10 YEARS OF THE CHICAGO CHOPIN SOCIETY

Frederick Chopin is regarded as one of the greatest influences that pulsated beauty, life and triumph into the Polish people. Known as the poet of the piano, he put into notes that which could not be expressed into words: the sentiments of a great nation recounted graciously by a grand soul. Chopin remains a constant source of pride and inspiration for Poles around the globe, from Warsaw to Chicago. It is this very inspiration that led acclaimed Polish composer Jarosław Gołembiowski to pursue establishing a venue in which Polish musicians could be celebrated and given a chance to build blossoming careers. A graduate of the Karol Lipinski Academy of Music in Wroclaw, and Frederik Chopin Music University in Warsaw, Poland, Gołembiowski understood the delicate balance of establishing a musical career. His music has been organized in over 100 opuses with published works such as his latest book, *Music for Hours*. In 2003, along with board members Lida Kazmierczak, Ewa Zaborowski and Andrzej-Marek Urbaniak, Gołembiowski founded the Chicago Chopin Society, an organization with a mission to actively support and promote Polish composers, artists, and artistic organizations. Now celebrating over a decade, the Chicago Chopin Society has already left its mark on the Chicago, with years of beautifully dignified concerts and festivals.

Partnering with other Chopin Societies such as the Chopin Society of Houston and the Miami Chopin Foundation, the Chicago Chopin Society set a high standard for the celebration of Polish Music with the first Annual Chopin Festival in 2004 showcasing the talent of Adam Wodnicki with a tributary arrangement of Chopin’s finest pieces. The Chicago Chopin Society’s first benefit concerts were held later that year, with artists such as Hubert Salwarowski, the Penderecki String Quartet and Adam Golka who played the world premiere of Jaroslaw Gołembiowski’s *Opus 100*.

The second Annual Chopin Festival in 2005 featured Polish violinists Mikhail Yanovitski and Jolanta Sosnowska.
2005: from upper left: Pawel Checinski, Monica Sillvan, Jozef Spewak, Anna Luniewska, Urszula Subczynska, Janusz Obara, Jaroslaw Golemiowski Jolanta Sosnowska - Violinist, Mikhail Yanovitsky-Pianist, Andrzej Marek Urbaniak

2006 welcomed Chicago-based Rachel Naomi Kudo, the finalist at the XV International F. Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. 2007 was filled with brilliant performances by Piotr Różański, winner of the 2006 Polish National Chopin Piano Competition, as well as Chicago maestro Pawel Checinski, whose encores lasted over 40 minutes! During the fifth Annual Chopin Festival in 2008, John Owings, Gold medalist of the first Robert Casadeus International Piano Competition, won the praise of the audience for his Chopin recital, followed in 2009 by violinist David Yonan and soprano Stefania Kondella.
In 2010, the 200th Anniversary of Chopin’s Birthday welcomed lectures, recitals and master classes alike with performances by Nina Drath and young pianist Michael Pecak, while 2011 was graced with actor Wojciech Malec who presented an evening of poetry celebrating Chopin and his music. Sławomir Dobrzanski performed compositions by Maria Szymanowska, a respected Polish composer, in 2012. In 2013 Edyta Kulczak, mezzo soprano of the Metropolitan Opera, performed works by Chopin, M. Karłowicz, S. Niewiadomski, and S. Moniuszko at the Polish Museum.
2014 brought talented guitarist Kacper Wierzchos whose performance of classical medleys resonated with an enthusiastic audience. 2015 started

Thanks to the Chicago Chopin Society, Chicago’s Polish culture has been enriched with over a decade of flourishing artists. From star-studded festivals to concerts of aspiring musicians, the Chicago Chopin Society has stayed true to its goal: promoting Polish Arts and bringing to the forefront the talent of Polish musicians. Inspired by Chopin, headed by Jarosław Gołembiowski, and realized by a passionate Polish Community, we only imagine the talent that the next decade of the Chicago Chopin Society can bring.

Ewa Niklinski