

## Winter Youth Conference 2009

This year, for the first time, there has been both a winter and summer Anthroposophical conference directed towards fostering New Zealand's youth impulse. This is the first year that such a winter event has been run for this generation of New Zealand youth, and as I will layout, it ran splendidly.

The main theme of the conference was: *'Rhythms as a key to Understanding'*, where we looked at physical rhythms - in nature/farming, human development & the body - in conjunction with Steiner's ideas of Biodynamics, Wardolf education & Anthroposophical medicine.

After coming from an intense couple of days bringing to consciousness 'knowing thyself', at the Anthroposophical Society AGM, a relaxed few days in small company was much looked forward to. Through a long Monday, I arrived (late) around 11 pm at the north Canterbury Biodynamic farm Milmore Downs; hoping for a cup of tea. On arrival my hope was greeted with the warmth of open fireplace and pleasant company, before a restful night in country silence.

The following day, the conference, with its 15 young and energetic kiwis and 5 older experienced ones, began with a verse (in part): "matter is never without spirit, spirit never without matter". Reminding us that in the rhythm of our life we must not neglect to foster the practical we share with each other, as well as the spiritual in which we draw inspiration for living this life in light of the freedom of our moral imagination.

The conference was, outside of time to connect to our peers, talk based. Given by 'our fearless leaders': left to right: Warwick Sandler, John Ridout, Sue Simpson, Shona Tuppa, Rachel Pommery



The first was given by John Ridout, who's many years of experience as a Biodynamic farmer and scientist was deployed in some style. He showed us the various rhythms that are displayed between earth and air; and how the plant, as member to both spheres, draws the physical components of life from both.

After a delicious lunch of organic soup and home backed bread, Warwick Sandler brought his understanding of the rhythms engaged in by the human child, in coming to culture and awareness through the different incarnations of astral and spiritual bodies. Of particular interest was Steiner's picture of the child's first steps in life: In which breathing, sleeping and imagining are of primary concern. Thus in opposition to a trend in the mainstream to bring children into a competitive

concept driven environment so as to fulfill the ends of adult ideas of what children need to become to perpetuate the status quo. Much discussion followed on into dinnertime.

As the conference was small, and held primarily in one house (mainly in front of the fire) the evening was very 'gezellig' (Dutch, translating close to cozy). After a day filled with many activities, a good night's sleep called us all by late evening.

The next day held morning rhythm in the form of Eurhythmly taken, by Sue Simpson, then a farm rich lunch. This was followed by a talk on Anthroposophical nursing by Shona Tupper. The focus of her talk was on the rhythms of the human body, and the means by which they could be regulated to their proper function. This was an overtly interesting talk, in which a wealth of rhythmical function was explained.

The discussion was followed by lantern making. That evening of the conference was full moon, so a winter lantern feast coincided with the rhythm of mid-winter full moon. After constructing a lantern, each to our own design, individuals became part of groups that went on to produce a component of the evening feast. The banquet itself was lavish in taste and spirit, eaten under the warmth of candlelight.



Once the meal had settled, we found our boots and explored the farm with lantern and moon-light: exploring the world with the practical light of our community. The rest of the evening filled with stories and singing over mulled wine.

The following day featured a talk by Rosa Henderson on the relation of rhythm in colour influencing mood. A group exercise followed where each group choose two primary colours, with which we were to paint whatever came to mind. We created:



This was followed by closing and cleaning. Ending a most enjoyable and relaxing conference in which much was learnt and shared; and organized so as to make flawless our movement between the rhythmic needs of the day.

We would very much like to thank the speakers that took time out of their days to give such wonderful talks; Gita Krenek and Rosa Henderson for the wonderful organization and location; the participants of the AGM that voted with confidence for the youth, by sharing funding with some of our initiatives; and the sponsors: Piko; Opawa Organics; and Milmore Downs & Liberty Markets, that made the wonderful food a reality.

By Erik van Zwol (photos by Rosa Henderson)