



## **POLISH-AMERICAN ARTS ASSOCIATION**

of Washington, DC.

# **NEWSLETTER**

Fall Issue 2010

**Member of The American Council for Polish Culture, Inc. Since 1966**

### **New Officers for 2010-2011**



**Dr. Susanne Lotarski swears in Board Member Marianna Eckel, Treasurer Ted Mirecki, President Tom Payne, 1st Vice President Dr. Wanda O'Brien-Trefil, Board Member Dr. Estelle Wachtel Torres, and Board Member Dr. Ed Pawlowski .**

## **WIGILIA Supper**

**Sunday, December 5, 2010 at 4:00 pm.**

**Embassy of the Republic of Poland  
2640 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009**

**\$85 per person  
Traditional Wigilia cuisine and Polish kolędy**

## ***Message from the President***



It is my pleasure as recently elected President of PAAA of Washington DC to welcome our members to this newsletter. During this transition I am reminded of what Lech Wałęsa said in 1966: “The transition from capitalism to communism is easy, one decree on nationalization solves the problem. However, the transition from communism to capitalism is a totally different matter. It is easy to make fish soup from the aquarium with living gold-fish, but just imagine what challenge it is to try to make the aquarium with living goldfish out of the fish-soup.” Fortunately, I have not inherited the symbolic fish soup, but rather my predecessors and Board members have maintained a vibrant infrastructure fueled by enthusiasm and talent to make positive contributions to our Polish American community and advance the many artistic facets of our heritage.

When it comes to appreciation of Polish heritage and arts, I am admittedly a “late-bloomer.” About 10 years ago, I began accompanying my mother, Elaine Mazany Payne, to PAAA events as an escort. She served in many capacities, including President, until her passing this past January. I quickly developed an appreciation for the organization and the culture it promotes. Now I am proud to be your elected president and dedicate this year to my dearly departed mother.

Why am I relating this? I want to relate the lesson that I learned not to give up on dormant family members; keep inviting them to learn and carry on this rich tradition. I now fully understand the uniqueness of our organization in light of why the efforts over centuries to destroy our best and brightest forefathers have failed. As a culture we have continued to produce so many great achievers in all fields, and we have continued to uphold our proud legacy. So, invite your extended families to become active members in their heritage, and to participate in our events.

What can you expect from the organization in 2010-2011? We have already started our new fiscal year with a cultural cornucopia. The Wianki was held in June to the delight of our community and many visitors near the Capitol. On September 19th, we were dazzled by the artistry of Artur Dutkiewicz, a jazz pianist from Poland, as he interpreted the spectrum from Chopin to Jimi Hendrix on the piano. On September 25th, the National Chopin Competition winner Claire Huangci mesmerized us with her lyrical Chopin pieces on Padarewski’s piano at the Polish Embassy. We will look back fondly at 2010 as the 200<sup>th</sup> celebration of Chopin’s birthday and the many events sponsored by Polonia. On December 5th, you won’t want to miss the Wigilia celebration at the Embassy with its uplifting warmth, traditional foods, and kolędy. And we will continue our tradition of holding a Chopin concert in February of 2011.

The Board is committed this year to renovating the website [www.paaa.us](http://www.paaa.us), to reviewing the current Constitution (subject to approval of the membership at the next General Meeting), to reviewing current Scholarship policies and procedures, and to developing and distributing an updated directory.

As President, I intend to maintain and build stronger ties to our affiliated organizations. There is a place for all of our organizations, and we are not competitors, but rather we can cooperatively work together, as evidenced by the fact that many of us have active participation in several organizations. I feel privileged to already have attended meetings and events of the Polish American Congress, Polish Summer Youth Leadership Conference, American Center for Polish Culture, and the Friends of John Paul II so far this year. They reveal a great spirit of service of both young old and old in our community. It is incumbent upon us to continue to acquaint others with the many noble political, educational, sociological and artistic endeavors to benefit the Polish American community, as well as America as a whole. And I also encourage current members to get more actively involved in matters about which you are passionate. We are always open to suggestions for new ideas on events and activities.

Najlepsze życzenia!

Thomas Payne, President  
Polish-American Arts Association

## ***Message From the Editor***

Although many of you know me as a pianist, I am delighted to assume the responsibilities as Editor of the PAAA Newsletter. I thank the Officers and Board Members for contributing well-written articles about the many cultural activities of the PAAA. You will notice some changes, because I am doing the layout for the Newsletter myself. You will also notice that some photographs are now printed in color. I hope that you enjoy!

Wanda O'Brien-Trefil, Ph.D.  
1st Vice-President  
Polish-American Arts Association



**THE POLISH-AMERICAN ARTS ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON, DC, INC.**

**Editor: Wanda O'Brien-Trefil, Ph.D.**

**The PAAA Inc is a Non-Profit Organization Charter under US Law c3 since 1966**

**[www.paaa.us](http://www.paaa.us)**

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**Layout by Wanda O'Brien-Trefil, Ph.D.**



## ***Annual General Membership Meeting***

### ***Installation of New Officers and Presentation of Scholarships***

The Polish American Arts Association of Washington, D.C. convened for an annual General Membership meeting at the McLean Community Center in McLean, Virginia on May 25, 2010, installed new slate of officers for 2010-2011, and awarded scholarship awards to college students. President Eliza Wojtaszek warmly greeted some 50 members. Canon Philip Majka gave the invocation. The President submitted her annual report of activities and projected events to include Wianki in June at Capitol Hill, Chopin Concert in September with Claire Huangci, a Jazz Concert in autumn with Artur Dutkiewicz, and a Wigilia supper in December. Polish Embassy representative Włodzimierz Sulgostowski conveyed the Polish Ambassador's greetings to our group.

The nominating committee of Dr. Ed Pawlowski, Irena Mirecki, and Frank Piatkowski presented a new slate of officers, conducted an election and proceeded with the installation of officers. Dr. Susanne Lotarski, President of the Polish American Congress, Washington Division, administered the swearing in of the new officers and board members with the oath of office.

President Thomas Payne presented PAAA scholarship awards of \$3000, \$2000 and \$1000 to the following college students:

Patricia Marianna Wnek of Germantown, Maryland, a sophomore student at the Peabody Institute of Music at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, majoring in violin.

Sarah Catherine Kuchinsky of Derwood, Maryland, a sophomore at Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana, majoring in Biology and pre-veterinary medicine,

Sylvia Anna Surowiec of Elkridge, Maryland, a junior at Stevenson University, Maryland, majoring in visual communication design.



Hanna Bondarewska describes the mission of the Ambassador Theater, which recently produced „Summer at Nohant”

All winners were wished God's blessings for continued success. Patricia Wnek performed on her violin with an unaccompanied rendition of pieces by Chopin and Mozart.

Guest speaker for the day was Hanna Bondarewska, actress, author, theater director, and founder of the Ambassador Theater [www.aticc.org](http://www.aticc.org). She presented an impassioned, fascinating, and comprehensive overview of her organization's multicultural mission and recent work with a video screening. The afternoon was topped off with a scrumptious buffet of delicacies and libations. Kudos are in order for the organizing committee of Tom Payne, Sharon Brzostowski, and Frank Piatkowski.

Ed Pawlowski, Ph.D.

#### **NEW OFFICERS**

President  
Thomas Payne

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Dr. Wanda O'Brien-Trefil

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Richard Wiermanski

Treasurer  
Thaddeus Mirecki

Recording Secretary  
Irene Sowa

Corresponding Secretary - Vacant

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Marianna Eckel

Alice Laning

Bernadette Wiermanski

Dr. Richard Okręglak

Dr. Ed Pawlowski

Estelle Wachtel-Torres, MD

## PAAA Scholarship Award Winners 2010

The Polish American Arts Association Washington, DC. is happy to announce the conclusion of its Twelfth Annual Scholarship Competition on May 28, 2010. Three young scholars were introduced at the General Membership Meeting and be presented with their winning awards. They were Patricia Wnek, \$3000, Sarah Kuchinsky, \$2000, and Sylvia Surowiec, \$1000.

**Patricia Wnek** is currently studying music at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. She has excelled in the violin from the tender age of four and has tirelessly performed at numerous concert venues since - including the PAAA Wigilia.

**Sarah Kuchinsky** is currently studying veterinary medicine at Butler University, a career she has envisioned since early childhood. Volunteer work for three years at the National Zoo alerted her to the importance of programs related to the preservation of species and the impact of environmental wildlife care.

**Sylvia Anna Surowiec** is an art student attending Stevenson University who states that she is passionate about graphic design. She has traveled extensively in hopes of improving as an artist and as a person. She has been selected by the Stevenson Art Department for an internship program in London.

Congratulations! We anticipate joy and success for Patricia, Sarah, and Sylvia in their careers from the

PAAA Scholarship Award Committee: Thomas Payne, chair

Wanda O'Brien-Trefil, PhD.

Estelle von Wachtel-Torres, MD ,co-chair

Ed Pawlowski, PhD



Scholarship recipients Patricia Wnek and Sylvia Surowiec

The Polish American Arts Association of Washington, DC is proud to present this list of young Polish American scholars who have benefited from our scholarship award program since its inception in 1999. Money for the scholarships is raised through attendance at the PAAA cultural events. We thank our faithful members and good friends who have supported our efforts in the past and we hope they will do so in the future. The PAAA stated mission continues to be a fostering of the knowledge of Polish Culture in the United States and a promotion of the scholastic endeavors of our Youth. Please promote this mission by encouraging college students of Polish descent to apply for a PAAA scholarship at our website [www.paaa.us](http://www.paaa.us).

### PAAA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

'99	Monica Koplewski	Communications
'00	Coleen Karnas	Music
'01	Aleksandra Syska	Journalism
'01	Jill Bochanik	Business
'02	Marie Wisneski	International Relations
'02	Mark Domanski	Medicine
'03	Helen Donnelly	Art
'04	Michelle Grajek	International Relations
'04	Adam Domanski	Medicine
'05	Tomasz Obrzut	Medicine
'05	Alex Martay	Art
'06	Russ Walenga	Art
'06	Robert Ouelette	Art
'07	Katlyn DeGtaw	Music
'07	Justine Tobiasz	Art
'07	Lisa Moutoux	Nursing
'08	Paul Armstrong	International Business
'08	Kristin Thorin	Medicine
'09	Gabriela Piatkowski	Music
'09	Caroline Bogdan	Environmental Engineering
'09	Matthew Czekaj	Foreign Service
'09	Kristina Buda Ortins	Fire Protection Engineering
'10	Patricia Wnek	Music
'10	Sarah Kuchinsky	Veterinary Medicine
'10	Sylvia A. Surowiec	Graphic Arts

## ***Wianki***

Washington D. C. held its annual Festival of Wreaths, “Wianki” on June 26, 2010. Despite being an extremely hot day, the new location in front of U.S. Capitol in the shadow of the big trees created an atmosphere resembling Polish Festival fields.



We had pleasure listening to the Polish music played by “The Brothers-In-Law Plus Band” from New Jersey under direction of Oleh Skrypczuk. The program was opened with Josef Surowiec singing the Polish National Anthem and the American National Anthem. He continued singing Polish folk songs throughout the program, with accompaniment provided by “The Brothers-in-Law Plus Band”. Surowiec has such a beautiful voice!

While the wreaths were being made by young girls, under the direction and supervision of Mr. and Mrs. John Kasper, the dancers from two Folk Dance Ensembles: “Janosik” from Pennsylvania, and “Michas” from Virginia, performed regional folk dances of Poland, displaying and presenting their styles, colorations, and temperaments with Polish Folk Music and Dance. The dancers wore regional costumes from Śląsk, Kaszuby and Kraków.

At dusk, the “wianki” pageant began, lead by Stasia Skrypczuk, with young girls wearing white gowns and carrying wreaths. The wreaths were lighted and, to the strains of Polish folk music, were placed by the reflecting pool in front of U. S. Capitol Building. After the girls danced their last dance, the audience continued to enjoy the band. Many photographers tried to capture the moment, but people who were just lucky enough to be there and see the event heard famous Polish music and songs, and were able to celebrate and reminisce about our ancient tradition. Such a beautiful evening! Such a beautiful tradition!

Please come and join us for our annual “Wianki” celebration next year: June 25<sup>th</sup> 2011. This event is free and open to all. Check new announcements as the location of the event may change. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this event a success

Marianna Eckel

Director of „Wianki”



## **American Center for Polish Culture**

### **62nd Annual Convention**

The Polish American Arts Association of Washington D.C. is proud to be an Affiliate Member of the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC). Along with about 60 conventioners from all over the US, we recently attended the 62nd Annual Convention organized under the theme "Carving a Dream" in Rapid City, SD. The Radisson Hotel was located conveniently to various tourist sites, including Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse Memorial Monument. Upon arrival and registration, each participant received a straw cowboy hat

to help set the wild west theme and create the casual atmosphere. The mornings were dedicated to business issues, the afternoons to touring.

The opening session was a most extraordinary experience. We were welcomed by Alan Hanks, Mayor of Rapid City and Mr. Zygmunt Matynia, Council General of the Polish Republic, in Chicago, IL, who delivered a passionate keynote address. Whitney A. Rencontre II "Standing Buffalo" chanted an anthem in the native Lakota language, followed by Steven Yellowhawk who sang the American national anthem. Then the Polish anthem was sung by the conventioners. After lunch we were treated to a performance by Jasmine Pickner, from the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, who explained and performed spiritual and symbolic hoop dancing. Several members of the audience joined her in a lesson of hoop dancing.

Among the luncheon speakers was pianist-composer Jarosław Gołombowski, who gave us an overview of the many Chopin societies in the United States. The following day we were treated to a talk by Douglas W. Jacobsen, author of the World War II novel, "Night of Flames".

One of the outstanding visits was to Bear Country, an animal preserve, then on to Mt. Rushmore. An elegant dinner was followed by a patriotic lighting ceremony, dedicated to all veterans. The next day's tour included Deadwood, a famous western gold-mining town, and Boot Hill Cemetery. Wild Bill Hickok is its best known inhabitant along with Anne Oakley. Hickok is immortalized in several sculptures, including one by Korczak Ziolkowski in the town square. On to the Circle BRanch for the performance of the Sheriff and Biscuit Bandit shoot out. Dinner that night at the "Circle BRanch" served chuck-wagon style with buffalo meat, beans, etc. on tin plates. After dinner entertainment consisted of country-style music by the sheriff, his wife, and two talented sons. Saturday's tour, and the most memorable part of our convention, was the visit to Korczak Ziolkowski's Crazy Horse Memorial Monument.

Driving up to Crazy Horse, the sight of the mountain is indeed spectacular. At the Visitor's Center we viewed a background film that told the story of how Korczak Ziolkowski began carving the mountain in 1948, and how the mountain continues to be sculpted by using explosives. Seven of Korczak's ten children actively continue work on this monumental project which is funded by private funds. The Center also holds a display of Korczak's works, including his bust of Paderewski, which won First Prize in the 1939 World's Fair.

The Awards Banquet and installation of newly elected directors was held at the Center's banquet facility. Rev. Canon Philip Majka presided over the installation, which was followed by the Awards Ceremony. The Founders Award went to Jacqueline Droleski (Elmira, NY) and Mary Heslin (Hartford, CT). A special Cultural Award was presented to Jadwiga Ziolkowski, Korczak's daughter, in recognition of the continued work on the Crazy Horse Memorial Monument. This historic evening ended with a spectacular Laser Light show beamed on the mountain. The convention chairs, Debbie Majka and Richard M. Wiermanski, assisted by an outstanding committee, carved a dream and inspiration for the conventioners.

**Richard & Bernadette Wiermanski**



## ***Pianist Claire Huangci Impressive in Chopin Concert***

In today's performance the keyboard often comes music. That was certainly by Claire Huangci at the Poland on September 25. perfect performance with panache. Claire Huangci's Embassy of the Republic of and the PAAA. Jadwiga the Foundation,



style, technical excellence at at the expense of expression in *not* the case with the concert Embassy of the Republic of Hers was a technically near-great expressiveness and concert was organized by the Poland, the Chopin Foundation Gewert, Executive Director of introduced the pianist.

Claire is the winner of the National Chopin Competition held by the Chopin Foundation of Miami (founded by Lady Blanka Rosenstiel), which entitles her to automatic entry into the world's most prestigious competition, the International Chopin Piano Competition held this year in October. Claire's all-Chopin concert began with two Etudes from Op. 10 – these are pieces which are studies to train and display technical excellence, but unlike other composers' studies, Chopin's etudes are also concert pieces of high artistic quality. Etude No. 2 is an exercise in training the outer, weaker fingers (third, fourth, fifth) of the right hand in playing rapid chromatic scales. Etude No. 5, the "Black Key" etude, is meant to train the right hand for spacing on the black keys. Both pieces were flashes of sound performed at a breakneck pace, but producing clear definition of every note – like pearls falling on marble.

The Polonaise-Fantaisie Op. 61 is more fantasy than polonaise. It is from Chopin's late period, when he was moving away from the literal folk-music roots that inspired much of his earlier music. Claire did a wonderful job modulating among the various moods from triumphal polonaise rhythms to poignant reveries.

The Andante section of the Andante Spianato and Grand Polonaise, Op. 22 was not quite "spianato" enough. "Spianato" means smoothed out, and there were some miniscule fits and starts in its ebb and flow. Claire's performance of the Polonaise was technically spectacular, but now and then a phrase would be rounded off too abruptly to conform to the pace of the polonaise rhythm. However, the audience loved the keyboard pyrotechnics, and "bravos" resounded at its conclusion.

The high point of the concert were the two Ballades, No. 1 Op. 23 and No. 2 Op. 38. These are vast dramatic works that range from quiet lyrical passages to stormy, passionate outbursts. Claire managed to convey that drama most effectively, providing power and volume in the loud sections, tenderness and expressiveness in the quiet ones. In these, and the posthumously published Nocturne in C-sharp minor, her true artistry became apparent – impeccable technical proficiency combined with a deeply felt lyricism and expression of the emotional content of Chopin's music.

After extended applause and "bravos", for an encore, Claire played the F major Waltz, Op. 34 no. 3. Despite very minor quibbles, the concert was a most satisfying musical experience. It is indeed amazing that someone so petite and slender, with rather small hands, can produce so much power and such a range of expression on the keyboard. It was too bad that Claire did not play more pieces based on Polish folk music, so that we could get a feel for her interpretation of Chopin's uniquely Polish national expressiveness. We wished her all the best in her appearance in the Warsaw competition. And, no matter what the outcome there, in her undoubtedly successful career thereafter.

**Ted Mirecki**



## ***Why Wasn't Copernicus Tried for Heresy?***

Mikołaj Kopernik, Latinized as Nicolas Copernicus (1472-1543) is remembered as the man who brought forward the idea that the Earth circles the sun, rather than being the unmoving center of the universe. We also know that about a century after his death, Galileo was tried for suspicion of heresy for espousing the same doctrine. So why wasn't Copernicus treated the same way as Galileo? Part of the answer to this puzzle lies in the different personalities of the two men, part in Copernicus' career path.

Copernicus was born into a prominent family in Poland (his uncle was a bishop) and was educated in Italy. On returning to his native land, he eventually was appointed as canon of a large cathedral in Frombork, on the Wisła River. A word of explanation: during the middle ages wealthy merchants and noblemen would often try to make amends for their lives by leaving money and property to the church. Over the centuries, then, a large cathedral would amass all sorts of land, buildings, businesses, and the like, and somebody had to manage things. This was Copernicus' job. In addition, he is supposed to have led troops against the Teutonic Knights and served on a Royal Commission to reform the Polish currency. Some scholars have even suggested that he discovered Gresham's Law in economics ("Bad money drives out good") before Gresham did. In short, Copernicus was very much a man of business affairs in his time, not a cloistered scholar. The best analogue in modern American would probably be the mayor of a large city or governor of a small state.

As a savvy Church politician, Copernicus knew how to present his ideas without ruffling feathers. When he published his monumental work *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (*On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*), he was careful to stress that the idea was a mathematical exercise – an attempt to see if a heliocentric universe could be constructed. A foreword (which he probably didn't write and may never have seen) explicitly denies that the book made any attempt to give a picture of the actual universe that we live in.

Because of Copernicus' political savvy and disclaimers, his book circulated widely in Europe without stirring up controversy. In fact, there were even lectures on the Copernican system given at the Vatican! Part of the lack of controversy was due to the fact that, like all scholars of the time, Copernicus wrote in Latin, so that his work was accessible to only a small number of people.

Galileo, on the other hand, was a confrontational guy. He wrote in Italian, so more people read his *Dialogue Concerning Two World Systems*. Galileo put the cosmological arguments of the Pope into the mouth of a character named 'Simplicio' ('Fool'). Small wonder that he landed himself in trouble! Galileo could have learned something about strategy and diplomacy from his Polish predecessor.

James Trefil, Ph.D., Clarence J. Robinson Professor of Physics  
George Mason University

### ***Update on Claire Huangci at the International Chopin Piano Competition***

I called Dr. Jin Huang (pictured on left page with Claire and President Tom Payne) to learn that Claire had become one of the 20 semi-finalists in the competition. Quite a feat for a 20 year old pianist! No pianist from the US made it into the finals. Dr. Huang reports that Claire has moved on to her extensive European tour. Among her performances, she will be performing Chopin Concerto No. 1. We wish her enormous success!  
The Editor





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**Polish-American Arts Association  
P.O. Box 9442  
Washington, DC 20016**

