Like swelling waves that flood the land,
A green spring-tide is surging, streaming.
Saps flow, touched by a mighty hand
Whose force we feel, though dimly dreaming.

God weaves amidst the radiant light.
Their helpers work in joyful bliss.
With their creating we unite
When we, with open hearts, behold all this.

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

Welcome to the May 2024 newsletter!

Snails move slowly, and yet they move, carrying their homes on their backs. They live in a magical spiral house, and leave a silver trail behind them. We may not see them travel, and yet we can see where they have been. We have been fortunate to witness a rare sight recently: the Aurora Borealis. Another name they have is "Merry Dancers." That is just what I experienced that Friday night: filaments of light, woven into sheets of gauzy fabric, dancing in the night sky. Did I actually see these? Or did I feel them dance within me? I asked myself this next day when I saw photos of the greens and purples that cameras recorded. I learned that the magnificent colours of the aurora are not really visible to the naked eye. We simply do not have the receptors for them. It takes a device between the observer and the phenomenon to make these visible to us, to amplify them. "Newer phone cameras are more sensitive to light than our eyes, they’re sometimes able to capture auroras we can’t see." Just as there are sounds beyond our human hearing range, e.g., so low that only dogs can hear, or that can heal our bodies with inaudible vibrations, there are lights that we cannot see. Despite the limitations of our senses, we may still perceive these subtle changes in atmosphere.

The solar storm that brought us the recent Aurora was palpable in the days before and after its manifestation. Just as our old festivals (e.g. solstices) are generally three-day events. The day before the Aurora, I was working with the Rowan tree that grows by the gate into my field, creating a flower essence from its particularly wonderful blossom this year. To do this, I undertake a Goethean study of the flower. I recall up all I know about it already, its history, folklore, traditional uses in medicine and practical crafts. I record what I can see, smell, taste, etc. I draw details, I draw its visible phases of growth. I draw my imaginations, and eventually I find myself in a kind of dreamtime where the object of my study begins to speak to me in a singularly poetic voice. I lend it my own voice to speak, to sing, to tell its story, and I do the inner alchemical work of transformation,
We welcome your contributions to the newsletter

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

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

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

Please send all contributions to:
Ruth Marshall,
email: nc.blathu@gmail.com
by Friday 19th July 2024

We are living in strange and challenging times. War, hunger, environmental catastrophe, homelessness, destruction... We dare not close our eyes and ears to this news, but need instead to find ways of making sense of it, of our own existence here and now. For here and now is all we have. At Bealtaine, as at all our traditional festivals, we stand at the gateway into a new season, and each gateway is an opportunity for growth and ongoing transformation. This moment is powerful: the moment of transformation. Wherever we are, whenever we are, it is always now, always the point at which we can choose, a moment of transformation.

In this issue, we offer you a rich variety of routes to transformation: storytelling; listening to the voices of others, some of whom live in war zones; creativity; language; and perhaps encourage you along the path of the snail, slowly but surely, leaving a trail of silver light behind you for the children to follow.

In warmth and peace,
Ruth Marshall

BLÁTHÚ National Coordinator
E: nc.blathu@gmail.com
Tel: 089 241 1816

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IASWECE

BLÁTHÚ is a recognised member of IASWECE, the Internati 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/
NEWS & DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

PUPPETRY - a BLÁTHÚ CPD workshop with Ulrike Farnleitner at Dublin Steiner Kindergarten on Saturday 15th June 2024

- See advert on page 18.

To book: https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/puppetry-tickets-904601967837?aff=oddtdtcreator

• Explore how to involve children in puppetry and how to choose the right story
• Practice setting the scene, with attention to detail, and our senses of aesthetics, balance, warmth and joy
• Explore the importance of memory skills and learning stories by heart
• Practise using music to build a bridge between scenes, using simple instruments
• Stretch and enliven our imagination muscles
• Strengthen our courage and confidence to keep creating puppet shows for the joy of your group of children, after the workshop is over

Conference 2024:
"The Active, the Artistic, and the Attentive”
28th & 29th September
Limerick School of Art & Design

The 2024 Conference is a collaboration with IWEA (Irish Waldorf Education Association), a new body representing Steiner schools in Ireland. BLATHU members will have a chance to see their services within the wider context of Steiner Education in Ireland. Programme is still at a planning stage, but further details will be available shortly, once speakers are confirmed.

Of particular interest to Blathu members, will be the “An Ciorcal” workshops with Marguerite Devanne. Please check our website: www.blathu.org for updates.

WhatsApp for kindergarten staff

In response to interest expressed during visits to kindergartens, we have set up a WhatsApp group for kindergarten teachers to aid communication and supportive sharing of ideas for use in your services. If you would like to join this group, please contact Ruth: nc.blathu@gmail.com / 089 2411816

What’s currently available for members on the BLÁTHÚ website?

• 3 talks with Nancy Mellon on storytelling
• Nancy Mellon on how story can aid communication with colleagues
• Irish rhymes and games with Linda Grant
• Tools for self-care and building resilience through breath, optimism and gratitude
• Our Festivals publication & Team Meetings Guide are available as downloadable PDFs
• List of books available to borrow *

These can all be viewed in the Members pages of our website.
Please keep an eye on the website for latest news, updates, uploads: www.blathu.org
You will need to register, and then log in as a member to access this material.
If you encounter any problems with this, please contact Ruth : email: nc.blathu@gmail.com

BLÁTHÚ Members’ Library *

Please check our website for a list of books available to borrow from BLÁTHÚ. We have a growing list of useful books full of games, songs, ideas, stories, etc as well as pedagogical advice for those working in Steiner early years setting.
If you borrow, we will post out to you. All you have to do is pay the postage to return the books to us.
Contact Ruth at nc.blathu@gmail.com for more information
Self-care and Self-compassion in Work and Life

The key to self-care, said Kathleen Fanning at our recent CPD workshop, is to build one’s resilience: a kind of bounce-back-ability. Kathleen gave us three key practices that help to build our resilience muscles, namely: breath awareness; optimism; and gratitude. You can listen to Kathleen speak about this on the members pages of our website: www.blathu.org

Of course, there may be external circumstances that we feel powerless to change, but what we can manage is our own responses and reactions to these.

Self-compassion entails treating ourselves with the same care and warmth that we might offer a friend in need. Being warm and understanding towards ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate. We can do this by showing kindness to ourselves; talking to ourselves the way we might talk to a friend; listening to our needs, and communicating these kindly but honestly.

In a workplace, everyone needs to feel appreciated, not just for their efforts, but also respected for our common humanity. When this is lacking, it can be challenging to give the extra input that is often required. But we can encourage and build an atmosphere of emotional honesty, where it is safe to communicate about issues that arise.

At the End of the Day: A Mirror of Questions

What dreams did I create last night?  
Where did my eyes linger today?  
Where was I blind?  
Where was I hurt without anyone noticing?  
What did I learn today?  
What did I read?  
What new thoughts visited me?  
What differences did I notice in those closest to me?  
Whom did I neglect?  
Where did I neglect myself?  
What did I begin today that might endure?  
How were my conversations?  
What did I do today for the poor and the excluded?  
Did I remember the dead today?  
When could I have exposed myself to the risk of something different?  
Where did I allow myself to receive love?  
With whom today did I feel most myself?

What reached me today? How did it imprint?  
Who saw me today?  
What visitations had I from the past and from the future?  
What did I avoid today?  
From the evidence – why was I given this day?  

by John O'Donohue
During our time together in Ljubljana we worked on many themes, and it was not only interesting and thought-provoking, but also soul-nourishing to meet representatives from almost the whole world. It seemed as if we had met not just for four days, but for a year! There was a wonderful intensity present. The days were filled with content to reflect on, supported by study, and with all the occurring conversations, we felt both challenged and enriched at the same time. One of my colleagues said: “Our time together in Ljubljana was one of music, spring sunshine and meeting, and time to find the “in between”!”

Ljubljana is a lovely city with a river and a castle, beautiful buildings and a great concert hall. As a council, we not only had our daily meeting in the Steiner school in Ljubljana, but also enjoyed an outing to the lake Bled where we crossed the water with rowing boats, and enjoyed the view of mountains in the distance still covered with snow. At our outing we were invited to visit a Steiner kindergarten where we met many of our Slovenian colleagues. My impression was that in all the different kindergartens there is a special sense of beauty present, and a love and care for the environment of the little child is cared for.

Steiner Waldorf education in Slovenia started 32 years ago. Schools, kindergartens and the association all work together. They meet very regularly and hold common conferences. There are 9 kindergartens, 5 primary school and a high school. These schools serve approximately 1500 children. Due to lots of enthusiasm and skills, they also established a School of Music 20 years ago, and half of all the children in these schools learn an instrument. There are also a number of non-member schools and kindergartens.

From its beginning, the Waldorf movement has had a very good connection to the local communities and government, with good working conditions. As times have changed, this cooperation seems to be challenged by the “Zeitgeist”, the tendency towards controlling. The urge however, is to stay independent and to stand up for this timely and modern education that supports the whole human being through all stages of development. There are approximately 2 million inhabitants in Slovenia. There are other pedagogies with whom the Waldorf movement is in ongoing co-operation, but the Waldorf movement is the biggest in the country.

In our study group time, we worked most effectively with the so-called “seven conditions” that one can find in the book “How to Know Higher Worlds” (aka Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment) by Rudolf Steiner.” These so-called conditions not only prepare each human being who starts to practice with some more strength, but also
builds pathways to a renewed relationship to the Earth and Cosmos. When we spoke further, Philip Reubke, from the Goetheanum, mentioned that the root for some destruction might lie in the human soul. So what better than to create a loving relationship with the cosmos and a health equilibrium in our body?

Clara Aerts spoke about the “HERMMES” project - “Holistic Education Resilience Media Majority in Educational Settings”. Their intention is to develop a media education plan for settings. Media is, by the way, also sand and other materials, not only digital. This project is not only for Waldorf settings. One core question was mentioned: how to develop a media education plan and not to undermine the health of children. I would invite you to go to the website https://hermmes.eu and see for yourselves.

In our meeting we also spoke about the current crises in the world that children and all of us have to go through at this time. How to turn the challenge into positive experience is one of the core questions. What are our personal impulses and questions?

We heard from representatives from Israel and the Ukraine their life situations and their daily work with children in kindergarten. In Kiev, for example, it is the daily challenge to go with the children into the shelter when the sirens sound. The kindergarten teacher feels that her task is to stay calm and to maintain the daily rhythm with the children, i.e. celebrating a birthday, or drawing, or telling a story, and so on. Of course they never know for how long they will need to be in the shelter with the children.

In Israel, each 18 year old person, male or female, has to serve in the army for three years. I noticed the pain in our Israeli representative when she spoke about the past situations that traumatised so many. One of the responses in the country was a total freeze when 100,000 people need to move to hotels and accommodation with nothing more than their clothes on after an attack that shocked them and the world. Her daily hope is that one day everyone turns towards peace and love. “Each of us has to become an ambassador for peaceful image in the world, we need seeds for healing.”

I was really grateful that we had time and space to listen to the burning issues that my colleagues from around the world brought. We shared tears and laughter, and how important it is to meet, to exchange, and to show compassion and empathy.

**Supporting IASWECE:**
We also spoke about the fundraising that needs to be intensified. One can send donations direct to IASWECE https://iaswece.org/home/ if you wish. These donations will be used in the best way for projects around the world; very often for training and support for kindergartens in need.
Thoughts about creativity in Kindergarten

by Ulrike Farnleitner

During the spring IASWECE meeting in Slovenia I met my colleagues and some agreed to answer a few questions in a snapshot interview style.

Cathy McFarland represents New Zealand. We met in the very lovely Kindergarten garden in Ljubljana and had some time to talk.

‘What are your thoughts on Creativity?’
‘I think play is the tap root from which all creativity springs. The artist plays with colour and light, the musician plays with sound and silence, the poet plays with words and literature and children play with anything they can lay their hands on, if we let them, as long as there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose. No specific outcome, it needs to be spontaneous and there always needs to be an element of risk. For us as teachers in the kindergarten, we look at the art of living. Creativity means to be spontaneous in the moment, artistic while being in the moment, down to earth and using the material we have got.’

‘What does it meant when you say no desired outcome?’
‘Normally, play is captured for a learning objective such as maths, science social skills and so on. For play to be truly creative, there needs to be nothing like that. Just free play. The child is free, and the teacher observes what the child does in the moment.’

‘Is everyday a creative day?’
‘Not necessarily. God always give you another chance, and that’s called tomorrow. Your material is your children, and they need as unpredictable as possible. Working with what you have got, working in the moment with your understanding and expertise of child development. For example, when children do painting, it’s not in order for them to be artists, but to develop a soul capacity. When they are learning to lay the colours next to each other, it’s going to develop into a capacity to have a conversation, which isn’t just laying one colour on top of the other, but actually creating a picture. Every artistic activity we do in the kindergarten develops a soul capacity for later life.’

Jaqueline Baumgartner IASWECE representative from Switzerland shared her thoughts.

What is essential when we look at creativity and the young child?

‘If a person is creative, one could say that this activity springs from his life forces, because these are the creative forces in the physical. It is the etheric body or life body that accompanies and supports the children in their development and in their imitation. This process is formed by rhythmical formative forces.

When a small child draws, doodles, actually she cannot yet express herself in any other way and we think she is ‘just’ doodling. When children are ready to draw figures and other forms it is appreciated differently by adults because we can recognize it more easily. But in fact, it is no longer so creative. Being creatively creative is the preliminary stage of thinking. Children are inwardly imagining. While playing with simple toys that are “unfinished”, for example the items in the baskets in kindergarten, logs, stones, shells, nature material, or the simple doll, the child needs much more inner activity to add their own creative forces to the unfinished material in order to make it whole. That means that it’s vital what the child does with and ‘thinks’ about the knotted cloth, doll, when they play with it. In actual fact they do this through their own creative power. They imagine everything internally. Before the age of 2.5 years, however, the young child lives creatively and is not yet able to express this outwardly in the same way as a five-year-old child.'
The very young child is still fully active, but the child does not yet have such an imagination, it learns from the world, by experiencing sense impressions, all that a child sees and feels and hears and more. She lives in and with creative powers and when they get older they slowly distance themselves. This is the time when the child's imagination comes alive and the child turns a piece of wood into a train, a horse, a boat and more. The young children are 'realists', up to about 2.5 to 3 years old. They are fascinated by the real things. The vacuum cleaner, the drill, the tractor. That is what they want to handle and to play with. The so called 'pretend' play slowly emerges. Imagination is vital to acting, imitating, and the capacity of thinking and learning.

Aurelia Udo de Haes who represents Norway, answered the question

**How to kindle creativity in Kindergarten during the day?**

“It is everywhere during the whole day when you work with the children. And it is important for us adults to work with our own creativity, not only the singing and painting but especially to meet and *work with the unexpected*. You really have to be creative when you meet the unexpected! The children are of course very creative in their play, that is the most important part. We also have to embrace their activity in the between. For example, we adults are expecting from them to wait for the food. Sitting around the table and it might take a little longer than they have the patience for, and they make some noises with their feet or hands and of course that is spreading around in the group and it can be contagious and it might sound to us adults chaotic. We might like to stop it immediately, but that is also the humorous way of living: children create a play out of the situation. Everything is play to them. Just waiting, is boring. And of course, we have to be creative ourself to get them back into what we have planned with a little story or song. That is our daily challenge.”

“To offer them form again?”

“Yes exactly. Now we start anew. Or when they are going outside and changing in the garderobe into their outside gear. Imagine 18 children putting their clothes in the boot room: it might become a very lively situation, and again they can make their play out of it. Their boots might form a train or whatever. And we adults are expecting them to put them on their feet and get ready. And suddenly a play is going on. A learning opportunity. We have to let go a bit of our control. Children like to make up their own rhymes and songs and verses and very often they make fun out of it. So we support their creativity while we deal with the unexpected also in a creative form. This is our daily task, to teach out of joy, observation and with the unexpected”
A CONVERSATION WITH NANCY MELLON

By Linda Grant

LG: Nancy Mellon, you are very welcome to Tuamgraney, here in east Clare and to our conversation today about storytelling.

NM: Well, thank you. It’s a great pleasure to be here.

LG: One of the questions I want to ask you is what has happened in the move away from traditional oral storytelling to visual storytelling (screen media)? Today stories are told more through visual images, through TV, film, and the internet. What has been lost in that move away from traditional storytelling?

NM: Such an important question for all kindergarten teachers in the whole world and for parents who are raising young children.

Because young children are building their bodies, every cell, every aspect has to be built, it is such a process of growing while they are sleeping and waking and going through their daily rhythms. All creatures have daily rhythms coming to rest at the end of the day, hopefully the child of today has such rhythms and enter into deep slumber to restore themselves when the day is done. They are building themselves out of these great rhythms which we are all constantly bathed in just as the birds and the flowers are.

Without whole human beings, adults to meet this growing child, to hold this child in their arms of care, without the warmth that comes from the adult human body and soul of love and devotion to the child; the child is at a very important loss. No matter how brilliant these videos are and there is so much available to children on screens, if screens are available to them, much of it is not particularly good for them. The child’s ability to discern what is good for them on the internet is not well developed, so there is a great opportunity in this 21st century for those of us who are loving these children and have the responsibility for them, to develop within ourselves the confidence and the clarity about why the child needs us to be the storyteller. With our feet on the ground where the child can feel that we are here with them. We have grown a whole body, that we have eyelashes and ears and an adult chin, that our hands are alive in their presence, holding and shaping what we are saying with our words, inviting them to be close to us so they can feel our warmth, they can feel our life body.

These days, with all the inputs from the computer world which can be so astonishing, it is easy for us as adults to lose our sense of ourselves as more than just our physical body. Around our physical body, and around the child’s physical body, there is this other body that is invisible; it is holding them and giving them this sense of life. The voice of the storyteller comes out of this life body, feeding the storyteller and giving them the capacity to form words, put them together and to form a narrative that has a beginning, a middle and an end.

All this comes from the storyteller’s breath, their warmth, and their relationship with the whole rhythmic life body that is around them. This adult life body is connected with other great rhythms that go all the way out into the planetary spheres, into the stars, into the great circulations which are constantly holding and breathing our earthly world. Children are cosmic beings! They come from the stars, they come down through the planetary spheres, down through the moon gate, down through the colours and care of these mysterious rhythms. They descend into the human body here (Nancy places her hands on her womb). When they are on this earth from the cosmic world, if we lose our touch with this vast life body that is guiding and holding us as human adults, then of course the children are at a loss.
If they are given screens as a substitute for this connection with an adult who is really holding these great rhythms, then they are at the mercy of all these shifts and cuts and clicks and bytes and so forth. These actually go into their body and turn up as asthma, digestive problems, and all sorts of nervous disturbances that children present at school. We then have to try to soothe and balance that through our own presence.

LG: Would you say something about the introduction of images (on screens) before language is developed?

NM: Children are developing their visual sense, their ability to see what’s out there as well as what’s within them. That is a long and beautiful process. They see a leaf fall from a tree, they go into a state of wonder, ‘how did that happen?’ In their dreaminess within them, what they see when they look at you, their teacher can be different to what you or I see. The young child can sometimes see something of your life body around you or something within your soul that disturbs them or something that they love and makes them want to be close to you. We want to take care of this visionary capacity of a young child.

The developing imagination of the child can be affected by too many fixed images on the screen for the child to handle. These days there is a flooding in of visual images, more than children have ever had to deal with. They might have had a few books to look at in the warmth of the mother or father’s presence. Nowadays the visual display of so many images on screens that can go so quickly, can be so strange and full of distortions. That is why we want to nurture in our kindergartens all over the world, a peaceful warm kind of storytelling which helps to really nourish the child’s imagination, their ability to patiently look at the falling leaf, their ability to wonder at the sky with astonishment, to hear the words that match what they noticed when they were outside. Through the way that we speak about what they saw and experienced outside, to help them to gradually build their sense of being in touch with what surrounds them. And to inwardly, more gently (than when on a screen), to develop their relationship with their own inner seeing, their own imagination. This is a very gradual process.

We need to keep very strong care of the storytelling time in our kindergartens. In our households, parents need to understand why the child needs the storytelling time, to be the ‘storymother’ or the ‘storyfather,’ patiently and regularly, with their young growing child. They absolutely need that. We need to help parents and we as teachers, to understand why the growing child needs us to be present for them in this way.

In a future article, Linda’s conversation with Nancy continues, with Nancy’s guidance on fairytales and the relationship of the adult with the child.

Snail, snail,
Shoot out your horn,
And tell us it will be
a fine day, the morn.

- Scottish traditional rhyme

Snail, snail, come put out your horn,
To-morrow’s the day to shear the corn.

- an English children’s rhyme

Oh how slowly, oh how slowly,
comes the snail along his track..
Seven days he takes to travel
just a little way and back.

Oh how slowly, oh how slowly,
through the grass he makes his trail.
Gracious! I would run much faster
If I were a little snail!

- from Germany
It is now time to renew your membership with Bláthú for the year 2023-2024.

As the national organisation for Steiner Waldorf Early Years in Ireland, BLÁTHÚ is committed to upholding standards of Steiner pedagogy in early years education and care. BLÁTHÚ is committed to promoting the growth and development of Steiner Waldorf services in Ireland, and aims to support our member services to maintain the quality of care and education that they provide. 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 Steiner Waldorf Early Years services and pedagogy.

Proposed changes to membership requirements:
Annual membership will now run from 1st September to 31st August each year, to reflect the school year and to assist a smooth membership renewal process.
We are proposing to introduce a number of minimum standards, which will be implemented over the next three years.

Standard of Training:
We would wish to see that each member service have, or be currently working towards having, at least 1 fully-trained Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood teacher.

Commitment to CPD:
Completing a minimum of 2 relevant CPD workshops per service per year. Participation by staff members on a Steiner Early Childhood training or a foundation course in Anthroposophy, in Ireland or abroad, is also considered as CPD.

Representation at Annual Conference:
Each member service to send at least 1 staff representative to BLÁTHÚ’s annual conference.

Mentoring:
We recommend a minimum of 1 mentoring visit per service per school year; plus a follow-up zoom call within 6 weeks of the mentoring visit. BLÁTHÚ offers a considerable discount if a service commits to a series of 3 pre-booked visits.

Membership Options:

**Full Membership** is open to Kindergartens/Early Years Services as organisations which 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

**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

**New or small initiatives** such as parent & toddler groups can take out a reduced membership, which means they can avail of full benefits with one person receiving correspondence & discounts. Cost: €35 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: €23 p/a

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?

**Benefits to All Members**
- Join with members nationwide strengthening Steiner Education in 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
- The assurance of quality

So, what do we do now - how do we renew our BLÁTHÚ membership?
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 www.blathu.org
**FOR THE SEASONS - FESTIVALS CALENDAR**

*Ruth Marshall*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Festival / Event</th>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>Bealtaine/May Day - the May Bush</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>Moveable 20/21st 24th</td>
<td>Whitsun Summer Solstice Midsummer/St John’s Day</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td>Last Sunday in July</td>
<td>Garland Sunday / Reek Sunday</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>Early August</td>
<td>Lughnasadh / Lammas / First Fruits / Harvest</td>
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**AMHRAIN AGUS RANNTA - SAMHRADH**

*Collected by Linda Grant*

**Two poems by Gabriel Rosenstock**

**Bóin Dé**

Tá boinéad nua ar an mbóin Dé
Inniu a céad lá breithe!
Tháinig an bheach: “Ó is fear liom é
Ná bláth bán ar bharr sceiche!”

Translation:

**Ladybird**

The ladybird has a new bonnet,
Today on her first birthday!
The bee came : “Oh I prefer that
To a white flower on top of the thorn bush!”

https://soundcloud.com/utaata/15-boin-de-1?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

**Báisteach**

Titeann an bháisteach
Plip-plopli-plup!
Ar dhionta na cathrach
A leithéid de thrup!
Plip-plopli-plup!
A leithéid de thrup!
Plipí
Plipité
Ploplití
Plopli!

The rain falls
Plippity- ploppety- plopl
On the roofs in the city
Such a din!
Plippity- ploppety- plopl
Etc

FOR THE SEASONS: RANNTA

Feicim ar an bhealach, bláthanna ag fás, Eitleáin ar eitilt, báidíní ar snámh.

Tógaim liom mo liathróid, buicéad agus spád, Deánaim caisleán láidir thios ag bun na trá.

Translation:
The Beach
I see on the way, Flowers growing, Aeroplanes flying, Boats sailing.

I take my ball with me, Bucket and spade, I make a strong castle, Down at the bottom of the beach.

An Fhearthainn
‘Bhuf, bhuf,’ arsa an madr ‘Mi-ádh,’ arsa an cat ‘Rachaidh muid abhaile Tá an fhearthainn ag teacht!’

‘Cuac, cuac,’ arsa an lacha ‘Tá mise sa chró Lig amach mé faoin fhearthainn, Lig amach mé go beo.’

Translation:
The Rain
‘Wooff wooff’, says the dog ‘Meow’, says the cat ‘We will go home The rain is coming!’

‘Quack, Quack’, says the duck ‘I’m in the shed Let me out under the rain, Let me out, quickly’.

Bogaimis ár gcos
Siúil leat, siúil leat, siúil leat mar is cóir Siúil leat, siúil leat, ar an bhealach mhóir

Léim leat, léim leat, is cos amháin san aer. Léim leat, léim leat, léim go hard sa spéir.

Léim leat, léim leat, léim dá chos in airde. Léim leat, léim leat, tú féin is do chairde.

Gread leat, gread leat, gread do chos go trom. Gread leat, gread leat, gread chomh gasta liom.

Siúil leat, siúil leat, ar bharraicíní na gcos Ag imeacht linn abhaile, bogaimis ár gcos.

Translation:
Let’s move our feet
Walk on, walk on, walk on as you should Walk on, walk on, on the big pathway

Hop, hop, with one foot in the air. Hop, hop, hop high in the sky.

Jump, Jump, jump with 2 feet up. Jump, jump, you and your friends.

Stamp, stamp, stamp your feet heavily. Stamp, stamp, stamp as I can.

Walk on, walk on, on your tippy-toes Going home together, let’s move our feet.

From the website: Dánta agus Rainn Gaeloidechas https://gaeloidechas.ie
1. Máirín Bhán was a lovely girl ...

2. She lived in a tall castle ...

3. A wicked fairy put her to sleep ...

4. She slept for a hundred years ...

5. A prince came on his horse one day ...

6. The prince awakened Máirín Bhán ...

7. The prince began to dance with her ...

8. Everyone there was dancing ...

This is the Irish version of the traditional song ‘There was a Princess Long Ago,’ and it uses the same tune. It can be included in an end of year ring time. Fadó, fadó: Long long ago

1. Máirín Bhán was a lovely girl ...

2. I gcaisleán ard a chónaigh sí a chónaigh sí a chónaigh sí

3. Chuir siog olc a codladh í ....

4. Ar feadh céad bliain a chodail sí

5. Tháinig prionsa ar a chapall lá ....

6. Dhúisigh an prionsa Máirín Bhán ....

7. Thosaigh sé ag rince léi ....

8. Bí gach duine ansin ag rince ....

Listen to Linda Grant sing Máirín Bhán: https://on.soundcloud.com/ZoaMXqn7pARpjd8

Fáinleog mé

Fáinleog mé ag eitilt san aer
Tháinig mé ón Aifraic i gcéin
Ar ais aris chuig an seansciobóil
Mar a rugadh mé go hóg

Ní raibh gá le mapa ná leabhar
Bhí eolas na sí agam de ghlannmheabhair
Seo an áit a thógas mé nead
Ar nós an chinn a thóg mo Dhaid.

Translation:

I'm a swallow flying in the air
I came from Africa far away
Back again to my old barn
Where I was born

There was no need for map or book
I knew the way with my clear mind
This is the place I will build a nest
The same kind my Dad built


Use the traditional air for ‘Báidín Fheilimí ′.
Once upon a time, in a land far away, lived a kind and happy girl named Willow. She lived with her loving Mother and Father in their cottage surrounded by beautifully scented flowers and trees that nestled their home. Here they lived from when Willow was just a baby, her Father built their house with strength and Mother planted their garden with beauty. A tall swaying willow tree stood in the garden long before the family came to this land. From the day they arrived the tall willow tree spoke to Mother, she knew the tree held wisdom and magic.

When their baby was born that summer, Mother cradled and sang lullabies to her beneath this tree every day in the warm breeze. As the girl grew each year, learning to walk and talk and run and sing she connected more and more to the tree. “This tree is strong, kind and beautiful, like you my darling Willow,” Mother would say to her daughter. Little Willow felt as if she was part of this mighty swaying tree. She could hear it whisper to her in the breeze, she could feel how deeply its roots stood in the ground, how free its branches felt to dance and sway. All summer long she played in the garden, dancing with the flower fairies, running with the wind fairies and splashing with the rain fairies.

Willow and her parents also grew rows of vegetables and grains which needed daily love and care. Planting seeds, watering and watching them bloom and blossom gave them much joy. They would have the most wonderful harvest each year. Although this year there was something worrying Mother and Father. Each morning when Father Sun rose, they discovered that the crops had been eaten. Father and Mother could not discover who was eating their crops. Father tried staying awake at night to catch the thief but he would fall into a deep sleep. Once Mother thought she heard little voices from the garden but when she went outside, everything was quiet and still without even a summer breeze.

One night Willow was in bed awake when she heard Mother and Father talking. “What will we do, dear? Our crops won’t grow, we won’t have enough food to eat through the Winter,” cried Mother. Willow kneeled on her bed and looked out the window at the night sky. The moon shone brightly and it filled the garden with its glow. Willow’s eyes traveled toward the Willow tree and above where the most twinkly star sat shining in the sky. “Oh, star above me shine, from the heavens you are divine, tonight I feel sorrow, for there may not be food left tomorrow. Star, may you bring me hope to discover why our garden can no longer cope?” Willow closed her eyes for a moment... then she felt a warmth inside her heart. She opened her eyes and from the night sky the star was falling downwards and fell beneath the willow tree. The girl couldn’t believe her eyes. Mother came in to say goodnight, tucked Willow into bed and kissed her forehead. She listened to her parents going to bed. Quietly, Willow crept out of her room and outside into the garden.

Everywhere was in darkness, but then Willow saw a glow beneath the tree. Drawing close to the tree, Willow’s eyes widened because before her was a shining creature with shimmering wings. “Am I dreaming? Are you really here before me?”
“I am as real as this wondrous tree above us Willow, I am the star fairy and I have come to help you. I have heard your plea for help and your sorrow. I will help your family so you may live happily tomorrow. Two little pixies creep into your garden while you sleep, picking your vegetables and scurry away with lightness of foot,” said the star fairy. “I know that your family need the crops to eat through the year, don't worry little Willow, I will help you. Here is my gift to you,” the star fairy said. From her hand poured a shimmering stardust into Willow’s hands. “You must sprinkle this along your crops tonight, and in the morning they will grow again in the warm sunlight. The star fairy fluttered her shimmering wings and rose into the air and began to sing an enchanting song. When out from the meadow hopped the two little pixies and she led them far away into a land where they would not need to miss good food either.

Willow began sprinkling the stardust upon the crops. Round and round she skipped in circles around the vegetable patches. Just as raindrops began to fall Willow hurried back into the house quietly and settled into bed.

The next morning, Willow woke with the sound of her mother and father laughing joyously. Willow hopped out of bed and ran out to them. “Oh Willow, look outside at our garden, something magic has happened,” Mother said. Together they went to the garden and everywhere they looked the crop was growing! All the lush colours of the ripened fruits and vegetables filled their eyes and hearts with joy. Willow, Mother and Father embraced and danced together happily, their garden was saved! They were so grateful to this magic that happened. The family enjoyed their garden all Summer, knowing that their garden was forever protected by the star fairy and the majestic willow tree in their garden.
Snail Bands are really useful items for supporting creative play for children. Their uses are so manifold, and they are very simple to make. You can make these either by crocheting or knitting, but whichever way, you need to choose good yarn. Start with 6 stitches and then turn the piece to work the next row. Keep going in this same way until the band is approximately 1.5 meter in length. You can also make hairbands, in which case you need to measure the heads.

For the snail bands that would be used for belts, for pulling baskets, for tying on play stands, you need a certain length in order to be able to make knots. Warning: be aware that if the band is very thin and narrow, the knots will be tight and really difficult to open again. The broader you knit the band the longer it needs to be. There are many ways to tidy them up, and the creativity is open to all involved. You will see this in the images above. Enjoy!

Snail buns are easy, and can be lots of fun to make. Of course, you could make the familiar sweet cinnamon pinwheels. But perhaps you would prefer a savoury snail? When my boys were young, we used any leftover shortcrust pastry to make “Marmite Rollos” by spreading a thick layer of the black stuff on the rolled-out dough, rolling it up like a Swiss roll, then cut into slices. You can use bread dough, scone dough, shortcrust or puff pastry (you can even buy gluten-free ready-to-roll puff pastry widely nowadays). Whichever you choose to use, roll the dough out to a rectangle and spread with your savoury filling. Roll up the dough, and cut into slices about 2 cm thick. Lay slices flat on a baking tray lined with parchment, and bake in the oven, keeping an eye that they don’t burn!

Some suggestions for fillings:
- Pesto and soft goats cheese
- Red onion, spinach and crumbled feta cheese with mozzarella (cooked first, cooled and then spread)
- Marmite and cheddar cheese (only for the real fans!)
BRMT Seminar: August 2024

In 2023, Blathu co-hosted an introduction to BRMT workshop, in conjunction with Soulscape Training. Now, Soulscape is happy to announce a two module Seminar with Rosemary Peer in the Kilkenny Steiner School, Callan from Monday 12th to Thursday 15th August.

This seminar will be helpful for teachers, early childhood educators, parents and others working with children of all ages.

**Level 1** (12/13 Aug) teaches how to use rhythmic movement to regulate muscle tone, stimulate the brain, improve attention, increase impulse control, and decrease hyperactive behaviours, and gives a concise overview of the six most important early childhood reflexes in learning and behavioural issues (e.g. concentration problems, reluctance to learn, AD(H)S) and learn how to test reflex activity and integrate it with BRMT and specific isometric exercises.

**Level 2** (14/15 Aug) focuses on stabilizing emotions and emotional states, establishing a balance between thinking and feeling, stabilizing and integrating reflexes that evoke strong emotions.

Level 1 is a prerequisite for attending level 2, and having prior experience in working with children is recommended.

Contact thesteinertraining@gmail.com for more information and to book a place.
Ballybay Kindergarten & Monaghan Waldorf School is an independent and non-denominational school that has been founded by a group of parents living throughout County Monaghan and beyond, who have come together with a shared passion for Waldorf education. This is an incredible opportunity not only for our own children but for others in the area who wish to explore this type of education.

We first found each other in early 2022, through a poster calling out for parents interested in seeking Waldorf education for their children. Since then, united by great passion and commitment, we formed friendships, established a playgroup, and built a strong community. And then, after much discussion, hard work and engagement, we were delighted to welcome our first students in September 2024 to begin learning at the farmhouse in the Ballybay Wetlands Centre. As a group, we ourselves continue to learn throughout this process, and we look to the future and hope to have a thriving Waldorf school in coming years. Our plans for the upcoming school year are to lease the main building at the wonderful Wetlands Centre, and to have 22 kindergarten (ECCE pre-school) children, with approximately 15 to 20 primary school children enrolled from our bridge classes (junior and senior infants) through to classes one, two and three (first, second and third class equivalent) for the upcoming school year.

We feel that bringing education back to the heart of the Wetlands Centre is a wonderful initiative, and also a much needed resource for the local community where places for childcare are limited.

Current childhood is very demanding, and our youth are facing a new frontier with the techno/sociological changes in the world. Coping with tensions requires self confidence and flexibility to learn new things. And so faced with these challenges, and a sense of disillusionment with the current system, we seek an alternative that aims to nourish our children and guide them to live life to the full as open minded caring and responsible individuals – facing the world with courage, free from prejudice. We hope for our children, an education that ignites in them an interest in the world, allowing them to unfold and grow up in a healthy way. We wish for them a warm and welcoming environment, where they may feel a true sense of belonging. We find that Waldorf education imbues all of these childhood imperatives in the most gentle and joyful way, by providing a more human education in a nurturing environment.

Waldorf education encompasses the head, the heart and the hands. Striving towards strengthening the will - which requires proper nourishment in education. The will is our drive – to be active; to work; to learn; to be independent; to be an individual; to take the initiative. And this underpins Steiner education. Waldorf is the fastest growing education movement worldwide, and the largest that is free from state, church or commercial interest. It is a network, a community and it is no surprise that such widespread support for Waldorf education has sustained for over 100 years. Each and every school was started by someone who wanted something new for their children, and we now find ourselves doing the same.

**Introducing Ballybay Kindergarten**

**Monaghan Waldorf School & Ballybay Kindergarten**

**RECRUITING FOR SEPTEMBER 2024**

Our independent Waldorf school, located in Ballybay, Co. Monaghan, is inviting applications for the following teaching opportunities:

- Kindergarten teacher assistant (ECCE pre-school class)
- Kindergarten teacher (mainstream equivalent to junior & senior infants)
- Primary school class teachers

Full job descriptions can be found at [monaghanwaldorfschool.ie](http://monaghanwaldorfschool.ie)

To apply, please email cv to info@monaghanwaldorfschool.ie

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www.blathu.org

Or contact Ruth at nc.blathu@gmail.com for more information

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