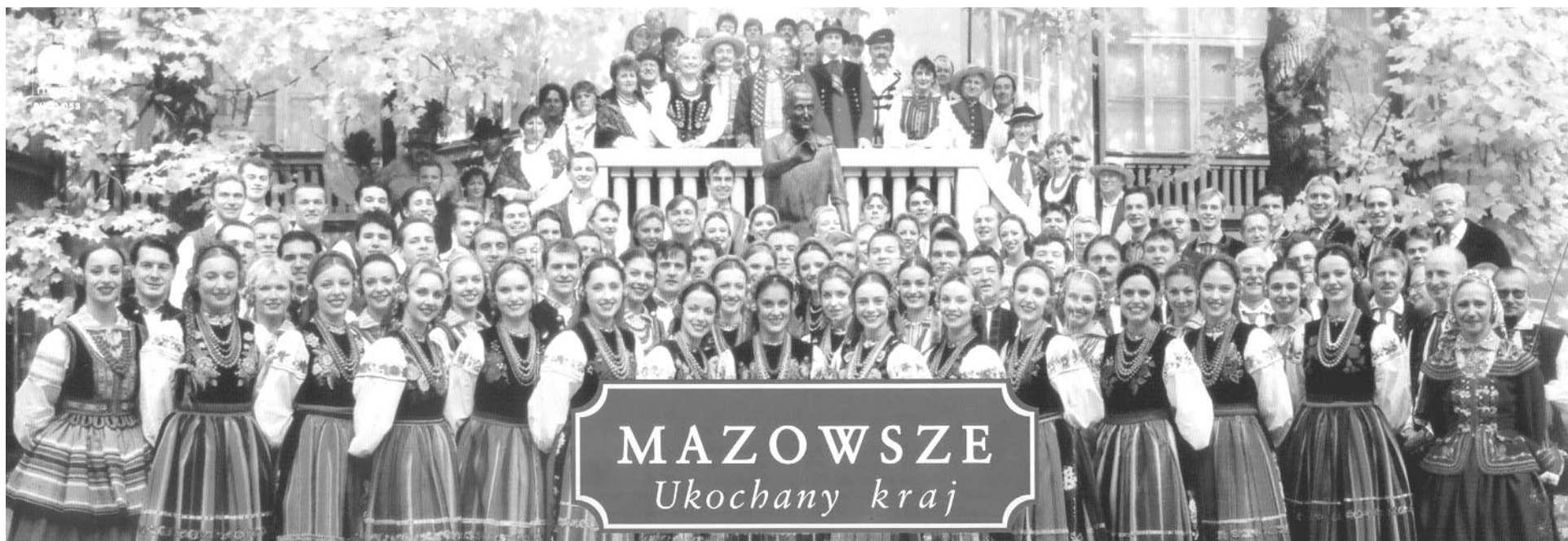


The Mazowsze Are Coming to Philadelphia



The internationally known Polish folk dance group, Mazowsze, will be performing on **Saturday, November 24, 2007**, at 3 p.m., at the Kimmel Center, 260 S. Broad Street in center city Philadelphia, PA.

Group-rate tickets will be available at the Polish American Cultural Center Museum. If interested, contact the center, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 215-922-1700. There is also information on the front page of the Museum's Internet site at: PolishAmericanCenter.com

Mira Ziminska Woman of the Century Presented by Kaya Mirecka Ploss



If it weren't for Mira, there would be no "Mazowsze," many who knew Mira Ziminska have claimed. You might never have heard of Mira Ziminska, but I am sure that you have heard recordings by, or maybe even seen in person, the well-known singing and dancing group from Poland called "Mazowsze."

Mira Ziminska was born in Plock on February 22, 1901, and died at the age of 96 in 1997. Mira packed a lot of life into all those years. She was only two when she first appeared on the stage. True, it was only in an amateur production in her native Plock, but that was her debut. At 17, she started her career on a real stage. Ziminska became one of Poland's greatest stars of the pre-World War II theater, cabaret and film.

The idea to create a Polish folk song and dance ensemble was born during the war. Mira and her future husband Professor Tadeusz Sygietynski were hiding during the severe bomb attack on Warsaw, huddled in a cellar beneath the ruins of the city. There amid the rubble and danger, the two made a promise to each other. When the war was over and they had survived it all, they would create the most beautiful singing and dancing ensemble, with a repertoire based on old Polish folklore and ancient Polish culture. They promised themselves to preserve all the beauty that the enemy wanted to destroy in Poland. They would create something that would never be forgotten.

Tadeusz Sygietynski and Mira Ziminska kept their promise. They knocked on many doors to get a place for rehearsals and to look for some funding. Finally an old palace outside Warsaw called Karolina was given to them. An enormous amount of research went into the preparations, to find the often forgotten old folk songs. Their search to find almost 100 young, attractive, talented girls and boys was even harder. Each one arrived at Karolina to go through a rigorous selection process. Youngsters from all over Poland came there to be tested for voice and dancing skills. Finally, after almost two years of strenuous rehearsals that lasted from early morning to late at night, they were ready to face the public.

The results were unbelievable. Thirty-nine regions of Poland were represented in songs, dances, and the most glorious costumes people had ever seen. It was like a beautifully painted picture of Poland in all its glory. The audiences went wild. Soon Mazowsze was performing not only in Poland but also in almost every capital of the world. Mazowsze became Poland's best ambassador and a showpiece of Polish culture and tradition.

Only seven years after the founding of Mazowsze, Professor Sygietynski died. Everybody thought that was the end of Mazowsze. An ensemble of 100 dancers and singers like Mazowsze must constantly have new repertoire, new songs and dances. Would Mira Ziminska be able to keep it all together, people were asking.

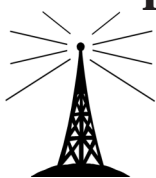
The answer came soon. "I made a promise during the war and, now, that my husband is gone, more so than ever do I want to keep that promise," Mira said. And she did. For over 40 years she was the artistic director of this outstanding group of singers and dancers. She constantly enriched the program with newly rediscovered traditional songs, new musical arrangements, and new dances.

On her 95th birthday, just a year before her death, Mira received the title "Woman of the Century" ("Kobieta Stulecia"). President Aleksander Kwasniewski bestowed on her the highest Polish award, the Order of the White Eagle.

When Mira Ziminska died on January 26, 1997, her beloved Mazowsze was on tour in the United States. When the news reached them about Mira's death, the artists asked the audience for a moment of silence. Of course, among these people who so loved and admired her, many wept at the loss of this Woman of the Century, indeed of the ages.

Tadeusz Sygietynski had a most important role in the founding of the Mazowsze Ensemble, but it was mostly Mira Ziminska who, through the years, showed the world what Polish folk art is really like, in all its beauty and glory.

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