

Online concert celebrates centennial of St. John Paul II's birth

A concert honouring the centennial of St. John Paul II's birth is now available online.

The concert, featuring some of the United States and Poland's top classical music artists, was held June 21. St. John Paul's birth was May 28.

The concert features introductory remarks from Polish Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki of Poznan, president of Poland's bishops' conference, and Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York. The performances can be seen at <https://jp2concert.com>. The total running time is two hours and 47 minutes.

The musical program begins with pianist Szymon Nehring, in a church courtyard, playing a solo piano rendition of "Etude in C# Minor, No. 25, Op. 9," written by one of Poland's musical treasures, Fredric Chopin.

The program, a combination of sacred and classical music, includes Metropolitan Opera soloist Angel Joy Blue's rendition of Franz Schubert's "Ave Maria"; two other Metropolitan Opera soloists, MaryAnn McCormick and Lisette Oropesa performing Mozart's "Panis Angelicus" and "Laudate Dominum"; Metropolitan Opera featured performer Latonia Moore singing the "Ave Maria" from Verdi's opera "Otello"; and Brandie Sutton's performance of the "Lamb of God" to the accompaniment of David Sneed, who has performed with such artists as Aretha Franklin, Wynton Marsalis, Jessye Norman, Stevie Wonder and Diana Ross.

In the joint Polish-American program, performers on the Polish side include Veriko Tchumburidze, first prize winner of the last International H. Wieniawski Violin Competition, Richard Lin, gold medalist of the 10th International Violin Competition of Indianapolis, and Adam Palma on guitar performing Chopin's "Polonaise in A Major"; Polish National Opera soloist Edyta Piasecka singing "Nai" by Stanislaw Moniuszko; another soloist, Rafal Bartminski, singing "Pray for My Soul" from Jan Maklakiewicz's "Polish Mass"; and soloist Aleksandra Olczyk's rendition of "Pie Jesu."

The concert also features the world premiere of the arias from the opera "Hiob" by Krzesimir Debski, which was based on a play by Karol Wojtyła, who later became Pope John Paul.

The event was held under the patronage of the John Paul II Foundation in Rome, the Institute of the Heritage of National Thought, the Center for Thought of John Paul II in Warsaw, the Polish Community Association, the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York and the Jozef Pilsudski Institute of America.

Its chief sponsor was the Culture and Art Foundation, known by its Polish acronym FKIS, which promotes Polish culture and art.

Its mission "creates a positive image of Poland, arouses interest of the international community in Poland's history, culture and art," according to the organization's website.

"It aims to increase the visibility of Polish culture abroad, through activities to strengthen the Polish community's ties with their homeland, organizing activities aimed at maintaining and promoting national traditions, increasing national, civic and cultural awareness, education through art, propagating patriotic values, awakening interest in Polish history, teaching respect for the homeland and its heroes, shaping the attitudes of modern patriotism," it added.