

RYSY POLISH FOLK SONG AND DANCE GROUP (Sept 1981 – Nov 2014)

Rysy was formed in 1981 at the request of Fr M Łekawa SAC, the Polish Chaplain in Glasgow. The group started out as a choir to sing at Belahouston Park in Glasgow for the visit of Pope John Paul on 1st June 1982.

The group consisted of mainly young and some mature members from the Polish Community and some Scottish friends. Over the years there have been about 110 members who have been part of the group, some for a very short time and some who have been members from start to finish.

The objective of the group initially was to sing at the Mass in Belahouston and also to preserve Polish Folk Song and Dance in the Polish Community in Glasgow and to spread awareness of this aspect of Polish culture as widely as possible in Scotland and wherever they were asked to perform.

The group's repertoire included many regional songs and dances from Mazowsze, Slask, Rzeszow, Krakow, Lublin, Kaszuby, and Goralski regions. They also performed national dances such as Polonaise and Mazur.

The majority of the costumes worn by the group are authentic Polish costumes, acquired by the group with the help of the Polish Church Committee in Glasgow or they are owned by the group themselves. Other costumes have been made by group members to traditional designs e.g, Polonaise and Goralski.

The first co-ordinator of Rysy was Ewa Gromek, followed by Kris Gromek, then Krzysztof Komarek and finally Marysia Komarek. The musical director throughout all the years has been Mary Teresa McLaughlin.

Through Ewa Gromek we were able to contact and invite Mr Anatol Kocylowski, a noted choreographer and group director from Krakow to come to Glasgow and choreograph traditional folk dances for the group. He visited Glasgow on several occasions to add to our repertoire and also choreographed the Lublin Dance when the group visited Nova Huta in Poland.

Rysy has performed in many different venues:

- 'A Gala night' in The Theatre Royal in Glasgow in May 1982 was part of the Lord Provost's aid to Poland appeal.
- Glasgow City Chambers on several occasions,
- Kelvin Hall,
- The Royal Concert Hall,
- Glasgow City Halls
- 'The Loveliest night of the year' event held June 1996 in Glasgow Art Gallery
- Partick Burgh Hall on several occasions one was to help raise funds for Polish School children to visit Poland in 1989.

The group have taken part in many Folk Festivals the most memorable ones are:

- The Charathon at Glasgow Green in 1993 ,
- The Glasgow Garden Festival in 1985
- The 2nd Polish Folklore Festival in Britain held in Lemington Spa in May 1995.

Rysy has travelled all over Scotland - Aberdeen, Oban, Kilmarnock, Paisley, Prestwick, Johnston, Dundee, Uddingston, Edinburgh, Peebles, and many more to share Polish Culture. Many of these concerts in the 80's and 90's was to thank the people of Scotland for all their help given to Poland.

The group participated in many multi culture events the most memorable being the Glasgow Mela held in Kelvingrove Park in Glasgow.

Rysy have also travelled abroad, they have been to Osny near Paris on three different occasions from 1982 to 1992 to celebrate with the Polish people of France.

They have been to Poland twice as guests of Nowa Huta Dance group and performed in Nowa Huta where they danced Polish Dances and also some Scottish Dances.

One of Rysy's biggest events was the Dożynki Ball held in Esquire House in Glasgow October 1995.

Rysy are well remembered for their numerous concerts in the General Sikorski Memorial House where their aim was to include involving everyone in singing Polish Folk songs in both Polish and English. This went down well with the many families, where the Polish language was not spoken as it gave them a sense of belonging. Christmas concerts were well attended and we celebrated customs from all over the world.

The group also were involved in the many religious occasions and they attended and prepared the Hymns along with Father Marian every year at Palm Sunday and Carfin Pilgrimage in August.

Some special church events:

- Pope John Pauls' visit to Glasgow 1982,
- Cardinal Glomp's Primate of Poland visit in Feb 1985,
- Bishop Wesoły visit to Glasgow to carry out confirmation in St Simon's church Dec 1991
- Cardinal Winning of Glasgow visits to St Simon's Church in Partick on many occasions.
- The great Jubilee year in 2000 held in Livingston,

Rysy was responsible for inviting and hosting other groups like Nowa Huta from Poland and Karpaty from Southampton.

Rysy was a big part of the Polish Community in Glasgow for 33 years and we touched the hearts of many people. It was a big part of all our lives. Group members came and went for various reasons but all are remembered.

The name of Rysy is displayed in Glasgow Art Galleries and St Simon's church and when the group folded in November 2014 a memorial bench was erected at the main entrance to Kelvingrove Park Glasgow, where we hope people can go, sit and remember.

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Marysia Komarek
Rysy Co-ordinator
July 2015