

**NEWSLETTER OF THE  
JANUSZ KORCZAK  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**

NUMBER 7 • 2011

## Our Goals

The objectives of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada are as follows:

- \* To foster the recognition of Janusz Korczak's life and work.
- \* To familiarize Canadians with his heroism during World War II, and his staunch defense of children's rights.
- \* To disseminate Korczak's pedagogical ideas and their effect on children's education.

## Our Tasks

Projects developed in 2009/2011

- *Remembering Janusz Korczak and the Jewish Children.* A talk by Dr. Robert Krell, a child survivor of the Holocaust.
- *Lost and Found.* Evening with author Lillian Boraks-Nemetz.
- *Janusz Korczak - Champion of Children's Rights.* A talk by prof. Jadwiga Binczycka (Poland).
- *This Child, Every Child. Janusz Korczak and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.* A talk by author David Smith (Vancouver).

Projects to be developed in 2012

- Publication of the book "*Janusz Korczak: May their lives be so much easier...*" by Olga-Medvedeva-Nathoo. (In cooperation with Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland).
- Presentation of this book. A Round Table dedicated to Korczak's legacy at the Faculty of Education at University of British Columbia.
- Unveiling of the Korczak bas relief at the Faculty of Education at University of British Columbia.

- Promotion of a new stage production of the Teatr Popularny in Vancouver based on Korczak's book *King Matt the First*.

- Further promotion of Korczak's legacy through talks, workshops and publications within the frames of the International project *2012 – the Year of Janusz Korczak*.

## Membership Fee

The membership fee is \$15 per year, payable in cheque form. Please mail to:

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**New members are very welcome!**

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The website hosts: information about the Association, news; all previously published Newsletters; an 800-pages English edition of Korczak's works translated by Jerzy Bachrach (1916 – 1995).

## Thank-you

We would like to express our deep gratitude for support of the Association to:

Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Vancouver, in particular Consul General Mr. Krzysztof Czaplak.

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, especially Executive Director Mrs. Frieda Miller.

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## On the front cover

Janusz Korczak and his ward Leon Gluzman. A painting by Elias Benzaquen.

## On the back cover

*The Children's Rights and Janusz Korczak.* School project. A drawing by Juliana Schneider.

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## Remembering Janusz Korczak and the Jewish Children

*The talk was delivered to members and supporters of our Association at Jewish Community Centre on May 9th, 2009  
By Robert Krell, MD, a child survivor of the Holocaust*

I have been somewhat familiar with Janusz Korczak for about twenty years. The various connections are as follows. His name is inscribed at our own Holocaust memorial at the *Schara Tzedek* cemetery which was unveiled in 1986. Since this was a project I initiated, I was aware that at least one of Vancouver's family had known and admired him. So Korczak is remembered here.

Then on a trip to Poland and Israel in 1991, as part of a local mission, our first stop in Warsaw was at the Jewish cemetery where we saw the tablets, or markers for the graves of Henryk Goldszmit's parents. Also in 1991 an interesting sequence of events unfolded. I served on the International Advisory Committee that organized the first large gathering of Child Holocaust Survivors. It was in New York and attracted 1600 people, primarily child survivors who had seldom, if ever, revealed information about their backgrounds.

I spoke there, as did Abe Foxman, the executive director of the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) whose story of hiding is similar to mine. At an early point in this overpowering gathering, mostly of formerly hidden children, a lady approached me, wanting to talk. It was Betty Jean Lifton. We talked a long time. About children. About suffering children. She was, of course, the author of *The King of Children: A Biography of Janusz Korczak*, published in 1988. Her husband, Robert J. Lifton, a renowned psychiatrist, had written and published in 1986, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. I had already used that book to teach young doctors about the role of physicians in Nazi genocide, as well as that of other professionals including lawyers, architects, engineers, and yes, philosophers and theologians.

It was because of Bob Lifton's research that the Liftons went to Munich in 1978. Betty Jean had been a journalist and had reported on wounded, orphaned and displaced children and her books were concerned with the

rights and welfare of children. In Munich she immersed herself in Holocaust literature. [...] She heard of some orphans, Korczak had raised and teachers he had trained. Later she interviewed people who knew Korczak.

Between 1979 and 1986, she made four trips to Poland and two trips to Israel and completed her book in New York and Cape Cod.

After 1991 I stayed in touch with her and I had dinner with her in New York a few years later, a privilege, indeed. I am afraid that we are no longer in contact as happens with so many relationships that are difficult to maintain. But she touched my heart and I learned from her.<sup>1</sup>

Are there other connections to Korczak?

Only those I learned about much later in life. But they haunt me. For example, August 5th, 1942, I was a two year old living in the Hague, Holland. That week we received notification to report for "resettlement to the East" on August 19th, which resulted in leaving our home immediately in search of places to hide. That fateful August also marked the deportation of Korczak and his children to Treblinka. Who could have imagined that while Dutch Jews were scurrying about in search of safety, already thousands of Polish Jews were being murdered daily in Treblinka? And we knew nothing. Not of Treblinka. Not of Auschwitz.



**Robert Krell**

<sup>1</sup> See p. 6 of this issue.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

In 1991 we went to Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka. Passing under the sign *Arbeit Macht Frei* into Auschwitz I experienced a violent shaking, a convulsion of my entire being. I thought I was having an epileptic seizure except that it did not reveal itself externally. I did not fall to the ground nor foam at the mouth. I experienced a seizure of the soul and was relieved it did not show. My grief remained a personal matter. I believe every Jewish child who survived was imprinted with this indelible grief and bereavement and loss. But I was beginning to speak about it.

In fact I spoke about it in Berlin in the year 2001. I had not planned ever to set foot in Berlin but had promised to come when an organization of child survivors invited me to their own gathering. Amongst many things, in my public lecture attended by survivors, their children, journalists and writers, I said:

“I did not expect to speak of these matters only a few decades ago and certainly not on German soil. For it is here that the poisoners of my soul devised and calculated their plans including the murder of the treacherous and dangerous 2-year old Dutch Jewish baby, Robbie Krell of the Hague, Holland. This was the capital of child murder, killing on a scale never before undertaken and hopefully, never to be duplicated. Here in Germany, here in Berlin, originated the plan to kill every Jewish child in Europe. It was a very successful plan. At war’s end

only about 6-7% had survived. And of the few surviving children, so many were wounded to the core of their identity and existence that they were not able to raise identifiable Jewish children to replace those who were lost.

The SS Standartenführer Karl Jager report on the killings by Einsatzkommando 3 in Lithuania lists cities and villages and the numbers of Jews killed as follows:

Merkinė 223 Jews, 355 Jewesses, 276 Jewish children.

Varena 541 Jews, 141 Jewesses, 149 Jewish children

Kaunė-FIX (Kaunus, Kovno Fort) 2,007 Jews, 2,920 Jewesses, 4,273 Jewish children (mopping up of Ghetto of superfluous Jews). And so this list continues. The total of 137,346 Jews and a few others (non-Jews) killed by Einsatzkommando 3 under the command of Karl Jager was summarized by him in these words: “I was always a person with a heightened sense of duty.”

That is not all I said in Berlin.

But we are speaking of children, who in some small way, I have come to represent simply because they cannot speak to us. They deserve a voice, many voices.

I found a quite remarkable work titled *Children of Europe* written by Dorothy Macardle in 1949. She estimated that two million Jewish children had died as a result of war and persecution. She writes, “Not

to be explained by fear or provocation or uncontrollable passion of any kind, the systematic slaughter of innocents stands out in history as the most coldly vicious proceeding that has ever emanated from human brains.”

According to Macardle about 500 children were found in Terezin, 500 at Bergen Belsen, and 800 at Buchenwald. There were 200 children under age 16 at Dachau. In addition, Polish and Israeli scholars estimated that 3,000 sets of twins passed through Mengele’s hands in human experiments. Perhaps 200 survived. The Russian army found 160 in barracks on January 27th, 1945 and later, an additional 30 or 40.

It appears that only a handful of children survived the camps. A comparatively larger number survived in hiding. In Belgium, 3,000 children were saved. But of the 4,363 Belgian children who were deported, only 39 returned. In Holland it was the same. Of an estimated 8,000 children in hiding, over half were discovered or betrayed.

When I returned to Holland in 1961, ten years after immigrating here, I knocked on the door of my rescuer’s apartment. An adjacent door opened. It was our neighbour Mr. de Vries. “Is it you, Robbie?”. “Yes, meneer de Vries.” “Back here to visit your Moeder? “Yes, I am.” “You know”, he said, “I am disappointed in you, you never thanked me for not betraying you.”

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

Having escaped the worst, what was the fate of the children who remained? The vast majority were orphaned. And those who were not, were often embroiled in complicated legal situations, particularly battles between rescuing families reluctant to return their charges to surviving parents. How lucky, my parents returned. How unlucky, my parents returned. I was then 5 years old, and had to leave my loving Christian family whom I considered to be my parents. Their daughter, Nora, was my sister so far as I was concerned. It was my good fortune that my parents made the wise decision to allow me extended visits with my foster parents. How lucky was I to be loved by four parents and my Christian sister.

But what about parents who returned from their nightmare experiences? Did they resemble who they were before the war? Of course not. How could anyone recapture the joy of youthfulness and promise after the monstrous persecution? My parents were aged 29 and 27 when they had to give up their baby son to strangers. And at that time, so far as they knew, their parents and brothers and sisters were alive. Only three years later, they were the only survivors of their family, save one nephew of my father's, my first cousin.

Back together, it almost seemed as if we were "normal".

We were not, not really.

Considerable damage had been done. A few years before her death at age 89, my mother told me that when she brought me to my hidings, I picked up my little suitcase and tried to follow her back out. She said that in that moment our eyes met and she knew instantly that I would never forgive her for leaving me. And I now think she was right.

While rationally I applaud her courage in giving me away to save my life, emotionally I cannot handle it to this day. There remained an edge to our relationship and I know that much of my childhood I tried to repair this irreparable event with exemplary behaviour and unwarranted attentiveness. As an adult I gave up. And it was not our fault. It was the fault of our persecutors who forced us to live in a universe of hate and murder. And I shall never forgive them.

Although the *Shoah* was an integral component of my self-awareness, the concept of child survivor did not strike me until 1981 when I attended the First World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Jerusalem. A speech by Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, then Chief Rabbi of Nethanya included the words:

"My name is Israel Meir Lau. I believe I am the youngest survivor of Buchenwald (age 8 at liberation). My father was the last Rabbi of Piotrkow in Poland, and he was killed in Treblinka. My mother died from hunger in the Ravensbruck concentration camp."

And then I realized. In 1945 I was 5, my only cousin Nallie was 7, and Rabbi Lau (Lulek) was 8. We were the children of the Holocaust, not second generation but first generation survivors. We had been bypassed. Adult survivors had made themselves known, so had their sons and daughters labelled themselves as the Second Generation, well described in Helen Epstein's book in the late 70's. [Helen Epstein is a writer of memoir, journalism and biography. She lives in Massachusetts, United States. She was born November 27, 1947 in Prague, Czechoslovakia. In 1979 she published her best-known book, *Children of the Holocaust* (Putnam), which has since become

a much-translated classic on transmission of trauma across generations, used in psychology courses as well as Holocaust Studies].

By 1982, I was involved in helping my dear friend, Sarah Moskovitz, establish in Los Angeles a child survivor group. She published in 1983, a wonderful book titled, *Love Despite Hate: Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Their Adult Lives*. In 1984 I chaired a panel at the American Psychiatric Association Annual Meeting, the proceedings of which were published in 1985 as a special section on child survivors in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*. All panel participants were child survivors. In the early 80's we defined a child survivor as one who was no older than 16 at the end of the war, primarily because the life paths of those approximately 17 and older was much different. The older survivors were more active as participants in their decisions whereas the younger ones depended more on the guidance of adults. The younger children were also more likely to resume some kind of schooling whereas the older survivors were more likely to seek work, marry and re-establish families. One crucial difference was the fact that older survivors had pre-war memories and were able to adopt, or for that matter, reject the Judaic traditions they had absorbed. Some of the younger children had no memories to fall back on and were entirely dependent on their placements as to whether they would be salvaged as Jews or lost to conversion or assimilation. My first schooling was at a Catholic kindergarten taught by Sisters of the Convent. I was a first-class Catholic before gradually discovering my Jewishness and struggling with it for a lifetime.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

The greatest damage done to children post-war, was the negation of memory by mostly well-meaning adults. The older concentration survivor envied the child's "Not knowing or remembering". Strangely enough, mental health professionals assumed likewise, the same professionals who had emphasized in the prewar years, the importance of all that happens to children in their formative years. Suddenly, they were nowhere to be found. They neither talked with the horrendously traumatized youngsters nor properly debriefed them. Instead they busied themselves with the physical care of these children, but seldom paid them psychological attention. Why? Why did they exhort the children to forget the past and get on with their lives at all costs?

On the surface it was good advice.

Getting on with life was crucial to postwar survival. But as Elie Wiesel has said in response to the question, "How did you re-adjust to life?" "Adjusting to life was easy, what was difficult was regaining respect for death, ordinary death. We were used to sleeping next to corpses." This was the problem for our helpers. They could not deal with those who had been in the abyss, who had been with death, near death, marked for death. It is as Robert Lifton described, the survivors carried a "death taint". After all, if they lived, those unmarked by the murderous events in Europe, wondered if so many died, how come these survivors lived? Surely they must have done something awful in order to survive. This was the attitude

of the French government to the 426 boys from Buchenwald who were brought to Ecouis for their recovery. There was not much motivation to provide money for their care. After all, they must be a group of sociopaths to have survived, and in any case, so traumatized and starved that surely they would die at a young age.

In fact, they were told by a psychiatrist who addressed the group that they would never recover. Well, indeed they were wild for a time. Unsocialized and enraged, their behaviour reflected their years in flight, in hiding places, and in concentration camps. And some never recovered. But amongst those children and teenagers were future doctors, physicists, Rabbis, and businessmen. Amongst the Rabbis, we count Rabbi Moshe Beer, Rabbi Menashe Klein, and Rabbi Israel Meir Lau who became Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel. The latter's older brother, Naphthalie Lavie was Israel's Consul General to New York and of course, Elie Wiesel who won a Nobel Peace Prize. Amongst the physicians, there was an orthopaedic surgeon in France, a medical director of an Israeli hospital, and a plastic surgeon in the United States. The physicist, Kalman Kalikstein, worked alongside Albert Einstein. Many boys became successful businessmen and in several follow-up studies, the majority achieved success in work and marriage.

It brings us to the most tragic question of all. We cannot even imagine posing this question with respect to the one and a half million Jewish

children we lost but can we at least ask it with respect to the nearly 200 children who were accompanied to their deaths by Dr. Korczak? Which of them might have been the conqueror of cancer, the arbiter of peace, the writer of symphonies, the painter, the novelist, the teacher, the Rabbi, the physician and the potential healer of the disadvantaged, the needy, the poor? Who amongst them would have followed the path of their glorious mentor, the man to whom orphans could turn in time of need? We will never know.

All the more reason to act in their behalf and determine what we can do to honour them and their mentor. We must begin with remembrance and memory. And remembering must be followed with action. The challenge becomes how to instill the qualities of Henryk Goldszmit into future generations of physicians, caretakers, health providers. And in order to inspire the healers, the health professionals, the volunteers, should there not be a Korczak orphanage, or a Korczak wing at the Children's Hospital, a Korczak hospice for terminally ill children, a Korczak playground? Unless there are places that cause future generations to be curious about the name, the person, his deeds, might he be forgotten? You, we, must make that unlikely. Forgetting Janusz Korczak is not an option. Perhaps this Association can provide the leadership required to properly memorialize this benevolent and kindly man, in memory of the Jewish children who perished.

<sup>1</sup> B.J Lifton died in 2010.

### Lost & Found. Evening with author Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

*The event took place at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre on October 18th, 2009.*

*The talk was delivered by Lillian Boraks-Nemetz to members and supporters of our Association.*



**Lillian Boraks-Nemetz**

*Photo by Patti Gail Bland*

I am truly honoured to have been given a chance to speak to such a wonderful crowd of people. Although some of my talk will embrace my life and work, it is the spirit of Dr. Korczak that I would like to invoke here tonight.

Lost and Found sounds like a department in a store where you go to retrieve umbrellas, gloves, glasses or keys. But the context in which I place this is somewhat different... Maybe more than anything it's the lost keys that symbolize the title of this talk. Not keys to the car, or to the house or to a jewellery box...but keys to oneself. Keys I had lost in my childhood and have struggled hard to find

in adulthood.

It's the mystery key to understanding oneself, to find out who one truly is, and to try and find meaning in one's life, despite the losses. Growing up in the shadow of the Holocaust, I have always felt that some terrible truth lies inside me but did not quite understand its meaning. And that is why much of my struggle has been based on looking for it and finding it. I am not sure that I have entirely succeeded in my quest but it's the process of discovery and the journey that counts more than the end result-- the destination or the discovery itself. And it is that learning process of discovery that I would like to talk about.

Dr. Korczak has always been my hero. Janusz Korczak, the man, the children's rights advocate, the caregiver, the teacher, and the writer.

I knew about him in the Warsaw Ghetto when I was a little girl and visited his orphanage with my father. I remember fragments of children playing, working at tables but I don't remember meeting Korczak himself. I was conscious of the fact that the children were orphans. And I felt glad to have been holding my father's hand.

Dr. Korczak became a hero to many after he had sacrificed his life for his 200 orphans whom he led in that heart-breaking march through the streets of Warsaw Ghetto to Umschlagplatz, where the trains stood waiting to deport them to Treblinka extermination camp. He was offered a reprieve, but declined saying, 'my children need me'. And he was devoted to the cause of children. He fought for their rights and understood their needs. And I often thought when I was an immigrant teenager in Canada still filled with the terrible memories of war, when there was no one to talk to who would understand a child survivor? If only Dr. Korczak were alive, he would understand and he would fight the injustice that was done.

Korczak was also a thinker and an author, and we get know him best through his written word. Betty Jean Lifton, in her preface to Korczak's *Ghetto Diary*, writes that "Writing is the only weapon any writer has when he or she is trapped and there is no place to go but inward." Korczak was also a radio host and it was said that he spoke to children as if to adults, and to adults as if they were children.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER



**Lillian Boraks-Nemetz**

*Collage by Al Carlson*

When Korczak wrote the *Ghetto Diary*, he didn't mention the Ghetto itself, instead he describes his daily struggle, his disappointments, his joys, his wishes and we get a sense of an individual in dire circumstances who against all odds tries to find himself in the quiet of the night when the children are asleep, a glass of vodka by his side, a jug of water and black bread and he writes words that express the man, who he is, and how he would like to live despite the conundrum of the Ghetto, and it is between the lines, not necessarily the chronological order of events that we glimpse his struggle and the depth of his soul.

For us child survivors it is not so easy to understand our feelings. We have much to tell for we have experienced the unthinkable and the process of describing how we felt when all that was happening, is a complicated one.

How did we feel knowing that we survived an imminent death by fate, miracle, twist of circumstances, and sometimes kind help from others?

How did we feel when we were separated from our parents?

Or how did we feel having had survived while our siblings perished in some cases our parents and whole families?

What do we do about our nightmares, when the sound of a simple siren means an air raid, when we see people being prejudiced and intolerant and remember how we ourselves were persecuted for being Jews?

How do we manage to live in the shadow of the Holocaust?

We have lived with all the above questions, and none of the answers, for a very long time. It was difficult to articulate feelings that were buried so deep inside us. Silence was our code. The public persona coped with normalcy while the private one smarted from childhood traumas and wounds, with no one to help, at least no one who could or would have understood.

Very often we'd feel we couldn't talk about our experience to our friends, because most weren't interested in the subject. In many cases the best we'd hear from those who fortunately did not experience our plight that we should forget the past, get over it and live in the power of now...live in the moment, the new echoes of Eckhart Tolle.

So the child survivor's private persona continued to live in hiding in their own kind of prison, trying hard to forget their frightening memories, pushing them away while becoming accomplished and successful in various other spheres of life in their professions, with families and friends...

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

But it is not as simple as it seems. And here I quote my friend, colleague and child survivor, Dr. Robert Krell, one man among us who truly understands the children who survived.

And I quote from his book titled *Messages and Memories: reflections on child survivors of the Holocaust*:

*“No wonder we hesitate to recall, for our memories are not the privileged ones of a joyous childhood. Our memories lead directly to an overwhelming combination of loss and chronic unremitting grief. And just beyond that, to our inevitable and justifiable rage - a rage so great that it must always be contained.”*

Yes, we children were enraged with the sense of injustice and burdened as Dr. Krell further lists with the numerous culprits that were inhabiting our innermost selves, and I quote

*“Hiding, silence, identity and powerlessness...”*

*“The coexistence of silence with an ambivalent identity results in the diminishing personal power. To be uncertain of oneself leads to powerlessness. It prevents us from speaking up for our rights, sometimes it prevents us from speaking at all. In fact our enemies did their work so well that we who have survived and have much to say about it, are seldom heard.”*

Many of us tried to live as if nothing had happened...for we were not able or ready for a long time to travel, in Aharon Appelfeld's words, “from the oblivion to the awakening”.

It was in the early eighties and for some even earlier, that the awakening came and we broke the silence. Again Dr. Krell stepped in with

video testimonies and that was the first chance we had, to speak of our childhood experiences. I for one found it difficult to find the right words with which to describe the lost years of childhood, for it seemed that nothing I said really did it justice, or showed how I really felt even though that was not the requirement for the testimonies.

Thanks again to Dr. Krell's hard work, first the Holocaust High School Symposium then the Holocaust Centre came into being and we started speaking in an educational outreach program ran by our very own Rita Axelrod and to this day, child survivors speak to students against racism. And I used to get letters from students asking how I felt during the hiding years, how I felt when separated from my parents. So when I spoke, I started adding my feelings to the facts. And that seemed to have a considerably greater impact.

Despite the speaking in schools I continued my struggle to find a different way of telling my story, not simply describing events. The Holocaust was considered and rightfully so, a unique, isolated event that distanced everyday life from itself. And yet here we were living that everyday life as I had previously mentioned, in its shadow. And I realized that to tell my story I would have to combine the unique with the everyday. But how? People want facts, events, historical truths and the individual seems to get lost in this huge, incomprehensible drama.

And here I will quote a well known Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld.

*“We say the word “Holocaust” and great concepts immediately occur to us: God, Destiny, reward and pun-*

*ishment. The essence of metaphysical speculations. But literature even if it wishes to shout out and shatter the firmament must first obey a practical imperative - it must deal with the individual.”*

So from the general to the particular, I would like to tell you of my own quest to overcome the losses which I had tried to ignore in order to live the so called normal life. Some say that in order to understand a writer you must understand the person and their life. Others say that it's only the art that matters. In my case it is probably the former.

I am a late bloomer and writing came to me later in life. Martha Bloom a Saskatchewan writer wrote a few successful novels in her 80's so there is hope for me.

It was in the 1960's when it all started for me, a married woman with two wonderful children, who becomes aware of the unexplainable ache within her, headaches, bouts of depression and nightmares. She can no longer cope with her memories. She can no longer pretend that the Holocaust didn't happen. She can no longer be contained. I am of course speaking about myself.

The first person to ever hear fragments of my story was my son Steven. A wonderful human being who alone, at the mere age of 12 or even earlier listened and understood my struggle, even if as he said later he did not understand much of the story itself for the only gun he had ever seen pointed at a human being, was in the movies. Yet I felt his sympathy and compassion and that gave me the strength to go on. My daughter was still only 9, and I could not burden her mind with these things. But she became a great support to me in later years.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

At 33 years of age I wanted to write but was still torn between two languages. I wrote some pretty lame verses in Polish but when I showed them to a poet whose work I very admired, Andrzej Busza, he informed me that my Polish read like the language of a thirteen year old, the age at which I had left Poland.

On the advice of J. Michael Yeats a Canadian poet I started translating Polish emigre poetry into English. It was thanks to two poets, Andrew Busza and Bogdan Czaykowi, that I started getting the drift of modern poetry. I continued to translate Polish poetry into English in collaboration with another distinguished English poet, Michel Bullock. This work ended in publication titled *The Astrologer in the Underground*, poems by Andrew Busza. The name I used at that time was Jagna Boraks.

When I witnessed a Polish poem translated into its English counterpart, I started believing in the possibility of transformation of Polish into English. At that moment I may have lost one language but gained another and began writing poetry in English.

So my imagery was harsh and cold. It came from that place that shaped me, the Holocaust. Yet I never wrote that word, nor knew where these images were coming from. I despaired over how to describe my perceptions of nature, human nature, emotions, the senses, all of which came to me in Polish, and turn them into English equivalents. How to translate not poems, but feelings about things and people acquired in another culture.

Eventually the poems started flowing better but the bitterness I felt from the past and the society I lived

in, continued to reflect in them despite myself.

Here is an example of a poem I wrote in an answer to those, who would tell me to forget the past.

### IT'S NOT EASY

They say  
it's so easy  
to sculpt love  
at passion's wheel  
into a statue of ourselves  
as in Rodin's "The Kiss"  
or to arrange our bodies  
inside an ornamental vase  
like summer roses

they say  
it's so easy  
to forget our real needs  
the needs of children  
to forget the rules of games  
the games of opening wounds  
the wounds that even time  
can't heal

tell them  
it's not so easy  
to empty our eyes of tears--  
souls of hiding places  
sentences of lies  
or to escape the prison  
of our dreams  
and crush the wall of fear

One of my critics asked why I didn't lighten up and wrote about sex. In short I gave up sending out poems and embarked on a full scale University education to master the English language. I worked feverishly day and night to complete essays and to write exams then went right through for a Master's Degree in Comparative Literature.

My command of English was strengthened naturally but I still had much to overcome to become a writer. I wrote and wrote but couldn't get a handle on what I really wanted to say. Then I thought why write about lives of others when I have so much I want to say about my own? Why try to understand a fictionalized character when I don't even understand myself?

I felt compelled to put my experiences into writing. Why not use myself as a character? Maybe out of the chaos in myself something will make sense on the page. And these are the basic premises on which I teach *Life into Fiction* at UBC.

And again I return to Betty Jean Lifton's words that when a writer feels trapped, there is no place for him to go but inward. I believe that I did that and that was probably how I first got in touch with hidden child inside me.

I wrote my childhood memoir but it was rejected. After all who was I to write a memoir and who would read it? Besides, the word Holocaust was an unmentionable in Canada of those years. People were afraid to look it in the eye, face it.

Much of the publishing world was prejudiced against Holocaust writers. They did not consider them to be real writers, partly because so many memoirs were being written by amateurs or ghost writers.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

And in my case, who would understand my angst about the Warsaw Ghetto Wall? It was my son who once said and I paraphrase, that his mother internalized the Warsaw Ghetto Wall, and so nothing was able to get out or to get in. Somewhere in myself I was stuck.

Nevertheless, I persisted and decided to turn my memoir into a story for young people. *The Old Brown Suitcase* had 22 rejections on the grounds that the Holocaust cannot become a part of everyday life or be written together with the Canadian Immigrant experience. It's sacrosanct they thought. Then, one day the novel was accepted for the very reason that the view of the Holocaust could now be accessible through the voice of an immigrant teenager to Canada. The book was successfully published by a small publisher on Vancouver Island. It went on to win multiple awards and being studied in schools.

It was the day I won the prize for the Best Young Adult book of 1995 that I felt lighter for the first time ever. Not because of the prize as you may think, but because of the acknowledgment I had received--because a group of people suddenly understood, supported and respected my past, my words and the feelings and thoughts of a hidden child.

This novel was my first real quest to try and understand where some of the issues I grew up with came from. I didn't know them till it was finished. One of the passages in the novel was major to how I came to understand my need to run for survival when something threatening appeared around the corner. In that novel I found the feelings I could not

before identify in connection with the Holocaust, like fear, identity, isolation and hiding. I finally began to understand these feelings and their influence on my subsequent life.

I'll read the part about my escape from the Ghetto:

"Father tells me to be patient. He tells me what I already know, that I am leaving the Ghetto.

I sit on my suitcase and keep silent. A rat scurries across the floor. Then another. I move my suitcase away from the squeaking rats, and Father stops pacing. He shoos away the rats and sits down next to me on the floor.

"You are going to your grandmother in the country if all goes well," he says slowly.

Babushka! I will see Babushka! For a moment I am overcome with excitement. I feel brighter in a gloomy room.

"Are you coming too, Papa?" I ask.

"No darling girl, I am not. We would be too conspicuous, and I can't leave your mother alone. Just remember what I told you. We can't let the Germans win. We must survive. So when the time comes, you must follow my instructions perfectly."

"I will Papa," I mumble into his shoulder. My throat is all choked up with tears, but my eyes feel dry, and my body feels numb. I try not to cry.

As daylight approaches, I hear sounds I haven't heard for months. I hear street cars and other vehicles, sounds of a normal city.

"Where are we, Papa?" I ask.

"Near the entrance to the Ghetto," he replies, confirming my guess. The policeman returns.

"It's all fixed," he says, "I gave them the goodies. They promised to pretend not to see her. But you know them, they can turn on you anytime. It's a chance you have to take. Good luck!" He salutes and leaves.

Father sits down on the floor and places his head in his hands. After a long moment, he gets up.

"We're leaving now. Remember what I told you", he says, taking my hand and my suitcase.

We leave the building and walk for several blocks. We stop and Father squeezes my hand tightly.

About half a block from us is a busy checkpoint in the Wall, three soldiers in steel helmets hold rifles as if they were ready to shoot. They march back and forth in front of the large opening. Several Polish Policemen in navy blue uniforms stand by the opening.

"This is the way out of the Ghetto, Slava. You are going to cross the line in a few minutes," Father says gravely. "In the pocket of your coat, is a false identity card. The name on it is 'Irena Kaminska.'" It says that you are a Catholic orphan from Warsaw. There will be a woman waiting for you on the other side. She will know you, and she will take you to Babushka's."

I am frozen. I say nothing. Father gives me the suitcase. My hand can barely hold it.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

"When I tell you, start walking," he says, "Walk through the checkpoint at a normal pace. Do not hesitate, or run. Above all do not turn around to look at me." He hugs me with tears in his eyes.

"Now go!"

I look at him for one last moment, and begin the longest walk of my life.

I try to feel brave as I march towards the checkpoint.

As I draw closer, the green German uniforms grow bigger, and the brass buttons of the Polish Police coats gleam in the sunlight. I arrive at the checkpoint and begin to walk through. The gendarmes and the police do not appear to notice me. I walk straight ahead, and they turn away. My knees feel weak, and heartbeat fills my throat, but I keep on walking. A few more steps and I am on the other side.

I hear shouting beside me.

"I know who you are, you little Jewess! I saw you!" A little boy in rags points his finger at me. I clutch my suitcase tightly as if it were Father's hand, expecting the worst. All of a sudden the shouting ceases as a tall woman in a grey suit grabs my hand, and pulls me into a side street.

She stops for a moment to take my suitcase from me. "You can call me Agnes," she says. "Don't be afraid." Only then do I remember that Father had said someone would be waiting for me on the other side.

We walk quickly now. The beggar boy is left behind, but I feel that

the whole world is staring at us. We rush into a train station. Agnes shows the conductor our tickets and we climb into one of the cars. It is almost empty. A few minutes later the train pulls out of the station.

Agnes sits next to me. She is wearing a grey hat to match her suit. Her eyes are grey too, but large and bright. She is fair haired. I wonder if she is Jewish. But then, I am fair-haired too.

It is my first train ride in two years. I sit on the wooden bench taking in things I haven't seen for so long. There are fields and forests, peasants on carts filled with straw, cows grazing in the pastures, and country houses with white curtains in the windows.

There are no boundaries for miles, and the wall of the Ghetto is behind me. But I wish my parents and my sister were here. God knows when I will see them again."

This passage is a word for word true event and its powerful moment has never left me. I live constantly with the image of having said good bye to my mother then letting go of my father's hand and walking away by myself into the unknown for at that moment I became another person, with a false name and a false birth certificate with false parent's names and a false denomination and I as Liljana Jagna Boraks ceased to exist.

What follows is somewhat connected with *The Old Brown Suitcase* and is an essay I wrote about my recent trip back to Poland:

I am a child survivor, who has not officially acknowledged my rescuers,

though I have been thinking about them a great deal following my recent trip to Poland.

This trip came about as a result of a strange coincidence. Claude Romney, a Vancouver child survivor and a friend, discovered on reading my book, *The Old Brown Suitcase*, that I was hidden during the war in Poland, in a village called Zalesie, on Spokojna Street no. 16. She promptly arranged for me to visit her cousin, Wisia, a child survivor herself, who had coincidentally bought this very house. I had tried to visit this house before on one of my trips back to Poland, but the former owners would not let me in. Thanks to Claude and the kind couple who now live there, I was able to return 60 years later, to an important time in my childhood past. This house and garden were the boundaries within which I was confined during the war.

As I wandered through the premises a few weeks ago, memories abounded.

In 1942, my escape from the Warsaw Ghetto was made possible by my father. He pulled all possible strings just before the great deportations began, to get me out of the Ghetto hell to the other side of the wall. From there, a Christian woman took me to that house in the village of Zalesie. It was my grandmother who lived there. She took me in while hiding under the protective wing of a Catholic man from Cracow and passing as his Christian wife. Though they were not married, the man was willing to support this temporary relationship, based on human decency and friendship.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

And so in June 2006, I relived the years of 1942-44, sleeping in that same dark room smelling of mold. I found a few of the familiar trappings, such as the yellow tiled wood burning stoves, Grandmother's ancient dining-room hutch, the white-tiled kitchen stove and oven. The rooms were unchanged except for some of the furniture, and still had the same wood-framed windows through which I watched the changing of the seasons, longing for my parents and sister.

What often helped me in those days to dispel the closed in feeling of the darkish house was being allowed into the summer garden to hide among the sweet-smelling jasmine and acacia flowers, which still blossom there. The raspberry bushes still grace the back fence and walnut and chestnut trees are still scattered throughout the garden. Searching every nook and cranny so well remembered, I even found the old outhouse, now equipped with a toilet seat and an orange blossom air-freshener.

It was near the outhouse, that I was once hidden inside a hole in the ground to avoid being noticed by the visiting Nazi delegation, who came to investigate the murder of the village Volksdeutscher. Standing by the fence, I recalled with a chill in my heart the unforgettable night, when my grandmother and I stood by the same fence. We were facing Warsaw, staring at the blood-red sky over the burning Ghetto and wondering with despair about the fate of our family.

The return to this house was a healing experience that helped me get in touch with a significant part of

my life, my feelings at that time, and the people around me. It even offered closure to certain events. More than ever I realized how fortunate I was to have survived, thanks to those who cared. I am deeply indebted to the woman who brought me to Zalesie, the man under whose wing we were hiding, my grandmother who took me in and my father who saved my life. I honor them here and now.

They placed themselves in danger, so that a child may live.

These findings, these realizations were all part of the healing process.

I went on to write two more Young Adult novels after *The Old Brown Suitcase*. One talks about anti-Semitic currents in the Victoria of the 50's and the confused identity of my protagonist who was a boarder in a High Anglican School St. Margaret's. The director of the school advised her not to say she was Jewish as she would have been the only Jewish girl in the school. Thus she kept it a secret until her diary was discovered. The book was a finalist for Red Maple Award by the Ontario Public Library System.

I proceeded to write a third novel in the series about the protagonist, Slava who embark on a journey to Communist Poland in search of her lost sister. So many years after the war I desperately believed that she may be still alive.

It was this novel that brought out a feeling of guilt I always had in respect to my sister, After all I survived while she did not. This next poem may well be a product of the rage Dr. Krell spoke of in his book.

### LAUGHING SKELETONS

*For my sister Basia*

Night has flooded me with memory  
a wall of dreams stands  
between illusion and reality  
two skeletons  
arm in arm parade along  
the walkway of the sky  
their laughter moves the stars  
to land upon my dreaming eyes

my murdered sister

my sweet skeleton child --

I never said good-bye

I welcome you

into my home below the earth  
below the roots of trees and others'  
graves

to another sky where once upon a  
time

beyond the fourth dimension  
in the fifth house of the moon

You and I will meet again!

we shall laugh across the sky

and make the shooting stars

land inside the hollows of our eyes

As time goes on and I write more and more I would like to believe that my writing has not been merely used as a vehicle for spewing my rage about the past but that in the process, the girl, the woman I finally rescued from hiding, became a writer and a teacher.

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

Socrates said that an unexamined life is not worth living and I firmly believe that. I also believe that the betterment of society not only depends on its leaders but its composition of decent individuals with a willingness to think and act for themselves and the good of all.

I have learned this after many years of counting my losses, I found so many good things in my life. When I look at my children and grandchildren I realized how blessed I am, and also my dear mother and sister who are with us tonight. I also include all the spouses. And the wonderful friends who are there for me as I hope I can be there for them. I make more of an effort now than ever before to look for good things in people and find that kindness and tolerance are the keys to people's interactions with one another and are the essential ingredients for healing the soul.

I would like to conclude with a poem from *Ghost Children* – a volume of poems inspired by my return to Poland.

## FLICKERS IN THE DARK

What flickers in the dark?  
what place  
have I approached?  
  
fifty years  
I wandered the desert  
of my God  
fifty years  
I lived inside  
the dune of memory  
burying its images  
  
fifty years  
I waited for their ghosts  
to rise from the ashes  
for their fiery tongues  
to defeat the night  
and give birth to words  
that flicker in the dark

The flicker in the dark may well be the flame that was kindled by the spirit and work of Janusz Korczak. Like he, we must fight for children's rights, and recognize that as wars are fought and genocides happen, children suffer and we must continue the work of educators so that the young minds of future generations can be spared bigotry, and that no child ever be caught in the crossfire between two countries, civilizations or cultures, live in fear, be persecuted, left without identity and suffer a loss of self.

Why is it that some people feel a great responsibility for the welfare of another human being, while others turn away?

Like Janusz Korczak, we need to speak out, look out for others and not stand aside with indifference.

## SECRETS OF THE TREES

Trees of the forest  
know their heart  
and the heart of a man with an axe  
  
trees root anew  
in foreign earth  
water and light  
sustain them  
  
water flowing  
through fertile valleys  
created by God and man  
  
light that fires  
the eternal flame in a temple  
or sprouts a murderous seed  
in the heart  
  
trees know  
secrets of creation  
and the secret of a man with an axe

## MEMORY TREE

Tree gathers unto its rings  
stories which it tells  
in the silence of racing time:

infant blossoms  
dreaming  
in the branches

trees sweet sap  
falling  
from green hair

cancer that twists the roots  
and carves painful memories  
into the trunk

## TRANSPLANT

Roots transposed  
at the monument to the ghetto  
martyrs  
and the dog barks  
  
humans stroll these grounds  
seeking shade while history  
smoulders beneath their feet  
I stumble on the year 1942:  
the air is still on the streets of death  
where they have long since built  
houses  
made love and parked cars  
  
life is a museum of oblivion  
all the way to the trains  
where thousands once gathered to  
receive  
the bread and jam of affliction

### Two comments to Lillian Boraks-Nemetz's life and work

#### Secrets of the Trees

By Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo

There are varying opinions about how one ought to analyze a literary work. Some think that the analysis should be based exclusively on the text.

Others claim that by ignoring the author's life experience, the literary critic diminishes his own analysis. All these arguments are fruitless in view of the Holocaust literature because in most these cases the life of an author and his work cannot be separated. We have witnessed this for example in the works of Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Henryk Grynberg, Jerzy Kosinski, Miriam Akavia, and others.

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz was a child during the Second World War. Her earlier experience was that of the Warsaw Ghetto, a place of terror, poverty and death. These words that have no place in the vocabulary of a child became markers of her childhood. Lillian survived the war in hiding. A child's life had to be extinguished before the child could survive by forgetting its name, the names of its parents and the happy family pre-war days. She belongs to those about whom one says she "almost" perished. Or by what miracle did she survive? One says this while thinking that death was merciful in letting her live.

Lillian came to Canada as a 12 year old adolescent. She arrived from Europe where her people were all but exterminated by the Nazis. She came at a difficult juncture in her age when the child self dies while giving birth to a teenager. A psychoanalyst would say that death was still hovering at her heels. She had to survive now in a new country, a new society, and a new language, in an alien space where the existential problem of -who am I? -- became an every day reality and consequently, a source of continuous tension. She had to be born anew.

Thus, her work arose from these biographical facts and was rooted in them.

In a recent interview, Lillian confessed: "I feel that I am still very much that hidden child." Her trilogy, *The Old Brown Suitcase* (1994), *The Sunflower Diary* (1999), and *The Lenski File* (2000), is written in first person.

Narrative passages are revealed through such an intimate forms as a diary and letters. And yet these novels based on real events are intermingled with fiction while the whole personal drama is viewed within a larger historical context. One can see that the narrative is consciously structured, built, formulated, even chiselled. In another words, it is a story about this child and about this girl who tells her story as if she were observing herself from outside.

Her volume of poetry *Ghost Children*, in which the first person is not always used, is in turn a lyrical confession on the very side of the girl. I will risk a comment here, that in comparison with her prose, in her poetry one finds less allusion to the word *I* but more about *She* (Lillian). The whole picture reveals the poet mired in the tragic duality or the split of her persona. The key to this in her poetry is the image of the tree. Not one often found in poetry, the metaphoric tree, whose blossom speaks of youth or whose leaves whisper of love and not the tree that allows the elderly to rest in its shade. This is a symbolic tree, reflecting the author's imagination about what is eternal and what is mortal, about God's creation and the pain caused by people. It is about the power of the word and a silence in the face of rampant evil. It's about the road of life travelled by a human being, and about the death of a human being. It is also about the tragedy and endurance of a people.

Fore mostly, this tree is transplanted.

In effect, Lillian's poetry is about the impossibility of ignoring one's roots, the origin of which remained on that other side of her life, despite the crowning beauty of the branches that unfolded in the new world.

Finally, it is poetry of memory without which nothing human exists.

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

## Growing up in the shadow of the Holocaust

By Malgorzata Burczycka

On the autumn evening of October 18th, 2009 more than 100 people gathered at the Jewish Community Centre to take part in hearing Lillian Boraks-Nemetz a member of the Board and co-founder of the Korczak Association of Canada, speak about her life and survival.

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz was born in Warsaw, Poland. As a child, she was incarcerated in the Warsaw Ghetto for eighteen months. Rescued by Christian people, she was hidden, together with her grandmother, in Polish villages under a false identity until the war was over. In 1947, she moved to Canada with her mother, father and newborn sister living first in Montreal, then Vancouver, and finally settling in Victoria at a boarding school.

With a Master's degree in Comparative Literature, Lillian is a poet and novelist. In addition to her own original works, she has translated two books of poetry by Polish authors into English. She teaches Creative Writing at the UBC Department of Continuing

Studies. She is the author of numerous books, including a collection of poetry: *Ghost Children* (2000), and three young adults novels: *The Old Brown Suitcase* (1994), *The Sunflower Diary* (1999), and *The Lenski's File* (2000). She is at present completing an adult novel.

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz is also a co-founder of the *Holocaust Child Survivors Group of Vancouver*, and was the Chair for four years. She often gives talks to educate students about the Holocaust and racism.

The October evening was entitled *Lost and Found*, and the main theme was Lillian's journey to become who she is. Her need to articulate feelings buried deep inside became at this point overwhelming. Until then Lillian, as many others Child Survivors, tried to live as if nothing happened. She married, had two children, and developed a 'normal' public persona, trying to forget about her past, living in the moment. But her private persona was one that was still carried all the frightening, traumatic memories that continued to live in hiding within her own mental prison, that reminded behind the Warsaw Ghetto Wall that she had internalized. And slowly the burden of living in silence became too

heavy to carry and Lillian needed an outlet for her sorrow and rage. So she embarked on a journey of self discovery and in an attempt to understand her own life she put herself into her fictional characters, as many writers do.

One of the most memorable moments during Lillian's lecture was when describing her time in the Warsaw Ghetto, she talked about the time when as a little girl she visited Korczak's orphanage with her father. That image of a man and a place full of children and the knowledge of what happened to all of them later, haunted her for years with piercing questions: "How do we manage to live in the shadow of the Holocaust? How do we feel knowing that we survived an imminent death by fate, miracle, twist of circumstances, and sometimes kind help from others? How do we feel having had survived while our siblings perished, in some cases our parents and whole families?"

Near the end of her presentation, Lillian read few of her poems and talked about a character in her latest book. And though she managed to speak more about her work as a writer than of her haunting memories, the shadow cast by her traumatic childhood was clearly present.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

The Janusz Korczak Association of Canada hosted Prof. Jadwiga Binczycka from Warsaw, a renowned Polish pedagogue who for many years had presided the Janusz Korczak Association of Poland.

Topic of her presentation was *Janusz Korczak – Champion of Children’s Rights*.

The talk took place on October 3, 2010 at Peretz Centre for Secular Jewish Culture.

An exhibit *Janusz Korczak and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto* (prepared by Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre with participation of our Association) was also on display.

During her stay in Vancouver Prof. Binczycka had a talk on *A Child in the World of Grown Ups* for the members of the Polish Community organized by our Association in cooperation with the Group “Episode”.

One of the highlights of Prof. Binczycka’s visit was a reception hosted in her honour by the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland. Another memorable event for her was an unexpected meeting at UBC with a Vancouverite Jane Heyman, a granddaughter of Isaac Eliasberg, Korczak’s friend and the President of “The Orphans Aid Society” of Warsaw.



**Prof. Binczycka against the background of Burrard Inlet – a rare quiet moment in between the Korczak talks**

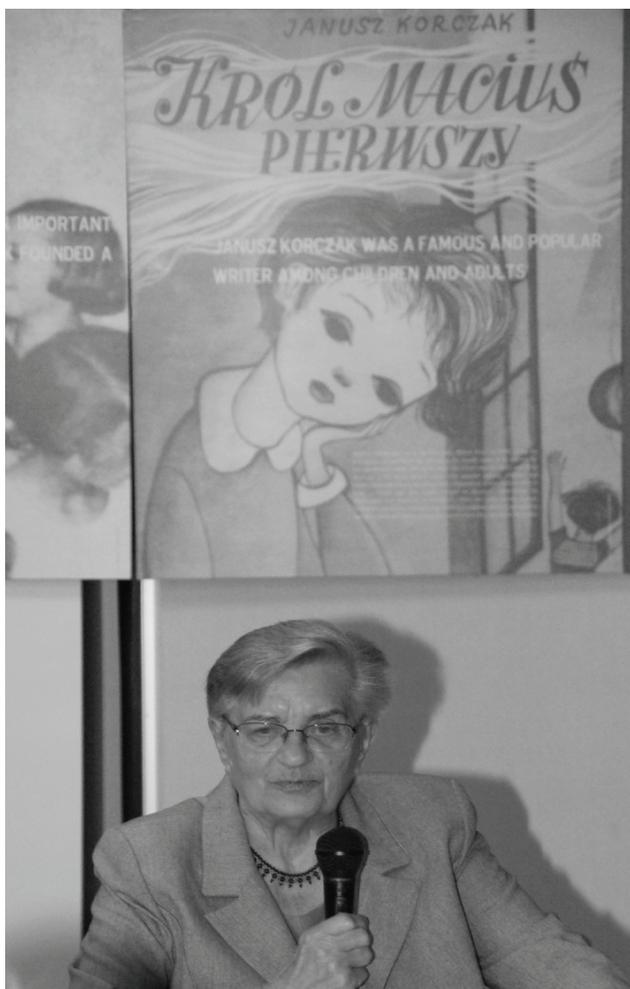
*Photos by Khadim Nathoo*



**Prof. J. Binczycka and Gina Dimant**

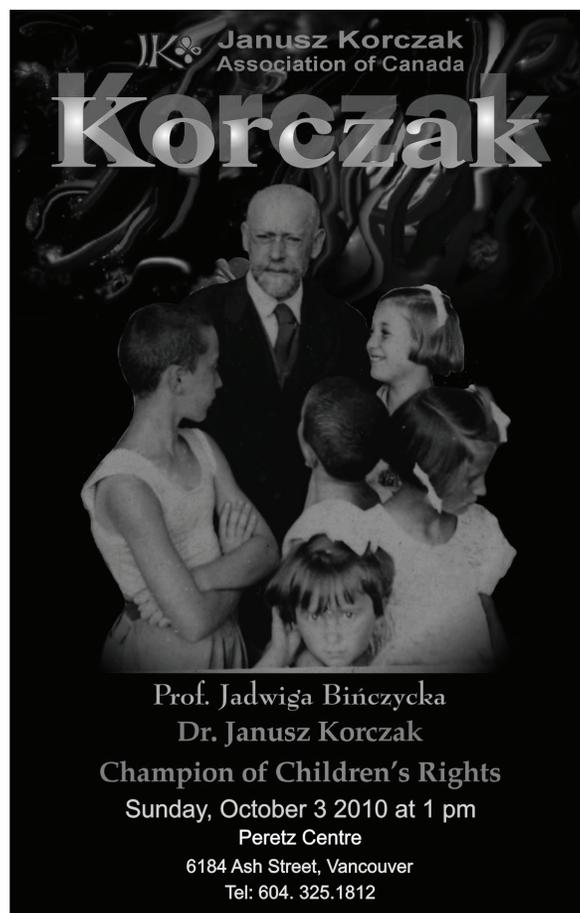
*Photo by Anna Gelbart*

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER



**Prof. J. Binczycka**

*Photo by Michal Radoszewski*



**Poster of Prof. Binczycka's talk**

*Designed by Anna Gelbart*



**Prof. J. Binczycka**

*Photo by Michal Radoszewski*

## Janusz Korczak – Champion of Children’s Rights

By *Jadwiga Binczycka*

There are several issues which I would like to speak to you about. I am here to suggest some answers to the following questions:

- What is the history of the formation of human and children’s rights?

- What was the role that Janusz Korczak and his ideas played in this history?

- How did Korczak’s view of a child (as a part of his philosophy) influence the general understanding of children’s rights?

- Did the Convention on the Rights of the Child which was signed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 – mean that the process of children’s emancipation was completed and the problem was solved once and forever?

- Children’s Rights - do they really exist or are they only declarations with no implementation?

- And finally, what is the role of the World Korczak Movement and the Korczak Association of Poland in making children’s rights a reality?

One of the most important components of mankind’s history is its struggle with different kinds of injustice, violence, and constraint. The main goal of this struggle is to become free of injustice, and to obtain the rights to liberty. This is how our understanding of human rights is born.

Let me give you some historical ex-

amples.

In ancient times slaves had no right to freedom and sometimes even to life. They were treated as animals, and at times even worse. Later, the social position of serfs was similar - they had no rights to liberty or security. Women suffered from the same misfortune. The Woman Liberation Movement tried relentlessly to establish equal rights and privileges for men and women. As you see – a human being, a social group or any minority without human rights is seen as worthless, and becomes subjects of extortion.

In this context, children can be described as the last minority of human kind that has not been set free. That was Janusz Korczak’s idea.

Janusz Korczak was one of the first advocates, spokesmen and real protectors of children’s rights.

According to him: *“It is not that a child will become a person, he is one already.”* He believed that children were fully fledged human beings and should be treated and respected as ones. He showed that children are an “underprivileged class” as he called this group of population, and they should be emancipated. Korczak called the community of children *“a diminutive nation”* which – *“had been forgotten in the great historical transformations from the struggle for the abolition of slavery to the struggle for equal rights for women”*.

Korczak stressed: *“Children and youth represent 1/3 part of mankind, the childhood constitutes 1/3 part of life. Children will not be fully fledged persons in future, they are fully fledged persons now. They ought to own 1/3 of wealth of the earth – and that they have to have on*

*the basis of law rather than favour or courtesy. The fruits of 1/3 part of human activities should belong to them”*.

Children can’t be treated as a kind of property of adults, but rather like their partners. It is not just enough to love children. Korczak emphasized: *“I strongly believe – we must put an end to the fiction of our affection, sweetness, kind heartiness in our attitude towards children and we rather need to talk about their rights”*.

What kind of rights?

Korczak wrote: *“I require a Magna Carta (Basic Charter) of the rights of a child. I came upon three basic rights; but perhaps there are more of them:*

*1/ The right of a child to his/her own death*

*2/ The right of a child to the present day*

*3/ The right of a child to be what he/she is”*

The first one can be shocking; it is not easy to understand this right. Don’t interpret it literally. What Korczak intended to say was that a child wanted to freely discover the world. However, very often parents don’t allow him/her to be active because he/she might... get dirty or even worse - harm himself or herself. The adults are afraid of their own death and because of that they incline to take care of their children’s life to the extent that they don’t allow them to live.

The right to his/her own death interpreted in this way is closely connected with the second one – the right of a child to the present day.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

Korczak observed how adults neglect the actual child's experience, his or her "here and now" and think only or mostly about his/her life in future.

Korczak wrote: *"We should respect the present hour, the present day. How will the child be able to live tomorrow if we don't let him/her live today conscientiously and responsibly? We shouldn't neglect them, restrict their present life by reference to the future, we shouldn't hurry or hurt them. We should respect every moment of their life, because it passes by and will not be repeated; and we should take every moment seriously. When it is not taken seriously it leaves a wound, when it is lost it leaves a bad reminiscence. Let the children enjoy in an unconcerned and trusting way the joy of the early morning. This is how the child likes it"*.

Korczak added: *"A child has the right that his sadness be respected, even if it is only about a pebble that he/she has lost."*

Korczak stressed the right of child to err and then he wrote: *"Let us allow children to make mistakes and help them joyfully to improve themselves"*.

The third right – the right of a child to be what he/she is.

What does it mean?

Let me quote Joop Berding's (the member of the Korczak Association of the Netherlands) interpretation which is very similar to mine.

He wrote: *"We should leave behind illusions of an 'ideal child' and look at every young individual as he/she really is, with all his/her possibilities and shortcomings."*

*"We should have confidence in children and rule out exaggerative expectations. Nowadays many prob-*

*lems in education arise from the ambitions of parents who are disappointed when the child does not meet their expectations. To have confidence also means giving the child time to find things out for his/herself, the time that is appropriate to his/her personal abilities. It means not to rush them.*

*The same way as an educator is not almighty, a child is not completely "makeable". Pedagogy in its practical implementation finds its limits in a child. Korczak accepts every child in his/her uniqueness"*.

This interpretation indicates that Korczak believed in capability of self education of the child. Self education is very important and effective. Adults can only help children in the process of self development.

Korczak helped his wards create a good atmosphere in his Orphanage and establish a real dialogue with the children.

There were common rules in the Orphanage. All members of this community – without any differences of age or position – were subjects to the same rules. These rules were protected by the Children's Court which played the essential role in the Orphanage's life. Here the children were judges and they during special sessions decided who was guilty or who was not. In smaller cases, following decision was taken: *"We forgive you, we forget"*.

Korczak himself stood in front of the Children's Court several times and was judged by children. This way Korczak wanted to stress that there were common rules and one ethic for everyone.

This method helped the Orphanage to become a community of mutual friends, social harmony, cooperation, and common moral principles which were implemented in every-

day life. They were not presented as a kind of sermon given by wiser adults who had a higher morality; but instead, the moral principles were issues to discuss about and decide upon.

Korczak expressed this idea of him as follows:

*"We don't give you anything. We don't give you God, because you have to search for Him in your own heart...."*

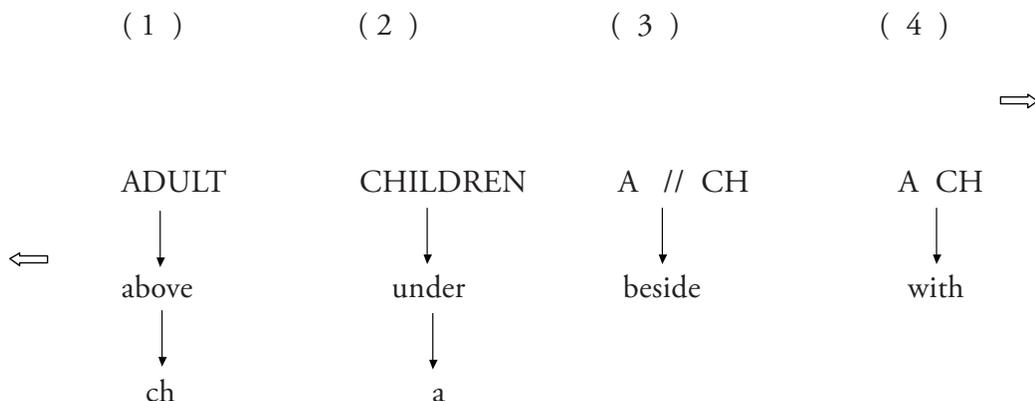
*We don't give you Motherland, because you will have to find that by your own effort and your own thinking. We don't give you Love, because there is no love without forgiving and forgiving is difficult, it is a hard job which everyone has to undertake himself.*

*We only give you one thing – the longing for a better life which doesn't exist yet but will exist in the future, and that will be the life in truth and justice. Perhaps this longing will bring you to God, to Motherland and to Love "*.

Korczak practiced these moral principles in his own life and it was of a great significance for his pupils (and I think for us as well). He also proposed the possibility of creating a society where all members including children have equal and real rights. Korczak wrote about "the right of a child to be respected" in many of his works but one of them has this particular title: *The Right of a Child to Respect*. In this book, Korczak is a splendid diagnostician of the situation of a child in the world of adults, and of the relations between adults and children.

According to Korczak's ideas and contemporary pedagogical and psychological knowledge we can describe the relations between adults and children in the following way:

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER



Model (1) is typical for autocratic power. Adults are on the top, children at the bottom - children belong to adults, they have to obey them without any discussion.

Model (2) shows the opposite situation – children are on the top, they subordinate adults to their needs and emotions.

Model (3) – adults and children are beside each other, but they don't really know each other, they are indifferent toward each other and sometimes even hostile toward each other.

Model (4) Here a real dialogue, mutual respect and mutual acceptance take place.

The adults – parents and educators – are not talking to children but speaking /discussing/ **with** children. Speaking with children instead of **to** them – was the main principle of Korczak's life and pedagogy.

The relation with children instead of “above”, “under” or indifferent “beside” – is the best test whether the children's rights are real .

In model (1) children's rights are only verbal declarations. Similar is in model (2) and model (3).

So, the reality of children's rights and the types of interpersonal relations between adults and youth are inseparably connected.

What kind of situation can we see today?

There are people who don't believe in the necessity (of the rights) for children's rights. Those exist even among teachers!

I have met young students who sincerely asked me:

“Do you think we really have rights? It's impossible!” I have also met a very skeptical student who, after my enthusiastic lecture about children's rights which was delivered at school – said to me: “What you are talking about! Nobody can win with a teacher“. And I must say it is a pretty common opinion among students. They know better the language of disagreement than the language of cooperation, dialogue, mutual respect, and equal rights.

What can we say about the right to live in the world, where the children are the first victims of wars, poverty, and deportations?

What can we say about the right to live without abuse in the society where the acceptance for corporal punishment still exists? And even more: if you are one of those adults who beat their children, it is a violent assault, if you are beating an animal – it is cruelty, when you are beating a child – they think it is okay, it is for his /her benefit.

Sorry to say but such an attitude towards a child one can still see in Poland, and not so rarely. There are not too many people who oppose this kind of abuse.

How is the right to education executed if the emigrants' children don't know the language of the country where they live and have lots of troubles with learning?

There are many more questions and examples...

So, my conclusion is that the struggle for the true children's rights is still on, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child signed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 rather started than finished, the process of child's emancipation.

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

What should we do to speed up this process?

What can be the role of the World Korczak Movement and the Korczak Associations' members in particular? This is a good topic for discussion.

Now, I would like to provide you with some information about the activity of the Korczak Association of Poland, especially in the children's rights defense.

We talk about children's rights; we popularize them wherever we can. We organize conferences and we publish books. To name just a few of them: *The Children's Rights-Declarations and Reality*, *The Right of a Child to Health*, *The Right of a Child to Security*, *Great Humanists about Children's Rights etc.*

These conferences often are followed by art programs which are prepared by children. I would like to mention one of them titled "I Have Right to My Rights" (Lejery School Theater). That was a beautiful program. The spectators and among them mostly teachers and psychologists were deeply touched by it.

Three times we attended the International Seminar "Janusz Korczak - the Polish-Jewish Pioneer of Children's Rights" and the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a Subject of International Law" which took place in Geneva. There were very interesting discussions with the representatives of the International Korczak Association

and Committee on the Rights of a Child of the United Nations.

We closely cooperate with Mr. Marek Michalak – the Ombudsman of the Children's Rights in Poland and with many NGO's. For example with the International Chapter of the Order of Smile.

Order of Smile is a prize granted by children to those adults who opened their hearts to children's needs and their rights, showed their kindness and patience, regardless of skin color, nationality or religion. The Order was established in Poland however the proposals for nominees are sent by children from various countries. The international status of the Order was granted by the decision of UN Secretary General in 1979.

For over 40 years there were 900 persons admitted to the group of the Knights of the Order of Smile from over the world. Among others are John Paul II, Dalai Lama XIV, and Mother Theresa.

The youngest Knight who ever received the Order of Smile was Marek Michalak in 1994, then aged 23, the oldest Dame was Irena Sendler in 2007, aged 97 who saved 2500 Jewish children from Warsaw Ghetto.

Among the Knights of the Order of Smile are several members of the Janusz Korczak Association of Poland (Jadwiga Binczycka, Jerzy Fornalik, Roma Ludwicka, Jerzy Zgodzinski).

The award ceremony is very joyful. Every nominee has to drink a glass of lemon juice with the smile on his/her face while saying: "I promise to be cheerful and to bring joy to children".

The Korczak Association of Poland initiates activities in the spirit of Korczak in bigger cities and small towns as well.

Not long ago I attended the Fourth School Students' Council in small town Ilawa where students of the secondary school for handicapped children presented their visions of children's rights. That was a conclusion of the discussion on this issue that lasted a whole year.

We organized workshops dedicated to this topic in kindergartens as well. The little kids are asked to draw what they think about their rights. The best of these drawings that depict their right to love, to have a family, to play etc., were published in the form of a calendar.

A few times we organized the Day of Kites. Many kites with children's rights written on them flew up towards the sky. Maybe some of those kites fell into the hands of people who did not yet believe in children's rights. And maybe then these people decided to change their minds.

I believe that these people will support the authentic relation between adults and children: the dialogue and partnership where the children's rights really exist.

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

## Comments on Prof. J. Binczycka's visit to Vancouver

### Teaching with a heart

By Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo

In the very core of the city of Warsaw stands a monument to Janusz Korczak.

Poles as well as tourists from abroad, teachers and students, and of course parents with their children gather here to honour the famous Polish-Jewish educator, author, and champion of children's rights, who perished in 1942 together with his wards from the Jewish orphanage, at the Nazi death camp in Treblinka.

Prof. Jadwiga Binczycka was one of those who initiated the construction of this memorial. That project resulted directly from a labour of love, her energy, and her belief that keeping Korczak's heritage and memory alive would be beneficial to the Polish society. The opening ceremony of the monument took place in June 2006.

Jadwiga Binczycka is a Professor of Education, and the preservation of Korczak's memory and his legacy is what she has been doing for more than half a century. She lectured at the Warsaw University and the Warsaw Academy for Special Pedagogy but never refused to work far away from the Polish capital: in cities such as Katowice (Silesia) and Olsztyn (Warmian-Masurian region). Was this the so-called Polish "positivist" sort of idealism or just a path that her private life had taken? Either way the number of students whom she tutored in the theory of pedagogy and Korczak's educational ideas, and whom she taught how to love a child and what is respect and tol-

erance for a child, surely exceeded thousands. One can say that if they link their hands together, they could embrace the Earth. That may be an exaggeration. But seriously, in her pedagogical career, Prof. Binczycka has guided about 900 students who graduated with Bachelors and Master's degrees and six of them completed their PhDs under her supervision. Quite impressive numbers, aren't they?

Korczak's heritage is not the only important part of Jadwiga's educational activities. Writing about Korczak is her contribution to the pedagogy as well: she is an author of more than 10 books and over 600 articles on pedagogical topics. She is also an organizer and participant of many conferences and workshops for teachers which are held in Poland and abroad: in Austria, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Czech Republic, Slovakia, England, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Finland, Israel, Russia, and Switzerland.

Korczak is also a part of Jadwiga's personal life. Most of her friends are in one way or another connected with Korczak's heritage and the worldwide movement based on his ideas. Within the Korczakian 'brotherhood,' Jadwiga has her own unique presence. She has held high administrative positions (she used to be a Vice President, Dean and Vice Dean at various Universities, the Director of the Korczak Research Institute, and a member of the Committee for Education at the Polish Academy of Humanities). At the same time she has contributed a great deal of volunteer work as the President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Poland /1993- 2009/, Vice President of the International Janusz Korczak Association, a Member of the Committee of Children Rights'

Defense, and a Member of the World Association for Educational Studies.

Throughout her long career she has always been close to the youth, and that is why she doesn't even have a bit of conservatism in her views; she is open to new trends and handles problems with much humour.

Finally, Jadwiga is always ready to talk about Korczak, whether night or day, no matter how far from her home, because she strongly believes that Korczak's legacy is her national pride, and that nothing is more important for any society than respect for a child.

## A Special Guest

By Iwona Haskins

In September of last year, our Association had a very special guest, Prof. Jadwiga Binczycka, one of the most recognized experts of Korczak's work.

It was Jadwiga's very first visit to Vancouver. She had three lectures planned during her short visit: the presentation for our members and guests, for UBC students, and for the Polish community in the Lower Mainland area.

After the presentation and discussion, everybody was invited to a reception and had a chance to meet with our prestigious guest privately.

The meeting with the students from the Slavic Language Department of UBC was organized by Prof. B. Karwowska. Her students (potential future educators) were "examined" by Prof. Binczycka (her own term) about their knowledge of Korczak and his pedagogical work. She later said that she really enjoyed this experience and was impressed by the students.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

The public talk organized by the Episode Group was conducted in Polish. The subject was very interesting: Korczak's pedagogical theories in today's technologically advanced society. Discussion after the lecture was long and emotional.

Members of the Association tried their best to show Jadwiga our beautiful city. Some of them had her as a guest in their homes.

Prof. Binczycka's visit was very valuable but definitely too short. We continue to keep contact with our lovely guest.

We would like to say thank you to Prof. Binczycka for her time and effort, and also to everybody who made her visit a success.

**A letter from Bogumil Pacak-Gamalski**, editor of the Vancouver Polish literary magazine *Strumien* (*Stream*) to our Board:

*Dear Friends,*

*Just to let you all know how I appreciated the visit and talk by Prof. Binczycka with our community in Vancouver. Here is my commentary on that subject:*

### **Janusz Korczak – today?**

*Translated from the Polish by Galina Sanaeva*

October 8, 2010

Over the past several days, professor Jadwiga Binczycka, a renowned educator and a "Korczakian," has

been visiting Vancouver. I had a chance to listen to her talk about the wonderful Pole, Janusz Korczak. Nowadays, we quite often forget who "the Old Doctor" was and what he tried to teach us. Certainly, we remember the martyred Korczak's death and his legend. Like with every legend, only the essence remains while minor details vanish over time.

But what do we really remember about this legend? That there was an orphanage for Jewish children? That Korczak was the devoted "Old Doctor" who loved his wards? Despite Korczak having had an opportunity to save his own life, he stayed with the children to the end and kept to his ideals. What a beautiful legend it was. But what was the essence of his ideas? What did Korczak devote his life to? What had he been working on? What did he try to teach us, adults? It is worth reminding ourselves about that. It is worthwhile to listen to the words of the doctor, activist, and philosopher. Many of Korczak's teachings are still relevant.

Foremost, a child is a young person, not someone becoming a person. Therefore, a child is already a person who is spoken with, not a little man who is spoken to. One century has already passed. According to Korczak's ideas, this epoch should have left us different, changed, and improved. It was supposed to be revised for lawlessness and harm, for adults and chil-

dren alike. Did we succeed? No. We signed treaties and agreements. However, despite these majestic documents being showcased in high level governmental offices, we are still spreading hate and teaching ignorance. We are dropping bombs and missiles on cities and buildings where children lie. Moreover, children are forced to fight, and as a result, they are reduced to mere brutal instruments of crime. Almost every day we are shocked to discover that respected child-care and educational organizations prepare children for hell. Even priests, monks, and secular teachers betrayed their mission by allowing the ferocious robbery of childhood. This crime is the worst of the worst. Physical wounds eventually heal while wounds in the soul never do. Baby teeth are replaced by adult teeth, things taken away are forgotten over time but a robbed childhood can never be replaced, affecting that person over a lifetime.

This is a sad consequence. However, it does us no good to simply be ashamed of it. Rather, the situation must be changed. We should work incessantly remembering the words of the "Old Doctor": *"I'm not here to be loved and admired but to work for others and love them. It is no one's responsibility to help me but it is me who has a responsibility to care for the world..."*. By caring for our children and raising them as honest and dependable people, our gratitude for the "Old Doctor" is shown in the most efficient way.

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

## This Child, Every Child. Janusz Korczak and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

A talk delivered by the author David J. Smith to members and supporters of our Association.

The event took place at Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre on May 29, 2011.

**JK** Janusz Korczak  
Association of Canada

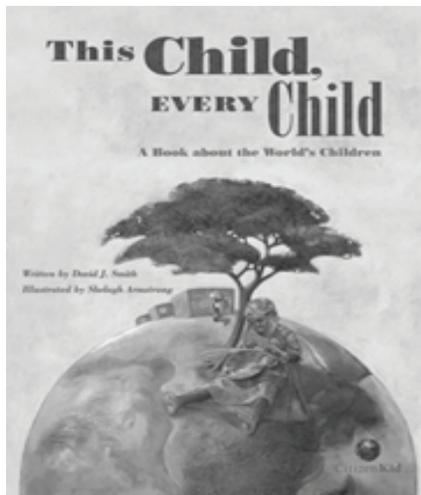
2011 Annual General Meeting  
**This Child Every Child**  
Janusz Korczak and the UN Convention  
on the Rights of the Child

"Children are not  
the people of tomorrow  
but people today"  
~ Janusz Korczak

Sunday, May 29 2011  
4:30 pm  
at  
Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre  
50 - 950 West 41st Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 2N7  
(604) 264.0499

Guest Speaker **David J. Smith**  
Reception to follow

**David Smith's talk. An Invitation**  
Designed by Anna Gelbart



Cover of David Smith's recent book



**David Smith**

David J. Smith is a classroom teacher and author of six books. He achieved international recognition for his unique method of teaching children to draw maps of the entire world from memory, now published by Fablevision as a highly successful curriculum. *Mapping the World by Heart* by Smith won the U.S. Department of

Education's "A+For Breaking the Mold" Award for this work.

Since 1992, he has been a full time consultant, providing lectures and workshops on geography and global issues, and on IT issues, to teachers, parents, student groups, and others in the United States, Europe, Africa, South America, Australia, and Asia. *Time* magazine, NBC's Today Show, The *L.A. Times*, and the Associated Press, among others, have acknowledged Smith and the success of his curriculum. Besides the curriculum, Smith has written articles for the *New York Times'* Education Life section, for the *International Educator*, for *The World paper*, *NESA Notes*, and *Independent School Bulletin*.

He has also written five other books – *If the World Were a Village* (Toronto, 2002), *The CEESA Web-Site Manual* and *Emergency Procedures Handbook for International Schools* (1998, 2003 US State Department).

*If the World Were a Village* has been widely and favourably reviewed in journals such as *Booklist*, *School Library Journal* etc. It was chosen by the American Booksellers Association as their #1-recommended book on the BookSense 76 Children's list for Spring-Summer, 2002, and *Newsweek* chose it as one of 10 children's books on their "recommended reading" list in August 2002. In addition, it won the H.C. Andersen Prize for 2003, the International Reading Association's Children's Book Award for 2003, and was named a Smithsonian Notable Book of the Year. It has been published in 20 editions, in 17 languages other than English, including Braille.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

The sequel to *If the World Were a Village*, entitled *If America Were a Village* was published in August, 2009.

His newest book, *This Child, Every Child: A Picture Book for Children about the Rights of Children* was published in February, 2011.

David and his wife live in North Vancouver, B.C.

David Smith's book, *This Child, Every Child*, which was the backbone of his talk before the members of our Association, is a groundbreaking book that compares the lives of children around the world today.

Every second of every day, four more children are added to the world's population of over 2.2 billion children. Some of these 2.2 billion children will be cared for and have enough to eat and a place to call home. Many others will not be so fortunate.

*This Child, Every Child* is a revealing and beautifully illustrated glimpse into the lives of children around the world; it uses statistics and stories to draw kids into the world beyond their own borders and provide a window into the lives of their fellow children.

As readers discover, there are strik-

ing disparities in the way children live. Some children lack opportunities that others take for granted. What is it like to be a girl in Niger? How are some children forced into war? How do children around the world differ in their home and school lives? *This Child, Every Child* answers such questions and sets children's lives against the rights they are guaranteed under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

As David said, "It would indeed be impossible ever fully to capture the contradiction, paradox and ambivalence with which we treat our children; in the Convention, and Korczak's document 100 years before that, we try to use the humanity of words to come to grips with the inhumanity with which so many children are treated.

As we continue to honour Korczak, we must be committed to convey the importance and depth and humanity of his work."

### Comment on the event

By Anna Gelbart

[...] *This Child, Every Child* is a book about the world's children, about children's rights. Our chil-

dren, our neighbours' children, children of the world, children that live in a place we'd like to call our global village.

Children's rights. Lets go back for a moment to Janusz Korczak's famous essays, *How to Love a Child* written in 1914-1920. Many called it the constitution for the rights of children, the child's right to respect and children as human beings now and today regardless of nationality and religion, ideas that were adopted by the UN in the Declaration of the Right of the Child of 1959.

The outstanding educator Korczak said, "One who understands that all tears are salty, can educate children; one who doesn't, can not."

David J. Smith shares this humanitarian view.

He has written extensively on the subject of children's rights, children everywhere.

Children are the same, if given the same chance and opportunity.

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

## School Holocaust Project

Grade 6: Term 3 June 201

*By Bridget Esler, Lauren Lavoie & Juliana Schneider*

Hello! We are Juliana, Bridget and Lauren! We are three sixth grade students at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Throughout the school year, our grade has been studying the Holocaust in library class. We have read a novel from the perspective of a Jewish boy living in Germany during WWII called *Daniel's Story*, we have looked at the story of Anne Frank and we have watched videos about this time in history.

As an end-of-the-year assignment our class was asked to split up into groups of three and do a presentation on a hero of the Holocaust. There was a list of heroes we could choose from and after Juliana (one of the members of our group), informed our library teacher of the story of Janusz Korczak, our teacher decided to add him to the list of heroes.

As you continue reading we would love to tell you about our project on this amazing hero. Our project consisted of two smaller assignments. The first, a short biography including childhood, war, political climate, and why the person was a hero. The second, a poster about the person, including a portrait (printed or sketched), facts, a short cartoon on the three main parts of the hero's life, quotes, life lessons, description of personality etc.

We all spent several weeks, finding information (and checking if it was accurate), drawing, and writing the biography. We were all very inspired by Janusz Korczak's caring nature, courage and his quotes. The quote we chose to display on our poster is: "A hundred children, a hundred individuals who are people – not people to be, not people of tomorrow, but people now, right now – today". We loved the emotion and respect

for children behind this quote. We also displayed the life lesson: "Children should be respected and treated equally to adults. Children aren't just children, they are people".

Then we were asked to in 5 words describe Janusz Korczak. We found this extremely difficult since he was such an amazing person, but in the end we managed to narrow it down to 5. The five words we chose are:

Brave: for choosing to die with the children he loved.

Loving: for dedicating his life to children.

Creative: for writing novels for children and adults.

Caring: for helping children especially those among the underprivileged and finally, overall

Exceptional: for all the things he did out of love and compassion.

We all learned a lot from our project on Janusz Korczak. We learned all the basic information about him; where he was born, what he did, his family background, and much more. But there were many things that stood out the most. Things that nobody would really know about someone unless they really dug deep into a person's life. That's exactly what we did. We found out he didn't want to have children because his father had a disease and he feared it would be passed onto his child/children. We found out things that really shocked us like that he was given the opportunity to live but chose to die with the kids of his orphanage, to stay with the ones he loved. With all the information that we learned, the lesson that stood out the most was that children are people just like you and me. We both have feelings and should be treated with the same respect. One quote that our group loved, but couldn't write in our presentation was this: "I am a butterfly drunk with life. I don't know where to soar, but I won't allow life to clip my beautiful wings".

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER



**Bridget Esler, Lauren Lavoie & Juliana Schneider**



**Juliana Schneider**

## **Tear from the Eye**

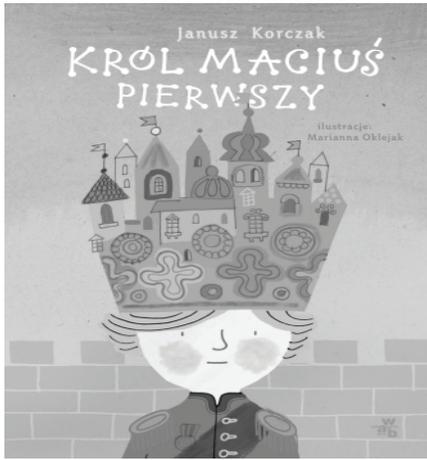
*By Juliana Schneider*

No 200 souls wanted to cry  
Although they all needed to know why?  
Where was the unity where was the “we”  
Blessed by God that’s what everyone should see  
Never will we know the horror that they saw  
Never will we feel the life they fought for  
All the terrible things in their life

Like being stabbed in the back with a knife  
All the pain and suffering for every single child  
Those are emotions that will never have to hide  
Everything was at a zero  
Then came Janusz Korczak who was truly a hero  
He was offered freedom and chose to die  
To show how much he cared and help them try  
To stop that tear coming from their eyes  
Watching them all say their last goodbyes

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

## King Matt I is to rule on stage in Vancouver in 2012



Cover of Korczak's book "King Matt the First"

by Marianna Oklejak



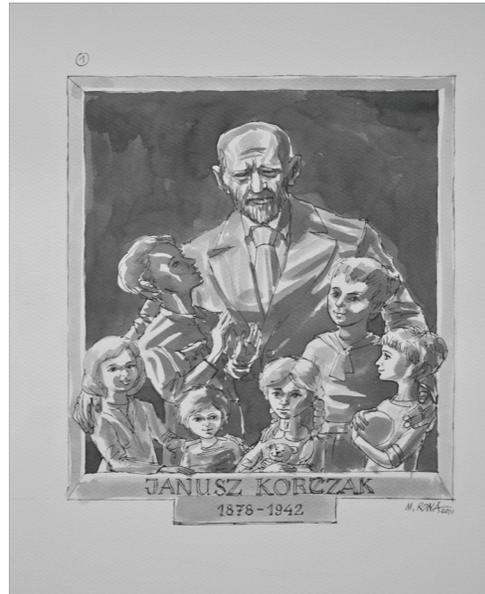
Actors of the Vancouver Polish Popular Theatre

Photo by Andrzej Manuski

Vancouver's Polish Popular Theatre (Teatr Popularny) is to put on stage the play based upon Janusz Korczak's book King Matt I. Adapted and directed by Julia Wiernio (Poland). Translated into English by Marek Czuma. The play will be performed in English with subtitles in Polish. The premiere is expected in spring 2012 as a part of the the

Chutzpah! International Festival of Jewish Performing Arts featuring both established and emerging professional artists from across Canada and around the world.

## Celebrating the Year of Janusz Korczak: Korczak bas relief to be installed at UBC



The Korczak bas relief

A project by Marek Rona

will commemorate the occasion with numerous events. As always, we strive most of all to introduce Dr. Korczak, the great humanitarian and children's rights advocate, to Canadian society. In this spirit we have commissioned the bronze relief (see picture above) to be displayed at the Department of Education at the University of British Columbia. At the unveiling ceremony we will introduce present day educators, students, and academics to the life and works of Dr. Korczak. This celebration will not be possible without your generous support.

We would greatly appreciate your donations towards the relief to be sent to the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada, 203-5455 West Boulevard, Vancouver BC, V6M 3W5.

If you are interested in more information please contact us at 604- 264-9990.

We are a registered charitable organization and will issue receipts for all donations.

The relief is being designed by **Marek J. Rona**, a prolific Polish sculptor known for his many civic monuments. His bronze sculptures and numerous memorial plaques have been recognized as unique and outstanding. He is also a painter and a book illustrator. Marek J. Rona lives with his family in Bydgoszcz, Poland.

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

## Congratulations



**Gina Dimant during WWII, so far away from home, in Siberia**

In 2011 one of the founders of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada, Mrs. Gina Dimant, turned 85!

Always on the move, always full of energy, always hospitable in spite of all the difficulties that life did not spare her.

For at least the last 15 years she has been an unstoppable promoter of Korczak's ideas and the activities of our Association.

Here are two photos of Gina – from 1945 taken in Siberia (more precisely in Eastern Kazakhstan),



**Gina Dimant – her life has never been easy but every day of it has been interesting**

*Photo by Michal Radoszewski*

where she spent seven years (1939 to 1946) first fleeing from the Nazi-occupied Poland to Soviet Russia and later being deported by the Soviets to remote areas of Eastern Kazakhstan. Another one is from 2010 taken at one of the Korczak events in Vancouver.

## Sto lat, droga Gino!

A member of the Board of our Association Malgorzata Burczycka was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit by the President of the Republic of Poland for her outstanding community achievement in promoting Polish culture and arts.

Malgorzata is a founding member of the Vancouver Chopin Society and the former Vice-President of the Polish Canadian Congress. She was also involved in the media, contributing to the Polish language newspaper and TV program.



**Malgorzata Burczycka**

*Photo by Krzysztof Burczycki*

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

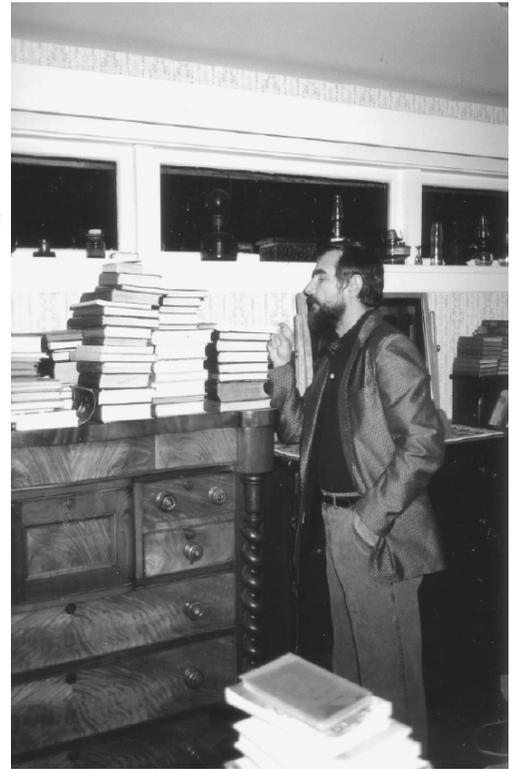
## In Memoriam

Krzysztof (Chris) Szafnicki (1944 – 2009)



**Krzysztof Szafnicki**

*Photos by Barbara Szafnicka*



We remember Krzysztof as thoughtful, playful, and always optimistic.

He had a Ph.D. in Sociology, was an academic who taught students at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby. His passion was to make the society a better place to live in. Furthermore he had unquestionable organizational skills that helped him bring to life and carry through his countless ideas. Without him the chronicle of Polish community life in the last almost 25 years would have definitely been less colourful. The diversity of his interests was legendary. He liked tennis and jazz, classical music and theatre, fine arts and poetry. His interest in history and social issues was so vital to him that we can say it was his daily bread. Simply put, he was a social activist by nature.

And so, it is no wonder that he was the first enthusiast to respond to the idea of establishing the Korczak Association in Vancouver. For him, Janusz Korczak was a great moral authority of universal significance and Krzysztof was adamant that Canadians should

know more about our patron's legacy. At the same time he believed that Korczak's work and the man himself were an important part of Polish culture, which Krzysztof tirelessly promoted. He volunteered to be a keynote speaker at the first public talk on Korczak in Vancouver in front of a few hundreds of people gathered at Norman Rotshtein Theatre. We were then a small group of friends but after this talk and the show of Andrzej Wajda's film "Korczak" that followed, many joined us. This event marked the beginning of our Association.

Krzysztof doubtlessly compiled a long list of things-to-do every morning. Most likely every evening he realized that some of these things from the long list had not been done yet. He planned to do them the next day...

One more facet of Krzysztof's exceptional personality that we all knew was how he loved songs. Even now when he is no longer with us we get together from time to time and sing for him in celebration of his life.

(O.M-N.)

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA - VANCOUVER

Andrzej Endelman (1928-2011)



Andrzej Endelman

Andrzej Endelman was once a member of our Association, one of those few for whom Korczak's name meant not only a hero of the Holocaust or a champion of children rights, or an author of numerous books. It was more than those things. For Dr. Endelman, Korczak was someone he knew in his own childhood. Janusz Korczak and the Endelman family belonged to the same circle of Polish society: Warsaw Jews, assimilated and well educated. Among the Endelmans there were prominent politicians, businessmen, writers, doctors - all of them socially active. They generously supported Korczak's orphanage.

I met Dr. Endelman for the first time at a Polish emigre poetry night at one of the more notable Vancouver's homes. During the break we were chatting about this and that and eventually got onto the subject of our favourite Polish public and literary figures. I mentioned Korczak. His reaction was instantaneous. "Korczak?" It seemed to me that he was at that moment overwhelmed with memories from his past. He said: "When I was a child I very often heard Korczak's name from my parents. It flitted here and there during their

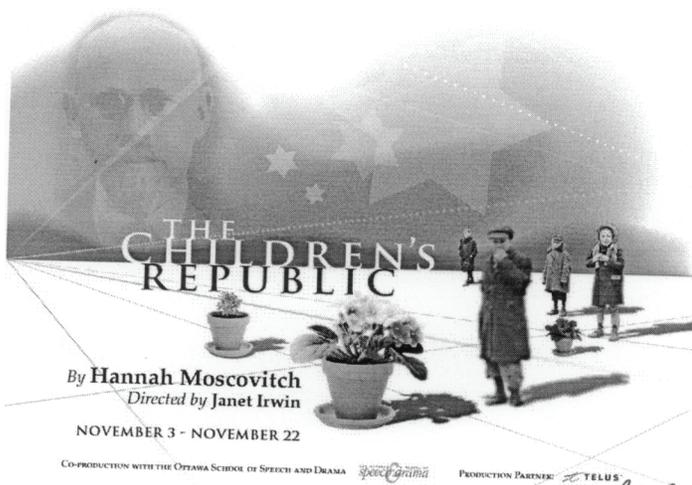
conversations. I read Korczak's books for children of course. I don't remember now whether I saw him but his presence in our home was always tangible."

Most likely young Andrzej would meet Korczak later in his life but the Second World War broke out and the world turned upside down.

Andrzej and his parents survived – by hiding in shelters on the Warsaw Aryan side after escaping the Warsaw ghetto, then the concentration camp of Stuthof that was the last liberated concentration camp at the very end of the war, and later on, after the war was over, they wandered from one country to another... England, Ireland where Andrzej graduated from the Medical School, Australia, finally, Canada. Here he practised as a gastroenterologist. Knowledgeable, cultured, and reliable Dr. Endelman was greatly respected by his Canadian colleagues and friends. Vancouver loved him and he loved Vancouver. But he always remained *Homo Varsoviensis*, a son of the city he shared with Janusz Korczak.

(O. M-N.)

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA – OTTAWA



A poster of "The Children's Republic". Ottawa, 2009



Leon Gluzman with young actors  
Photo by Alan Dean

### *The Children's Republic* –the opening of a new play about Janusz Korczak' orphanage

Fragments of the letter to our Association sent by Amanda Lewis, an Executive Director of the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama:

[...] "*The Children's Republic* has been 3 years in the making and features a cast of professional adult and child actors. Written by Canadian playwright Hannah Moscovitch, the play focuses on Dr. Korczak's life work, and his understanding of children's rights.

The play is being produced as a tribute to Leon Gluzman who was a resident in Dr. Korczak's orphanage in the 1920s. He still lives in Ottawa. We suspect he is probably one of the very few people left to have known Korczak personally.

The production opens in Ottawa on November 5 and runs until November 22, 2009. It is produced in conjunction with an exhibit on Dr. Korczak that has been brought from the Jewish museum in London, England." [...]



Hannah Kaya and Louis Sobol in "*The Children's Republic*"  
Photo by Alan Dean



Paul Rainville as Janusz Korczak in "*The Children's Republic*"  
Photo by Alan Dean

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA – OTTAWA

## Selected media coverage of the event (Excerpts)

Children's Republic: A New Canadian Play Premieres at the Irving Greenberg Theatre Centre

By Heather Marie Scheerschmidt  
for *Culture* magazine October 30, 2009

This November, the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama (OSSD) in partnership with the Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC) presents a new play about children struggling to make sense of a world descending into chaos, and the man who teaches them to believe in themselves. The Children's Republic, by Hannah Moscovitch, explores the life and work of Dr. Janusz Korczak, a Polish-Jewish physician, author, educator and dedicated advocate of children's rights.

The inspiration for this new work is another man known for his generosity towards children, Ottawa businessman Leon Gluzman. Now in his nineties, Gluzman lived in Dr. Korczak's orphanage [...] before immigrating to Canada in 1929 [1930]. His childhood connection to Dr. Korczak had a huge impact on his life and the contributions he has made to his community. One of those contributions was to help the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama construct a new arts facility in his Westborough building. As they got to know one another, Mr. Gluzman shared with OSSD Artistic Director Amanda Lewis the story of his childhood and his experiences with Dr. Korczak. Together they realized the

story would make for an interesting play.

With that in mind, Amanda Lewis organized a weeklong exploratory workshop at the school. Students ages 10 to 16 worked with a director, a movement coach, and a composer to research Dr. Korczak and explore his philosophies through text, movement, and music. The workshop included a question and answer session between the children and Mr. Gluzman. "The minute he started talking about Poland in the 1920s, we were there with him," Lewis recalls. "It made the orphanage very alive for all of us."

[...] Korczak actively encouraged the children under his care to creatively express themselves. He believed that if they were respected, and really listened to, they could learn to overcome the tragedy of their circumstances and become who they were meant to be. In them, he saw what he called a child's inborn abilities; he believed that children have a spark of potential that needs to be nurtured. He treated them as experts in their own affairs, and strove to make his orphanage a place where kids could structure their own community, and where the role of adults was to support them. Although much has been written about Dr. Korczak, including plays, Lewis decided they would create a new work, "We have a person, in our building, who knew Korczak... I wanted to start from there."

What emerged from the first workshop was a strong sense of connection to the children of the orphanage, and a desire to tell their stories. As the project grew and entered its second phase, OSSD and GCTC co-commissioned Moscovitch to

write a play based on the themes that had been researched and developed with the students.

Hannah Moscovitch, the current "it" girl of Canadian playwriting, is an Ottawa native and a graduate of the National Theatre School. Now a resident of Toronto, Moscovitch's previous work has enjoyed both critical and popular success. Her most recent work, *East of Berlin*, has been nominated for a 2009 Governor General's Literary Award.

"It was a strange offer," Moscovitch says when asked how she became involved in the project. "Normally when you have children on stage you hire adult actors to play them. So to actually put children on stage seemed to be a really weird idea." Before starting the script, she was able to sit in on one of the workshops and talk to the kids about the material, "It was really interesting to hear what they thought about the rights of children according to Korczak, and what he meant to them." This is the first time Moscovitch has written parts for young people, and she describes the experience as rewarding, "Working with these children is really moving. There's something innately compelling about children, and if you're in theatre you're always trying to work out what's compelling...they're very sincere on stage."

For Amanda Lewis, who regularly works with kids, the fact that child actors impress came as no surprise. "What we did with this work was to involve the kids right from the start, so that they had an ownership of the project that was greater than anybody else's. And when Hannah came into the process, they had a voice already. And she heard that voice."

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA – OTTAWA

The creative process for *The Children's Republic* mirrors Korczak's teachings; the OSSD students, given respect and encouragement, felt empowered to reflect the lives of the Polish orphans from their own perspective. The students' interests drove the project, and their voices gave shape to the story and the characters that Moscovitch would eventually write. There's also an interesting parallel between the teachings of Dr. Korczak and the philosophy behind the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama. The school, thanks to the generosity of people like Leon Gluzman, is a space where children are given the freedom to express themselves and the opportunity to work with professional artists who nurture their creative abilities.

*The Children's Republic* has become an exciting opportunity for collaboration within the Ottawa community. It started with Amanda Lewis and the OSSD students; soon Janet Irwin signed on to direct, and when Artistic Director Lise Ann Johnson saw a workshop presentation, the GCTC came on board as a producing partner. Hannah Moscovitch, who remembers attending plays at the GCTC with her parents and who briefly attended the OSSD, agreed to write the script. Well known Ottawa actors Peter Froehlich, Kate Hurman, Sarah McVie and Paul Rainville round out a cast that includes an unprecedented six roles for children

played by Juliana Krajcovic, Luke LeTourneau, Leah Morris, Adrien Pyke, Hannah Kaya and Louis Sobol.

The subject matter of this piece has inspired the larger community to become involved. The play premieres during Holocaust Education Week and accompanying the show is an exhibit from the Jewish Museum in London, England called *Champion of the Child*. The exhibition, arranged through the Shoah Committee of Ottawa, charts Dr. Korczak's legacy and shows how his life's work has resonated around the world.

When asked what sets this work apart from others she's written, Moscovitch had this to say: "I've written a lot of plays that are ironic, and clever; not that they don't pack some sort of emotional punch at the end, but this play is a really emotional story. I'm not being clever politically in it, I'm not being ironic...I'm just telling a story, and it's an emotional story."

Dr. Korczak died in the Treblinka concentration camp along with 200 of his orphans. "He is known for the horror of his death," says Amanda Lewis, "for what his death symbolizes, what the death of the children symbolizes. And we could do that play, but we really wanted to look at his life and the lives of these children".

### **The Children's Republic by Hannah Moscovitch**

*Posted on November 13, 2009 by riverwriter in Word currents*

This is a beautifully staged, impressive piece featuring an all-Ottawa cast consisting of four superb seasoned actors and six very promising youths from the Ottawa School of Speech and Drama.

Janet Irwin once again demonstrates her ability to nourish a large cast production through workshops and rehearsal with a sure hand that guides the incredibly intricate elements of a production like this to the superb result that we have here.

Marc Desormeaux's quadraphonic soundscape at times became its own moving story, particularly the sounds of birdsong and bird flight which developed into a very moving symbol of life and freedom.

Hannah Moscovitch's script, which she developed through a workshop with the children at OSSD over the course of two years, layers anecdotes that give us a picture of the character of the remarkable Janusz Korczak, a pediatrician in Warsaw, Poland, who established an orphanage in 1911 [1912], and with great compassion, worked with his children into the war years, when he was forced to move the orphanage to the ghetto. He stayed with his charges in spite of various opportunities to leave them until he accompanied 200 orphans to Treblinka extermination camp, and was never seen again. His orphanage still exists in Warsaw.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA – OTTAWA

Powerful stuff. While the Holocaust is a significant but tiny part of this story, the script does not feed on it; rather, the script focuses on character: Moscovitch compresses time, using the stories of five of the children to represent all of them, from their first tentative arrival [...], through their development of awareness and emotion and personal ties and even romance, stopping along the way to show returning adults who have succeeded in life. Korczak becomes endearing and even humorous, as do the children. Although I found the opening scene somewhat tentative and a little forced, the action very quickly drew me in, and I was hooked.

Paul Rainville, one of my favorite actors, certainly has perfected his recipe for delivering an intelligent, engaging, powerful character whom the audience can totally embrace. His Korczak drew the audience into the humor and the drama and the nobility. Every nuance rings true.

Kate Hurman, resplendent in a wonderful dark hairpiece, another of my favorite actors, gave us one of the warmest moments of the entire evening when Stefa goes to the photographer to have her portrait taken. The gamut of expressions that is brought on by the photographer's suggestions was natural and wonderful. In a sense, her character is choric, because Stefa's opinion gives the audience a measuring stick for Korczak's actions: her reaction to his decisions and pronouncements gives us a sense of whether he is being heroic or hubristic.

Peter Froehlich gave interesting and contrasting performances of

two characters, one a great supporter of Korczak, the other cranky pragmatist. The contrast is very interesting particularly since both sides of it were played by the same man.

[...] The six young actors in this play acquit themselves very well. They carry a great deal of the action with considerable skill. Louis Sobol plays Israel through the greatest character shift in the play: Israel progresses from sullen, disobedient, and alienated to loving, enterprising and self-sacrificing without missing a beat. Leah Morris, who plays the violin live on stage remarkably well, also progresses from withdrawn anorexic mute to outgoing friend. Hannah Kaya, Juliana Krajcovic, Luke Letourneau, and Adrian Pyke also gave the play genuine, interesting characters, each with its own drama and humor.

Camellia Koo's set, features a double door, a scrim, and multiple wooden chairs—several on stage to serve as beds and chairs, and the rest on the wall behind the scrim where they could be highlighted, displaying symbolic items representative of the many orphans and situations that had passed before—all on a multi-tone gray floor. The door seems to be a nod to the door of the actual orphanage. Jock Munro's lighting creates focus and atmosphere seamlessly.

Koo's costumes, particularly the children's costumes were very effective at depicting the period, the social circumstances, and the country; but more important, they gracefully aged these children very believably.

*The Children's Republic* works on many levels: the performances are all solid, we experience a range of emotions, the script focuses on the positive development of the orphanage and the children; but the ending of this poignant script fails. With the Nazis evicting everyone from the orphanage in the Warsaw ghetto, Korczak gathers his faithful housekeeper and the heart of his 190 children into a group hug; and, very much in character, proposes that they walk to the sun. Moscovitch could have done so much more with this: the mechanics of the scene demand that this sun symbol be planted and developed in much the same way as she developed the sounds of the birds. Conversely, she had introduced and repeated Korczak's love of a passage in the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. The Kaddish theme went nowhere, but it could have been the foundation for a remarkable and evocative ending. She could have had Korczak recite that passage here, or use the voiceover of it, or had Moishe recited for him. Think of Meryl Streep as Ethel Rosenberg reciting the Kadish with Al Pacino as the despicable Roy Cohn dies in *Angels in America*. Had Paul Rainville been given such an ending, it would have blown the audience out of their seats. As it was, we had a striking moment, but a moment that felt manufactured as a parlor trick, because the walk to the sun has little relationship to anything else in the play except a tenuous link to Korczak's fanciful imagination—hardly enough justification for the ending of a story that does need an ending.

# JANUSZ KORCZAK IN CANADA – TORONTO & MONTREAL

## The Children's Republic on Toronto Stage



A Poster of “The Children’s Republic”. Toronto

A play *The Children’s Republic* by Hannah Moscowitsh directed by Alisa Palmer is being performed at Toronto Harold Green Jewish Theatre (in cooperation with Tarragon Theatre) from November 8 to December 18, 2011.

XXX

Our Association participated in the final stages of the *Righteous among the Nations* award process. The President of our Association Jerry Nussbaum was invited to represent us at a Yad Va-Shem Award Ceremony in Toronto. The award was granted to Mr. Zbigniew Zakrzewski. On his behalf, at this very moving ceremony, the award was accepted by his son, Mr. Marek Zakrzewski from West Vancouver.

## Janusz Korczak Award

Janusz Korczak Award granted to outstanding humanitarian Dr. Kirsten Johnson, MD at the Segal Centre for Performing Arts in Montreal on February 25, 2010.

In the spirit of building bridges with the cultural communities and promoting tolerance through theatre, the Segal Centre for Performing Arts presented a special performance by Young Actors for Young Audiences (YAYA): *No More Raisins, No More Almonds* on February 25, 2010, followed by the inauguration of the Janusz Korczak Award for Children’s Rights.

“We created this award to pay tribute to Dr. Janusz Korczak and honour a Canadian citizen or organization that has shown an outstanding commitment to helping children in conflict regions,” said Bryna Wasserman, Artistic Director of the Segal Centre for Performing Arts.

Inspired by the remarkable humanitarian of Dr. Janusz Korczak, a distinguished jury evaluated several nominees and awarded the first-ever *Janusz Korczak Award*

for *Children’s Rights* to Dr. Kirsten Johnson, MD, MPH, a passionate and tireless protector of the world’s most vulnerable.

Focusing on the devastating effects of war on women and children, Dr. Johnson has dedicated herself to improving their lives. As part of the *Child Soldier Initiative*, Dr. Johnson works alongside a number of organizations devoted to eradicating the use of child soldiers. She also reshaped rehabilitation programs for former child combatants with her study on the long-term mental conditions of child soldiers in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2005, she was awarded the New Investigator Award of Excellence at the Global Health Conference in Washington, D.C. in recognition of her research on malnutrition in refugee and displaced person camps.

Using her vast experience as a clinician and public health specialist, Dr. Johnson has pioneered techniques for training humanitarian workers in disaster response, which became part of the curriculum in an inter-university initiative between Harvard, Tufts, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Feinstein Famine Center. Her research in Chad with Physicians for Human Rights resulted in a collaborative report on the Destruction of Livelihoods in Darfur by the Government of Sudan, which she presented to both the United Nations Special Representative for the Secretary General on Genocide Prevention, as well as the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Netherlands.

*Young Actors for Young Audiences (YAYA)*: The young troupe that brought *No More Raisins, No More Almonds* to life for this special occasion is part of the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre and the Academy at the Segal Centre. Made up of actors aged 8-18 from different cultural backgrounds, the popular play tells the story of Jewish youth trapped in Nazi Ghettos during WWII. Written by child Holocaust survivor and educator, Batia Bettman, the play is followed by a “talk back” between the actors and their peers in the audience. The performance was interpreted in Sign Language by Natalie Constantine.

## About the Segal Centre for Performing Arts

The Segal Centre for Performing Arts is one of Montreal’s leading, multi-disciplinary performing arts organizations. It is comprised of five pillars: The Segal Theatre, an award-winning, professional, English language theatre; The Academy, educating artists and audiences of tomorrow; The Studio, an intimate, inspiring venue, presenting the next generation of performing artists; Cinema Space, a boutique screening room showcasing the best of Montreal and world cinema; and the award-winning Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre, celebrating over fifty years of dramatizing the Jewish experience and building intercultural bridges through the arts.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK'S TRACES IN CANADA

A new book *Janusz Korczak: "May their lives be so much easier..."* by Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo is in print



Leon (Lejb-Bear) Gluzman. Circa 1923



Leon Gluzman and Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo. Ottawa, 2010  
Photo by Khadim Nathoo



Leon Gluzman against the background of his and Korczak's portrait

If it could only be written, equally sizeable and not less impressive than Korczak's own works would be a collection of biographies of all the people he had influenced. These would include his colleagues, students, followers and, of course, his wards: the children from underprivileged Jewish families who passed through his Orphanage (called the Children's Home) during the 30 years of its existence (1912-1942), as well as the children of the Polish orphanage where Korczak worked from 1919 to 1935.

Among these wards was the Canadian businessman and benefactor Leon Gluzman, who was a pupil at the Orphanage from 1923 until 1930. In this book, his personal story is etched against the backdrop of momentous historical events, proving that the free spirit formed in childhood - together with an understanding of responsibility, an awareness of rights and duties, and a respect for self improvement and inner discipline - becomes so rewarding in adult life.

### **About the book**

The diverse legacy of the renowned Polish-Jewish author and pedagogue Janusz Korczak (born Henryk Goldszmit; 1878-1942) spreads over the 20 considerable volumes of his *Complete Works* (Warsaw, v. 1 - 1992).

# JANUSZ KORCZAK'S TRACES IN CANADA

Grounded in archival sources, the book is illustrated with more than 100 images. Among these are found a complete collection of memorable postcards and photos received by Gluzman at the Orphanage, the largest such collection that has been preserved. These objects of special significance to Korczak's legacy shed light on his pedagogical thinking in a remarkable fashion.

Publication of the book is set to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the opening of Janusz Korczak's Orphanage which took place in 1912.

***Below are excerpts from the book translated from the Polish by Anna Gelbart and from the Russian by Yakov Medvedev.***

## Introduction

*Leon Gluzman: "The Orphanage shaped me and resolved my destiny..."*

One hundred years have passed since Janusz Korczak's Orphanage opened its doors in Warsaw, an institution that later became famous the world over.

Almost seventy years have passed since the life of this Children's Home fell silent with the death of Korczak and his pupils at the Nazi extermination camp in Treblinka. Yet the history of the Orphanage *lives on*.

For a long time I tried stubbornly

to get in touch with Leon Gluzman, who in the 1920s was a pupil of Korczak. It was important for me to hear something about Korczak from a witness, first hand. The passing of time was not on my side.

At last I succeeded. Thanks to Leon's son David a meeting was arranged in Ottawa on the 19th of November 2010.

I have to admit that the conversation with Leon Gluzman did not fully reveal the information of which I had dreamt. Quite often I hit a brick wall as I tried to pose questions to a man over ninety with a fairly poor memory. Indeed, his memory played "hide and seek" with him: one moment the facts were concealed in the darkest corners and another moment they came to the surface shining and sparking with a beautiful glitter. With his incessant curiosity he threw questions at me: why am I interested in Korczak, how long have I been researching Korczak's legacy, what is happening with the Children's Home today, etc. Our "cross" interview facilitated by his son (vigilant with regard to his father's overstrain) became noticeably shorter. I failed to find out about many details of daily life in the Children's Home. This forced me to limit my research to the Gluzmans' family archives, which they kindly made available to me. I made use of other sources to obtain the information needed to recreate

with the utmost credibility the history of Leon's long life; a life that was defined by Korczak.

Leon repeats continuously: "The Orphanage shaped me and resolved my destiny..."

## Childhood. The first blow of fate

*Leon Gluzman: "The following day as dawn was coming my father passed away..."*

For most people, the date of birth and name given to them by their parents remain unchangeable facts of their biographies. But, one cannot say the same about Leon Gluzman. He came to this world at a violent time, and like many others who were caught in the middle of turbulent history, was forced to move from one geographical and cultural space to another and to settle far from his Motherland.

The easiest way of beginning Leon's story would be by saying: Leon Gluzman was born in Warsaw in the year 1914. But it is not that simple. His date of birth is not consistent across various documents. Some of them said that he was born in 1914, others - in 1917.

The reason for this could be inaccurate documentation of his birth; or perhaps it was because his young and impetuous parents misplaced his birth certificate; or it was lost in

## JANUSZ KORCZAK'S TRACES IN CANADA

the chaos of war. However, the earliest official Gluzman's document bearing his date of birth - the document that I stumbled upon offers a probable and quite trustworthy explanation. On the Canadian Passengers' List of 1930, in which all data concerning immigrants was kept, in the section labeled "date of birth", the following was written: "Around the year 1914". This clearly shows that the birth certificate was not presented by Leon to the officer upon arrival; the record was merely written based upon what the young immigrant said. According to this declaration, the boy had turned 16, and this, in its own right, greatly increased his chances for finding a job. From that time on, the year 1914 was considered as his true date of birth (instead of 1917, which

Leon later insisted on). As a result, Leon was forever known to be slightly older than he really was. In a sense, this was in line with the true state of things - he had indeed begun to live an adult life, much earlier than other youngsters of his age. On the same Passengers' List, Gluzman's full name was given: Leib-Ber. In the Orphanage, he was called Berl. In Canada, he had been known as Leon for as long as anyone could remember. It seems as if someone advised him at the dawn of his immigration to get rid of his overly exotic name. But by changing it Leib stayed true to himself (Leib in Yiddish means lion). No doubt that the name Leon goes well with his family name

- Gluzman. It also sounds more acceptable to the Canadian ear. It seems as if his teacher Korczak also became used to the new name of his charge. This habit was not unusual for Korczak as those of his wards who left Poland often did change their names, fitting them to their new surroundings. (For example, those who settled in Palestine, translated their names from Polish and Yiddish into Hebrew.) In any case, a post card sent to Berl in Canada by the director of the Orphanage and his irreplaceable assistant Stefania Wilczynska (a single card of this sort that has been preserved), was addressed to Leon Gluzman.

It can be assumed that Leon's parents - Abraham and Goldy Gluzman, were about the age of twenty-five when their son was born in the year 1917. Leon does not know where they came from; whether they were originally from Warsaw or if they had come from a small Jewish *shtetl* to the capital looking for a job. His father, as far as Leon remembers, was a street peddler. His mother, if he remembers well didn't work. One thing is certain: life didn't spare Leon's young parents troubles. During WWI, a tragic conflict for all the nations involved, Jews as well as Poles who were living on former Polish territories were conscripted to the armies of the captors: either the Russian, German, or Austro-Hungarian. Just like other soldiers, Jews risked their lives fighting against their enemies, but they were also harassed and abused by their "com-

rades", those who fought alongside them. On the other hand, those Jews who stayed behind in the cities were suspected of spying, plotting, and sharing the enemies anti-Polish sentiments. In the interest of so-called state safety, Jews were taken from lands that were in close proximity to the enemy, and were shipped off to areas far from the grasp of the foe, often to the remote areas of the Russian Empire.

Did the Gluzman family (Leon had an older sister Sally) stay in Warsaw during the war? One can only guess. If they stayed, Leon was born on the 18th of March of the year 1917 in the city of Warsaw which was no longer a part of the Polish Kingdom but had not yet become the Second Republic. To make matters worse, the city was under German occupation.

One way or another, the Gluzmans survived.

In November of 1918, the independent Poland was reinstalled. That was welcomed with great enthusiasm by the Polish people. But, living in the free Poland was no easier. The country was faced with the task of effectively defending its borders, where the war was still going on, and had to rebuild the towns and cities that were destroyed by war. All of this had to be addressed with an ailing economy. There were not enough jobs, yet there were plenty of those who were looking for job opportunities as discharged soldiers and officers, freed POWs, refugees and those resettled streamed home...

## JANUSZ KORCZAK'S TRACES IN CANADA

In these new conditions, the Gluzmans were lost - they didn't know how to survive. Leaving Poland for Canada was considered a good solution. Leon's father believed Canada - even though it was extremely far away from Poland - was a place where one could establish a decent life with opportunities for his children. Canada seemed like the perfect escape - for both some Jews and Poles. But unlike many others the Gluzmans had a real chance: Goldy's sister who had left Poland before WWI had already been living in Ottawa for a few years and would be able to help them with their entry into the country. This provided the hope for a better future. It was decided that the father and son would be the first to go to Canada, and soon after that the mother and daughter would join them.

Alas, this dream was not meant to be.

[...]

Abraham Gluzman died in 1923, the same day that the father and son was to sail off the Polish seashore to a new life...

[...]

After her husband's death Leon's mother was left without no means of support for the family. Some well-wishers recommended her to

turn to the Children's Home. The Orphanage on Krochmalna Street 92 has already operated for over 10 years under the leadership of Janusz Korczak, who took in orphans and children from poor families.

Stella Eliasberg, the wife of one of the Home's founders Dr. Isaac Eliasberg and an active member of the "Aid for Orphans" Society, wrote in her memoirs: "Checking the applications, visiting the attics and the cellars occupied by poor Jewish families - we've seen their boundless misery, and often their helplessness. Wasted by hunger and hard work the widowed mother of a bunch of hungry kids was not able to cope. Even in the most tragic cases, there were only one or two children that qualified and were accepted by the Orphanage; nevertheless these children had to wait for few months or sometimes a whole year or longer..."

Gluzman's family situation was similar.

### The Orphanage

*Leon Gluzman: "This Children's Home wasn't anything like the horrid asylums described in novels or shown in films..."*

We can only guess who amongst the Orphanage staff was contacted by Goldy Gluzman. Not with Korczak - that wasn't customary; besides, Korczak was very busy and 1923 had been busier than ever before. He was collaborating fiercely with his

publishers, since that was the year during which his *King Matt on the Desert Island* appeared, a sequel to his already famous fairy tale *King Matt the First*. He wrote articles for educational periodicals. Parallel to the work at the Children's Home, he worked at the Polish Orphanage "Our Home". At the Children's Home Korczak organized theoretical and practical courses on education, at first for his former wards and later on for other students who were planning to work at orphanages. He organized summer camps in Goclawek outside Warsaw. He was consumed with so many things. It is possible that the person that Goldy Gluzman turned to was 'principal educator' Stefania Wilczynska, though most likely it was one of the members of the society "Aid for Orphans".

Leon was accepted to the Orphanage. Later he would say about this eventful day: "God was on my side".

Six year old Leon moved to Krochmalna 92, while his mother and sister remained in the cluttered room on Nowolipki Street. Interestingly, after eighty years Leon could hardly remember the name of the street where he lived with his family while the address of the Orphanage stuck with him and he could utter it with one breath. The six years (from June 1923 until March 1930) that Leon spent under the protective wings of Korczak and Stefania Wilczynska's were etched in his memory forever.

## JANUSZ KORCZAK'S TRACES IN CANADA

Leon tells his story: "This Children's Home wasn't anything like the horrid asylums described in novels or shown in films... This was a Home in its purest meaning. The kids were taken care of just like any child is cared for at home. Korczak and Wilczynska came every evening to the dormitory. They had kind words for everyone, they knew how to comfort kids by letting go of their worries and troubles that they had accumulated during the day. "Just like the parents would do"- adds Leon.

"One person settles down the children in the evening and wakes them up in the morning," - wrote Korczak, seemingly surprised at the highest degree of patience - his own as well as Stefa's. It is true; they admitted later that with time and the mounting problems their enthusiasm had diminished. Year after year they were consumed by chronic fatigue and the enormity of the physical effort followed by psychological exhaustion. Their advanced age and loneliness, even though they were always surrounded by children, became evident. In 1926 – the fourteenth year of the Home's operation - interns noticed: "...[Now] it is rare to see Ms. Stefa sitting by a child's bedside in the evening and having her usual heart to heart with the child. There is absolutely no time for that now."

That's how Korczak's young and all-or-nothing students assessed the situation.

Leon, the appreciative child, remembered things in a more favorable light.

What really happened? Precisely that, which everyone was able to save in their memory.

Leon recounts his story: "I can remember Doctor Goldszmit (that's how we referred to Korczak at that time) wearing his white doctor's smock. He was of medium height (even though at the time he seemed to me much taller), bald with a red goatee and penetrating blue eyes. Always wearing glasses, always with a cigarette in his mouth [...] He lived like a hermit. I remember his attic filled with books, a massive desk he inherited from his father and an iron bed. I remember vividly this attic, I spent many hours there."

How did Leon end up in Korczak's room? Did he first ask to see him? About something that really mattered? It was customary in the Orphanage that children would put their requests into a special "mail box".

"An educator who recognizes the benefit of a written communication with children will soon acknowledge the need of a mail box. [...] You are holding a bunch of pages[...] and in the quiet and calm of the evening you'll read these letters carefully, you'll think about them, something you'd ignore during the day for the lack of time.[...] I maintain that the box doesn't hinder things, actually, it makes an oral communication with the children easier. I choose children for whom a longer, intimate, warm or serious conversation is necessary. I choose the appropriate moment for

myself and the child..."- That's how Korczak clarified the meaning of this approach to this form of education.

Is it possible that Leon was lurking for Korczak in the hallway or simply barged in without warning? Uninvited?

The truth is that he raced and ran to Korczak, mostly after visiting his mother (on Saturdays if they wished, the children spent time with their parents). Somehow Leon's visits home didn't make him happy. The opposite is true. The desperate situation of Leon's mother and sister filled him with a poignant feeling of sadness. He needed Doctor Goldszmit to relate what he saw and what he felt.

Leon resumes his story: "During all the years that I spent in the Orphanage Korczak helped me to resolve all my problems. He listened to me, never interrupting, understood everything as if experiencing all my hardships with me. I confessed to him. I told him all about my torments. He never failed to comfort me with his encouraging words. At the end of our conversation I would usually get a cookie glazed with chocolate. He knew it was my favorite treat and he always kept it ready for me".

That's the thing - every child was positive that everything Korczak did, he did it especially for him alone. Very likely that's what determined that that Korczak, the head of the Orphanage, became universally perceived as *the father* of the orphans.

[...]

A hitherto forgotten text authored by Korczak *The Rights of the Child as an Individual* [*Prawa dziecka jako jednostki*] has been found by Marta Ciesielska, the head of Korczakianum, Documentation and Research Centre in Warsaw, within the brochure *Continuing education instruction courses for educators in educational and care institutions. Justification and program*. Warsaw 1928, pages 28 and 29 [the entire brochure: p. 47].

### [Janusz Korczak]. *The Rights of the Child as an Individual*

Translated by Lilian Wysocka

Depending on age, mental development and experience, the child has certain specific rights that are difficult for adults to cope with and, for this reason, are most often not recognised. Apart from nutrition and hygiene it is essential for the child to have freedom in order to vent an excess of vital energy, the right to have a range of experiences that methodically introduce him into life, and the right to have initiative in relation to his own needs. In many cases the role of an adult should be restricted to that of an understanding guardian who protects the child against any potentially painful effects of his experiments. The adult's - and especially the educator's - attitude towards the child should never have the character of a struggle for authority and rights: the educator must be a skilful organiser of the conditions in which the child, enjoying the entirety of its rights, can develop freely.

Just like the adult who has an

undisputable right to rest after work, to have peace and quiet, and enjoy himself or herself, the child has, in the same or greater degree, legitimate rights to move, play and to that form of justice which is comprehensible to him. Contact between two extremely different worlds, that of an adult and that of a child, ends in the failure and captivity of the weaker party, that is, of the child. The combination of adults' interests and occupations forces the child into slavish relationships of existence, incomprehensible and tiresome for him. The principle that the child does not exist for the benefit of the personnel and the education centre, but that it is the other way around, should be implemented - in particular with respect to educational institutions, to the fullest possible extent. The obligations towards himself and towards the environment with which the child is burdened should gradually become part of the notions the child holds and should be based on his natural rights, never encroaching upon or disregarding such rights.

Program [of the lectures]

1. The child's right to the conditions that foster growth and development. Physical and mental development treated as work. Weight and measurement. The curve of growth and weight. Change in proportions. Moments of exhaustion. Need to rest from the obligations.

2. The child's right to cognize things freely. The work of cognizing and understanding. Different nature of the child's psyche and feelings. Difficulty in communicating between the adult and the child. The brutality of adults in adjusting the child to themselves.

The faults of adults in the light of child's notions. Assessment of children's faults by adults.

3. The child's right to self-improvement. Heredity. Traumas. Imposed improvement and significant improvement. Child's struggle with his own faults: falls and victories. Necessary comfort and sympathy. Caress. Fault as the beginning of faults.

4. The child's right to enjoy all a citizen's rights in his own world. The proportion of the length of childhood and the period of youth to average human life expectancy. Child's social handicap. Adults' promises. Ruining trust. Child's responsibility for others. Injustice.

5. The child's right to recognition of his inexperience and weakness. Adjusting child's work to the capabilities of his brain, to [the stage of] his growth and strength. Unsuccessful attempts by and faults of the child as a transitional phase of his learning about life.

6. The child's right to joy and entertainment. The child's indifference to adults' tragedies. Children's optimism. Serious treatment by the child of his its commitments and - his failure to fulfil them. Attitude towards the present, the past and the future. Moral values of games and plays. Sports, races, the wheel. Beauty and serenity in education. Entertainment and sweets.

7. The child's right to democratization of education. Individualism. The child for himself. Privileged children, a favourite, a stool pigeon, a handy man. Toadies. Troublesome companions. Complaints. Fondness and dislike of others among children. Freedom of feelings. Educator as the children's ombudsman.

# HOW PEOPLE REMEMBER KORCZAK

## The Garden of Memory of Janusz Korczak

By Elzbieta Kuc-Schneider



**Anthony Hecht**



**Marek Baczewski**

The presence of an exceptional human individual manifests itself in the collective awareness among others in the number of testimonies to their memories that occur in the literature of subsequent generations.

Janusz Korczak is among those individuals who despite being already well-remembered in the literature continue to provide inspiration for modern writers.

In the present time, the only way to thank him for his entire life, his record-setting activity for children's

rights and last but not least, for his heroic attitude during the Second World War, is keeping the memory of this man alive.

As an abstract idea, however, memory could never survive but with humans who fiercely fight for it to be preserved in a special "garden" – The Garden of Memory. This beautiful metaphor was used by Polish writer Joanna Olczak-Ronikier as a title for her book (*In the Garden of Memory*).

Poets are important "gardeners" in such a particular garden. They fight tirelessly for the survival of the memory of all those worth being remembered.

This short article wishes to recall the voices of two poets whose verses, inspired by the personality of Janusz Korczak, have not yet found their place on an excellent website containing the most known poems about Korczak: ([http://www.thehypertexts.com/Janusz\\_Korczak\\_Poetry\\_Poems\\_Translations\\_%20by\\_Esther\\_Cameron.htm](http://www.thehypertexts.com/Janusz_Korczak_Poetry_Poems_Translations_%20by_Esther_Cameron.htm)).

The first poem by American author Anthony Hecht (1923-2004) has been published in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (4th ed.).

Anthony Hecht is also known under the name of "The Dark Poet" which is to emphasize his persistent engagement, on the field of literature, with the tragic events of the Second World War. The poem "The Book of Yolek" (1990) was written after the author had read the article "The Last Walk of Janusz Korczak" by Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, published in the "*Anthology of Holocaust Literature*" (ed. Jacob Glatstein and Israel Knox, 1973).

The poem, phrased as a direct address to the reader, confronts the events of that particular tragic morning in August 1942 (Korczak's and the children's walk towards their death) with our daily routine.

An emotional commentary to the poem is not necessary. It has to be read and experienced by each reader.

## HOW PEOPLE REMEMBER KORCZAK

### The Book of Yolek

*Wir haben ein Gesetz, Und nach dem Gesetz soll er sterben.*<sup>1</sup>

The dowsed coals fume and hiss after your meal  
Of grilled brook trout, and you saunter off for a walk  
Down the fern trail, it doesn't matter where to,  
Just so you're weeks and worlds away from home,  
And among midsummer hills have set up camp  
In the deep bronze glories of declining day.

You remember, peacefully, an earlier day  
In childhood, remember a quite specific meal:  
A corn roast and bonfire in summer camp.  
That summer you got lost on a Nature Walk;  
More than you dared admit, you thought of home;  
No one else knows where the mind wanders to.

The fifth of August, 1942.  
It was morning and very hot. It was the day  
They came at dawn with rifles to The Home  
For Jewish Children, cutting short the meal  
Of bread and soup, lining them up to walk  
In close formation off to a special camp.

How often you have thought about the camp,  
As though in some strange way you were driven to,  
And about the children, and how they were made to walk,  
Yolek who had bad lungs, who wasn't a day  
Over five years old, commanded to leave his meal  
And shamble between armed guards to his long home.

We're approaching August again. It will drive home  
The regulation torments of that camp  
Yolek was sent to, his small, unfinished meal,  
The electric fences, the numeral tattoo,  
The quite extraordinary heat of the day  
They all were forced to take the terrible walk.

Whether on a silent, solitary walk  
Or among crowds, far off or safe at home,  
You will remember, helplessly, that day,  
And the smell of smoke, and the loudspeakers of the camp.  
Wherever you are, Yolek will be there, too.  
His unuttered name will interrupt your meal.

Prepare to receive him in your home some day.  
Though they killed him in the camp they sent him to,  
He will walk in as you're sitting down to a meal.

[1990]

<sup>1</sup> From the German translation of John 19.7 ("We have a law, and by that law he ought to die") by the theologian Martin Luther (1483-1546), leader in Germany of the Protestant Reformation.

# HOW PEOPLE REMEMBER KORCZAK

The second poem, written by a contemporary Polish author Marek Krystian Emanuel Baczewski (born 1965) is to be found in the "*Antologia nowej poezji polskiej 1990-2000*" (*The Anthology of Modern Polish Poetry, 1990-2000*, ed. by Roman Honet and Mariusz Czyżowski).

Here are the Polish original and English translation of this poem:

## Ostatni poranek w getcie (rzecz o Januszu Korczaku)

Dzien nie nalezy do swiatla, ale do kwiatow,  
Uwalniają go rankiem z otwartych kielichów,  
zeby szybciej wychłęptac chłodna jeszcze rose,  
tak jak swit z jego czoła spijał pot tej nocy,  
nieprzespanej nocy, kiedy stał w brudnym oknie,  
trzymał swiat za parapet: zeby sie nie rozpadł.

## The Last Morning in the Ghetto (about Janusz Korczak)

*Translated by E. Kuc-Schneider*

The day does not belong to the light but to the flowers,  
they release it out of their open chalices in the morning,  
because they want to drink the cool dew faster,  
the same way the dawn drank sweat out of his brow that night,  
that night he didn't sleep, when he stood in a dirty window,  
and held the world at its window-sill: so it did not fall apart.

XXX

What follows is a **note by M. Baczewski**, written explicitly for our Newsletter, about his motivation to write those few succinct but meaningful verses:

*Translated by E. + Th. Schneider*

"About Socrates it was once said, that the fact he was practicing virtue was proof that virtue exists. It is not

an easy task to find righteous deeds in people's daily relationships. Isn't righteousness an idea made of such a grandiloquent substance that there is no point in becoming absorbed by its existence?

A Talmudic tale says that there is a certain small number of people ideally righteous. Their being guarantees the existence of the world. They are exactly 36. They are poor and they do not know each other. If one of them dies somebody else takes over his role.

Their name is Lamed Waw.

It was this old Talmudic parable that inspired me to write a poem about Janusz Korczak.

The beginning of every poem is always a picture. At the beginning, there was a picture of an old man standing in the window (the Doctor's last notation in his *Diary*: "I am watering the flowers. The bald head in the window. What a splendid target")<sup>1</sup> and a detail from his biography: Korczak's decision to accompany his orphans to the extermination camp.

We know he had a choice in that August of 1942: the death sentence for all those who were able to work was to be postponed. Korczak did not have to die. However, a voluntary death sometimes seems to be the only right decision. Korczak defended not only his personal human dignity but human dignity in general.

Was he one of the Lamed Waw? I believe - yes.

By putting their hands on the windowsills the majority of people look mostly for support.

Some people's hands are support for the world.

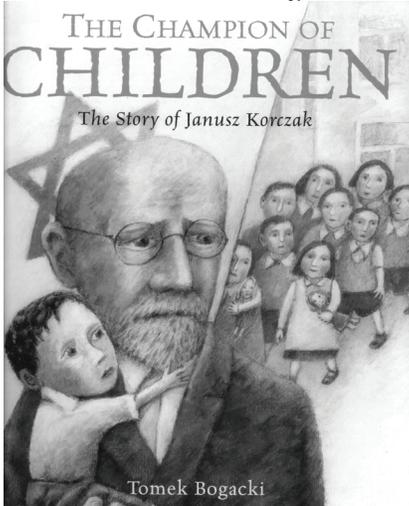
Korczak's decision is also an answer to the question What is the greatest gift that can be offered to a child? And the answer is - the gift of a presence."

Thanks to these poems the Garden of Memory of Janusz Korczak has been enriched by two new flowers of remembrance.

<sup>1</sup> Transl. by J. Bachrach and B. Krzywicka

### The Champion of Children. Written and illustrated by Tomek Bogacki.

Published by Frances Foster Books, Farrar, Straus and Giroux BFYR, 2009. Ages 5 and up.



### The Champion of Children - Not for Children?

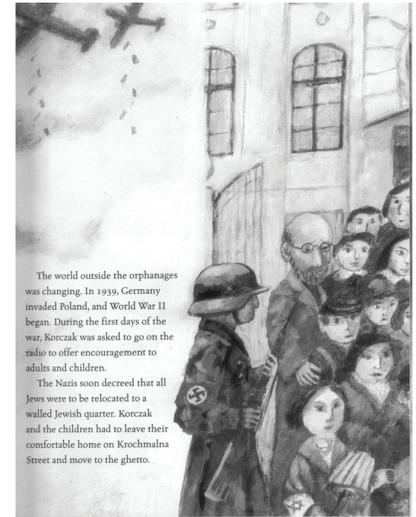
By Yakov Medvedev, 11th grade student, St. Georges school, Vancouver

What makes a good children's book? Is it the theme? Is it the humor? The illustrations? Perhaps the book has a memorable character? Or maybe the book is written in a rhyme? Ultimately, it isn't defined by a single trait - but rather by a combination of several factors. One of the most important traits in a children's book is to have themes that are appropriate for children - and to make sure that they are conveyed humorously, and in creative ways.

In his *The Champion of Children*, Tomek Bogacki, who is the writer and illustrator of the book, tackles a story that is difficult for even adults to listen to because of the dark period of human history that it captures - the Second World War and he goes even further - he not only recounts Korczak's story, his work at the orphanage, and explains his legacy to children - he describes the tragic ending of the Old Doctor and his wards.

There is no doubt that he piques the interest of kids through the colorful drawings that appear on every page, depicting the various events that took place in Korczak's life and in his orphanage. However, the second half of the

book which is dedicated to the Holocaust seems inappropriate for children. There is a fitting time for specific subject areas - but I think that this just isn't one of them. Although there are different types of children that are raised in different situations, and it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where the boundary of age appropriateness lies,



The world outside the orphanages was changing. In 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and World War II began. During the first days of the war, Korczak was asked to go on the radio to offer encouragement to adults and children. The Nazis soon decreed that all Jews were to be relocated to a walled Jewish quarter. Korczak and the children had to leave their comfortable home on Krochmalna Street and move to the ghetto.

there should be a general idea of at what age children should be exposed to these sorts of themes. In school, students are introduced to the story of the Second World War and the strife of the Jewish people at about the fourth grade level - for example, through the story, *Hana's Suitcase* by Karen Levine. However, based on the drawings of this book, one can assume that this one targets children of an even younger age. But the story is a so violent and dark! In addition to this, the words the author uses sometimes are far too powerful for a children's book. Tomek Bogacki says "Korczak died with his children in the Treblinka extermination camp". *Extermination* - this is a powerful word. Is it really appropriate for children?

Clearly, Tomek Bogacki creates his book with good intentions: he tells the children of today how lucky they are in comparison with the children who lived through the Second World War and the Holocaust. But questions still remain. Should a Jewish child really be scared of being Jewish? Or if a child is not Jewish, will this story evoke compassion or fright?

XXX

Tomek Bogacki grew up in Poland and first heard about Janusz Korczak from his grandmother. He has written and/or illustrated over a dozen books for children. His autobiographical picture book, *My First Garden*, was declared an "affecting and wonderfully illustrated memoir" by *The New York Times Book Review* and named a Notable Book for children by *Smithsonian Magazine*.

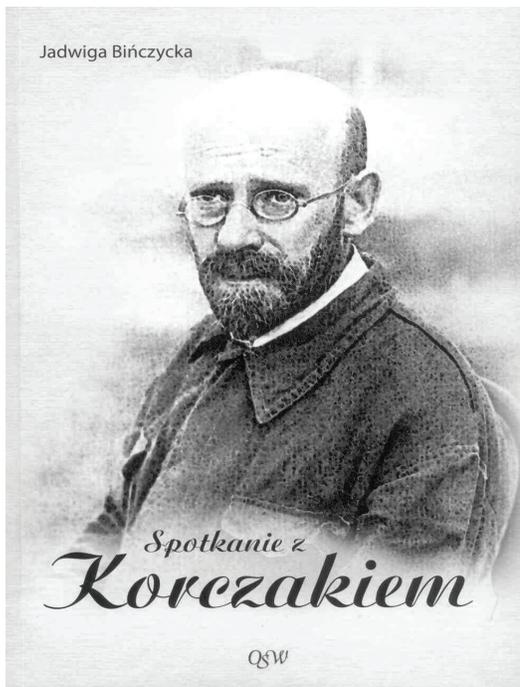
Tomek Bogacki lives in Long Island City, New York.

## NEW BOOKS ABOUT KORCZAK

**Jadwiga Binczycka. Meeting with Janusz Korczak**

**Jadwiga Binczycka. Spotkanie z Korczakiem.**

Olsztyn 2009. 151 s. In Polish.



Readers of this issue of our Newsletter have already known that prof. Jadwiga Binczycka is a highly respected expert on Korczak's pedagogy who has devoted her professional life to the promotion of his great legacy. Her book *Meeting with Janusz Korczak* is solid proof of that.

The book contains articles which had been written by prof. Binczycka over the course of many years. In a certain sense it is a summary of her contribution to the Korczak studies. I would say it is her dialogue with Korczak's texts and, on the other hand, her talk with future teachers. It also reflects her association with the world's "Korczak community".

It is intriguing that this book does not look and sound as "a volume written by a professor of pedagogy". There are no passionless theoretical discussions addressed to her colleagues nor are there any boring instructions given to young students "for their edification". Prof.

Binczycka is definitely not one of those who only conduct research on Korczak's educational ideas – she follows them in her pedagogical practice. Her attitude to the readers, who might have not known much about Korczak and children's rights, is respectful - she treated them with understanding and patience.

There is always room for doubts in her reasoning and her search for the answers to the questions which often are not strictly of a pedagogical nature; rather they are essential questions of how children and adults can co-exist. So this book could draw the attention not only of those who work in the field of education.

There are many Korczak quotes in this collection of articles. It is difficult to resist the temptation of using them in abundance, because this was the Old Doctor, who like anyone else was able to put himself in a child's shoes, and it was him whose thoughts about children are so profound and expressed in such a simple and at the same time lively manner.

Whenever it's possible, prof. Binczycka organizes Korczak's ideas, which are scattered throughout his works (his understanding of children's rights, his view on a family etc.), and explains them, helping the readers to get them involved in a very important – and direct - talk with Korczak.

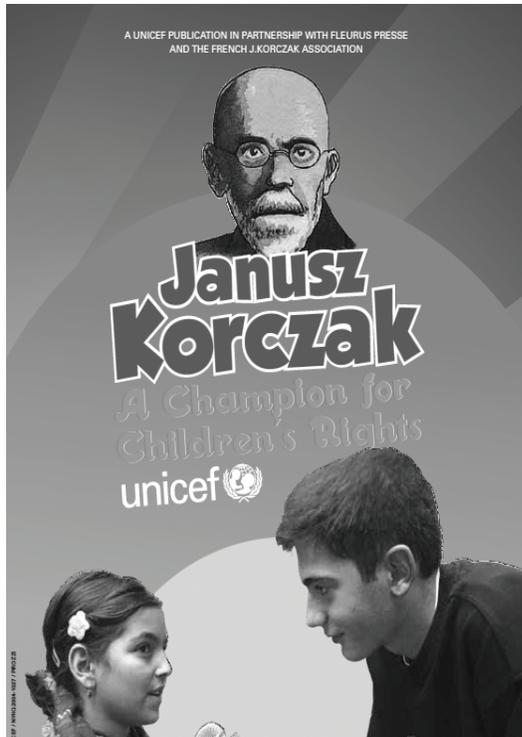
The author emphasizes that Korczak's ideas are highly in need today when the status of a child in society is still low, and the lack of respect to a child in the family is pretty obvious, and schools very often become rather bureaucratic institutions than a space for fruitful interpersonal relations.

For clear reasons, prof. Binczycka never met Korczak, however the title of her book *Meeting with Korczak* is very precise as the word *meeting* means meeting of the minds. In "the Korczak community" prof. Binczycka is playfully called "Korczak's widow". There's some truth behind every joke though - she is as devoted to Korczak as she is to a child.

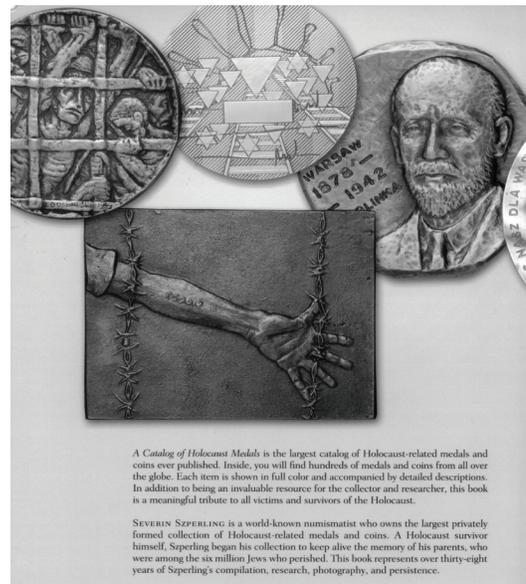
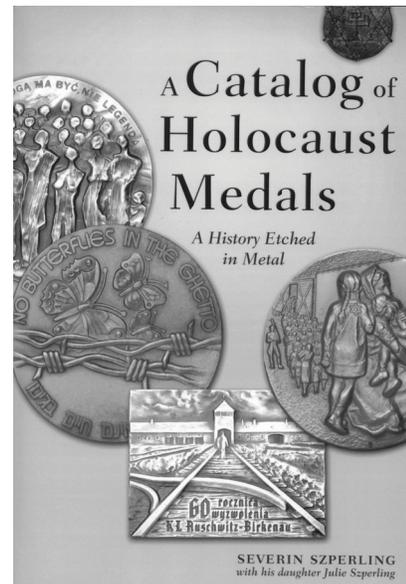
(O. M-N.)

## NEW BOOKS ABOUT KORCZAK

**Janusz Korczak. A Champion for Children's Rights.** A UNICEF publication in partnership with Fleurus Presse and the French J. Korczak Association. 2010



A booklet was published with the help of the Korczak Associations of France and Switzerland. It is based on the similar booklet that had been published in French in 2009. It is targeted at young readership and is richly illustrated: there pictures on every of its 47 pages. The booklet contains: Story about the Orphan's Home; Explanation what is the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Quiz (Check what you know about Children's Rights); Information about UNICEF; Children's and Youth Parliaments etc.



### **A History Etched in Metal. A Catalog of Holocaust Medals. By Severyn Szperling with his daughter Julie Szperling.**

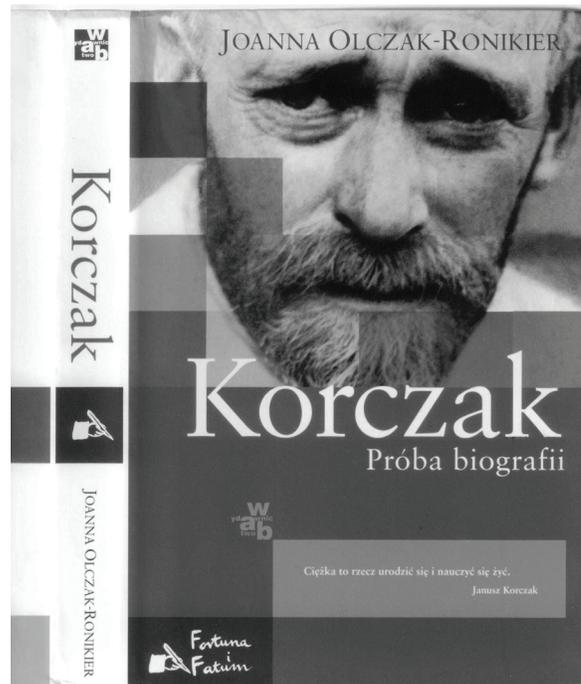
Tuscon, Arizona 2010

Prepared by a friend of our Association Severyn Szperling this catalog is indeed the fruit of a labour of love. A passionate numismatist Severyn has collected Holocaust medals and coins for years. 25 medals and 2 coins are about Korczak. They were issued in Poland, Israel and Russia.

## NEW BOOKS ABOUT KORCZAK

- At 250 pages, 7"x10", this is the largest and greatest single catalog of all Holocaust medals and coins ever published.
- Hundreds of medals and coins from all over the globe, commemorating the people and events of the Holocaust
- Hundreds of full-color photos with detailed descriptions
- An invaluable resource for the collector and researcher, and a meaningful tribute to all who perished and survived during the Holocaust.

To order online please visit [www.wheatmark.com](http://www.wheatmark.com), [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk). To order by phone please call (888)934.0888 ext. 3



**Joanna Olczak-Ronikier. An Attempt at a Biography Korczak. Joanna Olczak-Ronikier. Korczak. Próba biografii.** Warszawa 2011. S. 479. In Polish

### The opinion

I was waiting for a book about Korczak that would satisfy me for years.

Finally I got it. The title of this book is *Korczak. An Attempt at a Biography* by J. Olczakowa-Ronikier. In this book Korczak is not shown as a saint or a superhero like he is depicted in numerous other works. He is not portrayed as a person all alone in a crowd either. He is presented as a man who lived his life to the fullest; as a man who in inhumane conditions made extremely difficult decisions. He died as he lived; according to what he had written about in his books, true to his own philosophy of life, and true to his children. In this book he is introduced not as a legend but as a man of flesh and blood. However, this man of flesh and blood is perceived by me and I believe by many other readers of J. Olczakowa-Ronikier's book as a monument more powerful than those which are made out of bronze.

[L.W.]

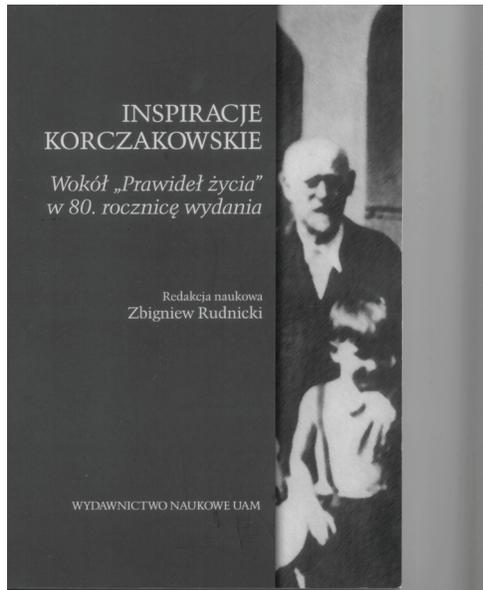
The full review of this book will appear in the next issue of our Newsletter.

**Inspired by Korczak. About Korczak's book *Rules of Life* on the 80th anniversary of its publication.**

**Inspiracje Korczakowskie. Wokół "Prawidel zycia" w 80. Rocznice wydania. Red. Rudnicki.** Poznan, 2011. S. 238. In Polish.

This book is the outcome of the work of a team of educationalists who undertook a challenging task to look in-depth at one of Janusz Korczak's works, i.e. his *Prawidła Zycia* (*Rules of Life*, 1929). The authors – each of them of different professional background - analyzed Korczak's text through their own professional experience. This resulted in its interpretation from different perspectives: philosophical, psychological, that of special education, of social work, of teaching practice etc. This in return revealed multiple layers of Korczak's message. Being confronted with the modern realities it sounds fresh and pioneering. Although over 80 years have passed since *Rules of Life* was first published, it still contains an enormous inspirational potential.

# NEW BOOKS ABOUT KORCZAK



The full review of this book will appear in the next issue of our Newsletter.

## Humanization of Childhood: International Dialog In Russian, English & Polish.

Two Volumes of the Proceedings of the International Korczak Conference in Kazan, Russia, 2011.



Cover of the book, Poster and Program of the Conference in Kazan  
Designed by Rasikh Salakhov

## NEW BOOKS ABOUT KORCZAK

The International Janusz Korczak Conference "Humanization of Childhood: International Dialogue" that was held in city of Kazan (The Republic of Tatarstan, the federal subject of Russia) on July 5-11, 2011 has resulted in two volumes of proceedings in Russian, Polish and English. Volume 1 has been published, volume 2 will be of print soon. The full review on both volumes of the book will appear in the next issue of our Newsletter.

Below you will find three papers presented at the Conference that clearly show different perspectives on Korczak's rich legacy.

The author of the first paper is prof. Roza Valeeva, who has a PhD in Education. She is the author of several books on Korczak's heritage. Roza is the Head of the Department of Education at the Kazan Federal University (former University of Humanities and Education). She is the President of the Janusz Korczak Association of Russia, the organization that hosted this Conference.

The second paper prepared by Avi Tsur, School Inspector at the Ministry of Education of Israel, and Batia Gilad, the President of the International Janusz Korczak Association, represents the Korczak movement in Israel and summarizes the implementation of Korczak's heritage in this country.

The third paper was written by the Director of the Educational Centre «Shining Mountain Center for Peaceful Childhood» Mariola Strahlberg (USA). She emphasizes the need for practical work in the Korczak movement and shows how diversified the work with children in the spirit of Korczak could be.

### **Teaching future teachers in the spirit of Korczak**

By Roza Valeeva (*Russia*)

[abridged]

Eradication of authoritarianism in any form of education is a core idea of the pedagogical theory of the 20th century. It still remains the most topical issue of pedagogy. Achievement of this goal is closely linked with the personality of an educator, his/her skills, and will power. Ability of the educator to build good relations with his/her students is even more important than adopted methods of teaching, or perfect school buildings or state-of-the-art facilities.

[...]

What are the modern requirements, both professional and personal, that the teacher who participates in the process of humanization of education, should meet? Amazing but all these must-have features Korczak described in what he called a reasonable educator. Here they are:

- A reasonable educator constantly expands his knowledge about a child in theory and in practice.
- He is creative.
- His driving force is loving the child, even the most spoiled. He admits the child's right to be who he/she is.
- He is understanding and tolerant.
- He finds kind words for every child.
- For him every child has a potential to grow.
- He is aware of educational tasks that he himself and the children under his care are going to carry out.

- He fulfills the tasks by a well organized educational process, not by pressure and orders, and with endless prohibitions. He seeks mutual consent with the children.

- He organizes children's life and work allowing them to participate in establishment of the rules that govern their society.

- He recognizes his own mistakes.

[...]

But the question is – *how to train SUCH a teacher?*

I believe the answer lies in the combination of the teaching theory (by lectures and seminars) and practical field work.

However not every type of the practical work provides personal growth of the student and his development of the above mentioned qualities. This largely depends on the nature of the type of activity and the relationships between the educator and the student.

This is what teachers who lead the Korczak Youth Association in Russia try to realize in their work. The Korczak youth movement that mostly unites students and recent graduates of the pedagogical departments of the Universities, exists in various cities. There are chapters of the Association in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kursk, Vladivostok, and Kazan. Their main goal is to defend children's rights and to help the disadvantaged. For example, members of the chapter Pedagogical Fund "Humanist" organized by teachers and students of Kursk Pedagogical University, work with children who suffer from leukemia. No doubt that this way students gain unique experience that will serve them later in their work as teachers.

Members of the Moscow chapter every year organize the annual integrative camp "Our Home" for children who have both parents and for those who are orphans, also for those with no serious health issues and the disabled ones.

[...]

The Kazan chapter of the Korczak Youth Organization was established in 1993 at the Linguistics Department of Teachers' Training University. In 2004 we received a full status of the non-profit Korczak youth organization "Sun for the Children". Nowadays "Sun for the Children" is affiliated with the Department of Psychology and Education of Tatar State Humanities and Education University. It includes about 40 students, alumni, and professors.

[...]

Main guidelines of the activities of the Kazan Chapter are as follows:

- we study Korczak's pedagogical legacy: we deliver and attend lectures, organize workshops, conduct research of Korczak's works within the context of contemporary pedagogy. One of the most interesting forms of this activities is a seminar "Reading Korczak's works" where students and young educators present their understanding of Korczak's ideas in a creative way: some in form of dramatization, songs, poems, paintings etc.

- as a part of extra curriculum activity we organize public lectures on Korczak's life and heritage. Once a year we organize the Korczak Days where we present the Korczak exhibit guided by our volunteers.

[...] We also put on a show dedicated to Korczak's life and a show on children's rights. There are video and feature films in the program as well [...]. The Korczak Days usually are days when new members join our group.

- we work at the orphanages. Most of the children there are social orphans. (Their parents were deprived of their parental rights). We visit them every week [...] and they are looking forward to seeing us. In a way we connected them with the world outside the orphanage because what they really need is communication and understanding. One of our students described this contact as a very fruitful and mutual one. He said: "We bring fun and happiness to these children. [...] They like it when we come. It brings joy to us as well."

It is clear that every year some of the students graduate from the University, others enroll. In this situation, to keep traditions of the organization alive, is a challenge

That is why we start every academic year with a talk about Korczak, his life and his pedagogical ideas delivered to those who are just beginning their study at the University. After this talk many of them express their wish to join our organization and be engaged in our work with children.

So, the Korczak student's activities can be very diverse in forms. What is important is its content – authentic human attitude towards every child. This is what helps to teach future teachers how to become people with responsibilities and high

moral values.

[...]

At the end, I would like to share with you a very short Korczak story:

"Once a little girl asked Korczak:

- 'Why does everyone love you?

- Maybe because I love everybody" - he answered without hesitation.

After all, our happiness depends upon those whom we love, and those who love us.

### **Korczak's pedagogical legacy in the 21 century**

*By Avi Tsur & Batia Gilad (Israel)*

*Years of work have confirmed for me more and more clearly, that children deserve respect, trust and kindness, that it is pleasant to be with them in a cheerful atmosphere of gentle feelings, merry laughter, an atmosphere of strenuous work and surprises, of pure, clear and heart-warming joy, that working with children in such an atmosphere is exhilarating, fruitful, and attractive. [Korczak J. *The Child's Right to Respect*, (1992) University Press of America, Inc. translated from the Polish by E.P. Kulawiec, p. 171.]*

The act of educating children is a challenging and magical meeting point between the grown-up and the youngster. What comes between them is the knowledge, the expertise, the qualifications and experience of the adult, anchored on values of human dignity. [...]

## NEW BOOKS ABOUT KORCZAK

The implementation of these disciplines is contained in the meaningful dialogue between the teacher and the child.

Korczak's educational approach provides educational and inspirational tools to achieve these goals. The principles underlying his educational legacy were considered innovative at that time and remain relevant to this day.

One of the significant elements of dialogue is the ability of expressing oneself, and simply out of mutual respect. Korczak was one of the forefathers of the Convention on The Right's of the Child which was signed in the year 1989 by the UN and which expresses in its articles Korczak's major moral issues in his educational approach.

Within the convention we find the approach in which the child is treated as a young person who is unable to fend for his rights and therefore needs an adult society to care for him. All of this in order to enable him to grow into a "useful, mature responsible citizen" with equal rights and obligations to society at large.

*The child is like a foreigner who doesn't know the language, isn't familiar with the street plan, is ignorant of the laws and customs of the land. At times he likes to go exploring on his own; when things get rough, he asks for directions and help. What he needs is a guide who will politely answer his questions.* [Korczak, J. (1925), *When I am Little Again - The Right to Respect*, University Press of America, 1992. (Translated by E. P. Kulawiec) p.176.]

The Child's right to education - as expressed in article 28 of the Convention is a significant expression of the realization of his/her rights. Education is the basis on which youngsters can develop, express their talents, develop their skills, become more professional and make their lives more meaningful for themselves and for the society in which they live.

Article 12 on which we are focusing the discussion today, is most significant. You can not educate or raise a child, if you do not hear, do not listen, do not give him the tools and means of expression, if you do not offer a meaningful dialogue. Therefore, we want to open the discussion on this subject.

We will deal with it from the Korczakian perspective - to what practical extent is his legacy expressed by those who spread his educational legacy world-wide.

Developing different tools and surroundings where youngsters can unfold and become aware of their needs are the basis for their being able to express themselves in an adult environment.

Through the Ministry of Education and in cooperation with the Israeli Korczak Association we have recently developed a set of posters which express in a special way Korczak's approach to a variety of selected topics. The kit of posters is entitled *Educational Moments*.

[...]

In writing *Educational Moments* [Ktavim Aleph, (Hebrew Version), pp. 113 - 350], Janusz Korczak strove to explain the world of chil-

dren to adults, parents and educational professionals. It is about their accounts of true experiences, analyzing particularly productive moments in children's education. So, if the context influences the effectiveness of the teaching - if it is cold in the classroom, if the child is hungry, if the noise or the teacher's remarks prevent the child from concentrating, there must be moments of a particular quality which are more effective, more fruitful, and more useful in the pedagogical process. Systematic note-taking, the adoption of the role of observer and the experience acquired over time make it possible to pick out the value of those moments and include them in the process of education.

*Respect for the present moment [...]. How will he manage tomorrow, if we do not allow him have a conscious, responsible life today. Respect for every single instant, for it passes never to return, and always taken seriously; ...*

*Let him eagerly drink in the joy of the morning and look ahead with confidence. That is just how the child wants it to be. A fable, a chat with the dog, catching a ball, an intense study of a picture, the copying of a single letter - nothing is a waste of time for a child.*

*An instant is but the duration of a smile or a sigh. Unintelligently we divide years into less or more mature ones. There is no such thing as present immaturity, no hierarchy of age, no higher or lower grades of pain and joy, hopes and disappointments.* [Wollins M. (1967), *Selected Works of Janusz Korczak*, *The Right to Respect*, p.489.]

For Korczak, each moment of the youngster's life is an educational one. At home, at school and in the courtyard. Each of the environments has an effect on the child, on his feelings, and on his ability to connect to society, to absorb values and to grow.

Our kit of posters, *Educational Moments*, combines visual and written texts.

The texts are chosen from Korczak's writings and the visual parts are based on the work of two of the orphanage graduates who thanks to the sensitivity of their educators (Korczak and Stefa) and an awareness of their talents, succeeded in enabling them to reach outstanding results.

Itzchak Belfer, an artist and sculptor, resident of the orphanage in the years of 1930 – 1938 and Shlomo Nadel, photographer, resident of the orphanage from 1928 – 1936.

The kit can be of service in two ways. As a theoretical and practical discourse supplement within a teaching staff framework and as a basis for experiential activities for students, especially the implementation of methods that can combine the educational, school and home framework.

Two panels are devoted to people who formulated, implemented and were active in the educational approach, Janusz Korczak and Stefa Wilczynska. As Korczak wrote about them: "I am a father, with all the faults of one – constantly busy,

*never having any time, good at telling stories but rarely doing so. Stefa is a mother; there are times when she too is wrong – but one is lost without her."*

She was Korczak's real partner.

The final panel is dedicated to the dark days of the Second World War when human values were destroyed, the period in which Korczak, Stefa and the children were forced to leave their home, move into the Ghetto and fight not only for the children's spiritual and moral existence but mostly for their physical being.

*With the close specter of death hanging all about, life continued: the children's organizations, the newspaper, school life, the daily chores, the recording and collecting of data.* [Kulawiec E.P. (1992), Introduction to "The Child's Right to Respect" p.xi]

Korczak, Stefa and the children were forced to enter the Ghetto in October of 1940 to Chlodna Street. After settling in their new quarters, they were once again uprooted and had to move to another home situated between Sienna and Sliska streets where the living conditions became worse. On August 5 1942 the adult staff together with the 198 children were all sent to the Treblinka death camp.

*"The spirit feels a longing inside the narrow cage of the body. Man feels and ponders death as though it were the end, when in fact death is merely the continuation of life, it*

*is another life. You may not believe in the existence of the soul, yet you must acknowledge that your body will live on as grass, as a cloud. For you are, after all, water and dust."* [Korczak J., *Ghetto Years*, June 1942, p.121.]

The remaining eight panels deal with selected educational issues:

**The Image of the Educator:** "Exceptional children give us in actual fact the richest material for thought and consideration, teaching us to improve and to search." [Im Hayered (Hebrew Version), p.389]

Korczak sees the image of the educator as one whose duty is to be with the child in his times of distress and happiness. It is the duty of educators to find their own befitting, personal style on which to build a relationship with the child.

**School:** "The school creates the rhythm of hours, days and years. The school staff is supposed to satisfy the current needs of young citizens. The child is a rational being. He appreciates the needs, difficulties and impediments in his life." [Selected Works of Janusz Korczak, (1967), The right to Respect, p.484.]

Korczak was critical of the school as it existed in that period of time. He aspired to a school of dialogue, in which a child receives recognition, in which his needs are respected, a school that will enable him to pave his way in the world.

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**Trips:** Nature was an essential part of Korczak's educational approach. The trip was a good opportunity to break away from school routine and to expand the range of activities. The trip is in actual fact, **"a meeting with objects and sights, a meeting of a person with himself and his G-d .."** [Adir Cohen (Hebrew), Dialogues of Love, p.17.]

**Society and its Laws:** *"If someone does something wrong, it is best to forgive (...) but the court must protect the weak, so that the strong do not annoy them (...) disorder affects mostly the good, the quiet and the conscientious."* [Ktavim Aleph, (Hebrew Version), pp. 224 – 225.]

The subject of sustaining a democratic society in which everyone is equal and in which everyone has an opportunity of self expression was one of the cornerstones of the educational values of Korczak. The framework of the child's growing-up should allow for increased personal development but no less to this, it should enable the child's social development. A person is not an island in his surroundings but an integral part of society in which he lives, therefore society should allow each and every person to be a part of it. This can only transpire if we produce the tools for each, the weak and the strong to express themselves, develop and become integrated. Korczak's approach is in favor of the weak, this can be seen throughout his life.

From a very young age Korczak wishes to abolish money in order to be able to play with the gatekeeper's son. Money brings about status differences, forms barriers between people. A young child already feels that social equality is the basis for social and

personal growth. His entire life comprises the making of choices in this direction.

He chooses to be a doctor – a profession that is entirely meant for serving mankind, unconditionally. He then chooses to be a pediatrician seeing children as powerless human beings within a society. Whilst he is still a young doctor, Korczak opens a night clinic so as to treat children whose parents cannot afford treatment. He later chooses to serve the young orphaned child, aspiring to change the outlook of society in regard to the weak, the orphaned and the different.

**Work and Responsibility:** *"I know that many are not pleased that I collect the dishes after meals. In my opinion, even those whose duty it is to do the job, are not in favor of my giving a helping hand (...) My aim is that in the Children's Home there should be no soft work or crude work, no clever or stupid work, no clean or dirty work. No work for nice young ladies or for the mob. In the Children's Home, there should be no purely physical and no purely mental workers."* [The Ghetto Years, Ghetto Fighters' House (1980), p. 204.]

For Korczak work was of high value in the establishment of real life. As the child is an entire person, work, already in childhood years, is an integral part of his life.

**Postcards:** Life in the Children's Home included the constant feedback on various aspects of the children and educators conduct. **"The postcard is not a prize, but a keepsake, a memento."** [Ktavim Aleph, (Hebrew Version), p.267.]

The postcard was given for an activity that the child endured over a period of time. For example, getting up early

in winter or peeling of potatoes. For mentoring or participation in joint prayers.

**The Word:** Korczak recognized the importance of reading, writing and the spoken word. Much value was placed on discourse in communicating with children and between the children themselves. The written word was made an integral part of functioning at the home **"different in thought, in imagination, and different on paper, in letters and words."** [Ktavim Tet, (Hebrew Version), p.101.]

**Children's Books:** *"A wonderful thing – a book. All that was invented by the cleverest men is to be found in books. Sometimes a person thought all his life, a hundred years, and then wrote (...) Someone died quite some time ago yet his thoughts are inscribed in a book. It is as if the book speaks, advises. Why suffer alone when you can find in books a hundred teachers and consultants?"* [King Matt on the Desert Island (Hebrew Version), p.86.]

**Talent and Training:** The pedagogical principle that guided Korczak and the counselors was to develop personal skills in accordance with each child's uniqueness. Children whose special talents were identified were given an opportunity and the means to express it. So in the case of Itzchak Belfer who says: *"When I was about ten, Stefa approached me one day and said: Itzchak, I know that you like to draw. If you wish, I will buy you crayons, paint, brushes and paper so that you can draw in the small room in your free time. The thought of Stefa's awareness of my talent and likewise probably the Doctor's as well, thrilled me."*

In the Children's Home Korczak and Stefa created an atmosphere of mutual trust, making it possible for the child's talent to thrive.

**The Newspaper:** From a very young age Korczak showed great empathy for children and a genuine concern for all their social problems. A doctor by education and an educator by inclination, his passion for improving a child's reality which he observed drove him to writing and journalism. **"I am a doctor by education, a pedagogue by chance, a writer by passion, and a psychologist by necessity."** [Lifton (1988), *The King of Children*, p.125.]

Janusz Korczak believed that enabling children to run their own journal in a democratic atmosphere, would have a positive educational effect on them, make them more responsible and increase their self-esteem and social status. Korczak's promotion of progressive educational techniques included real opportunities for their empowerment.

In 1921, five years before the founding of the children's newspaper *Maly Przegląd* (*The Little Review*), Korczak published his ideas in a brochure titled *"The School Newspaper"* in which he wrote: *"I deeply believe that there is a need for children's newspapers, but these must be periodicals written by the children themselves. Newspapers that deal with subjects which they find important and interesting [...]."* [Korczak, J. (1921) *The School Newspaper*.]

In section 12 of this brochure Korczak writes: *"There are some who find it easy to write. They like and want to write. And there are*

*those who dislike writing. Just as there are people who like to play, some who like to draw, some who excel in learning by heart, solving mathematical problems, to sew, sing, to assist on the farm, care for flowers, to care for young children, or to read books. It is a great joy that not all like the same things."* [Korczak, J. (1921) *The School Newspaper*, translated from Polish to Hebrew – Buchner, A]

[...]

The children's weekly appeared each Friday for 13 years. The readers of the paper were both Polish and Jewish children. [...] At the outset (1926) the sub-title of the newspaper was *"Pismo dla Dzieci i Młodzieży"* and was changed at the end of March, 1929 to *"Pismo Dzieci i Młodzieży"*. The Polish word *"DLA"* meaning "for" was omitted so instead of *"A Newspaper for the Children"* the new sub-title read *"The Children's Newspaper."* [Hagari, A. – Poznanski (1978), *The Little Review*, Korczak's Writings, Hachinuch, p.347 – 348.]

The young writers wrote about themselves, raised complaints, asked for advice and help, wrote about problems they faced with their parents and teachers and forwarded ideas and new subjects for the newspaper. Sometimes there appeared an article about a public problem and how it was solved. There were editions on special subjects and at times competitions were announced. There was an attempt to correspond with children from the Land of Israel especially with children from Kibbutz Ein Harod where Korczak spent most of his time on his two visits to Palestine (1934 / 1936). [Korczak, J. (1978),

*Selected Writings*, Warszawa, vol. II, pp 61-62.]

Creating a school newspaper enables multi-disciplinary interaction. It is a useful tool that can bridge the gaps in heterogeneous classes enabling pupils of varied levels and age groups to succeed in the areas that they feel most competent and confident. By producing a journal as a learning activity, pupils will enjoy the fruit of a final document each in his own way contributing to its creation. It can be the vehicle for pupils and teachers to experience meaning and purpose in their school lives and can produce a positive change on the school environment reflecting the values and goals adopted by the school and exemplifying positive values that children learn in the classroom.

*"In an educational institution without a newspaper the staff seem to me uncoordinated and desperate, pottering and grumbling, going around in circles, leaving the children without orientation and control, proceeding ad-hoc and at random, without tradition, without memories, without developing a path to the future."* [Korczak J. (1921) *The School Newspaper*, (translated from Polish to Hebrew – Buchner, A.)]

Schools can do much more to make a difference for students within their care. Educating comes from the heart and soul of the teacher. It comes from the belief that teaching pupils to take responsibility for their behavior is as much the duty of the educator as is teaching History, Mathematics or English and is more important than simply enforcing rules. It comes from the belief that most pupils do the best they can.

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"The newspaper can be likened to a bouquet of different flowers. The beauty of the entire bouquet depends on the variety of the flowers of which it is comprised." [Ktavim Tet, (Hebrew Version), p.131 / Korczak 1921.] The newspaper is like a peeping hole into the child's life, through which the adult can learn about events in the child's life, about his problems, his thoughts and his feelings.

Like the newspaper's written format, so Korczak's radio talks were a spoken dialogue with the child. In an interview, Korczak said: "Radio will never replace the book, but it is a new language." [Lifton B.J. (1988), *The King of Children*, p.207.]

*You lived – how many fields did you plow,*

*How many loaves of bread did you bake,*

*How much seed did you sow,*

*How many trees did you plant,*

*How many bricks did you lay,*

*How many buttons did you sew,*

*How many patches, how many seams did you make,*

*To whom did you give your warmth,*

*Who would have stumbled but for your support,*

*Whom did you show the way without demanding gratitude or prize.*

*What was your offering,*

*Whom did you serve?*

[Korczak J., From his Talks on the Radio, Display-cards, Ghetto Fighters House]

**In Conclusion:** There can be no doubt as to the relevance of the topics that Korczak raises and this is just from a momentary glimpse, into the partial wealth of his writings.

Korczak understood the world of the child, he thought in the terms of the children from within the understanding of an adult, from a deep understanding of the needs of children, the needs that have not changed to this very day in the 21st century.

The following excerpt is taken from the text that was originally published in *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education* (Paris (2000), UNESCO: International Bureau of Education), vol. XXIV, no. 1/2, 1994, p. 37–48]

*"Janusz Korczak exerted and continues to exert influence on the minds and hearts of mankind. His influence springs from his exceptional personality, the passion of his struggle for children's happiness, and the warm sentiment he displayed for those in his care. It springs from his life itself and the sacrifice of his life under tragic circumstances. Obstinate and with unwavering conviction, he strove to overcome the social evils affecting many people, in particular children. He managed to help children and adults of goodwill in the creation of better living conditions. He persevered in his work to the very end, providing an example of social and professional activity worthy of emulation. The model he left behind is perhaps his most valuable legacy."*

### **Understanding Today's Children**

Therapeutic approach to treating children with learning, behavioral, emotional and health challenges

*By Mariola Strahlberg, MS, Lac, Shining Mountain Center for Peaceful Childhood, Inc. Monsey, NY, USA*

### **My Background**

In order to understand the reason for existence of the Shining Mountain Center for a Peaceful

Childhood, Inc. I would like to start with some background information. I was born after WWII in Warsaw, Poland. In 1968, in my last year of high school, the Polish government forced the last remnants of Polish Jews (approximately 20,000 people) to leave the country. When I came to the US, my English was not good enough to do anything other than sciences and therefore I decided to study electrical engineering and computer science. After finishing University, I worked as a computer researcher for 25 years. When my daughter entered elementary school, I was introduced to her friends and noticed striking differences among the children with whom she was acquainted. Some read well, some did math well, others were only good in sports or art, but most importantly only very few of her friends loved school. I was concerned about it since school was easy and fun for me and I wanted these children to appreciate what they were learning. In the second grade, my daughter started having stomach aches before going to school, lost interest in math and reading and could not wait for the weekends and vacations. I started looking into alternative education and placed her in Waldorf school where, after few months, she came back to her old happy, easy going self. When I turned forty, I started to have a recurring dream about Janusz Korczak. The dream came night after night; there was no message, just the picture of Korczak with 3 children. For some reason I started to think about change of profession. Six years later, I entered acupuncture school and for the next three years, there was no Korczak dream. The dream came back on my graduation day and I realized then that my new profession will need to include helping children reach their highest potential. I started to look more closely at education of children in the US and their lives in general.

### Challenges of children in the US

Over the past thirty years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children who require special services due to learning, behavioral, emotional and health challenges. More and more children suffer from anxiety, phobias, stress and sleep disorders, while spending less time in unstructured play at home, school and outdoors. Parents are overwhelmed by multiple diagnoses (ADD, ADHD, PTSD, Asperger's, LD, OCD – over 80 of them) and struggle to understand the conventional medical approaches with their pharmacological interventions and side effects. Complementary medical alternatives address one specific need rather than an integrated therapeutic program that focuses on the whole child.

In 2001, No Child Left Behind Act was made into a law by President George W. Bush. The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding for schools. The Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state. Since schools evaluations are based on test scores, children are being taught the information needed for them to pass the test. There is a dramatic decrease in number of hours per week spent on free play, art, music, gym, etc. Educators find that current methodologies and training don't offer enough viable solutions for today's children with differentiated needs.

Here in the US, we are obviously facing a difficult situation and the sad thing is that although parents and educators are stressed out about it, it is the children who really suffer.

### Reason for the existence of the Shining Mountain Center for Peaceful Childhood, Inc.

The goal of the Shining Mountain Center for Peaceful Childhood, Inc. is to serve as a partner with parents, teachers, and caregivers to foster a peaceful coexistence for children at home and in educational settings. We are committed to offering solutions to assist children recognize their unique set of gifts, help them identify how to work through their challenges, and provide them with tools to enhance their well-being. While other centers may provide individual sessions or workshops on topics such as: nutrition education, Brain Gym®, rhythm or yoga, Shining Mountain integrates these with therapeutic modalities, such as acupuncture, color, sound, and cents of essential oils. Our programs are of value to children and adults alike and provide each with tools for lifelong success. Our many years of experience show that the use of a non-invasive, integrated, natural approach, over a four to six month period, helps children increase their levels of motivation, improves their academic, fine arts and sports performance, and encourages them to use new ways of communicating and connecting with their families, peers and educators.

Parents play a critical role in the Shining Mountain's program; they attend all weekly sessions with their children and have the option of private sessions or attending lectures and retreats offered on and off site.

Since its inception in 2004, the Shining Mountain Center is dedicated to the work of Dr. Janusz Korczak (Henryk Goldszmit 1879-1942), a physician, educator and writer who devoted his life to orphaned children in Poland. We selected the following

axioms from Korczak's Declaration of Children's Rights as our guiding principles:

*“Love the child, not just your own,*

*Observe the child,*

*Do not pressure the child,*

*Be honest with yourself in order to be honest with the child,*

*Know yourself, so that you do not take advantage of a defenceless child.”*

Being able to love a child, not just your own, allows a parent to create a distance needed for objective listening and observation. During sessions for groups of 4-6 children and parents, parents are not paired with their own children so they can take the time and observe similar or different behaviors, notice how much patience they have with other children, and learn to hear the children's struggles and sufferings which are often ignored in day to day living.

How can we not pressure the child? We are always in a hurry, running from one activity to another, not able to catch our breaths and ...the day is over. During each session, we look into ways to decompress, which activities are important and which can be taken out of the schedule so that there is time for just being and not always doing. Parents start noticing, often to their surprise, that moments of “doing nothing” are often the most creative moments without which the child will not develop his or her interests, personality and leadership skills. Without this creative orientation, children will just learn how to follow adults. Since most of the school environments have no room for just being, parents are highly encouraged to create time for the kids to express their creativity away from TV and computers, alone or with other children, without parental supervision and direction.

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Being honest with oneself is a difficult axiom to follow for many parents. In the Shining Mountain Center, during the first visit, the child and adult receive a copy of a Chinese Fable. The parent is to do a reflection exercise before reading the fable, read it together with the child, and then do another reflection exercise. Through reflection exercises as well as selection of quotes from *Loving Every Child, Wisdom for Parents*, edited by Sandra Joseph, parents have a chance to reflect on why they do certain things and are able to discuss with me how to change certain behaviors.

Parents are also encouraged to attend a few sessions without their children. During these sessions we discuss the situation at home and together try to figure out new approaches. Parents slowly realize that some of the behaviors they see at home are directly related to children imitating parental behaviors, children not having clear boundaries, lack of daily rhythm, etc. Shining Mountain offers workshops, lectures and retreat for parents where they can relax, reflect and brush up "forgotten" parenting skills.

### **The Shining Mountain Center's Approach**

I enter the mystery of a human being through the senses, which I find appeals to children. I use the sense of sight (color), hearing (tuning forks and rhythm), smell (essential oils), touch (tapping, reflexes, and Raindrop Technique), and taste (healthy eating). Those are the five basic senses, and then I add others:

movement and balance (Brain Gym®), words and thoughts (conscious language) and warmth.

The full individual program for parent(s) and a child consists of 14 weeks, one hour session per week, followed by 4 once a month sessions. Each session is composed of 3 parts: conversation, movement and treatment.

During the conversation time, we look at what works at school, home and with friends, what doesn't work and define 3 areas where the child would like to see change. During the movement part, both parents and children learn Brain Gym® exercises and are asked to do them at home twice a day.

Treatments consist of color, sound, and essential oils. All the treatment are active not passive. The child is not lying on the table and experiencing something while his or her mind is far away. She/he is to tell me what they feel, where they feel it and if, whatever I am doing, feels all right. They are active participants of the whole process, gaining confidence in their own ability to determine their own well being. The last session is a celebration, a celebration of the child. We go over how the child and parent behaved during our first meeting, what changed, what more needs be done. I prepare a little card for a child to take home with 5 personal attributes (i.e., fun to be with, fast learner, good listener, compassionate, etc) and together we create a picture of the child achieving their highest potential. Over the years, I hear from children who finished the program and many of them keep the little card in their wallets when

they go away to college or to work to remind them of what is possible.

### **What is next for the Shining Mountain Center for Peaceful Childhood, Inc?**

Over the years, parents asked me to come up with a program that could be used outside the Center to reach wider number of children. Shining Mountain's Five Star Program®, designed specifically for elementary and secondary schools, allows us to bring our philosophy and a sample of our tools to public and private schools, summer schools and camps, after school programs and community centers. The program is easy for children and adults to practice at home, and it is our hope that it will become widely used in the near future.

We are open to collaborations with educators, parents, healthcare providers. We offer in-service programs for schools, retreats and workshops for parents and educators, individual and group sessions for children and their parents. We have plans to open a Center in Western Massachusetts dedicated to Janusz Korczak. The Center will provide many of the services that I already discussed. In addition, we plan to have a summer children's camp based on the model described by Dr. Korczak in his writings. With summer camps, we would like to offer to the children the experience of a democratic, humanistic environment so needed in the present time. Visitors to the Center will also have an opportunity to learn about the life and work of Dr. Korczak and other educational pioneers.

### The Cracked Pot

#### *Chinese Fable*

A water bearer in China had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck.

One pot had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect what it was made for.

But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do. After two years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream...

"I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house."

The bearer said to the pot,

"Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path. Every day while we walk

back, you've watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

**Moral:** Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding. You must take each person for what they are, and look for the good in each one.

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M. – The power of Single-Tasking – *Lilipoh Magazine, Summer 2007*

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E.Johnson – Reflections on Janusz Korczak and Today's Children – *October 2010*

## Japan

The International Janusz Korczak Conference took place in Tokyo August 5-9, 2010. The Conference was organized by the Janusz Korczak Association of Japan and was supported by Japan Ministry of Culture, UNESCO/UNICEF, Japan Teachers' Association, and Meiji University, Tokyo.

## Switzerland

The Janusz Korczak Association of Switzerland undoubtedly plays a leading role in the worldwide Korczak movement in promoting children's rights. This theme has been explored in the annual Geneva seminars in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

### ***The International Korczak Seminar in Geneva: A Great Success***

[abridged]

*Translated from the French by  
Yakov Medvedev*

The international Korczak Seminar took place at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations in Geneva on June 6, 2009.

The Seminar was dedicated to Dr. Korczak on whose ideas the International Convention on the Rights of the Child was built. This seminar turned out to be a fruitful gathering at which members of the Korczak Associations of Poland, Israel, France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Switzerland were present along with 18 members of the International

Committee of Children's Rights all of whom discussed this very topic. The discussion showed to all those involved how close or how far apart

their social, pedagogical and judiciary views were. All in all, the convention was a success. Its great outcome was highlighted by the visit of Ambassador Rapacki of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations in Geneva, who announced that the seminar on the same topic would take place again the following year.

**Source:** La Lettre de Association Suisse des Amis du Docteur Janusz Korczak #61 - aout 2009. By *Daniel Halperin*

### ***The Second International Korczak Seminar in Geneva***

[abridged]

The second International Korczak Seminar was held at Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations in Geneva on June 5, 2010. This event was organized with the patronage of the Ambassador of Poland, Z. Rapacki, Dr. Yanghee Lee, the president of the Committee of Children's Rights of the UN, prof. Waltraught Ker-Ganse (University of Berlin) and Batia Gilad, the president of the International Janusz Korczak Assosiation. Much like in 2009, this meeting was the perfect opportunity for members of the UN Committee and members of other associations (from Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Great Britain, and Switzerland) to exchange their views on the children's rights. The central theme was broken down into three subtopics: the impact of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child on educational practice, the way in which Korczak's pedagogical values are interpreted by teachers,

and the links between generations in the contemporary world. The convention proved to be a success, and these topics will be re-enforced during the third conference, in 2011.

**Source:** La Lettre de Association Suisse des Amis du Docteur Janusz Korczak #64 - aout 2010.

### ***"Seeing from the eyes of a child: from the height of one meter and twenty centimeters" . About a child friendly urban development***

[abridged]

The Committee in charge of the urban development of city and province de Bale in cooperation with the Committee in charge of children took an innovative initiative: they interviewed close to five hundred children about various aspects of their neighborhood. Based on this information, the committee designed a plan for future children friendly urban development called "Seeing from the Eyes of a Child".

**Source:** La Lettre de Association Suisse des Amis du Docteur Janusz Korczak #65 - decembre 2010. By *Sebastian Olloz, Presidente du Canton de Bale-Ville.*

### ***The Protection of Children's Rights: A Necessary Articulation***

[abridged]

The spring conference of the International Social Pediatrics Club took place in Geneva on June 3-4, 2011.

**Source:** La Lettre de Association Suisse des Amis du Docteur Janusz Korczak #66 - avril 2011.

## ***The Korczak Weeks in Bern***

Various events dedicated to Korczak were held in Bern, during "The Korczak Weeks" (October 16 - November 13, 2011). In addition to a play "Geranien im Ghetto" created specifically for this occasion and written in Bern dialect, there were several talks, concerts, and films shows. The exhibit "Oneg Schabbat" based on the Ringelblum archives was also presented as a part of the program. The participants obtained a pedagogical manual with CD's. This event was initiated by the parish "Johannes" of the Evangelical Reformed Church of Bern.

## **USA**

### ***Information collected and compiled by Kurt Bomse, the President of the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA***

2010-2011

Mariola Strahlberg, Debra Ingrando-DeEntremont, Mary Lee Batesco, and Carmela de Marco participated at the International Korczak Conference in Kazan in July 2011.

Tatyana Tsirlina delivered a talk on Janusz Korczak to her students at Seattle Pacific University.

The Epstein school in Atlanta and one of the schools in Oregon founded the Korczak Kites project.

There is a school named after Janusz Korczak in East Pointe in Michigan.

Kurt Bomse presented Korczak's life and teachings to the audience at JCC in Florida.

## **Request**

We are currently collecting material for the book *Who's Who in the Korczak Movement in both Americas*.

As far as we know, the only organized Korczak Movements in North and South America exist in USA, Canada and Brazil. However, there are other individuals and groups of people working in the spirit of Korczak in some other countries: some use his pioneering ideas in their educational practice, others popularize his life and work through performances, exhibits, translations of his books, and other endeavours.

Unfortunately the Korczak-inspired activities going on in the Western hemisphere are not widely known about in Europe. The book *Who's Who in the Korczak Movement in both Americas* aims to show our contribution to the World Korczak Movement. *Who's Who* is a chance to present what has been done for the promotion of Korczak's legacy on these continents to Korczakians from outside America. It will also help to establish contacts between the "Korczak communities" within the Americas.

The personal information of the participants will be published only with their consent.

The project participants' information will be published free of charge.

Everyone who is interested in this project should send an e-mail to Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo - [khadimolga@yahoo.com](mailto:khadimolga@yahoo.com) Please mention the subject: **Who's who** and type in the e-mail's body: **Yes, I would like to participate in the project.** Please share your mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number. We will then send you a questionnaire to fill in.

We need your response to get this project under way.

## **2012 - The Year of Janusz Korczak in Poland and Beyond**

2012 has been announced in Poland as the Year of Janusz Korczak. It will be widely celebrated all over the country. This is the result of the joint initiative of Mr. Marek Michalak, Polish Ombudsman for Children's Rights, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. The initiative was approved by the Polish Parliament (Sejm). 2012 was chosen for the celebration of Korczak's life and work because it is the 100th anniversary of the foundation of his Orphanage (Dom Sierot). This year also coincides with the 70th anniversary of Korczak's death.

Janusz Korczak's pioneering vision and implementation of children's rights are relevant to contemporary society.

Events related to this theme will be organized in Poland with the assistance of the Department of Public Affairs and Culture and the Department for Human Rights. The European Council will be an important partner in all related actions.

The program of the celebration will include the Korczak congress, conferences, seminars, publication of books and articles, and exhibitions; a coin and a medal will also be stricken for this occasion.

Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, the Commissioner for Human Rights on the Council of Europe, has long been a promoter of Korczak's ideas. He has been invited to become the Foreign Ambassador of the 2012 Janusz Korczak Year. The First Lady Mrs. Anna Komorowska will preside over the Honourary Committee.

**All Korczak Associations worldwide together with many other establishments and charitable organizations which work with and for children will participate in the celebration of the Year of Janusz Korczak.**



"A Hundred children, a hundred individuals who are people - not people to be, not people of tomorrow, but people now, right now - today

-Janusz Korczak

Juliana Sepkiewicz  
June 19th 2011

HOPE COURAGE HARMONY DIGNITY PATIENCE CHERRISH GENTLE  
GIVE IMAGINATION NO REGRETS STRONG REFLECTION KIND CHILDREN LIFE MATURE  
INSPIRE HAPPY AMAZING CAREFUL SUCCESS REPLETION  
PEACE INSPIRE HAPPY AMAZING CAREFUL SUCCESS REPLETION  
WISDOM LIVE