

GEORGE ALEXANDER ROEPER

1 9 1 0 - 1 9 9 2

Centenary Celebration
Keynote Event

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B I R M I N G H A M C A M P U S



Program

(The historic bell that George Alexander Roeper rang to convene the Roeper Community)

In His Own Words ... a tribute to George Alexander Roeper in a Forensic Multiple

Welcome **Lori Lutz**, *Roeper Class of 1975, Past Chair/Board of Trustees, Current & Alumni Parent*

Remarks **Randall Dunn**, *Head of School & Current Parent*

Remarks **Karen Roeper**, *Class of 1966**

Introduction **Karen Johnson**, *Latin Teacher, Middle/Upper School*

Remarks **Tom Roeper**, *Class of 1961*, Professor of Linguistics/University of Massachusetts*

Dance Selection **Brittani Holsey**, *Class of 2006, Dance Major/Western Michigan University*

Introduction **Leslie Hosey**, *Psychologist, Waterford School District, Former Trustee, Current & Alumni Parent*

Remarks **Adele Diamond**, *Canada Research Chair Professor of Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience/
Department of Psychiatry, University of British Columbia*

Questions & Answers **Marcia Ruff**, *Roeper School Historian & Alumni Parent*

Afterglow Reception
W. Hawkins Ferry Gallery

An Education of Meaning: A Tribute to the Vision of George A. Roper

by Marcia Ruff

*Much will be required of the intelligent citizen of the future.
How do we prepare youngsters for a world of tomorrow?
We educate for the future.*

As you read through George A. Roper's writings and speeches, you quickly discover this is George's standard point of departure. What will the future hold and how can we help prepare our students for that future? But his passion wasn't just to make sure he fulfilled the obligation many teachers feel – to prepare children for the world they will be living in. George wanted to shape the future, and he wanted to do it by educating children to become self-aware, ethical, creative, critical thinkers who felt a responsibility to make the world a better place – and to have fun while they were doing it.

When George and Annemarie established their school here in 1941, they started on a path of continuous innovation, always looking for better ways to achieve their goals. Their basic premise never changed: the fundamental task of education is to create an environment in which the students discover who they are as whole, complete and individual people. As George described it from their psychoanalytic perspective, "The principle of supporting both the child's conscious and unconscious motivation toward self-realization underlies all of the school's educational endeavors."

Ah, but how to do that? That was the part that changed continuously over the years. George and Annemarie kept up on – and participated in, through lectures, articles, books, correspondence and relationships – the latest thinking in psychology, education, the arts, politics, and sociology, always with the goal of finding new and better ways to educate children to become self-realized adults, ethically, effectively, and creatively engaged in the world.

In the 1940s, they launched a school that was rooted in a Freudian understanding of child development. In a society that saw young schoolchildren as blank slates, with malleable personalities and conscious control over all their behavior, George and Annemarie saw complex individuals with motivations rooted in their unconscious, with personalities that had been developing since birth, and whose daydreams and fantasy were normal and necessary parts of growing up. They established a curriculum rich in discovery, play, multicultural literature, art, dance, nature and beauty. Instead of receiving grades, students were the subject of thoughtful narrative assessments that considered the whole child. (The whole family, often.) They early on established an attitude of mutual respect between adult and child that was the antithesis of traditional school hierarchy and is the hallmark of the school today.

In the 1950s, the Roepers became pioneers in gifted education, establishing the second elementary school in the nation exclusively devoted to gifted education. They also changed people's minds about what good early childhood education should be, and led the way in developing curricula devoted to critical thinking and creativity. They promoted social justice by integrating the school and by carefully nurturing a substantive student government that involved children of all ages.

In the 1960s and '70s, they focused on institutional elements, restructuring the school into multi-age groupings and increasing the students' ability to choose their own courses, even as very young children. They flattened the school's governance into a participatory democracy in which students, faculty and staff joined into institutional decision-making. They were fully engaged in the political upheavals of the 1960s and '70s and encouraged their students and faculty to discover and embrace the healthy elements of social change, as well.

By the early '60s, George and Annemarie had articulated an educational vision that anticipated many of today's ideas about an effective 21st century education: "Our school tries to develop a person who will be able to cope with the modern world, enjoy as many facets of it as possible and contribute to it actively, constructively and creatively. This requires a person who is emotionally secure, aware of his own abilities and his place in a large, complicated and ever-changing world, a person who reacts in a flexible, broadminded and intelligent manner to the whole

complexity of modern life, and who is able to communicate his thoughts and feelings."

Emotionally intelligent. Collaborative. Self-aware. Tolerant and flexible. Creative. Ethical. Forward-thinking. There is very little that contemporary social critics such as Daniel Pink, Ken Robinson, Daniel Goleman, Howard Gardner, and others are calling for that wasn't implemented by George and Annemarie Roeper 60 years ago.

George, born in Hamburg, Germany, came by his prescience and drive honestly. He was descended from a long line of bold innovators. His grandfather built four businesses from the ground up in the 1800s, including one based on a process he invented for packaging smoked herring that created an entire new market in his region. George's father struck out on his own with an import-export firm that led him to raise his family for many years in Kobe, Japan, while he sold steel to the Trans-Siberian Railway project. George's grandparents on his mother's side were a ship owner and a wife who sailed at his side, so much so that George's mother was born in China because that's where they were when the baby was due.

When George was 13, his parents sent him to Max and Gertrud Bondy's new boarding school. There Max, a social activist, and Gertrud, a psychoanalyst trained by Sigmund Freud, gave George an education he later described as "about the future and for the future." They instilled in George a commitment to the

value of self-knowledge and community that shaped the rest of his life. As importantly, George also met Annemarie Bondy, Max and Gertrud's gifted daughter and the girl who would become his partner in love and work.

All his life, George had a remarkable capacity to see clearly what was happening around him and act, often boldly and courageously. When the Nazis came to power, he was the one to convince Max, Jewish by heritage, that the danger was real. He got the family non-Jewish passports that gave them greater freedom to emigrate. He correctly read the political winds in Austria and warned Annemarie, who was studying medicine at the University of Vienna, in time for her to catch the last train over the border before the Nazis annexed the country in the Anschluss of March 1938. George had his own escape plan and left Germany on a moment's notice when he received warning (from an old friend from the Bondy school) that his name was on an execution list.

When in 1939 the Bondys decided even Switzerland wasn't safe for them, George came ahead to the United States and, despite his limited English, lined up property in New England for the family to start another school. By 1946, only five years after arriving in Detroit, he and Annemarie had developed such a following that they were able to purchase a wooded estate in Bloomfield Hills to give their school a permanent home that matched their dreams.

Post-war Detroit was an exciting city, with a booming economy of wealth, ideas and production, and George and Annemarie

were integral members of the vibrant avant-garde. They attracted artists and imaginative thinkers to teach in the school, and drew students from the most forward-looking families. They raised three children of their own – Tom, Peter and Karen – and continuously expanded the school. George traveled frequently with the Comparative Education Society, studying schools in Scandinavia, Russia, Africa and Asia, always on the lookout for new ideas. George and Annemarie both conducted original research in the nascent field of gifted education, focusing especially on identifying differences in the emotional development of gifted children and how those might affect teaching methods.

George was also concerned that post-Sputnik America's interest in identifying its most talented children would focus on IQ scores and fail to find and nurture the creative children he thought were key to solving the world's problems. In a 1962 lecture to school parents, George pointed out, "The (IQ) test does not allow for the speculative, innovating, inventive answer. Creativity appears to be the ingredient in addition to intelligence that makes up the personality capable of changing the world. It is creative thought that will bring about the change, close the gap and change the world. As Prometheus fashioned a man of clay and breathed into him the fire of life, so we should breathe into man the creative thought."

George Alexander Roeper was a lucky man. Despite seeing human nature at its worst in Nazi Germany, he maintained an optimistic, humanistic point of view that believed men and women

were eternally capable of improvement and progress toward happiness and justice. He spent his life in an emotionally and intellectually rich marriage of equals with Annemarie, a partner who was fully engaged alongside him in building a life of innovation and achievement. He delighted in watching his three children, who share his curiosity, inventiveness, and humanistic values, grow up into accomplished, self-realized adults.

Enveloping it all was a meaningful career in a profession George valued and loved. As he described it on his CV, "Nothing is more worthy of research, understanding, and improvement than the means to encourage children to achieve full development as creative, intellectual beings for the satisfaction of their own and mankind's aspirations."

George was handsome, charismatic and possessed of an innate courtesy and gentleness that caused everyone who knew him to feel known and accepted by a man well worth being respected by. He wove his understanding of human nature, derived from a deep understanding of psychoanalytic theory and an affectionate ability to observe clearly, with a passion for social justice to build a school, a life and a legacy that we are grateful to inherit.

It is a legacy that was described movingly at George's 1992 memorial service by then-Head of School Chuck Webster:

"It is not a terribly complicated notion to assume that educational material is learned more enjoyably and more

effectively when it is related to a value system. The notion that learning is more significant in the context of understanding one's self and making changes in one's world is very powerful, but hardly complicated. The notion that an educational system's structure, decision-making process, and attitude are as critical as its program content is also not a terribly involved idea. That children learn more successfully and more effectively from respect, encouragement and challenge than from fear or neglect is hardly earthshaking news, and that children are constantly generalizing and building intuitions about the data in front of them is almost a psychological truism.

"But what is striking and terribly important is how seldom these basic, accessible notions about learning and life are held together, practiced and protected by an institution.

"As I listened to people speak about how consistent and clear their association with George was, I was struck again, not by the eloquence or complexities of our educational model and our philosophical legacy, but by how unusual it is to live those relationships individually, and especially, institutionally. It is a privilege to be part of an institution that continues to make learning simple, important and connected, and most of all, defines learning by articulating what it means to be human."

Dr. Adele Diamond

Adele Diamond, Ph.D., is the Canada Research Chair Professor of Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of British Columbia. Her work integrates developmental, cognitive, neuroscience, and molecular genetic approaches to examine fundamental questions about the development of the cognitive control abilities that rely on a region of the brain known as 'prefrontal cortex' and has changed medical practice worldwide for the treatment of PKU (phenylketonuria) and for the type of ADHD without hyperactivity. Her recent work, including a paper in the journal, *Science*, is affecting early education practices around the world.

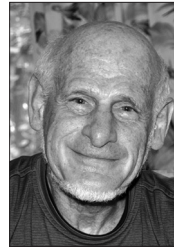


Diamond received her BA from Swarthmore College, Phi Beta Kappa (in Sociology-Anthropology and Psychology), her PhD from Harvard (in Developmental Psychology), and was a postdoctoral fellow at Yale with Patricia Goldman-Rakic (in Neuroanatomy). She received a YWCA Woman of Distinction this year and in 2001 was named one of the *2000 Outstanding Women of the 20th Century*. Her work has been featured on the Public Television series, *Scientific American Frontiers Series* with Alan Alda, and in shows on the CBC, CTV and NPR, and in articles in *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Vancouver Sun*. A recipient of many awards, she was named a Distinguished Scientific Lecturer by the American Psychological Association and has received a Canada Fund for Innovation Award. Her research has been continuously funded by NIH and NSF since she was a graduate student. She created and organizes the

immensely popular international biennial conference on *Brain Development and Learning Conference: Making Sense of the Science* in Vancouver, which presents exciting scientific findings in neuroscience and child development in ways that people working on the frontlines — parents, teachers, doctors, social workers, and others — can understand, see the immediate relevance of, and USE.

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Tom Roeper



Tom Roeper is a Professor of Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts and the oldest child of George and Annemarie Roeper. He literally grew up at the school, living in Hill House in a room now occupied by Purchasing and the big copier until the family moved into its own home in 1950. Tom went to school at Roeper (then known as City & Country School) through 6th grade, which was the end of full grades at the time, went to public school in Bloomfield Hills and to Cranbrook, and completed high school at The Putney School in Vermont.

Tom received his B.A. from Reed College in Portland, Oregon, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in linguistics from Harvard. After post-doctoral work at the University of Chicago, he settled in at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in 1973, where he has been ever since, having achieved full professor status in 1983. He spent one year as Assistant Headmaster at Roeper in 1978-79, where he taught linguistics and worked with his father during George's final year before retirement.

Professionally, Tom is known for being the first linguist to directly apply the Chomskyan approach to linguistic theory at the empirical level in language acquisition using grammatical representations. This led to founding both a journal, *Language*

Acquisition, and a book series, *Studies in Theoretical Psycho-linguistics*, as well as directing 25 dissertations on this topic, leading to hundreds of others and worldwide interest. He has given more than 100 lectures in 17 countries on theoretical and applied topics, and is one of three authors of the Diagnostic Evaluation of Language Variation, a group of clinical assessment measures to determine whether a child has a language disorder or speaks a dialect other than mainstream English. It was developed to reduce the over-identification of minority children as language-disordered.

George and Annemarie's humanism and respect for the individual, and especially for children, have informed Tom's work and life. He was a Civil Rights worker in Mississippi in 1964 and served with an international relief organization in Sarajevo, Bosnia, in 1988, accompanied by his wife, Laura Holland, and his children, Maria and Tim. As a linguist, Tom has been a champion for the dignity of children, respecting the intentions and individuality behind all speech. His book, *The Prism of Grammar: How Child Language Illuminates Humanism* (MIT Press 2007, Kindle 2010) is, as he describes it, an effort "to connect the mathematical structures behind grammar with the whole human being that radiates every time we speak."

Brittani Lynn Holsey

ROEPER SCHOOL CLASS OF 2010

As a classically trained ballet dancer in traditional Russian technique, Brittani Holsey has mastered the most demanding and challenging of all

dance methods. Yet, her wide skill set and talent also includes tap, jazz, lyrical, Cecchetti ballet and a myriad of indigenous and cultural dance genres.



Brittani began her passion for dance at age nine with her then studio's pre-professional troupe and competed and performed at regional competitions throughout the Midwest. That preparation and her many years "making up dances for her three younger sisters to perform for their parents and grandparents in the living room" guided her enthusiasm for choreography and her acceptance to the highly acclaimed Dance School at Western Michigan University — one of only 60 institutions accredited by the National Association of Schools of Dance — and a joint degree in Journalism.

Highlights from Brittani's dance career to date, include featured performances in *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* and choreographing an extraordinary series of dances titled, " ", for her George A. Roeper Senior Project.

During her seven years at Roeper, Brittani was a celebrated member of the Roeper Dance Company under the tutelage of Sandy Allen — serving as both dancer and choreographer — and was one the youngest Roeper Summer Camp Dance Counselor apprentices on record, until she recently assumed the Head Counselor position.

Brittani enjoys family and friends and embraces a philosophy of life best described in one of her favorite quotes, "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened." – Dr. Seuss.