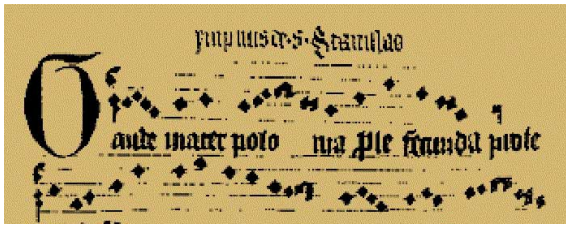Brief history of Polish music

Gaude Mater Polonia by Vincent of Kielcz (Wincenty z Kielcza, Poland ~1200-1262).



First performed in 1253, this hymn accompanied coronations of Polish kings and their victories for many centuries.

For example, it was performed after the Polish king Jan III with his army famously saved Vienna from a brutal Turkish invasion in 1683.

The Latin title means "Rejoice Mother Poland" and its Latin lyrics encourage the country to be proud of its sons.

Gaude Mater Polonia hymn enjoys continuing popularity for over 770 years (!), so it is definitely one of **the most enduring hits** in the history of music.

Today the Gaude Mater hymn is performed by choirs at Polish Universities during official ceremonies. Tom will play his own guitar arrangement of **Gaude Mater Polonia**.

Polonaise "Farewell to the Homeland" (c. 1794) by Michał Kleofas Ogiński



Count Ogiński (1765-1833) was a Polish statesman who lived through the violent dismemberment of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

Ogiński fought in the 1794 uprising led by Kościuszko, the last attempt to free Poland from Russian occupation. After the Russian army crushed the Kościuszko Uprising, massacring thousands of civilians in Warsaw, Ogiński went into exile.

The polonaise expresses Ogiński's farewell to Poland, which disappeared from the map of Europe for 123 years...

Originally written for piano, Ogiński's polonaise became an enduring emblem of Polish national identity, and a forerunner of Chopin's patriotic polonaises.

The distinctly Polish music of Ogiński and Chopin helped preserve a Polish national identity that outlived the loss of the state and helped make rebirth of Poland in 1918 possible.

Tom will perform his own arrangement of the polonaise.

Jezus malusieńki is a traditional Polish carol whose melody is a kujawiak, a folk dance from the Kujawy region in north-central Poland.

The kujawiak is one of the five traditional national dances of Poland, the other four being the krakowiak, mazur (mazurka), oberek, and polonaise.

Of all these dances, the kujawiak is the most romantic and lyrical, with a calm character enhanced by a slow tempo and expressive rubato.

The kujawiak melody of **Jezus malusieńki** carol is likely much older than its religious lyrics, which made the carol widely popular in the 18th century, the century during which Poland disappeared from the map of Europe, forcefully partitioned out of existence by its violent neighbours.

During the 123 years without a Polish state (from 1795 to 1918), folk melodies and carols such as **Jezus malusieńki** helped keep Polish tradition alive in homes and churches.

Tom will perform his own variations on the kujawiak melody of **Jezus malusieńki**.

Prelude and Dance (2020) by Tom Chalko is a composition for solo classical guitar, directly inspired by Polish folk music.

The Prelude takes its inspiration from Chopin's Prelude in D major, Op. 28 No. 5.

The Dance is a set of variations on the kujawiak motif from the Polish folk song "A za lasem wołki moje" ("My little oxen beyond the forest"). Tom remembers the melody from his childhood because his grandmother used to sing it.

The Dance variations explore a range of moods: ornamented and songlike, hushed and shimmering with tremolo, bell-like with harmonics, and flowing arpeggios.

Recording is available at YouTube:
https://youtu.be/5NmDecxJHAg

Prelude in C minor, Op. 28 No. 20 (1838) by Fryderyk Chopin:



Chopin (1810-1849) was born near Warsaw, fifteen years after Poland had been forcefully erased from the map of Europe by Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1795.

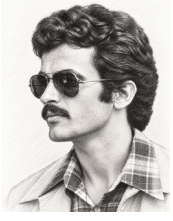
Chopin left Warsaw in November 1830, weeks before the November Uprising against Russian rule, and never returned, eventually settling in Paris, where he lived among the Polish exiles of the Great Emigration.

Chopin's music, inspired by Polish folklore, carried the voice of a Poland that no longer existed to European audiences, and helped keep Polish national identity alive until the independence of Poland returned in 1918.

Prelude No. 20 is a slow, solemn procession of heavy chords often described as a funeral march.

Tom will perform his own guitar transcription of the prelude.

Cabaret Song without title (1978) Music by Andrzej Kunikowski, guitar version by Andrzej Kunikowski and Tom



In 1977 and 1978 Tom played guitar alongside the violinist Andrzej Kunikowski in a Polish cabaret troupe called "Kapota". In 1978 Andrzej composed a song with a catchy melody for the cabaret, still without words.

Andrzej played it on the piano, but the band had no plans to include a piano, so he asked Tom to adapt the song for guitar. They made the guitar version together: Andrzej named the chords, and Tom worked out how to play the melody with its accompaniment on guitar.

Tom migrated from Poland to Australia in 1982, Andrzej died a few years later and the song never received the recognition it deserved for its elegance, beauty and memorable harmonic progression with rich major 7th chords.

Tom has kept playing the song from memory ever since, and has now decided to perform it in public so that Andrzej's music is not forgotten.

This performance is in Andrzej's memory.

One# - a stylized oberek (2018)
by Tom Chalko

The oberek is one of the traditional Polish dances: lively, whirling, and in triple time, in contrast with the gentler kujawiak heard earlier in this program.

Tom's stylized oberek keeps the drive and energy of the village dance, treating it as a concert piece for classical guitar.

Its melody is ornamented with custom figures built on intervals of a third, all written out in full notes rather than with grace notes or ornament signs, so the piece can also serve as an etude in ornamentation.

The piece is built on the harmonic minor scale, and the title refers to its notation: a custom key signature with a single sharp, G#, the raised seventh of A minor, and no other accidentals anywhere in the score.

Krakowiaczek jeden is a traditional Polish folk song set to a krakowiak, a fast, syncopated dance from the Kraków region of Poland.

The song tells of a young man from Kraków who rode to war with seven horses and came home with one.

In the 19th century, the krakowiak became a fashionable dance in Vienna and Paris, where it stirred sympathy for a distant and oppressed Poland.

Tom will perform his own arrangement of the melody.

Czerwone jabłuszko ("The Little Red Apple") is a Polish folk song that seems to be a medley of Polish dances.

Three distinct parts of the song have different rhythms and different tempos.

The lyrics of the song explicitly name the oberek, the mazurek (little mazur), and the kujawiak, three of the five Polish traditional dances.

Tom will perform his own arrangement of the song.

Szła dzieweczka do laseczka ("A Little Maiden Went to the Little Grove") is a Polish folk song from Silesia (Śląsk), a Polish region that had been ruled by Bohemia, Austria, and Prussia for centuries.

In the 19th century, Prussian authorities pressed Germanisation in Silesia (Śląsk), yet the local population kept singing in their own language. Tom will perform his own guitar arrangement of the song.

Zasiali górale owies ("The Highlanders Sowed Oats") is a Polish folk song linked with the trojak, a dance for three dancers that is popular in Silesia (Śląsk), in southern Poland.

The trojak has two parts: a slow, stately part in 3/4 and a fast part in 2/4. Tom's arrangement follows the same two-part form, moving from a lyrical melody to a driving, syncopated rhythm.

Tom will perform his own arrangement of the song.

Stokrotka ("The Daisy"), also known by its first line "Gdzie strumyk płynie z wolna" ("Where the Stream Flows Slowly"), is a catchy Polish song of the scouting campfire tradition.

Polish scouting began in 1910, when Poland did not exist as a state, and during World War II the scouts of the underground Grey Ranks (Szare Szeregi) played an important role in the resistance against the German occupation of Poland. Tom will perform his own arrangement of the song.

Głęboka studzienka ("The Deep Little Well") is an authentic Polish folk melody rooted in the regional cultures of Upper and Cieszyn Silesia (Śląsk). "Głęboka studzienka" is musically structured as a traditional Polish folk waltz (***walczyk***), characterized by its lively, triple-meter (3/4 time) rhythm. The melody is simple and easy to remember, yet its harmonization leads briefly into a different key before returning home.

Tom will perform his own guitar arrangement of the song.

Zielony mosteczek is a very popular Polish folk song originating from Silesia (Śląsk) and Wielkopolska regions of Poland. Tom will perform his own arrangement of the song.

Ostatni Mazur ("The Last Mazur") is a Polish patriotic song from the time of the January Uprising of 1863 against Russian occupation of Poland, and it represents the mazur, one of the five traditional national dances of Poland.

The mazur is known in its stylized form as the mazurka, as in Chopin's mazurkas. The melody is attributed to Fabian Tymolski (1828–1855), although some songbooks present it as a folk melody.

The words about the last dance before battle were written in 1863 by the insurgent Ludwik Ksawery Pomian-Łubieński, imprisoned by Russian occupiers.

At traditional Polish dance balls, the evening began with a polonaise and often ended with Ostatni Mazur.

Tom will perform his own arrangement of the melody.

Somnium Pace (2017) by Tom Chalko. The Latin title translates to "Dream of Peace" or "Dream in Peace".

The composition unfolds as a dialogue between two contrasting musical motifs: one dark, fatalistic, and overpowering; the other gentle, tender, and lyrical.

Eventually, the dialogue reaches its conclusion: peace and harmony prevail.

Can our real world follow the musical conclusion?

The world premiere of **Somnium Pace** took place in 2018 at Melbourne Guitar Festival, where it was performed by Australian guitarist Dr Harold Gretton.

Tom tries to perform **Somnium Pace** at every live concert to remind people that peace should be the goal for human society on Earth.

Recording is available on YouTube
https://youtu.be/Qf8-yWB3LOE