

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We regret if you were unable to attend our 95th anniversary gathering celebrating the rich history of the Central Council of Polish Organizations and the Polish Cultural Council. Reading the documented history in the event program underscores just how much this small organization has accomplished over the past 95 years and the lasting impact it has had on the Polish community.

Our success has never been defined solely by programs or events, but by people. It is the result of countless volunteer hours contributed by thousands of dedicated individuals over the decades, made possible through the continued generosity and commitment of faithful supporters like you. Your support has played an essential role in

preserving our heritage and ensuring that our mission continues for future generations.

The year 2025 proved challenging for many nonprofit organizations as essential federal funding for programming was reduced or eliminated. Fortunately, the Polish Cultural Council has never relied on federal subsidies; our work has always been supported almost entirely through organizational fundraising and the generosity of our community.

While this independence has sustained us for decades, the current nonprofit landscape has become increasingly competitive. Community support is more vital than ever, and the PCC continues to rely on committed individuals like you to ensure our programs and mission endure. Your

support is essential through donations and event attendance.

Ostatki is back after a one-year hiatus—and what better night to celebrate than Valentine's Day, 2026! Get ready for an unforgettable evening filled with music by our favorite continental and folk trio, the Mikey Dee Band. Specialty Polish will be flowing, the food will be mouthwatering and delectable, and the dancing and laughter is guaranteed to last all night.

Bring your friends, bring your family, and bring your Valentine—let's make memories together and celebrate in true Ostatki style!

Happy New Year. Wishing you and your family heartfelt blessings in 2026.

Warmly, Chester Wawrzonek

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED
to our traditional Ostatki - Mardi Gras

Saturday, February 14 2026
MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND JOIN US!
Ostatki will be celebrated at the stylish **EDGEWOOD CLUB**
1 Pennwood Avenue, Pittsburgh 15218

OSTATKI
Pittsburgh - 2026

Polish Researchers Develop New Method for a Common Medical Scan

By Kristine Danowski

For over 50 years, positron emission tomography (PET) has been a common medical imaging technique for visualizing metabolic processes and improving medical diagnoses. The subject receives a small amount of a short-lived radioactive tracer molecule. As the tracer circulates through the subject's body, it "lights up" certain areas with unusually high or low metabolism. These changes from normal can indicate cancer, cardiovascular, neurological, or pulmonary disease depending on the type of tracer. PET can provide information about alterations in cell function even before a disease may be visible in anatomical images such as MRI. In the USA, the average cost for a single PET scan is approximately \$7300. In addition, the PET instruments themselves can cost millions of dollars.

A team of researchers from Jagiellonian University led by nuclear physicist Paweł Moskal is developing a totally new type of PET instrument. The Jagiellonian PET (J-PET) has the potential to increase the specificity of PET diagnoses as well as significantly decrease the cost. By probing the lifetime of an exotic atom called positronium that forms within the body during PET scans, Dr Moskal says physicians can use this new information to better identify different types of cancer, monitor disease progression, and guide treatment plans.



Drs. Ewa Stepień and Paweł Moskal seen through their new J-PET instrument. *Science.org*

The Polish team's technique is catching on with several other labs around the world.

During PET, the radioactive tracer emits particles called positrons, which are a form of antimatter. When they collide with electrons, which are ordinary matter, the particles mutually annihilate. This phenomenon produces two photons, or particles of light, which

move away from each other in opposite directions. The PET instrument detects these photons and traces them back to their origin in the subject. By modifying the tracers in molecules the body naturally uses, such as glucose, physicians can monitor the rate of metabolism in different tissues to look for hallmarks of disease. For example, cancer cells metabolize glucose much



A conventional PET instrument

Photos: Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=404712>. Retrieved 9/2/2025.

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"The opinion expressed by authors does not always reflect the views of the PCC."

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faster than normal cells. As a result, diseased regions eat up more tracer and glow more brightly on PET scans.

Much of the costs of conventional PET instruments are the exquisitely sensitive crystal detectors required to capture photons. Dr Moskal replaced these detectors with less sensitive but cheaper plastic detectors. By 2016, Dr Moskal and his team had stacked their plastic detectors in layers to build a prototype PET instrument, J-PET, with sufficient sensitivity. Dr Moskal says their latest version, expected in 2028, should cost just 10% to 20% as much as a conventional PET instrument and have even higher sensitivity.

Not only did they develop the new J-PET instrument, but also Dr Moskal's team detected a different phenomenon produced by the antimatter-matter annihilation. Positrons and electrons don't always instantly annihilate—about 40% of the time, they instead combine to form a temporary state called positronium. Within a few billionths of a second, the positronium annihilates itself, giving off a delayed pair of photons. Working with Jagiellonian medicinal physicist Dr Ewa Stępień, Dr Moskal

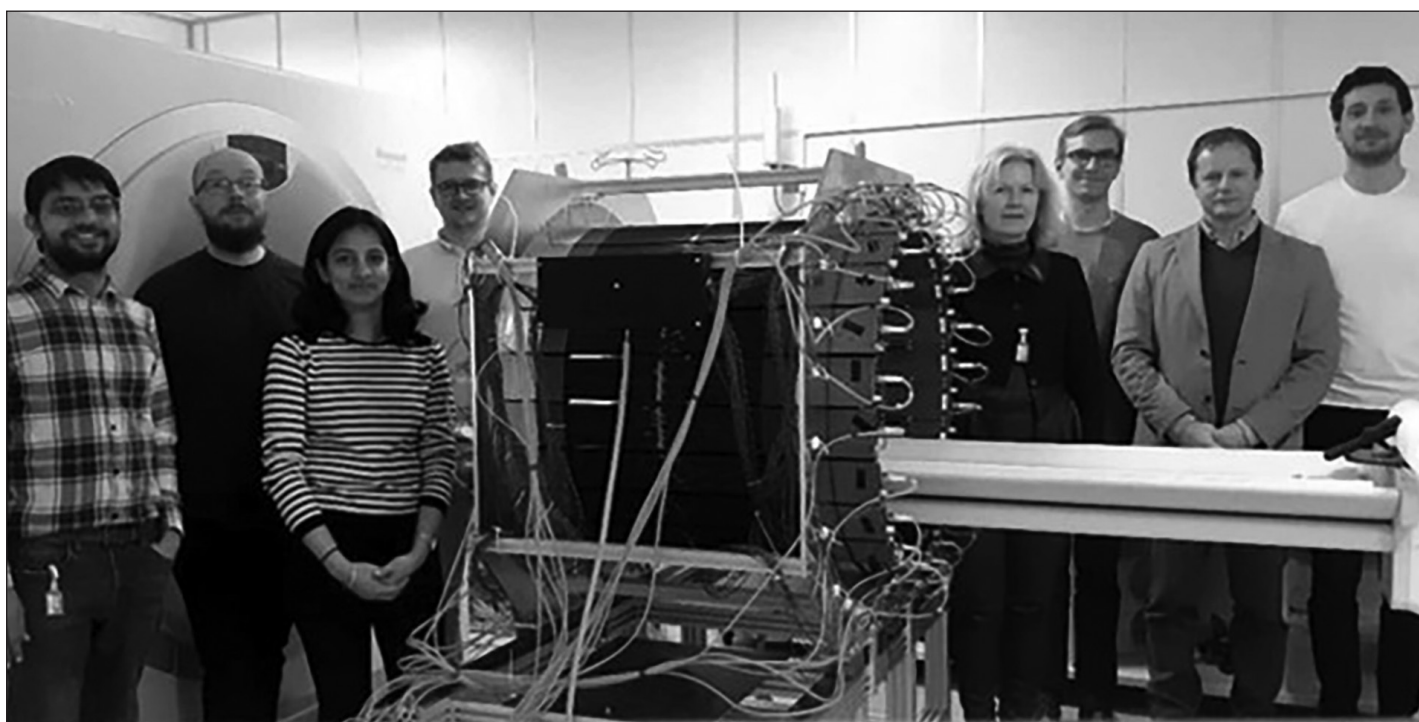
began to investigate positronium using J-PET. They discovered that they could measure the elapsed time between the positronium annihilation and the usual antimatter-matter annihilation to calculate the positronium lifetime. Conventional PET instruments cannot detect positronium, so J-PET again was a first.

In 2021, Drs Stępień and Moskal reported the very first positronium images, which compared heart cancer cells and healthy fat cells extracted from human subjects. Their study showed the cancer cells had a significantly shorter positronium lifetime than the healthy ones. In 2024, they imaged a subject with brain cancer and found that positronium lifetimes in the tumor were shorter than those in healthy brain tissues. Using both positronium and anti-matter-matter annihilation in a J-PET instrument can monitor how diseases progress and even the efficacy of medical treatment. This is a major increase in sensitivity.

Drs Moskal, Stępień, and their team have already performed the first clinical imaging using their J-PET instrument at the Medical University of Warsaw and the University Hospital in Kraków.

Their studies included the diagnosis of patients with neuroendocrine, prostate, and brain tumors. The data collected at these hospitals were used to reconstruct standard PET images as well as positronium lifetime images for superior sensitivity.

Both the Polish team's far less expensive J-PET instrument with plastic detectors and their new measurement of positronium are **major medical and technological advances**. Some researchers have compared the team's accomplishments to the development of the first digital cameras. Not only will J-PET decrease PET's high costs, but it will also make more PET instruments available to more physicians. The increase in sensitivity will allow physicians to detect diseases even earlier, when treatment can be more effective. The next steps – which are difficult – are large clinical trials of J-PET, regulatory approval of the new radioactive tracers, and convincing medical instrument manufacturers to mass-produce the J-PET instrument. Major technological advances are rarely easy, but the J-PET team will doubtless succeed.



The modular J-PET scanner team. <https://physicsworld.com/a/towards-quantum-pet-harnessing-the-diagnostic-power-of-positronium-imaging/>

Summary of the Recent 2025 International Chopin Competition. Eric Lu again!!

By Jakub Polaczyk

The XIX International Chopin Piano Competition was held from 2 to 23 October 2025 in Warsaw, Poland. I followed the recent Chopin Competition online through its YouTube channel, and it turned out to be a truly unique edition. The First Round offered, however, only a limited selection of Études, so many of my favourite Études and Nocturnes were absent. By contrast, the Second Round featured the most varied program. Several participants chose lesser-known works by Chopin, which I believe deserve more attention in a competition devoted to his music. Among the highlights was the brilliant performance of the *Variations on Là ci darem la mano* by the then-16-year-old Tianyao Lyu, originally from China and now studying in Poland. Some pianists even performed a sonata in the Second Round, adding to the program's diversity.

One of the most memorable performances of the entire competition was also Kevin Chen's legendary interpretation of all 12 Études Op. 10—a rare feat.

In the Third Round, I especially remember Zitong Wong's energetic performance, including a powerful *Scherzo in B minor* in addition to his chosen sonata and unbelievable finale from *Sonata in B-flat minor* performed by the younger Korean brother Hyuk Lee. This interpretation of the finale was something so multidimensional that it was breathtaking.

A major surprise came in the Final Round, where the pianists were required to perform a solo Chopin piece before playing their concerto



with the orchestra. The chosen work, the *Polonaise-Fantasy in A-flat major*, is one of Chopin's most complex and imaginative compositions—far too intricate to shape purely by intuition. Many pianists struggled with it, but the winner, Eric Lu, delivered a beautiful and insightful interpretation. Already well known from his 4th Prize ten years ago and many concerts in Poland, Lu is an introverted but elegant artist. While not all of his interpretations were my favourites, his *Polonaise-Fantasy*, *Sonata in B-flat minor*, and unusually poetic *Waltz in C-sharp minor op. 64 nr. 2* were truly special.

Although Lu won the top prize, several other pianists impressed me deeply with their imagination and fresh perspectives on Chopin:

- Piotr Alexewicz (Poland) – a remarkable *Fantasy in F minor*.
- David Krikheli – an extraordinary *Polonaise in F-sharp minor*, one

of the best I have ever heard. The introduction was unforgettable.

- Piotr Pawlak (Poland) – a pianist with a natural sense for large-scale form, already mature in the previous edition.
- Yehuda Propkowicz – beautiful interpretations of the mazurkas, making his special prize well deserved.

For me, the best concerto performance of the entire competition was by Zitong Wong. Another notable pianist was Vincent Ong (Malaysia), whose *Sonata in B minor* stood out for its individuality.

Interestingly, the competition was once again won by a pianist who chose the Fazioli, which is still relatively new to the Chopin Competition. Also, for the first time, the jury was led not by a Pole but by an American: Garrick Ohlsson, the 1970 winner and a remarkable pianist—although none of his personal favourites reached the finals.

While the competition was a true celebration of Chopin's music, I believe it needs some program adjustments in the future, allowing pianists a broader choice of repertoire. The new requirement of performing Waltzes in the First Round, however, was very successful, as many pianists struggled to capture their dance-like character.

I wish Eric Lu a great career ahead. Winning the Leeds Competition was a huge achievement but winning the Chopin Competition had been his dream since childhood, and now he is making history as the second pianist ever to win the Chopin Competition with the *Concerto in F minor*—and the first to perform both Chopin concertos in the finals. All the best to Eric and the rest of the pianists who also didn't make it to the final round.

Peter P. Toluściak – recipient of the Order of Virtuti Militari

by Matt Saykiewicz

I was recently contacted by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej) to help locate the grave of First Sergeant Peter P. Toluściak, a Pittsburgh native and recipient of the Order of Virtuti Militari, Poland's highest military decoration.

Born October 16, 1901, Toluściak entered the preparatory school at Duquesne University at the age of 15. Just days after his 16th birthday, Toluściak received his parents' permission to enlist in the *Blue Army* (Haller's Army), which was recruiting in Pittsburgh. The Blue Army was the informal name given to the Polish Army units formed in France during the later stages of World War I. While records of his enlistment indicate that he was born in 1900, it appears that he may have altered his age by a year in order to be qualified to fight in Europe. After four months' training at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada, he was shipped off to France where he continued his training and later was assigned to an artillery battery. After the war ended, Toluściak opted to remain in Europe and to enter the Polish Air Force. He was first sent to the French aviation school at Istres in February 1919, and received further, more advanced aviation instruction at the Avord School near Bourges. Upon completion of his training, Toluściak was transferred to Poland where he took part in the Polish-Ukrainian War and the Polish-Bolshevik War. In March 1920, Captain Franciszek Rudnicki, squadron commander, was ordered to discharge all Americans from the squadron. While two other Americans serving alongside Toluściak dismissed themselves and returned to the United States, Toluściak, so dedicated to his ancestral home, composed a letter to Captain Rudnicki requesting

permission to remain. The letter read: "I cannot go home at this moment, when the Motherland is being threatened. I came to defend the Motherland, and will carry out my task and the order given to me by my parents." The Chief of the Polish Air Force approved his request to remain.

Over the next months, Toluściak participated in nearly 40 separate actions in Poland, often volunteering for the most dangerous assignments and returning his aircraft nearly destroyed, and accumulated more than 208 hours in the air. For his actions during the battle for Kiev (April through June 1920), Toluściak was recommended for the Order of Virtuti Militari, Poland's highest military decoration. A second recommendation for the same award was submitted the following October for Toluściak's separate courageous actions in late September. The initial award recommendation for his actions in the spring of 1920 was apparently lost. However, due to the perseverance of his former commanding officer, Captain Wiktor Komorowski, who had pursued the first nomination, Toluściak was awarded the Order of Virtuti Militari V Class on July 27, 1922.

Prior to his receipt of the Order of Virtuti Militari, Toluściak returned to the United States and enlisted in the Marine Corps on April 6, 1922, at Parris Island, South Carolina and was soon transferred to the marine Aviation Detachment at Quantico. Just a month-and-a-half later, Toluściak was transferred to VO Squadron 2 stationed in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, his last duty station. Over the next several years, Toluściak continued a decorated flying career with the Marines until his untimely death on January 24, 1925, during a training flight crash in Haiti.



Toluściak gravesite in Pittsburgh

First Sergeant Toluściak's remains were shipped to his parent's home in Pittsburgh arriving on February 13, 2025. More than 400 former servicemen in military attire attended Toluściak's funeral parade. The procession marched from his parent's home at 471 31st Street in Polish Hill (the house still stands today) to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Toluściak was buried at St. Stanislaus Cemetery in Millvale. Polish consuls (emphasizing the importance of Polish society in Pittsburgh) attended the funeral and spoke. Today, First Sergeant Peter Patrick Toluściak rests beside his parents, Bazyli and Teofila, and his brother, Stanley, a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, in the Polish section (Section L) of St. Stanislaus Cemetery. I visited the cemetery with my daughters in October. We were able to locate and clean the grave and adorn it with the Polish national colors (see picture).

Fortitudine, Vol. 35, No. 3, 2010.
Bulletin for the Marine Corps Historical Program. The White Eagle with an Eagle, Globe and Anchor: First Sergeant Peter P. Toluściak.

The Pittsburgh Post, February 15, 1925.
Marine Corps Flier to be Buried Today at Military Funeral

Speaking Polish – Piece of Cake

by Veronica Wojnaroski

There are many phrases in common use which came from the Bible, too many to list. We will take a few as a jumping off point to explore a key word in the phrase and talk about its usage in Polish.



Birds – Ptaki

The phrase, *a little bird told me*, appears in *Ecclesiastes (Księga Eklezjasty)* 10:20. In Polish the phrase is *Mały ptaszek mi powiedział...* After saying this to your companion, you say (or might whisper) some bit of information without divulging your source. You might even look around to check that no one else is listening. The phrase, itself, is not often used in Polish; but let's look at variations of the words *ptak*, singular, and *ptaki*, plural. *Ptaszek* and *ptaszę* also mean *bird*, although *ptaszek* is a *little bird*. *Ptaszydło* and *ptaszyna* are both diminutives which mean *birdie*. *Ptaszarnia* is an *aviary*. *Obserwator ptaków* is the standard term for a *birdwatcher*, while *ptasiarz* is colloquial term, like *birder* in English.

A phrase in common use names a particular bird, *swallows, jaskółki*. It comes from a children's book by Jan Brzechwa called *Lis i jaskółka (A Fox and a Swallow)*. The phrase is *Mówią jaskółki, że niedobre są spółki (The swallows say that partnerships are not good for you)*. In the book, the swallows enter into a partnership with a fox and come out on the losing end.



The apple of my eye – Moje oczko w głowie

The most prominent biblical verse in English translation for *apple of my eye* is *Psalm 17:8*, where David asks God to *keep me as the apple of your eye*. It also appears in *Deuteronomy 32:10* and *Zechariah 2:8*. It refers to something or someone highly treasured and cherished, deserving of the utmost care. In the Polish translation of the Bible, the pupil substitutes for the eye. David says *Strzeż mię jako źrenicy oka...*, *guard me as the pupil of your eye*. In the very common use of this expression in Polish, the wording, *moje oczko w głowie*, translates as *my little eye in my head*. It is related to the fact that the eye is very valuable and at the same time we have an image in our mind.

Oko, eye, is derived from a Proto-Indo-European word and exists today largely unchanged in the Slavic languages, including Bulgarian, Macedonic, Slavonic, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and Ukrainian, among others.

Polish phrases about eyes often convey vigilance, love or wisdom. *Pańskie oko konia tuczy* means *the master's eye fattens the horse*, i.e. *supervision is key*. Also about vigilance, is *Mieć kogoś na oku*, *to have someone on one's eye*, meaning to *watch someone closely*, to

keep an eye on them. Affection can be expressed with *Kocham twoje oczy jak gwiazdy*, *I love your eyes like stars*, i.e., *beautiful sparkling eyes*. To give someone a seductive look is *puścić kogoś oko*, *to wink at someone*, *to flirt with your eyes*. *Wpadać komuś w oko* is to *fall into someone's eye*, in other words, *to catch someone's eye*, to be liked by someone. *Przymknąć oko* is to *close one's eye slightly*, to *turn a blind eye*, to *overlook a minor offense or mistake*.

At wits' end

The primary Bible verse for *being at your wit's end* is *Psalm 107:27*: *They reeled and staggered like drunkards and were at their wits' end*. In this passage, sailors in a storm cry out to God who delivers them. In Polish, the phrase is *na skraju wytrzymałości*, *to be at the end of one's endurance*. *Wytrzymałości* is one of those interestingly composed Polish words. *Na skraju* is easy to understand, *on the edge*. *Wy*, while it is the second person plural pronoun for the English *we*, is importantly a prefix for many verbs which signify the utter completion or thoroughness of an action, in other words, the perfective tense. The verb *trzymać* means to *hold*, to *keep* or to *support*. The embedded conjugation, *trzymał*, in the past case, signals finality, and *ości* is a suffix which, added to many Polish words means, vaguely, *ish*.

Some homework for you

Here are a few more phrases from the Bible which are in common use and which you can investigate on your own.

Na glinianych nogach
Feet of clay
- *Daniel (Księga Daniela)* 2:38, 41

Stare jak świat
Old as the world (hills)
- *Job (Księga Hioba)* 15:7

Wilk w owczej skórze
A wolf in lamb's skin
- *Matthew (Ewangelia Mateusza)* 12:25

Here are some more phrases which invoke birds:

po ptakach
lotem ptaka
z lotu ptaka
zły to ptak, co własne gniazdo kala

after the birds, i.e., done too late
bird's eye view
from a bird's eye view
An evil bird is one that defiles its own nest



LETS COOK POLISH

Karnawał on the Plate **The Balance of Sweet and Savory**

by Marta Nutini

When most people think of Polish Karnawał (Carnival) they picture tables full of sweets: glazed *paczki*, crispy *faworki*, and cakes. While those treats are certainly part of celebration, they don't tell the whole story. In fact, the real beauty of Polish carnival table is in its balance, between sweet and savory.

A true Polish Karnawał table tells a story of contrast and connection. It brings people together with flavors that are rich and comforting, but not just sugar-based. It's a space where *słodko i słono* (sweet and salty) and *bogato i skromnie* (rich and modest) all meet. It's where you'll see plates of *śledzie* (herring in sauce), bowls of *salatka jarzynowa* (vegetable salad) and rows of *kanapeczki* (open faced sandwiches) topped with everything from pickles to cold cuts.

This balance shows that the celebration is not just about indulging. It's about sharing, remembering and preparing for the quieter season ahead.

Here are some easy Polish recipes to help you celebrate the other side of Karnawał.

Śledzie pod pierzynką (Herring under a blanket)

A classic Polish herring and beets layered salad:

Perfect example of combining sweet, salty and creamy flavors.

Ingredients:

- 4-5 pickled herring fillets, (plain, in oil or vinegar)
- 3 medium beets baked or boiled, grated
- 3 medium potatoes baked or boiled, grated
- 2 medium carrots boiled and grated
- 2 hardboiled eggs, grated or finely chopped
- 4-5 tbs of mayonnaise or yogurt (you can even mix both)
- 1 medium onion (red or yellow), finely chopped
- Salt, pepper to taste
- Optional: a small apple peeled and grated for a bit of sweetness

Instructions:

Prepare all the ingredients by cooking and grating vegetables and eggs. Dice the herring and onion. Begin layering the ingredients in a glass bowl or dish. Start the first layer with herring,

then chopped onion, beets, carrots, potatoes and eggs, spreading a bit of mayonnaise or yogurt between layers. Optionally sprinkle grated apple between layers, then season with salt and pepper. Cover the top with remaining mayonnaise/yogurt and optionally decorate with extra egg, dill or parsley. Chill in the fridge for a few hours or overnight for the flavors to blend. The salad is the best on the next day, when the flavors are mixed.

Śledzie w śmietanie (Herring in sour cream sauce)

Simple and classic:

Ingredients:

- 1 jar (8 oz) pickled herring fillets, drained
- 1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup of sour cream
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional chopped dill

Instructions:

Cut herring into bite-size pieces. Mix sour cream, sugar, salt, pepper and onions. Fold in herring. Chill 2-3 hours before serving.

Salatka Jarzynowa (Traditional Polish Vegetable salad)

A staple at every celebration:

Ingredients:

- 4 medium potatoes, boiled and diced
- 3 carrots, boiled and diced
- 1 celery root cooked and diced
- 3 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 1 onion or green onion (finely chopped)
- 1 cup of canned or cooked peas
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 3 dill pickles, chopped
- 1 tsp. mustard
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Mix everything in a large bowl, adjust seasoning and refrigerate for few hours before serving

This year as you celebrate carnival remember, that joy doesn't always come in the form of frosting. It can be found in traditions, connections and shared memories. Carnival is about savoring what we have, so hopefully this year you will enjoy the full Polish table, the sweet and the savory, but most importantly, the people gathered around it.



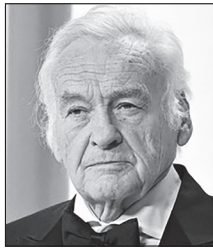
Śledzie pod pierzynką



Śledzie w śmietanie



Salatka Jarzynowa



Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski honored

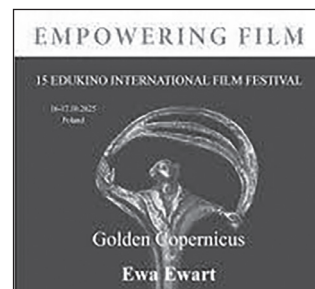
Internationally renowned Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski has received the FIPRESCI 100 Lifetime Achievement award, marking the centenary of the world's oldest film critics' association, the Fédération Internationale de la Presse Cinématographique. Skolimowski's best films include *EO*, *Deep End*, *The Shout* and *Moonlighting*.

His films are often characterized by their visual intensity and poetic structure. His work has spanned multiple countries and decades. Ahmed Shawky, president of FIPRESCI, said that Skolimowski is a "true master of cinema, whose films are intelligent, humane, witty, thought-provoking, and effortlessly cool".

Polish filmmaker wins top documentary award at EDUKINO festival

Ewa Ewart has been awarded the Golden Copernicus Prize for best documentary at the 15th EDUKINO Empowering Film Festival. The film, *Bez retuszu (Unretouched)* follows the story of Magda Atkins, a painter and makeup artist who recorded video diaries during treatment for breast cancer. Atkins

intention was to inspire and support other women facing the disease. Ewart is a journalist and a multiple award-winning documentary director, known for creating films with strong emotional impact. She was born and raised in Poland but has spent her professional life in the United Kingdom.



National Museum in Kraków opens new European Art Gallery



In December, 2025, the National Museum opened its new European Art Gallery, a major permanent exhibition presenting more than 120 works created between the 13th and the 20th centuries. The gallery features paintings and sculptures from the Museum's extensive and varied collections. Visitors trace European history backwards, moving from 20th century

works back to Medieval masterpieces. The final room features Romanesque-era Spanish Madonnas, among the institution's most prized objects. Many major artists are represented and many of the works were donated by some of Kraków's most influential collectors. Some of the works entered the Museum after World War II as "abandoned" or "left behind."

Eliza Kącka wins Poland's Nike Award

Writer Eliza Kącka has won Poland's Nike literary prize for her book, *Wczoraj byłaś zła na Zielono* (yesterday you were green with anger), which explores a mother's relationship with her autistic daughter. The judging panel described the book as "a lesson in humanity" that bridges "two worlds, without moralizing or emotional

blackmail. Kącka also won the readers' choice award. On accepting the award, she said, "I stand on this stage as a mother – one of many – who has often heard the silent cries of her child, as well as my own... I also think of the mothers who share this experience with me, and I accept this award on their behalf".

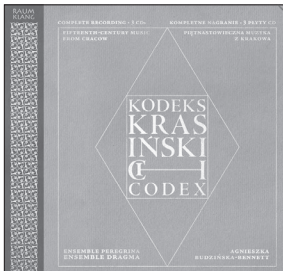


Polish guitarist is among Grammy nominees



Classical guitarist **Mateusz Kowalski** has been nominated for a Grammy Award in the **Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance category** for *Slavic Sessions*, a collaborative album with Slovenian guitarist Mak Grgić. Kowalski said that "This recognition... is the result of years of passion for classical guitar and for sharing the beauty of Slavic music with audiences

worldwide". *Slavic Sessions* features guitar-duet arrangements of works by Chopin, Dvořák and contemporary composers, including Poland's Marek Pasieczny and Bosnia's Miroslaw Tadić. The album was recorded at the Koszalin Philharmonic Hall in northern Poland and released on the US label Red Poppy Records. The Grammy presentation will be on February 1, 2026.



Music fit for kings

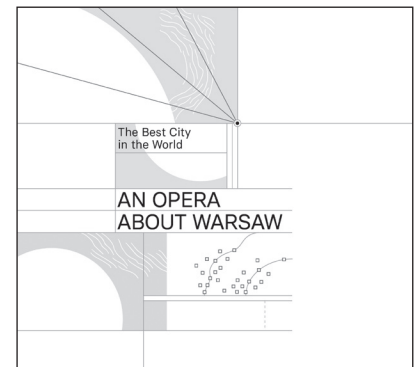
The *Krasinski Codex*, a crucial 15th-century Polish music manuscript (Kras 52), was rediscovered and fully recorded by **Ensemble Droma**, **Ensemble Peregrina**, and **Agnieszka Budzińska-Bennett** (director/editor) for Raumklang Records, winning the **Gramophone Award 2025** for its vibrant presentation of

medieval Polish court music, featuring works by Ciconia, Zachara, and native composers, making these rediscovered treasures on three CD's, accessible after 600 years. The project was supported by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute in Warsaw.

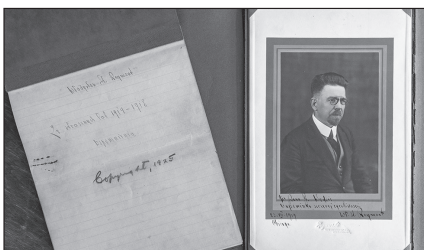
New opera: *The Best City in the World*

This new opera, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the start of the Polish capital's post-World War II reconstruction, premiered at the National Opera in Warsaw. It is a musical tribute to the massive effort from raising Warsaw from near-annihilation. It is also a symbolic reference to the similar fates of other cities and nations,

happening even now. The opera was commissioned by the Sinfonia Varsovia, with support from the city of Warsaw authorities. The composer is Cezary Duchnowski. The libretto is by Beniamin Bukowski, based upon the book by Gregorz Piątek, *The Best City in the World: Rebuilding Warsaw 1945-1949*.



The Kosciuszko Foundation has donated an important work to the National Library in Poland



The Kosciuszko Foundation has donated to the National library exceptional memorabilia of Nobel

Prize winner, **Wladislaw Reymont**, a manuscript of his wartime memoirs and a photographic portrait of him. This gift is part of the Reymont Year of celebrations established by the Senate on the 100th anniversary of the writer's death. The memoirs relate Reymont's visit to the United States in 1919. He visited many Polish communities in the US, speaking about Poland's regained independence and its situation at the time, delivering more than 30 lectures.

The manuscript, a travel notebook in Reymont's handwriting, came from the legacy of the Foundation's founder, Stefan Piotr Mierzwa. The text was intended to be spoken publicly and likely formed the basis of Reymont's *From the Terrible Years 1914-1918: Memoirs*. The Kosciuszko Foundation has, for 100 years, worked closely with the National Library of Poland through its activities promoting Polish history, education and culture.

Looted items returned to Poland

Germany has returned artworks stolen from Poland during and after World War II, including invaluable Medieval archives and a 14th century sculpture of Saint James. In the trove are 73 documents, the oldest dating back to 1215. Additional requests have been made for manuscripts, journals and church bells. There are currently some 200 requests for other restitutions.

Four historic works of art, lost during World War II, have been formally returned to museums and libraries in Poznań. The National Museum in Poznań received two paintings by Polish

artist **Michał Wywiórski**: *Early Spring* and *Self-portrait in the open air*. A Flemish tapestry from the late 17th century, *Garden Scene*, was returned to Gołchów Castle, and an 18th century rare book by **Johann Albrecht Gesner** went back to the University Library in Poznań. The Ministry of Culture arranged for these returns, considering that the restitution of cultural property, both lost during World War II and stolen after 1945, is one of the most important tasks of the Ministry. So far, more than 800 objects have been recovered worldwide, with another 190 still undergoing restitution procedures.



Preserving Polish-Jewish Legacy Recognized

The Wdzięczność-Gratitude-תודה ברוכה Award was given by **B'nai B'rith Poland** to individual winners whose activities have helped to preserve Poland's Jewish legacy and cultivating Jewish-Polish relations. The winners include **Robert Kobylarczyk**, in Tuszyn; tour guide and speaker **Ireneusz Socha**; and veteran journalist and author **Andrzej Koraszewski**. The institutional winner is the Association of the Museum of Białystok Jews. For more information about the winners and their activities, see <https://www.bnaibrith.org/winners-recognizing-polish-preservation-of-jewish-heritage/>.

Polish designer named among most influential figures in global fashion

Magda Butrym, a graduate of the International School of Costume and Fashion Design (MSKPU) in Warsaw, has been included in the prestigious BoF 500 list. This recognition marks the first time a Polish designer has been featured among the most influential figures shaping the global fashion industry. This list

is compiled annually by the *Business of Fashion*. It highlights the key personalities defining the direction of the fashion world. Butrym has gained international acclaim for her romantic eveningwear, with designs that draw on her Slavic heritage and blend modern sophistication with tradition.



Painting lost in WWII return to Polish museum

A long-lost painting by Danish artist Bertha Wegmann that disappeared during World War II has been returned to Poland. The work, entitled *Lato* (summer) was turned over to the National Museum in Wrocław after being recovered from a Danish auction house where it was due to be sold. Wegman painted *Lato* in the early

20th century during a visit to Lower Silesia. When it disappeared, it was on loan to a girls' school from the Silesian Museum of Fine Arts in Wrocław and entered private hands. After the painting was definitively identified, the Danish family who owned it returned it voluntarily and without charge to the Silesian Museum.

Polish is an effective language for AI

A team of researchers from the University of Maryland, Microsoft and UMass Amherst has found that Polish is the most effective language for performing complex AI tasks, with an average accuracy of 88%. English ranked sixth, while Chinese, long assumed to be a linguistic stronghold for machine learning, placed near the bottom. In all, 26 languages were tested. The authors suspect that this result is because Polish benefited from its Latin alphabet, rich morphology, and possibly the syntactic regularity of the language. It also may be that Polish data, though smaller in volume than English, is cleaner and more consistent. The Polish Patent Office quipped, "Humans have trouble with it, but not AI". For more information, see <https://www.zmescience.com/science/news-science/polish-effective-prompting-ai/>.



Auschwitz exhibit in Cincinnati

An exhibit entitled *Auschwitz. Not so long ago. Not so far away* is open at the Cincinnati Museum Center and runs through April 12, 2026. The most comprehensive of its kind in North America, the exhibit is hosted in partnership with the Cincinnati Museum Center and the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center. The exhibit features more than 500 original objects such as suitcases, eyeglasses and shoes that belonged to survivors and victims of Auschwitz, over 1.1 million of whom perished at

Auschwitz, mostly European Jews, but also Poles, Roma, Soviet POWs and others. Other artifacts include fence posts, fragments of the barracks, the desk of commandant Rudolf Höss, a gas mask used by the German SS, and a lithograph depicting a prisoner's face by Pablo Picasso. The collection was prepared jointly by the Auschwitz Museum in Poland and the Spanish company Musealia, with artifacts loaned from more than 20 collections around the world.



Magda Umer - Remembering Poland's Most Ethereal Voice

Magda Umer, Polish singer, journalist, author, film director, screenwriter, actress and author of recitals, has died at the age of 76, leaving behind a legacy unmatched in Polish music and poetry. Known for her ethereal, emotional, and unmistakable

voice, she became one of the most important interpreters of sung poetry in Poland. She brought her unique sensitivity to every performance, leaving a lasting impact on generations of listeners and artists. May she rest in peace.

Polish stylist triumphs at global hairdressing championships

Alicja Musiał won three awards at the 2025 CMC World Festival in London, a gold in the technical wedding hairstyle category and two silvers for salon cutting

and evening updos. With these awards, Musiał, originally from Kalisz in central Poland, confirmed her status as one of the world's leading hair professionals.



Polish basketry tradition to make UNESCO cultural heritage list

Century-old traditions of basketry have been added to UNESCO's list of the **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**, as announced by the National Association of Braiders and Wickerwork Makers. UNESCO keeps this list of intangible heritage in order to help protect living cultural practices, from music and rituals to craft skills.

Wojciech Świątkowski, head of the Braiders and Wickerwork Makers Association, said that "For crafts people and local communities who have kept this skill alive for generations, this is a special moment", and added that the recognition will help to bring basketry to the younger generation.

WWII documents found in Warsaw apartment

Documents have been found under the floorboards in a pre-war tenement house in the Warsaw district of Saska Kępa. They were recovered during a refurbishment in an unoccupied apartment. The discovery is of immense historical merit. There are documents of the High Command of the Home Army, blank German documents, maps, copies of

Polish-language newspapers published in England, and personal items such as photographs and identity cards. There is a war-time diary of a young woman, whose identity remains unknown. The Warsaw Rising Museum is conducting research into the provenance of the documents and will undertake their preservation.



CD from Poland's National Forum of Music Choir wins French award

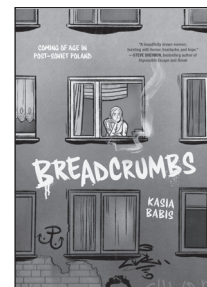
The CD, entitled *Dance of Death*, received the **Diaspon d'Or** from the prestigious magazine *Diaspon*. The award is presented by the magazine's reviewers for the most outstanding

classical music recordings. The album explores the theme of *danse macabre*, and features works by German composers Hugo Distler, Johannes Brahms, Johan Sebastian Bach and Max Reger.

A moving new memoir

Babis, Kasia, *Breadcrumbs: Coming of Age in Post-Soviet Poland*. Macmillan Publishers, 2025. This is a moving graphic memoir, a coming-of-age story set in Poland as the country transitions from communism to capitalism, a time when the author was born. It is a time of debilitating food shortages, worker discontent and astronomical inflation.

Kasia experiences her own journey of growth, from rebellious teen to politically-minded activist. Each new experience is a reminder that broader societal upheavals reverberate on a deeply personal level. The book is an NPF (National Public Radio) Best Book of the Year. It is available from Carnegie Public Library in print format.





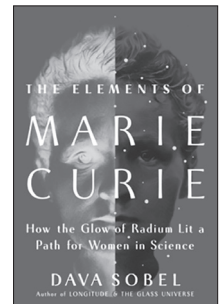
www.PolishCulturalCouncil.org

A new book about Marie Curie mentoring women scientists

Sobel, Dava, *The Elements of Marie Curie: How the Glow of Radium Lit a Path for Women in Science*. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2024

This book is partly biography and partly a clear and understandable discussion of the science of radiation. The emphasis, however, is on Curie's role in mentoring women scientists. The narrative uses Curie's life as a framework to tell the stories of the dozens of women who were trained in her laboratory and went on to have their own successful careers. Reviewers have

called it a *luminous chronicle*, a *masterpiece of storytelling*, and an *essential read*. The book is the **Winner of the Planetary Society's 2025 Cosmos Award for Outstanding Public Presentation of Science**. It was longlisted for the **American Library in Paris Book Award**. It was named a Best Book of the Year by Barnes and Noble (History) and a **Best Science and Nature Book of the Year** by the *Guardian*. It is available from Carnegie Library in print format, audiobook and as an ebook.



In memoriam, Michał Urbaniak

The Polish jazz legend, Michał Urbaniak, has passed away at the age of 82. A composer, violinist and saxophonist, he worked with, among others, Quincy Jones, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Joe Zawmul, Billy Cobham and Stéphane Grappelli.

He was born in Warsaw in 1943. He began to study music in high school. In the 1960s, he played with various Dixieland and jazz bands. He toured the United States with the Andrzej Trzaskowski band, the Wreckers in 1962, playing at the festivals and clubs of major US cities. He returned to Poland

for a brief time, where his band was considered to be the best jazz band behind the iron curtain. He then moved to Scandinavia until 1969. After many triumphant concerts in Europe and the United States, in May 1973 he played for the last time before a Polish audience and emigrated with Urszula Dudziak to the US in September, 1973, where he became a US citizen. The list of his accomplishments, his recordings, and the musicians with whom he played is long. Urbaniak was known as an innovator, named among jazz's top global performers. He received Poland's Golden Fryderyk lifetime achievement award in 2016. He composed award-winning film scores. He was widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in the history of Polish jazz.