumbs from the floor, they eagerly take their sweeping brushes and help me to do the work. They want to do what adults can do and they take in their whole environment. Children imitate everything they see, good or bad, without any filters. When I forget myself and throw blocks to the basket to tidy up quicker, not even a second later they imitate me and start throwing toys to the baskets too instead of putting them in gently. It can be so tricky!

Actions mean more than words

Children do not have an understanding of when they should or should not be copying behaviour of others. Being tired, stressed, hungry or just not in the good mood can influence how we act around them. But we can do our best to be aware of our own selves. And it can become our greatest tool. Asking questions and explanations may be so overwhelming for a young child. However, when we are conscious of the fact that we are active role models for our children we can help them to navigate the world through our actions. When we comfort a child who got hurt, others will come to stroke their cheek or bring a tissue for the tears. When we offer help to one that is trying so hard to make a roof for their house, others will come along to help too.

Being worthy of imitation

Children will see what we do and how we do it. That's why it is so important for adults to be worthy of imitation. If we set this as our goal, we may everyday be able to do it a little bit better. We are able to show them how by being present, kind, and thoughtful. We are able to correct our actions and words even when we make mistakes. We may say: "I am sorry, let me do this again, let me say it better" and help them to become compassionate and responsive learners by our example.

With these thoughts in mind, kind gestures and words full of warmth we can become the confident leader that our children need. There is no way we can be perfect parents and teachers at all times, but we may strive to be the best version of ourselves, to be worthy of imitation.

BIO: Urszula is a Kindergarten Teacher in Dublin Steiner School. She is a student of the Soulscape Early Childhood training as well as a storyteller, fibre artist and passionate gardener. When she's not teaching, she enjoys hiking in the wild, cooking vegan meals and fermenting veggies. Follow her journey on www.instagram.com/thehiddenbloom

ART classes for Children from Ukraine

Gofundme: <https://gofund.me/90ada941>

Olga Vnukova, a Ukrainian mum with two young children living in Dublin for 9 years, felt a need to do something to help the children coming from Ukraine. Olga and her husband became Irish citizens in 2019. In March her parents and grandmother arrived from Kharkiv, and are now living in Stepaside, Dublin.

Some friends and I decided that we must do something to help Ukrainian children and so we set up art classes in Dublin for them. The classes are for both refugee children and those already living here, as you can imagine all our children are affected by the trauma of this war. The classes are an outlet for the children to be creative, express their feelings, feel safe and have something in a new country that they feel belongs to them.

As families come into Ireland, they face an arduous process of building a new home and community. We wanted to provide a place for these children to meet up where they can feel part of their new community and meet fellow Ukrainian facing the same emotions as them.

We joined up Jole Bortoli, founder of “Art to Heart” and visual art facilitator in The Ark cultural centre for children in Temple Bar. Jole leads the children in creative art classes. To start with we had support from a local school in Killiney (St Joseph of Cluny Secondary School) who provided a location to get these classes off the ground free of charge.



During our first month, Jole worked with children at St Joseph’s of Cluny art studio, and we also organized additional art classes in Bray, and in Clayton Leopardstown Hotel. We had 9 sessions in total, each attended by 12-15 kids. Another weekly group started in North Wicklow Educate Together school for children who live in Royal Hotel Bray. Our art team, led by Jole, is also growing, with a new volunteer artist from Ukraine.

Children respond very well. We give them sketch books which they can take home or use at the hotel for making sketches, notes, drawings. The covers of these sketchbooks kids made themselves at one of our meetings in the art studio.

We need funding to purchase much needed art resources for the classes and cover the costs for those coming on board to support the children. We aim to raise 10,000 EUR which we estimate will provide materials and support for at least 100 children for 3 months. Roughly €30 per child per month.

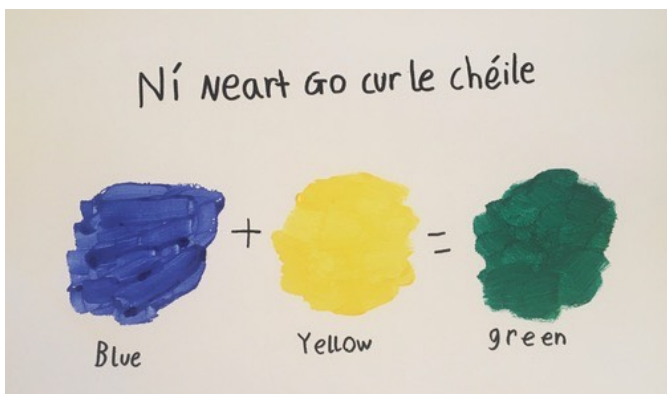
Virgin Media News video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6oiN7dlpcg>



The Colours of Friendship

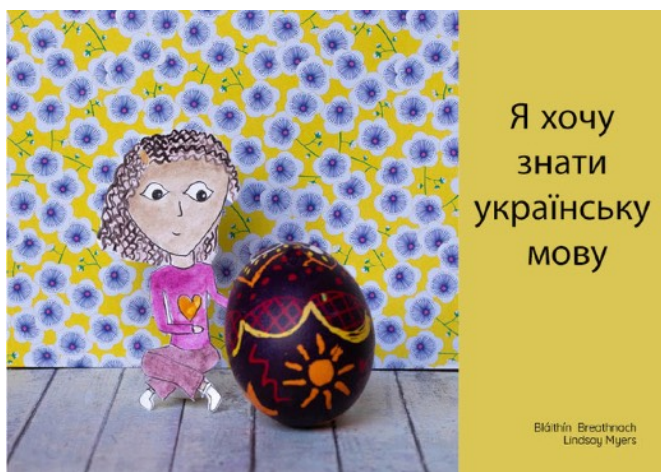
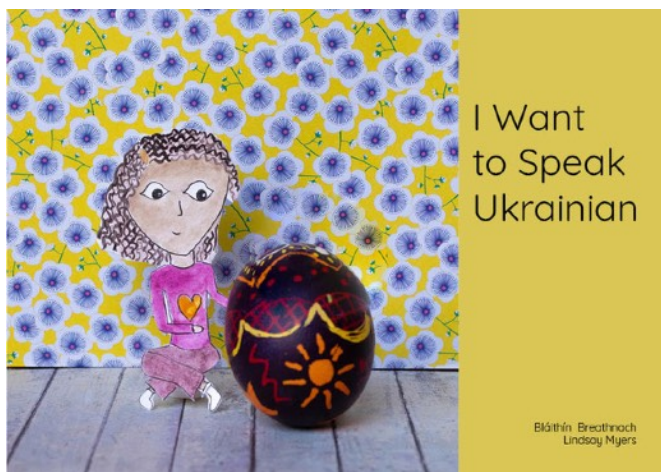
By Lindsay Myres

Learning about colours and colour mixing has always been an important part of Steiner education. There can often be a far greater significance to colours, however, than we realise, and I was never more aware of this than I was this year when I walked in the Galway, St. Patrick's Day Parade with Cuan na Gaillimhe Steiner School carrying a sign with the visual and verbal motto "Blue and Yellow make Green". Everyone in the crowd who saw the sign was perplexed for a minute but then they burst into a smile... as the magic of this simple yet powerful message of solidarity for the Ukrainian people dawned on them. The world that we live in is a world where it is possible to be blue and yellow and green at the same time: a world where it is possible to be Ukrainian and yet also be a part of the Irish nation and people. "Ní neart go cur le chéile" Together we are stronger.



Little realisations fuel big ideas, and not long after my parade-walking experience I began working with Bláithín Breathnach, a second-year, university student of mine, on a project that took us both to a whole new level... we created a picturebook that would serve as a point of contact between the Ukrainian refugee children coming to Ireland and the children already attending Irish schools. There is nothing more validating than seeing yourself and your experiences reflected in literature, and by bringing these two groups together in the same story ... by quite literally placing them on the same page, we wanted to create something that would help both groups to better understand each other's lives and cultural backgrounds.

Our picturebook, which tells the story of a friendship between an Irish girl called Leila and a Ukrainian girl called Darynka, recounts how Leila and her friends prepare for Darynka's arrival in their school by finding out as much as they can about Ukrainian culture. Together they make kite paper sunflowers for the school windows, read Ukrainian folktales and play Ukrainian games. They even learn how to pronounce the letters in the Cyrillic alphabet and as the days pass they collect a few simple words and phrases in Ukrainian, all of which Leila carefully writes down and illustrates in her notebook.



When we set about making this book just two months ago neither Bláithín nor I knew anything about Ukrainian culture, We had never come across the Cyrillic alphabet and we had absolutely no Ukrainian! Through reaching out to the Ukrainian community in Galway, however, we



discovered so many amazing new things. We learned, not just how to say “hello” (pryvit) and “my name is...” (me ne zvaty) but how to decorate pysanky eggs with wax and colourful dyes, how to cook Ukrainian borsch and how to play a Ukrainian game that makes dancing around the maypole even more fun! We found out all about Ukrainian children’s literature and folklore....and I was amazed to discover how similar the Ukrainian folktale, Kyrylo Kozhumiaka (Nikita the Tanner) is to the story of Michael and the Dragon, a tale that has become a staple of Steiner education across the world. This tale, which tells of how a tanner from a small village in Ukraine saves a princess by defeating the mighty dragon terrorising his people, is a powerful reminder of the struggle that we all face when it comes to understanding the nature of good and evil behavior.

No matter when or indeed where we live the challenge is always the same: how to recognise what is right and how to stand for that truth no matter the cost. I will never forget the day when my daughter came home from school reciting this small rhyme: *“Brave and true I will be. Each good deed sets me free, Each kind word makes me strong. I will fight for the right! I will conquer the wrong!”* We can teach our children all about maths and science. We can teach them literacy and art... and these things are essential. But if we do not remember to also teach about



goodness and truth we are nothing, for it is these things that add the colour to our world.

And on the subject of colours....there is something else very interesting and that is that when the Ukrainian people decorate the pysanky eggs the colours that they use all have meanings. Blue (syniy) means truth while yellow (zhovtyy) means happiness and green..... well green (zelenyy) means hope. Funny is it not that the surname of Ukraine’s current president is Zelenskyy?

The publication of *I want to Speak Ukrainian* and its Ukrainian translation (Ya khochu znati ukrayins'ku movu) was made possible thanks to the financial support of the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, NUI Galway, and there is no doubt but that without their generosity we would never have got the book to print. We are extremely grateful also to Galway City Partnership, and Galway Education Centre who helped us to get over 6,000 copies of our book to national schools and refugee centres in Galway last week. At present we do not have the funds to make the book available to schools nationwide but you never know... We have, however, put some copies up for sale through Charlie Byrnes in Galway (with the proceeds going to the IrelandforUkraine fund), and it is our hope that our project will serve as a reminder in this time of trauma and crisis that we should never be afraid of dragons no matter how frightening is their fiery breath.

Conscious mothering

By Sarah Meehan

As the 10th birthday of my firstborn approaches, it fills me with joy to celebrate my own growth over this wonderful decade of my life. Choosing to become a conscious mother has allowed me to embark on an incredible journey, fulfilling my deepest dreams whilst facing many fears along the way.

As eager as I was to learn, travel and work as a young adult my longing to be a full-time mother and caregiver made it relatively easy for me to make as much space in my own career, life and heart as I could for my precious young children and their growing souls. I always believed my task in their first three years of life was to create a warm, safe and peaceful home for them – and for myself. I could not deny this truth to us all. Having three children in ten years has meant that I have gone through this process three times and I am still constantly growing through this experience, which is firmly rooted in the senses.

Choosing each day to feel and quietly explore through all my senses has unfolded before me the mothering experience that I always knew was waiting for me. In so many ways, the senses - all of them - have been my most loyal, gentle yet ruthlessly stubborn guides while I tended to my infants needs.

Fine-tuning the senses of smell, taste and touch has opened up a pathway between my senses and theirs and nurtured a relationship that helps us to find harmony and understanding in our days together at home.

Choosing to become a conscious mother has meant letting layers of my identity peel away and this transformation of the self is not always easy to accept. Turning down “opportunities”, veering from the mainstream narrative and facing our own inner world is excruciatingly difficult for me as a modern woman and mother.

Trying to find my own higher sense of self through motherhood is lonely at times and I often wish for reassurance from others that I am doing the right thing. The pressures and tendencies of the times we live in make these waters so difficult to navigate. And make us forget the importance of the search for beauty and truth for the sake of our young children. I feel lucky that reassurance does come to me when I use my senses to feel trust within myself and to know that I have followed my truth.

Choosing to simplify and choosing to see my children as beacons of light brings me home time and again to my senses.

EUTONY

By Ulrike Farnleitner

Helene Roitinger has trained in Eutony, and in music, as well as in Coaching and Supervision.

After a Eutony session, we are totally relaxed and connected anew with our bodies and spirit we are able to practise and to follow the path of integrating what is to what could be.

“A relaxed mind on a flexible body offers more solution than when tension is ruling”

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We all realised that we need not only physical, but also emotional touch - especially in difficult times. A warm conversation, a loving look, the discovery of a hopeful initiative can provide nourishing touch experiences for us, and thus bring us back a little closer to ourselves.

<https://www.eutonie-akademie.at> At present only in German available on her website, but a CD will be offered in English this autumn.

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KINDLING



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The Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Care and Education



Issue 40 - 2021

Theme: Diversity & Inclusivity
Festivals & more

The Journal
for Steiner
Waldorf
Early
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Care and
Education

Published twice yearly in the UK, available as printed copy or PDF (for worldwide subscription) KINDLING contains themed articles (Issue 39 and 40 are both on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) songs, stories, crafts, research, health, information, book reviews, news and more...

It is of interest to anyone concerned with the young child and Steiner Waldorf early childhood education and care.

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