



*Crossing Borders to Promote
Polish Culture*

*American Council for Polish Culture
69th Annual Convention
August 9-12, 2017*

Toronto, Canada



*The American Council for Polish Culture
Marcella Kochańska Sembrich
Vocal Competition Award Concert*

Anna Wojcik, Soprano

Thursday, August 10, 2017

Consulate of the Republic of Poland

Toronto

Marcella Kochańska Sembrich

Polish Prima Donna on World's Stage

Marcella Sembrich was the stage name of Prakseda Marcelina Kochańska, born in partitioned Poland near Tarnopol in 1858. She came from a musically inclined family who struggled to make ends meet. Her father, a travelling music teacher, taught her how to play the violin and the piano. At 11, she started to study music at the Lviv Conservatory where she received piano lessons from Wilhelm Stengel – her future husband. She furthered her musical education in Vienna where she decided to work on her voice after being encouraged to do so by Franz Liszt.

She made her debut as an opera singer in Athens in 1877 as Elvira in *The Puritans* by Vincenzo Bellini. A year later she already had a contract with the Dresden Court Opera. She had a vocal range of 2.5 octaves and a flute-like timbre that gave her coloratura soprano a special frailty. To this magnificent voice she applied the sensibility of a violinist, making her singing voice absolutely unique. Her artistic qualities secured her a place among the most successful opera singers of the time. After Dresden she began to perform at London's Covent Garden Opera.

She performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York from 1894 until the end of her singing career in 1909. Afterwards she remained active as a musician and gave concerts all over the world. After her husband's death in 1917, she decided to leave the stage but even then, she did not retire and instead went on to teach other musicians until her death in 1935.

Despite being one of the most successful opera singers of all times, and mingling with monarchs, billionaires like Andrew Carnegie and great composers like Johannes Brahms and Gustav Mahler, she never denied her humble background. There are many accounts of her unfailing kindness to street musicians. The diva also made it her mission to promote Polish art as much as possible – her concerts almost always featured a piece by a Polish composer.

<http://culture.pl>



Anna Wojcik is a seventeen year old Polish-Canadian soprano born in Toronto. She is a student in Cawthra Park Secondary School's vocal program. Anna started taking vocal lessons at the age of nine with Kinga Mitrowska. Since then she has won numerous competitions in the GTA including the International Festival of Religious Song, the Festival of Polish Song, the Annual Carol Competition, the Young Talents Competition, the CNE Rising Star Competition, Singfest Competition, and the Talent Nation Rising Star Showcase. Anna has appeared as a soloist with orchestras including the Toronto Sinfonietta, the Celebrity Symphony Orchestra and the Camerata Chamber Orchestra. Her classical repertoire consists of arias like *Adele's Laughing Song* (Strauss), *Doll Song* (Offenbach), *Summertime* (Gershwin), *Glitter and Be Gay* (Bernstein) and other pieces in English, Polish, Italian, French, and German. Anna has performed in various gala concerts one of which was the "Touch of Love" concert series with choir and chamber orchestra directed by Krzysztof Jedrysik. They performed the concert in churches, basilicas and cathedrals in Brampton, Buffalo, Chicago, and Warsaw where her performance received standing ovations and moved audiences to tears. In 2015, Anna won first place in the American Protégé Competition and sang in Carnegie Hall, NY for the Winners Recital. She has been rewarded for her hard work by receiving the Emerging Music Artist MARTY Award in 2016. Anna loves being on stage and sharing her passion with the world. She continues to pursue her dreams of becoming a known singer.



Pianist, **Alex Wang**, is a grade 11 student in the Regional Arts Program at Cawthra Park Secondary School, where he serves as pianist for the Chamber Choir. Alex has played in various music festivals and has won numerous awards and scholarships. He is a regular first prize winner in the Peel Music and Kiwanis Music Festivals. In May 2015, he was featured in the Peel Music Festival Gala Concert. He has also participated in the Ontario Music Competition Provincial Finals, the Fourth Canadian Chopin Piano Competition, and numerous other concerts and musical events. In his recent performance with CAST Orchestra at the Rising Stars Gala Concert, Alex performed Rachmaninoff Piano Concert No. 2 and as a soloist *Alborada del Gracioso* from Maurice Ravel's *Miroirs* suite. Alex is currently studying with Dr. Elaine Hou. In the future he wishes to further his studies in piano performance at a post-secondary institution.

*Past winners of the ACPC
Marcella Kochańska Sembrich
Vocal Competition*

1954 Constance Kozenski	1995 Katherine Nowak
1971 Danuta Siarkowski	1996 Mary Heston
1973 Katherine Ciesinska	1997 Dr. Laura Kafka
1974 Aleksandra Orze Copich	1998 Deborah Frontczak
1975 Krystyna Korwin Kossakowska	1999 Rosemary Ostrowski
1976 Kristine Ciesinski	2000 <i>No competition</i>
1977 Danella Sikora	2001 Kinga Skretkiewicz Ferguson
1978 Elizabeth Szczygielska	2002 <i>Piano Recital by Adam Golka</i>
1979 Carolyn Ognenoff	2003 Aimee Petra
1980 <i>No competition</i>	2004 Jason Kaminski
1981 Diana Klima	2005 Mariatana Salerno
1982 Katherine Polit Appelt	2006 <i>Organ recital by Ewa Bak</i>
1983 Krystyna Kozinski Stolarz	2007 Justyna de Biaggio (Giermola)
1984 Ewa Nagorka	2008 <i>No competition. Vocal Recital by Justyna de Biaggio</i>
1985 Maria Teresa Kurzanska	2009 Jaqueline Noparstak
1986 Diana Sliwinska	2010 No competition
1987 Lori Ulman	2011 Julie-Anne Hamula
1988 Julietta Jedwabaska	2012 Andrzej Stec
1989 Rosemary Ostrowski	2013 Kate Walson
1990 Grazyna Piotrowska	2014 Alexandra Nowakowski
1991 Waleria Przelaskowska	2015 Katarzyna Sadej
1992 Jozef Surowiec	2016 Rachel Ackerman
1993 Erin Alisansk	2017 Anna Wojcik
1994 Jean Marie Perchalski	

Note: The ACPC Marcella Kochańska Sembrich Vocal Competition is not connected with the Kościuszko Foundation Marcella Sembrich International Voice Competition which is open to singers of any nationality.

**The American Council for Polish Culture
Marcella Kochańska Sembrich
Vocal Competition**

The ACPC Sembrich Award was established to support the career development of a young singer of Polish descent. The first award was given in 1954, but the tradition of an annual competition did not start until 1971. The previous year, a gift was presented to the American Council of Polish Cultural Clubs (as the ACPC was formerly known) by admirers of Mme Sembrich, to be used for an award to a talented vocalist, male or female. At the 1970 ACPC Convention in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, at Alliance College, the decision was made to present an annual Marcella Sembrich Vocal Award to a singer from the area in which the Convention was being held. This has changed with time and now the award recipients are selected from among candidates throughout the United States by the ACPC Music Committee. In addition, distinguished judges from the world of music are invited to participate in the selection process. The competition is open to singers of Polish descent who are US citizens. Because this year's ACPC Convention is held in Toronto, an exception was made to invite Polish Canadian singers to participate in the competition.

ACPC Music Committee

Jarosław Gołombiowski, Chairman
Alicia Dutka
Richard Larkin
Robert Senakowski

2017 Distinguished Judges

Edyta Kulczak
Urszula Sulkonska
Marek Drewnowski

For more information on the Marcella Sembrich Vocal Competition see:
http://www.polishcultureacpc.org/sembrich/Sembrich_2017.html