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### **TO CHOPIN'S MOTHER – ON THE 240<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF HER BAPTISM IN IZBICA KUJAWSKA**

The year 2022 brought the 240th anniversary of the birth and baptism of Tekla Justyna Krzyżanowska, Fryderyk Chopin's mother. Given the powerful emotional bond between mother and son, and also her role in raising Fryderyk and shaping his personality, biographers have been researching the circumstances surrounding her birth for years. Knowledge on this subject was initially confined to the general information that she hailed from Izbica, in the region of Kujawy, but no exact dates were available. A turning point came in 1951, when an employee at the Registrar's Office in Izbica, Czesław Machtyłowicz, at the request of the Fryderyk Chopin Society, conducted a successful search for Justyna's certificate of baptism, bearing the date 14 September 1782. Yet that is not the date of her birth, which no doubt occurred around a week earlier and, as was customary, was not noted in the church records. The authors of this article describe in detail the successive phases in the search and the 'miraculous' discovery of the book containing the record of Justyna Chopin's baptism, which had been earmarked for destruction, and discuss the conclusions and circumstances that result from the rediscovered document.

That book and the font in which Chopin's mother was undoubtedly christened constitute two unique material artefacts linked directly to the birth of Justyna Krzyżanowska.

As this polychromed wooden font had been used continuously for more than 250 years, it was in serious need of renovation. That was carried out in 2022, at the initiative of the parish priest and dean of Izbica, Revd Leonard Fic, thanks to funding for most of the work from the Fryderyk Chopin Society. In addition, at the suggestion of Krzysztof Dorcz, on 27 May 2022, the Municipal Council named one of the squares in Izbica Kujawska after Justyna Chopin.