



Polish Journey

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GET TO KNOW OUR NEW PRESIDENT: CHESTER WAWRZONEK

In 1962, the Wawrzonek family immigrated to Toronto, Canada leaving behind their tiny village of Przeroty-Bor, Poland. With hopes for a better life, they stepped aboard the Stefan Batory and crossed the Atlantic. “While I was only six when we arrived, I maintained strong ties to Poland all my life,” Chester noted. “Developing an interest in Polish music and dance at an early age, I joined folk ensembles and formed lasting friendships in the Polish community.”

That early interest became a lifelong passion. Chester spent summers in Poland studying dance, earning a degree in choreography from the University of Marie Curie Skłodowska in Lublin. During that same period, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering from the University of Toronto.

In 1977, Chester was one of the five founding members of the Lechovia Song & Dance Ensemble in Toronto. One of the most successful Polish folk ensembles in the world, today it boasts well over 1,000 alumni.

In 1979, Chester accepted a job with a Toronto engineering firm for a six-month assignment working on a nuclear plant outside of Pittsburgh. He recalled, “That soon stretched into two years, and I

missed dancing.” A trip to Rzeszów, Poland, attending a folk festival in 1983, changed his life. At a festival party, he met a priest. In casual conversation he said he was living in Pittsburgh and interested in finding a folk group. In a one-in-a-million coincidence, the priest, Father Pindell, ran a folk group in Pittsburgh.

Chester joined, and in the group met his wife, Evanne, becoming an active member of the Polish cultural life in Pittsburgh. With Chester’s influence, Evanne’s parents, Merle and Irene Addams, became dedicated volunteers in Pittsburgh’s Polish cultural community in what became the PCC.

Under Chester’s inspiration, in 1986, 20 folk enthusiasts joined him and formed the Karuzela Polish American Folk Ensemble. With his vision, the group expanded to include the Mala Karuzela and the Zlota Karuzela, forming a combined three-generation ensemble of more than 100 members at the time. With his mother-in-law, he shared the idea of an all-Polish choir,



Chester Wawrzonek
PCC President

and the Karuzela Chorus was born.

Chester was a committee member of the annual *Bal Poloanaise* and the choreographer for 23 of them. As the choreographer and dance master, he worked with more than 200 debutantes and their escorts—many whom had never formally danced before—to train them in classical dance and perform the elegant Polonaise at their debuts. “Years later,

many of them returned to tell us how much they loved the dance and what the experience meant to them. That’s what was so meaningful to me,” he said.

In 1988 Chester joined the firm of Galletta Engineering as a department leader in structural and architectural engineering. Later at Galletta, he became Vice President of Engineering and a partner. He retired in 2017.

Chester and Evanne have two sons and daughters-in-law, Addam, and Becky, and Christian and Julia. Chester proudly says, “Evanne and I never stopped dancing, so both of our boys began dancing in the womb—and continued dancing post high school with Karuzela.” Both boys were debutante escorts multiple times, with Christian holding the record for escorting seven debs. Chester proudly added “Last year, Addam and Becky had our first grandchild, Evaleen. I am certain she will dance. It’s in her DNA.”

In retirement Chester is more committed to the PCC. “I’m humbled and honored to assume leadership following in the footsteps of Rick Pierchalski, and his predecessor, my late father-in-law, Merle Addams,” he said. “I plan to continue Merle’s vision of *jedność* in the Pittsburgh Polish community. My mission is to educate new generations about the beauty and impact of Polish culture in Pittsburgh and our world.”



Karuzela Polish American Folk Ensemble inaugural performance on May 31, 1986

Marbles, Peacocks, One Fat Cat and Statues of Lenin *by Magda Rybka*

There are in Poland such undeniable gems as Malbork, Torun and Kraków. There are also smaller and less spectacular sites which can mirror our history, our virtues and vices even more clearly. I must say that visiting such places is, for me and my family, an unending source of pleasure.

This time we paid a visit to a manor located in Lublin Voivodship, just 9 kilometers from Lubartów. This place reminded us that even at the peak of its glory, Poland was not really a unified country. It was a mosaic of small states possessing their own armies, independent laws and governments. They were family entails, landed properties in fideicommiss, in Polish called *ordynacja*. In the 16th century some of the biggest and most powerful were *Ordynacja Nieswiecka* owned by the Radziwiłł family and *Ordynacja Zamoyska* established by Jan Zamoyski. The overall possessions of the latter family included estates both in the Crown of Poland and Livonia (*Inflanty*) and their total area was app. 17,500 km². The members of this influential family were also able to acquire the *Kozłówka* estate. The baroque palace in *Kozłówka* was founded by Michał Bieliński and designed by Józef Fontana in the first half of the 18th century. The estate was bought by Alexander Zamoyski, the 11th ordinate at *Zamość* entail in 1799.



The manor house in *Kozłówka* was the destination of our “winter” trip this year. I used quotation marks because this February surprised us with spring temperatures and tempting sunny weather, inviting us to migrate to places we had never seen before.

I enjoyed the trip immensely, but with mixed feelings of awe and distaste. My awe resulted from the fact that *Kozłówka* is a delightful place and my distaste came from the comparison between the luxury life of the magnates and the extreme poverty of peasants, whose unpaid toil was the real source of this wealth. When I hear that nowadays about 50% of global goods belong to 1% of people, I conclude that although seemingly we went through a massive transformation, in fact very little has really changed, and the distribution of goods is still very disproportionate.

The grandeur of *Kozłówka* was established by count Konstanty Zamoyski who obtained the estate as a wedding present from his father Jan Konstanty, who spent his youth in France, was unable to pass his baccalauréat exams, and somehow never mastered the piano, proved to be quite a good manager. Thanks to his perseverance and apparently good connections he was able to persuade the tsar to grant the *Kozłówka* estate the

status of *ordynacja*. Apparently asking the tsar for privileges was not dishonorable and pragmatism of family benefit prevailed. The *Kozłówka* entail consisted not only of the mansion but also of 7,650 ha of lands and also a palace in Warsaw, a brewery, three windmills and countless other treasures.

Anyway, starting with 1903, the *Kozłówka*, as the family entail, was not ever to be divided and could be inherited only by the oldest male heir. It also received (as mentioned above) many privileges and independence from the central government. Konstanty Zamoyski enlarged and rebuilt the palace in the style of the second empire, redecorated and modernized the interiors and filled them with many objects of beauty. The marble staircase which leads us to the palace chambers was almost entirely covered with portraits representing many beautiful and powerful people, among them some family predecessors. One of the most venerated persons was Zofia de domo Czartoryska (1778-1837), considered one of the most beautiful women in Europe of her time and also called the mother of the Zamoyski family. It is understandable since this brave woman gave birth to ten kids, mostly sons. Her reproductive work rescued the family from

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“The opinions expressed by authors do not always reflect the views of the PCC.”

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annihilation. She was also famous for her kind heart and her charity work. In the numerous palace chambers, one can see a few pleasant portraits of this lady.

During the reconstruction in the years 1898–1911, the interior of the palace was adorned with neo-rococo plafonds, marble fireplaces, Meissen stoves, and three-color oak parquet floors. The windows were covered with curtains made of silk damask or embroidered velvet. The spacious chambers were filled with precious furniture. Count Konstanty also established a sewage system which definitely added to the comfort of life in the palace. The rare attractions are quite modern bathrooms and household equipment, such as a gigantic vacuum machine which had to be operated by two servants. The palace was not much destroyed during the wars and its interiors have retained their character, architectural layout, and furnishings from the time of Count Konstanty Zamoyski which presents a high value for visitors. We were impressed by the elegance and relative coziness of the place and struck by the beauty of china vases, wonderful textiles, and delightful table sets.

In addition to the Palace, there are also other buildings worth taking a look. Among them a chapel built by Count Konstanty in 1903–1909. The chapel was designed after the royal chapel of Versailles. This place of worship is pleasant and full of light. There is also a coach house with a display of riding

accessories and horse carts. The northern pavilion hosts the socialist realism gallery.

After a palace tour, we still had the energy to visit this unique exhibition. Apart from big and small representations of Lenin and Stalin, there are some really interesting paintings, posters and sculptures which remind us of this ‘splendid’ era. Notwithstanding the horrors of this time and relief that we no longer have to suffer the hypocrisy of any party propaganda, I think that these art pieces, which highlight the idea of social solidarity, bring to mind new challenges that we are facing now. In the context of the farmers’ protests in Europe and the need for ecological transformation we should reconsider how to reconcile sometimes conflicting expectations of different social groups and beware of the further deepening of social injustice. It is an irony of history that this gallery of social realism is located in a place which could be considered a symbol of elitist culture.

The park surrounding the palace, which was refined by Aniela, the wife of Count Konstanty, looked rather sad at this time of the year. I am sure that it will radiate with much more charm in the spring and summer. Its main attraction now was meeting with an exceptionally big family of peacocks who parade their exceptional tails in the courtyard. They were accompanied by a very fat cat hungry for caresses and treats.

I probably should have mentioned that the status of Ordynacja was preserved till 1944, when the Kozłówka entailed estate was taken over by the State, together with the palace-and-park complex. The Museum was established soon after. In 1998, Kozłówka was awarded the prestigious international medal Europa Nostra 1997, and in 2007 the palace-and-park complex was acknowledged as a Historic Monument. In 2009, an arrangement was signed with the Zamoyski family, whereby the Province of Lublin paid the family’s inheritors a certain compensation because of their waived claims.

I strongly recommend visiting the museum in Kozłówka on your way to Lublin or maybe Zamość. The site is not only admirable but also educational. It’s located just about 150 km from Warsaw on a pretty good speedway.

Useful links and sources:

<https://www.muzeumzamoyskich.pl/24-eng-history>

<https://gazetabaltycka.pl/promowane/kozlowka-najpiekniejsza-rezydencja-magnacka-lubelszczyzny>

<https://jeziorapolski.pl/en/kozlowka-the-greatest-manor-house-in-the-lublin-region/>

[Pałac w Kozłowie. Przewodnik Ilustrowany.](#)

<https://wielkahistoria.pl/latyfundia-ordynacje-panstwa-w-panstwie-czy-wszystkie-mapy-rzeczpospolitej-obojsza-narodow-falszuja-rzeczywistosc/>



Save the Date!

Friday, June 28, 2024

**Midsummer’s Night Magic Picnic
at Avonworth Community Park
Details will follow.**

Re-Visiting Ania Filochowska, violin virtuoso by Eva Tumiel-Kozak



Ania Filochowska

Have you ever wondered about the careers of the young, talented artists we have presented through the years? One specific, exceptional talent comes to mind: violinist Ania Filochowska, who, at the age 15, with her brother Piotr (17) dazzled the audience at a PCC-sponsored concert on Mount Washington in the spring of 2009. Their spectacular technique, bravura and mature rendition of fiendishly difficult works by Wieniawski, Paganini, Brahms, Bach, Mozart and Sarasate, were unforgettable and brought our audience to their feet with rousing applause. The late Dr. Mushalko, who reviewed the concert, commented at the end: "Those who missed this performance missed hearing future stars of the music world". Was he correct in his predictions? Indeed!

Today's biography of Ania reads like *Who's Who* in the world of violin virtuosos. It's practically impossible to mention all her achievements. Warsaw-born Ania started playing the violin at the age of 6.

At 11, she was accepted to Juilliard as the youngest student of Itzak Perlman. At 12, she played on NPR's "From the Top". Concerts around the world with famous conductors and orchestras followed, as did several awards in string competitions, and many presidential awards and scholarships. Throughout all that fame and recognition, Ania still enjoyed occasional collaboration with her older brother Piotr. As a graduate of the Curtis Institute, she served as Concertmaster of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in the 2017-18 season, and later won a coveted position at the Berlin Philharmonic.

Ania played many instruments as a child, but I have always wondered why she chose the violin, one of the hardest and most challenging, most demanding instruments to learn and to perform. I believe only Ania can answer that question. Here, in her own words, are her innermost thoughts and reflections on the subject.

Why I love the violin and how my relationship with it changed through the years.

The violin and I have had such an intense and long relationship that I almost can hardly separate myself from this being. I have probably dedicated more energy, passion, and time to this gorgeous wooden box with an angelic voice than to any human being. From a young age, I felt that the violin was the most appropriate partner to tell my innermost thoughts and feelings. I enjoyed playing soulful and melancholic music in which I poured out my heartbreak over family quarrels and other childhood annoyances. My school days were not fun, not only because my inability to get out of bed in the morning drove my whole family mad, but my chubbiness and violin nerdiness made me a sort of outcast in my class. I did not care too much,

however, because deep down inside, I knew that I had something that gave me comfort and strength. And it was a violin in my hand. I realized early on that I could speak through it unabashedly, and the more I tried to say what I felt, the deeper it sang. So, I never wished away any of my hardships because I knew that I could channel all my emotions to create rich music. It also enabled me to be heard and appreciated by audiences. I gained many friends who listened to me, even though they were mostly not my peers.

As I got older, my relationship with the violin began to change. I didn't like the pressure of winning competitions and auditioning for the most prestigious music schools. I hated the bad feelings associated with competing against my violinist friends. Additionally, I was subjected to frequent failures due to the nature of this art form. Everyone has different opinions and preferences,

plus the results of competitions are often skewed due to jury biases. As the pressure increased, my body began to react negatively. I developed tension problems and experienced neck and shoulder pain. I fought my injuries while feeling pressured to practice a lot and outperform my peers. My pains often made me consider a career pivot. At 18, I dreamed of becoming a film actress rather than a violinist. I tried to convince my family to let me make the change, but they were skeptical. They thought that I should only quit if I were to pursue a "real" profession. We managed to find a compromise that I would be allowed to apply at the Theatre Academy in Warsaw if I did not get accepted at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. As it happened, I was admitted, and so our deal fell through.

At the Curtis Institute, I was primarily focused on winning the approval of my professors and

receiving their support. Unfortunately, I never managed to become a favorite student of any of my professors, which caused me grief, especially since I could not decipher the root cause. I kept wondering whether it was my playing or personality that did not attract their attention. Nevertheless, I knew that one day I would have to learn to stand on my own feet and I might as well start early. Luckily, I had received a lot of praise, many incredible opportunities, and accolades earlier in life, which still provided some boost of confidence in the trying times. In other times, the early success had a countereffect because, as a result, I felt that people had higher expectations of me than I could fulfill. The dream of becoming the greatest violin soloist began to recede. There is only a handful of places in the world for the lucky ones who can carry that title, and there seemed to be better candidates for the role than me. I think all in all, it was a pretty good idea to aim for the highest possible target because when I lowered my expectations, I still aimed very high: the Berliner Philharmoniker.

I was lucky enough to win a spot in the Berliner Philharmoniker's prestigious Karajan Academy. While in Berlin, I auditioned for a full-time position with this top orchestra and was one of the two considered candidates. My violin playing and artistry were appreciated and respected, so I could no longer feel like a failure. My self-confidence was mostly under control, though I had moments of utter doubt and uncertainty. I would use my favorite Kundalini yoga mantras in those moments before going on stage. I would also think of the phrase "fake it til you make it," though, after 20 years of intense practice and training at the highest level, I was probably prepared well enough to believe that I am able to play the violin.

After starting an ambitious transition to another field last year, I was curious to see if and how my

relationship with the violin would change. At first, I didn't feel anything. I had no desire to play the violin, so I didn't touch it for months. Then, when asked to play somewhere, I would spend days warming up my stiff fingers and building up calluses so I could press against the thin metal strings to make a beautiful, rich sound. After the initial pain, my skills would quickly return. For the first 12 months, I kept telling myself that I wasn't playing as well as previously. It probably wasn't just the rusty skill set but also the guilt of betraying my calling, my identity, what most people thought was my true love. How could I play as well or better if I set my mind to new ideas?

Now, a year after my initial hiatus, I feel that I have finally freed myself from the negativity of doing something seriously, professionally. I'm also no longer just a violinist. I'm much more whole, much more of who I am deep down inside, open to wide-ranging interests and possibilities, and I bring that to my music. My violin playing has become freer, even wilder at times, and above all, more enjoyable, especially for myself. Nowadays, I sometimes play for hours on end, without correcting mistakes or criticizing myself, just having fun with my violin. I also love playing on stage. I don't have any expectations that I need to live up to. I have no auditions or competitions to win or teachers to please. I am now as free to make mistakes as I am to make the most passionate, authentic music. I dare to go all the way. I also feel less tension in my body when I play. I used to blame the violin for

my pain issues, but now I wonder if another cause was perhaps the stress and pressure of my environment.

I really love the violin because my ability to play this incredibly demanding instrument is one of the few things that cannot be taken away from me. And I probably won't devote the next two decades of my life to anything else to the same degree - anything that requires at least six months of deliberate practice to produce the merest effect of a decent-sounding single note. I am very proud of the fact that I have persevered along this long road of many highs and lows, with my patience being tried more times than can be counted. However, had I not stuck to playing the violin for over two decades, I would not have been able to experience the deep connection with it that I do today. I am grateful for music and my violin. My life is much richer because of them. I am sure I would perceive the world very differently had I not experienced the unique life path of being a humble servant of this beautiful art form.



Ania Filochowska in concert with Chris Botti

MUSHROOMS ON THE WILD SIDE

by Leszek Chudziński

In summer and fall the forests in Poland come alive with people; young and old are united by a lofty goal to find wild mushrooms, a prized commodity since time immemorial. Mushroom foraging in Poland is not only a pastime but also, particularly in the countryside, it's a way of life. Mushrooms are cooked, fried, marinated and stored in jars, dried, frozen or salted (rather rare today). There is hardly a house that does not have a couple of pounds of dried mushrooms in the pantry to enhance the flavor of meat dishes, soups, or to make a fabulous mushroom sauce. Poles could die for pierogis with mushrooms or a delish mushroom sauerkraut dish.

No wonder mushrooms in Poland have inspired not only folk artists but also some of the most prominent Polish poets who found mushrooms an irresistible subject; Adam Mickiewicz, Maria Konopnicka, Jan Brzechwa, to name a few. Probably the best known is Mickiewicz's passage from a Polish epic, Master Thaddeus,

"Everyone is hunting for a milky cap; this one is more modest in height
And less famous in songs,
but it is the tastiest..."

"Wszyscy dybią na rydza;
ten wzrostem skromniejszy
I mniej sławny w piosenkach,
za to najsmaczniejszy..."¹

Polish folklore is rich in mushroom wisdom and superstitions have been passed on from one generation to another. Most beliefs originated from experience and observations and also from hearsay as means of ensuring the gathered mushrooms were safe to eat.

Let's look at a few of the old mushroom beliefs.ⁱⁱ Once a mushroom is seen (or touched), it must be picked for otherwise it will stop growing (not true). Poisonous mushrooms taste bitter (not always true: some amanitas have a sweet or nutty taste while a bitter boletus is indeed very bitter); gilled mushrooms that stain upon touching are inedible (not always true: not only mushrooms that stain upon touching are edible, e.g., a delicious

milky cap (rydz)ⁱⁱⁱ that stains green; while poisonous mushrooms, e.g., amanitas, do not always stain upon touching); all young mushrooms are edible (this is not only false but an outright dangerous belief for at a young stage it's almost impossible to distinguish between edible and poisonous mushrooms, e.g., man on horseback or meadow mushrooms and death cap (*Amanita phalloides*)^{iv}; poisonous mushrooms are never infested with worms (not true: many insects and worms are immune to amatoxins).

It's absolutely flabbergasting that these beliefs and misconceptions were relied on to make sure a tasty mushroom dish would not have serious consequences. Fortunately, today in place of hearsay and old beliefs there's ample help in finding the mushrooms and in making sure our wild mushroom foraging will be a safe adventure.

As the old folk used to say, mushrooms are best picked in the morning, after rain or at night, or in the fog, when the forest floor smells of mycelium. I'm not sure about picking mushrooms at night, but in order to grow, mushrooms need moisture and the right temperature; too hot and they will sizzle, too cold, they won't grow.

Since mushrooms are symbiotic, certain species grow in the presence of certain trees, e.g., boletus edulis can be found in birch, oak, beech, and coniferous forests, including pine, fir, spruce and hemlock (sometimes also under cedars but they will acquire a bitter taste). Morels abound in apple orchards; they can also be found under maple trees and in pine forests, especially in the in previous-year's burns, now an annual occurrence in the Pacific Northwest. Slippery jacks, chantarelles, velvet boletus, love conifers; a birch forest will support king and birch boletus, including brown birch bolete and one of the largest edible mushrooms – an orange birch bolete, known in Poland as *krawiec* (tailor) or *kowal* (smith), depending on the region. And yes, King Boletus is often found in proximity with *Amanita muscaria* (a fly killer, *muchomor czerwony*); while the former has been choice and used to grace

kings' and farmers' tables alike, the beautiful amanita in the past was fried with sugar to control flies in country homes.

The mushroom kingdom is vast and still little-understood. To better realize the rich world of mushrooms, please refer to the website of Mycologia Lucerne, a Swiss publisher of the most comprehensive mushroom multi-volume guides for just the small country of Switzerland. <http://tinyurl.com/2zfs62f6>



Some people are allergic to certain types of mushrooms. It's been proved that man on horseback^v (*gąska zielona, zielonka*) and *Verpa bohemica* (*naparstniczka czeska*)^{vi}, known as early false morel, might cause an adverse reaction so instead of becoming my own ginny pig, I simply stay away from these two species. *Paxillus involutus*^{vii} (*olszówka*)^{viii}, also known as the brown roll-rim or the common roll-rim, a mushroom once popular and widely collected in Poland, has recently been labeled as poisonous, because it can cause a mild or serious poisoning that could require medical help. Besides, man on horseback, particularly in the young stage, can be easily confused with death cap – a reason in itself to stay away from this late-fall mushroom.

Mushrooms in America can be very expensive, so a successful mushroom hunt will go a long way. A pound of young boletes in Seattle goes for 40 or 50 dollars, depending on the season. A kilogram of dried boletes in a Polish store goes for 1,000 dollars. Chantarelles and lobster mushrooms could cost anywhere from 15 to 30 dollars a pound, while matsutake mushrooms, depending on the mushroom's condition and stage, are priced from 50 to 150 dollars per pound, to be exported to Japan and China, where they are sold for thousands of dollars.

Today's mushroom hunters are helped by a proliferation of sources of information about mushrooms. The Internet provides easy access to a plethora of information, but a word of caution is in order: one cannot (and should not) learn about wild mushrooms from a picture or a movie posted on social media. To master this art, one should gain first-hand knowledge and go foraging with a person knowledgeable in this matter. Join the Mycological Society of America that offers educational studies and courses in mycology. But for my money, I'd rather join a local chapter of a mycological organization to have easy access to mushroom experts and make a few friends in the process. What's more, many local chapters organize mushroom shows and forays, having an expert on board. So, Puget Sound Mycological Society is my backyard friend: <https://www.psms.org/>. The burgers of The Three-Rivers City can join the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club, <https://wpamushroomclub.org/>, or choose one from several such organizations in Pennsylvania.

Happy Hunting!

King Boletus^{ix}

King Boletus got new shoes,
Left or right, how can he choose?
He looks left and he looks right,
With one leg that's quite a plight.

He tries one and then another,
With one leg that's quite a bother;
Left looks left and right looks right,
With one leg that's quite a plight.

The King's leg is two by four,
Mushrooms couldn't ask for more;
Shoes are seven and a half,
Which shoe would King rather have?

Finally, King comes to his mind,
Shoes aren't for one-legged kind;
He pulls the shoe off his foot
And it's gallantly standing put.

ⁱ Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*

ⁱⁱ [Ludowe zwyczaje zwi%C4%85zane z grzybami.pdf](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Milky cap has a distinguished nutty flavor that sets it apart from other edible species but it's very brittle and care must be taken not to damage it while picking and transporting.

^{iv} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amanita_phalloides

^v http://nittygrits.org/man_on_horse-back_mushroom

^{vi} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verpa_bohemica

^{vii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paxillus_involutus

^{viii} <https://zdrowie.gazeta.pl/Zdrowie/7,101460,23692582,olszowka-grzyb-czy-to-gatunek-trujacy-jak-go-rozpoznać.html>

^{ix} A poem by Leszek Chudziński

RENEW TODAY!

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Speaking Polish by *Veronica Wojnaroski*

Speaking Polish is taking a break for this issue, but will return in the Autumn.



LET'S COOK POLISH

A Classic Recipe with a Twist

by Evanne Addams

This past holiday season I was flipping through the TV channels and stumbled across an episode of *WQED Cooks* about Eastern European cooking. The segment caught my interest because it featured our own Eva Tumiel-Kozak, in a repeat episode shot many years ago. Eva was expertly preparing an elegant Polish dish of the nobility that she called *Tenderloin Surprise*. The Polish name for this recipe is *polędwiczki wieprzowe ze śliwkami*. The recipe consisted of pork tenderloin stuffed with prunes and cooked with apples, onions, apple cider and herbs, fresh lemon and garnished with red cranberries and almonds. Eva's *surprise* was the elegant result of the stuffing method. Instead of slicing the tenderloin, laying it flat, applying the stuffing to the cut surface and rolling to produce a pinwheel, she efficiently created a hole down the center of the loin and stuffed it without slicing the meat apart. The final presentation, juicy meat and moist stuffing, produces intact servings of tenderloin with filling in the center, worth the extra effort for an attractive, dramatic presentation with the fruit garnish.

Christmas was a few weeks away and I was entertaining 20 family members for a holiday dinner. I decided to make Eva's Tenderloin Surprise to wow the guests. In the recipe, after searing, the tenderloin cooks for approximately 20 minutes on the stove, and then is served immediately. I prepped everything in advance, leaving the hollowing of the tenderloin, the stuffing and the cooking to be done while my guests gathered, celebrated, and entertained me while I cooked.

As I should have guessed, my planning did not go well. My son, Christian, is famous for his homemade rum infused chiffon eggnog. Drinking it equates to drinking spiked clouds. Everyone looks forward to it each year including me. After socializing and consuming several glasses, I was way behind in my cooking schedule. There was truly not enough time to take the necessary steps for the Tenderloin Surprise by serving time. I was forced to improvise.

Improvising is a fun challenge for a cook; however, it's a bit stressful in a last-minute situation. But I had to make decisions and act quickly, so I decided to eliminate the stuffing and cook the tenderloin whole, surrounded by the stuffing ingredients. Instead of stove top cooking after searing, I chose to oven roast on high heat in just 10 minutes. To my surprise, it came out

attractive and delicious. And the tenderloin, as well as the fruit infused with the juices, simply melted in our mouths.

Below is my improvised recipe for Eva's Tenderloin Surprise. My intent is not to surpass Eva's elegant dish - a presentation that can't be replaced. Mine is a slight variation to Eva's original with a bit of effort-saving measures. My intent is to simply present a beautiful and delicious variation in a pinch.

Serves 4

1 pork tenderloin about 1 lb.

3 T each chopped fresh rosemary and fresh marjoram

Fresh rosemary for garnish

Salt and pepper

Juice of ½ lemon

2 T olive oil

2 T vegetable oil

4 T butter

1 cup chopped onion

2 red apples, unpeeled, cored and cut in ¾ inch slices

½ cup whole prunes soaked in ¼ cup apple cider or white wine

½ cup whole apricots soaked in ¼ cup apple cider or white wine

1 cup fresh cranberries

Spinach to plate

Sliced almonds for garnish

For the perfect roast, a cast iron skillet is ideal, but any oven-safe skillet will do. Preheat the oven to 400F. Place your skillet in the oven while it comes to temperature until it is extremely hot. While the oven is warming, coat your tenderloin with the minced herbs and salt/pepper then set aside. In a separate skillet on medium high heat, swirl in 2 tablespoons of olive oil with 2 tablespoons of butter. Drain and reserve the soaking wine or cider from the prunes and apricots. Add the onions, apples, cranberries, and drained prunes and apricots. Cook about 5 minutes on medium high heat, stirring frequently till the onions and fruits begin to soften. Remove from heat and set aside. Remove the hot skillet from the oven and place on stovetop on high heat. Swirl 2T vegetable oil with 2T butter. Sear the meat on one side for one to two minutes, until a crust is formed, then sear the remaining sides for another one to two minutes each until all sides have a crust. Squeeze the juice of ½ lemon over the meat. Pour the reserved wine from the apricots and prunes over the cooked fruit and add everything, arranging the fruit along both sides of the meat. Roast the tenderloin in the oven for 10-12 minutes or until an instant thermometer reads 145F. Remove the roast from the oven and place it on a plate, tented with foil, to rest for 10 minutes. Plate the serving platter with spinach. Cut the tenderloin in slices on the diagonal and place on the platter. Pour the roasted fruit and juices over the roast and garnish with sprigs of fresh rosemary and slivered almonds.



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Another nomination for Apteka



Tomasz Skowronski and Kate Lasky, chefs and co-owners of Pittsburgh's Apteka restaurant, have been nominated for a third time for a James Beard Award, in the Best Chef: Mid Atlantic category. Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., New Jersey,

Virginia, Maryland and Delaware comprise this region. Apteka is known for its delicious take on vegan food with an Eastern European influence. Skowronski and Lasky were the first Pittsburgh chefs ever to be nominated in this category.

Major theft at Warsaw University library

In late January, 2024, the Warsaw University Library reported a significant loss, with eighty-seven valuable books, estimated at over EUR 500,000, confirmed missing. The theft was first discovered late last year and has been under investigation since November. Most of the stolen books are from early 19th century Russia. The theft was "curated" for the high value and rarity of the items, possibly answering specific demands from auction houses and antiquarian bookstores in the Russian market. They are early or first editions of books of historical or scientific value. Some of the books have already been sold at auction.

The theft was first discovered in late 2023, when a library visitor had left empty covers and dummy books in place of eight books that had been borrowed. Further inspection revealed that some eighty valuable items were missing. The library's director was fired for negligence. Access to the library's historical collections has been suspended until further notice. An international probe has identified possible culprits who have also been associated with thefts from Latvian libraries. Efforts to recover the stolen items are ongoing.



Polish archaeological discovery makes Top 10 List of 2023



In its list of the most important discoveries of 2023, the prestigious magazine, *Archaeology* has included the discovery of unique paintings from Old Dongola, in present-day Sudan, by Polish archaeologists. The archaeological team was led by Artur Obłuski from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology at the University of Warsaw.

The paintings depict the Virgin Mary, the Eternal God, the Archangel Michael, Christ, and the Makurite King David kissing the hand of Christ. They are said to contain unique iconography, such as the depiction of Mary and the direct contact between a mortal and a supernatural being. The Warsaw expedition has been operating in Old Dongola since 1964.

Polish author receives European literary prize

Polish writer **Tomasz Różycki** has been awarded the *Prix Grand Continent*, for 2023, for his novel *Złodzieje żarówek, Lightbulb Thieves*. The prize was granted for this book for being an outstanding European

narrative which can appeal to readers across the continent. The website, *Books from Poland*, describes the book as a *funny, surreal and poetic story that takes us on a tour of a communist-era housing block*.



Agnieszka Holland receives Kazimierz Kutz Award 2024



Poland's esteemed director and screenwriter, Agnieszka Holland, was named the winner of the fourth Kazimierz Kutz Award. This award honors individuals from the world of culture who combine their artistic activities with social involvement. Holland's many films have presented topics with a strong political slant; for example, government reprisals, stifling bureaucracies, sanctioned strikes, dysfunctional families and solidarity against censorship. Kazimierz Julian Kutz, in whose name the award was given, was a Polish film director, author, journalist, and politician, one of the representatives of the Polish Film School, and a deputy speaker of the Senate of Poland

Poland's Eagles film awards

The winners of Poland's 2024 *Eagles* awards, the prestigious *Orły* have been named. Director **Agnieszka Holland's** film, *Green Border, Zielona Granica*, has won the award for Best Film. The film tells the story of a migrant crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border. Holland was also honored with a *lifetime achievement* award.

Paweł Maślona's *Scarborn*, about Tadeusz Kościuszko, won for best script, best sound, best make-up, best costumes and best supporting actress. **Eryk Kulm** was named best leading actor for his role in **Michał Kwieciński's** *Filip*. **Magdalena Cielecka** won the Eagle for best leading actress for **Sławomir Fabicki's** *Lęk* (*Anxiety*).





Auschwitz exhibition opens in Boston

An exhibition entitled “*Auschwitz. Not so long ago. Not so far away.*” has opened in Boston, MA. It is the first touring exhibition on the World War II Nazi German death camp in southern Poland. Many museums and institutions cooperated in the creation of this exhibition. More than 700 original objects,

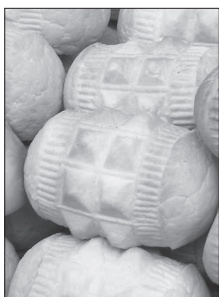
including suitcases, eyeglasses and shoes that belonged to survivors and victims of Auschwitz, and also physical parts of the camp, are displayed. The theme of the exhibit is: it happened; therefore it can happen again. The exhibit is currently at the **Castle at Boston’s Park Plaza** until **September 2, 2024.**

Polish musicians honored with Golden Record for *Peasants* soundtrack

L.U.C. & Rebel Babel Film Orchestra, along with Kayah and Ralph Kaminski, were presented with the prestigious Golden Record for the soundtrack to the film *Peasants*. This award recognizes the soundtrack’s exceptional success, having garnered over 50 million listens. The film, itself, has achieved immense popularity, reaching nearly 2 million viewers since its premier in October, 2023 and has recently reached theaters in the United States. The film, directed by DK Welchman and Hugh Welchman, is based upon the classic novel by Władysław Reymont, *Chłopi, The Peasants*. The book was written between 1904 and 1909, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1924.



Polish cheeses win recognition in the *TasteAtlas* ranking



A collection of Polish smoked and soft cheeses has been added to the ranking by *TasteAtlas*. Founded in 2015 by Croatian journalist and entrepreneur, Matija Babić, *TasteAtlas* is an online guide to traditional foods of the world, local ingredients and authentic restaurants. The site uses reviews and recommendations from gastronomy professionals and critics. The Silesian cheese, *Śląska Gołka*, is ranked second place in the smoked cheese category. It is made from the milk from cows of the Red Mountain breed; it has a delicate, slightly salty flavor with a soft, flexible texture. In fourth place

is *Podhalańska Redykołka*, a semi-hard cheese from semi-skimmed sheep’s milk. It comes from the Podhale region; *redyk* is the name for the bi-annual trailing of the sheep by the highlanders of the Tatra foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. Two other cheeses from Podhale, *Podhalańska Bryndza* and *Bundz*, ranked in the top ten of sheep’s milk cheeses. Bryndza was also ranked in the soft cheese category. *TasteAtlas* ranked these cheeses among its top ten: *Oscypek*, the salty, smoked cheese from the Tatras came in at 100; while Redykołka ranked 50th; Gołka, 36th; Bundz, 25th; and Bryndza, 18th.

Polish drama to be staged on Broadway

After an off-Broadway run at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the drama, *Our Class*, by Polish playwright, **Tadeusz Słobodzianek**, is going to be staged on Broadway. The time and theater location have not yet been announced. The play follows a group of 10 Polish classmates, five Jewish and five Catholic, from the time in Poland in the 1920 when they grew up as friends, through the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust, to the postwar period, when some of their old friendships are shattered. According to thefrontrowcenter.com website, *Our Class* is a beautifully crafted psalm of degrada-

tion and destruction inflicted on humanity that deeply darkens the story like a heavy blanket. Despite the weight of the darkness that lies over everything, in another vein it is also a narrative of love. How love for one another can overcome, heal, and transform. The play was the first Polish drama to be given the country’s prestigious Nike Literary Prize. The European Theatre Convention ranked it among the best contemporary European plays written during 2009 and 2010. On May 4, 2103 the Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre staged a performance of *Our Class*. The performance was, in part, sponsored by the Polish Cultural Council.



Ewa Podleś, a true coloratura contralto, dead at the age of 71



In January 2024, the music world lost **Ewa Podleś**, one of the unusual singers of our times. She thrilled audiences with her range of three octaves, from a low, almost baritone-like register to her voice soaring to the high D at the end of an aria. She debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 1984, replacing Marilyn Horne in Handel’s *Rinaldo*, but her successful career took her mainly to such houses as La Scala, the Liceu in Barcelona, as well as to Madrid and Berlin; and also, to Paris, Vienna and La Fenice, in Venice. She gave acclaimed performances in Britain’s Birmingham Opera and at the Edinburgh Festival. She was popular, too, in the US and Canada, giving recitals and concerts, not least in New York, quite often featuring works of her compatriots such as Szymanowski, Moniuszko and Lutosławski.

Known for her powerful stage presence, facial expressions, and her enormous intensity, she gravitated toward the end of life toward heavier roles such as Klytemnestra in Strauss’s *Elektra*. In her own words: “The interpretations I offer arise from instinct and from the heart.”



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