SOLIDARITY

25 YEARS LATER

By David Ost

It was what everyone is saying it was. One of the great social movements of the 20th century. Probably the most democratic of the mass movements of the century. Incredibly wide in its scope, innovative in its organizational practices, with an openness of communication stunning for a movement of such size. Here was a movement founded on an innovative theory equating democracy with an active civil society, which understood that meaningful social change takes place every day in the lives of each person, and not just when new leaders take power.

And had there ever been a movement with such broad participation? The terms today seem archaic, for social categories were simpler then, but the alliance of workers and intellectuals within a single organization was real, powerful, and unprecedented. Each group saw that the other took genuine risks and invested real effort in the common project, and it was this that made it impossible for the inbliet to divide them. The Party had succeeded in uniting society—against itself—and the result was a new world being created every day.

An intoxicating ethos of participation lies at the root of this movement. I first experienced it during a visit in March 1981, my third time to the country. Whether at the celebrations in Warsaw University of the 13th anniversary of the 1968 events, or in Bydgoszcz during the farmers’ protest that almost led to a nationwide general strike, everyone wanted to have their voice heard. Some had their doubts. A farmer apologized to me that their meeting that day had lasted nine hours, worried that this was not the “real” democracy of which I apparently was an expert, and then explained: “But everyone needed finally to speak!” All I could say is that this was in the great tradition of democracy that had been absent for a long time.

A powerful social movement bringing together virtually the entire population on a program of democratic rights against an unpopular dictatorial state: it was this that excited the world’s imagination and, perhaps paradoxically, caused the global left to support it far more than the right, which valued stability and feared mass movements. Poles were teaching the world a great deal about democracy, and it seemed likely they would go on doing so for a long time to come.

And yet something happened along the way, and by 1989 things were quite different. The world watched in wonder as Solidarity and government elites peacefully dismantled the system, first with the Round Table accords and then through a newly elected parliament. But it was already evident: working people seemed to be absent through all this. They had appeared briefly in 1988, making the strikes that forced the government to the negotiating table. And then Solidarity, its leadership dominated by intellectuals far more than in 1981, asked them to recede. Workers were asked to leave politics, management, and even the workplace to others, and to accept the sacrifices that their leaders determined necessary. The Solidarity leadership had decided that a narrow meaning of citizenship was better suited to the tasks at hand than the expansive one they had articulated in 1988. So they asked people to go to the polls, but not to do much more than that. Workers did not know it yet, but the organization they had built now feared them, more than it feared the remnants of the old regime. The union’s official journal, Solidarity Weekly, instructed workers to respect their managers and to “actively participate in (or at least silently accept) a policy of reductions, belt-tighten-
SOLIDARITY: 25 YEARS LATER

By David Ost

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had catapulted into positions as company manag-

ers and entrepreneurs. The new symbolic hero was the young entrepreneur, not the descendants of Wajda’s Birkut.

The point is not that intellectuals “betrayed” workers. These were of course different times than in 1980, when it was held that intellectuals had abandoned solidarity with a small ‘s’: those with higher education tried to get ahead on their own, now that they finally could. But was there anything wrong with that? Hadn’t the abolition of the nomenklatura system been one of Solidarity’s major victories? Did not intellectuals genuinely believe that what they were doing was crucial to a successful democracy, in which everyone would eventually be able to prosper. Moreover, the labor-intellectual alliance could not have lasted forever. Even in the 1970s, when the system was in its prime, a majority of intellectuals did not believe that “there is no alternative.” With their suggestions and complaints never taken seriously, many now got angry. Angry at the way their former allies had cut them off, angry at bearing the brunt of all the cutbacks, and then angry at being charged with “populism” or “irrational.” They really raised a ruckus.

Anger itself was not the problem. Societies split by class inequalities always contain a great deal of anger. In the west, trade unions arose precisely in order to capture that anger, and channel it toward inclusive reforms that stabilized the system. In Po-

land after 1989, however, even Solidarity leaders were wary of trade unions. The anger was a problem precisely because it was available—to savvy politicians who might want to capture it for their own interests and turn it into a substitute satisfaction that solved nothing.

Conservatives were smarter than that. Like conservatives everywhere, they understood that anger was not enough; they had to have some substitute satisfactions to make for it. Thus they developed the neoliberalism that leaves people more disillusioned instead of more hopeful. Anger even more. No wonder more extreme right-wing parties like Self-Defense and League of Polish Families gained strength afterwards, setting the stage for the uneasy and often fractious relationship between the Solidarity allemanners and their Law and Justice party, now governing Poland in an increasingly illiberal, anti-democratic way (such as by banning demonstrations of organizations they don’t like). This is the same dynamic that has enabled the radical right to a convincing victory in the USA: winning the support of downwardly mobile white workers by claiming to re-

The Solidarity movement of 1980-81 was an extraordinary human tragedy in its wake. And anytime workers protest, they are either warmed (by liberals) against being populists, or urged (by conservatives) to be angry at atheists and communists instead.

When I say Solidarity was defeated, I mean the democratic vision and the democratic practices that it enacted, every single day, in 1980-81. This is not a matter of idealizing those days—filled as they were with tension, shortages, and the everpresent threat of repression. But there were some incredibly valu-

able experiments going in those days—such as an experiment in democracy, trying to reconcile conflicts by consensus, a participatory ethos that made even “the least of my brethren” feel he or she was taken seriously. Not all of these, of course, can be applied today. Unfortunately, however, hardly anyone has even tried, so we still don’t know what might yet be salvaged. Indeed, one of the most startling things, to an outsider, is the al-

most complete lack of attention devoted in Poland to what actually happened in 1980-81. Much has been written about what the Party and the Soviets were afraid of, and recently we’ve seen a great deal of interest in who the secret police were recruiting. But as to how these 16 months were lived and experienced, how Solidarity’s democracy looked concretely in, say, Warsaw or Poznan, or Mielec or Bytom—of this there is barely a word.

Of course, after winning elections on a platform claiming abortion, atheism, and communism as the country’s main evil, a radical right can look good in a liberalized world. We ought to try to recapture it today. For it might turn out that the intellectuals in 1980 were right all along: we all do have a learn.

Ost is professor in the Department of Political Science at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. He was the guest speaker at the Skalny Center’s March 29 luncheon seminar in Wilson Commons on the River Campus.
Message from the Director

By Ewa Hauser

Continued from page 1

For me personally, it was a delightful surprise. I was humbled when receiving the Cavalier Cross of Merit with a document signed by the President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski. Having left Poland in the middle of the communist period when the cooperation with Polish diplomats would not have been welcomed by most of my friends as “collaboration” (in Polish “kolaboracja,” which indicates a treacherous alliance with the enemy), it was also a happy sign of the final victory of democracy and normalization in the relationship between Polish citizens and their government.

At the end of the academic year, the new Consul General from New York, Krzysztof Kaspryzk, visited with University of Rochester President Joel Seligman. Consul Kaspryzk talked about the many important links between his hometown, Kraków, and Rochester. An alumnus of Jagiellonian University (MS in physics, 1971), he invited the UR president to visit his hometown and his alma mater. Now we are hoping to strengthen the alliance and exchange visits by the leaders of the universities, which will follow already established scholarly collaborations and student and faculty exchanges. We hope that after this anticipated visit, a new stage of even closer cooperation between our universities will follow.

Our academic collaborations significantly expanded this past year to include a Jagiellonian doctoral student, Magda Modzelewska, hosted by the Center and the Department of Political Science. Magda first met our UR delegation and spoke with the chairman of the political science department, Gerald Gamm, when we visited Kraków in March 2005. She worked on American political theory and James Johnson, a professor on the Rochester faculty, kindly agreed to meet with her regularly and to talk about her research and writing progress. Magda’s visit was supported by a Japanese grant given to the best Jagiellonian graduate students. Another doctoral student, Luiza Nader from Warsaw University’s Art History Department, also visited to study Polish conceptual artists—many of whom emigrated to New York City. Luiza’s arrival was made possible by a Fulbright fellowship and an invitation by art history professor Rachel Haidu. Luiza’s musician husband, Mikolaj Palosz, and a baby son accompanied her. She presented an exceptional talk for a Skalny luncheon in October, and Mikolaj played his cello at a Skalny concert in December.

Radoslaw Rybkowski, the deputy director of the American Studies Center at the Jagiellonian, arrived as another guest “Speaking Stones” led by Professor Anthea Butler. The courses were very interesting, of high quality, and contributed to the development of my acquaintance with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

During the spring semester, Michal Galas, visiting professor of Judaic Studies from the Jagiellonian University, taught a course on “Jewish Civilization in Poland” and gave a series of talks at UR and in the community. In March, Gerald Gamm of political science returned to Poland for three weeks, teaching a short university on American political parties at the Jagiellonian American Studies Center. This was a significant development and marked the first teaching visit of a UR faculty member to Jagiellonian University. The first, but not the last.

In May, the Skalny Center showcased Adam Makowicz at the piano in Kilbourn Hall. We all enjoyed his wonderful jazz music during the recital and a reception afterwards (see Krzysztof Polakowski’s article in this issue). We are very grateful to Andrew Gos and his wife, the mayor and dean of the Eastman School of Music Concert Operations who helped us enormously to make this event a success. Also in May, we hosted the 13th Annual Polish Youth Concert at the Lower Strong Auditorium, co-sponsored by the Department of Music and the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester (see Bozena Sobolewska’s article).

One of the best attended Skalny lectures this year was given by David Ost, the preeminent social scientist whose research and writings have been devoted entirely to the study of Polish intellectuals. David’s talk, based on his latest book titled (ironically) The Defeat of Solidarity (Cornell University Press, 2005), was terribly critiqued by Randall Stone, a UR political science professor specializing in international relations. Randy’s excellent comments were welcomed by Ost and the audience. In this issue, there is a synopsis of Ost’s argument.

Now I am looking forward to directing the first UR study abroad session in Kraków with 10 excellent students whose interests in studying Polish cover a spectrum of issues from linguistic fascination with one of the most complicated of Indo-European languages (see Joyce Fleck’s essay) to historical and contemporary changes (Poland as an ally of the U.S.—see the essay by Chase Hannon) and interest in the students’ ancestral and cultural roots. Professors Rybkowski and Galas will help me teach a course on the historical multiculturalism of Poland. This study on the relationship between Polish and Central European students over a decade ago. I am very sorry to inform you that he is leaving the University of Rochester as of July 1, 2006. We congratulate him on his new position as senior vice provost and dean of undergraduate education at the University of Miami.

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Rochester Impressions from Warsaw University Student-Scholar

By Anna Kucharska

Thanks to the cooperation between Warsaw University and the University of Rochester, I had the opportunity this year to take part in a special student exchange program in the United States. It gave me the chance not only to experience student life on campus in Rochester, but also to gather materials for my master’s thesis. The six-week program was financed by four institutions: the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, the Fulbright Foundation, and these two universities. Everything was well organized, beginning with my courses, through housing and ending with travel opportunities.

I could choose from two to four courses. Because I’m writing my master’s thesis on “The Image of Mormons in the USA,” I chose courses connected with religious issues. I selected “The History of Persecution and Religious Martyrs” taught by Professor Janusz Kapelush, “Judaic Studies” taught by Professor Anthea Butler. The courses were very interesting, of high quality, and the lecturers were well prepared and helpful. Not only did the courses give me the opportunity to deepen my knowledge of religious life in the United States, but also let me get to know the area in and around Rochester. In order to get a grade at the end of the courses, I wrote informative essays that contributed to the development of my acquaintance with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It had been almost impossible in Poland to collect materials for my thesis because I could find only two books connected with Mormonism. Moreover, because of the fact that Rochester is located near Palmyra, N.Y.—the birthplace of Mormonism—I was able to visit places directly associated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In Rochester, I visited two books connected with Mormonism. Moreover, because of the fact that Rochester is located near Palmyra, N.Y.—the birthplace of Mormonism—I was able to visit places directly associated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In Rochester, I visited the Joseph Smith Foundation and the Joseph Smith Birthplace Memorial Museum. I also went to many of his hometown and his alma mater. Now we are hoping to strengthen the alliance and exchange visits by the leaders of the universities, which will follow already established scholarly collaborations and student and faculty exchanges. We hope that after this anticipated visit, a new stage of even closer cooperation between our universities will follow.

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Anna was one of five visiting students in fall 2005 from the American Studies Center at Warsaw University.
The Seven Wonders of Rochester

By Radoslaw Rybkowski

When I was just about to come to Rochester, I checked the Web sites for the University, the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies, and the City of Rochester as well. And I came to the conclusion that I would not find any wonder when I arrived. I felt Rochester was a typical post-industrial American city, with typical problems of crime and not-so-sustainable development. The University of Rochester seemed to be a very good university, but not the ultimate top of American universities. It would be a good place to go, to conduct research, but not to travel. I was very wrong. Here I found my own personal seven wonders that make my Rochester a wonderful dream. For others, these are good reasons to come to Rochester.

1. Lake Ontario. I heard about Lake Ontario a lot. Some of my friends described it as a big lake, even a very big one, with some very nice beaches. I came far too late to enjoy swimming and sun-bathing, but just walking on the shore was a relaxing experience. At the end of my stay in Rochester, when the temperature dropped below freezing, I went to Ontario Beach again and walked the pier. As you can see from this picture—the lake just looked awesome. Ice-covered fences and ice on the pier touched by the light of the sunset created an unforgettable atmosphere.

2. Sibley Library. I am not a specialist in music, although I love American musicals and I love to listen to good music. At the Sibley Music Library of the Eastman School of Music, I had the opportunity to listen to shelves full of music: some very familiar, old and classical (because of the composers and performers); some rather new, experimental and popular. Sitting in the library with ears covered by headphones brought me to the regions of music I have never before explored. Coming to Rochester, I was not thinking about music at all. But being told about the unique chance of using this exceptional collection, I could not resist the temptation. And now I could only wish I had had more time to spend there.

3. Eastman Theatre. I did my Ph.D. in the history of American theater, and from time to time I teach courses on the history of American theater and film. Because of that, theater buildings are always points of interest for me. But this particular building, now used mainly for musical concerts, is especially interesting because it can easily evoke the atmosphere of the “glory days” of Rochester. Come here even if you are not interested in music. Keep your eyes open and imagine the booming economy of Rochester, Rochesterian tycoons coming to see new film releases, beautifully dressed ladies with big hats. Wasn’t it wonderful?

4. University of Rochester. During my previous visits to the United States, I always stayed in New York City, at the very urban campuses of Columbia and New York University. I visited Harvard, Princeton, and Carnegie Mellon—but only as a tourist. So for the first time in my life, I was able to experience the atmosphere of a rather secluded campus. The Eastman Quadrangle is my favorite place: I could see it green, then with colorful leaves and covered with snow at last. The place is wonderful, especially in the late afternoon when the Rush Rhees Library is gently touched by the reddish light of afternoon sun, and the Interfaith Chapel’s stained glass can be seen even from the outside. Such a breathtaking view helped me understand why Americans like university campuses so much.

5. Polish and Central European Club. This was my most unexpected wonder. Of course, knowing the work of the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies, and having met Professor Ewa Hauser long before my arrival in Rochester, I was sure that Poland would not be terra incognita for students of the University, but it was an amazing experience to meet students, from freshmen to Take Five scholars, interested in Poland, devoting their own time and energy during extracurricular activities of this student club. I enjoyed Polish food Wednesday in Wilson Commons and I enjoyed the Polish (and Central European) Wigilia very much. I proudly wear the club’s T-shirt when I am back in Poland.

6. University of Rochester. This is not a mistake. The University of Rochester is listed once again—this time for its students. Those who attended my course were just wonderful. I liked every minute I spent with them during my classes, during my office hours and during our informal encounters at the bus stop, at the library or in Wilson Commons. All the e-mails we exchanged were important feedback for me. I noticed their passion and their interest, and I can only hope that my course helped them to better understand the very recent history of Poland.

7. And last but not least, the seventh wonder: The People. The impact of this wonder will surely be long-lasting. (Of course, students are people, too, but they deserved, I think, a separate paragraph.)

Many times, absolutely unexpectedly, I met people who were interested in what I was teaching, what I was investigating, and what were my future academic and non-academic plans. All of them left some mark on my life, helping me to find new goals and the energy for reaching them. Generous in their support, clever in their advice, heart-touching in their personal relations—they pushed me to my future life “full of delicious possibilities” (as it is said in my favorite musical, Ragtime). During my stay, I met so many people that I could not count them all. Although I know that thousands of miles away from Rochester, I am pretty sure that I could always count on the people I met here, on my friends.

So these are the seven wonders I found in Rochester. Because of all of them, I will never forget the time I spent here.

Poetry in Ivory

By Krzysztof Polakowski

Maestro Adam Makowicz for the second time in Rochester, N.Y! This long awaited musical event, initiated and organized by the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies at the University of Rochester, took place in Kilbourn Hall on May 12.

Many of his admirers and enthusiasts, still remember his first recital at St. John Fishers College some 14 years ago. For those who attended this first Rochester recital, Makowicz remained loyal to his musical preferences (improvisations on Chopin’s themes, best standards of Gershwin, Porter, Ellington); what changed, however, is a number of his own new compositions collected recently on two CDs: “Songs for Manhattan” and “From my Fields.” He played some of them showing his great musical personality as a composer.

Makowicz admits his dedication to the “greatest jazz pianist of all times,” Art Tatum. Tatum’s recordings listened to by Makowicz in the late 1950s influenced greatly his switch to jazz as already a mature, well-educated classical pianist. Technical virtuosity developed during his musical studies in Poland contributed significantly to his future performances. Despite his admiration to Tatum, Makowicz does not attempt to imitate his improvisations and their unsurpassed sense of harmony. Unlike Tatum, Makowicz’s creations appear to be more elaborated and musically minded. He plays more creatively using his technical skills in a more restrained manner, with great taste and moderation. It was particularly evident in his improvisations on Chopin’s themes.

Adam Makowicz lives in “upper Manhattan,” but visits his native Poland every year, giving both solo recitals as well as playing with the nation’s finest symphony orchestras. His Rochester performance was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Louis Skalny Foundation.
Rabbi Marcus Jastrow
Symbol of Polish-Jewish Relations in the 19th Century

By Michai Galas

The one thousand years of Jewish history in Poland and Poland-Jewish relations are full of ups and downs, which have caused many common stereotypes, prejudices and misunderstandings. And many contemporary studies are concentrating on these negative aspects of Polish-Jewish relations. That is why I decided in my studies to turn my attention to Rabbi Marcus Jastrow, who can serve as a symbol and model of Polish-Jewish relations and cooperation, and who similarly as Kosciuszko and Pulaski links Poland and the United States.

Unfortunately, Jastrow is forgotten in contemporary historiography. The 100th anniversary of his death in 2003 found almost no response in Poland and the United States. With some motivation, I have started my adventure with Rabbi Marcus Jastrow, “the man of a full stature” to whom I dedicated the last years of my scholarly activities.

Rabbi Marcus M. Jastrow (1829-1903) was born in Rogozno and received his education in Poznan and Berlin. In 1858, with the support and recommendation of Heinrich Graetz, the distinguished historian, Jastrow was appointed a preacher of the so-called General Jewish congregation in Warsaw—one of the two progressive synagogues in Warsaw at that time.

Marcus Jastrow as a religious leader and reformer, and continued that direction of reform in his synagogue. In his opinion, his synagogue should be distinguished among the other synagogues and places of worship in Warsaw by its cleanliness and order during services. Such undertaking should attract Jews to attend the services, particularly youth who “need religious instruction”.

One of the most important parts of the reformed services in this synagogue were sermons, which Marcus Jastrow started to preach on holidays and each second Saturday. The introduction of Polish as a language of sermons was an important event in the history of this congregation. This innovation became very important because the congregation was growing up, and most of the new members did not know German. And the satisfaction as Marcus Jastrow was able to preach in Polish and introduced this custom to the synagogue.

When Jastrow became the preacher in Warsaw, he introduced also some small but meaningful changes, for example, he proposed to pray for the ruler not in Hebrew but in German and later Polish. And this direction of replacing Hebrew with German or Polish could be observed in support that Jastrow received from the authorities. Jastrow had a dilemma about whether he should stay in Warsaw. In the fall of 1863, he was deported to Prussia, because he was a Prussian citizen, instead of being sent to Siberia.

After his banishment from Warsaw and the Polish Kingdom in 1862, Marcus Jastrow received the invitation for the position of rabbi of the city of Mannheim. Not seeing any chances for his return to Warsaw, he accepted the offered position. But when the political situation had changed, Jews in Warsaw managed to get approval for his return from the authorities. Jastrow had a dilemma about whether he should stay in Mannheim or return to Warsaw. The motives behind his final decision to return to Warsaw were presented by Jastrow in his Open Letter addressed to the Council of the Congregation in Mannheim.

The text of the letter shows his great attachment to his community in Warsaw. He writes: “After hearing the verdict [of the court of conciliation], my inner spiritual light became stronger, that led me to the conviction that I was in the process of a dangerous self-deception believing that I can cut so many threads that bound me with my brothers in faith in the country that I left, that if its sufferings became more bearable to me, I understood that I would do my family, for whose good I wanted myself with a bleeding heart to detach from my beloved community, the biggest harm by that sacrifice because I sacrificed myself I understand the truth, though its sufferings become less bearable to me, my strength has to be weakened; only after the seemingly done separation I realized where is the home land of my spiritual strength and where is the land of its roots.”

After his return to Warsaw, Jastrow spent several months there. He took part in preparations for the January Uprising in 1863, against the Russians. He was one of the people who knew about conspiratorial activities, which we can learn from his letter to Rabbi Jacob Raisin: “I, being a foreigner in Poland at that time (.), had to get the advice of natives who were well informed about that effect, and for similar purposes, all this in secret, at the risk of liberty if not, for a sojourn in some fortress or in Siberia is not conducive to health.”

Rabbi Marcus Jastrow and his patriotic activities got a very favorable reception in Polish circles. Articles about him appeared in the press and even poetry was written. After the defeat of the uprising, Jastrow was invited to take part in the works of various Polish patriotic movements, which were active on immigration, but he declined from taking part in strictly political activities. Jastrow described events that took place in Warsaw and the Kingdom of Poland in two books published anonymously, in 1859 and 1864, and in many articles published already in the United States.

When at the beginning of 1863 Jastrow left the Kingdom of Poland and went to Berlin, Prussian authorities did not agree to issue once again his passport. After persistent efforts of his friends in Warsaw and Berlin, Jastrow had to resign from his plans to return to Warsaw. Since that time, he was under constant invigilation by police. Not seeing any possibility to return to Warsaw, he happily accepted the invitation to work as a rabbi in a respectable community in Worms, where he served from 1864 to 1866. But when a proposal from Philadelphia arrived, he gladly accepted it.

From 1866, he served as the rabbi of the Hebrew German Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia. Jastrow was also one of the leading personalities of American Judaism of that time, and was involved in the most important debates, conflicts and took part in the creation of Reform as well as Conservative Movements. Jastrow also had an important impact on the development of Jewish studies in the United States.

As an international studies major, I have the benefit of studying several different cultures from every part of the world. I am interested in studying Polish history and culture, however, for several reasons.

One such reason is the possibility of operating with the Polish military in my future. I am a Navy ROTC midshipman, due to be commissioned as an ensign in May 2007. I will then report to my ship to begin training as a surface warfare officer. Because Poland is one of America’s newest and closest allies, I may be sent to serve in Europe, cooperating with Polish military forces. The United States is currently strengthening ties with post-communist Eastern European nations, and Poland is perhaps the lead nation in this process.

Polish forces maintain the third-highest troop levels in Iraq, right behind the United States and Great Britain. As of early 2006, the Polish forces have

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Compiling the Brzustowicz Polish-American Collection
Exploring the life of Polonia in the United States

By Eric Glowacki

Compiling the Brzustowicz Polish-American Collection

For all immigrants to the United States, the discovery and assertion of identity is at the heart of any life. The search for establishing identity and the place of Polonia in the United States is illuminated in the Brzustowicz Polish-American collection, compiled from the lifelong work of John Brzustowicz by his son, Richard, a longtime professor of neurology at the University of Rochester Medical School. His father, John, was a highly respected and prolific community activist who created a Polish-American community group in Poland in 1925. He left behind this collection of correspondence, manuscripts, and other primary documents, which reveal the many aspects of Polonia from the 1920s through the 1980s. The Brzustowicz name is synonymous with Polish-American intelligentsia, a family that has produced physicians, lawyers, and academics. John Brzustowicz's son, Richard, settled in Rochester, becoming an eminent neurologist at Strong Memorial Hospital. In 2005, nearly 20 years after his father's death, Dr. Brzustowicz died and his widow donated these documents and a large Polish and Polish-American library to Rush Rhees Library.

It was daunting when I first confronted the collection. It existed as a mass of several dozen stacked boxes, and there seemed to be only the most minimal order of their contents. A student intern had begun organizing the prior semester. I decided to focus on a specific segment of the collection detailing a Polish language school that John Brzustowicz founded in South Brooklyn in 1928. I planned to organize all documents concerning curricular matters, events, and history surrounding the school thematically and roughly chronologically as well. The next was a prodigious quantity of original printings and manuscripts of Plomyk, a youth magazine modeled after a Warsaw-based periodical. After searching numerous other libraries and archives, the collection of Plomyk is the most complete in existence, and certainly the only one featuring the original manuscripts. Finally, John Brzustowicz had collected, over the span of 30 years, newspaper clippings detailing matters concerning Poland and Polonia. Carefully archiving these clippings while preserving the original organization was the third aspect of my project.

The material categorized with "Polonia School" spans the years 1928 to 1988. It details Jan Brzustowicz's efforts of organizing and networking in the South Brooklyn Polish community. In addition, there are numerous documents—pamphlets, letters, speeches—that provide insight into the life of Polonia throughout the inter-war period and the post-World War II era. He also collected worldwide articles concerning the Warsaw Uprising, the fate of the Jewish minority in Poland, and the Polish-Soviet War—historical events that even in the Polonia and Plomyk material were being distorted in the popular mindset as well as among academics. Along with the articles are copies of editorial letters that he wrote to newspapers about these issues.

From the way the clippings are arranged, it is clear that Brzustowicz was collecting and presenting this information in order to further an agenda. His collection embodies a particular perspective of 20th-century Polish history that today is overlooked by laymen. The Brzustowicz family's perspective is one of the most profound collections and the most extensive to date. The permanent collection in this endeavor is today the subject of debate, as many Western historians begin to revise their views on Poland and Central Europe. For instance, Brzustowicz amassed articles and transcripts from all over the world concerning the Katyn Massacre. He carefully organized them chronologically from the 1940s to 1960s, documenting initial reactions and discussions on the West, Soviet response, lack of action during the Nuremberg Trials, and continuing debate throughout the Cold War. He also sought to document the activities of the early PRL, from the UB operation against former AK members to the forced relocation of Poland's Lemko population. This unique collection of contemporary sources makes it particularly interesting to those analyzing the perspectives of Polonia on events occurring in Poland.

In working with this collection, I've been privileged to be enlightened by these unique perspectives on Polonia. I cannot overestimate how the thoroughness of this collection completely envelopes one into another time period. Historical events that are important to Polonia come alive through actual letters, anecdotals, photographs. The experiences of Poland leaving for the West during the Second World War are vividly represented. I grew up surrounded by Polonia of the New York City area, and can associate with the similarities between my experiences and those of the young Poles who lived in fact I was surprised to discover far more parallels than differences. Overall, I feel my work with this collection not only furthered the interest of preserving and presenting an invaluable resource, but personally fostered a deeper understanding of my own identity as a Polish-American.

Eric is a University of Rochester freshman who plans to study medicine and history.
Polish Youth Concert Celebrates Exceptional Talent

By Bozena Sobolewska

It was a beautiful, sunny afternoon of Sunday, May 7, when the Polish community of Rochester gathered to listen to music played by Polish youth at the University of Rochester. This annual showcase of young musicians of Polish descent was again organized by the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies in cooperation with the University of Rochester Department of Music and the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester. Now in its 13th year, the concert is thriving. The number of players was a record high and the level of their performances was excellent.

The organizers express deep thanks to the artistic director of the concert, Ms. Sabina Slepecki, first violinist with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and a faculty member at the Hochstein School of Music, who again acted as a master of ceremony with verve and enthusiasm. We also wish to thank Olexandra Yurchenko, who provided an excellent piano accompaniment to all players who needed it.

The concert was opened by Waldemar Wojdak, a member of Polish Literary Club, who read “Wojski’s concert,” a fragment of Mickiewicz’s famous poem “Pan Tadeusz.” Another piece of “Pan Tadeusz,” “Jankiel’s concert,” was read after the intermission by Witold Lawrynowicz, also a member of the Polish Literary Club.

Fifteen young people of Polish descent, from preschoolers to high-school juniors, played on piano, violin, cello, guitar, alto saxophone, French horn, accordion, and trumpet. A variety of pieces were performed, written by such composers as Chopin, Bach, Beethoven, Schuman, Vivaldi, Liszt, Veracini, Hummel, Seitz, and Vieuxtemps.

We were very pleased to welcome for the first time several very talented students: Christopher Wojdak, who gave a great performance on accordion; Jack Pietrowski and Zachary Denysenko, violinists; Rachel Winsberg and Brian Podosek, trumpet. We hope to see them at future concerts.

For the fifth year, performers at the concert competed for the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester Award for Musically Talented Youth of Polish Descent. The Polish Heritage Society of Rochester presented four awards for the best young musicians of Polish descent. This year the winners were: Alex Styk, violin; Rachel Winsberg, trumpet; Paul Watrobski, cello; and Dyzio Guzierowicz, French horn.

Alex Styk is 13 years old and a third-time winner of a competition. He is currently a student of Mikhail Kopelman, professor at the Eastman School of Music. In 2003, Alex won first prize in the Fortissimo! Competition, and in 2004 won second prize in the WOKR13 Most Talented Kids Contest. In 2005 he played as a violin soloist with the RPO. His performance was stunningly good, almost at the professional level. We were pleasantly surprised by the performance of Rachel Winsberg, an eighth-grade student, who played at this venue for the first time. On the other hand, Paul Watrobski (14 years old) and Dyzio Guzierowicz (15 years old) performed for us many times and we are very pleased with the great progress they are systematically making.

In addition, two members of the jury funded four honorable mentions. They went to Zachary Denysenko, violin; Kaia Megiel, violin; Anna Stolarczyk, piano; and Hannah Watrobski, violin.

This was the final youth concert sponsored by the Skalny Center. The Polish Heritage Society of Rochester is taking over its sponsorship and organizing the event. The next concert is expected to take place in October 2007, and the venue will be announced later.

Sobolewska is administrative assistant at the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies.
My Reasons to Go to Poland

By Joyce Fleck

I want to go on the Skalny Center’s summer trip to Jagiellonian University to learn the Polish language, experience Polish culture, and learn Polish history. All these things can be studied outside of Poland, but I believe it is most effective to be immersed in the language and culture, and to see the influence of history firsthand.

Polish is a unique language, and it has interested me in particular since freshman year. In my linguistics course, we studied the International Phonetic Alphabet. Although the purpose of the IPA is to have characters or symbols to represent every sound of all the world’s languages, new sounds are still being discovered and added. What I thought strange, however, is that there are a few sounds that Polish speakers use and distinguish, but which are not differentiated in the IPA. Therefore, although these sounds are natural and distinct to native speakers, they must be extremely similar and pose quite a challenge to non-native speakers.

This challenge intrigues me, and one of the reasons why I want to study Polish is because it is a difficult language. I know several people who study Polish, and although they are all very successful, they all affirm this. The little I know of the language linguistically indicates this as well. Not only are there sounds that are difficult to distinguish and produce, but there are also seven cases plus formal/informal sounds that are difficult to distinguish and produce, linguistically indicating this as well. Not only are there sounds that are difficult to distinguish and produce, but there are also seven cases plus formal/informal sounds that are difficult to distinguish and produce, linguistically indicating this as well. Not only are there sounds that are difficult to distinguish and produce, but there are also seven cases plus formal/informal sounds that are difficult to distinguish and produce, linguistically indicating this as well. 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Not only are there sounds that are difficult to distinguish and produce, but there are also seven cases plus formal/informal sounds that are difficult to distinguish and produce, linguistically indicating this as well.

The people I know who study Polish have also motivated me. My roommate, Christine Kenison, went on the program last year as her introduction to Polish, and liked it so well that she is returning this year. She has told me great things about the program and has shown me many photos of Poland. Now she hopes to do more with Slavic studies, and a lot of her enthusiasm has rubbed off on me. I see Polish books and papers all over the room, plus the ever-present flashcards, as constant reminders of how much fun it would be to learn Polish.

I know a few people who are older and who have lived or are living in Poland, and are doing Slavic studies. One spent one of his undergraduate years at Jagiellonian University and is back now doing his Fulbright there. He has told me great things about Poland: the people, the culture, and the university. He believes that the language program in Kraków is the best place to learn Polish, and says that Jagiellonian’s language faculty is top-notch. Getting to study at Jagiellonian University and learning by immersion in Poland, I feel, is the ideal way to learn Polish.

Besides studying the language, I really want to experience the culture. Eastern Europe is incredibly different from here, from Western Europe, and from everything to which I am accustomed. I love to travel, see new places, discover new things, and really live in the culture. I’ve been to Eastern Europe once, further north on tour with my orchestra. It was a short trip, but it was enough to make me want to go back, see more of Eastern Europe, and get a chance to experience it more fully.

Learning Polish history also is a pull for me. I enjoy European history, and studying it in the country where it took place, getting to see its effects on Poland, and seeing art and architecture from different eras makes it even more interesting, memorable, and meaningful. From this aspect, too, studying at Jagiellonian University will be a real treat, as it is the third oldest university in Europe.

From various sources, I am convinced that the Polish language program at Jagiellonian University is very strong. I wish to go this summer and hope to continue Polish studies afterward and be able to return to Poland sometime. I am also excited that I know people with whom I will be able to practice my Polish at the University of Rochester after I return. That way, I will be better able to retain what I have learned.

Joyce is a freshman at the University of Rochester, majoring in French and in bassoon performance at the Eastman School of Music. She is a recipient of a Skalny scholarship for participation in the study program on location at Jagiellonian University in Krakow.