



Spring Newsletter 2025



Welcome to the first and springtime newsletter of the Heartfire Centre for Speech and Drama. It is the intention that a new newsletter will be circulated 4 times each year to accompany the season. Because this is the first, we will try to present an overview of the work and functioning of Heartfire for those who may not have experienced us before. As well, we want to provide in one place a summary of all the basic information about Heartfire up to this point and which, until now, has been spread out in many different communications over the several years since Heartfire came into existence. It is intended that once our website is up and running all the newsletters will be accessible there, ensuring that all the basic information about our activities and development will be available in one space and can be updated without having to constantly rewrite all the introductory material.

At this time we have just completed our third workshop of 2025. It was our first exploration of the theme of Gesture and leads into our next workshop which will explore the same theme but from a different angle. The basic question explored in Gesture part 1 was how can gesture arise out of an inner experience which finds expression in a movement of the physical body. We learned how to pay attention to the sensations that arise when we make any movement. We explored this through the three levels of gesture. Beginning with the eurythmy movements for a vowel and a planetary being: these embody the archetypes of our human soul life. Then the eurythmy movement of a consonant and starry constellation that awaken an experience of the creative activity out of which our universe comes into manifestation. Thirdly, through working with the gestures of Adam and Eve painted by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, we discovered how human gesture can take us into the depths of our human experience. This process culminated in the 6/7 gestures and their corresponding voice and speech qualities which Steiner calls the 'revelations of speech' and in which he has identified the archetypes of the soul's relationship to the world that appears to be outside itself. We used these archetypes as a way of penetrating the poem 'Snake' by D H Lawrence.

In Gesture part 2 we will explore the theme of Psychological Gesture: that is a gesture that embodies and in turn can be used to provide access to the psychology of a character.

What is The Heartfire Centre for Speech and Drama?

The Heartfire Centre for Speech and Drama is a new Speech and Drama initiative that is based in Samford Valley, Queensland.

It is dedicated to providing workshops, training intensives and, eventually some form of full time professional Anthroposophical training in the arts of speech (storytelling and lyric poetry) and acting (drama). It is the initiative of Nicole Ostini, Katrina Stowe and Dawn Langman.

Dawn's life work has been to research and develop an integrated speech and acting methodology based on Rudolf Steiner's approach to the art of Michael Chekhov's, also Anthroposophically inspired, art of acting. Nicole and Katrina are both graduates of the 4-year training developed by Dawn since her arrival in Australia in 1995. They are experienced performers and teachers at primary and adult levels and have been working together with Dawn, over several years, to lay the foundation for a full and part time training and an artistic ensemble. They will continue the research into and development of this methodology.



These are some of the steps we have achieved so far. We are an incorporated association, intending to work towards charitable status that would allow us to attract tax deductible donations.

- In these last 2 years we have offered public workshops. Our first 7 have been very successful averaging between 20 and 30 each time. We have 1 more scheduled for 2025.
- We have gone through a professional process to arrive at a vision statement for Heart Fire.
- We have a dedicated circle of around 10 colleagues who act as 'midwives' to support this initiative coming into the world. Most of our midwives are also members of the association. We have just held our 2nd AGM.
- We have engaged a professional film maker to film and edit video clips that can demonstrate our work at a professional level and these will be ready to be inserted into our website as soon as it is ready to be released.
- We are in the process of working towards a small ensemble consisting of graduates of Dawn's training, eurythmists, speakers and performers from different backgrounds who are interested in exploring this methodology (around 8 altogether). Last year we met for a week 4 times each year to deepen our research into the work. Due to complications this year we are having a rest but intend to continue once we are able to work in our own space.
- We have begun to build the Heartfire Studio that can be a home for our work.

Heartfire Location

Functioning in proximity to Pacifica College of Eurythmy, Heartfire is based in Samford Valley, Queensland. We have been grateful for the support of the Samford Valley Steiner School whose generosity with their facilities has enabled us to hold the workshops and other activities that have taken place in the first two years of our existence.

Foreseeing that we will shortly be in need of our own facilities we have recently begun work on creating the Heartfire Studio with the aim of holding workshops and courses there. This will be situated a few minutes from the Steiner School and Pacifica in Camp Mountain. It is envisaged however that we will always maintain the mutually fruitful working relationship we have had with Samford Valley Steiner School.

Dawn's account of The Heartfire vision and the background of the Langman methodology.

The Heartfire vision of a fully integrated speech and acting methodology has arisen out of many years of research into the impulse given by Rudolf Steiner for a renewal of the performing arts of the Word: drama, storytelling and poetry recital.

I am but one of many pioneers who have sought to find such a methodology over the years. One of the challenges that has faced all of us has been to develop an acting methodology that could seamlessly integrate with the groundbreaking work of Marie Steiner and her pupils to incarnate a renewal of the art of speech. Called Sprachgestaltung (in English, Speech Formation or Creative Speech) it trains the speaker to channel the divine creative activity of the macrocosmic beings of the stars and planets as it manifests through the sounds of language; the consonants and vowels.

Initially the acting side of the process relied on the already existing talent and /or mainstream professional experience of those who first trained with Marie Steiner. The demands of the speech work in those early years were so huge and all-consuming in themselves that the need for a fully articulated acting process, equally grounded in the spiritual scientific lawfulness that Anthroposophy provides, was not immediately clear. However, in recent years the further evolution of the speech work and the potential that it has to make a contribution to the wider culture, have been challenged by the lack of such a process.

Over the lifetime of my own work and search for answers to these questions, including an initial mainstream speech and acting training followed by my deep immersion in the art of Speech Formation, I was fortunate to discover and train in the acting methodology developed by the great Russian actor Michael Chekhov. He is acknowledged as one of the great actors, and teachers of acting, of the twentieth century. It was his destiny to function in the mainstream world of film and theatre and to translate the spiritual lawfulness of Anthroposophy into language and processes that could inspire and school the actors' artistic striving whether or not they were consciously in search of the spiritual dimension of their art. His achievement at this level has meant that it has only been more recently acknowledged how deeply his work was embedded in the spiritual scientific principles of Rudolf Steiner.

It was not in Chekhov's destiny to master the art of Speech Formation. It was his work to lay the foundation of a spiritually scientific acting process. However, he fully recognized and spoke about the role of both speech formation and eurythmy in developing capacities that actors and artists of the spoken word will need for theatre to fulfil its function in the future. In ways appropriate to our evolving present consciousness, it must be able to reveal the spiritual realities at work within our human destinies and evolution in order to explore the mystery of 'why we are here and why we suffer'. (from Olga's final speech in *The Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov.)

text

The Three Streams

The Heart Fire methodology consists fundamentally of a systematic exploration of each of these three streams of work that makes possible their thorough integration at each level of the process.

Chekhov's spiritual/psycho/physical acting methodology: Chekhov's psycho-physical exercises attune our body/soul/ instrument to be an organ of perception and expression that provides a healthy basis in movement and gesture for accessing the emotional life of the actor and the revelations of the soul and spirit as they manifest in drama, poetry and story.

Speech Formation/ Creative Speech: A spiritual scientific exploration of the consonants, vowels, rhythms and other elements of language, leads to the initial experience that words are not just agreed abstract symbols that carry information to our brains but have the power to create events and awaken and refine our deepest life of thought and feeling. Further training transforms us step by step into conscious co- creators with the spiritual powers, through whose Word we and all things are created.

Eurythmy: Through this art of movement the basic elements of speech eurythmy deepen and intensify our work with vowels and consonants. As we progress further, we are introduced to the cosmic gestures that reveal the inner life of the macrocosmic beings of the stars and planets who so intimately weave into the evolving consciousness of human beings as expressed through drama, poetry and story.

The integration of these three streams enriches the artistic striving of actors, storytellers and reciters by providing an objective path to dimensions of reality not otherwise accessible.



Work thus far and into the future.

Over the last 2 years we have delivered a series of introductory workshops that have provided opportunities for teachers and performers, intending or established, as well as those seeking self-development in this embodied way, to experience the rich and transformative health bestowing benefits of this approach. As already stated, we are thrilled with the consistently high numbers who attend and the enthusiastic feedback we have received has confirmed our sense that there are increasing numbers of those who are not only ready but also thirsting for this work. Our next stage will be to investigate steps towards longer modules of work and the viability in our present world of working towards the possibility of a 4-year full-time training sometime in the future.



Present stage of Studio and need for further funding:

A generous donation to Heartfire, as well as the generous offer by Nicole and her husband Nick, to use some of their land for building the studio, has enabled us to fund the first stage of the studio build. Over the next months we will need to raise considerable funds to complete the studio. A proportion of this we can provide immediately out of the existing funds that have been generated from our workshops. A loan has enabled us to complete the project to this point but it will need to be paid back as soon as we are able.

Our existing funds will enable us to purchase the materials John has estimated he will need to transform the greater part of the shed into a beautiful working space and go some way towards connecting us to an electricity source as the property on which we are situated is not connected to the mains. Finally, we will need to tackle the utilities space at the other end of the shed and the surrounds to the studio.

We have long term plans for an official and sustained campaign with several different approaches. However, due to the heavy commitments of our carrying members, it may take several months to get this underway. We would be grateful, if any of you who can think of ideas or ways to help with this, would contact us with your suggestions.

As we have said we have not yet gone through the process required to achieve charitable status that would allow donations to be tax deductible and we know this to be lengthy, time consuming and in itself requiring considerable funds.

This means that for now, we are relying on the generosity of any of you who have experienced our work and who support the importance of our need for a space of our own in which we can develop it further, to consider whether you might be able to donate to our cause NOW. Or if you know of anyone who would be supportive of our cause and in a position to help us, please make them aware of it and send them a copy of our newsletter. Any donation, large or small, will be received with gratitude.

To make a donation please contact Katrina at katrina_stowe@yahoo.com or Mercedes at mercwink69@gmail.com



As this goes to print we have just received an anonymous donation from America of \$1500 American dollars that will translate into considerably more Australian dollars and enable us to buy some of the materials that will be needed for John to begin work on the internal walls and floor.