

Raphael House

celebrating 25 years

1979 - 2004

CHRONICLE NO 1 5 MARCH 2004

Founding Member tells of the unfolding vision

On 17 September, 1977 at 193 Hill Road the first official meeting toward a Rudolf Steiner School in Wellington took place. Those present included Trudi Schladitz, Paul Denford & Gerald Richardson.

Trudi Schladitz was born in Austria, 26 May 1925, to anthroposophical, teaching parents. After training as a teacher herself, she joined the Frie Padagogische Verienigung; Rudolf Steiner teachers within the Swiss state system.

Then after 12 years teaching and 2 years studying speech & drama at Dornach, she came to Hohepa in the Hawkes Bay, and here she found herself doing curative eurythmy and dormitory work.

So in 1965 she returned to Switzerland to do the actual eurythmy training. After 4 years of study and with a full eurythmy qualification, she returned, this time to Wellington, where she longed for culture.

From her home in Kerikeri, Trudi takes up the story.

I came to Wellington and had to take a job, any job to earn a living for myself and my teenage daughter: factory working for 7 years; making candles for the Catholic Church; running a candle-shop; making gift-packs in a hanky factory; costume jewellery; book keeping..

I was a trained eurythmist and a trained Rudolf Steiner teacher and I had nowhere a possibility to act in my capacity. Not from the moment I arrived; not in this culture; not one that is really based on the spiritual life.

When I first walked through Wellington it was like a violent dream:

empty walls decorated only by coke advertisements; old brick buildings; concrete. Unbelievable! No unity in the whole city. I felt nothing was alive anymore.

In Switzerland architecture is always whole, everything is one. In Rome - it lifts you up. And that was missing and I remember thinking, what sort of building to put up? Because people had no idea - had to go the cheapest way and I wanted a proper building, especially one with a stage. That's why the first building has a stage, so you could open the doors and have an audience. (Now kindergartens one & two)

For me a stage was very important. That the children act is most important.

I joined the anthroposophical group where there was a tiny interest in eurythmy & I gave a little bit of eurythmy lessons for nothing.

Then with the encouragement of a visiting member of the Vorstaz, I began doing demonstrations in eurythmy - first in a house of one of the anthroposophical members and then a yoga centre.

I joined the community of students in Oriental Bay, a beautiful old house, and we did it up. Now we did eurythmy every night. And this was the start. Among my students were Paul Denford & Gerald Richardson who became teachers at the school.

When my parents came out to New Zealand, they saw how much we worked together and they bought us a house at 193 Hill Road, Belmont. At one stage we had seven people living there. There was a flat attached so we

had plenty of room for people staying to sleep over! Paul had to hunt for a room to do eurythmy - with enough space to move - and he found the Estuary school. So then I began to run public courses, still without any pay!

The school just sort of happened really. It was a question of: what do we do? We had lots of teachers, so we said "well we start a school". We didn't have one penny. Nothing. We decided we could have an exhibition of children's Rudolf Steiner work.

Many international Rudolf Steiner people had been my guests at Hill Road, so I wrote to them for school work.

For ourselves, we did things. Gerald did very good woodwork (wooden animals, a rocking horse); Paul did a dolls house and little dolls; I did rag dolls. Future mothers helped too. We had a climbing doll on 2 strings. There was a flap-dragon, which flapped and changed colour, green then red, and had to be hand-painted with gold decorations.

In a corner at Turnbull House, we had all our special things. People just loved it. There was a tremendous response. They wanted to know all about a school which was not existing yet.

It was written up as 'the future Wellington kindergarten Steiner School'.

As Wellington rent was too expensive, we repeated the exhibition in Lower Hutt. Around Christmas. We even had an anthroposophical Christmas tree with a live candle.

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The Unfolding Vision continues..

Later I became the kindergarten teacher at the school. I really loved these children. Then I taught handcraft because there was no-one else to do it. Then eurythmy, and German, of course, because children need a second language. As the school grew I kept on eurythmy.

It all happened because I wanted to start - I didn't know if it was a school - I wanted to create culture. True spiritual life. All proper culture originates from a spiritual impulse. All true culture was originally like that.

It didn't really matter for me if it was a school for children or a school for grown-ups. I wanted a school that must educate the parents.

It cannot really work otherwise.

That was my vision - with it culture - spirit which manifests in matter: whether it be a picture, a sculpture, or a teaching. Spirit reaching down into matter. Matter originating in spirit.

NEXT WEEK: WE FOLLOW THE STORY & FIND OUT HOW THE MONEY CAME IN AND THE FIRST VENUE WAS FOUND

Teachers want to apply the Steiner approach



Mrs Trudi Schladitz with some of the kindergarten toys made by the teachers in preparation for the proposed Rudolf Steiner school in Wellington. The toys are on display this week at Turnbull House and the exhibition includes children's work lent by Rudolf Steiner schools around the world.

December 12th 1978