In Partnership

by Ann-Elizabeth Barnes

Two years ago I undertook a journey with my daughter to visit Dornach, the place of her birth and the first six years of her life. We went primarily to visit her grandparents, but also to see the sights and sites of Switzerland and Italy. While visiting the Goetheanum I greeted with happiness the familiar and beloved structure and marveled anew at its magnificence and immense size. The harmony of the interior space, the colors of the windows in the large auditorium, the experience of the west window, the intimacy of the Group Room all left me with a feeling of solidity, peace, strength and hope. The Goetheanum was still there, a dear presence, even after years of living away.

After Dornach we travelled through Italy, making the most of our experiences of the architectural and artistic wonders of this old country. The Last Supper in Milan, St. Mark's in Venice, Brunelleschi's Duomo, the Piti Palace and the Uffizi in Florence, the Vatican in Rome-all nourished our beings, fed our souls and soothed our yearning for a connection to the past artistic grandeur that is our heritage. Everywhere we went I leaned up against the ancient stone, the edifices that had stood for centuries, representing what is highest in Man. As I leaned I felt strength, ancient and timeless, flow through my limbs and permeate my soul. I felt anchored, grounded, a part of history stretching back through the ages to the times when these buildings were under construction, inspired by humanity's striving towards the spirit. It felt safe, familiar and at home.

Therefore I was eager to repeat this experience two years later with my second daughter who also came to Dornach to visit her grandparents upon graduation from school. I couldn't wait to lean up against the Goetheanum's presumably solid concrete walls, to feel again that sense of groundedness, of coming home.

We went into the Group Room and the same feelings of intimacy and familiarity again filled my being. But, as I pressed the palm of my hand against the wail I had the most odd sensation that the building was floating. There was no familiar sense of timelessness, of solidity, of being grounded. There was a distinct impression of buoyancy and frontier and borders, but also of something concealed, hidden, withheld. I felt as though I was being asked to see what is coming towards us out of the future.

After standing for awhile, my palm pressed to the wall, trying to make sense of this unexpected and different picture, I asked our tour guide about the actual method used for the construction of the building. He explained that the Goetheanum is hollow, built of poured concrete around iron staves but hollow in the center. This helped a bit to explain the sensation, but not completely.

The feeling of being asked to discern what is coming towards us out of the future, and the mandate I sensed of being ready to meet it, stayed with me powerfully for the rest of the trip. This time we went to France, to visit friends, but also to see the sights. At each ancient site I again placed the palm of my hand on the sides of cathedrals and castles and felt the sense of peace, of familiarity and timelessness. It felt ordered, known, the opposite of chaotic. It was a repeat of the experience of two years ago. But the Goetheanum, that dear and glorious edifice is asking something of us. It is truly a place of the future, fashioned by human hands but inspired by the dictates of the approaching epoch. Lean your hand and body against it and it does not comfort. Look at it from the west, it inspires confidence, gives a feeling of companionship, of community, of inspiration; but lean up

against it and you know you are its partner-it can't realize its destiny without you. We are colleagues for the time to come, we are collaborators for the future. And to find the reflection of what the future holds, we must look to each other.

The Goetheanum provides a physical center for learning, but it also has a destiny intimately bound up with humanity's. To assist the Goetheanum in fulfilling its destiny we have to work with it. This is what it is asking us. Without it, and each other, and the mirror we hold for one another, we cannot see our tasks, for the future is like the Gorgon's head, unbearable to behold unless reflected in something else. Without our individual training and discipline, without the effort to develop the inner organs of perception necessary to behold the future, the Goetheanum cannot realize its mission. Our higher selves come to expression primarily when in relationship with others. We can give each other guidance only when we are working together. All the important decisions of our lives involve other. We empower one another to move forward with confidence into the future, but this is possible only in concert with others. This we know. And the Being of the Goetheanum is asking for our partnership.