



# The St Michael Steiner School

# NEWSLETTER

10th December 2010

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## Dates for Your Diary

### DECEMBER

Thur 16 End of term festival  
11-1

Fri 17 Term ends for all  
classes 12.30pm

### JANUARY

Mon 10 Staff INSET (no school)

Tue 11 School starts 8.15am

Thur 20 Kindergartens' parents'  
evening 7-8.30pm

Tue 25 Class 2&3 parents'  
evening 7-8.30pm

### FEBRUARY

Tue 1 Class 4&5 + 6&7 parents  
evening 7-8.30pm

Sat 5 "A Morning in the  
Classroom" workshop for  
parents.

Tue 8 Class 1 parents' evening  
7-8.30pm

Sat 12 Parents' workday (TBC)

Thur 17 School ends for half term

Fri 18 Staff INSET (No school)

Mon 28 Back to school

## Christmas Thoughts

On the first Monday of Advent, the Kindergarten children and their teachers and families sat in a garden of candlelight and sang of Mother Mary calling for the gifts of the Earth so that her child could come to birth. Mary called first to the Sun, the Moon and the stars - the elemental world - and then to the children themselves to open their hearts and offer their love.

As adults, perhaps we remember our own childhood experiences of Christmas - a time of magical warmth, expectation and love - and appreciate what a different world our own children are growing up in; how special and rare these magical experiences have become, unless we create them for ourselves.

In the city, we hardly ever really see the sky - the electric lights are too bright - but at this 'midnight' time of the year, the heavens seem to lie very close. Class 6&7 have had the opportunity to look at the night sky with more understanding as they have been studying astronomy during Advent. If you can, take the time to go somewhere where you can look up into the clear night sky, and you will see, almost directly overhead, the twins of Gemini and beside them Cancer and Leo; above us at Christmas is spread out a reflection of the height of Summer, shining out of the winter darkness; it reminds us that soon the days will begin to grow longer - from this time, the light begins to grow stronger again.

For the last five years, every morning during Advent, the children in the Lower School have gathered together to light the candles on the Christmas tree, to hear a Bible reading and to sing a carol together. In the first year, the oldest children were in Class Four and Five. These ten and eleven year olds stood up and read passages dotted with unfamiliar, archaic but beautiful vocabulary, while the younger children sat and listened, joining in with the chorus of a well-known carol every now and then. My own Class One at that time asked me when they would be able to read and I told them, "In a year or so" and so they waited. Regardless of the fact that they couldn't understand the readings or join in with most of the singing at that stage - things that seem essential to us as adults - they loved this daily ritual and sat happily in the midst of it all without contributing at all outwardly. Inwardly, however, they participated in everything. Now those children are in Class Five and can read as fluently and beautifully as those very grown up Class Fivers did all those years ago, while another Class One sits under the tree, looking forward to their turn.

On that first Advent Monday two weeks ago, there was just one tiny candle to light, but each day since, there has been one more, so that the tree grows brighter and brighter as we approach Christmas. The number of parents joining us each morning has also grown as word. It's wonderful, and perhaps surprising, that so many people are drawn to such a short and simple little ritual. As a child, it was things like this - carol singing and making food and decorations in preparation for Christmas - that I loved, that made this time of year so magical. What I remember is the feeling of anticipation, the feeling that something wonderful was approaching. Advent can remind us of one of the most precious gifts we can give our children, a cornerstone of Steiner education: the patience to wait for things to come in their own time.

Amanda Bell

## From The Early Years

Whilst many of you were enjoying our school's Advent Fair, staff from our Early Childhood team were attending the Steiner Waldorf Early Years Group (SWEYG) National Conference, this year held at Kings Langley School. With a theme of 'School Readiness', a large group of both early years and class teachers gathered to hear the three speakers who were Dr Bettina Lohn (Elmfield School doctor), Clara Aerts (Kindergarten teacher for 25 years from Belgium), and our Class 4/5 teacher, Amanda Bell.

Bettina opened by speaking about the physical and physiological aspects of child development in relation to school readiness. She described the areas of assessment that she would look at in the rising Class 1 children, which include health / physical maturity including teeth; vision/hearing; speech/language including rhyming, singing voice; fine and gross motor skills; drawing skills; social skills; emotional skills and cognitive skills.

We heard how physically, around six years of age, certain new developments happen – a longer neck, hip movement, arch on the foot drops, the child has to master their balance all over again. The child needs time to consolidate these changes and may be totally out of balance for a while.

Our second speaker, Clara, looked more in depth at the transformations that occur in the older kindergarten child, and how we can meet their needs, particular through partnership with parents. She spoke of three periods of development within the first seven years, each with its own primary focus. From birth, the baby develops primarily through her senses, the impressions that surround her helping to inform the sculpting of her body. A second period begins just before three years of age, when the world of feelings and relationships is explored during the first years of kindergarten. The third period, corresponding to the final year/s of kindergarten, is when a child learns about the world of morality. For example, a six year old can say, after a misdemeanour or accident: 'now we are going to make it good again'. This lawful order of development is true for all children. In addition, every child brings his own gifts, his own heredity, and particularly his own environment that will affect these archetypal developmental patterns. Some aspects of development may be held back, for example, whilst others may flourish, for a variety of reasons.

Clara confirmed the importance of the teacher-parent relationship, and described it as creating a chalice in which our observations are brought together to hold the growing child. To help us observe objectively, she suggested vows similar to those of entering a convent should be considered:

- Poverty – to empty our own images and to simply see the child as he or she is;
- Obedience – to be faithful to what we see – to be open, yet faithful;
- Truth – to be honest to what we observe and to ask inwardly, 'what can I do to help you? What is your question?'

Clara reminded us, as teachers and parents, that we are simply guides along the child's journey through life.

The importance of child observation is recognised within the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and we are delighted that the Easter Conference 2011 will be focussing on this topic.

We will bring you more from the Conference in our next newsletter.

Just a couple of weeks ago, we spent one long, cold Friday morning in our Forest soon after the cold weather descended. We found ice crystals on leaves and sticks and blades of grass sparkled white in the sunshine. However, Jack Frost caught our fingers and toes, despite our warm clothes, and so we have decided to stay in our warm kindergartens on Fridays until it gets just a little milder in the new-year.

The dark winter days were lit just last week with our Advent Spiral heralding the beginning of Advent. The simple spiral of lights that slowly grew as children and adults walked slowly around the spiral within an atmosphere of quiet reverence, brought a special mood for us all that we may like to remind ourselves of during our busy Christmas preparations. Thanks to all the parents who baked star biscuits and brought us greenery, for Class 6/7 and Mr Jacques for offering their spacious classroom, and for Ellie, who played her recorder so beautifully for us.

We would like to thank Leila for bringing us our Thanksgiving Festival, and the delicious pumpkin pies that we shared together.

Our end of term festival will take place on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> December. Full details have been given to you in a letter earlier this week and we look forward to seeing you all there. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all our team, to thank you for all your support this term, for your donations of fruits and vegetables, for your help in our festivals and at other times. We wish you all a peaceful Advent, a merry Christmas, and a joyous New Year.

Katie Sharrock  
On behalf of the Early Childhood team



## What's Happening in the Classrooms?

What a term! Class 1 have really formed together as a group now and we're settling into the routines nicely. We really enjoyed the little bit of snow that there was and spent one of our Wednesdays in King George's Park playing in the snow and making snow angels (see picture). We even made some snow flakes in the classroom which was very fun and made a nice snowy mess on the floor.

After finishing the quality of numbers and introducing number bonds to 10, we were happy to move on to learning the last of the letters. We've just about learnt all the vowels now and are very curious to know exactly what makes Princess Arora say 'a' (like in apple) when she looks out of her window onto the ground, but when she looks up and sees a big beautiful star shining over the castle she says 'Ah' with her arms outstretched. The same goes for Princesses Oriet, Uriella, Ella and Ingrid. What's on the ground that frightens them? I wonder. We've certainly learnt how to draw a five pointed star now!



We love opening up our advent calendar and seeing the little gnomes peek out from behind the windows. We are also watching Mary walk along the star path and the sky is filling up quickly with all the stars. Not many more days to go! All in all, it's been a wonderful first term even though we've had some illnesses, though I've heard that this is a very healthy sign. It's been a bit cold in the classroom, but we've stamped out the cold with lots of singing, clapping and skipping. We hope you all have a wonderful break over Christmas and catch up on some much needed rest.

Lara Koppers

### A WARNING FROM A FORMER PUPIL

Dear Parents of St. Michael's Steiner School,

Last night, I went to see Harry Potter & the Deathly Hallows Part 1. I was extremely shocked to see children as young as 8 watching in the same cinema. I respect that it is a 12A and this means it is deemed to be suitable for under 12s under adult supervision, but I really warn you that this is not the case. Depending on your child (some are less affected than others), I would say that it is thoroughly unsuitable for anyone under 11. This film includes suggested torture, an extremely frightening scene with a snake (really, don't underestimate it) and extraordinarily Nazi-like qualities. Of course, it is extremely dark in other areas, the references to Nazism that I found most disturbing. Those of you that know the story will know that there is a hunting-down of "mud bloods" in the film and this racism is really a theme that, however dressed up, is too disturbing for young children. I must also tell you that however well your child dealt with the previous films, you really can't be too careful with this one. I implore you to not take young children or at least to see it first so you can decide for yourselves.

Yours Sincerely, Billy Bell Ottewill  
[Billy is now in Class 11 at Michael Hall]

## END OF TERM FESTIVAL IN THE LOWER SCHOOL

On Thursday 16th December, the Lower school will be holding a festival of work for parents. Classes 2 - 7 will be showing some of the work they have been doing in the first part of the Main Lesson and in their music lessons. Class 1 will not be showing their work this term as we felt it was a bit too soon for them to be put 'on show'.

As usual, the festival will begin after break at approximately 11am in Class 2&3, continuing with Class 4&5 in their room and finally upstairs with Class 6&7, followed by some music from the St Michael's Orchestra and communal singing around the Christmas tree.

All parents are welcome at all the class presentations, but because space is limited, as usual, priority should be given to parents of the children in the class that is presenting.

Presentations will be between 15 and 20 minutes in each class with about 5 - 10 minutes for changeovers, but the timings are approximate. We will move on as soon as the previous class has finished, so please arrive in good time.

Past experience has taught us that it is not possible to prevent people from coming into the classrooms late without having to behave like - and be looked on as - policemen. In spite of requests not to, and advice about how disruptive it is for the children who are presenting, it always happens that at least one person comes in late, and one is enough. All we can do is ask you, for the sake of all the children, to please arrive in good time.

Please also note and respect that photography and recording of festivals of work is not allowed.

After the festival, the children should return to their classrooms to say goodbye and then the Social and Outreach group will be serving mince pies and seasonal soft drinks.

You are free to take your children home from 12.30pm. The school will close at 1pm.

Friday 17th December will be a half day - ending at 12.30pm - for all classes.

# NASA program puts aspiring engineer, Waldorf School graduate to work on Mars rover

Published: Sunday, December 05, 2010

His engineering talent has taken one local graduate all over the country; one day, his ideas could be flown in space.

Michael Maylahn, 19, a 2009 graduate of The Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs, recently led a team of engineering students in creating a prototype Mars rover at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala.

A sophomore at Santa Monica College in California, Maylahn was recommended by a teacher to participate in the project, in which just 89 students from across the country were accepted into NASA's National Community College Aerospace Scholars program after completing a rigorous months-long application process.

To qualify, Maylahn spent about 800 hours last summer completing four web-based research assignments in which he drew up a plan for a hypothetical robotics mission to Mars — in addition to holding down a full-time job and taking an online class.

His plan — including a financial proposal, timeline and sketch of the rover — was accepted, and the process culminated in Maylahn flying from California to Alabama for the three-day, hands-on experience at the NASA center earlier this fall.

There, he led an 11-member team of students from throughout the U.S. to put their rover plan into action, with only 30 hours to get it all done. They competed against 33 other students in Alabama, while a separate group was sent to

compete at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

"We had to create a business model for a robotics firm that would hypothetically create and sell a Mars rover to NASA for a mission," Maylahn said. "Then we were given a box of robotics parts and actually built the rover."

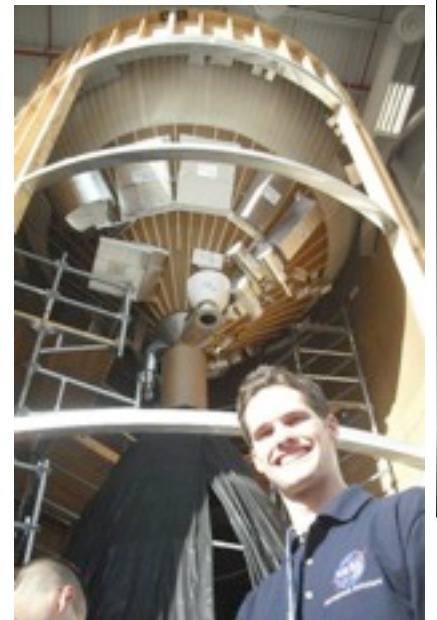
Maylahn tapped into his natural leadership abilities to encourage team bonding, which is what he believes gave his team the edge to win the competition.

"I divvied up the tasks and helped people if they needed help. The most important part was briefing everyone every couple of hours so they knew what everyone else was doing. As a result, it brought our team close together," Maylahn said.

The "think outside the box" mantra of his Waldorf School education also played a key role in his success as the team leader, Maylahn said.

Though his forté has always been math and science, Maylahn said he was grateful to his teachers at the Waldorf School for helping him strengthen his weaker areas, like writing and art.

"That made me more well-balanced," he said. "The more well-balanced you are, the more things you're able to achieve. I also feel like I have a really good idea of who I am, and at 19 years old, I feel like most of my peers don't have that."



Ultimately, Maylahn hopes to combine his love for math and science with his natural leadership abilities and one day run his own robotics firm.

"I feel like I earned so much from this experience, (and got) a glimpse of what I want to do in my career," he said.

MAREESA NICOSIA, The Saratogian



### ACCOMMODATION FOR VISITORS

Occasionally we have students, advisors, therapists or speakers, who do not live in London, come to our school. Often we need to find a place for them to stay for the night so that they can join us for our early starts. If you have a room available and are happy to have lodgers there from time to time for mostly one night at a time, and with plenty of notice, please let us know.

### FREE SCHOOLS UPDATE

The search for new premises for the school continues. If you see any empty or available buildings, let Katie or me know. We will pass the information on to Lara Newman, our contact at 'Partnership for Schools', and she will investigate for us.

Amanda Bell, for the College

### Outstanding Fees - please pay now!

#### Fee invoices may be paid either:

- 1 Annually in advance by September 10th or:
- 2 Termly by the first day of each term or:
- 3 By regular monthly Standing Order commencing in September with financial commitment to be met in full not later than the following August 1st.

Cheques should be made payable to:  
The St Michael Steiner School Ltd.

#### Information for BACS payments:

Account name:  
THE ST MICHAEL STEINER SCHOOL LTD.  
Account number: 65098413  
Bank: THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK  
Sort code: 08-92-99

Please quote your family name as a reference so that we can identify your payment.

### Education News Clippings

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship office sends out regular media clippings about education issues to anyone who is interested. Some of them are controversial and not all of them are complimentary about Steiner education, but we're all grown up aren't we? So if you are interested and not scared of a little criticism, email Jasmin at [forjasmin@googlemail.com](mailto:forjasmin@googlemail.com) and she will forward them to you.

### Travel Costs - Donations Requested

Hannele, our Eurythmy teacher who works with our Kindergartens to Class 4/5, travels from Bristol to our school for one day a week. Her weekly travel costs of £30-£40 take much of her salary, and we would like to ask for donations towards covering these costs. Donations may be given to Andrea. To help cover these travel costs, Hannele is offering a Parents Eurythmy session each week – see below.

### Parents Eurythmy

Every Monday from January 17<sup>th</sup> from 1.15pm to 2pm. A minimum number of parents would be needed for a successful session. (*Childcare cannot be provided*)

The fee is £5 or £3 concessions.

Please ring or e-mail Andrea at school to book.

**The Management Team** meets approximately every two weeks to monitor and co-ordinate the School Support Teams. If Support Team members have items for our meetings, please put them in the box in reception or email them to Jin Yee Lim at [j.lim@liminaires.co.uk](mailto:j.lim@liminaires.co.uk)

### Would you like to see this newsletter in colour and detail?

This Newsletter - as well as back issues - is available in full colour on our website at [www.stmichaelsteiner.wandsworth.sch.uk](http://www.stmichaelsteiner.wandsworth.sch.uk)

### Newsletter Contributions

The next newsletter will be distributed on Friday 10th December. Deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 8th December  
We are always keen to publish contributions from parents in the newsletter. If you have something interesting/funny/controversial/moving/profound to share, however small, please send it to me.  
Email please, to: [amandabell@mac.com](mailto:amandabell@mac.com)

# Community Page

Please note that the school does not endorse or recommend, either in general or in particular, anything offered in the Community Pages and parents are advised to check the qualifications of practitioners or people offering services here.

## **A New Year Singing Workshop: Gregorian & Taizé Chants**

**Saturday January 29<sup>th</sup> 2011:  
11am – 3.30pm**

*with Delia & Andreas Rosenboom  
In the chapel at St. Michaels Convent,  
56 Ham Common, Richmond, Surrey, TW10  
7JH*

- ~Heart-opening harmonies~
- ~Stunningly beautiful melodies~
- ~Chants, rounds & songs in 4-parts~
- ~Songs that centre, open & connect~
- ~A nourishing singing experience~
- ~All taught by ear~
- ~All welcome~

**Cost: £26 if received BY JAN 13<sup>th</sup> or £30 if  
booked later. Refreshments provided.**

Please bring lunch & a bottle of water.  
To book, please send contact details & a cheque  
(payable to D. Rosenboom) to Delia at: 33 Upper  
Close, Forest Row, E. Sussex, RH18 5DS  
St. Michaels Convent is reachable by no. 65 bus from  
Richmond or Kingston.

**Enquiries: 01342 825031  
Or: [www.deliarosenboom.co.uk](http://www.deliarosenboom.co.uk)**



## **Taizé Chants by candle-light**

**A pre-Christmas singing workshop  
Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 7 – 9 pm  
St. Richards Church, Ashburnham Rd, Ham,  
TW10**

**Come and learn, sing and bathe in beautiful  
rounds and songs from the Taize Monastery and  
other sacred traditions.  
Uplifting, nourishing melodies and heart-opening  
harmonies, all taught by ear.  
All welcome. No experience necessary. Cost: £12**

**Bookings & Enquiries:  
Delia Rosenboom: 01342 825031  
Or visit [www.deliarosenboom.co.uk](http://www.deliarosenboom.co.uk)**

*Delia is an Alexander Technique teacher & choir leader,  
& a member of the Natural Voice Practitioners Network  
(NVPN)*

### **To whom it may concern,**

Me, Zsuzsa Sallay (21) and my boyfriend, Álmos Szabó (20) are looking for summerjobs in England. We live in Budapest, I study Medicin, Almos is doing his A-level this year, then he is going to start academic studies next year. We both learnt in a Waldorf school in Budapest.

I speak English, German and French relative fluently but not perfectly, Almos speaks English and German, but not on a high level. We both would like to practice our language knowledge and get some new life-experiences by working in England. We are planning to travel around in Europe, we would like to earn some money for this trip as well.

We are looking for jobs preferably with lodgement. We would help in the household or in the garden, with children or older people, in stores or in offices, in bars or restaurants, or something else, somewhere else... We are open and flexible!

We would be very happy if someone could help us!

Our email addresses: [neo-na@hotmail.com](mailto:neo-na@hotmail.com); [almosszabo@gmail.com](mailto:almosszabo@gmail.com)

# *A Christmas Carol*

*by Charles Dickens*

*"story telling  
at its best"*

*"colourful,  
captivating,  
magical"*

**performed by Matthew Dexter**

Mon 20, Tue 21 Dec **Rudolf Steiner Theatre** 7.30pm £ 10/8con  
35 Park Rd, NW1 6XT 0207 284 2770  
Baker Street tube