



POLISH AMERICAN ARTS ASSOCIATION

of Washington, DC

Fall 2015

NEWSLETTER

Member of the American Council for Polish Culture, Inc. since 1966

Tom Payne - New ACPC President

Tom Payne has been elected the new president of the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) at the 67th Annual Convention, held in Chicago in August. Now serving as the President of the Polish American Arts Association (PAAA) in his third consecutive term, Tom follows in the footsteps of other PAAA leaders who went on to preside over the national organization: Feliks G. Bochenski, Walter Zachariasiewicz, Kaya Ploss, Richard Wiermianski, and Thaddeus Mirecki. As the PAAA prepares to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2016, it is proud of its strong participation in promoting Polish culture on the national level. In addition to the above listed presidents, over the years PAAA was represented by numerous board and committee members, as well as hosted a number of ACPC conventions. In Chicago, in addition to Mary Flanagan and Cecilia Glembocki, who were already serving as board members, Celia Larkin and Raymond Glembocki were elected to two year terms on the ACPC Board of Directors. Alice Laning is in charge of the ACPC Scholarship for Summer Study [in Poland], Aloysius Hennessey is on the Nominating Committee, Ted Mirecki serves as the Financial Secretary, and Wanda O'Brien-Trefil chairs the Music Committee

In his own words, Tom Payne was a "late bloomer" as far as involvement in things Polish was concerned. In fact, you might wonder, "How can someone with the last name of Payne claim to be Polish?" Tom's Polish side comes from his mother, the late Elaine Mazany Payne, who also served as PAAA president from 2006 to 2007. Elaine's parents were Philip Mazany from Grand Rapids and Helen Sobecki from Saginaw, Michigan. Her father founded and



New ACPC President, Tom Payne may have come late to recognizing what it means to be Polish but in fifteen years he has provided a lifetime's worth of service to the Polish-American community.

edited the *Polish Echo*, Saginaw's only Polish language newspaper, which catered to the needs of the city's large Polish population.

Unlike many who have been involved in Polish-American activities most of their lives, Tom grew up in Northern Virginia in an "un-Polish" community, but he still fondly recalls his mother making some Polish specialties in the kitchen, such as *paczki* before Lent and *bigos* during the winter. He completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Virginia in History and Economics and after entering the business world, earned Masters Degrees in Business Administration from Virginia Tech and in Telecommunications from George Washington University.

Tom's introduction to PAAA activities was almost casual and accidental. As his mother advanced in years,

she needed someone to escort her to social and other occasions, so having no choice but to fulfill his role as a dutiful and devoted son, he began to attend PAAA meetings and events in the year 2000 as a casual observer and soon joined the organization as a member. He mixed and mingled with other members for a few years, and one day, while attending the General Meeting, he was surprised to hear someone nominate him to be Recording Secretary; even though he enjoyed the association and its activities, he was not sure if he wanted any responsibility, but out of politeness and respect, he accepted. From then on, Tom enjoyed serving in various roles until he was elected President in 2010. His only regret is that his mother passed away before she could see her son follow in her footsteps, but she knew it was coming.

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Message from the President

I send warm greetings to all of our members! As we embark on a new Association year, I want to assure you that the Board is still very committed to providing excellent celebration and promotion of Polish American culture. So in the next year, we will be actively promoting the following events and activities:

Wigilia will be celebrated on December 6 at the elegant mansion of the Arts Club of Washington. We will enjoy Polish food, music, kolędy singing, sharing of opłatek, and most of all, take the opportunity to socialize with fellow members during this special time of Christmas.

The PAAA Scholarship program continues to thrive thanks to the generous donations of Mr. Karpinski and all of our generous members. No donation is too small and our awardees greatly appreciate this assistance. Our outstanding Scholarship Committee does a great job in selecting students who not only hold great promise of scholastic achievement but also are committed to promoting their Polish heritage.

A fine Chopin Concert will be held in the Spring, which will also coincide with PAAA sponsoring the ACPC Spring Board meeting. I encourage extra effort to attend this concert at the Embassy for the opportunity to get to know and perhaps renew acquaintances with some outstanding volunteers from other regions of the country.

We continue to plan our special 50th Anniversary Gala Celebration to be held at the Congressional Country Club on September 17, 2016. This will be an exciting celebration, so mark your calendars now. Please share with us your fond memories, photos and souvenirs from past events that can be displayed or put in a program book

Finally, as the article by Cecilia Glembocki indicates, PAAA is joining with the Embassy of Poland to financially sponsor an ambitious children's book project. This truly fits our mission of promoting Polish culture, especially to youths of Polish origin.

All of the above requires time and attention from dedicated committee members but it also depends on your financial contributions as well as your support in attending our wonderful events. As we draw nearer to the end of the calendar year, please keep us in mind for those late tax-deductible contributions.

I hope to see many of you at the Wigilia in December.

Tom Payne

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Tom Payne - New ACPC President

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Upon his election in 2010, Tom introduced himself to another responsibility, that of representative to the American Council of Polish Culture. Tom had been invited to attend an ACPC Convention in previous years, but had no real appreciation for the mission and wonderful work of this organization and its active members. But as President he understood the obligation and he attended his first ACPC Convention in Rapid City, South Dakota, in 2010. He was so impressed with what he saw, that he eagerly embraced further involvement. He was given responsibility to take on a dormant project to establish a Historical Road Marker honoring the arrival of the first Polish settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1608. He is very proud of ensuring that this happened and the official installation was commemorated at the ACPC Convention in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 2012. Tom's involvement in ACPC grew with work in various committees and eventually he was elected as Second and then First Vice President, and finally, President at this year's

convention. He may have been late in realizing the full extent of what it means to be Polish but over the past fifteen years, he has provided a lifetime's worth of service in promoting culture, heritage and history of the land of his ancestors.

Full report on the convention will be provided in the Polish Heritage and can also be found, along with many photos, on ACPC website. The convention's theme was music of Polish composers and music filled the reception rooms of the Embassy Suites for four days, from informative lectures and brilliantly performed concerts, to a lighter entertainment during the Awards Banquet. Many thanks to the organizers, the Chopin Society of Chicago and its president, composer Jarosław Gołombiowski, whose own music was an inspiring feature of the multifaceted program. And to Tom Payne, congratulations and best wishes for a successful tenure as the ACPC president.



Music was the theme of this year's ACPC Convention and it was featured in brilliantly performed concerts and informative lectures. Left: Katarzyna Sądej, winner of the Marcella Sembrich-Kochanska Vocal Competition; Right: Violinist Krzysztof Zimowski and pianist Sławomir Dobrzański with composer Jarosław Gołombiowski after the world premiere performance of his Melody.



This year's Wigilia entertainment program

will feature young pianist **James Bennett** who easily fits into the category of a prodigy. He has been playing piano since he was six, attends the gifted and talented program at school, plays violin in the school orchestra and loves to compose. He is the winner of numerous competitions, both as a pianist and composer. He has played at events at the Kosciuszko Foundation and the Polish Embassy, and can be heard in coffee houses and other venues. He has volunteered to bring his art to entertain older people in nursing homes.

Born in Warsaw, James has lived in Poland, Russia and Ukraine in addition to the United States. He speaks Polish and

PAAA Wigilia December 6, 2015

Please join us on as we celebrate the foods and traditions of the Polish Wigilia in the ambiance of the historic mansion of Arts Club of Washington.



English and his Polish heritage comes through in his interpretations of the music of Chopin.

Our traditional kolędy singing will be led by tenor **Kirk Bennett**, and the ever popular **Stasia Skrypczuk**, well known to all of us from her annual appearances at the PAAA Wianki Festival as well as performances at other events, including our Wigilias in the past years. Violinist **Olek Skrypczuk** will accompany the singers and also perform a violin solo.

The chef at the Arts Club of Washington is preparing a delicious traditional Polish Wigilia dinner. So make sure to reserve early. Bring your family and friends.

Literary Corner by Danuta E. Kosk-Kosicka



Polish born poet Danuta E. Kosk-Kosicka is the author of *Oblige the Light*, winner of the fifth Harriss Poetry Prize (CityLit Press, 2015); and *Face Half-Illuminated*, a book of poems, translations, and prose (Apprentice House, 2014). She is also the translator for two bilingual books of poems by Lidia Kosk, *niedosyt/reshapings* and *Ślodka woda, słona woda/Sweet Water, Salt Water*. The latter has been nominated for the Griffin Poetry Prize and Found in Translation Award for book translations. Her writings have appeared in many literary journals and anthologies in the USA, Ireland, Japan, UK, Sweden, and Poland. They have also been featured on

NPR/WYPR's "The Signal." Danuta is co-editor of the literary journal *Loch Raven Review*. She holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry; her scientific career encompasses professorships at the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University. To learn more about Kosk-Kosicka, read samples of her works, read and hear interviews, etc., please visit her website: danutakk.wordpress.com

I am pleased to acquaint the readers of the PAAA Newsletter with some of my work, both as a poet and as translator. In future issues, I hope to speak also about other Polish poets, some of whose works I have translated, and to present some of their writings. Recently, I was able to provide a Polish accent to two notable literary events in our area: the 20th Baltimore Book Festival at the Inner Harbor; and a conference on translation entitled "Confluence: Translation in the Capital Area," hosted by Montgomery College in Silver Spring. At the first, I presented my book *Oblige the Light*, reading several poems from it; at the second, I led a roundtable entitled "Shades of Meaning: Obscured, Ignored, or Reflected in the Translated Poem?" The panel, which included Spanish and French translators, Patricia Bejarano Fisher and Keith Cohen, discussed the choices to be made at

various steps of rendering the same poem into those languages. I shared the experience of translating a poem into a variety of languages, based on my translations into English. I have translated close to a hundred poems for two bilingual books by Lidia Kosk. From these I have selected ten poems for a larger project, a ten-language book publication.



I read these two poems from my book *Oblige the Light* at the Baltimore Book Festival

The Thin Blue Line between Still and Alive

In the Art Gallery students create moving paintings.
They stand or sit by their chosen portrait on the wall—
same pose, same splendid costume,
here a blue sash, a sword, there a yellow rose.

At the strike of one they stir, casually walk away,
leaving the background and the still selves.

I come alive on the background of a jet plane
pierced with a row of doors. The farthest opens
on a sandy Mazovian plain with Chopin's weeping willow.

My hand reaches through the door, brings out
a clover leaf, lilac flower, grain of sand,
a walnut from the tree guarding the whitewashed house.
I glance ahead. And back again. Step by step, I move on.

Fabled Roosters of Kazimierz

Once I went to the town where pretzels grew
rooster-shaped. Lines of buyers formed at dawn.
Aromas from the bakery weaved through
garden, castle hill, tiny crooked streets.
From the attic room where I slept forty
years ago the young sun still guides me down
the murmuring stairs on a dew-beaded
path through the garden of scents. I pull
feathery greens from shimmering rows—
onions, carrots, red beets. The soil inhales
my contented toil, exhales the hoed weeds.
Iridescent roosters peck at unlocked earth.
In the expanding summer the good witch
grants me memories and multihued dreams.

The Warszawa Salon of Elżbieta Sieniawska

On Friday, October 23, 2015, a number of PAAA members joined an international gathering for an evening filled with music, singing, interesting conversation, and delightful food and wine. It was the *Warszawa Salon*, staged by the Washington Opera Society (WOS) and the International Club of Washington in the elegant reception rooms of the Polish Embassy, decorated with great Polish art, period furniture and crystal chandeliers. For a few hours, guests were asked to imagine themselves in the Wilanów Palace, being hosted by the woman who first introduced *salons* to Poland. That woman was Elżbieta Helena Sieniawska *née* Lubomirska (1669-1729), a Polish noble lady, Grand Hetmaness of the Crown (*Hetmanowa wielka koronna*) and renowned patron of arts. As an influential woman politician in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the reign of Augustus II the Strong she was deeply embroiled in the Great Northern War and in the Rákóczi's War for Independence. She was considered the most powerful woman in the Commonwealth and called the *uncrowned Queen of Poland*. Sieniawska began holding *salons* at the end of the 17th century. They became very popular there during the 18th century. The most renowned were the Thursday Dinners of King Stanisław August Poniatowski at the end of 18th century, and the most notable *salonnières* were Zofia Lubomirska and Izabela Czartoryska.

Hanna Bondarewska, actress and artistic director of the Ambassador Theater, who played the hostess for the evening, set the tone with the following greeting:

"Welcome friends. I am the Duchess Elżbieta Sieniawska or as many have called me the 'uncrowned queen of Poland' because of my extensive wealth, beauty, and flair for international relations and political influence. I am the first to produce a *salon* in Poland, a gathering of intellectuals, artists, musicians mostly hosted by women because, as everyone knows, women aren't as educated as men and need an outlet for their social and intellectual prowess. Being a great patroness of the arts, I have invited the greatest singers of our day... and even some from future days. The year is 1699 and, of course, much of the music you will hear tonight was not yet written, nor was Marcella Sembrich, the greatest Polish soprano of the 19th and early 20th century yet born. However, because of my vast wealth and influence, I am able to transport us through time and space."

She then proceeded to introduce some of the greatest operatic arias and songs, performed by five singers, well known and admired in the Washington area and throughout the country: mezzo-soprano Magdalena Wór, bass-baritone Dariusz Ocetek, tenor Jesús Daniel Hernández, and sopranos Elizabeth Treat and Liora Michelle. All were accompanied by conductor Lucy Arner on the Embassy's piano once played by the Polish composer and statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski himself. Paderewski's *Minuet in G* was the first number on the program followed by arias from operas by, among others, Gounod, Verdi, Bizet, Donizetti and, of course, Stanisław Moniuszko, as well as songs by Fryderyk Chopin. The latter two were sung by Magdalena Wór and Dariusz Ocetek in their native Polish. Following the performance, conversation flowed over excellent Polish food and wine. It was an evening to remember.

Led by Executive Director Michael J. Reilly, the Washington Opera Society presents intellectual and specialty operatic programs to Washington's audiences, including zarzuela, operetta, and early show music. The WOS endeavors to support music in the D.C. public schools. It is an ambitious undertaking, but judging by the energy and high level of art presented at the *Warszawa Salon*, Michael and his team are definitely up to the task. We wish them great success and look forward to the next *salon*.



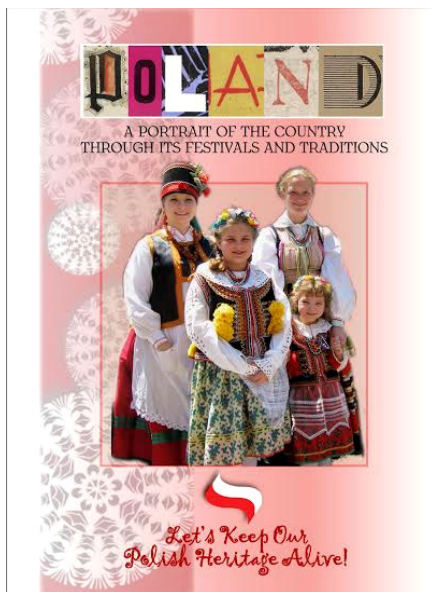
Top to bottom: Hanna Bondarewska as Elżbieta Sieniawska; Beata Kubokova, wife of the Deputy Chief of Mission Maciej Pisarski, Cultural Attaché Sławomir Zagórski, Mr. Pisarski, Elizabeth Treat; Washington Opera Society board member Doria Kaplan, Director Michael Reilly and President Barbara Bennett; former PAAA president Stefan Lopatkiewicz and Magdalena Wór.



In her regal attire, Hanna Bondarewska becomes part of the Jan de Rosen painting in one of the Polish Embassy's reception rooms

The artists raise glasses while singing *Libiamo* from Giuseppe Verdi's opera *La Traviata* at the end of the program

Children's Book on Polish Culture and Traditions



The Polish American Arts Association has undertaken to cosponsor, along with the Embassy of the Republic of Poland, a project to produce a book for use by elementary school teachers and parents to teach young children about Polish culture, traditions and history. The initiative for the project came from Cecilia Glembocki. At the PAAA General Membership meeting on November 1, 2015, she talked about how the idea came about and what she is doing to implement it.

Below is Cecilia Glembocki's presentation on the project.

Over a year ago, I received an email from a lady in Los Angeles who said she was fascinated with the CD that was developed for the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) project Polish Perspectives that she found on our website. Her child was going to participate in an international culture day at his elementary school and since her father was from Poland, she searched the internet for some information for young children about Polish heritage. Through my involvement with the Polish Perspectives, I already knew we needed to develop art items for elementary teachers specifically for this kind of request. The article in the Spring-Summer 2015 issue of this newsletter describes what we have available thus far.

In our exhibits at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) conferences, we have been showing a set of five panels that cover history, important days to remember, traditions, cuisine and customs, which were developed by Carla Tomaszewski, a well known graphic artist and historian of Polish culture and traditions. However, we did realize that we need something specific for young school children. Carla has found an old book from Scholastic Magazine called *Poland, A Portrait of the Country Through its Festivals and Traditions*, published as part of a series of books about traditions and customs of various countries. Unfortunately, the book has been out of print since 1999 and there was no possibility to have it reprinted. So we have set on rewriting the book as our own project. Carla has already researched many of the topics we wanted covered and it was a matter of updating the articles to reflect more recent developments and current areas of interest for young children. Carla is producing new illustrations and we are including some local children on the front cover.

In 2015, the Embassy of Poland provided us with a grant of \$2,500 from the Polish Foreign Ministry for the printing of the book. Mr. Piotr Konowrocki, Head of the Consular Section at the Embassy, who facilitated the grant, is also interested in having it translated into Polish for use in schools in Poland. While we had the money for printing, we were still short more than \$3,500 for the graphic development and production costs. We proposed to the PAAA that it apply on our behalf to the ACPC for a matching grant. The PAAA came through not only with the application but, recognizing the value of the project, allotted its own funds and became the cosponsor. Subsequently, individual PAAA members made additional contributions and now we are heading towards being fully funded. We are not quite there yet so if you wish to support this very exciting project, please make checks payable to PAAA and send to: 900 N. Taylor St., No. 617, Arlington, VA 22203. Contributions are tax deductible.

I am pleased by the tremendous response from people who want to pass on to their children what they remember as their Polish traditions. What a great gift for our children and grandchildren.



At the November PAAA membership meeting at the Kosciuszko Foundation, Cecilia Glembocki talked about the Children's Book Project; after the meeting, participants visited the room containing Polish folk art items donated by PAAA members. Below left to right: Cecilia Glembocki, Marianna Eckel, Kristen Coughlin and Paulina Wąsicka



WIANKI 2015

Despite the heavy clouds and ominous weather forecasts, an impressive crowd gathered on Saturday, June 20, at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to hear Polish music and see colorful dance performances in the PAAA's annual Wianki Festival. Before the rain fell, a full repertoire of songs and dances was performed by the popular groups: *Ojczyzna* and *Krakowiaki* from Baltimore and *Michaś* from Virginia. The *Brothers-in-Law Band* with Stasia and Olek Skrypczuk and Richie Popso provided music and song entertainment throughout. The only part of the festival that was prevented by the rain was the final wianki presentation at the edge of the reflecting pool. The young girls did put on their white dresses and created flowery wianki earlier in the evening under the direction of Krysia Popso. Wianki chairman, Marianna Eckel, again did an outstanding job of organizing the event; she and her committee deserve credit and thanks for putting on a great show. We can now just look at the pictures and wait till June 2016 to enjoy Polish music and dance on the National Mall.

Women's Voices Theater Festival

During September and October of this year, more than 50 of the Washington, D.C., area's professional theaters joined together to present the Women's Voices Theater Festival. Led by the area's premiere theaters, including Arena Stage, Ford's Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Studio Theatre, Signature Theatre Company, Round House Theatre and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, these organizations each presented at least one world premiere of a play by a female playwright during a six week period, along with special events, panels and workshops to celebrate and support the work of women theater-makers. There are two Polish names among the 50 playwrights featured in the festival.

Playwright **Martyna Majok** was born in Bytom, Poland, grew up in New Jersey and Chicago and now lives in New York. Her plays have been performed and developed at more than a dozen theaters in New York and elsewhere and received numerous awards. Here is what *Washington Post* wrote about her play, *Ironbound*, presented in the festival by the Round House Theatre in Bethesda, Maryland:

"You seldom see plays that are both harsh and wonderful, but that is the balance that Polish-born playwright Martyna Majok strikes in the first knockout of the Women's Voices Theater Festival. *Ironbound* strips its four characters down to the raw essentials of survival....The play never sugarcoats, yet it steers clear of bleakness because Majok's language is so entertainingly alive."

Leslie Kobylinski is best known as the Artistic Director for First Draft, a non-profit professional theater company dedicated to developing new plays alongside audiences and partnering with theaters looking to produce new work. She has collaborated with DC playwrights on over 30 new works for the stage, and has guest directed over 25 readings. In 2007, Leslie made her playwriting debut at Round House Theatre with *The Director: The Third Act of Elia Kazan* starring Helen Hayes award-winner, Rick Foucheux. A DC native and former producer for network television programs at NBC, CNN and TNT, Leslie is a frequent script consultant for television and films. As part of the festival, First Draft conducted readings of Leslie's new play, *Stolen Beauty*, at the Arts Club of Washington and two area theaters.

Leslie sees the role of the theater as unique and separate among the media: "Human beings are driven to understand and find meaning in their lives. We are, all of us, trying however we can, to tell the stories that make us who we are. A theatrical play allows for that instant present moment alchemy between storytellers (actors, designers, playwright, director etc.) and audience. There's an exchange of oxygen that is unique. Your words take on a life of their own, and will never be interpreted or heard exactly the same way twice."





PAAA Wigilia

Sunday, December 6, 2015 at 4:00 PM

Arts Club of Washington
2017 I Street NW
Washington, DC 20006

Please join us for a celebration of Polish Christmas food, traditions, kolędy singing and the age old custom of sharing opłatek with family and friends

For information see: www.paaa.us/events or email: paaanewsletter@gmail.com

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