

20th Anniversary Season

Performing Arts Series

Columbia Artists Management, LLC
presents

Opole
Philharmonic of Poland

Boguslaw Dawidow, conductor
Izabela Matula, soprano

Friday, March 4, 2011
Yardley Hall
Johnson County Community College

Underwritten in part by the
Arthur and Alma Yardley Endowment,
Johnson County Community College Foundation
and Mark and Nancy Gilman.

Opole, Philharmonic of Poland
Boguslaw Dawidow, conductor
Izabela Matula, soprano

Program

<i>Die Fledermaus</i> , Overture	Johann Strauss Jr.
Carnevals-Botschafter Walzer, Op. 270	Johann Strauss Jr.
Annen Polka, Op. 117	Johann Strauss Jr.
“Gruss dich Gott, du liebes Nesterl!”	
Graffin Zeldan aria from operetta <i>Wiener Blut</i>	Johann Strauss Jr.
Soloist: Izabela Matula, soprano	
Künstler-Leben Waltz, Op. 316	Johann Strauss Jr.
Banditen Galop, Polka Schnell, Op. 378	Johann Strauss Jr.
“Liebe, Du Himmel auf Erden,”	
Maria Anna Eliza aria from operette <i>Paganini</i>	Franz Lehár
Soloist: Izabela Matula, soprano	
Eljen a Magyar Polka, Op. 332	Johann Strauss Jr.
Perpetuum Mobile, Op. 257	Johann Strauss Jr.
Polka, Ohne Sorgen, Op. 271	Josef Strauss

Intermission

Kaiser-Waltzer, Op. 437	Johann Strauss Jr.
Tritsch-Tratsch Polka, Op. 214	Johann Strauss Jr.
Elena’s Bolero, “Mercé dilette amiche” from	
opera <i>I vespri siciliana</i>	Giuseppe Verdi
Soloist: Izabela Matula, soprano	
Pizzicato Polka, Op. 234	Johann Strauss Jr.
with Josef Strauss	
Frühlingsstimmen Waltzer, Op. 410	Johann Strauss Jr.
“Meine Lippen, sie kussen so heiss,”	
Giuditta’s aria from opera <i>Giuditta</i>	Franz Lehár
Soloist: Izabela Matula, soprano	
Plappermaulchen! Polka Schnell, Op. 245	Josef Strauss
Unter Donner und Blitz, Polka Schnell Op. 324	Johann Strauss Jr.
Leichtes Blut, Polka, Op. 319	Johann Strauss Jr.
An der schönen, blauen Donau, Waltzer, Op. 314	Johann Strauss Jr.
Radetzky March, Op. 228	Johann Strauss Sr.

Program subject to change.

Program Notes

The following program notes are copyright Susan Halpern, 2011

Johann Strauss Sr. and his sons wrote much of the great dance music composed during the 19th century around Vienna. The elder Strauss was the son of a poor tavern keeper who apprenticed him to a bookbinder, but the lure of the music to which his father's customers had danced was great. With a few violin lessons and a smattering of music theory learned from a man who had been a friend of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, he worked his way up as a performer and composer of dance music to the directorship of the Imperial Court Balls in Vienna.

Father Strauss tried to steer his sons into business careers, but they were irresistibly, inevitably drawn to music. Johann Jr., the eldest, wrote a waltz when he was only 6, yet he was first sent out to work as a bank clerk, although his mother surreptitiously allowed him to take violin lessons. When he was 19, he organized his own orchestra and made his debut in the suburbs of the city. He went on to write some 500 pieces of dance music and more than a dozen operas and operettas. Of all the family, he possessed the highest gifts, and he was greatly admired by other composers of his time. When his daughter asked Brahms for an autograph, the composer wrote out the famous *Blue Danube* tune in her album, and underneath the music, "Unfortunately not by Johannes Brahms."

Johann Jr. began his waltzes with rhythmic vitality and short melodic themes much like those his father wrote, but after 1860 his work changed, and he gave the traditional waltz format new life and sophistication, more accurately reflecting his own world: the pleasure-loving 19th century imperial Vienna. In his work, he fused the rhythmic drive of his father's music but changed the rhythmic emphasis from that of the individual beat to that of the larger unit of the measure, and infused his music with the lyricism of the work of Joseph Lanner (1801-1843).

The waltz is a popular social dance in triple time that evolved from an Austrian peasant dance, the *ländler*, around 1800. The Strauss waltz in its mature form is a kind of suite consisting of a set of waltzes preceded by an introduction and followed by a coda. These opening and closing sections may be based on the waltz tunes themselves or on related musical material, and they are often beautifully though briefly developed in the classical symphonic manner.

Strauss's hundreds of waltzes earned him the sobriquet "the Waltz King," and he might almost as well have been called "the Polka King" too for he wrote about 150 of these lively dances. The polka seems to have originated with Bohemian village musicians around 1800 and arrived in Austria via Czechoslovakia. Its name may derive from the Czech *pulka* (half) or *polska*, the Czech word for a Polish girl. The dance was exported to Vienna in 1839 by a Bohemian regiment band and then spread rapidly through Europe and even to the United States. Musicians in diverse locations created variants of the dance, and in the 1850s in Vienna, the elegant polka française, the polka quadrille, the polka-mazurka and the lively *polka-schnell* (fast polka) developed. Strauss orchestrated them with clever effects. In 2/4 meter, the polka generally has a ternary (ABA) form and sometimes includes an introduction and a coda.

As he found more time for composition, Johann Strauss began to conceive his works more in terms of absolute music, less in terms of the dancers. The waltz became transformed. No longer strictly dance music, it became the apotheosis of the Viennese Waltz in concert form. The introductions and the codas of the waltzes grew longer and longer and developed in complexity and in imagination.

Overture to the Operetta, Die Fledermaus, Op. 362 . . . Johann Strauss Jr.

(Born October 25, 1825, in Vienna; died there June 3, 1899)

Johann Jr.'s operatic masterpiece *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat) of 1874 features spouses and lovers, masters and servants, nobility and workers, jailers and prisoners, all of whom dance the polka till dawn. In this delightful comedy of manners, Strauss combined a clever, well-written libretto, based on a French comedy by the librettists of *Carmen*, with his sparkling music.

Die Fledermaus was the victim of circumstances, however. The first performance took place on April 5, 1874, less than a year after a financial panic in Austria, and the impoverished Viennese public was hardly in the mood to witness the antics of a carefree aristocracy that danced till dawn at court balls and drank freely of champagne; consequently, what has since proved to be Strauss's finest and most popular operatic work was actually withdrawn after only 16 performances. The Overture to *Die Fledermaus* is a potpourri of the principal melodies found in the operetta, but it is not just a string of tunes, but rather a carefully worked out composition, which Strauss skillfully assembled in a sort of free sonata form.

Carnevals-Botschafter Walzer, Op. 270. . . Johann Strauss Jr.

Carnevals-Botschafter Walzer ("Carnival's Ambassador" Waltz) is an attractive waltz that Strauss composed relatively early in his career, yet it is one of his larger, lengthier waltzes. Johann's first wife, the mezzo-soprano Jetty Treffz (1818-78), began her married life in caring for her husband who was suffering the unrelenting demands of conducting engagements that were straining his mental and physical health. Jetty planned for a short Venetian honeymoon in autumn 1862 to give her husband a complete rest. During the honeymoon, his happiness inspired him to write the *Carnevals-Botschafter*. Dedicated to the 1863 carnival festivities, the waltz was probably premiered at the 50th anniversary celebration of Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde (Society of the Friends of Music) on November 11, 1862. It begins with a short fanfare-like introduction, which is followed by a catchy, light waltz melody. The music is playful and carefree, and it hints at festivity.

Annen Polka, Op. 117 . . . Johann Strauss Jr.

Strauss composed the *Annen Polka* in 1852; it premiered in the Prater, a large Viennese park, on the occasion of the public celebration of the Festival of St. Anne on July 26, 1852, hence the reason for its name. Strauss Sr. also wrote a polka for the same festival 10 years earlier. Both works are well known.

Composed relatively early in Strauss' career, the *Annen Polka* does not include any of the innovations of his later polkas. It is what the Viennese called a "Polka Francais," a more refined dance than the German polka. *Annen Polka* has a moderate polka tempo, and all four of its melodies have distinct eight-measure halves repeated in their entirety. Initially the strings dominate, but later, the woodwinds are more prominent. When the initial

melody returns, it stops abruptly two measures before its end, and the flute then introduces a new melody to close the piece.

“Gruss dich Gott, du liebes Nesterl,” Graffin Zeldan’s aria from operetta *Wiener Blut* . . . Johann Strauss Jr.

Wiener Blut is set in Vienna in 1814-1815, during the Congress of Vienna, a conference that aimed to settle Europe’s crisis after the upheavals of the Napoleonic Wars. It follows a traditional operetta plot full of mistaken identities. At the time, no operetta had taken Vienna as its subject; here most of the characters are Viennese and associated with various Viennese landmarks and institutions. The waltz, *Wiener Blut*, describes what it is like to have Viennese blood. *Wiener Blut* was intended as “a celebration of the 74th birthday of the eternal master Johann Strauss,” and it premiered on October 26, 1899, the day after his 74th birthday, which was unfortunately four months after his death.

The idea behind the operetta was for a stage work that made use of melodies from Strauss’s older and less well-known works. Josef Zeldan’s attempts to keep his relationships in balance results in confusion and chaos because of the involvement of the aged but amorous Prime Minister. After much intrigue, many misunderstandings and numerous false identities, Zeldan realizes that his heart belongs to Gabriele, who generously forgives him for his numerous amatory indiscretions. Graffin Zeldan’s aria, “Gruss dich Gott, du liebes Nesterl,” is one of the most distinctive arias of the operetta.

***Künstler-Leben Waltz*, Op. 316. . . Johann Strauss Jr.**

Künstler-Leben (“Artist’s Life”) was composed for the Hesperus Ball during the carnival season of 1867. The Hesperus Association, known as the Artist’s Association, was very influential in Vienna. Premiered just after the *Blue Danube* waltzes, these waltzes were quickly dubbed new “twins” of the *Blue Danube*. In them Strauss expands the waltz form, using five waltzes and creating links between sections and journeying to harmonies only distantly related to the home key.

Künstler-Leben begins with an inspired lengthy, slow introduction of two parts, the first of which is based on melodies from the first and fourth waltzes, while the second is in a faster waltz tempo. The first waltz pair features a lively melody and has a traditional format. The second and third waltzes are somewhat melancholy in comparison but are followed by two more light-hearted waltzes before the triumphant coda, which is almost as long as the five preceding waltzes, and possibly Strauss’s longest. It revisits all five of the waltzes, especially the first, which receives developmental treatment just before the close of the piece.

***Banditen Galop, Polka Schnell*, Op. 378 . . . Johann Strauss, Jr.**

Banditen-Galopp (“Bandits Galop”) is a polka arranged from melodies in the comic operetta *Prinz Methusalem*, which premiered January 3, 1877 in the Carl-Theater Vienna. The title derives from the appearance of a bandit gang intent on overthrowing the reigning Prince. The principal melody appears in the Act 3 duet with chorus, “In der stille ganz verstohl’n werden wir Schätze hol’n.” The Act 1 Finale provides the source of the *Galop*’s remaining themes.

“Liebe, Du Himmel auf Erden,” Maria Anna Eliza aria from operette, “Paganini” . . .

Franz Lehár

(Born April 30, 1870, in Komorn, Hungary; died October 24, 1948, in Bad Ischl)

Lehár was generally considered the most significant operetta composer of the first half of the 20th century. Lehár studied with his father, a military bandmaster, and from 1882 to 1888, was a pupil at the Prague Conservatory, where he studied violin and music theory. On the advice of Dvorak, Lehár concentrated on composition. After graduation, he played violin in the opera orchestra at Elberfeld. Later, he joined his father’s band in Vienna, as assistant bandmaster. In Vienna, he also had jobs conducting, and in 1902, became the conductor at the Theater-an-der-Wien. His operas were produced there and he lived there, devoting his time to composition.

Most famous for his operettas, the most successful of which is *The Merry Widow* (*Die lustige Witwe*), Lehár was sent the libretto for *Paganini*, then entitled *Hexenmeister* (“Wizard”), anonymously by Paul Knepler, a Viennese publisher. He immediately set to work before he had even drawn up a contract with the author.

Lehár tailored the part of Paganini, the famous 19th century virtuoso violinist, for the voice of Richard Tauber, the famous Austrian tenor who had become the composer’s standard interpreter. Lehár’s 28th work for the stage, *Paganini* has vocal writing influenced by Puccini. *Paganini* is one of many so-called “biographical operettas” that were then popular. In this anecdotal, romanticized account, Lehár’s central figure presents the stereotype of the Romantic artist who has a noble mission: he must live only for his art. As in many stylized artist biographies of the time, Paganini rejects a life of comfort as a defiantly independent creative soul, but not without contending with his love for women. This selection, “Liebe, Du Himmel auf Erden” (“Love, Heaven on Earth”), presents an alternative.

Eljen a Magyar Polka, Op. 332 . . . Johann Strauss Jr.

A French dictionary of dance from 1847 describes the polka as having a pulse rate of 104 beats per minute with an emphasis on the second beat of the measure. Strauss, as Hofballmusikdirektor at the Imperial Court in Vienna, needed to compose works suitable for Court balls. *Eljen a Magyar* (“Hurrah for Hungary”), written in 1869, is a typical example, a *polka-schnell*, a speedy, simple dance in 2/4 meter, in ternary (ABA) form.

What is unusual about *Eljen a Magyar* is that the B section has only one theme, not the more usual two or three, and is of an atypical length. The first section contains three distinct melodies, all with a Viennese flavor, which at that time would have been considered Hungarian, displaying chromatic inflections and dotted rhythmic figures.

Perpetuum Mobile, Op. 257 . . . Johann Strauss Jr.

In Johann Strauss’s time, perpetual motion was a subject of scientific study. Its musical representation here consists of a set of melodies played over a constantly repeated, unvarying accompaniment in such a way that the melodies can be repeated again and again, with no apparent necessary ending.

Perpetuum Mobile (“Perpetual Motion”) composed in 1861, is subtitled “A Musical Joke.” The subject is represented by a tricky set of tunes played with an unvaried, constantly repeated accompaniment that allows the melodies to be brought back again

and again until the surprise ending to the “musical joke.” Most of the themes are intentionally silly.

Perpetuum Mobile begins with low brass and strings that repeat an incessant rhythm before the melody begins. Nearly every instrument of the orchestra plays a solo during the seemingly endless progression of melodies. Strauss mixes instruments that have the most disparate ranges, for example, pairing the bassoon and the flute. High glockenspiel notes are paired with the string basses.

Polka, Ohne Sorgen, Op. 271 . . . Josef Strauss

This carefree, speedy selection is a *polka-schnell*, or fast polka, and its title, *Ohne Sorgen*, translates as “Without worry.” Josef Strauss was more introverted than his well-known siblings, but he could write music with the same lively spirit as this polka makes clear. It has an effervescent spirit and an infectious charm, a playful manner and a lightness of expression that give the feeling of festivity. The center of this short polka is clearly celebratory in feel.

Kaiser-Waltzer, Op. 437 . . . Johann Strauss Jr.

Johann Strauss Jr. composed the *Kaiser-Waltzer* (“Emperor Waltz”) in 1888-1889. This waltz, in which clearly Strauss was thinking as much of the concert hall as the dance hall, begins with a little Austrian military march, a patriotic gesture to the Kaiser Franz Joseph. Then a solo cello introduces the first of a long series of glorious waltz melodies. A trumpet fanfare introduces the third waltz and one of Strauss’s lilting, sustained melodies, while the brass play an angular melody for the second part of this waltz. The fourth waltz begins with a rising, syncopated line divided between the strings and winds. The coda revisits the introduction and brings back the solo cello, playing the melody of the first half of the first waltz while a reminder of the second part of the same waltz can be detected in the flute.

Also known as the *Kaiser-Walzer*, it was written to observe the 40th year of the reign of Emperor Franz Joseph. Many musicians think this an even finer work than the more famous *Blue Danube* waltz. The music of the coda and the arrangement and patterns of repetition of the waltzes seem conceived specifically to satisfy the listener and not the dancer.

Tritsch-Tratsch Polka, Op. 214. . . Johann Strauss Jr.

It is not easy to find an English equivalent of this 1858 polka’s German title, *Tritsch-Tratsch Polka*. Two contenders for the most likely are “Trictrac,” the gambling game that takes its name from the sound of the dice rolling across the hard-surfaced table on which it is played, and “Chitchat,” referring to casual conversation. It is one of Strauss’s most well-known polkas.

Elena’s Bolero, “Mercé, dilette amiche”

from opera *I vespri siciliani*. . . Giuseppe Verdi

(Born October 10, 1813, in Le Roncole; died January 27, 1901, in Milan)

Verdi, an Italian Romantic composer, mainly of opera, was one of the most influential composers of the 19th century. His works are frequently performed internationally and, transcending the boundaries of the genre, some of his themes have long since taken root in popular culture. Although his work was sometimes criticized for using a generally

diatonic rather than a chromatic musical idiom and having a tendency toward melodrama, Verdi's masterworks dominate the standard repertoire a century and a half after their composition.

I vespri siciliani is an opera in five acts based on a historical event, the Sicilian Vespers of 1282, using material drawn from the medieval Sicilian tract, *Lu rebellamentu di Sichilia*. In February 1852, Verdi signed a contract to provide Paris with a grand opera for the 1855 Universal Exhibition. *Les vèpres siciliennes*, with libretto by Eugène Scribe and Charles Duveyrier, was first performed at the Académie Impériale de Musique in Paris on June 13, 1855, to critical acclaim. The first Italian version, translated by Eugenio Caimi, was distorted by the requirements of the Italian censors. "Mercé, dilette amiche" ("Thank you young friends") from Act V is sung by the heroine, La Duchessa Elena, Duke Frederick of Austria's sister. After being married to Henri, Elena expresses her great joy in a dance-like fashion, giving thanks to all, in a form that is much like a Spanish bolero, a soaring celebration of friendship lined with vocal acrobatics.

***Pizzicato-Polka*, Op. 234. . . Johann Strauss Jr. with Josef Strauss**

Pizzicato-Polka is a collaborative composition by the two older Strauss brothers, Johann Jr. and Josef, written in 1869 for one of several visits to Russia. Although it is not certain how they shared the composition of the work, it is conjectured that Johann probably wrote the introduction and ending, and Josef composed the main section. Its distinguishing characteristic is that the string instruments of the orchestra are all played in *pizzicato*, a technique of plucking the strings with the fingers rather than using the bow to produce the sound. Scored for strings and glockenspiel, the polka was published in Vienna in 1870 and became very popular, especially in Italy, where Strauss included it on the program of every one of his tours. *Pizzicato Polka* has four melodies and is structured in ternary form.

***Frühlingsstimmen Waltzer*, Op. 410 . . . Johann Strauss Jr.**

Strauss originally wrote *Frühlingsstimmen* ("Voices of Spring") waltz in 1882 for the Bianca Bianchi, a coloratura soprano, who was to sing it at a grand matinée charity performance at the Theater an der Wien in aid of the "Emperor Franz Josef and Empress Elisabeth Foundation for Indigent Austro-Hungarian Subjects in Leipzig." It was not successful when it was premiered, but later, in 1886, when Strauss toured in Russia, it pleased audiences. Strauss later made a piano arrangement that contributed to the spread of its popularity. In *Frühlingsstimmen* Strauss does not follow ballroom tradition, writing instead a concert piece with only three, not five, waltz pairs of untraditional lengths. In the first half of the third waltz, Strauss uses an experimental, developmental form. This waltz glorifies spring and has remained one of the classical repertoire's most famous waltzes. In the second waltz section, the joys of spring are reinforced with the flute sounding like a birdsong. The third section has been said to suggest spring showers.

"Meine Lippen, sie küssen so heiss," Giuditta's aria from opera *Giuditta*. . . Franz Lehár

Giuditta is a musical comedy, (*musikalische Komödie*) with a libretto by Paul Knepler and Fritz Löhner, which premiered at the Vienna State Opera on January 20, 1934. It was Lehár's last and most ambitious work. The best known song in the work is the soprano aria sung by Giuditta, "Meine Lippen, sie küssen so heiß" ("My lips, they kiss so hotly"). It is an attractive, light selection, yet one quite effective within the context of the story.

In the plot, the appealing Giuditta abandons her husband Manuele and runs off with Octavio, an army officer, to North Africa. Military obligations intervene and Octavio leaves Giuditta behind. She becomes a successful nightclub dancer, only to be discovered by Octavio, after he deserts his unit with his self-esteem destroyed.

Plappermaulchen! Polka Schnell, Op. 245 . . . Josef Strauss

The colorful *Plappermaulchen!* is a polka, and its title means “Chatterbox.” It is a busy and effervescent work, and humorous with much use of percussion and other colorful effects. The work has a short introduction then the main theme expresses manic joy. The middle section is relatively subdued before the music becomes more enlivened again. The mischievous main theme returns, the music becomes gentle and returns to its lively nature at the end.

Unter Donner und Blitz, Polka Schnell, Op. 324 . . . Johann Strauss Jr.

Strauss published *Unter Donner und Blitz* (“Thunder and Lightning”) in 1868. It evokes the sound of thunder and lightning with constant timpani rolls and cymbal crashes. Written in the traditional ternary form, it has a spirited coda contributing to a thunderous close. With this work, Strauss amuses as much as creates a successful piece of music.

Leichtes Blut, Op. 319 . . . Johann Strauss Jr.

Leichtes Blut (literally, “Light Blood,” but usually translated as “easy-going, carefree, spirited”) is a fast polka that Strauss composed in 1867. This polka debuted at the Strauss brothers’ annual Revue Concert where they presented all the new dances they had composed for the yearly Vienna Carnival. It is a very quick polka, lively and full of youthful energy, and its trio is almost as fast as the main body of the polka.

An der schönen, blauen Donau, Waltzer, Op. 314. . . Johann Strauss Jr.

An der schönen, blauen Donau (“By the beautiful, blue Danube”), written in 1867, remains probably the most famous of all of the hundreds of pieces of dance music that Johann Strauss Jr. composed. Many music critics think that the greatest single composition of all the Strauss family is this one.

In its original version, for male chorus and orchestra, this waltz was not a success, but when the purely orchestral version made its way to Paris and London, it became a hit that quickly spread. The climax of its early history came in 1872, when for a fee of \$100,000 plus expenses, Strauss traveled to Boston to conduct it on a festival program of his works. This festival itself was one for the *Guinness Book of World Records*: 20,000 musicians performed with 100 conductors for an audience of more than 100,000 people! This memorable waltz became the symbol of imperial Vienna.

Typical of the Strauss waltzes in mature form, it exists as a kind of suite consisting of an introduction, a set of waltzes and a closing coda. The opening and closing sections may be based on the waltz tunes themselves or on related musical material, and are often beautifully though briefly developed in the classical symphonic manner. The waltz melody takes its title from a poem by Franz von Gernerth. Von Gernerth’s title is misleading or, more charitably, it is an instance of poetic license, because in reality the Danube River was and continues to be a pale green or gray-brown color, never blue.

Radetzky March, Op. 228 . . . Johann Strauss Sr.

(Born March 14, 1804, in Vienna; died September 25, 1849)

During the 17 years prior to his death, the elder Johann Strauss was the bandmaster for the First Citizen's Regiment of Vienna. The *Radetzky March* celebrates the victory of the Austrian army, led by Field Marshal Count Josef Radetzky de Radetz, over the so-called Kingdom of Sardinia, which then included large parts of northern Italy. It was dedicated to Imperial Royal Army Field Marshall Lieutenant Peter Zanini, the Military Advisor to the Court. The first performance was conducted on August 31, 1848.

Unfortunately the march involved the composer in political controversies that he did not wish to enter. He was totally disaffected by politics, but when Vienna became Republican – and because Radetzky belonged to the Old Order of the Imperial Hapsburgs – in the Revolution of 1848 the march became identified with the forces of political reaction. It became the symbol of the military might of the old Hapsburg monarchy.

Opole, Philharmonic of Poland

Boguslaw Dawidow, Music Director and Conductor

Orchestra Biography

The history of *Opole, Philharmonic of Poland* can be traced back to the years immediately following World War II. One of Poland's leading orchestras, *Opole*, was founded in 1947 and became the resident Orchestra of Opole. In 1952, a major Performing Arts Center was built in the city of Opole as permanent home to the philharmonic. In June of 1969, the Orchestra was awarded by the Ministry of Culture of Poland the State Award for Arts Excellence in honor of the great Polish composer Józef Elsner.

The philharmonic has performed with most outstanding piano, violin and vocal soloists in the world. Since 1960, the Orchestra has participated regularly in prestigious Polish cultural events such as the Festival of Contemporary Music in Wrocław, the Chopin Festival in Duszyniki, the Moniuszko Festival in Kudowa-Zdrój, Poznan Musical Spring, and the International Festival of Oratorio and Cantata Music in Wrocław. Since 1973, *Opole* has annually appeared as resident Orchestra of the Opole Days of Oratorio Music Festival. *Opole* has toured extensively abroad to countries as far reaching as Spain, France, Holland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, South America, Hungary, Japan and, most recently, to Italy and Germany where the Philharmonic performed music of contemporary Polish composers to great critical and popular acclaim.

In September 1999 Boguslaw Dawidow was appointed Music Director and Principal Conductor of the orchestra. Under Maestro Dawidow's leadership, *Opole* has hosted a continually growing number of world-famous musicians, winners of international piano, violin and conducting competitions.

Opole, Philharmonic of Poland was the only Polish orchestra invited to participate in the Gala Concert in Rome to mark the 80th birthday of Pope John Paul II in May 2000. This is the first transcontinental tour of the United States for *Opole, Philharmonic of Poland*.

Boguslaw Dawidow

Music Director and Conductor
Opole, Philharmonic of Poland

Internationally renowned for his musical knowledge, immense enthusiasm, as well as being highly valued for his extraordinary stage presence, Maestro Boguslaw Dawidow has served as Music Director of the *Opole, Philharmonic of Poland* since his appointment by the Ministry of Culture of the government of Poland in September 1999. Maestro Dawidow has been highly involved in forming the artistic shape and raising the international stature of *Opole, Philharmonic of Poland* in his capacities as both Music Director and General Director of the Philharmonic.

Born in Sopot, Poland, Maestro Dawidow studied conducting under Bohdan Wodiczko and Krzysztof Missona, and later continued his conducting studies and musical education in Vienna and Italy. The most significant influence on Maestro Dawidow's musical personality came from legendary composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein. Over the years of his brilliant musical career, Maestro Dawidow has conducted leading orchestras all over the world, including ensembles from France, Austria, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Russia, the United Kingdom, Spain, Holland, South America, Hungary, China and Japan. Maestro Dawidow has made numerous audio recordings with *Opole, Philharmonic of Poland*, including recordings of the works of Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Szymanowski and Elser that have been met with both great critical and commercial acclaim.

Between the years of 1991 and 1995, Maestro Dawidow was a resident conductor of the Polish Chamber Orchestra, and from 1994 until 2002 served as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Russian National Academic Symphony Orchestra, which is one of Russia's oldest orchestras, established in 1879. Thanks to his exceptional musical talents and wide range of musical experience and management, in 2002 the American Biographical Institute in New York bestowed Maestro Dawidow with the title "Man of the Year" in honor of his musical accomplishments on both sides of the Atlantic and extending to the Far East and African continent.

Izabela Matuła

Soprano

Izabela Matuła has been awarded first prize at several prestigious competitions, including the "Oper Oder-Spree" International Opera Course at Beeskow, Germany (2005); the Yamaha Scholarship Award (2007); the Inter-University Vocal Competition (Katowice Academy of Music, 2007); and the International Vocal Competition at the Oper Schloss Laubach (2009). She was a prize-winner at the Ada Sari International Vocal Artistry Competition in Nowy Sącz (2009) and the Wilhelm Stenhammar International Music Competition (2010), and was the sole performer chosen to represent Poland in the recent BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition.

Ms. Matula has participated in a range of festivals including the Silesia 17th International Festival for Young Laureates of Music Competitions (Katowice 2007), and the first International Festival of Academic Orchestras, where she performed Richard Wagner's "Wesendonk Lieder" under the baton of Paweł Przytocki (Katowice 2008).

Ms. Matula is known for performances of the oratory repertoire. She performed W. A. Mozart's "Coronation Mass" under Wojciech Czepiel in Kraków Philharmonic Hall (2005) and under Lex Wiersm (Kraków 2006); participated in the world premiere of Juliusz Łuciuk's "St Rafał Kalinowski" Oratorio together with Capella Cracoviensis (Kraków 2007); and has repeatedly performed works composed and conducted by Krzysztof Penderecki throughout Poland.

Ms. Matuła's operatic repertoire includes the roles of Dido in H. Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*; the Countess in W.A. Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*; Margarita in Gounod's *Faust*; and Micaela in Bizet's *Carmen*. In 2010 she performed as a soloist in Krzysztof Penderecki's Symphony No. 8, in Mahler's Symphony No. 2 and in Mikołaj Górecki's Symphony No. 2 in Krakow during the celebrations of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald.

Ms. Matuła was featured as Liu in Puccini's *Turandot* in the opening performance of the 2010-2011 season with the National Theater in Saarbruecken. She studied music theory and voice with Semen Shkurhan at the Kraków Academy of Music, while participating in master classes and workshops with Elżbieta Towarnicka, Ryszard Karczykowski, Urszula Trawińska-Moroz and Charlotte Lehmann. Ms. Matuła is currently a student of Neil Semer.