

# Polish Singers Alliance of America



## APRIL 2024 NEWSLETTER



**PSAA General Director David Zagorski leads the Combined Choruses at the 52<sup>nd</sup> International Convention Concert honoring Copernicus in his 550<sup>th</sup> Birthday year at Assumption Church in Buffalo, NY**

## May 2023 Convention

The Polish Singers Alliance of America held its Covid-delayed 52<sup>nd</sup> International Convention on May 25-28, 2023 at the Buffalo-Marriot Niagara in Amherst, a suburb of Buffalo, NY. Meetings for the good of the organization were held on Friday with delegates from ten choruses present. Elected to serve as officers for the next three years were David Zagorski, General Choral Director; Maria Lesniak, Assistant Choral Director; Mary Lou Wyrobek, President; Gary Bienkowski, Vice President; Frances Cirbus, Treasurer; and Donna Serafin, General Secretary. Mariusz Bryszkiewicz was re-appointed as Librarian. Of particular note, the body decided to combine District I and District IV with officers from District IV continuing. Special thanks to Joseph and Christine Wesolowski who have held the fort at District I for many years. With only one choir and the Lira Ensemble, a professional group who associates with the Alliance, remaining in Chicago, the merger was necessary. The funds held in District I, though not substantial, were directed to the Scholarship Fund. Social events included a

Buffet/Cabaret on Friday, a Gala, featuring the Krakowiacy Dancers and Special Delivery Band in performance on Saturday, and an Awards Brunch where 17 members were granted status as Honorary Members for their service to the Alliance. A total of eleven choirs and over 130 registrants participated in the Convention, originally planned for 2020. The profit of approximately \$4,000 was shared between the Central Administration and District IX.

At the competition held at the Buffalo Marriott Niagara Hotel on Saturday, the Chopin Singing Society #182 of New Jersey placed first in the men's category, the Marcella Kochanska Sembrich Female Chorus #321 of Philadelphia was first in the female category, followed by the Kalina Singing Society #221 of Buffalo, and the Jutrzenka Singing Society #226 of Brooklyn. The Polonia Choir Society of Edmonton #332 placed first in the mixed category, followed by Aria Chorus #303 of New Jersey, and third was the Chopin Singing Society #219 of Buffalo. The Hejnal Singing Society #323 of Brooklyn and the Symfonia Choir #291 of Hamilton,



Ontario also participated. Additionally the Filarets Choir of Detroit and the Polonia-Paderewski Choir of New Britain, CT sent delegates to the meetings. The top-scoring choir, winner of the Hlond Trophy for the second Convention in a row, was the Polonia Choir Society of Edmonton under the direction of Oksana Ostashevsky who was awarded the Prof. Antoni Kazmierczak Prize. Congratulations!



**The Polonia Choir Society of Edmonton once again gained the highest score and the Hlond Trophy. Oksana Ostashevsky, Director. May 28, 2023.**

After the Awards Brunch on Sunday, Mass was held at Assumption Church in Black Rock, the second settlement of Poles in Buffalo. Fr. Walter Grabowski was the celebrant for the Mass on the Feast of Pentecost with Dr. Thomas Witakowski directing the Chopin and Kalina Singing Societies with assistance from Polonia Choir Society of Edmonton, in leading the congregational singing. A brief tour of Assumption Church, founded in 1888, followed the mass, highlighting the Jozef Slawinski Sgraffito decoration in the sanctuary of the Church and the creative work of Swiatek Studios in melding Slawinski's work with the glories of their replication of parts of the original 1914 decoration.

The highlight of the Convention was the concert featuring the competition-winning choruses performing one of their competition numbers, new scholarship winners of the Leokadia Dombroska/Polish Singers Alliance Scholarship Fund, among other soloists, and the grand finale of the 120+ voice choir of the combined choruses of the Polish Singers Alliance of America in a tribute to Copernicus celebrating the 550<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. The concert was sponsored by the Permanent Chair of Polish Culture at Canisius University. Soloists included 2023 scholarship winners Mark Filatov, tenor, and Nicholas Kaponyas, accompanist, in an aria from Moniuszko's *Halka*; music director Dariusz Ocetek in an aria from Moniuszko's *Straszny Dwor*; 2022 scholarship winner, Melanie Bebak playing the Chopin Nocturne in G minor Opus 37, no. 1; Emma Ziskind, former accompanist and solo pianist of the Chopin Singing Society #219, playing Chopin's Scherzo #2, Opus 31, and 2021 scholarship winner Anna Pascucci performing Chopin's *Zyczenia*. Re-elected General Choral Director of the Alliance, David Zagorski of Philadelphia, with accompanist Maria Chomicka, led the combined choruses in *Kleszczmy Rekoma* (*Clap Your Hands*), *Nie Lekajcie Sie* (*Be Not Afraid*), Gustav Holst's *I Vow to Thee My Country*, and the grand finale, *Gora Piesn*. Former General Director, Dr. Thomas Witakowski, directed *De Revolutionibus*, a piece he arranged with narration by Fr. Benjamin Fiore, S.J. as part of the tribute to Copernicus. Convention organizers were Mary Lou Wyrobek, Gary Bienkowski, Frances Cirbus, Theresa Krawczyk, Adrienne Kusmierczyk, Michele Cofield, Irene Kmiatek, Christine Witkowski, and Paul Wisniewski, with assistance from Regina Hanchak, Christine Palczewski, and Sophie Hodorowicz-Knab. A

good time was had by all, and the PSAA Central Administration thanks you for your participation and camaraderie. Next time in 2026!



**General Director David Zagorski leading the choirs in Gaude Mater at the Convention Concert.**

### **Leokadia Dombroska/Polish Singers Alliance of America Scholarship Winners**

We are happy to introduce the 2023-24 Scholarship winners announced at the Convention:



**Mark Filatov** is a New York-based singer from Brooklyn, Mark has performed in various venues as both a soloist and a chorister from various choral organizations. As a soloist, he's performed in the Placido Domingo Hall and Scorca Theater at Opera America, the Kościuszko Foundation, Polish Slavic Center, and Teatro LATEA. He has performed with Mastervoices, the National Chorale, the Foundation for the Revival of Classical Music, and the

Bronx Opera, under the directions of Maestros Ted Spelling, Dr. Everett McCorvey, Gerard Schwarz, and Michael Spierman. In addition, Mr. Filatov has performed at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center (David Geffen Hall, Rose Theater and Alice Tully Hall), New York City Center, Opera America, and Bronx Community College. He currently leads Jutrzenka Singing Society and will continue his studies for masters at the Manhattan School of music studying in Chris Nomura's Studio.

**Nicholas Alexander Kaponyas** is a Polish-American pianist born in 1999. Kaponyas studied with exemplary pianists and pedagogues such as Bozena Konkiel, Martin Labazevitch, Marcia Eckert, and



Eteri Andjaparidze. Kaponyas has participated in masterclasses with world class professors such as Seymour Bernstein, Andrzej Jasinski, Ewa Pobłocka, Anna Gorecka, Wojciech Switala, Anna Malikova, and Sofya Gulyak. He has performed as a solo artist and collaborative pianist in many prestigious venues such as the Polish Consulate of New York, the Kosciuszko Foundation, the Tenri Cultural Institute, the Polish and Slavic Center, and Steinway Hall. In a



fundraising effort for "Misto Dobra," the largest orphanage in Ukraine, Kaponyas was also invited to perform in Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall where he played both as a soloist and as a part of an ensemble. Kaponyas also took part in the world premiere of Norbert Palej's "Ave Maria" for violin, voice, and piano. He also has performed in the Gallery Inn Cannon Club for the Steinway Society of Puerto Rico in addition to performing in Poland annually. Recently, Kaponyas received the Honorable Mention prize in Yamaha's 2022 National Young Performing Artists Competition and won 1st prize in the 2022 edition of The Century Voice Competition playing with soprano Yohji Daquio. He also accompanies the Jutrzenka Singing Society.

## District IV

At the Convention Joseph Wesolowski, President of District I, requested that they be merged into District IV as there is only one choir, Filareci-Dudziarz #15 that continues to sing. The Lira Ensemble, while associating with the PSAA, is a professional group and does not participate in PSAA events. Raymond Jakubowicz, President of District IV agreed to lead the newly-combined District. The small remaining treasury of District I was donated to the Scholarship Fund.

**Chóru Filareci-Dudziarz #15 Chicago** -W styczniu, 2023r, na zaproszenie klubu działającego przy parafii św. Ferdynanda, chór zaśpiewał tradycyjne polskie kolędy. Wszyscy byli wzruszeni, były duże owacje. Od marca zaczęliśmy regularne próby aby przygotować się na koncert wiosenny. Koncert odbył się czwartego czerwca. Koncert był przygotowany przez dyrygent; Jadwigę Koszałka i v-ce prezesa Jerzego Kozyra.

W repertuarze koncertu znalazły się piosenki lekkie, ludowe i patriotyczne. Koncert się podobał. Wśród zaproszonych gości byli członkowie chóru im: Fryderyka Chopina, członkowie przyjaznych nam klubów polonijnych, a także przedstawiciele kościoła i goście z różnych firm. W czerwcu chór zaśpiewał w sali parafialnej kościoła św. Ferdynanda, na okoliczność pożegnania, odchodzącego z parafii; księdza Łukasza. Także w czerwcu, odbyło się zebranie sprawozdawczo wyborcze. Nastąpiła zmiana na stanowisku prezesa. Dotychczasowy prezes i długoletni członek chóru p. Anna Smoroń, ze względu na stan zdrowia zrezygnowała z pełnionej funkcji. Nowym prezesem została dyrygent chóru p. Jadwiga Koszałka. W lipcu, w parku, zorganizowaliśmy piknik. Piknik udał się, chórzyści i zaproszeni goście bawili się dobrze.

We wrześniu zmarła nasza długoletnia chórzystka, Maria Jeske. Chór śpiewał w funeral home i brał udział w jej pogrzebie. W październiku odbył się koncert jesienny. Koncert przygotowali dyrygent chóru, Jadwiga Koszałka wraz z v-ce prezesem, Jerzym Kozyra. Koncert, jak i po koncercie zabawa taneczna, były udane. W listopadzie, członkowie chóru uczestniczyli w zabawie tanecznej zorganizowanej przez Stowarzyszenie Parafialne Gręboszów, z którym nasz chór współpracuje. Zebranie chóru, na którym omówiliśmy dalszą pracę i plany na przyszłość, zakończyło naszą działalność w 2023 roku.

3/04/2024r. Prezes chóru Filareci-Dudziarz – Jadwiga Koszałka



Filareci-Dudziarz #15 - Concert Jesienny 2023.

**Filarets Choir #293, 313, 331 Detroit** -Występy rozpoczęliśmy 7 stycznia koncertem kolęd w kościele św. Colette w Livonii. W następnym dniu 8 stycznia śpiewaliśmy w kościele św. Wawrzyńca w Utica u zaprzyjaźnionego z chórem proboszcza ks. Romana Pasiecznego. Po mszy poczęstunek, który nam serwowała parafia. W Amerykańsko-Polskim Centrum Kulturalnym 13 stycznia zorganizowaliśmy Christmas Party. 5 lutego śpiewaliśmy w Orchard Lake w kościele ks. Bernarda Witka na zakończenie okresu kolędowego. Za tydzień 12 lutego ponownie śpiewaliśmy w tym kościele z okazji święta Cyryla i Metodego. 23 kwietnia chór

Śpiewał na mszy smoleńskiej zorganizowanej w Orchard Lake przez Wydział Stanowy Kongresu Polonii Amerykańskiej w Michigan. 7 Maja ponownie w tym samym miejscu śpiewaliśmy na mszy z okazji Dnia Konstytucji. 18 czerwca śpiewaliśmy w czasie mszy u ks. B.Witka w Orchard Lake. Ponownie w Orchard Lake śpiewaliśmy 13 sierpnia na dorocznej mszy z okazji Święta Żołnierza zorganizowanej przez SWAP. 8 października na Dzień Pułaskiego śpiewaliśmy w Wyandotte w kościele Our Lady of Scapular na mszy a potem w parku miejskim pod pomnikiem gen.K.Pułaskiego. 23 października wystąpiliśmy w Orchard Lake w czasie mszy z okazji rocznicy wyboru Jana Pawła II. Ponownie w tym miejscu śpiewaliśmy na mszy 12 listopada z okazji Święta Narodowego Polski. 2 grudnia uświetniliśmy śpiewem Oplątek w Orchard Lake organizowany przez ks. B.Witka. 3 grudnia zorganizowaliśmy w Troy spotkanie wigilijne dla chóru w sali APCC. 10 grudnia wystąpiliśmy na Oplątku zorganizowanym dla Polonii przez APCC w Troy. Rok zakończyliśmy śpiewem adwentowym w kościele Przemienienia Pańskiego w Detroit 17 grudnia. Łącznie 14 występów. Obecnie klub liczy 27 członków z czego 6 osób to członkowie wspierający.

Serdeczne pozdrowienia dla wszystkich członków całej rodziny śpiewawczej

Górą Pieśń Polska -- Zdzisław Foryś, Prezes Klubu Filaretów



Chór Filaretów z Biskupem Robertem Fisher i Ks. Bernardem Witkiem po mszy Św w Orchard Lake.



Chór Filaretów na mszy Św. w Orchard Lake



**Lira Ensemble #314** continues to maintain a busy schedule of events. Lira celebrated May 3<sup>rd</sup>, opened the *History of Poles in Chicago* Exhibit at the Chicago History Museum in May, prepared a downloadable concert for July 4<sup>th</sup> (see flyer) and celebrated the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the election of Pope St. John Paul II at concerts in Chicago in October. The Kosciuszko Foundation Chicago Chapter honored founder and director Lucyna Migala as an “icon of Polonia” in November (see photo). Lira also presented some Christmas concerts including in Orchard Lake, Michigan and at Holy Trinity Mission Church in Chicago. In 2024, Lira held an evening with Lira at the Consulate in March and are planning their trips to Poland for the summer.



**District VII** choirs held regular meetings through the year and all six active choirs participated in the 52<sup>nd</sup> International Convention in Buffalo in May. We once again sang for Mass and at the (temporarily missing) Kosciuszko Monument at West Point on May 6<sup>th</sup> celebrating Thaddeus Kosciuszko. 35 choristers from four District choirs sang at the Pulaski Day Parade Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral just prior to walking the parade route on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue where 25 other choristers joined in marching. Isabella Kobus-Salkin was the Marshall representing Polish Singers Alliance. All six choirs participated in the January 28, 2024 Christmas Concert at Holy Rosary Church in Passaic for an enjoyable concert and reception in the Church Auditorium. Now we prepare for the May 4<sup>th</sup> Kosciuszko Day at West Point Academy and our District Convention on June 1<sup>st</sup>.



**District VII West Point Academy - May 6, 2023**



**District VII NYC Pulaski Parade – October 1, 2023**



**District VII Christmas Concert at Holy Rosary Church, Passaic – January 28, 2024.**

**Chopin Singing Society #182** sang at a flag-raising at Clifton City Hall to celebrate Poland’s Constitution Day in May and participated in the PSAA Convention. We sang in route at the Pulaski Parade in NYC and hosted our Christmas Concert on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The men of Chopin sang at two local churches for Mass during the Christmas season. Chopin hosted the January 28 Koncert Koled Reception. We are planning and preparing for participation in the District VII Convention.



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**Chopin #182 at January 28th Christmas Concert-Passaic, Fr. Mierzwa directing.**

**Polonia -Paderewski Choirs #287 & #311, New Britain, CT**  
-Maj 3, 2023, Dzień Polski na Capitol w Hartford, CT . Chor spiewal hymny: Polski i Amerykanski na podniesienie Polskiej flagi na maszet, a pozniej wzielismy udzial w akademji na ta okazje. May 6th, our choir went to West Point, NY to celebrate the 203rd Anniversary of the death of American and Polish Hero and Patriot, Tadeusz Kosciuszko. We participated in the mass and sang at the monument of Tadeusz Kosciuszko. May 26 -28 - four delegates from Polonia -Paderewski Choir participated in the 52nd International Convention, PSAA, taking part in rehearsals and singing with the combined choirs at the concert at Assumption Church. June 4<sup>th</sup> - Polish Days in New Britain, CT. The official opening of the ceremony was done by Erin Stuart, the mayor of New Britain, and some state representatives were there as well. Thousands of people enjoyed good Polish food and music. We sang Gaude Mater and other Polish songs. On July 7th some of our choir members took part in the celebration of the Polish tradition of Noc Swietojanska at the Rocky Hill Senior Center. Many people enjoyed our singing of Plynie Wisla. August 6th Dzień Zolnierza together with many Polish Veterans we participated in mass at St. Cyril and Methodius Church in Hartford and were then invited to the Veterans Club in Hartford for a very special dinner. On August 19<sup>th</sup> we joined in the 40th Dozynki on Polanka Sokolow in New Britain, CT. We participated in very special mass celebrated by the new Pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Jan Gancarz. After mass we sang a few Polish songs. Our choir received a special plate with beautiful words of thanks made especially for that occasion. September 9th - Dozynki at the St Stanislaus Church in Bristol, CT. We participated in Mass and a short concert and received many thanks from the Pastor and parishioners. October 1<sup>st</sup> was the Pulaski Parade in New York. We were singing at the St. Patrick Cathedral during mass with District VII choirs and joined in the Pulaski Parade on 5th Avenue afterward – a very long walk, but the most beautiful memories of such an important celebration of Polish culture. October 14<sup>th</sup> - Zabawa Jesienna at the Haller Post in New Britain as a fundraiser for the expenses of our Choir. December 10<sup>th</sup> - a Koncert Koled at St. Lucian Residence, a Nursing Home for many Polish priests and nuns. December 17<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Party at the Haller Post Hall and a Koncert Koled for Veterans and guests. January 7, 2024 - Singing for Mass at Sacred Heart Church and a special Koncert Koled where we received a standing ovation from the hundreds gathered. January 14th we sang koledy at the Bojnowski Manor in New Britain, where we

met some Polish priests and nuns who reside there. The appreciation of our singing was overwhelming. January 28<sup>th</sup> -we participated in District VII. February 11<sup>th</sup> Uroczystosc 84 Rocznicy Zslyki Polakow na Sybir w kosciele Saint Michael the Archangel, Bridgeport, CT z udzialem wielu Polskich organizacji oraz wladz, Ambasador RP Krzysztof Szczerski, i Konsul Generalny RP Adrian Kubicki Organizatorem calej uroczyst. byla zyjaca sybiraczka Pani Helena Knapczyk, która stara się przedstawic historie okrotnej zsyly Polakow na Syberie. Pamiec o tragicznych wydarzeniach sprzed ponad osmiu dekad wciąż jest wazne i wpisane w pojęcie tozsamosci Polskiego Ludu. Chor Polonia-Paderewski wzial udzial we mszy swietej, zaspiewal chymny Polski in Amerykanski, i na zakonczenie piosenki: Legiony, Tylko we Lwowie oraz Rota. February 25<sup>th</sup> - Walne Zebranie Choru Polonia-Paderewski podczas którego został wybrany zarzad na ro 2024. All of our performances were directed by our dyrygent: Klaudia Naumowicz-Niewiadomska. Many thanks for her hard work.



**Polonia Paderewski Choir at the Dozynki in Bristol, September 9<sup>th</sup> Sacred Heart Church, New Britain – Jan.7th**



**Jutrzenka #226:** The beginning of 2023 was dominated by preparations for the 52 International Convention in Buffalo. “Are we going to make it”-was on everyone’s mind. At the same time, we practiced at The Polish & Slavic Center in Greenpoint and on April 30th, the reaction of the public was encouraging and gave us faith that we can go to Buffalo. Two members went to West Point on May 6th. Our focus was on the trip to the International Convention. All this excitement and worries paid off. We made it! Moreover, we were successful. We had good time, made new friends and now have wonderful memories that will last. We are grateful to organizers who made it happen, specially to Mary Lou Wyrobek. Thank You. After summer break, on August 27, Jutrzenka participated in a procession and festivities of St Casimir – patron of Our Lady of Czestochowa-St Casimir Church in Brooklyn. Jutrzenka marched in the annual Pulaski Parade in NYC with a banner and

sang with other members of PSAA during the Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral. It was a joyful experience. October 19th, Polonia in NY celebrated Polish Heritage Day, and Jutrzenka also participated by performing patriotic songs during the concert at The Polish -Slavic Center in Brooklyn. This was the debut for two our new members, Hanna and Malgorzata Pogorzelski. November 17th Jutrzenka was invited to sing at the Princess Manor in Greenpoint during the Marie Curie Sklodowska Professional Women Association annual banquet. The public loved our singing and we had to repeat our song. Also in November Jutrzenka hosted the District VII meeting. We sang Christmas Carols December 7th at P&S Center, and on January 7, 2024 at OL Czestochowa –St Casimir Church, the former “home” for Jutrzenka for many years where we had not sung since the pandemic. Worried how the public will react, the concert was very successful. Even the priest praised our performance and collected a donation for us. After the concert we participated in the parish “oplatek” party. Jutrzenka joined the District at the annual Christmas concert on January 28th. As always, it was very pleasant experience uniting all singers. We attended the February 4th District VII meeting. We are keeping our regular rehearsals on Wednesday and hoping to get more new members.

Leokadia Juszczak, President



**Jutrzenka at OLC-St. Casimir on January 7th**



**Jutrzenka Singing Society #226 at Christmas Concert, Passaic**



**Jutrzenka at the Polish & Slavic Center on December 7th**

**Marcella Kochańska-Sembrich Chorus #321** – David Zagórski, Choral Director

After our traditional Koncert Kolęd held on January 15, 2023, at the Associated Polish Home and the District Christmas Concert on January 29 in Passaic, NJ, the Chorus took a short break and then resumed rehearsals to prepare for the International Convention held in Buffalo, in May, where the Chorus placed First in Choral Competition in the Female Chorus category. In June, the Chorus was to have participated in the Associated Polish Home’s Wianki –Noc Świętojańska Picnic, but the event was rained out. On the first Sunday of October, the Chorus marched and sang in Philadelphia’s manifestation of Polish Pride, the Pułaski Day Parade sponsored by the Polish America Congress-Eastern PA District. On Sunday, January 21, 2024, the Chorus again held its annual Christmas Concert-Koncert Kolęd and featured the Nazareth Academy Chorale, Choral Conductor, Kathryn Chmelko is also the accompanist for our Chorus. The Chorus ended January with participation in the District 7 Christmas Concert, again at Holy Rosary Parish in Passaic, NJ.

Deborah M. Majka, President



**Marcella Kochanska-Sembrich Chorus at Christmas Concert with Nazareth Academy Chorale – January 21, 2024**



**ARIA #303** -During the past year, we took part in many events, both patriotic and religious. In April of 2023 the choir sang Lenten songs in New Jersey churches. Since hardly any choir sings Lenten songs, our repertoire was well received by the church attendees. On April 1st the choir sang patriotic songs by the Katyń Monument in Jersey City. In the meantime, we were preparing for the PSAA Convention in Buffalo, NY in May. The choir members went to Buffalo by bus, and we were joined by the members of Hejnał, Jutrzenka and Chopin. Upon returning from the Convention, we had a meeting with general assessment of the Convention, election of choir officers and planning of the future. This meeting was the final meeting of the season, and we started a break for the Summer. The Aria Choir started regular rehearsals in the beginning of October with a few new members under the direction of Dr. Barbara Miluk-Kolasa. During the Pulaski Parade in New York City, October, Aria traditionally took part in the parade on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. On the vigil of the Parade, we sang at the Pulaski Monument in Wallington and later sang at the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Church. Our rehearsals are conducted at the Civic Center in Wallington, NJ every Monday. This year we sang in five churches and later we took part in the Christmas Concert sponsored by the VII District at the Holy Rosary Church in Passaic, NJ, and Aria, Hejnał, Jutrzenka, Marcela Sembrich-Kochańska and Chopin sang individually and at the end together. Presently we are singing Lenten Songs in churches and preparing for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Aria #303 which will take place April 27, 2024 and we are cordially inviting all choir members and their guests to celebrate with us. Wishing all a Very Happy and Blessed Easter.

Bogdan Modrzynski, PhD. President/Prezes of Aria #303  
*"Górą Pieśń Polska"*



**Hejnał Singing Society #323** did not present a report but the choir participated in the Convention, Pulaski Parade, Koncert-Koled and held *Carols with the Hejnał Choir* at the Polish-Slavic Center on January 21, 2024.



**Aria at Koncert-Koled January 28, 2024.**

**District IX** joyfully hosted the 52<sup>nd</sup> International Convention in May. Kalina and Chopin members sang at Polish Day at Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Youngstown, NY on October 7<sup>th</sup>, then held what they hope to be a semi-annual District meeting in Buffalo to elect officers (see photo) and discuss planned events. Once again, Buffalo hosted the annual *Festival of Carols*, joined by the Msgr. Peter Adamski Polish Saturday School choir and welcoming back our Ontario, Canada choirs again after a long hiatus to St. Gabriel Church in front of an enthusiastic audience of 300+ on January 7, 2024. Finally on February 4<sup>th</sup> four District choirs sang at the weather-delayed Koncert Koled at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Hamilton, Ontario, hosted by Symfonia and Cantabile, where nine separate groups performed at the enjoyable concert followed by a lovely dinner and raffle.



**Newly elected officers of District IX: Vice President Wanda Golec (Cantabile Choir), President Theresa Krawczyk (Kalina Singing Society), Secretary Mary Lou Wyrobek, and Treasurer Frances Cirbus (both of Chopin and Kalina Singing Societies).**



***Festival of Carols* on January 7, 2024 at St. Gabriel Church, Dr. Witakowski directed the combined choruses and announced his retirement from the Chopin Singing Society at the Concert in Hamilton, Ontario on February 4<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Witakowski served as General Director of the PSAA from 2005-2017**





**Symfonia Choir #291** competed at the Convention, came to sing in Buffalo for the *Festival of Carols* and hosted the District in Hamilton for the *Koncert Koled*. Grazyna Karpiuk asked that we print this article by Renata Kobrzynska:

Dnia 4 lutego 2024 roku w Kościele Św. Stanisława Kostki w Hamilton odbył się długo wyczekiwany koncert kolęd, który został przełożony z wcześniejszego terminu z powodu niesprzyjającej pogody. Tym razem pogoda dopisała i wszyscy uczestnicy dojechali na czas. Organizatorem i gospodarzem całego wydarzenia był Polonijny Chór „Symfonia” działający w Hamilton od 1951 roku. Wszystkich zgromadzonych powitał

ciepłymi słowami ojciec Jan Wądołowski, podkreślając rolę wspólnego śpiewu w budowaniu jedności i harmonii nie tylko w rodzinach, w podtrzymywaniu więzi międzyludzkich, w tworzeniu atmosfery przyjaźni i pokoju. Trafnie zauważył, że ludzie wyczuleni na piękno muzyki, czy wogóle sztuki, stają się coraz lepsi. Zachęcał też, aby podtrzymywać tradycję wspólnego kolędowania i przekazywać ją młodszemu pokoleniu, co w dzisiejszych czasach wcale nie jest takie łatwe. W koncercie wzięło udział łącznie osiem chórów i zespołów śpiewaczych. Były to Chór Parafialny „Te Deum” oraz przyparafialne zespoły, dziecięcy i młodzieżowy, pod kierownictwem pani organistki Katarzyny Brun-Pankowskiej, Kameralny Chór „Cantabile” z Oakville, Chór

Symfonia z Hamilton- oba pod dyrekcją pani Marii Leśniak i z akompaniamentem Oksany Skiry. Zaś gościnnie wystąpiły dwa chóry z Buffalo: żeński „Kalina” i mieszanzyespół śpiewaczy „Chopin”, pozostające pod opieką dyrygenta Thomasa Witakowskiego, który z wielką charyzmą i poczuciem humoru prowadzi oba chóry od

wielu już lat z nieustającym powodzeniem. Obu tym chórów towarzyszył akompaniament Ivana Docenko. Entuzjastycznie został też przyjęty występ kapeli ludowej, działającej przy tutejszym zespole tanecznym „Polonez”, która poza śpiewem pokazała swe talenty grając na różnych instrumentach, takich jak skrzypce, akordeon, fujarki i kontrabas. W trakcie koncertu mogliśmy usłyszeć popularne, jak również i te mniej znane kolędy i pastorałki w znakomitym wykonaniu. Nad kolejnością występów czuwała prezes Symfonii, Grażyna Karpiuk, przeplatając muzykę poezjami o przesłaniu jakże aktualnym nie tylko w okresie Bożonarodzeniowym, ale i przez cały rok....I z Nowym Rokiem co nam oto świta Do serc strwożonych niech pokój zawita.

Niech zginą wojny, zagasną pożogi, A ludzkość wznosi nowe życia progi...Publiczność dosyć licznie dopisała, nagradzając gromkimi brawami kolejnych uczestników. W występie finałowym zabrzmiały ze zwielokrotnioną siłą dwa utwory w wersji polsko-angielskiej, w wykonaniu czterech połączonych chórów z Buffalo, Oakville i Hamilton. Chóry te należą do Związku Śpiewaków Polskich w Ameryce, który zrzesza wszystkie chóry

polonijne w Ameryce Północnej, a wspólne wykonanie utworów jest dopełnieniem wieloletniej przyjaźni między chórmi, która trwa

już nieprzerwanie ponad 40 lat. Po uczcie duchowej nie zabrakło też strawy cielesnej, którą zafundował nam Dom Polski, racząc wszystkich uczestników i gości smakowitym polskim obiadem. Obecni na obiedzie muzykanci z kapeli nie omieszkali uprzyjemnić nam czasu swoim graniem i śpiewem. Można więc było nie tylko zaspokoić apetyt, ale i pobawić się wspólnie przy dźwiękach skocznej muzyki. Na zakończenie spotkania odbyła się loteria fantowa i cicha licytacja, przygotowana w całości przez członków „Symfonii”. Pomogło to choć trochę zasilić konto do dalszej działalności chóru. Rozstanie nastąpiło jak zawsze w radosnej, przyjaznej atmosferze i z nadzieją na rychłe spotkanie tej wspaniałej śpiewaczej rodziny na kolejnych wspólnych koncertach.



**Cantabile Choir #333** were missing some choir members at the time of the Convention and members attended but could not compete. The choir came to Buffalo for the *Festival of Carols* and also participated in the Hamilton *Koncert Koled*. They continue to sing at special occasions at St. Anthony Parish in Oakville, Ontario.

Over 100 **Radosc-Joy** dancers, from the age of 4 to young adults, participated in this year's *Koncert Swiateczny*, as did our parent group, Sokoly. The audience showed their sincere appreciation for the 2 1/2 hour concert by their enthusiastic applause throughout all parts of the show. Act I consisted of 10 mini scenes which showcased koledy, pastorałki, lyrical dances, and a “mini Jaselki”, all enriched by appropriate costuming. Act II was a little trip through the history of our *Swiateczne* traditions, and was divided into three scenes: Jada Kolednicy, Kulig rwie, Bal Maskowy Karnawalowy. Through songs, dialogue, and dances, the audience was given an insight into the significance of each scene in relation to our Polish traditions. The Bal Maskowy was a fitting finale with the beautiful costumes and elaborate masks and headdresses. Historically, the Bal Maskowy signalled the end of the period of koledowanie and merriment, and the start of Lenten sacrifices. Of course, we participated in several multicultural events during the course of the year, as well as banquets and fundraising activities. After several years of absence, we were thrilled to take part in the Cheektowaga Polish American Festival. We are looking forward to participating in Dyngus Day activities in Buffalo, and now we continue our preparations for the upcoming concert season. Wishing everyone the best!

Ania Piwowarczyk (artistic director)



**Radosc-Joy Act I – a mini-Jaselka**





**Radosc-Joy Act II Bal Maskowy Karnawalowy.**

**Chopin Singing Society #219** led the singing on June 4, 2023 as St. Stanislaus Church closed out its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year with Mass with Bishop Fisher. Members then joined in the anniversary banquet at Kloc's Grove. Chopins performed at the Cheektowaga Polish Festival and also led the singing for Mass at the event on July 29<sup>th</sup>. Some of the singers joined the choir of Assumption Church on August 13<sup>th</sup> as Assumption celebrated its 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our annual Mass and picnic were held at Stiglmeier Park on August 15<sup>th</sup>. With Dr. Witakowski on sabbatical, rehearsals began with guest conductor, Dr. Bradley Wingert, on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Members joined with Kalina to sing at the "Polish Day" Mass at Our Lady of Fatima Shrine on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Chopin's 124<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert was held on October 29<sup>th</sup>, where a former director and soloist of the Society, Adrienne Tworek-Gryta was honored. Featured vocal soloists were Valerian Ruminski, who has performed at the Metropolitan Opera and is the artistic director of Nickel-City Opera, and up and coming soprano Emily Helenbrook, as well as member, Melanie Bebak, a Polish Singers Alliance Scholarship Winner as piano soloist. Historically, it was not uncommon for the Chopin Singing Society to feature performers of such high caliber as this year's contingent. The choir sang at the All Souls Day Mass & Polish Ancestors' Day at St. Stanislaus Cemetery on November 5<sup>th</sup>, and Chopins' annual Wigilia was held at the Polish Falcons Hall on Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The events of our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary year began with the Polish Singers Alliance of America District IX "Festival of Carols" at St. Gabriel Church on January 7, 2024 and the snow-delayed reprise in Hamilton, Ontario on February 2<sup>nd</sup> where Dr. Thomas Witakowski announced his new status as Director Emeritus of the Chopin Singing Society after 32 years as director. We thank him for the many years of exciting concert events he led for us. January 21<sup>st</sup> found us in collaboration with the Polish Arts Club and the Permanent Chair of Polish Culture at Canisius University celebrating Thaddeus Kosciuszko and his aide-de-camp Agrippa Hull, an African-American patriot, in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Montante Center, restarting the long-standing tradition of the Society joining in the Buffalo Community's celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We hosted a 300+ audience at Chopin's Birthday Bash, this time with poet Adam Mickiewicz whose 225<sup>th</sup> birthday was in December, with a multi-media extravaganza held at the Montante Cultural Center on February 25<sup>th</sup> featuring the Chopin Singing Society with the Canisius University Chorale all directed by Dr. Brad Wingert, pianists Claudia Hoca, the second winner of the International Chopin Young Pianists Competition instituted by the Society in 1965, and Chopin member, Melanie Bebak, with readings of Mickiewicz's poetry by member Michael Zachowicz amid a backdrop of a Power Point featuring places of interest and memories of Chopin and Mickiewicz prepared by Klara Chomicka-Frank. Ms. Bebak received a scholarship from the Polish Arts Club of Buffalo at a luncheon on March 3<sup>rd</sup> where a contingent of singers came out in support! Our annual meeting was held on March 10<sup>th</sup> where Gary Bienkowski was again elected as President. We look forward to our grand celebration of Dyngus Day on April 1<sup>st</sup> at the St. Stanislaus



**Chopin Singing Society 124<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert – October 29, 2023.**

Social Hall – Come join us! Our history book is almost ready and an exhibit related to it will be displayed at the Buffalo & Erie County Main Library in the summer, as well as at the Erie County Fair in August. A 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary banquet will be scheduled in June, and you are all invited! In Memoriam: Georgianna (Gina) Peete, a long-time dedicated supporter of all our events.



**The Chopin Singing Society is joined by the Canisius University Chorale under the direction of Dr. Brad Wingert, interim director, at the Chopin & Mickiewicz Birthday Bash, February 25, 2024.**



**Kalina Singing Society at Convention 2023.**

**Kalina Singing Society #221** had an active 23-24 season. On April 3, 2023 Kalina hosted its 122<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Dinner at the Polish Falcons Clubrooms, singing several numbers and awarding a scholarship to Sarah Mangham of the Community School of Music. Sarah entertained the audience with a number of vocal presentations. We placed second in the female chorus competition at the Convention with 11 members under the direction of Edward J. Witul. Two Kalinki, Theresa Krawczyk and Donna Serafin, were awarded Honorary Membership. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, Kalina joined with



Chopins to sing at Polish Day at Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Youngstown, New York. The congregants processed around the circular sidewalk saying the rosary. Mass followed in the church with choruses singing. A lovely dinner followed. The Kalina Wigilia was held on December 17th at the Polish Falcons Clubrooms with 132 in attendance. A good afternoon was enjoyed by all. In 2024, The Kalina chorus participated in District IX's Christmas Program concerts at St. Gabriel Church on January 7th and the snowstorm postponed February 4th event in Hamilton. Throughout 2023 and 2024 Kalina has been working on delivering its memorabilia; program books, pictures, minutes, scrapbooks and newspaper articles to the Canisius University library archives to preserve a record of its accomplishments. Considering that Kalina was founded in 1901 there are considerable items to save. Lastly, Kalina will celebrate its 123rd Anniversary with a dinner, concert and brief historical presentation on April 7th. In 2026 Kalina Singing Society will celebrate its 125th Anniversary, quite an achievement in PSAA history.



**The Ladies and Gentlemen of the Polonia Choir of Edmonton with Director Oksana Ostashevskaya at the Convention.**



**Polonia Choir of Edmonton #332** - The 2023 season was a year of growth for the Polonia Choir. After a short season of recovery preceding it, we were delighted to welcome brand new voices into our ranks as well as a few "old" ones returning from a sabbatical. This spring we are 30 members strong. It was an eventful season. The choir was again invited to sing during the May 3 Constitution Akademia, and the November 11 Independence Day Akademia at the Polish Hall. In August, several choir members volunteered their help in the Polish Pavilion at the Heritage Days Festival, which is the world's largest three-day multiculturalism celebration. In December, we participated in the annual celebration of central European Christmas music organized by The University of Alberta Wirth Institute and The Polish Culture Society, and in an evening of carolling organized by the Polish Culture Society of Edmonton (Towarzystwo Kultury Polskiej). In January we gave a concert at the Polish Veterans' Seniors Residence. One of the most exhilarating events of the season was the May gathering of Polish choirs in Amherst, NY, at the PSAA 52nd Convention. All the extra hours which Polonia Choir put into the preparations for months ahead paid

off as once again we were delighted to win the coveted Hlond Trophy awarded to the top-scoring choir. Another reason to celebrate will be the choir's upcoming 25th anniversary. Our Gala Concert will take place on the evening of April 27th, in the Campus Saint-Jean theatre. It will also be the last large concert under the baton of our beloved artistic director Oksana Ostashevskaya. We are sad to report that Oksana, who has shaped a loose group of men and women who loved singing into a lovely choir which she led for 25 years, is retiring. This means that aside from grieving her imminent departure, the choir has been actively searching for someone to take over the baton.

Anna Mioduchowska for the Polonia Choir



**Melanie Bebak, a Scholarship winner and member of Chopin Singing Society #219 performs at the Chopin & Mickiewicz Birthday Bash in Buffalo, February 25, 2024.**



**Jutrzenka members with Mayor Eric Adams at the Sashing Ceremony for the Pulaski Parade Grand Marshal – January 18, 2024 at Polish Consulate in NYC.**



**December 17th Concert Reception at Haller Post - Original Member of Polonia-Paderewski, Theresa Plawska, and friend Helena Knapczyk, both Siberian survivors and going strong!**