

A Lifetime of Joy

A review by Carrie Dentler

www.theparentingpassageway.com

A Lifetime of Joy was “collected, created, adapted and translated” by Bronja Zahlingen, a familiar name to many of us in Early Waldorf Education. I adore this book. Bronja Zahlingen was born in Poland in 1912 and went to Germany at the onset of WWI. She first encountered anthroposophy in high school and after graduation and kindergarten training began a kindergarten in Vienna. She went to conference in England at the time of invasion of Hitler’s troops and stayed in England for a number of years. She returned to Vienna in 1950 and began her life’s work of creating linguistic games, poems and stories for young children. She died in 2000, and this lovely book is so wonderful for small children and is such a testimony to her creative spirit.

The rhymes and stories really are wonderful for children up to age nine and will convince you of the wonder and appropriateness of puppetry in bringing these stories. Many of Bronja’s articles are also included. In her article entitled “In Praise of Early Childhood” she points out this fact”:

“Human beings can change and develop beyond their natural genetic and biological dispositions, on which their spiritual, soul and moral qualities never entirely depend. Here we begin to understand the great responsibility that rests upon us adults, as parents and educators; in fact, upon the whole attitude and environment that a particular place, culture or civilization has to offer.

In the presence of young children, this responsibility is especially great because in their earliest years, children are endowed with an immense power of imitation that can also reveal the great trust and confidence they have in us and in the world around them. They cannot yet distinguish values, and seem to assume that everything around them is good. During this period of life, body, soul and spirit still exist as a unity.”

In this book there are also articles entitled, “Movement, Gesture and Language in the Life of the Young Child” and “The Pedagogical Value of Marionette and Table Puppet Shows for the Small Child”. There are verses and songs, circle games, stories and plays for puppets for every season along with Christmas legends based around nature.

These puppet plays are fabulous and could really make up the block of your entire school year for the Kindergarten-aged child. The puppet plays do include music and songs, so it would be advantageous if you or someone you know could read music.

Consider this book as an essential book for your shelf for your young child (and those who are young at heart).