



# Skalny Center

SPRING 2004

FOR POLISH & CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES



*Consul General Milczewska presents a Cavalier Cross to Stasia Skalny*

This spring, we experienced a terrible loss with the passing of one of our greatest friends and supporters, Stasia Jezowska Skalny. Stasia was one of the four trustees of the Louis Skalny Foundation who made the generous gift that established Polish studies at the University of Rochester in 1994 and renewed the commitment by beginning an endowment in 1999. We traveled together in September 1998 to Warsaw, then to Krakow for the signing of the UR institutional agreement with Jagiellonian University. After the official business was done, we took a few days to enjoy the Tatra mountains. She was enchanted with the views and

walks in Zakopane. When the Center was endowed and re-named with the Skalny family name, Polish Consul General Agnieszka Miszewska decorated her along with the other trustees of the foundation with the Cavalier Cross of Merit of Poland for her support of Polish culture in America. Stasia was always present at our lectures and events, films, and holiday celebrations. On March 8, she came to a farewell dinner for Professor Andrzej Mania before he returned to Krakow. We were planning to go to Poland again this fall. She died suddenly after a short illness on April 13. She is very much missed.

## Message from the Director

In this 10<sup>th</sup> year of building relationships, the Skalny Center now has received a Fulbright Alumni Initiative grant for scholarly collaboration between the University of Warsaw and our University of Rochester. The new alliance with my own alma mater is a natural extension of my Fulbright year in Warsaw in 2001-02. This will significantly contribute to the expansion of the list of the Center's European partners. UR departments of Political Science, English, and Women's Studies will join the Skalny Center in this project.

The Fulbright Foundation has been especially kind to Rochester students this year (eight of them received grants), and we at the Skalny Center are particularly pleased that one of our star students, Sara Korol, has been selected as one of the eight junior Fulbright grantees. She will conduct research on Polish-Ukrainian border issues and we are looking to her field reports once she is established in Warsaw and Lublin this fall. Sara's enthusiasm and charm had a great deal to do with the activities of



*From left: Sabina Slepecki, Barbara Sullivan, John Borek, Pearl Rubin, William Sullivan*

the club this year, which included the production and sale of T-shirts displaying the words "UR Polish" and the Center's logo, a lovely holiday dinner in December, and trips to Polish neighborhoods in Rochester and Buffalo in early April.

In 2004-05, we will welcome the return of Professor Grzegorz Kolodko from the Leon Kozminski Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management and Professor Krzysztof Zamorski. Both will be our guests as part of the agreement on scholarly exchange with Jagiellonian University.

Before the 2003-04 academic year began, I had a chance to visit the Polish Film festival in Kazimierz Dolny where I spoke with Agnieszka Holland, a famous Polish and American film director, who agreed to come to the Skalny Center in the near future. We are now planning a conference devoted to her filmmaking in 2006, in conjunction with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Susan B. Anthony, the patroness of the University's Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender and Women's Studies.



*From left: Andrzej Mania, Krzysztof Penderecki, Elzbieta Penderecka, Frederic Skalny, Ewa Hauser, Oleh Krysa (professor of violin at the Eastman School of Music), Tatiana Tchekina (Krysa's wife and accompanist)*

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# Jerzy Kosinski and his Fictions: From Painted Bird to Tainted Words

*This is an edited version of a lecture by Barbara Tępa Lupack delivered on January 23, 2004 as part of Skalny Luncheon Seminar series*



By Barbara Tępa Lupack

Jerzy Kosinski was a complex, fascinating, and compelling man, one whose life story played out—sometimes almost exhibitionistically—on the front pages of the *New York Times Magazine* and *The Village Voice*, one whose foreignness and well-practiced outrageousness made him an instant media darling (much like the protagonist Chance, the gardener, in his novel *Being There*), but one who—despite the amount of press that he received—was never particularly well understood or fully appreciated. He was a man who loved disguises, literally as well as figuratively, and who disguised himself so often that, to borrow a phrase from William Butler Yeats, at times it became virtually impossible to tell the dancer from the dance.

According to Kosinski enthusiasts and to many critics of American literature, Jerzy Kosinski was a brilliant novelist, among the most talented and innovative writers of the so-called postmodernists of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a group that included such prominent authors as Kurt Vonnegut, Raymond Carver, John Barth, and Donald Barthelme. Kosinski's admirers contend that his acclaimed fiction held (and continues to hold) a deservedly high place in the American literary canon. As evidence, they point to his numerous awards, including the Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (the highest award given in France to a foreign novel) for his first novel, *The Painted Bird* (1965); the National Book Award (the highest award given in the United States) for *Steps* (1968), his second novel; and the BAFTA (the British equivalent of the Oscar) for his screenplay



of *Being There* (1971), his third novel—and to his enduring popularity among readers (especially students) worldwide. They also note that with the publication of his celebrated first novel (by which he achieved ubiquitousness among the literati and the glitterati alike), he instantly became the best-known Polish born writer since Joseph Conrad.

According to others, however, including Polish journalists such as Joanna Siedlecka and Czesław Czapliński, and according to his unofficial biographer and one-time friend James Park Sloan, Kosinski was a habitual liar, a plagiarist, a writer who could not write in his adopted tongue of English without

an egregious amount of help from editors and assistants (whom he hired privately, paid for secretly, and never acknowledged publicly). Kosinski's detractors allege that all of his novels—or at least all of his best novels—were written with such collaborators. As proof, they point to recently uncovered evidence that Kosinski lied about the circumstances of his early life—that is, about his wartime experiences as a solitary boy left to fend for himself among the peasantry, which constituted the basis for *The Painted Bird*—and they conclude that the same dishonesty is discernible in the patterns of his later life and, of course, in his fiction. Those issues of alleged dishonesty and lack of artistic credibility became the basis of a scandal that rocked the literary world in the early 1980s and that threatened to ruin Kosinski's reputation—and that contributed, however indirectly, to his suicide.

Who then was the real Jerzy Kosinski—a literary genius, or a literary fraud? Was he a painted bird—the title metaphor of his remarkable first novel, about a bird who is painted by an angry villager and released back into the flock, where it is pecked to death by other birds who cannot recognize him beneath his gorgeous new colors? Or instead of being the victim, was Kosinski actually the victimizer, the perpetrator of frauds and the purveyor of tainted words?

Although recent biographical revelations about Kosinski have prompted some scholarly revisionism, in the end the only true gauge of his literary reputation is his writing. And, despite the gossip about Kosinski's personal life, his texts survive intact. Simply put, the novels are intriguing explorations of the self and of the picaresque hero; most are part of a larger and significant fictional cycle; and a handful are by any measure truly extraordinary—so extraordinary that they stand as highly original works of literature, brilliant attempts at new and exceedingly bold effects. Regarding his most innovative novels *The Painted Bird* and *Steps*, for instance, fellow novelist William Kennedy concludes that “the revisionists can go pack salt.”

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## Message from the Director

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By Ewa Hauser



Ewa Hauser

During the past fall and spring, the Center continued the tradition of Skalny luncheons and evening lectures. Additionally, the fall was marked by the annual Polish Film festival, and in spring we celebrated Polish Constitution Day with music at the Polish Youth Concert. This spring we also had the second Skalny Memorial Lecture delivered by a great friend of Poland and the University, Dr. Norman Neureiter '52. He was the science attaché to the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw and, most recently, a science and technology advisor to the U.S. Secretary of State. He spoke to a surprisingly big crowd, considering the winter storm in effect that afternoon, about U.S.-Poland relations during the Cold War and current scientific exchange and collaborations.

Skalny luncheons this past academic year included presentations by UR historians Celia Applegate and Lynn Gordon (see remarks in this issue) and Jagiellonian visiting professor Andrzej Mania, whose presentation—and a course offered for some 30 undergraduates—focused on the U.S. presidential policy toward Poland and Eastern Europe (see synopsis of his talk).

In response to the results of a questionnaire sent to our entire 700+ mailing list, we organized two additional concerts, which were co-sponsored with the UR Music Department (see K. Polakowski's story in this issue). Mary Jane Curry, assistant professor

of education at the University's Warner Graduate School of Education, helped with entertaining and hosting Elena Letnanova, a Slovak pianist. Mary Jane will visit Elena during her summer research in Bratislava on post-transformation education in the region

In February, we had an unusual and unexpected pleasure to hear music by the legendary Polish composer, Krzysztof Penderecki, at two concerts organized by the Eastman School of Music during his weeklong visit to Rochester. We also had a wonderful occasion to meet him and his wife, Elzbieta Penderecka, at a special reception hosted by the Skalny Center and co-sponsored by the Krakow-Rochester Sister Cities Committee. It was an exceptional evening with some 50 friends of the Center assembled in the elegant Inn on Broadway where the maestro stayed during his visit to the Eastman School. We are very grateful to ESM and especially to Susan Robertson, who was instrumental in arranging the meeting of the Pendereckis with Polish-American Rochesterians.

Last but not least, the Skalny Center briefly hosted the Polish Consul General from New York, Agnieszka Miszewska, who took part in the International Trade Expo at the special invitation of the

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# American Presidency toward Poland, 1945-1989



By Andrzej Mania

*Professor at the Institute of Political Science and International Relations, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland, and Skalny Center Visiting Professor in spring 2004*

The fate of Poland after WW II was connected with the fate of other East European countries. Only in the context of U.S. policy toward the Eastern European region can we understand the changing U.S. policy toward Poland.

Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Eastern Europe was almost terra incognita for the United States. WW II changed the political map of this region. It took time for the U.S. to formulate principles of U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe. Till Tito's heresy in 1948, it was obvious that the United States did not have any plans on how to deal with Eastern Europe and especially with the Soviet domination over it.

Tito's break with Stalin became the model that the United States wished to repeat in other countries of this region. It was ready to accept even a communist country, but under one condition: that country had to become independent of the Soviet Union. Liberation, which replaced the containment policy in 1952, differed only in rhetoric. It was never the intention of the United States to initiate rebellion, but—as was later often taken for real by the freedom fighters in 1956 Hungary—many took liberation rhetoric as a declaration of reality. The tragic events of 1956 in Poznań and later transformation of power in Poland focused U.S. attention on Poland. The main purpose of the U.S. policy at that time was to avoid forceful Soviet intervention in Poland, which would not only terminate the limited independence but might also involve a risk of spreading hostilities. Since 1956, the United States has been seeing violent upheavals in Eastern Europe as counterproductive to its interests, both because of their futility and human costs, as well as its fears of raising East-West military tensions over an extended period. U.S. politics concentrated on anti-communist gestures, propaganda and restrictive policies in East-West trade, and some covert operations intended to build independence from the Soviet Union, albeit still communist, governments.

The events of 1956 in Poland and Hungary were a lesson to the United States. The Soviets proved that they were ready to use military power to protect their position in this region, and it showed the limits of U.S. policy directed toward depriving the Soviets

of their dominant position there. The second lesson concerned the American image of Eastern Europe. This region was no longer a monolith as it was previously defined in the documents of the National Security Council. Since that time, differentiation of policy toward each country became the symbol of the U.S. policy.

After 1956, the United States began a policy of active engagement still strongly influenced by containment and a liberation approach. This option allowed it to exploit growing differentiation between Eastern Europeans countries and their gradual separation from their eastern patron. This policy line began in 1957 with economic assistance to Poland and later was continued during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In the '60s, it was called "peaceful engagement" or "bridge building." Since that time, American policy began to be two-track, at least in some moments. One was directed toward regimes, the second toward the people.

During the entire period after WW II, U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe was overshadowed by American policy toward the Soviet Union. It took years and even decades before U.S.-East European policy became, at least in some aspects, detached from the Soviet factor.

During the Nixon presidency, East European policy was subordinated to the higher politics of detente on the assumption that peaceful coexistence would be beneficial to evolutionary change in the region. The Nixon administration still saw small states as proxies of the great powers. Human rights become the national issue mostly thanks to the activity of the U.S. Congress. The growing interest of the American public in human rights coincided with new conceptions of security and cooperation in Europe. The new president, Jimmy Carter, replaced anti-communism with the concept of universal human rights as the U.S. ideological approach to the world. At that time, the impressive growth of Solidarity in Poland attracted the attention of the United States on Poland once more.

In the 1980s, in principle, the United States followed a low-key policy; it used economic levers to restrain the Polish government from suppressing Solidarity, and it warned the USSR against the invasion of Poland. All information concerning possible Soviet intervention was disseminated as widely as possible. It was to serve as an element of deterrence. This activity was aimed at depriving the Soviets of the element of surprise. The American strategy inspired by Zbigniew Brzezinski and developed by the NSC's Special Coordination Committee was twofold: first, to avoid the apparent mistake of 1968 by pub-



Andrzej Mania

licizing Soviet military moves and the Western sanctions that an intervention would precipitate, and second, to induce moderation on the part of the Warsaw regime with economic incentives.

By the end of December 1981, the Soviets had canceled their invasion plan. American and allied pressure and doubts about the Polish army's loyalty and preparations for popular resistance as well as Wojciech Jaruzelski's renewed offer to resolve the crisis by internal means had evidently acted as a deterrent.

Ronald Reagan served two terms as president and had a chance to watch and influence dramatic events and historical changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Reagan hoped to discourage Moscow from invading Poland, and cautiously avoided any provocations that the Soviets could use to justify an invasion.

On Dec. 13, 1981, General Jaruzelski declared martial law as a patriotic necessity to deal with the pervasive "chaos and demoralization." Once Moscow decided that Solidarity had to be eliminated, the United States decided to minimize the danger of civil war in Poland. The administration took steps to punish the Polish regime and the Soviets mostly by implementing different economic sanctions. The Reagan administration's reaction was rather mild, in line with the administration's plans to avoid a Cold War atmosphere. In the moment of transition when the Bush administration was taking power into its hands, the U.S. found itself in a unique situation when it could realize fully another two-track policy. One was directed toward the governments, the other toward civil society, which included the opposition and the church.

In many ways, systemic transformation in Eastern Europe was possible because of drastic political changes in the Soviet Union itself. In March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev took power in the U.S.S.R. His policy of glasnost influenced the situation in Eastern Europe.

On April 17, 1989, the new president Bush in his address in Michigan expressed a positive reaction toward events in Poland and declared his readiness to help Poland. President Bush visited Poland July 9-11, 1989. During his main address before the Polish National Assembly, the president offered common action together with the West to help the Polish economy; he also presented the idea of organizing the Polish-American Enterprise Fund with \$100 million to support the Polish private sector. It was not a big package, if we compare it with Lech Walesa's hopes for \$10 billion. But this marked the end of the process of U.S. policy toward Poland as one of the East European countries.



Andrzej Mania with his students



# UR Historians Deal with Polish Transformations Before Their Eyes



By Celia Applegate  
and Lynn Gordon

*In May 2003, Professors Celia Applegate and Lynn Gordon combined their intellectual interests in European nationalism and the history of ethnicity to teach a seminar titled "Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Europe, 1800-2000." Much of the reading and research for the course focused on Eastern Europe, an area they had not yet visited. Professor Applegate is a scholar of German history and Professor Gordon teaches history of education, women, and migration. The following are remarks given at a Skalny Luncheon seminar in October.*

Taking advantage of the arrangement for teaching exchanges between the University of Rochester and the Jagiellonian University, and supported by the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies, we spent the last half of May 2003 in Poland. The first week we stayed in Krakow and its environs; during the second week we traveled to Lublin, Bialystok and the countryside near the Belarussian border, Warsaw, Malbork, and Gdansk.

Poland surprised us in many ways. We were fortunate to be there just before the historic vote on joining the European Union; this gave us the chance to hear and participate in many discussions on the pros and cons of the matter. And finally, to travel in Poland is to visit a country that has recovered physically, but not emotionally, culturally, or intellectually from World War II.

On June 7 and 8, 77% percent of the voters said "yes" to joining the EU. Yet the landslide victory, the scenes of rejoicing in the streets, and the statement of Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski that Po-

land was "returning to the place to which Poland has belonged for a thousand years," conceal the fact that the vote itself was a squeaker. By the end of the first day, only 17% of voters had cast their ballots; about a third of the necessary quorum, without which the Polish parliament would have had to decide. Eventually, at almost the last minute, enough voters showed up to pass the measure. In fact, Poland's "landslide" pales in comparison with the "yes" vote in Slovakia (92.5%), 93% in Lithuania, and 84% in Hungary.

To many Poles, it's just not clear that the EU is the answer to their problems. Some retain traditional nationalist fears about Polish land and Polish economic enterprises being dominated by foreigners. In a country that has been in the past partitioned by its neighbors, such concerns are hardly surprising. But most who opposed the EU just didn't think that Poland's economic woes (20% unemployment, failing industries, and 25% of the population still working on farms) would respond to an opening of borders and economic integration with the West. And indeed, how will Polish farmers, many of whom use scythes and horse-drawn plows, compete with their western counterparts? Failed socialist enterprises, including the famous Gdansk shipyards, the birthplace of the Solidarity movement, dot the landscape. Other Poles view any change with a combination of frustration and cynicism. After 45 years of communist domination, few believe that their government acts in their best interests, or that the influence of the EU can change that.

Since the fall of communism, Poland has re-claimed and re-interpreted its own history, taking charge of museums and historical sites. This has provided obvious cultural, educational, and intellectual benefits for Poles and has also made the country increasingly attractive to "heritage tourists" from Western Europe, the United States, Canada, and Israel. Some such tour-

ists are from the large Polish Diaspora; others are Polish Jews or their descendants.

The history of Poland is best displayed in the churches, museums, and palaces of Krakow, the historic seat of the Polish kings, and the city least damaged during World War II. Wawel Castle, original home of the Polish kings, the lively Rynek Glowny (16<sup>th</sup>-century market square), and the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Collegium Maius, of Jagiellonian University, represent the glories and power of Poland before the 18<sup>th</sup>-century partitions. In contrast, Warsaw, re-built almost entirely since its destruction following the uprising against the Nazis in August 1944, is focused on World War II. The Museum of the City of Warsaw contains many artifacts of the Nazi occupation and the Polish resistance. Monuments to the uprising and memorial plaques to the resisters, surrounded by fresh flowers and candles, are everywhere to be found. The impact of the war, now over 60 years in the past, on the city and its people, is very evident in the present.

The area of greatest controversy for historians and interpreters of historical sites is the history of the Jews in Poland, and the tragic ending of that history during the war. During the communist era, travel to Jewish sites was not encouraged, and major monuments (such as the one to the Warsaw ghetto uprising of April 1943) referred only to the deaths of "victims of fascism." Since 1989, Jewish organizations from Israel and the United States have contributed both financially and intellectually to their preservation and re-interpretation. Now when someone visits Auschwitz-Birkenau, as we did, both the guides and the plaques around the camp emphasize the Jewish identity of most of the victims. Auschwitz looks much as it did in 1945. As we walked around, we had the eerie feeling that the prisoners and guards had left only a few minutes ago.

Interpreting Polish-Jewish relations before, during, and since the war has been more difficult. Jewish tourists have memories (their own or others') of discrimination, persecution, and violence directed at them by Poles. The recent publication of Jan Gross's *Neighbors*, which tells the story of the village of Jedwabne where, unprovoked by the Nazis, the Pol-

## Message from the Director

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Krakow-Rochester Sister Cities Committee and Charles Goodwin, the chair of the Rochester Business Alliance. It was especially good that she, along with the Trade Representative of Poland, participated because this year's exposition was focused on building trade relations with East-Central Europe.

The coming year will mark a significant expansion of the Center's international collaborations. Within Poland, besides our established institutional exchange with Jagiellonian University, we also will commence a formal relationship with the University of Warsaw. Then new links, at first informal, are being created with Central European University, which was established in 1991. Eva Fodor, a professor of sociology at CEU in Budapest, will become an associate of the Skalny Center.

While some of our students will be studying in Krakow and others in Prague, we will be looking forward to University of Warsaw professors visiting Rochester in September. Later, there will be a spring trip by a UR delegation of students and faculty to Warsaw and Krakow.

And now I am looking forward to new challenges during my trip to Poland and Russia beginning tomorrow. Enjoy the summer season!



From left: Ewa Hauser, Michael Leach, Frederic Skalny, Krzysztof Penderecki



ish townspeople murdered their Jewish compatriots, created a sensation. Gross's findings were authenticated by Polish historians at Warsaw University's Institute for History and Memory; a monument was erected near Jedwabne, and the Polish president apologized for the crime. Still, there is widespread resentment concerning the notoriety this controversy brought to Poland, and what Poles consider an over-emphasis on specifically Jewish suffering. The inscription on the Jedwabne monument merely states that "Jewish fellow citizens were murdered" here—it says nothing about the identity of the murderers. There is no Polish monument to the Polish Jews (10% of the population in 1939) who were killed during the war, or attacked in post-war pogroms in 1946 and again in 1968.

Struggling with a painful past is not unique to Poland; consider, for example, the absence of U.S. public memorials or museums devoted to African-American history and to slavery. Poles have had only 14 years of a free press and open discussions/debates on their history. Certainly there is cause for optimism. We saw busloads of schoolchildren being taken to see a beautifully-restored synagogue in Tykocin. Polish children are helping to restore a damaged Jewish cemetery in Bialystok. Both Jagiellonian and Warsaw universities offer programs of Jewish studies. The former Jewish quarter of Krakow, Kazimierz, hosts an annual Jewish Cultural Festival that draws thousands of people from Poland and around the world.

The trip had a profound impact on the way we will teach our course (and other courses on German history, immigration and ethnicity, etc.) and conduct our research. Like most academics educated during the Cold War, Eastern Europe was off our intellectual horizons. While Poland was at the heart of postwar controversies both in 1918 and 1945, and the United States is home to a large Polish American community, we knew almost nothing of its history, nationalistic ethos, or culture. We hope to play a role in addressing this lack of knowledge among our own students. We also have become interested in the subject of Holocaust education in Poland, and plan additional reading and research (and perhaps another trip!) to find out more about this subject.

## Jerzy Kosinski

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Today Kosinski continues to be read and admired as one of the major forces in the contemporary American novel. His works can be found on bookstore shelves as well as on academic reading lists, and he is studied alongside such literary giants as Hemingway and Faulkner. His nine novels have gone through numerous reprintings and reissues in America and have been translated into more than 50 languages, while his posthumously published volume of essays, the bulk of which he collected before his death, the remainder compiled by his second wife, Katherina von Fraunhofer-Kosinski, reveals his sharp critical eye and reconfirms his position as a leading intellectual and philosophical novelist.

Kosinski once observed that it is a good thing that novelists die, "because their biographies die with them. So then you just read their books." Although Kosinski has been dead for 13 years now, his biography still generates much controversy. But despite that—or, arguably, because of it—people continue to read his books.

## Pianists Bring Distinct Artistry to Skalny Events



By Krzysztof Polakowski

Two musical performances by pianists in the fall of 2003 and the spring of 2004 were hosted by the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies in cooperation with the Department of Music at the University of Rochester.

On Sunday, Nov. 23, Belgrade-born pianist Zora Mihailovich presented a well-attended recital at Strong Auditorium with works by Mozart, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and Rubinstein, as well as interesting contemporary pieces by David Rosenboom and Ricardo Pick-Mangiagalli.

Zora Mihailovich has performed in many prestigious musical centers, including London's Wigmore and Royal Festival Halls, New York's Carnegie Hall, Brussels's Conservatoire Royal, and others. She also has collaborated with famous singers Giuseppe di Stefano, Placido Domingo, Nicolai Gedda, and Anna Moffo. Besides her soloist performances, she has made numerous recordings, among them Anton Rubinstein's Works for Piano (1995), as a tribute to this, almost forgotten, pianist and composer (1829-1894). Among her recordings are also the extremely difficult Rachmaninoff's 2nd Piano Concerto, two piano sonatas by Chopin, two piano sonatas by Mozart, and many others.

Ms. Mihailovich, like Ignacy Jan Paderewski, the famous Polish pianist and composer over half a century ago, represents worldwide Steinway & Sons, one of the most famous piano manufacturers since 1853. She is also involved in music education, traveling throughout the world as a scholar and performer at many universities and institutes, including the University of Southern California's School of Music, as guest faculty artist at the California Institute of Arts, visiting professor at the University of Arizona's School of Music in Tucson, and the Uppsala School of Music in Sweden. She also has



*Professor Emil Homerin*

been a judge for the Jeunesses Musicales International Piano Concerto in Belgrade. Currently, she is artist in residence in the Department of Music at Rochester.

On Sunday, Feb. 1, another Slavic pianist, Elena Letnanova, performed at the University of Rochester's Strong Auditorium before an appreciative audience. Elena is a dear friend of the Skalny Center; and made her first appearance at the University in 2002. This time, her concert was a unique tribute to Frederic Chopin. It was unusual in its content: Chopin's piano pieces combined with the reading of his letters and letters to him written by friends after he left Poland for good in 1830. Letters, translated into English from Polish, French, and German, were read by Emil Homerin, professor in the Department of Religion and Classics at the University of Rochester. The music played often corresponded to the content and mood of Chopin's letters. Etude in c-minor, op. 10 nr 12 ("Revolutionary") was associated with Chopin's remarks expressing his feelings during the tragic November Uprising (Powstanie Listopadowe) in 1831. Chopin felt guilty being away in Paris, unable to participate and becoming aware that he may never return to Poland.

Both beautiful performances were made possible by a generous grant from the Louis Skalny Foundation.



*Elena Letnanova*



# Polish Youth Perform, Display Art in Joint Program Each Year



By Bozena Sobolewska

This year, for the first time since 1998, the Annual Polish Youth Concert and Art Exhibition took place at Strong Auditorium on the University of Rochester's River Campus on May 2. It was organized by the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies in cooperation with the University of Rochester Music Department and the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester.

The concert, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, was opened by Ewa Hauser, professor and director of the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies, with a brief history of the event. Next, Sabina Slepcecki, first violinist with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and faculty member of the Hochstein School of Music, took over as the artistic director of the concert. Nine young people of Polish descent played a variety of pieces by such composers as Beethoven, Haydn, Vivaldi, Purcell, and Samartini, on piano, violin, cello, flute, guitar, alto sax, French horn, and trumpet. For the first time, we were very pleased to welcome two very talented Hochstein School of Music students: Paul and Hannah Watrobski, playing on violin and cello, respectively. We hope the involvement of the Hochstein School of Music and the Eastman School of Music Community Education Division (two performers were ESM students) will continue in the future. Alla Kuznetsov, from the Eastman School of Music Community Division (now called the Eastman Community Music School), provided an excellent piano accompaniment to all players who needed it.

The Polish Heritage Society of Rochester presented two awards of \$500 each for the best young musicians of Polish descent. This year the winners were: Alexander Styk, violin, and Adam Sobolewski, cello. Both of them have performed at the Polish youth concerts and other community events for many years, and we have been very pleased to watch their progress. Alex is 11 years old and a sixth-grade student at Pittsford Middle School. He has been studying violin since the age of four and his present teacher is Boris Zapasochny. He is child prodigy and a winner of many prestigious awards. Among others, two years ago he won a competition for the Polish Heritage of Rochester Incentive Grant, last year he tied for first place in the Fortissimo! Competition, and recently he won second prize in the WOKR13 Most Talented Kids Contest.

Adam is a junior at Mendon High School. He has been studying cello at the Eastman School of Music Community Division for four years. His teacher is Melissa Burton. Two years ago, he won a competition for the Polish Heritage of Rochester Incentive Grant. He also studied piano, but cello has become his favorite instrument.

In addition to the main awards, the Polish Heritage Society funded three honorable mentions of \$50 each. They went to Christopher Drzewiecki (trumpet), Paul Watrobski (cello), and Dyzio Guzierowicz (French horn). We were happy that Matthew BaileyShea, assistant professor of music



*Hanna Watrobski playing violin*



*Alex Styk*



*Chris Drzewiecki and Alla Kuznetsov*

in the Music Department, kindly agreed to serve on the jury for the awards. We would like to thank him and the other members of the jury—Sabina Slepcecki, Michael Leach, and Krzysztof Polakowski—for their commitment and dedication.

Winners of the music competition will be announced officially on Sunday, June 6, at 3 p.m., at the Polish Music Program in the Interfaith Chapel of the University of Rochester on the River Campus. They will play musical selections with Ms. Slepcecki.

The art exhibition, held in the lobby of Strong Auditorium, was very impressive this year. Ten young artists submitted their work for the exhibition; many of the pieces were of excellent quality. The exhibition opened immediately after the concert and attracted a large crowd to enjoy the paintings and drawings. There was one very attractive piece of sculpture. The Polish Heritage Society awarded three prizes for the best artists. The winners were:

- Emily Drzewiecki, age 13 - First Prize (\$50)**
- Marta Grzegorek, age 16 - Second Prize (\$25)**
- Victoria Tomaszczuk, age 7 - Second Prize (\$25).**

There were also three honorable mentions, which were awarded to Alina Mokrzan, age 11, Daniel



*Dyzio Guzierowicz*



*Sabina Slepecki*



*First Annual Polish Youth Concert, 1993*

Zabek, age 14, and Anna Weldy, age 5. The winners will receive their awards at the Polish Music Program on June 6.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who helped to set up the exhibition and served on the jury, in particular: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Anders,

Grazyna Zareba, Krzysztof Polakowski, Mike Leach, Karolina Włodarczyk, and last but not least, Grzegorz Stachowiak. Grzegorz came back to Rochester after living in Ann Arbor for the past six years. He was the one who 11 years ago initiated the tradition of Polish youth concerts. He brought a his-

toric photograph from the first concert in 1993. All the children in this picture are grown now, working (Marta Michael - law firm) or attending graduate schools (Agnieszka Stachowiak - MIT). Andrzej Grabiec, RPO concertmaster at that time, stands behind them.



*Paul Watroski and Alla Kuznetsov*



UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

**Skalny Center**

FOR POLISH &amp; CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES

# The Polish Girl

By Sara Korol

*Sara, UR 2004 Magna Cum Laude graduate, was president of the UR Polish and Central European Club and elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society*

"Oh, you're the Polish girl!" they say around campus when they meet me. My reputation has preceded me again. "I'm not Polish," I say . . . and it's the often disappointing truth. Born in Baltimore as opposed to Warsaw, raised on tofu as opposed to kielbasa, and completely inept at remembering to use the formal "you" when referring to my superiors and elders, I am definitely not Polish. Yet long before I received my B.A. in Economics for which I diligently worked these past four years, I earned the title of "the Polish girl" among my fellow underclassmen. It cannot be solely attributed to a detectable yet distant Polish heritage on my father's side. No, one does not earn titles at the UR that easily.

Why am I known as "the Polish girl"? Maybe it's due to the fact that I spent almost two of the past five years in Poland, familiarizing myself with the Polish language at its source by living with host families, studying in Warsaw, and twice attending the Jagiellonian University Summer School. Maybe it's because I took Polish language classes for three semesters at UR and was a teaching assistant for a time. Perhaps some know me from my period of employment at the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies, or my frequent attendance at the events they organized. Others may be familiar with the UR Polish and Central European Club, which I

founded my junior year and presided over until this past spring.

Yet another possibility is that they learned of my Fulbright fellowship to Poland for next year with which I will study immigration issues over its eastern border with Ukraine. Or maybe they were simply in my American Economic History class and couldn't figure out how a student had managed to incorporate Poland into her term paper. Whatever the case, my obvious desire to retain contact with the country and culture in which I was immersed a mere five years ago as a high school Rotary exchange student has led to more than just the Certificate of Polish Studies that accompanied my diploma in May.

As I sat anonymously among the 130 students waiting to receive their economics degree on stage at the diploma ceremony, I had a quiet moment of introspection. I conceded that my Polish Studies certificate reflected my course of study infinitely more accurately than my Economics B.A. . . . so maybe the title was appropriate after all. Looking back, the classes which I found the most relevant in the face of my heightened transatlantic awareness were those that deepened my understanding of Europe. To my satisfaction, I noticed that my initial interest in Polish culture had gradually matured into an academic interest in Eastern European affairs, giving me the individualized perspective ultimately responsible for my various scholastic successes, such as the Fulbright fellowship. My sentiments at that moment were that I am truly fortunate.

For lack of a better cliché, let me say that it certainly feels like a chapter in my life has ended. Try as I might, I could not find a synopsis of the book of my life online, and so I cannot say for sure what the next chapters hold



Sara Korol at the Christmas dinner

in store. I am planning on pursuing graduate studies in international relations or Slavic studies upon my return from Poland next year, but only time will tell. It is difficult to look that far into the future when so much still remains to be done before embarking on the Fulbright-funded research. Thanks to additional funding from the O'Hern scholarship given through the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society, I will be able to travel to Belgium, Germany, and Ukraine during the month of September, visiting various universities and centers for European migration related to my research proposal.

If all goes as planned, my current tag of "the Polish girl" might very well be transformed into a more cosmopolitan identity thanks to my travels. Ironically enough, the country that I have focused on for so long is simultaneously in the process of adopting a new European identity after its recent accession into the European Union. It just so happens that Poland and I will take the next step together.

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