

**EDUCATIONAL AND THERAPEUTIC VALUES OF CAROLS AND
PASTORALS IN WORK WITH YOUNG HANDICAPPED PEOPLE**

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Pozornost a uvažování zahrnující křesťanské hodnoty obsažené v polských koledách a pastýřských zpěvech mohou být inspirací pro další výzkum.

Klíčová slova: Koledy; pastýřské zpěvy; postižení lidí; výchova; terapie

Long before Christmas, nearly from the beginning of November we have many occasions and opportunities to get in touch with Christmas related songs on an everyday basis. Their sound follows us when shopping in the shopping malls. New discs with Christmas hits by the best performers of pop music and so-called classical music appear on the market. The CDs recorded by them are added to daily newspapers, the press release services concerning them are present on the Internet all year round. Carols and pastorals do not only have to be a marketing means. They can also be a means of exerting influence used in the education and therapy of handicapped children. Therefore, we would like to devote this paper to that topic. Due to the limited scope of this work, we intentionally omit issues connected to the history of carols and pastorals and their literary and musical analysis.

Carols and pastorals are the treasures of culture of many nations of the World, passed from one generation to another together with tradition and faith of their fathers. They are valuable components of musical, religious and folk cultural heritage. According to the Polish tradition, they are to be sung since 24th December (Christmas Eve) till 2nd February (Presentation of the Lord Feast). Unfortunately, more and more often and particularly by young people, Christmas is associated with songs extraneous to national culture and tradition, which frequently stray in their content from Biblical message concerning Jesus Christ nativity and are singing glory to Christmas tree, Christmas tree lights, little stars, bells and gifts, i.e. objects representing dubious educational, patriotic and religious values, so necessary for proper development of the contemporary young people.

Carols and pastorals have a particular and unique charm, lyricism and sentimentalism. Like no other works, they carry huge emotional load, mainly of the positive kind. They are also a source of rich aesthetic experiences. They are characterized by simple, catchy melodies, have simple words, understandable by subsequent generations of people as well as differentiated character of expression (happy, sad, bluff, sentimental, lyrical), rhythmic and even dancing one. Through rhythms of the Polonaise, Mazur, Kujawiak and Krakowiak, names of shepherds, musical instrument names, costumes, landscape and heavy winter descriptions they are deeply rooted in the reality of the homeland. Furthermore, they have a unique and inimitable character, carrying a huge, positive emotional load. They have a simple form of verse songs, often including chorus. Their rhythmicity, among other things, gives us sense of calm, internal orderliness and harmony.

According to Mrs. Ewa Kofin almost all music (including secular music) considered festive, unusual and separating from everyday life can find itself in the sacred area. Musical as well as literary form decides whether a musical work belongs to the sacred or profane area. On the other hand, massive reproduction of art works can lead to its desacralization, therefore a loss of attractiveness. In the case of carols we are dealing with the overlapping of the sacred and profane

areas. On one hand carols preach the Truth, saying that due to His love for man, the Lord sent to the World His beloved Son, whereas music and lyrics serve to praise the Lord and not to appreciate the literary or musical composition skills of the author or surrounding a man with objects or phenomena. On the other hand they have simple words (shepherds names, musical instrument names, costume, landscape and seasons of the year description), joyful, bluff expression, dancing rhythms. The massive distribution of carols performed in this way is not always appropriate for their musical notation or literary character expression, mood and national or religious tradition (i.e. jazz, swing, metal, rap or hip-hop) can bring their sacred to the profane.

The worth of carols and pastorals may be evaluated from three aspects: historical, folkloristic or religious ones. More and more frequently they are used in education and rehabilitation of children, youth and adults at various periods of the liturgical and calendar year. First of all, their unique, inimitable character calls for using these songs in work with handicapped children. Like no other songs they carry a huge positive emotional load. The World they show is good, harmonious, full of goodness, love, joy and peace.

Therapeutic and educational effect of carols and pastorals is based on lyrics, musical material and situational context in which they are used. They can be listened to, sung, played on musical instruments, recited. One can make accompaniment for them (by clapping, stamping, on musical instruments), improvise about them (i.e. with word, voice, movement, instrument), make visual arts interpretation, pantomime or psychodrama performances. The educational and therapeutic action of such a songs may be enhanced by fairy tales, poems, stories, pictures, photographs, movies and other accessories of various kinds linked to Christmas or Winter Season subjects.

Within a framework of educational and therapeutic activities, pupils may listen to and perform traditional carols and pastorals, i.e. perform them in a traditional manner cultivated during religious ceremonies and patriotic events. They can also paraphrase their lyrics and melodies, make new verses for the existing melodies or new melodies for the traditional lyrics. Furthermore, they may compose totally new melodies as well as brand new lyrics. Joint performance of Christmas songs results in greater emotional and psycho-motoric involvement of each particular pupil than is the case of mere listening. Group singing or playing facilitates getting in touch with other people and maintenance of interpersonal contacts as well as mastering collaboration abilities within the group and submission to its standards. For this reason, children like these musical pieces as they encourage them to oral, vocal, instrumental, movement and imaginary activities. In this way they allow even to a minimum extent shy, timid, less musically gifted and more handicapped people to join these activities, for example: by means of murmuring, whistling melody, recitation of lyrics with low voice or rhythmic tapping. Even though the child does not express any activity in the contact with carols and pastorals, the contact itself gives him sensation of joint music making, closeness and unity with other children of the same age.

Carols and pastorals can be used in work with groups and individuals and applied with regard to various group of children: healthy, sick, able-bodied and handicapped. Under no circumstances should one level of interaction be preferred, i.e. the musical one, whilst forgetting about their deep literary and religious message telling the story of Jesus Christ's Nativity. Pupils may identify themselves with the circumstances of His birth, poverty and misery of the Bethlehem Crib, shepherds' joy, the Infant helplessness, the Mother of God's embarrassment and fear, looking for some analogies between their own fates and His fate. The Joy deriving from lyrics and music caused by the coming of the Lord spreads to the class participants, gives them hope for better future, frame of mind, health, financial situation and living faith, that they will

be able to cope with new responsibilities and challenges brought about by everyday life. In the case of a handicapped child, songs about Christ Nativity may have a positive impact on this child's orientation in time, seasons of the year, feasts, liturgical periods, customs, contributing to greater authenticity of his perception of the times he lives through, particularly if he lives for extended time periods outside of his home, i.e., in an educational or health care institution.

Children feel themselves safe in the carols repertoire, being somehow "wrapped" in their lyrics and melodies well known from early childhood and memories linked to sensations of Christmas time. A sense of safety, which spreads to them during listening or music making gives their actions harmony, order, control and calm. Musical sounds and lyrics of Christmas songs contribute to the creation of unique and inimitable atmosphere, where participants of musical, catechetical encounters have a strong feeling of unity, joy and satisfaction. When making music this way, they build a community of people close to each other, reciprocally receiving and giving their presence, joy and love. Interpersonal relationships between meetings participants are free of diffidence, rivalry, hostility and aggression. They are rich in gestures of tenderness, reciprocal affection and respect. One may say that they reflect gentle tenderness of Mary – Mother of Jesus Christ, mute anxiety of St. Joseph – a caregiver of the Holly Family, troubleless joy of shepherds and exultation of angels in the Heaven. During listening and music making participants have a sense of safety coming from realization of Lord's Providence.

The carol, performed in various ways, gives an opportunity for verbal, motional or instrumental expression, i.e., creation of own, individual improvisations and due to this fact, contributing to sensitiveness and openness to other human beings, greater mutual tolerance and forbearance development. When sung or played, even on very simple brass instruments, the carol may become a personal message of a handicapped pupil, an attempt to communicate to himself or others his needs, expectations and preferences. Through its performance – even in a very simple way at an elementary level of competence – he may feel listened to, appreciated and accepted by his pals. Christmas songs allow for the expression of emotions, feelings, thoughts, associations and conceptions often difficult to express verbally.

Lyrics and melodies of carols and pastorals may become an inspiration for shows comprising text and music (so called *Jasełka* – a specific type of nativity based play), pantomime and psychodrama etudes. The song material can be an integral part of the performance action or barely its musical and textual background. The production of these plays requires from each participant taking on specific social roles, which teaches empathy and reciprocal tolerance. Educational and therapeutic activities of this kind contribute also to child's vocabulary, range of produced sounds, tones and movements development, etc. The Christmas *Jasełka* can also be used for teaching religious truths and national traditions.

Carols and pastorals may also contribute to making one aware of unfulfilled desires and dreams, particularly children's ones, accompanying Christmas time. However, the most important issue is that these dreams do not concern material things, but a fulfilment of spiritual needs such as love, safety, belonging to a family or community, finding a sense of life or religious truths. Strong and deep positive emotional reactions are associated with these memories and following those carols. This can, for example, be proved by the fact that carols are used in the case of patients in a coma, since these songs, so full of emotions, may facilitate contact with them.

Nevertheless, for some people carols may be associated with something sad, unpleasant or traumatic. In such a case, they can be a medium between a patient and his problems and therapist. Using such a means of interaction allows an awareness of pathogenic, conflict carrying experiences i.e. from childhood, family home, past Christmas, their verbal definition and

expression and then working them out and removal. Somehow, emerging into Christmas lyrics and melodies allows patients, during their affective experience to return to difficult and painful moments from the past in order to confront them, settle, react to fear, tame phobia, express rebellion, anger, grief, aggression, and this way once and forever close the past and accept it the way it was.

However, one cannot forget that Christmas music making can also be a prayer for a man, an inspiration for deeper reflections, new insight into biblical truths about the God-man Nativity and the occasion for spiritual renewal.

Any young individual perceives Carols and pastorals in a highly unique and inimitable manner. First of all, their impact depends on his emotional and aesthetical sensitivity to music and lyrics, experience, philosophy of life, education, accepted moral rules and values. Due to this fact, using musical works of this kind in education and therapy requires a particularly conscious and equilibrated approach. We cannot forget that they are part of the priceless cultural and religious heritage of many nations, requiring great respect and cultivation. Carols and pastorals are willingly listened to (and often performed) by believers as well as atheists. Thanks to their simplicity and the positive content they carry, they somehow “fly over” the divisions and differences dividing people.

Observations and considerations presented by us concern Christian values brought about by Polish carols and pastorals and may be an inspiration for further research in therapeutic and educational application of these songs.

Shrnutí

Výchovné a terapeutické hodnoty koled a pastýřských zpěvů při práci s mladými postiženými lidmi

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