Janusz Korczak in Canada

Jerusalem
Daniel Korolik-Kogan (age 4 1/2), Israel

My City
Isabella Koltunski (age 11), Canada

The Western Wall
Ilona Matator (age 12), Israel

Bukhara
Aziz Mirzaev (age 5), Uzbekistan

Tashkent Gate
Timur Sharipov (age 6 1/2), Uzbekistan

Winter City
Saren Lamothe (age 12), Canada

Military Parade in Red Square
Veronika Lapatukhina (age 6), Russia
Reading with Mom on the Bench
Dasha Moskovkina (age 10), Russia

My Home
Kasia Napiorowska (age 6), Poland

Birthday Party
Nastia Yermoshina (age 9), Russia

Untitled
Nina Golinska (age 4), Canada

My Mum, Dad and I (in Halloween Costumes)
Anna Alitwein (age 6), Canada

Soccer Game
Jaroslav Morat (age 11), Poland

Horse Race
Lidia Grabowska (age 10), Poland

My brother and I on the Swing, and Ferdynand is Walking By
Lenia Wodoina (age 7), Canada
Education of the Adult by a Child  
(abridged)

The Exhibition opening talk delivered by Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo

Venerable and respected adults, all grown wise with experience, have gathered in this room in order to open an exhibition of …children’s art.

Why did a group of adults - members of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada - plan this exhibition, and why has a group of adults - guests to our event - shown their support by being present tonight at this Gallery?

Organizers of the exhibition proceeded from the assumption that an international exhibit of children’s drawings would have an educational quality, that it would depict life in different countries and on several continents, from which new Canadians originated, honoring the notion of a multicultural society, sharing Canadian values and at the same time preserving their own ethnic traditions.

While sending out a call for contributions to the exhibit, we set another goal as well: to introduce the children to the noble characters in Janusz Korczak’s books. Thus, we also hoped to acquaint these children with Korczak’s life devoted to children with Korczak’s life devoted to their upbringing as independent and free people with rights to be truly themselves and to be respected for who they are.

We have received drawings from 9 countries. We must admit that the response was from a smaller number of countries than we would have liked. However, we received a larger number of drawings than we had expected. An especially large number of drawings came to us from Poland and Israel - one can say that Janusz Korczak, a Polish Jew who lived in Warsaw but did consider in his lifetime the possibility of immigration to Palestine - is living posthumously in two homes.

We are also aware of how important it is to support children in their aspiration as expressed through her drawings through shapes and colors. That is especially important in our high-tech times when children tend to practice less often the activities of drawing, reading, writing, and even interpersonally communicating, because they spend more time talking to computer games’ superheroes than to their parents.

It is widely known how significant children’s art is for psychologists and psychoanalysts, who use it as a key to the mysterious world of the subconscious. Very often, children’s drawings express something about which the children themselves are not aware.

Let me give you an example: parents of a six-year old child with psychological difficulties sought advice from a psychoanalyst. The latter discerned through the child’s drawings a pattern repeating itself on the same mournful topic of cemeteries, tombs and crosses. The doctor’s interpretation of the drawings helped him to find out that this child as a baby had lost his biological parents and was adopted by foster parents who carefully and successfully kept from him the facts of his history. This persistent silence of the parents stole from him the uniqueness of his life and resulted in the unexpressed suffering of the child, thus preventing his body and soul from living in harmony. In this case the boy’s drawings, interpreted by the psychoanalyst, helped the child to become his true, happier, self.

But let me give you another example. A five-year old girl drew a portrait of her Mom with a snake around her neck. A psychologist explained this in the following way: “Mother is a snake”, “Mother is a viper.” Fortunately, this interpretation did not cause the Mom to be deprived of her parental rights.

Although we did not arrange our exhibition as a collection of study materials for psychologists, it could well be used by them.

First and foremost we tried to find in these drawings what it is that the children see in a world created by adults, and what they learn from us about life.

Finally - and that we consider as our main objective - we tried to find in those drawings what we as adults could learn from the children.

One of the most interesting of Korczak’s works written in 1926, was titled "Education of the educator by a child”. Although it concerns professional educators, the article’s conclusions are applicable to adults in general, because we constantly educate our children to model our behaviour.

What do children tell us through their drawings?

They tell us about their good days and bad days. Their world is exactly as ours - filled with joy but also with troubles and challenges. If we want to understand their message we should not merely be touched by their naivety. Dr. Korczak once wrote: "If we are constantly astonished at the child’s perceptiveness, it means that we do not take them seriously."

Yes, we have to take children and their art seriously, admiring their powers of observation and sensitivity. We could be their apprentices, especially since children can teach us about the feelings they are naturally born with - the feelings of self-dignity, justice and equality.
The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada decided to organise an exhibition of children's art, because we were interested in the condition of the world as it is seen through children's eyes, as well as the condition of children themselves as it is seen through their own eyes. Young children find it especially difficult to put their ideas and feelings into words, but they can express sophisticated concepts and complex ideas through drawing or painting. Art provides a means of communication and self-expression and since it is a language first, and only incidentally a visual form, the child's picture is more a reflection of what he or she knows and feels than of what is seen. It can give adults a valuable insight into the areas of concern that children may repress in verbal communication.

Children’s pictures are representations of what they have experienced visually, physically, and emotionally in their few years. We had many good examples of this among the pictures presented in our exhibition. We have seen playgrounds, classrooms, day trips, birthday parties and images of family life with grandparents and pets. Since many of these pictures were sent from countries torn by wars and unrest, the longing for security and safety in every child’s life is even more poignant. We also received a few disturbing drawings, among them a picture showing an execution - we can only hope that the young artist was not an eyewitness to that horrific scene.

Janusz Korczak was one of the first people in the world that fought for children’s rights and on many occasions took part in court proceedings acting on the behalf of mistreated children. His pedagogical ideas and models become the foundation behind the Declaration of Children’s Rights that was declared by The Organisation of the United Nations in 1959.

So how is the adult world taking care of its children today, almost fifty years later? Has the fate of children improved? According to what we know, it has not changed that much. All over the world children are being forced to work, often beyond their physical ability; they are malnourished, sexually exploited, and live without the right to education, health care or play. And even in our "First World", the fate of kids not loved, not wanted, neglected, abused, parked in the front of TV for most of the day, should make us aware of their loneliness and sorrow. We have a few very telling examples of it in our exhibition, and these should stand as lessons for us adults.

Malgorzata Burczycka is a journalist, an art historian, and social worker, a member of the Board of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

Cephalopods and Other Miracles

by Tamara Szymanska

When a child makes a mark on a paper, it is a spontaneous activity that, with experience, will change from scribbles to representational shapes, and then into images of people, animals and experiences of the environment.

I remember the happiness I felt when my 2 1/2 year old daughter drew her first cephalopod (cephalopod is simply a living creature with only a head and legs). This was a sign that her mental development permitted the metamorphosis of expression which was appropriate for her age.

When we study a child’s art, we can see a definite sequence of development from scribbling to drawing. Scribbling is not an aimless activity! Everything the child draws is a symbol - a symbol that rises from some deep level of the mind or imagination, and it gradually becomes identified with some external object or perception. An image of a house, tree and cat represent a child’s concept of a house, tree and cat. However, those images may also depict the relationship that the little artist has with his family, peers and the external world.

Through imitation and repetition children negotiate their ideas on paper. Children respect skill, so they are relentless in looking for perfection in their art. Therefore images can be repeated in countless versions and variations. Since most children want to make their art look real, they do not see free expression as their goal. However, through their creations they communicate their feelings and thoughts into visual terms. Every time a child puts his concept into material form he is making a statement as personal as his fingerprint.

In the early years, before children become adults, there seem to be two realities which are reconciled in the act
of drawing: an inner reality and outer reality. The work of art seems to be a product of a particular combination of the individual's inner and outer worlds, and it is a symbol of unification of those worlds. Therefore, it is important to realize that the mental and physical health of every individual depends on the reconciliation of those two worlds. In addition, making art helps children to understand the inner self, to make sense of the world, and to deal with the problems and fears that they experience in everyday life.

Rudolf Arnheim wrote: "to see organized form emerge in the scribbles of children is to watch one of the miracles of nature (R. Arnheim: Art and Visual Perception, University of California Press, 1954, p.136).

Tamara Szymanska is an artist and independent curator, she has had a number of individual exhibitions (including one dedicated to the victims of the Nazi concentration camps -

A Trip to My Childhood

by Zofia Fitzgerald

It was the beginning of June 2005 when I arrived in Gac, a small village in the Podkarpacie region of Poland. After a long absence, barely able to comprehend all the changes that had occurred in my country, I had arrived in the village of my birth.

Severely jetlagged and unable to sleep I left my parents' home very early the next morning and went for a walk. The sun was just rising, bringing warmth and light. The meadows, still heavy with dew, looked just like they had many years ago during my childhood. The storks stirred in their nest, warming their wings. As the sun rose bees started swirling around and an entire plentitude of scents filled the air. I walked around the fields and meadows surrounding the village and then I decided to visit my old school too.

Situated by the main road, the school looked just as it was when I was a child. In front of the building and facing the road stood a modest monument, marking the place where four men executed by the Nazis during the war found their eternal rest. A simple bouquet of flowers in a jar adorned their grave. Some things never change. I was finally home.

It was then that I decided to approach the school director and ask that the school contribute some children’s drawings for the exhibition being organized by the Janusz Korczak Association in Vancouver.

I waited till the school opened, then asked to see the school director. She happened to be a very nice young woman by the name of Sabina Zardzewialy. I told her about the Janusz Korczak Association, keeping in mind that the holidays were approaching fast and with only three weeks of school left children were no longer motivated to do extra projects. She was more concerned with the fact that she had habit of not interfering with the art teacher’s work. Also, she was somewhat disappointed that there were no prizes being offered.

Nevertheless, she decided to present this idea to the two art teachers in the schools under her management. The school year was ending and although she had taken my parents’ phone number she never called, so I really thought that I would not succeed in obtaining any drawings. A day before my departure I still had not heard from her. I had lost all hope, but decided to pay her another visit anyway.

I will never forget the sight, when I opened the door to her office and saw the secretaries signing and stamping a whole selection of beautiful drawings. There were so many of them! I took them all to my parents' home and spread them on the tables, sofas and the floor looking at them with fascination. I studied fine arts, fancied myself to be a graphic artist at some point in my life, but the simplicity and the richness of color was totally stunning to see.

Children draw what they see with honesty and simplicity. They draw the hills surrounding the village as if they were mountains and fill them with the most beautiful colors. They draw their home, parents, school, plants and animals that surround them - or the fantasy life that they imagine.

I am very happy that some of these drawings were selected for the exhibition. I sent an e-mail back to the school indicating which of the drawings were selected. Although I did not hear anything back, I know that the children have a sense of accomplishment and pride. Personally, I am satisfied that I was able to contribute to that sense of accomplishment.

Zofia Fitzgerald is a member of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.
Have you ever watched kids drawing - whether your own child or any other kid?

Most likely you have noticed that even the youngest ones, before they are old enough to choose a proper drawing 'tool', draw with anything that leaves a trace on any surface - on pavement, walls, or paper. Adults get angry and frustrated: the walls are soiled, a book is ruined, and paper is wasted - "better you go play with your toys!"

However, children’s drawings are little miracles that many pass by without noticing, or without realizing their importance to a child’s development and self-expression.

Kids are always imitating adults or older siblings. By watching them using a pen or a pencil, a child tries to pick it up by him or herself. Immediately the child gets completely involved in the process: discovering that doodling with a pencil creates different lines and shapes, hearing the knocking and scratching pencil on a rustling paper - it’s so much fun, and he repeats it again and again.

Later, a child discovers color pencils and paints and tries to draw images of the things around.

If a parent points out mistakes or corrects them, the child’s creative imagination may lose its spontaneity, sincerity and originality. When fun is gone, drawing becomes boring and dull.

Teaching little kids to draw must be done carefully, without pressure or rush. In these early stages, there is no need to insist on precision or achieving likeness in drawing real-life objects. At first, the child’s attempts could be frustrating and a real struggle: his hand is unsteady, pencils drop and tips break, patience wears out. It is important for an adult to be around to help without interfering or influencing the child’s creative process.

The best help an adult could provide is to encourage, praise and be patient. Engage your child in conversation about what she or he is imagining and drawing about. Showing your interest in child’s activity gives them confidence, and drawing becomes a precious gift of interaction between you and your child.

Tatyana Chabrova is an art teacher and author of numerous studies on children drawings. She lives in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Lena Sverdlov is a certified translator, a member of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.
Fifteen children are writing a diary. I know that others would like to write as well. And I know that such writing would be of use and comfort to them.

I also know they would feel shy doing it and would not know where to begin.

In any case almost all who started, did not know how, but worked on the beginning.

One began by describing what he did during the day, then asked if he could describe his thoughts.

Another started from his pre war memories or from the month of the occupation of Warsaw. Still another wrote about children, his friends and his home, but virtually nothing about himself.

Only once did he write about what he will do after the war. Not everyone, I think, would believe in the end of the war. Young people may remember vaguely how life was then, but they don’t quite believe that they will really grow up to be as tall and as adult as Mrs. Rozia or Mr. Felek.

It is strange but Mr. Felek was once a boy, who romped about, attended Grade Three in an Underground school, and someone had to cut and wash his hair.

But sometimes, would it not be useful to think not only of what was, but what is yet to come?

In conversations, one often hears about how someone will go about earning money or how another wants to become a locksmith or an electrician.

Most likely they have many more thoughts, but are afraid to reveal them.

Some time ago I asked the questions: Are you glad you were born?

How many children would you like to have after you marry? What names will you give them? Would you prefer to be educated, wealthy or famous? And to my mind, writing a diary about these topics would be a good beginning.

One should ask oneself: what will I do after the war? Will I want to live in Poland, or move to another place? To the countryside or to a city, a small one or a big one? How much money will I earn daily? What kind of a house will I inhabit, a small one with a courtyard or a garden?

Will I be working in a factory, in my own place or in the store or a toolshop in town, or only at home?

What will my family be like? Will I want to live alone, with a wife, a sister, a brother, or a friend?

Will I be married? Or will I wait a long time before I choose a wife? What should she be like? Should she be my age, older or younger than I?

Do I want to be just rich or very rich? Will I become rich right away or will I be saving pennies for a long time? What will be my first purchase? What will be the next one? Or, maybe, will I buy everything all at once?

What will I be eating? How will I dress? What kind of suits and how many will I own?

What will I read and how will I spend my leisure hours after work? What will my Friday nights and Saturdays be like?

How I will love to spend them with my brothers and sisters, if I am to have any, and also with my mother and aunt, if they are still alive then?

Do I want all this to happen fast or is it better to wait patiently, year after year, winter and summer after winter and summer?

How will my family be spending their summer, will I be visiting the Orphan Home? Will I be writing letters to friends who live far away?

When will I be at my best? When I am twenty years old, thirty or forty?

What obstacles will I meet along the way? Will I crave adventure or prefer to live in peace, never changing apartments, neighbours, or my way of life?

Such thoughts about the future occur to one person as a life plan, but to another as only a dream.

A dream is more captivating, but a plan is something that may really happen.

Because I know I will be older. Because I must grow up eventually.

Then I will work and earn money, because I will have to buy things, live somewhere and clothe myself.

In a Kindergarten in Kiev the teacher gave the class an assignment.

"Who will I be when I grow up?"

One boy wrote:

"I want to be a magician."

They started to laugh at him, but he wisely answered:

"I know that I will not be a magician, but the teacher asked me, who I wanted to be."

Source: Janusz Korczak w Getcie. Nowe Zrodla Warszawa 1992

Lilian Boraks-Nemetz is an author and an instructor at the Writing Center at the University of British Columbia, and a member of the Board of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.
Jan Twardowski, a priest and a poet, a man of great heart and spiritual influence, a true friend of Korczak and Korczak's ideas, died January 17, 2006 in Warsaw (Poland).

Here, we publish a speech delivered by Father Twardowski on the occasion of a holy mass celebrated in memory of Janusz Korczak at the church of the Nuns of the Visitation in Warsaw on December 29, 1971.

Stanislaw Szenic wrote in his memoirs: "A holy mass celebrated in memory of Janusz Korczak (the first mass officially celebrated for a man who was not a Catholic) was a very special one. The church was fully packed, and because there was not enough room inside, people crowded outside, at the door and on the square in front of the church." (From: S. Szenic, Garsc wspomnien, Poznan 1990, s. 196.)

Texts below were translated by Anna Lubicz-Luba

Awaking the Conscience
(abridged)

Someone could ask why just today we celebrate a holy mass in memory of Janusz Korczak, the Old Doctor and children's friend. Today is neither the anniversary of his death nor of his birthday. We experience Christmas time when Christians from all over the world gather [...] around the Child. Reverentia puero [Maxima debetur puero reverentia. We owe the greatest respect to a child - Ed.] - as old used to say. Janusz Korczak seems to be one of the most cordial sages who came to bow in front of the Child. This is the origin of the unexpected connection between the time of Christmas and this dedicated mass.

One and a half years before the Second World War Janusz Korczak, Dr. Henryk Goldszmit, generally called the Old Doctor, preached at the microphone of the Polish Radio in one of his chats entitled Loneliness and Old Age:

You have lived as much as you have ploughed
How much bread have you baked for people
How much have you contributed to laying the foundations
Before you depart

How people remember Korczak

Janusz Korczak was a pedagogue. He gave up his medical practice in order to educate children. He became a childless father of an uncountable number of other people's children. He started two houses for orphans - one Jewish on Krochmalna Street and another Christian one in Pruszkow, which was later transferred to Bielany. Maria Grzegorzewska in her Letters to the young teacher writes that he was an unusual pedagogue. He would release the truth by his presence. Anyone who had anything to do with him would feel at ease. Around him one could realize the futility of catchwords and irrelevant matters. In his presence one would long for pure and simple thoughts that his good sad eyes, full of pensive-ness, would bring to people's minds. [...] He was a philosopher in his own right. Once he said to his wards setting out for the long journey as he called life: "We do not give you God and love without forgiveness while forgiving is a great toil and drudgery that one has to undertake. We give you your country as you have to find it in the beating of your own heart and your own thoughts. We do not give you love for people - because there is no love without forgiveness while forgiving is a great toil and drudgery that one has to undertake. We give you longing for a better life which does not exist yet but will exist in the future. Hopefully this longing will lead you to God, your Country and Love."

He was associated with Polish culture and tradition. In his Ghetto Diary he
The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

HOW PEOPLE REMEMBER KORCZAK

Whom did you teach without looking for remuneration?

A speech delivered by Father Twardowski at the Janusz Korczak medal award ceremony on December 6, 1980 in Warsaw.

It happened that today, the sixth of December, the day of St Nicolas, the children’s friend, became the day of Janusz Korczak for me. On that day great joy comes upon me for the one I had admired, for whom I had prayed, whose works I had read and whom I had loved. I searched for postage stamps in his memory to stick them on the letters to my dearest people and I felt that he sort of smiled at me and asked: “How much have you ploughed during your life and how much have you contributed to laying the foundations before you depart, how good was your service, whom did you support when they stumbled, whom did you teach without looking for remuneration?” I am not able to fully express my gratitude for this unexpected gift and for the fact that I can ask such questions of Doctor Korczak here in this assembly. May the great spirit of Janusz Korczak unite us all in our patient work for the Child.

Source: “Polska” 1981 nr 4 s. 31.

From a speech delivered by Father Twardowski on the occasion of a holy mass celebrated in memory of Janusz Korczak at the church of the Nuns of the Visitation in Warsaw on August 8, 1992.

Korczak was destroyed by the external power, by people’s anger, and evil violence, but he chose love, which is more powerful than death. Each memory of him is his victory.

Each memory of him changes our eyes to be able to see the suffering child.

Each memory of him revives our hearts to love people, our conscience to avoid complexes, and any hurts to each other, so even our death can become our hope.


We greatly appreciate receiving the Polish texts from Dr. A. Iwanowska (University of Gdansk, Poland), editor of the Jan Twardowski books.

Children often visited Father Twardowski in his house, and used to inscribe their thoughts on his tiled stove. This one reads: For the dearest man in the world. Paula Dawidiuk and Goska Lukaszak from the city of Biala Podlaska. January 25, 2001

Anna Lubicz-Luba is a journalist and an editor; and a member of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

Photos taken by Anna Lubicz-Luba in 2004.
**Israel**

The Janusz Korczak House in Jerusalem has organized a competition to select the best recently published book for young readers. Winners will be announced in September 2006.

A Korczak Calendar 2005-2006, with drawings and paintings by Itzchak Belfer, has been published by the Janusz Korczak Association of Israel.

Itzchak Belfer was born in Poland in 1923 and grew up in the Janusz Korczak orphanage in Warsaw. At the beginning of World War II Belfer escaped to Russia. After the war he returned to Poland and in 1947 left Poland for Israel.

**New books on Korczak**


**Betty Jean Lifton’s book** *The King of Children* has been informed us that Seven Haiku were translated by Mia Vannerem (The Netherlands).

**Japan**

In 2005 Heibosha Publishing House (one of the oldest in Japan) issued a newly revised edition of the book "Dr. J. Korczak" by Jiro Kondo, a Japanese author who contributed a great deal to make Korczak’s name and ideas popular all over country. The Iwanami Publisher has published the 15th edition of the book "Dr. J. Korczak" by Jasuko Kondo. Both books are published in 120 000 copies.

In September 2006, the Haiyuza Theater and Tokyo National Museum will perform a drama about Janusz Korczak based on Jiro Kondo’s text.

In our Newsletter No 3, 2004 we published Seven Haiku by Jiro Kondo mentioning that a translator from the Japanese is unknown. We are grateful to Mr. Kondo who informed us that Seven Haiku were translated by Mia Vannerem (The Netherlands).

**Congratulations!**

Mr. Jerry Nussbaum has been elected as the President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada for 2006-2007.

Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo, co-founder of our Association (as well as the Janusz Korczak Association of Russia), and an editor of the Newsletter, was in 2005 awarded the Janusz Korczak medal for her contributions to the International Korczak Movement by the Janusz Korczak House in Jerusalem Society in Israel.

**Remembering Sella Heller**

We express our sadness in loss of Sella Heller, a great lady and a great supporter of our Association who passed away on January 27, 2006.
Clown

Igor Astashov (age 5 1/2), Russia