

Polish National Anthem – Poland is Not Yet Lost

An uplifting and hopeful brass-led tune, with a hint of resilience in the face of struggle – we explore the lyrics and history of Poland’s national song.

The Polish national anthem features lyrics written in July 1797 by Polish nobleman Józef Wybicki, and a melody that’s most likely derived from a Polish folk tune – specifically a mazurka, which is a lively folk dance in triple time.

The lyrics were written to help boost the morale of the Polish soldiers serving in the Napoleonic armies under Jan Henryk Dąbrowski. It was hoped that their participation in these wars would help the Poles' case for independence as Poland was partitioned at the time and part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The lyrics served to feed the Poles' desire for an independent state and emphasize their belief that the state would not die while they were willing to fight for it.

The title of Poland’s national song is ‘Mazurek Dąbrowskiego’ (‘Dąbrowski’s Mazurka’), but it’s also known by the first line of the song, ‘Poland is Not Yet Lost’ or ‘Poland has Not Yet Perished’.

Jan Henryk Dąbrowski named here was a Polish general and statesman, and something of a national hero in the 18th century. The song was originally composed to boost morale and patriotism in serving soldiers, and due to General Dąbrowski’s service in the Napoleonic Army during the Italian campaigns, is also known as ‘The Song of The Polish Legions in Italy’.

According to history, Wybicki wrote the original lines of the poem that would become Poland’s patriotic song in Reggio Emilia, near Bologna in Italy, to mark the retirement of Dąbrowski’s Polish Legion soldiers.

The first words of the Polish national anthem call out the hopes of the Poles to regain their freedom. Poland foundered as a nation because of the Polish Partitions in the late eighteenth century, when the neighbouring Great Powers of Prussia, Russia and Austria partitioned the territory of the Polish aristocratic republic between them.

“Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła,
Kiedy my żyjemy.
Co nam obca przemoc wzięła,
Szablą odbierzemy.”

Although vanished from the map, the idea of an autonomous national existence was always very much alive among the Poles. They lived for the idea of a “virtual” Polish state, whose élite had fled to exile and worked there for a re-establishment of a free Poland.

Poland has been frequently invaded and annexed by other countries throughout history, and the country's national anthem remains a proud symbol of Poland's struggle for freedom and independence.

The song became one of Poland's most popular patriotic songs, despite Poland not getting its independence till 1918.

The lyrics to Poland's national anthem in English

Poland has not yet perished,
So long as we still live.
What the foreign force has taken from us,
We shall with sabre retrieve.

March, march, Dąbrowski,
From Italy to Poland.
Under your command
We shall rejoin the nation.

We'll cross the Vistula, we'll cross the Warta,
We shall be Polish.
Bonaparte has given us the example
Of how we should prevail.

March, march, Dąbrowski,
From Italy to Poland.
Under your command
We shall rejoin the nation.

Like Czarniecki to Poznań
After the Swedish annexation,
To save our homeland,
We shall return across the sea.

March, march, Dąbrowski,
From Italy to Poland.
Under your command
We shall rejoin the nation.

A father, in tears,
Says to his Basia
Listen, our boys are said
To be beating the tarabans.

March, march, Dąbrowski,
From Italy to Poland.
Under your command
We shall rejoin the nation.