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## Music News

By: *Wanda Wilk*

October 1-5 was the "Górecki Autumn" Festival at USC. I was the- happiest person in the world! The University of: Southern California was honoring my husband and me and the great Polish composer Henryk Mikołaj Górecki was our house guest.

For months it was touch and go i with the elusive, reclusive composer. He finally arrived in New York from Poland with a cold. How could he travel all the way to the west coast feeling so miserable? I told him the California sunshine would heal him. I also promised to show him our Zakopane and Morskie Oko (Lake Arrowhead to those who don't know). His New Jersey hosts, Jane Kedron of the Polish Institute of Arts and - Sciences of: America and her husband, promised to put him on the plane no matter what.

I picked up HMG and his friend Andrzej Bachleda-Cures (the famous baritone voice heard on the old Polish recordings of Szymanowski's ballet, i. Harnasie) at LAX at noon. Instead of driving them to my home in the San Fernando Valley all the way on the freeways, I took a scenic route through Beverly Glen Canyon. As we descended into the valley, they could see the row of houses built on stilts set up against more mountains on the other side. We remarked on the California earthquakes at the time. I told them that in the fifty years that I have lived here in this wonderland, I only felt four of them. Most of them I read about in the newspapers.

They seemed impressed with the California landscape: I could understand that, for HMG is a man who loves mountains, especially Zakopane where his family friend Bachleda lives and where he is presently building a home overlooking Zakopane to which he will move from Katowice. Like Szymanowski, whom he revered; he loves the "górale" and the highlander region. He does not like to travel (period)! There is a true story about HMG being scheduled to fly from England with his English publisher after attending a festival of his music. The "Warsaw Autum" International Contemporary Music Festival was in progress in Warsaw at the time and when it was time to depart for the airport HMG was nowhere to be found! He had taken the train back to Warsaw.

So, I was surprised to learn that this, "non-traveler" had been to Mexico City, Brazil! Canada, the U.S. (NY, Chicago, Washington, DC), Israel and the Far East. He may be going to Australia next. Of course, he travels in Europe a lot, especially to Germany, Holland, Denmark, etc... He speaks fluent French and German and understands a little English. The language barrier did not matter during this trip, since he had an excellent translator who quickly repeated an entire paragraph without missing a point! Yes, Maria Anna Harley was good!

The Dean of the USC School of Music, a frequent flyer to Poland, thought up the name "Górecki Autumn": for the festival, which included three concerts, one lecture, one seminar, meeting with students during a forum, attending rehearsals of his music and rehearsing once with the USC Symphony orchestra for the performance of his famous Third, Symphony on October 3rd.

Of utmost importance was the presence of Adrian Thomas, author of the first book on HMG in English, who presented a lecture on Górecki's music on Thursday night. The British musicologist and professor has known the composer for almost twenty-five years. He met him when he went to Poland on an educational exchange program to study composition with Bogusław Schaeffer in Krakow. Since then, he has learned to speak Polish and has been the recognized authority on HMG, having written many articles on the composer and his music, and broadcast programs of his music when he was Head of Radio 2 on BBC.

A music history symposium, "The Górecki Phenomenon," took place on Sunday from 11:00 - 4:00 at USC. Dr. Maria Anna Harley, director of the Polish Music Reference Center (PMRC) was the chair and organizer. Present were Dr. Adrian Thomas of U. of Cardiff, Wales; Dr. Luke Howard from Moorhead State U. in Minnesota, David Kopplin, PH.D. candidate in composition at UCLA and publications coordinator for the LA Philharmonic, Dr. James Harley, composer, and Mark Swed, chief music critic of-the-LA Times.

The first concert of the festival was organized by Dr. James Harley, composer and musicologist. It took place on a hot Wednesday night, Oct '1, in Hancock Auditorium (with no air conditioning). The *Wanda Wilk about Górecki to page 7*



*Justyna Ball*

<http://justyna-polishdelight.blogspot.com>

## Thrills on Wheels

On Monday I called National Grid, my gas and now also my electricity provider, to make an appointment for inspection. As I was told again and again, in letters, that we did not allow them access to check our furnace. That is according to them. As I, nor my husband don't recall preventing anyone from checking it... I dialed the 800 number and received an automatic message telling me to press almost every key on my dial phone: 1 to report a leak, 2 if I'm a business customer, 3 to pay bills, 4 for checking the status of my account, 5 for whatever...and so on... until they ran out of numbers. I pressed the number for "other" and it demanded my account number which I pressed but kept getting negative responses, I tried again, with the same result so I pressed yet another number "to stay online for assistance".

That one came up with a new message that said "our next available representative will be with you in 10 minutes". What the heck! I thought, and almost hung up, but since I already wasted at least 5 minutes of my precious time I decided to wait and nicely tell "the next available representative" what I think of their services. Truly I couldn't go back, because then you would have to dial ALL THOSE NUMBERS AGAIN so I stayed on the line.

At this point I expected some elevator music filling my eardrums... Instead I was bombarded with yet another message, "Our customer, we want you to know that this company gives so much \$\$\$ to charities"... and it went on every 30 sec... again, and again... When it came back to me for the third time, I knew that I wouldn't even pretend to be nice to "the next available representative", and why should I?

Exactly 10 minutes later, the next available representative answered. It was a she who picked up the phone and heard me saying this "Listen, I have a suggestion. How about if your company stops giving to charities and just hires more people to answer the phone!" "Yes, I understand..."

"...Because I do not care how much they give, I wasted 15 minutes just listening to stupid messages!"

"I understand" she yelled back, so I continued... "Take a note to your bosses and let them know it!" "Sorry, we cannot take notes" she said. For a moment I had a strange feeling that I was talking to a machine. The night before I was watching the History Channel, a show about Ancient Aliens, how thousands of years ago extraterrestrials landed on earth and interacted with humans and how our and their DNA combined and created some avatars; they were larger than us, as biblical Goliaths, they were giants. So I visualized that woman from National Grid as being one of them... I gave her my account number which "did not show up on the computer", neither did my address.

So I kindly suggested, as being a concerned customer that they (the bosses) should buy her a new computer because ...I now live at this address for 24 years and they know it because they send me the letters which I have in front of me now!

"Yes, but the address still does not show up..." The robot could not handle the situation, so she put her avatar supervisor on the phone, who tried the same, and when I asked him (I think he should be asking me that) to double check my address, the address they had was wrong.

Not that I'm going to surprise anyone by repeating the same old passage, that the inspection will take place between 9am-6pm, meaning they expect me to sit around an entire day waiting for someone to show up and finish in less than 10 minutes... "What makes you think that your time is more valuable than mine?" Veteran's Day was coming up but they don't work that day, they don't work weekends either, "Maybe you should?" I yelled back.

Whoever runs it, extraterrestrials or not, that's what a monopoly does. And when Iraqi people "welcomed" the American army on their soil that brought them our customs and services, and National Grid with it, now the Iraqis can feel our pain.

So, in this Thanksgiving Season, ungrateful as I am, I've decided not to extend my many thanks to any available representatives from National Grid. Or any people from my insurance provider because they're as bad, they are from the same planet.

Instead I'd like to thank the Polish Health Minister for not bending over to the pharmaceutical lobbyists who forced every other European government to spend molto Euros on their swine flu vaccine. And here in the US, I was that close to buying a surgical mask and wearing it in public!

I'm thankful for the public smoking ban in Poland. Maybe that will make my mother think of quitting. Nothing else works. Like a genuine addict, I bet she had a cigarette on her way from breast cancer surgery. Well, she did not have lung cancer, did she? She lies about quitting, and she has people lying for her. I can hear her puffing over the phone. Who smokes, moi? And some of the pictures that she sends me that she takes with her cell phone, have a white cloud covering the image. I bought her a mountain bike thinking that you cannot ride and smoke at the same time. You think? I bet she attached to her helmet some crazy device so it does not interrupt her smoking routine. Now, at least I have her city police on my side chasing after my mother.

I'm thankful to Polish immigrants in Ireland for sending some 840 million Euros to Poland last year to boost the Polish economy. I'm not sure what role that played in the latest bank catastrophe. The Irish need a bail out now... Oh well, you can't have a good dance group like the "Riverdancers" and keep all that money. You've got to share...

The money flow from Ireland is actually one-fifth of all the money sent by all Polish immigrants around the world.

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## Calendar of Events

**Dec 5, Sun, 10:30 a.m., PNA Meeting.** Polish Parish in Los Angeles

**Dec 12, Sun, 1:30 pm, Polish American Congress Meeting** OLBM Rectory - Lower level - 3424 W. Adams Blvd. - For additional info: (626) 282-4686. - Visitors welcome to attend.

**Dec 18, Sat, 5 p.m., Traditional Christmas Dinner Celebration** at The Polish Club of Laguna Woods.

**Dec. 31, Fri Orange County - New Years Eve Party - SYLWESTER - from 7:00 PM till morning.** Pope John Paul II Polish Center - 3999 Rose Drive - Yorba Linda. Music by „PAX”. Tickets: \$60.00 per person includes a Bottle of Champagne per table, tasty Dinner, Appetizers and Desserts served to your table – food prepared by Teresa Turek Catering Information & Tickets: Danuta Dobrowolska 949 495-6622, Teresa Turek 949 235-3256, Maria Romańska 714 998-7597.

**Jan 2, 2011, Sun, - Polish American Congress Oplatek Luncheon and Awards Banquet.** Montbello Country Club's Quiet Canon Restaurant. Award recipients are Stan Czarnota, Frank DeBalogh, and Posthumous Award to Michal and Danuta Zawadzki.

*Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: zbykoopet@aol.com ★*