

Polanki, Inc.

Polish Women's Cultural Club Newsletter

September [Wrzesień] 2015

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Polanki Meeting September 11

Hiatus is over. Polanki general meeting will be held Friday, September 11, at Villa St. Francis in the dining room at 7:30 p.m. Be prepared to sign up to work the Soup Festival which is in October.

SPEAKER: None

HOSTESSES:

Joyce Broderick
Mari Ellen Kostopulos
Marie Mylar
Diane Ullstrup
Jessica Ullstrup
Dolores Winkler
Sue Zblewski

Vera May Buczkowski 1917-2015

Life member Vera Buczkowski passed away June 28, 2015, at the age of 97 years. Beloved wife of the late Henry Buczkowski. Vera was born in Willemsen, London, England, in 1917. Vera was an only child who was involved in soccer, tennis, boating, and swimming. She married Henry in 1947 in Middlesex England. Both Vera and her husband had worked for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association. They worked in refugee areas in Germany—Vera in administration checking refugee credentials to make sure they were not part of the SS or any other such group and would then process them so they could go to other countries; Henry drove a truck. Henry was born in the US. However, his family moved back to Poland before WWII. He lost his US citizenship because he enlisted in a foreign



army—Polish and English. In 1949 the couple immigrated to the United States traveling on the SS Queen Elizabeth moved to Prospect Avenue in Milwaukee. Her first job was working as a secretary for the Boys Club. In 1954 Vera became a US citizen.

In 1969 Vera became the first Human Resource personnel assistant at West Allis Memorial Hospital. She hired sustaining member Dorothy Fennig. Was it Dorothy who invited Vera to join Polanki in 1976? Vera retired at age 77 and chaired the retirees club until September 2014.

Vera loved to travel. She visited every single state in the US as well countries all over the world. Her last adventure was a full day at Polish Fest.

As a member of Polanki, Vera worked every booth at Folk Fair and always wore a Kashubian costume. She was Recording Secretary on the Board in 1978 and 1979. She worked as Dorothy Fennig's co-chair for the Debutante Ball and later chaired it herself. Vera opened her home to the Board while they were working on incorporation and the new by-laws. Vera worked Pierogi Fest and the Soup Festival usually at the dessert table. According to her pastor, Vera was always selling pies and cakes at various functions including fish fries at the Polish Center. She was always a presence at Polish Fest either working for Polanki or the Polish Heritage Alliance.



Vera was active until her death in numerous cultural service organizations as well as her church, The First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa.

“Generous, sincere, assertive, curious, dedicated, spiritual, determined, energetic, independent, resourceful, self-reliant, poised, sophisticated, stylish and always a lady.”

Vera will be missed by her many friends.

Jean Sorenson 1938-2015



Sustaining member Jean Sorenson passed away July 30, 2015, at 77 years. Jean was born in Massachusetts where she met her husband Jerry while he was in the service. After the service Jerry and Jean moved to Wisconsin. They had four children: Mark, Richard, Scott and Bambi. Her joy was her three grandchildren.

Jean enjoyed being a Red Hat Lady. Jean joined Polanki in 2003 and worked at Pierogi Fest and the soup festival. She also helped Geraldine with mailings.

Polish Fest Revisited

Thank you to all the volunteers that helped to transport and set up the sales booth for Polish Fest. The booth looked so pretty, and we were done in record time—5 p.m.! It helps that we start transporting earlier now. Thank you also for the many who manned the booth during the Fest. Everyone looked so cheerful in their costumes. We think that's part of our booth's appeal. We know it's a lot of time on your feet but the time passes fast especially when we are busy. Lastly, but very important, are the men and women who came to

pack up the merchandise on Sunday night. Again, everybody worked hard to get the job done, and we were out of the park at 9:15 p.m. Fantastic! Thank you all again!!

MaryEllen DeVito

Char Dzimiel

Lynn Adams (substituting for Ewa Melenchuk)

Meet Carol



Carol Sobanski Powers was born in Milwaukee to Ray Sobanski and Alice (nee Lewandowski) Sobanski. Her uncle is Ted Sobanski. She feels she is his legacy. Carol grew up in Milwaukee and attended Mercy High School. She attended the following universities:

Univ. of MN-Morris, BA Philosophy
UWM, Master of Arts, Philosophy
Bowling Green State U., PhD, Philosophy

Carol married Donald Powers who started out as general manager of the Milwaukee Inn. He later became a hotel manager in California. They had two boys, Mark and Scott, and one girl, Susie. Carol is now a widow with five grandchildren and two great granddaughters.

Carol loves to read and to walk. Besides belonging to Polanki, Carol is a member of other organizations and does a good deal of volunteering. She has held five jobs not all teaching.

Now it is your turn to “mix it up” with Carol and fill in the blanks. Hint: Ask her what her undergraduate major was.



9/02 Nancy Monfre
Barbara Niemczycki
9/04 Mirosław Rogalski
9/07 Judy Chattin
9/13 Barbara Mueller
9/16 Joanne Barndt
9/29 Heddy Moskaluk

Congratulations to

Active member Joanne Barndt and her husband Michael who are celebrating their 50th Anniversary in Germany.

Get Well Wishes to

Active member Barbara Januchowski who had surgery on September 1.

Coming Events

Oct. 11 Soup Festival, Norway House
Nov. 20-22 Holiday Folk Fair
Nov. 29 Tree decorating at PCW
Dec. 6 Holiday Bazaar/Brunch, PCW
Dec. 20 Polanki Christmas Party
April 10, '16 Pierogi Dinner, Polish Center

Community Corner

The Polish Center has a number of events coming up:

- Oct. 2 Grażyna Auguścik, 7 p.m., Polish jazz singer and recording artist from Chicago
- Oct. 16 Polish Beer Tasting, Friday, 7-10 p.m.
- Oct. 18 **Chopin Concert**, 2 p.m., featuring Kamil Tokarski, pianist, who grew up in Bydgoszcz, Poland, where he studied piano performance at the Arthur Rubinstein School of Music. He continued his musical education at the Grażyna and Kiejstut Bacewicz Academy of Music in Łódź. Adults: \$12; PHA: \$10.

Fall Cooking Classes:

- Oct. 5 **Stuffed Cabbage Rolls (Gołąbki)**
Instructor: Peter Burzynski, Executive Sous-Chef at Polonez Restaurant, 6:30 p.m.
- Oct. 12 **Potato Pancakes (Placki)** Instructor: Ela Wasielewski, former owner of Crocus Restaurant, 6:30 p.m.
- Oct. 19 **Blochowiak Dairy Refrigerated Cheese Torte** Instructor: MaryEllen DeVito, 6:30 p.m.

FYI: Polish Rummage Sale at the November Meeting

Global Union Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

Global Union turns Ten! This FREE festival of world music and culture returns to Milwaukee's beautiful **Humboldt Park Band Shell (3000 South Howell Avenue, Milwaukee WI 53207)** in Bay View for **ONE DAY ONLY on Saturday, September 19, from noon-6 p.m.**, rain or shine. 4 bands, 1 afternoon, 1 incredible park, 0 cost—Food and merchandise vendors will have items available for purchase. Artists from Morocco, **POLAND**, Colombia and an international hip hop collective based in Montreal will travel to Milwaukee for the last, and best, party of the summer that celebrates individual expression and global commonality. Radio Milwaukee's Marcus Doucette returns as MC and WMSE's Paul Cebal will once again spin the vinyl between sets that keeps the Global Union vibe in high-gear. Global Union is made possible through the lead sponsorship of BMO Harris Bank and the Helen Daniels Bader Fund as well as a host of local supporters which includes Polanki. Polanki will have a sales booth, Kathy Wieczorek and the hats, maybe wianki and maybe Bernie doing wycinanki

The **Polish** portion should begin around 2 p.m. featuring Karolina Cicha and Bart Palyga. Karolina Cicha and Bart Palyga visit the United States for the first time this fall. Their tour will promote *Many Languages*, a project showcasing the multi cultural region of Podlasie.

Many Languages is linked to the traditions of Podlasie, the home region of multi-instrumentalist and composer Karolina Cicha. The project draws on the full range of traditional music, but rather than an archival compilation, it's a compact whole, speaking the language of contemporary music. This language is built on the innovative style of the two performers, their charisma, and their experience in musical

expression from folk, ancient and rock music projects. *Many Languages* features songs in the minority languages of the Podlasie region of northeast Poland, bordering Russia, Lithuania and Belarus: Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Russian, Romani, Belarusian, Yiddish, Polish, Tatar and Esperanto. Traditional folk instruments, such as the morinhuur, dorar, drumia, duduk, accordion, pipe and mandolin are joined by modern samplers and loopers, as well as ancient overtone singing.

Karolina Cicha is a vocalist, composer, actor and multi-instrumentalist. From 2005-2009 she was a member of the Gardzienice Theater Practice Center and created the title roles in their productions of *Electra* and *Iphigenia in A*. . . .

Bart Palyga is a cellist, multi-instrumentalist and improvisational artist. He specializes in more than a dozen folk and string instruments from around the world.

***Ida* by Pawel Pawlikowski**

Anna Borovskaya's Essay
Winner of Janet Dziadulewicz Branden Memorial Award

In anticipation of the annual and always long-awaited Polish Film Festival in Madison, I asked a friend whether he was planning to attend. He was reluctant to go, saying he believed Polish cinema's subject matter was redundant. He was tired of seeing disturbing films about World War II and the Holocaust, key themes in Polish film. While disagreeing with my friend's decision, I could not help admitting that these concerns predominate in Polish art. Nevertheless, who would accept anything less from the nation where the most atrocious war began, and where "the Nazi Temir was so much fiercer and more protracted than anywhere in Europe" (Davis). Just as Tadeusz Rózewicz was tasked to "create poetry after Auschwitz," Polish culture as a whole has taken on a corresponding mission to revive and cope with the appalling legacy of the Second World War.

Historian Piotr Wróbel considers World War II the most horrific experience in a "long list of national tragedies" that has befallen Poland. It "destroyed a large part of the Polish cultural heritage, devastated the economy, demoralized the Polish people, and left them with a fear that would last for a long time"; moreover, "World War II brought an end to the seven-century history of the Jews in Poland and retroactively charged that entire history with an emotional significance that both communities are still attempting to understand" (Wróbel; Biskupski). Because so much of the Holocaust occurred on Polish soil, and "the Poles were witness to the greatest tragedy in Jewish history," the former were often accused of not helping the latter in their misfortunes (Biskupski). This claim, "one of the meanest of modern historical controversies," imposed a heavy burden on postwar Poland and continues to trouble Poles' hearts and minds today (Davis).

Learning about these facts in more detail later in life, I was shocked by how little people knew about Poland's fate during the war. I was appalled at the injustice that befell the country. The nation that suffered so much during the war, the people that fought Nazism so fearlessly, were not only improperly acknowledged, but they also lost their freedom and were accused of being "indifferent bystanders" in the Jewish tragedy. It is natural, therefore, that the wounds are still fresh and that art concerning this topic is still being made.

Polish expatriate and famous film director Pawel Pawlikowski offers a unique rendering of these issues in his latest masterpiece *Ida*. Even though Pawlikowski insists that *Ida* is a universal film that does not deal with a particular issue as such, this work is as much about Poland's tragic and complex history as it is about

"humanity, guilt and forgiveness" (D'Addario). According to *New Yorker* film critic David Denby, Pawlikowski "made a movie that breathes history in every frame." Denby notes that "almost every element in the story evokes the war years and their aftermath" (Denby). The stripped bare, desolate, black-and-white and silent world of the film reveals the ruined, bloodless and bleak state of postwar Poland under Soviet control.

This stark, featureless scenery becomes the background to a young girl's fearless search for identity. Right before taking monastic vows, Arum learns that she was born Jewish under the name Ida. This sets Ida out on a journey in search for her family's remains. Ida's foil and guide on this journey to the "underworld" is her newfound Aunt Wanda. Their distinct personal fates, and the terrible discoveries the two women make along the way, reflect the serious consequences of World War II in Poland: the devastation and despair, the grim secrets of the past and the inability to accept the future.

The unique quality of the film is that it does not judge, accuse or defend. It offers a story that can be interpreted in various ways. The despicable treatment of the Jews is foiled by the political purges, in which Wanda took part. The merciless killer of a Jewish family saves their baby's life. Pawlikowski does not show any brutality or violence. It stays off screen and is reflected in the suffering eyes and meaningful silence of the characters.

The movie constantly deceives our expectations, showing how often we rely on stereotypes in our judgments. Wanda, who at the beginning looks like a prostitute, turns out to be a judge and a member of the resistance. The strong and cynical Wanda cannot endure the burden of the past and commits suicide, while inexperienced and naive Ida is capable of understanding and forgiveness. The person considered the murderer of Ida's family turns out to be a father, who keeps silent to protect his son, the actual killer.

Throughout *Ida* the director reminds us that unlike the movie, history and man's fate cannot be black-and-white. One family can produce an artist and a fighter, a rescuer and a murderer. The film's austerity helps to keep the distance between characters and modern viewers. This technique underlines the extraordinary circumstances in which the characters happened to live—circumstances that "can't be judged by the morality of free men in normal times" and that test the fragility of our courage and humanity (Davis). The movie does not come to an end after the killer confesses and the remains of Ida's family are buried. It proceeds with Ida's journey, revealing the impact of the past on the younger generations. So as not to be repeated, this past experience should not become remote and stereotyped. Pawlikowski's movie keeps the pain and memory alive and at the same time helps to overcome it with the help of art, faith and beauty.



Front Row: Jennifer Flores (Jean's daughter and mother of the twins and AJ) with twins Alexa and Daniela; Jean Wroblewski (mother/grandmother and Polanki treasurer); and Antonio Flores (grandson/big brother).

Back Row: Joan Spindler (aunt/great aunt and sister of the twins Jean and Jane); Jane Dunn (aunt/great aunt and sustaining member of Polanki); Rachel Hooten (Jean's daughter/sister of Jenny).

The Riot Police at the Philharmonic Hall and Other Scandalous Histories of the Chopin Piano Competition

by Wojciech Oleksiak, Culture.pl., 8/24/2015

The legend of the International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition wouldn't be the same without its controversies and scandals.

The level of emotions that jury's decisions arouse goes sky-high and can make audiences and critics go wild: quarreling, booing, shouting, storming out of the concert hall, and publicly declaring the eventual fall and ruination of the competition. It has been like this since 1937 and the competition has never been more prestigious than today.

The Chopin Competition's popularity in Poland goes far beyond the popularity of any other classical music-related event. For the duration of the competition even its occasional listeners become experts on Chopin and the way his music is meant to be performed. Thousand of listeners (even those who only watch it on TV or the Internet) get seriously emotionally engaged and support their favorites with great energy and the conviction of having made the obvious right choice. Jerzy Waldorff, Poland's most celebrated music expert of the entire 20th century, wrote of it:

"Over these few days, the entire city talks only about piano playing, and every taxi driver knows best how the finale of the B flat minor Sonata should be played. On trams and buses, people are at one another's throats over their favorites for the prizes. In front of the Philharmonic: crowds of people who couldn't get a ticket. Sometimes, the riot militia has to be called to assist, but that doesn't always help!"

Meanwhile, the jury—always composed of the greatest active pianists, former competition laureates, and the most acknowledged teachers—often makes decisions that go in the opposite direction of the audience's liking. These feuds are usually based on the eternal question of whether Chopin is to be played in the closest way possible to its traditional interpretation, based on scientific research striving to discover the way Chopin wanted his music to be played, or whether every performer should interpret it according to their own ideas and personality.

Whereas it was the founders' main idea to restore the original way of performing Chopin's compositions, in the competition's history there have been several outstanding pianists who decided to do it their own intricate way and often won audience's hearts but failed to fine favor with the judges.

"The inhabitants of Warsaw are a tumultuous and combative society, keen on and experienced in starting uprisings. Because of Chopin, the capital found itself in the peril of a new, musical uprising"—joked Jerzy Waldorff

1937—No award for Chieko Hara

In 1937, Japan had only 80 years ago ended their absolute cultural isolation from Western countries. Chieko Hara, the first Japanese pianist to take part in the Chopin competition, as well as one of the first to achieve world-class mastery in performing Western classical music, was therefore a real trailblazer. She was also



Chieko Hara and Miua Kai, Warsaw, 1937

one of the first Japanese women to study abroad and thus was uncommonly westernized, yet still performed in the traditional kimono.

Chieko Hara's character and subtle approach to Fryderyk Chopin's music easily made her the audience's and critics' favorite. When the jury decided not to award her at all (even though there were 13 awards announced at that time) listeners gathered in and around the National Philharmonic Hall and reacted so boisterously that if it hadn't been for Stanisław Meyer, a wealthy businessman who immediately funded a special award for her, the situation might have become dangerous for the jury members. Eventually, people went home peacefully, but the heated debate on this controversy is said to have lasted for months.

(Continued next month)

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