**Kaspar Hauser Festival Impressions**

By Takeshi Suesada

A young teenage boy who suddenly appeared in Nuremberg in 1828, and who was murdered at the age of twenty one still remains a mystery to many people. What does the life of Kaspar Hauser mean to us today? Are we still trying to unravel the riddle of his life and death? In Ansbach, where Kaspar Hauser was murdered and buried, for quite a long time not much was spoken about Kaspar Hauser. However, there has been a revival of interests in the recent years. Kaspar Hauser Festival has been celebrated biannually in Ansbach for the last twenty years. Talks are given, plays are performed, exhibitions are made every other summer. The man behind the resurgence of interest is Eckart Boehmer.

He is an actor, theater director and researcher of Kaspar Hauser. Boehmer has dedicated his life to Kaspar Hauser.

In Camphill Communities, many people maintained deep inner connection to the being of Kaspar Hauser. People carried the spiritual impulse, like carrying a candle light in their hearts. Sometimes, this flame burns stronger and brighter. The fire spreads and touches many more people’s hearts. New candle lights are kindled. When we create an event for Kaspar Hauser, we see the spreading of the candle lights.

Here lies Kaspar Hauser

Riddle of his time

His birth unknown

His death mysterious

(From the inscription of Kaspar Hauser’s tombstone)

In autumn 2016, spiritual impulse to celebrate Kaspar Hauser came to the west coast in America. John and Penelope Baring were central to bringing this impulse out into the west. Camphill California hosted Kaspar Hauser Festival, where Richard Steel and Eckart Boehmer were invited as speakers.

It is amazing how spiritual impulse that wakes up in one place, can also wake up in another place. Do beings on the other side of threshold whisper to each other so that the same spiritual impulse can speak to people in different geographic locations? Do the angels say “Wake up. It is your turn to answer to the call.”?

The impulse to take up Kaspar Hauser in our hearts spread to the east coast in the United States in autumn 2016, and then in January 2017. “Can we bring about Kaspar Hauser Festival in the east coast, also?” This question lead the four Camphill Communities in upstate New York to gather. We decided to host Kaspar Hauser in November 2017. Representatives from Camphill Village Copake, Triform Camphill Community, Camphill Hudson and Camphill Ghent met regularly to plan the festival. It was months of talking and hard work to bring about this initiative.

The planning group’s meetings themselves were wonderful. The spirit of collaboration lived in the space between us...as if a Whitsun dove was shining, above us, between us and all around us...

As preparation for the festival, David Schwartz and Tim Paholak organized a study group from the summer until the festival   The study groups were deeply appreciated and well attended. Each time, twenty people or more came. From September until the festival, members from the four Camphill Communities gathered to practice the Kaspar Hauser play written by Carlo Pietzner, And From the Night, Kaspar. The play was ably directed by Stephen Steen, assisted by Meg Henderson. And From the Night, Kaspar was performed twice during the festival, and were well received. David Schwartz and Richard Steel gave talks at the Taconic-Berkshire Branch of Anthroposophical Society. It was wished among the planning group that we come in contact with wider Anthroposophical circles. At one point during the preparation, John Barnes from the branch came to the planning meeting and proposed if collaboration can happen for Michaelmas. Therefore, on Michaelmas day, Eurythmy Spring Valley performed the Foundation Stone Meditation at Fountain Hall in Camphill Village Copake. Michaelmas is also the supposed birthday of Kaspar Hauser. The festival was mainly lead by Richard Steel and Eckart Boehmer. It was important for the planning group to invite Eckart

Boehmer for this festival. Richard and Eckart have collaborated many times before. Richard Steel has been responsible of Karl Konig Institute. Since December 2016, together with Eckart Boehmer, Kaspar Hauser Research Circle http://www.kasparhauser.net/en/index.html has been established as part of Karl Konig Institute. This research group now has tremendous responsibility to continue the research of Kaspar Hauser. It is amazing how much developments have happened in this work just in the last few years.

The festival took place in the span of five days from November 1 to 5, 2017. On the first day, the festival started in the evening with Glen Williamson’s performance of his Kaspar Hauser play, The Open Secret of the Foundling Prince. The spirit of the story was directly in-align with the spirit of the festival. “Is this a beginning of a new community ?” words were uttered. The words expressed the sense of awe and anticipation for what is to unfold in the next days, and in the future.

  The second day started with the festival participants introducing ourselves. People came from different places; from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Vermont, Minnesota, California, Quebec, England and here in Hudson Valley. Participants were not only from Camphill Communities. People connected with the local Anthroposophical branch, and wider Anthroposophical Society also attended. At one point in the morning, Eackart sang a Native American song at the middle of Fountain Hall in Camphill Village Copake. This some how felt completely fitting to the festival that was happening in America.

In the afternoon, after an artistic presentation by Camphill Hudson, David Schwartz gave a talk, “Herman Melville and Kaspar Hauser: Vulnerability in a Time Dominated by Intelligence and Power.” David gave a picture of how the spirit of middle-Europe and the spirituality brought by Kaspar Hauser can also be found in America and in the American writer, as part of a larger picture of human evolution into the future. The day was also All Souls Day. In the evening, Karl Konig’s “A Christmas Story” was read. Together with the story,music by bells, singing and lyre, played by Akiko Suesada, were performed. The story and the music were the perfect ways to communicate with the beings on the other side of the threshold. The evening event and the next day took place in Triform Camphill Community.

The third day started with a talk by Richard Steel “Kaspar Hauser and Karl Konig Today.” One could identify two streams of development in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. One stream brought scientific theories such as Darwinism. Darwinism lead to the theory of social Darwinism, the idea of survival of the fittest, and eventually to WWII. Karl Konig studied Embryology, battled for the spiritual image of the human being, developed the capacity to think with the heart, and practiced in Camphill, “what you did for the least of my brothers, that you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

In the evening, there was the first performance of And From the Night, Kaspar at Fountain Hall, Camphill Village Copake. The dedication of the directors, all the players, lights, music were apparent in this well-prepared performance. The portrayal of Kaspar Hauser by Caspar von Leoper and the higher being of Kaspar, entirely portrayed in eurythmy, by Jeanne SimonMacDonald were splendid and should be especially noted.

The fourth day started with an artistic offering of puppets and play by the third-year Camphill Academy students in Copake. When one of the speeches was spoken, it was noticed that the students were from Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe. It was a small but wonderful picture of how global the spirit of Kaspar Hauser could be.

The main events of the day were the two talks by Eckart Boehmer, “Unfulfilled Mission of the Hereditary Prince” in the morning, and “Fulfilled Mission of Kaspar Hauser” in the evening. Since it was the first time Eckart gave talks in America in English, he read his talks, which were beautifully translated from German to English in advance by Helen Lubin. Eckart is one of the leading researchers of Kaspar Hauser in today’s world. He has come in contact with Anthroposophy and developed even deeper understanding of Kaspar Hauser. The extent of his exoteric and esoteric research was wide and deep. Researching the historical background, political intrigue, biography of Kaspar Hauser, lives of the people around, and the esoteric aspects of Kaspar Hauser are all part of attempting to understand “the riddle of his time, unknown birth and mysterious death.” Eckart’s life and research has contributed to the progress of this task a step further.

The fifth day began with The Festival of Offering in Camphill Ghent. It was an amazing “coincidence” that the reading of the week was the same reading used for the admission into Camphill Community: I AM the true vine. For me, this image from St. John’s Gospel is also described in the image that visited Kaspar... “The tree itself stood upon a base which was solid and from below to its top reached something like an innermost pole on the very tip of which there was so slender a crown with a red berry in it...pulsing with the fraternal blood of the brotherhood to which I was called.” (from one of Kaspar’s line in the play And From the Night, Kaspar) These images are one and the same for me.

The second session was called “Artistic Encounter with Kaspar”. Music, poetry, singing, lyre and the display of a painting all helped us come closer to the being of Kaspar Hauser. Gili Melamed Lev, Copake choir and Camphill Ghent lyre group contributed to the music. Much gratitude and thanks were expressed to each other at the final plenum. The festival will continue and will go back to the west coast, to Camphill California, in autumn 2018. For me, this echoing, from west coast to east coast, and then from east coast to west coast, is like healing medicine being poured across the continent. Does America need healing? Does the world need healing?   Yes, the whole world desperately needs healing! Kaspar Hauser is a healing medicine. However small the applied amount is, the medicine heals. We are also talking now if Kasper Hauser Festival can come back to the east coast in 2019! There was the second performance of And from the Night, Kaspar in the afternoon. Many people from Camphill Village Copake, Triform, Hudson, Ghent and people from the local area came to see. The performance ended with a standing ovation, a fitting end to the festival.

What was the five days of festival like? How did we experience? The five days of festival was like... magic. Not only everyday was special, but every moment was special. In all the talks, conversations, plenums, artistic offerings, meals, tea breaks, and in the interactions of people, there was something special. The festival took place in different Camphill Communities. Mainly it happened in Camphill Village Copake. One day, it took place in Triform. One day, it was in Camphill Ghent. A workshop was happening in Camphill Hudson, and many people who were attending the workshop participated in the festival. Traveling to the different Camphill Communities, and seeing people in the communities added to the wonderfulness of the experience.

As much as the talks carried the festival, art was also the vehicle of the spirit. The tone of the day, poetry, singing, drama, story, eurythmy, lyre, puppetry, music, craft, speech and painting were all very much part of the festival. Appreciation goes to everyone who participated in the festival, traveled and came from afar, who came from the local Anthroposophical branch, and all who supported in all different ways. The festival was an experience of community building. We attempted to create a community around Kaspar Hauser; building a house for Kaspar...

Special thanks to all those involved in the planning group. Thank you very much to Onat Sanchez-Schwartz, who did much administrative work and was the festival coordinator, Deborah Grace, David Schwartz, Stephen Steen, Emily Gerhard, Dries van Beusichem, Irena Valujeva, Michael Hoy, Thomas De Leon, David Keane, Anna Ree and Richard Steel. Thank you very much to Penelope and John Baring who helped us from California. A beautiful song was written by Channa Seidenberg for the festival to the poetry of Kaspar Hauser. The song was sang by Camphill Village Copake Choir twice. The poetry was also read several times during the festival in Triform, in Copake and in Ghent

**Contentment is the greatest grace,**

**Contentment changes water into wine,**

**Grains of sand into pearls,**

**Raindrops into balsam, poverty into riches,**

**the smallest into the largest,**

**The most common to the purest,**

**the earth into paradise.**

**Beautiful is the heart which remains in harmony with itself at all times**

**Beautiful is life itself as all deeds balance each other**

**~ Kaspar Hauser**

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