

"The Jazztopad Festival, a leading event of its kind in Poland..."

–NATE CHINEN, THE NEW YORK TIMES

"...Jazztopad stands as an internationally renowned festival with a clearly defined ethos, one that combines a strong respect for the traditions and roots of the music with a progressive vision that provides a platform for the contemporary and innovative."

–IAN PATTERSON, ALL ABOUT JAZZ

JAZZTOPAD FESTIVAL
in partnership with
POLISH CULTURAL INSTITUTE NEW YORK
presents **THE GREAT IMPROVISATION** series
at **NATIONAL FORUM OF MUSIC**
live streamed online

JANUSZ PRUSINOWSKI KOMPANIA
19 FEBRUARY 2021, FRIDAY, 2 PM (EST), 11 AM (PST)
National Forum of Music, Red Hall
Free live streaming at [Center for World Music](#)
[Polish Music Center USC Thornton School of Music](#)
[Center for Traditional Music and Dance](#)

jazztopad
FESTIVAL



Jazztopad Festival, in partnership with **Polish Cultural Institute New York** presents **The Great Improvisation series online** live streamed from the **National Forum of Music (NFM)** in Wrocław, Poland. The series presents various faces of jazz – from bold avant-garde and daring improvisation through to the mainstream. The ideal acoustics of the NFM halls provide a perfect environment for both young Polish bands as well as established artists. The series has presented such musicians as Wynton Marsalis, Bobo Stenson, Gregory Porter, Tomasz Stańko, Kuba Więcek, Brad Mehldau, and Dianne Reeves.

The Polish jazz scene has been a strongly recognizable brand in the world, both in terms of quality of festivals and the craft of artists. Jazztopad Festival has been running for the past 17 years under the umbrella of the National Forum of Music. Jazztopad's most distinctive feature is its commitment to commissioning new music and presenting special projects tailored for the festival. As the only Polish festival, Jazztopad has built relationships with the most important jazz centers in the world, supporting the promotion of Polish improvised music and cultural exchange for many years. Since 2015 Jazztopad has had annual editions in New York.

Friday, February 19, 2021 at 2 PM (EST), 11 AM (PST), Janusz Prusinowski Kompania is a group of musicians who follow in traditions of village masters they have learned from – but they are also an avant-garde band with their own characteristic sound and language of improvisation. They combine music with dance, and the archaic with the modern. **Free live streaming at [Center for World Music](#), [Center for Traditional Music and Dance](#) and [Polish Music Center USC Thornton School of Music](#).**

The Great Improvisation online series is presented by Jazztopad Festival and National Forum of Music, in partnership with Polish Cultural Institute New York, and in collaboration with Lincoln Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Center for World Music, Polish Music Center USC Thornton School of Music and Center for Traditional Music and Dance.

All concerts will also live stream on the websites and social media channels of National Forum of Music, Jazztopad Festival, Polish Cultural Institute New York and Europe Jazz Network.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Janusz Prusinowski Kompania is a group of musicians who follow in traditions of village masters they have learned from: Jan Lewandowski, Kazimierz Meto, Józef Zaráś, Piotr and Jan Gaca, Tadeusz Kubiak and many others – but they are also an avant-garde band with their own characteristic sound and language of improvisation. They combine music with dance and the archaic with the modern. Their tours and concerts incorporate educational activity, both in Poland and abroad.

Kompania's unique style is the result of their attempt to find new ways of interpreting the most important elements of village music from central Poland. It brings together mazurkas – sung, played, danced to, improvised live – and modern man. What new quality can be given to archaic and seemingly simple melodies and rhythms without resorting to trendy sample mixing? Where is the source of multi-layered rhythm, which is never even yet always perfectly precise? Where do these extraordinary melodies, challenging the equal temperament, come from? It turns out that traditional music of Polish villages can be a reference point for a variety of genres: reminiscent of Chopin in its melodic pattern and the use of rubato, sharing a love of improvisation with blues and jazz, evocative of contemporary music in its tone, and possessing the expressiveness of rock music. It is able to connect the East and the West, the North and the South, engaging in a dialogue with musical traditions of near and remote countries.

Dance makes music visible, tangible and meaningful – thus, dancers are a natural addition to mazurkas. Apart from concerts, Kompania's music can be heard at the parties of village and urban Dance Clubs. The band also runs various music and dance workshops. It can be proudly admitted that many novices started their adventure with Polish music, learning to play the fiddle, the drum, or to dance thanks to Janusz Prusinowski Kompania.

Between 2008 and 2012 the band performed in most of European countries, Asia, Canada, the USA (including Carnegie Hall and Chicago Symphony Center) – and of course Poland. Besides playing concerts with traditional Polish music the band prepared a special program of performances "The village roots of Frédéric Chopin's music" with pianist Janusz Olejniczak. In 2012 Kompania began a unique project "Kujawy" with three masters of Polish music: Tadeusz Kubiak, Tomasz Stańko, Janusz Olejniczak, and a group of singers led by Ewa Grochowska. The group also performed with Michał Urbaniak, Artur Dutkiewicz and Alim Qasimov. In October 2012 Janusz Prusinowski Kompania performed at the prestigious world music fair – WOMEX 2012 in Thessaloniki. In 2013 they spent a full month in the US with close to 30 concerts, performing at The Kennedy Center in Washington and at the European Jazz Festival in Los Angeles and the Richmond Folk Music Festival. Having seduced American audiences with mazurkas, they reached for Germany, France, Benelux, Great Britain, Croatia and a couple of other countries, everywhere leaving the dedicated lovers of wild Polish melodies behind. They've also returned to Womex (Cardiff 2013) with the „Wild Music of the Heart of Poland” project, created to present Polish traditional music, performed by young groups, to the international audience.

In 2014 Kompania, together with the eminent Polish singers (Ewa Grochowska, Justyna Piernik, Maniucha Bikont, Kaja Prusinowska, Adam Strug) and the group of the Turkish vocalist Muazzez Ozacar, prepared a special concert to celebrate the Turkish Year – "Exploring the Connections". Its premiere in Izmir was recorded and released on DVD. Musicians and dancers of Janusz Prusinowski Kompania were also involved in various

events related to Oskar Kolberg's Year, whose archives of the Polish village music remain their constant inspiration. The group has initiated and coordinates the Kolberg Academy, educational projects for children and the "Schools of Tradition" teaching about village music and dance.

In 2008 the band released "Mazurkas", an album which received rave reviews. This was followed in 2010 by their second album "Heart", awarded the Folk Record of the Year by the Polish Radio. In 2013 Kompania recorded the album entitled "Knee-deep in Heaven", co-released by the prestigious German label Oriente. In December 2018 the band presented their newest album „In the Footsteps”, in cooperation with well-known label Buda Musique. In 2019 we had a great tour in Japan, plus in South Korea.

Janusz Prusinowski – leader of the band – in 2014 was awarded with Bronze Medal for Merit to Culture Gloria Artis. In 2015 he received the annual prize of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage and was nominated by the Regional Council of Mazovia for the C.K Norwid prize in the Music category.

januszprusinowskikompania.pl

JANUSZ PRUSINOWSKI

Fiddler, who also plays the dulcimer, Polish accordion and the hurdy-gurdy; singer and composer. He learnt to play from village musicians and was an early pioneer of the traditional village music revival in Poland. Janusz has played in various bands, including Bractwo Ubogich and Kapela Domu Tańca, and is a co-founder of the "House of Dance" Association (1994). Over the years he has performed concerts throughout Europe, as well as in Africa, Asia and North America, played at hundreds of dances and sung at numerous church fairs. As a musician and composer he cooperates with the Polish Radio Theatre and the Scena Lubelska 30/32 theatre in Warsaw. Together with his wife Kaja he runs the "Play by Ear" children's theatre; they also compose songs and lullabies. The author of an educational programme, he leads workshops in singing and fiddle-playing. He has organised numerous cultural events and is the artistic director of the "Mazurkas of the World" festival.

MICHAŁ ŻAK

Flautist, clarinetist and shawm-player; a student of Jean-Michel Veillon. Over a number of years he has been exploring Polish village music. One of the co-founders of the House of Dance in Poznań, Michał collaborates with groups playing traditional village music, world music, early music, jazz and fusion, and has received many awards at the annual "Nowa Tradycja" competition organised by Polish Radio. He composes and performs music for theatre performances and silent films and has been involved in various educational projects. He travels to lands near and far in search of new melodies and exotic flavours. He has performed at hundreds of venues around the world, from festivals to concert halls. A former member of the Lautari band, he has collaborated with Marcin Pospieszalski, Zbigniew Łowżył, Michał Czachowski, Yair Dalal, Amin M'raihi, as well as Polish Radio and the National Theatre.

www.michalzak.pl

PIOTR PISZCZATOWSKI

Musician at "Janusz Prusinowski Kompania"; singer at "Monodia Polska"; Adam Strug's associate; co-inventor of the "Wszystkie Mazurki Świata" [Mazurkas of the World] festival and originator of the Instrument Fair at the same festival; enthusiast for and co-creator of folk music; actor and co-composer at the "Studium Teatralne" theater from 1996 to 2007; actor and co-author of performances at the "Słuchaj Uchem" [Play by Ear] theater; Initiator of

events and activities to promote Polish traditional music at the Womex fair since 2012; Project coordinator for "Polska Muzyka Tradycyjna w Turcji 2014" [Polish Traditional music in Turkey 2014]; Artistic director for www.akademiakolberga.pl and author of www.targowiskoinstrumentow.pl/ Avid dancer, reveller, bon vivant; Sociologist by education; privately, companion in Dorota's quests and peregrinations and father to three adolescent citizens.

SZCZEPAN POSPIESZALSKI

Composer, trumpeter, freely moving across different musical genres. He holds a degree in Composition, Interpretation, Education and Jazz from Katowice Music Academy under the direction of Professor Alexander Lasoń. Since he was a child he has been involved in many musical projects of the "Pospieszalscy" family. He performed with Noah's Ark, Raz Dwa Trzy, Deus Meus among others. Currently also working with Adam Strug, Ola Kubicka and POLA (Paulina Pospieszalska).

Jazztopad Festival has been running for the past 18 years under the umbrella of National Forum of Music (Wrocław, Poland). Jazztopad's most distinctive feature is its commitment to commissioning new music and presenting special projects tailored for the festival. The festival has been exploring sounds coming from the regions not frequently associated with jazz (Korea, Turkey, Japan and India), presenting house concerts and educational projects with film screenings and live improvisation. Some of the major artists commissioned by Jazztopad are: Charles Lloyd, Wayne Shorter, Amir ElSaffar, Kenny Wheeler, Vijay Iyer, Benoit Delbecq, Terje Rypdal, Jason Moran, John Surman, William Parker, and more. The festival, artistically led by Piotr Turkiewicz, had some of its commissions released with prestigious ECM, Blue Note, and AUM labels.

As the only Polish festival, Jazztopad has built relationships with the most important jazz centres in the world, supporting the promotion of Polish improvised music and cultural exchange for many years. So far, Jazztopad events have been held in the US, Canada, Japan, Turkey, South Korea, Mexico, and Israel. The festival has worked with such partners as: Jarasum International Jazz Festival, Tokyo Jazz Festival, Akbank Jazz Festival, and in the last five years – with TD Vancouver International Jazz Festival in Canada; Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Jazz Gallery, Jazz Standard, Joe's Pub, and National Sawdust in New York; The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, and Hyde Park Jazz Festival in Chicago.

Polish Cultural Institute New York was founded in 2000. It is a diplomatic mission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, operating in the area of public diplomacy. The PCI NY is one of 25 such institutes around the world. It is also an active member of the network of the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) in its New York cluster. The Institute's mission is to share Polish heritage and contemporary art with American audiences, and to promote Poland's contributions to the success of world culture. The Institute does so through initiating, supporting and promoting collaboration between Poland and the United States in the areas of visual art, design, film, theater, dance, literature, music, and in many other aspects of intellectual and social life. The Institute's main task is to ensure Polish participation in the programming of America's most important cultural institutions as well as in large international initiatives.