

## ***The Four Seasons* – the Music and Words that Are Building the Children’s World of Values**

### **Abstract**

This paper presents some remarks on the album edited last year *Cztery pory roku* (*The Four Seasons*). There are two reasons for the immense significance of the album: excellent performance by famous artists and rich essence that together mould the children’s world of values. The lyrics on the album are taken from *Śpiewnik dla dzieci op. 34* (*Songbook for children op. 34*) written by Zygmunt Noskowski and Maria Konopnicka.

This songbook was very popular but now it is absolutely forgotten, so it is valuable that the album reminds this great Polish heritage.

**Key words:** *music education of children, lyrics for children, the moulding of the system of values, emotional sphere, creativity in education.*

Last year was of great import in the of life the academic society of the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the University of Silesia in Katowice. It was the year of the jubilee of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of this faculty, which plays a significant role in the creative forming of students and scientists.

It was a time suitable for editing an elaborate album entitled *Cztery pory roku* (*The Four Seasons*), which is dedicated to the academic society of the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the University of Silesia. The album was part of the artistic and educational project *Patriotyczne przesłanie w sztuce i edukacji* (*Patriotic message in art and education*). The project has been realized by the Department of Arttherapy of the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the University of Silesia in Katowice, The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, and The Silesian Library in Katowice. It was organized under the auspices of rectors: of the University of Silesia – Professor Janusz Janeczek, The Karol Szymanowski Academy

of Music – Professor Eugeniusz Knapik, and the director of The Silesian Library – Professor Jan Malicki.

*The Four Seasons* – is the title of an album based on an original masterpiece, first in the Polish music literature, entitled *Śpiewnik dla dzieci op. 34* (*Songbook for children op. 34*). It is a unique work of art that has been addressed to children. The *Songbook* is the fruit of a brilliant idea of two of the most famous 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish artists: composer Zygmunt Noskowski and poetess Maria Konopnicka. These authors are regarded (in the whole world) as the greatest and the best authors, especially for children.

*Songbook for children op. 34* consists of fifty songs (together with the score) organized in four parts: *Winter* (twelve songs), *Spring* (twelve songs), *Summer* (twelve songs), *Autumn* (fourteen songs). The album *The Four Seasons* recorded by The Karol Szymanowski State Secondary Music School in Katowice in 2006 is a highly artistic performance of exquisite pieces of music from *Songbook for children*. The performers are: the Female Choir of The Karol Szymanowski State Secondary Music School in Katowice, Sabina Balcarczyk (piano), and Anna Noworzyn (soprano) who were conducted by Mirosława Knapik.

The Female Choir of The Karol Szymanowski State Secondary Music School in Katowice was established in 1945 – initially as a mixed choir, and since 1964 as a female choir. The choirmasters were the most eminent conductors: Karol Stryja, Józef Klimek, Edmund Kajdasz, Franciszek Janicki, Jan Wojtacha, and Mirosława Knapik (since 1981). The choir is very active and gives many concerts in Poland and foreign countries, having received the first prizes and honours among others: The Golden Lyre of International Choirs Festival (1986), Tychy's Christmas Carol Evenings (2002), The Łódź Choir Festival *Cantio Lodziensis* (2002). The Choir also participate in prestigious international competitions, e.g. The Warsaw Autumn (1984), People to People (Scotland, 1988), Musica Sacra (1998), Fröhlich sein und singen in Halle/Salle (Germany, 1998), International Days of Organ Music (Olkusz 1999 and 2003), and others. The repertoire of the group includes pieces of music of various composers of various styles and centuries. The choir prerecords Polish contemporary music; it collaborates with the Silesian Philharmonic Society in Katowice as well as other orchestras in the region.

Sabina Balcarczyk is a graduate of the Instrumental Department of The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice. She was successful as early as at the age of twelve – she was a soloist with the Orchestra of the Mieczysław Karłowicz Public Music School, later with the Orchestra of the Silesian Philharmonic Society in Katowice. Her artistic activity in Poland and abroad concentrates on soloist and chamber music. She has in her output numerous prerecordings of the Polish contemporary music, concerts in significant world culture centres, prizes on fes-

tivals and competitions. Since 1996 she has been promoting gifted musicians by the organization of concerts at Archdiocese Museum in Katowice. She is highly valued educator at The Karol Szymanowski State Secondary Music School in Katowice.

Anna Noworzyn is a graduate of the Vocal-Instrumental Department of The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice (first class honours) and she is also a graduate of Faculty of Philology of the University of Silesia in Katowice. She has won numerous prizes and honourable mentions on Polish and international vocal festivals and competitions. She took part in the world premiere of musical *Canterville Ghost* by J. T. Williams at The Chorzów Theatre (2000), and also in the prerecording of *Domus Dei* mass by W. Stępień.

Mirosława Knapik is a graduate of the Music Education Department of The Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice (first class honours) who finished also postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Music Education of the University of Illinois in the U.S.A. She is a very active person in the artistic, science, educational, and popularization areas; since 2005 she has been the professor of music arts. She has been a conductor of many amateurish groups of singers, and she has also been the second conductor of the Silesian Philharmonic Society Choir in Katowice. Since 1981 she has been the choirmaster of the Female Choir of The Karol Szymanowski State Secondary Music School in Katowice. She is a winner of numerous individual prizes and honourable mentions on international festivals and competitions; the choirs conducted by her repeatedly receive grand prix and first prizes. She is the director of the famous in the whole Poland, Festival of Christmas Carols organized annually in Będzin. Mirosława Knapik is an esteemed professor of the University of Silesia and since 2001 she has been the head of the Department of Arttherapy of the Faculty of Education and Psychology.

The artists mentioned above are regularly working in the field of artistic education of children and the youth. They organize concerts that connect the following: music, songs, the recitation of poems, and information about historical events. The main idea of these concerts is to allow children living at the beginning of the third millennium to grow up in the European culture, which is rooted in Christianity. Poland, a country lying in the centre of Europe, has participated in the creation of this culture for over a thousand years. Especially nowadays, in the post-modernist world, the world with the relativism of values and the sacralization of consumption and the media, it is very important to introduce the youngest to the world of traditional values; unfortunately, in many cases it has to be done from the beginning.

Among these values there are ones important not only in the life of a single human being but also for whole societies. The most important are these that can be treated “as a guide to organizing society: all citizens were of equal worth and

importance (equality); everyone should be treated fairly (justice); everyone should have control over their own lives (freedom); and everyone had a right to a basic level of material welfare (comfort). These ideas have now become common sense across Western societies” (McKee, 2005: 7).

The contemporary world, which is dominated by the mass media, offers and forces its own values. It is of great importance to give children and the youth sufficient grounds for the moulding of their systems of values. Moreover, it is not the best situation when children and the youth model themselves on patterns created by the mass media that present both positive and negative systems:

“The tabloidisation of our media has been accompanied by as many benefits as problems [...]. The past few decades have seen an overwhelming democratisation of our media – a diversification not only of voices, but of ways of speaking about personal, social and political life [...]. The contemporary media sphere constitutes a highly diverse and inclusive forum in which a host of important social issues once deemed apolitical, trivial or personal are now being aired” (Lumby, 1999: XIII). Similar phenomena are also observed in the Polish media. Concerns connected with negative patterns suggested by the mass media will become more apparent if we place our considerations within the context of modern people’s life and how it has radically and permanently changed during the last century.

Album *The Four Seasons* is one of the examples of actions connected with the process of upbringing of the young generation in the way which was initiated in the era of positivism. The album, based on the well-known and enthusiastically received *Songbook for children*, is the result of immense work done by contemporary famous artists. It is very striking that the performers take care of not only the quality of the music transmission but also of the proper pronunciation of each sound – they rigorously obey all rules of the Polish orthophony. This excellent album is a pattern of the music literature designed for children and the youth. Its magnitude follows from the fact that children learn by playing, which is an effective way of learning:

“[...] The child and later the adolescent are called upon as cothinkers or challenged with issues on which they have to take a stance. This constant confrontation with joint activities, with words and other symbolic mediations, with role-taking, but also with socially built situations, with set problems and their accepted solutions, with memories and expressed feelings, contributes to equipping the individual with the means to think, which he or she in turn learns to use by reinvesting them in new contexts” (Perret-Clermont, 2004: 3).

This valuable heritage, namely *Songbook for children*, by Z. Noskowski and M. Konopnicka, is entirely unknown to contemporary children, as well to their parents. Previously (i.e. since 1890) it was the thread from generation to generation,

but the situation changed after World War II, when the high-culture and authentic art were displaced by mass-culture and communist propaganda. Especially, such phenomena were clearly seen at schools where they were extensively promoted. Nowadays, there are educators who come back to the traditional values; to gorgeous, subtle and touching songs for children who are actually in the highest degree endangered by the influence of mass-culture.

It is a difficult matter to construct a fantasy world full of love, beauty and goodness. But M. Konopnicka made something more difficult – the world in her poems for children has all the above attributes and it is real, not fantastic. She describes typical people, places and situations, connected with the experience of daily work and the celebration of church holidays. This sphere of M. Konopnicka’s poetic individuality, strictly connected with poems stylized into folk songs, crystallized itself at the earliest time of her literary activity and it was seen until the last years of her life.

In *Songbook for children* M. Konopnicka gives us a rather unique look at periodical changes of Polish landscape, consolidating traditional values important for our society. It is worth stressing that the poetess does it in a very natural way, and at the same time she avoids the obtrusive didacticism that was typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Her poems remind everyone that the Polish nature is harmoniously connected with:

- human being, e.g. *Zła zima* (*Bad Winter*), *Maciuś* (*Young Mathew*), *Marzenie chłopca* (*A Boy’s Dream*);
- his daily effort, e.g. *W polu* (*In the Field*), *Kosiarze* (*Mowers*), *Żniwa* (*Harvest*), *Młocka* (*Threshing*);
- holiday rest, e.g. *Gwiazdka* (*Christmas Star*), *Kolędnicy* (*Carol Singers*), *Wielkanoc* (*Easter*), *Zielone Świątki* (*Pentecost*), *Dożynki* (*Harvest Home*).

The musical character of this creation is confirmed by Z. Noskowski’s compositions. Miniature poetic masterpieces refer to the Polish country and folk-dances. The outstanding meaning of Z. Noskowski’s and M. Konopnicka’s *Songbook for children* is that forces personal reflections, human feelings and emotions. It is a well-known fact that the knowledge taken from observing the closest neighborhood (people, their religion and work, and nature: plants, animals, and landscapes) is one of the fundamentals of a child’s attitude to life, other people, homeland and the world in the future. It is caused by the fact that such observations are strictly connected with direct emotions. Such emotions appear in the child’s contact with flora and fauna, which are described in the following lyrics: *Zajaczek* (*Hare*), *Wierzba* (*Willow*), *Czarna jaskółeczka* (*Black Swallow*), *Bocian* (*Stork*), *Żuczek* (*Beetle*), *Kukuleczka* (*Cuckoo*), *Jabłonka* (*Apple Tree*), *Ogródek* (*Garden*), *W lesie* (*In the Forest*), *Pszczółki* (*Bees*), *Skowronek* (*Lark*), *Sokół* (*Falcon*), *Świerszczyk*

(*Cricket*). Almost all the names of animals are in a diminutive form, so close to childhood.

Since the album has a timeless character, it will be a valuable teaching aid for all teachers who want to responsibly mould the sensibility (not only musical one) of the young generation because “learning is not just the incidental gathering information (on the Internet or elsewhere). It is also not only the steady conformation to formal school requirements. Long-term relationships and, hence, sustained interest seem necessary to acquire complex skills” (Perret-Clermont, 2004: 7).

The audience of *The Four Seasons* will find there great pleasure resulting from the music and poetry that favourably build the children’s world of values important in their future lives. It is worth noting that contact with the true heritage can intensify the feeling of national identity of the youth in the era of globalization.

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