



UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

# Skalny Center

2011

FOR POLISH &amp; CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES

## Study Abroad in Kraków



By Arian Burnett-Farrands

My grandfather was an inspiring man. His mother died saving him from drowning when he was very young, so he was raised by his extended family. He served in the military, and later became a devoted teacher. He was an avid and talented oil painter, replicating beautiful landscapes and scenery. Although my grandpa passed away a little over two years ago, his strong personality and distinctive quirks will ever be remembered. He left behind an extensive collection of oil paintings, many signed, "Polack."

I never thought much about this unusual signature, and was completely unaware that "Polack" is used as an offensive term to describe someone of Polish descent. (*Polak* is the Polish word for a Polish person.) This is because both my grandmother and grandfather on my mother's side are immensely proud of their Polish heritage. My great-grandparents immigrated from Poland and settled in Polish communities in Pennsylvania. Although they spoke mainly Polish, my grandparents lost most of their ability to speak the language when they moved away, but they maintained their Polish traditions. We break off a piece of *opatek* every year on Christmas Eve as we bless each other with health and happiness, and express our love. I always enjoy my grandmother's wonderful Polish cooking, including her *kie\_basa*, *go\_bki*, and homemade pierogi. Their bookshelves contain Polish novels and prayer books, and the occasional Polish swearword can be heard around the house.

My grandparents have always radiated a strong sense of pride for their Polish descent, and I absorbed this pride without knowing much about Polish culture or history. I enrolled in Polish language courses in an attempt to become better connected with my ancestral roots. While I am improving my Polish speaking and reading ability, I look forward to seeing my proficiency improve through the opportunity to learn Polish while being immersed in its culture. I would be honored to be part of the study abroad program, which would allow me to become comfortable with the language, and discover more about my past. I know my grandfather would be immensely proud to know I am learning about my heritage through an incredibly unique experience.

*Arian is a sophomore at UR, majoring in Brain and Cognitive Sciences. She is a recipient of a Skalny scholarship for the summer study-on-location program in Kraków.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



By Randall Stone

The past year has witnessed two important trends in Europe: a reduction of tensions in Eastern Europe and increased strains in the Euro Zone. Poland is deeply involved in both developments. On the positive side, the last year has seen a consolidation of the Obama administration's policy of a "reset" of U.S.-Russian relations, which started by backing away from the brink of conflict over Georgia that had threatened at the end of 2008. In the past year, U.S.-Russian cooperation has expanded to cover numerous fronts. The ratification of a new strategic arms limitation treaty in December committed the two sides to reduce their nuclear forces to levels that had not been seen since the 1960s. Russia has dropped its objections to U.S. bases in post-Soviet countries in Central Asia, and 60 percent of the material supplied to U.S. forces in Afghanistan currently transits through Russia. The im-

provement in U.S.-Russian relations has facilitated a thaw in Polish-Russian relations, as well, which had become very tense only a few years ago.

On the other hand, while the U.S. economy is recovering, the financial crisis in Europe continues to deepen. After the unprecedented financial rescue plan for Greece in 2010, Ireland and then Portugal lost the confidence of financial markets in 2011 and were driven to the EU and the IMF for financial bail-outs. Caught between increasing euro-skepticism at home and the overexposure of its own banks, the German government insisted on very tough conditions for these loans, which led to a deep recession in the so-called "PIGS." It is now evident that Greece will not meet its budget targets for this year, and it is likely that it will have to reschedule its debt in order to avoid outright default. This can be expected to raise interest rates and increase pressure on other highly-indebted countries in Europe. Poland, the

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Continued from page 1*



By Randall Stone

best-performing country in Europe, now appears farsighted for not rushing into the Euro Zone, because it avoided the worst of the financial crisis by devaluing the z\_oty.

Developments in the region are fluid, but one thing is certain: Central European politics remains important, complex and in need of interdisciplinary study. The Skalny Center is moving ahead with several initiatives. Three years ago, we helped to launch a new undergraduate major in International Relations, and this year we celebrated the graduation of 43 "IR" majors. This spring, we signed a three-year renewal of the University of Rochester exchange with Jagiellonian University in Krakow, and we expanded it to include tuition and housing waivers for participating Polish students. This represents an annual commitment of approximately \$100,000 by the University of Rochester. The high level of tuition in Rochester had prevented the student exchange from being financially feasible for the Polish side in the past, and we hope that this new initiative will lead to a significant expansion of ties with Krakow. Another exciting initiative is the Program on International Politics and Business, sponsored by a gift from Robert Klimasewski. The program is supporting an academic conference in Krakow on June 4-8 on "Multinational Corporations in World Politics," which will bring together leading academics and business professionals to discuss the politics and implementation of foreign direct investment. (See the link to the conference web page on the Skalny Center web site.)

Our first event of this academic year was a special program to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941), a virtuoso pianist, composer, statesman (the first Prime Minister of independent Poland after World War I), humanitarian and orator. Paderewski was acclaimed a "Modern Immortal" by his contemporaries. The program included performances of Paderewski's compositions by Igor Lipinski of the Eastman School of Music, readings of Paderewski's letters and press reviews about him interpreted by Dr. Matthew Ames, Assistant Professor of Theater Arts at Nazareth College, and fragments of films. His remarkable links to Rochester are described in Kathleen Urbanic's article in this newsletter.



*PFF opening - Pavlik's recital*

In November we held our annual Polish Film Festival at the Little Theatre, which was supported by the Polish Filmmakers Association and the Polish Film Institute. Polish cinema is particularly dynamic, and the festival presented a selection of some of the best new films to come out of Poland. The grand opening of the Festival, at the Inn on Broadway, included a piano recital by a special guest of the Festival, W\_odek Pawlik, the famous jazz performer and composer. Pawlik has cut 21 records under his own name to date and has performed at many

of the most notable and prestigious jazz and classical music festivals. We showed seven full-length feature films, two shorts, three documentaries, and one animated short. W\_odek Pawlik participated in the discussion after the screening of "Reverse," for which he created the musical score.

Another special guest of the Festival was Robert Wi\_ckiewicz, one of the most popular and prolific Polish actors. After his debut on the big screen in 1993, he has created many excellent and diverse interpretations in Polish cinema.



*PFF opening*



Wi\_ckiwicz, who played leading roles in three of the festival picks, took questions from the audience following the screening of *The Lullaby* and *Little Rose*.

Our evening lectures covered a broad spectrum of topics, including a lecture on the emergence of avant-garde jazz in Poland during the Cold War by Dr. Zbigniew Granat (Nazareth College) and on Father Maximilian Kolbe by Dr. Kazimierz Braun (University at Buffalo.) I celebrated the publication of my new book this spring by giving a lecture about global governance and the role of international organizations. The book, *Controlling Institutions: International Organizations and the Global Economy*, was published by Cambridge University Press in March. Polish poet and translator Piotr Sommer was the Skalny visiting professor this spring, and he participated in a discussion of poetry, the mutual influences of Polish and Anglo-American poets, and issues of translation. A short article about Piotr Sommer by Kathleen McGarvey was published in the spring edition of *Rochester Review* and is reprinted in this Newsletter. The Center hosted Olesya Tkacheva (Ph.D. 2009, University of Michigan) as a post-doctoral fellow, and she gave a talk about her research on party politics in Eastern Europe, and presented a paper about the role of the internet in Polish parliamentary elections. The last event of the spring semester was a celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Czesław Miłosz. Professor David Weiss of Hobart and William Smith Colleges spoke about the life and work of Czesław Miłosz, who was one of Poland's greatest cultural figures and a Nobel Prize-winning poet, essayist, translator and scholar.

The Skalny Center offers courses in the Polish language, and enrollments have increased in recent years. This year, students took both beginning and intermediate level courses and a course on life in present-day Poland, created for advanced students. In addition, the Center sponsors a summer study-on-location program in Krakow. During the 4-week program, offered through the Jagiellonian University School of Polish Language and Culture, students take courses on Polish language, Polish history, Polish literature, or communism and democracy in Eastern Europe. Thanks to a generous gift by the late Joseph Skalny, four undergraduate students and one graduate student were awarded scholarships to help them participate in the program, and a graduate student in Art and Art History Department received a scholarship to do research in Poland during the spring of 2011.

I hope to see you at some of our events next year. Please keep in mind the following upcoming events in fall 2011:

- **Lecture by Kathleen Parthe titled "For their freedom and ours: Alexander Herzen and the liberation of Poland" – Oct. 13**
- **Lecture by Skalny Visiting Professor, Anna Niedzwiedz – date TBA**
- **Opening of the Polish Film Festival, Nov. 10**
- **Polish Film Festival, Nov. 11 – Nov. 14, the Little Theatre**
- **Concert – Dec. 4**

## Reading Abroad

Visiting Skalny Center poet Piotr Sommer suggests some not-to-be-missed modern Polish literature.



By Kathleen McGarvey

Polish poet Piotr Sommer—editor of the Warsaw-based international writing magazine *Literatura na\_wiecie* (World Literature)—guided Rochester students on a tour through 20th-century poetry in translation this semester as the Skalny Visiting Professor in the English department, in a new course called Studies in International Literature. The author of a dozen volumes of poetry in Polish, Sommer has also published essays and interviews, translations, and literary anthologies.

His most recent work available in English is *Continued*, a book of poems published by Wesleyan Press.

Sommer recommends some of his favorite Polish literature available in translation:

\* *Cinnamon Shops* and *Sanitarium under the Hour Glass*, by Bruno Schulz

"Perhaps the single best prose writer in Polish from the 20th century, Schulz was born in 1892 and killed in 1942 in the Drohobycz Ghetto. Translations of his work are from some 60 years ago. Because he's such a great writer and stylist, it would be high time to have him translated again—and then again. Many American authors such as Cynthia Ozick and Philip Roth were inspired by him, as were many writers

in other languages. He's sometimes compared to Franz Kafka, but that comparison may make little sense. Schulz's writing is terrific prose that has a lot in common with poetry, in the way he treats language. Simply read anything you can put your hands on by Bruno Schulz."

\* *My Century* and *With the Skin: Poems of Aleksander Wat*, by Aleksander Wat

"Wat is one of the three or four best Polish poets of the 20th century, and he seems to translate well. He was born in 1900 and died by suicide in 1967. He's one of the few who have been able to connect the existential and the linguistic so phenomenally, and to preserve a light touch, too. Wat began as a Dadaist, and was able to preserve that spirit even in the poems he wrote in the Gulag, where he spent a few years. Poet and fellow Pole Czesław Miłosz invited Wat to Berkeley in the early 1960s; Miłosz taped his conversations with Wat, a kind of intellectual odyssey, and years after Wat's death published them as *My Century*. It's a classic."

\* *Lodgings* by Andrzej Sosnowski

"Sosnowski's first book translated into English—a collection of 100 poems—will be published in March by Rochester's own Open Letter press. Generally considered one of the best poets writing in Polish today, Sosnowski's work is difficult and beautiful. Part of the beauty lies in the way the cryptic quality of the 'message' combines with how the language works. He collaborated with his translator in producing this volume, so the result should be really interesting. He is original himself, and yet, because he is influential among the younger crowd, his work also shows something 'typical' about where some of the new Polish writing is going."



Piotr Sommer



# Selected Poems by Czesław Miłosz

In celebration of the hundredth anniversary of Czesław Miłosz' birth, we have reprinted a few of his poems. Miłosz lived through the terrible twentieth century in Central Europe, and his perspective is marked by the fact that he was a Pole who grew up in Vilnius, a city that is no longer Polish, but was a multicultural crossroads before World War II. As Miłosz wrote in *Native Realms*, "My roots were nurtured by a soil that was inhospitable to new plantings, a great many precepts advocating tolerance had penetrated me, and they were out of step with my century." The first poem is personal, and suggests a kind of poetic distance.

## My-Ness

"My parents, my husband, my brother, my sister."  
I am listening in a cafeteria at breakfast.  
The women's voices rustle, fulfill themselves  
In a ritual no doubt necessary.  
I glance sidelong at their moving lips  
And I delight in being here on earth  
For one more moment, with them, here on earth,  
To celebrate our tiny, tiny my-ness.

## Mojosc

"Moi rodzice, mój m\_\_\_, moja siostra", „Jem „niadanie w  
kafeterii, zas\_uchany „G\_osy kobiet szeleszcz\_ i spe\_niaj\_  
si\_ „W rytuale, który jest nam potrzebny „K\_tem oka  
przygl\_dam si\_ ruchliwym ustom „I s\_odko mi, „e jestem tu  
na ziemi „Jeszcze chwil\_, razem, tu na ziemi, \_\_eby  
celebrowa\_nasz\_\_ma\_\_mojo\_\_.

Miłosz thought in terms of long stretches of history, which caused him to juxtapose the burning of a martyr in Rome with the destruction of the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw in this poem, written during the war.

## Campo Dei Fiori

In Rome on the Campo dei Fiori  
baskets of olives and lemons,  
cobblestones spattered with wine  
and the wreckage of flowers:  
vendors cover the trestles  
with rose-pink fish;  
armfuls of dark grapes  
heaped on peach-down.

On this same square  
they burned Giordano Bruno.  
Henchmen kindled the pyre  
close-pressed by the mob.  
Before the flames had died  
the taverns were full again,  
baskets of olives and lemons  
again on the vendors' shoulders.

I thought of the Campo dei Fiori  
in Warsaw by the sky-carousel  
one clear spring evening  
to the strains of a carnival tune.  
The bright melody drowned  
the salvos from the ghetto wall,  
and couples were flying  
high in the cloudless sky.

At times wind from the burning  
would drift dark kites along  
and riders on the carousel  
caught petals in midair.  
That same hot wind  
blew open the skirts of the girls  
and the crowds were laughing

On that beautiful Warsaw Sunday  
Someone will read as moral  
that the people of Rome or Warsaw  
haggle, laugh, make love  
as they pass by martyrs' pyres.  
Someone else will read  
of the passing of things human,  
of the oblivion  
born before the flames have died.

But that day I thought only  
of the loneliness of the dying,  
of how, when Giordano  
climbed to his burning  
he could not find  
in any human tongue  
words for mankind,  
mankind who live on.

Already they were back at their wine  
or peddled their white starfish,  
baskets of olives and lemons  
they had shouldered to the fair,  
and he already distanced  
as if centuries had passed  
while they paused just a moment  
for his flying in the fire.

Those dying here, the lonely  
forgotten by the world,  
our tongue becomes for them  
the language of an ancient planet.  
Until, when all is legend  
and many years have passed,  
on a new Campo dei Fiori  
rage will kindle as a poet's words.



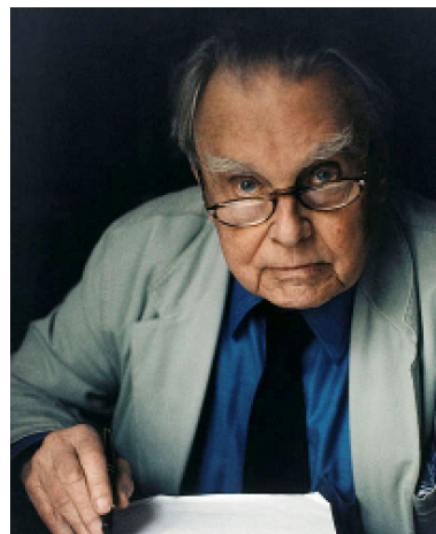
Campo Dei Fiori

## Campo Dei Fiori

W Rzymie na Campo di Fiori  
Kosze oliwek i cytryn,  
Bruk opryskany winem  
I od\_ankami kwiatów.  
Ró\_owe owoce morza  
Syp\_i na sto\_y przekupnie,  
Nar\_cza ciemnych winogron  
Padaj\_ na puch brzoskwiń.

Tu na tym w\_a\_nie placu  
Spalono Giordana Bruna,  
Kat\_p\_omie\_sosu za\_egn\_\_  
W kole ciekawej gawiedzi.  
A ledwo p\_omie\_przygasn\_\_  
Znów pe\_ne by\_y tawerny,  
Kosze oliwek i cytryn  
Nie\_li przekupnie na g\_owach.

Wspomnia\_em Campo di Fiori  
W Warszawie przy kanuzeli,  
W pogodny wieczór wiosenny,  
Przy d\_wi\_kach skocznej muzyki.  
Salwy za murem getta



Czesław Miłosz

G\_uszy\_a skoczna melodia  
I wziętywa\_y pary  
Wysoko w pogodne niebo.

Czasem wiatr z domów p\_on\_cych  
Przynosi\_czame latawce,  
\_apali skrawki w powietrzu  
Jad\_cy na kanuzeli.  
Rozwiewa\_suknie dziewczynom  
Ten wiatr od domów p\_on\_cych,  
\_mia\_y si\_t\_umy weso\_e  
W czas pi\_knej warszawskiej niedzieli.

Mora\_kto\_mo\_e wyczyta,  
\_e lud warszawski czy rzymski  
Handluje, bawi si\_, kocha  
Mijaj\_c\_m\_cze\_skie stopy.  
Inny kto\_mora\_wyczyta  
O rzeczy ludzkich mijaniu,  
O zapomnieniu, co ro\_nie,  
Nim jeszcze p\_omie\_przygasn\_\_.

Ja jednak wtedy my\_la\_em  
O samotno\_ci gin\_cych.  
O tym,\_e kiedy Giordano  
Wst\_powa\_na rusztowanie,  
Nie znalaz\_w ludzkim\_jzyku  
Ani jednego wyrazu,  
Aby nim ludzko\_po\_egna\_  
T\_ludzko\_, która zostaje.

Ju\_biegi wychyla\_wino,  
Sprzedawa\_bia\_e rozgwiezdy,  
Kosze oliwek i cytryn  
Nie\_li w weso\_ym gwarze.  
I by\_ju\_od nich odleg\_y,  
Jakby min\_y wieki,  
A oni chwil\_czekali  
Na jego odlot w po\_arze.

I ci gin\_cy, samotni,  
Ju\_zapomniani od\_wiała,  
J\_zyk nasz sta\_si\_im obcy  
Jak j\_zyk dawnej planety.  
A\_wszystko b\_dzie legend\_  
I wtedy po wielu latach  
Na nowym Campo di Fiori  
Bunt wzniesi\_s\_owo poety.



Looking back on the twentieth century from the vantage point of 1980, the following poem reveals a sadder, wiser Miłosz.

### Bypassing rue Descartes

I descended toward the Seine, shy, a traveler,  
A young barbarian just come to the capital of the world.

We were many, from Jassy and Koloshsvar, Wilno and  
Bucharest,  
Saigon and Marrekesh,  
Ashamed to remember the customs of our homes,  
About which nobody here should ever be told:  
The dapping for servants, barefooted girls hurry in,  
Dividing food with incantation,  
Choral prayers recited by master and household together.

I had left the cloudy provinces behind,  
I entered the universal, dazzled and desiring.

Soon enough, many from Jassy and Koloshsvar, or Saigon or  
Marrakesh  
Would be killed because they wanted to abolish the customs of  
their homes.

Soon enough, their peers were seizing power  
In order to kill in the name of the universal, beautiful ideas.

Meanwhile the city behaved in accordance with its nature,  
Rustling with throaty laughter in the dark,  
Baking long breads and pouring wine into clay pitchers,  
Buying fish, lemons, and garlic at street markets,  
Indifferent as it was to honor and shame and greatness and  
glory,  
Because that had been done already and had transformed  
itself

Into monuments representing nobody knows whom,  
into arias hardly audible and into turns of speech.

Again, I lean on the rough granite of the embankment,  
As if I had returned from travels through the underworlds  
And suddenly saw in the light the reeling wheel of the seasons  
Where empires have fallen and those once living are now  
dead.

There is no capital of the world, neither here nor anywhere  
else,  
And the abolished customs are restored to their small fame.  
And now I know that the time of human generations is not like  
the time of the earth.

As to my heavy sins, I remember one most vividly:  
How, one day, walking on a forest path along a stream,  
I pushed a rock down onto a water snake coiled in the grass.

And what I have met with in life was the just punishment  
Which reaches, sooner or later, the breaker of a taboo.

### Rue Descartes

Mijaj\_c ulic\_Descartes  
Schodzi\_em ku Sekwanie, m\_ody barbarzy\_ca w podró\_y  
Onie\_mielony przybyciem do stolicy\_wiata.

By\_o nas wielu, z Jass i Koloszwaru, Wilna i Bukaresztu,  
Sajgonu i Marakesz,  
Wstydliwie pami\_taj\_cych domowe zwyczaje  
O których nie nale\_a\_o mówi\_tu nikomu:  
Kla\_ni\_cie na s\_u\_b\_, nadbiegaj\_dziewki bose,  
Dzielenie pokarmów z inkantacjami,  
Chórálne mod\_y odprowadzane przez panów i ozelad\_.

Zostawi\_em za sob\_ pochmurne powiaty.  
Wkracza\_em w uniwersalne, podziwiaj\_c, pragn\_c.

Nast\_pnie wielu z Jass i Koloszwaru, albo Sajgonu albo  
Marakesz  
By\_o zabijanych poniewa\_ chcieli obali\_ domowe zwyczaje.

Nast\_pnie ich koledzy zdobywali w\_adz\_  
\_eby zabija\_ w imi\_pi\_knych idei uniwersalnych.

Tymczasem zgodnie ze swoj\_natur\_ zachowywa\_o si\_ miasto,  
Gard\_owym\_miechem odzywaj\_c si\_ w ciemno\_d,  
Wypiekaj\_c\_d\_ugie chleby i w gliniane dzbanki nalewaj\_c wino,  
Ryby, cytryny i czosnek kupuj\_c na targach,  
Oboj\_tne na honor i ha\_b\_ i wielko\_ i chwa\_.

Poniewa\_to wszystko ju\_by\_o i zmieni\_o si\_  
W pomniki przedstawiaj\_c nie wiadomo kogo,  
W ledwo\_s\_yszalne arie albo zwroty mowy.

Znowu opieram\_okcie o szorstki granit nabrze\_a,  
Jakbym wróci\_z w\_drówk po krajach podziemnych  
I nagle zobaczy\_w\_wietle kr\_cie si\_ko\_o sezonów

Tam gdzie upad\_y imperia, a ci\_co\_yli, umarli.  
I nie ma ju\_tu i nigdzie stolicy\_wiata.  
I wszystkim obalonym zwyczajom wrócono ich dobre imi\_  
I ju\_wiem,\_e czas ludzkich pokole\_niepodobny do czasu  
Ziem.

A z ci\_kich moich grzechów jeden najlepiej pami\_tam:  
Jak przechodz\_c raz le\_n\_cie\_k\_ nad potokiem  
Zrzuci\_em du\_y kamie\_na wodnego\_w\_a\_zwini\_tego w  
trawie.

I co mnie w\_yciu spotka\_o by\_o s\_uszn\_kar\_  
Która pr\_dziej czy pó\_niej\_ami\_cego zakaz dosi\_gnie.

The final selection sounds like an epitaph, but perhaps it  
does not apply to Miłosz. There is reason to hope that his mis-  
sion will not be forgotten, and his language will not be lost.



Rue Descartes

### The Fall

The death of a man is like the fall of a mighty nation  
That had valiant armies, captains, and prophets,  
And wealthy ports and ships all over the seas,  
But now it will not relieve any besieged city,  
It will not enter into any alliance,  
Because its cities are empty, its population dispersed,  
Its land once bringing harvest is overgrown with thistles,  
Its mission forgotten, its language lost,  
The dialect of a village high upon inaccessible mountains.

### Upadek

\_mier\_cz\_owika jest jak upadek pa\_stwa pot\_nego,  
Które mia\_o bitne armie, wodzów i proroków,  
I porty bogate, i na wszystkich morzach okr\_ty,  
A teraz nie przyjdzie nikomu z pomoc\_, z nikim nie zawrze  
przymierzy,

Bo miasta jego puste, ludno\_w rozproszeni\_u,  
Oset porós\_ jego ziemie kiedy\_daj\_c\_urodzaj,  
Jego powo\_anie zapomniane, j\_zyk utracony,  
Dialekt wioski gdzie\_daleko w niedost\_pnych górach.

## Sonata in the Flower City: Rochester's Place in the Life of Paderewski Celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of a Great Musician's Birth



By Kathleen Urbanic

He was one of the most acclaimed figures of his time — a virtuoso pianist and composer with charismatic appeal, renowned as well as an orator, statesman, and humanitarian. His social circle included princes, presidents, artists, and Hollywood stars. As representative of Poland, he signed the Versailles Treaty that restored his homeland's independence after more than a century. In the annals of Rochester's history, it is worth noting that the Flower City holds a distinctive place in the life of this man called a "modern immortal," Ignacy Jan Paderewski.

Paderewski first performed in Rochester in 1892, presenting original works as well as selections from Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin, and Liszt on his second US tour. He returned to Rochester several times during his career, earning both critical acclaim and popular affection. In 1916, a reviewer for the *Post Express* applauded the "fine intelligence," "wonderful minuteness of effect," and "high plane of emotional power" evident in his playing. In 1928, a *Democrat and Chronicle* reviewer marveled at the poetic effect of Paderewski's all-Chopin program, noting that "Paderewski's plummet of interpretation of



Chopin goes deeper and finds certain beautiful musical detail, sounds the full spirit of the music more completely than other interpretations do." Rochester concert halls were always filled to capacity for his performances, with chairs often set up on stage to accommodate an overflow crowd.

Among Rochester's citizens of Polish descent, Paderewski's appearances generated great excitement and immense pride. For them, he embodied the spirit and culture of their homeland, particularly and poignantly during the period before the First World War when Poland was under foreign rule. Whenever Paderewski visited, Rochester's Polish community organized a special welcome and

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# Polish Jazz: Modernism behind the Iron Curtain



By Zbigniew Granat



The lecture I presented at the Skalny Center last fall focused on the emergence of modern jazz in Poland of the 1960s, a development that offers a fascinating glimpse into the reception and transformation of American jazz on the other side of the Iron Curtain. This process began with an extensive imitation of American models, which in this part of Europe was hampered by censorship and other restraints imposed by socialist regimes. In Poland, in 1949 socialist realism, or *socrealizm* in Polish jargon, was declared the official, one and only artistic ideology at a series of national conventions and meetings of ideologues and artists, who were put up to represent the visual arts, theater, film, architecture, and music. This doctrine, which demanded that all art be "socialist in content, and national in form," did not last for very long, as immediately following Stalin's death in 1953 the restrictions imposed on art began to loosen. Artists' groups began demanding greater freedoms, and Communist officials realized that they had to make some concessions in order to stay in power. The arts, including art music and jazz, greatly benefited from the political "thaw" of the early 1950s.

Polish jazz in its modern sense did not exist before 1955. Stylistically, the music played in Poland at the time was heavily influenced by Dixieland and swing, with only occasional touches of bebop and cool. Still, the search for the discovery of progressive ways of playing was already on. A strong impulse came from an unlikely source: the Voice of America's new music program called *Music USA*, hosted by broadcaster Willis Conover. A year earlier the VOA hired Conover in the wake of increased efforts by the U.S. State Department and USIA to include jazz in their cultural outreach programs, designed as anti-Soviet propaganda. Conover, it

was hoped, would accomplish a specific task: to turn the music he loved into a "secret sonic weapon." Beginning on January 6, 1955, a segment of his daily broadcast called *Jazz Hour* became the main intercontinental tunnel through which "the music of freedom" unabashedly traveled across the borders to all corners of the Eastern Bloc. This provided a window to the best in American jazz, and at the same time became the main form of jazz education, and this ultimately

proved instrumental in the development of many diverse styles of European jazz. Although it became a cliché to hear that someone had learned how to play jazz from Willis Conover, there are indeed thousands of testimonies to the inspiration this program was for the Soviet Bloc and the world. As a man whose broadcasts made him the best-known American abroad, Conover may have been, as Gene Lees noted, one of the "unsung heroes" who did the most to bring down the Soviet Union.

## Polish Jazz

Andrzej KURYLEWICZ  
 Polish Big Band

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It is not the case, however, that when Conover launched his jazz program, the music was still blacklisted in Poland, as was still the case in the rest of the Soviet Bloc. In fact, by the mid-1950s Poland functioned as a meeting place of two politically opposed currents: the American propaganda that used jazz to promote the superiority of the West; and the socialist propaganda, which gradually embraced jazz in an effort to project a progressive image to the outside world. This embrace of a Western product by a com-



Sopot Jazz Festival, (1956)







ish Film Chronicle), in which the presentation of positive aspects of life in the Polish People's Republic – popularized in select *yo "News" news stories, current affairs, and cultural events – was luxuriantly accompanied by the uplifting sounds of jazz. Thus, in a rather remarkable twist of events these two political currents surrounding jazz seemed to merge. The "sonic weapon" did its work, luring the youth with its magical spell of coolness, while the establishment decided to go modern and capitalize on the nation's fascination with these "exotic" sounds. However unusual this configuration may have appeared, it was no doubt extremely advantageous for jazz.*

The year 1956 represents a turning point in the post-war history of Polish jazz, as in Polish history generally. In August the first official jazz festival was held at the seaside resort of Sopot, just a month before the first "Warsaw Autumn" Festival opened in the Polish capital, and only two years after Newport, Rhode Island, hosted its first jazz festival ever. From the political point of view, the Sopot event came two months after the workers' demonstrations in the Polish city of Poznań and two months before the beginning of the Hungarian revolt against the Stalinist government. Described by the press as "the Sopot earthquake," the festival stirred the emotions of the youth and elicited fears of rebellion among the guardians of the socialist order. Musically, the festival illustrated a passionate fascination among Polish musicians for a variety of jazz styles, ranging from Dixieland to cool and hard bop. The most modern group at the festival was the Komeda Sextet, led by Krzysztof "Komeda" Trzaskowski (1931-1969), a young doctor who had abandoned his medical career in order to pursue his love for jazz. He was soon to become an iconic figure in Polish jazz and an internationally known composer of music for over 40 films.

In 1965 Krzysztof Komeda recorded *Astigmatic*, the first significant free jazz album in Poland and one of the landmark recordings in the history of European jazz. A collaborative effort of Komeda, Staśko, and Zbigniew Namysłowski from Poland, bassist Günter Lenz from West Germany, and drummer Rune Carlson from Sweden, the album featured extended free compositions by Komeda – "Astigmatic," "Kattorna," and "Svantetic" – which originated a completely new direction for jazz, one that was deeply rooted in a specific "Slavic feeling." This album thus marked a high point in the long development from "jazz in Poland" to "Polish jazz," a journey that seems to have traveled at the speed of light.

The term "Polish jazz" should not be taken to imply the existence of a national jazz school, especially one grounded in Polish folk traditions, al-

though numerous efforts to adapt various folk materials to jazz were made during this period. These included Jan Wróblewski's "Bandoska in Blue," the first response to Willis Conover's call for folk-influenced jazz, Variations on the "Chmiel" Theme and Variations on "Near the forest" by Andrzej Trzaskowski, as well as a number of later pieces by Zbigniew Namysłowski. Considering the bastardization of the folk idiom in mass songs and similar musical inventions of *socialist realism*, this renewed interest in folk music among the new generation of Polish jazz musicians may seem somewhat unexpected. And yet, it is compelling to view this phenomenon as an attempt to reclaim the folk traditions and recast them in a new, modernist spirit.



**Andrzej Kurylewicz's Quintet, (1962)**

However, most Polish musicians from that period would have objected to any nationalistic claims. In a 1966 interview, pianist Andrzej Trzaskowski claimed that the mainstream of contemporary music, including world jazz, was international in scope rather than national, and so the creation of a "Polish school" was unlikely. Nevertheless, Trzaskowski did admit the possibility of a common pool of stylistic features, perceivable more in terms of mood rather than technique, which might unite the work of Polish jazz musicians. Without a doubt, all significant names in Polish jazz at that time (Krzysztof Komeda, Tomasz Staśko, Andrzej Kurylewicz, Włodzimierz Nahorny, Zbigniew Namysłowski and Trzaskowski himself) developed their own individual styles, but they also jointly contributed to the transformation of the received models of American jazz into an experimental art music that had an unmistakable Polish flavor. This musical idiom represents one of the most original developments in the European East.

In Poland of the 1960s, with its strong nationalistic consciousness and aspirations for liberty, the unique style of Polish free jazz spoke to the listener with a particular force. Together with the highly unconventional, noise-based style of sonorism in art music, the intellectually challenging works of the so-called Polish Poster School and the self-reflective and "cool" productions of the Polish Film School, jazz greatly influenced the explosive cultural revival of the 1960s. Its presence was felt everywhere, as the music was not only played and recorded but it also interacted with the other arts: ballet, theater, cinema, poetry, and the visual arts. As a symbol of modernity, it played a crucial role in the shaping of Poland's modern cultural identity, defined by the country's unique position between East and West.

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## Sonata in the Flower City:



By Kathleen Urbanic

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often presented him with a gift conveying their regard, such as a pair of binoculars made by Bausch & Lomb, inscribed "From the Poles of Rochester to the Master of the Piano," in 1932. Leading members of the Polish community invited him to take tea with them and the "modern immortal" graciously obliged, enjoying refreshments at modest homes in Polish Town.

The bond between Paderewski and Rochester's Polish Americans became unshakable during World War I, when the great musician poured his energy into rallying support for Poland's independence and raising funds to aid Poles suffering in war-torn Europe. In hundreds of speeches delivered across the United States, he cited the historical ties between his homeland and America: "Pray speak about Poland to your kind, dear friends.... Tell them that these very people in the days of your need sent you Kościuszko, offered you Pulaski, and not for the pleasure of fighting the English, but for the noble joy of contributing to the glorious conquest of human lib-



erty." Responding to his call for "an army of Kościuszko" to fight alongside the Allied forces, Rochester's Poles opened a recruiting station at Polish Falcon Hall on Weyl Street and sent 258 of their sons to the Polish army mobilizing in France – above and beyond approximately 700 men from the Polish community who joined the American armed forces.

Most dramatically, Paderewski brought the city's attention to Poland's cause in June 1918 when the local Polish Citizens Committee arranged for him to address the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber was "stormed," the press reported, by "persons not only from this city but from many surrounding towns who filled the main floor and the balcony of the hall to overflowing." Police officers monitored the crowd pushing into the foyer and, despite an effort to fit additional guests in the galleries, hundreds who waited in hope of being seated had to be turned away. Paderewski's speech was riveting and effective, leading the War Chest to allocate \$100,000 for Polish relief on behalf of the people of Rochester. Supplementing this gen-

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**Sopot Jazz Festival, (1957)**



## Sonata in the Flower City:

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erous donation was an additional \$14,000 raised by the city's citizens of Polish descent.

After the war, Paderewski served as Poland's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and represented his homeland at the League of Nations. His career in politics was brief, however, and the master of the piano returned to music in 1922. His concert tours brought him again to Rochester where he was hailed as "one of the few picturesque figures left to us in these matter-of-fact days." In 1923, he literally inscribed his name on local history when he became the first visitor to sign the guest book at the Eastman School of Music, offering his compliments to the school and to its "noble and generous founder."

Paderewski continued to draw standing-room-only crowds through the 1930s. When he appeared here in May 1939, he was nearly 80 years old and it was clear there would not be many more performances. "Time and worldly sorrows have taken their toll of the man," wrote one music critic, but he "still is able by his supreme musicianship to go through with an exacting program and to rouse his audience by the inspiration of his playing.... Last night's experience is one that will never

be forgotten by those present. There never will be another Paderewski."

After the concert, which drew two encores, members of the local Polish community met Paderewski backstage "in a brief ceremony so touching that tears came to the eyes of several onlookers." A delegation from the Polonia Civic Centre greeted him and presented him with a copy of the *History of the Polish People in Rochester*. Paderewski acknowledged the heartfelt gift and thanked the group in Polish, then departed for the New York Central Railroad yard where a train was waiting to take him to his next performance at Madison Square Garden.

That performance never took place, and Rochester "won a sad and significant" distinction as the last city in which Paderewski played publicly. The pianist collapsed minutes before his New York City concert and departed, ailing, for his home in Switzerland as the remaining dates on the tour were cancelled. Many in Rochester would long remember his final appearance here, including workers at the New York Central yard who heard him practicing on the piano in his private car. "The melody he sent forth from the car gave yard hands many moments of pleasure," the *Times Union* noted, "moments for which many music lovers would have sacrificed much."



In tribute from a city that had longstanding affection for him, Rochesterians organized a Paderewski Testimonial Fund shortly after his death in 1941. The committee, headed by Dr. Howard Hanson of the Eastman School of Music and including representatives of Rochester's Polish community, designated the money raised for the Paderewski Polish Hospital in Edinburgh, which served Polish refugees in Britain during World War II. Surely, the master of the piano and Polish patriot would have been moved by this expression of deep regard from his friends in the Flower City.

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