

# THE CULTURE OF LOWICZ



Brochure prepared by  
participants of the project  
"Integration of two nations  
through dance and folk culture  
- Lithuanian edition"



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**







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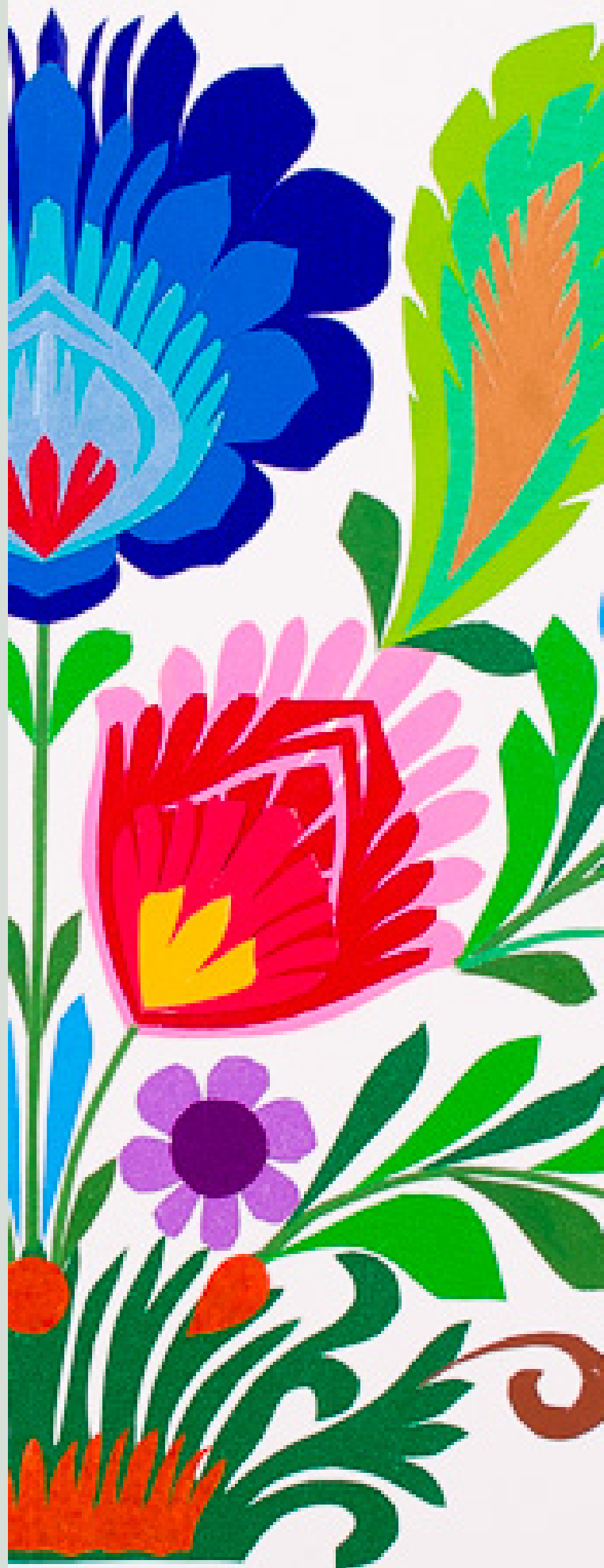
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# INTRODUCTION

*The brochure was developed by participants of the project "Integration of two nations through dance and folk culture - Lithuanian edition" as part of the foreign mobility initiative.*

*The project "Integration of two nations through dance and folk culture - Lithuanian edition" with the number 2021-1-PL01-KA122-SCH-000015417 is co-financed by the European Union.*

*The following schools participate in the project: Complex of Secondary Schools No. 2 Tadeusz Kościuszko in Łowicz as the beneficiary of the initiative and Rokiškio profesinio mokymo centras as the host institution.*

*Mobility in the project is carried out on September 12-23, 2022. The trip is attended by students from a Polish school, and at the same time members of the Song and Dance Ensemble "Blichowacy". Together with young people from a Lithuanian school, they implement an educational program related to the promotion of culture and improving digital competences.*

*More information about the project can be found on the School's website:  
<http://www.zsp2lowicz.pl/>*



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## THE FOLK CULTURE OF THE ŁOWICZ LAND. HISTORICAL VIEW

*The range of the Łowicz culture includes the so-called Land of Łowicz - the area around Łowicz and Skierniewice, formerly belonging to the Duchy of Łowicz. However, the rich achievements date back to much earlier periods in history, and have undergone strong transformations since the 19th century. Therefore, in many studies on When it comes to folk costumes, attention is often drawn to the key influences of the 19th century, still present in elements of folklore today. Originally, the Łowicka Land belonged to the property of the Gniezno archbishops, and the first mentions of it come from the 12th century. The following centuries were a period of changing borders of the territories of Łowicz, as well as the development and increase in the number of villages concentrated around two towns. XIX century*



turns out to be fundamental for the culture of Łowicz for two reasons: firstly, the establishment of the Duchy of Łowicz by decree of Alexander I and the title of Duchess of Łowicz, which strengthened the sense of separateness among the inhabitants, and secondly, the renting of peasants carried out by Grand Duke Konstanty and his wife, which in the long run allowed to the enrichment of peasants, which translated into the development of folk culture, including costumes and construction. The Łowicz culture and local folklore are distinguished from the rest of the country by the fact that they are still alive today and play an important role in the consciousness of the inhabitants of Łowicz and the surrounding area. Łowicz costumes, solemn Corpus Christi processions, and even dialects are constantly present in everyday life, still used by the community that builds its identity around them. Therefore, in the area of Łowicz there are still dance groups, to which young people willingly belong. Team membership is often continued through successive generations of families. Awareness and knowledge about the folklore of this region is also growing, and thanks to various promotional activities, the culture of Łowicz is becoming more and more recognizable even beyond the borders of Poland.



# TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Music is one of the most recognizable elements of Łowicz folklore. It is based on folk melodies of unknown authorship. The compositions are very old, passed down from generation to generation, and have certainly undergone many transformations over the centuries. Musical pieces accompanied the inhabitants of the Duchy during various celebrations, including weddings. Hence, many of the most popular melodies correspond to regional dances. Typical for the whole of central Poland, the dominant rhythm was  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{3}{8}$ . The traditional Łowicz band consisted of a violin, a clarinet and a drum. The words of the songs, of course, changed, just as the dialect and ... people's lives changed. As in the case of not only folk songs, but also contemporary popular music, the songs reflected the everyday experience of the inhabitants, their sorrows and joys. Interestingly, traditional folk music from Łowicz enjoyed the interest of composers and directors of artistic ensembles, and its echoes can be heard in the works of artists as recognizable as Fryderyk Chopin.



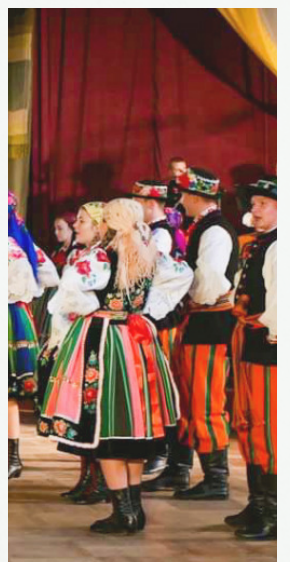
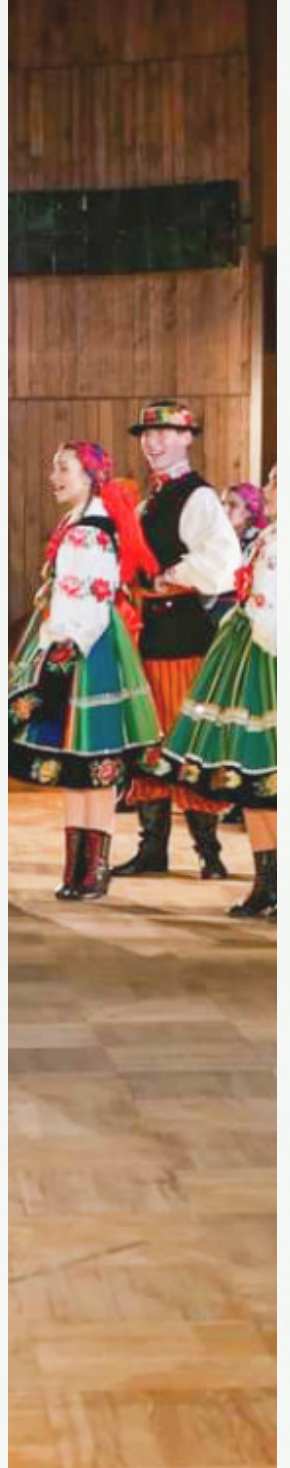


# FOLK DANCES

In the Łowicz region, the most common dances are those based on odd metres: obereks, kujawiaks, kujons, mazurkas and waltzes, usually connected with each other by increasing the tempo. The dances are interspersed with various chants - sometimes sad and wistful to the tune of kujawiak or waltz, others feisty and lively in the nature of oberek. Ceremonies also played an important role. about the arrival of spring. At that time, girls walked with a grove dressed in flowers, ribbons, feathers and kraszanki, while boys visited taverns with a tap "on Monday" wishing the hosts and collecting gifts. Drawing from these beautiful traditions, such dances as Dyngus, Cockerel and Zelman were created. It is also worth mentioning the characteristic dances for Łowicz, such as: chocznie, klapok, polka wagon, polkas shakes or polka in slippers.

## **Oberek, Łowicz's oberek**

It is known under many names almost all over Poland and to this day it is one of the most popular traditional dances in our country. Oberek is danced in groups, with very small steps performed in the mazurka rhythm, spinning evenly and flatly in place or in a circle, in four directions. Already in the middle of the 19th century it was included in the group of Polish national dances.







### ***Kujon***

*One of the varieties of obertas, characterized by a much more developed melorrhythmic structure - which makes it quite difficult to perform. A slower pace is also appropriate for a nerd.*





## CULINARY

*The Land of Łowicz is a region with a long tradition with a well-developed cuisine, in which echoes of Old Polish dishes can be felt. Regional products characteristic of Łowicz and the surrounding area include: plum jam from Łowicz, pickled cucumbers in Łowicz style and pickled cucumbers in Łowicz style, rye bread from Świątniki, baked with onion, honey, tomatoes, garlic and pumpkin. A delicious addition to bread is juniper sausage, once eaten only on holidays. Today, smoked noodles are known all over the country. On Christmas Eve, the first dish served was herring with potatoes and bread. Cabbage with peas or mushrooms, which was fried in oil and onion, was also served. Kłosy or dumplings were also served.*



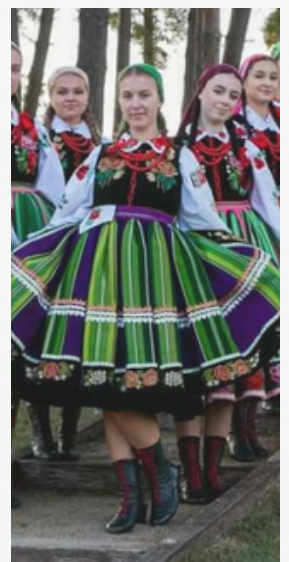


*Traditional soup served for dinner, is cooked with puree of pickled cucumbers or sorrel. Gołąbki, which are very famous all over Poland, have their origin in the Łowicz region. Beetroot with horseradish also comes from Łowicz. A traditional regional pastry is carrot gingerbread - it has a specific taste and unusual aroma. Baked apples filled with preserves are also a traditional regional delicacy. You can eat them hot or cold, with powdered sugar or whipped cream.*



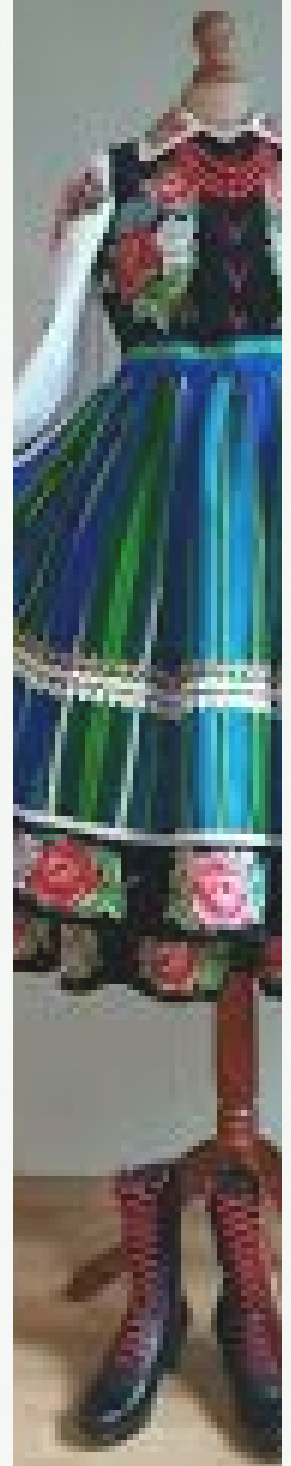
# ŁOWICZ'S COSTUME

The Łowicz costume, otherwise known as the prince's costume, is the costume of the population living in the fertile lands of Mazovia in the valley of the Bzura River and its numerous tributaries. The costume from Łowicz is one of the richest and most impressive costumes not only in Mazovia, but also throughout Poland, also worn and used today. Its basis, from the first half of the 19th century, were woolen, homespun striped uniforms, changing their colors and composition of stripes over the years. In the second half of the 19th century, fabrics in red colors, in small single stripes or bundles, dominated. They were used both for men's trousers and for women's skirts, dresses (the so-called dresses, woolen skirts), i.e. skirts with a bra, corsets, kaftans (spencers), aprons to the waist and worn on the shoulders (for clothing). The beginning of the 20th century was a time of further transformations of the costume from Łowicz. They concern a change in the color of fabrics, the disappearance of certain elements of clothing, i.e. skirts and corsets, and their replacement with dresses (dresses, woolen garments), and above all, a general increase in the decorativeness of the entire outfit. The background of the striped clothes became orange, and the stripes woven in various shades of green were varied and enriched with cinnabar, white and purple.





However, the apogee of changes, especially concerning women's attire, falls on the interwar period. Cold colors (green, violet, emerald) began to dominate in striped clothes, obtained thanks to aniline dyes. The variety of fabrics, colorfulness and undoubted beauty caused their imitation and spread in the weaving of other regions, i.e. the so-called Łowicz fashion. Men's attire underwent less transformations and although it was much less ornate, it had more complicated cuts than women's. Basically, there were two variants of it. In the former, trousers made of striped homespun with vertical stripes were always worn, a hip-length waistcoat (lejbik), a caftan (spencerek) with the same cut and decoration as the lejbik, and a white russet coat. In the second variant, trousers were made of striped homespun or sometimes black cloth, short waistcoats and caftans (spencers with flaps) and black russet coats cut off at the waist were worn. Other elements of the costume in both variants were identical: a felt hat was the basic headgear anyway, in addition, older men also wore black sheepskin hats in the form of a truncated cone or cylindrical shape. Shirts (bleaches) with a hemline cut, with a turn-down collar or a stand-up collar were used, they were worn tucked into trousers. Woolen belts were girded with long waistcoats (leisure jackets) and kaftans (spencers) and russet coats, most often when this element of the outfit was an outer garment.







*In winter, men wore various types of sheepskin coats, most often brown with large black collars. On their feet, they put on boots with harmonica uppers around the ankle, and from the beginning of the 20th century, the so-called stiffened officers. Men's attire, especially the one worn by bachelors, was supplemented with forepieces (ties) worn under waistcoats and caftans, and cuffs (sleeves), also used in women's attire.*





## OTHER ELEMENTS OF FOLK CULTURE

*Cutouts are the most popular folk craft in the region of Łowicz. Cutouts from Łowicz: they are divided into three types: coders, stars and ribbons. Cut-outs are created by cutting out patterns on colored paper, and sticking smaller motifs on their larger counterparts. The most frequently used motifs are floral ornaments, flowers and roosters. Cutouts from Łowicz, thanks to their uniqueness on a global scale, have gained recognition and fame all over the world. Today, the theme of cutouts from Łowicz is used in decoration. You can easily buy souvenirs from Łowicz decorated with a cutout motif. The cutouts in Łowicz are made of "spiders", initially they were made of clay and straw as well as colored paper. Today, to create "spiders" we use only simple words, thread and tissue paper. Tissue paper is also used to make flowers popular in this region, which are also used to decorate houses.*





## FOLK CULTURE OF THE ŁOWICZ REGION TODAY. "BLICHOWIACY" ENSEMBLE

In the 20th century, there was a real renaissance of interest in the Łowicz culture in other regions of Poland - and the inhabitants of Łowicz themselves put a significant effort into promoting the still alive folklore and traditions of their lands. Numerous song and dance ensembles are still active today. Among them, the band "Blichowacy" operating as part of ZSP No. 2 CKZ in Łowicz deserves attention.

Since 1948, the Song and Dance Ensemble "Blichowacy" has been operating at the "na Blichu" School in Łowicz. The members of the team are schoolchildren. "Blichowacy" cultivate the customs, rituals and traditions of the Łowicz region. With their colorful costumes, music, singing and dancing, they promote the folklore of Łowicz in the country and abroad.





*The artistic program of the Song and Dance Ensemble "Blichowacy" consists of three parts: the Łowicz suite, the Łowicz picture and the "Zapusty" ritual, as well as occasional programs. The group is accompanied by a folk band, which includes accordion, clarinet, violin and drum. The band takes an active part in school, county and nationwide celebrations. He participates in competitions, reviews and festivals in Poland and abroad.*

*The team's major achievements include:*

*1st prize at the 8th Folklore Biennale in Łowicz - 1993 and 1995*

*2nd prize at the Presentations of Cultural Achievements of Agricultural School Youth - Lubsko 1998*

*1st prize "Traditions 2000" in Łowicz*

*2nd prize National Folklore Meetings for "Łowicki Pasiak" - Łowicz 2002*

*3rd place at the 9th International Folklore Festival Polonez - Słonim (Belarus)*

*In 2013, the band toured abroad, e.g. in Russia, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Austria, the United States and Lithuania.*