



## **Austin Polish Society**

**Celebrating Polish heritage,  
culture, language and arts**

**[www.AustinPolishSociety.org](http://www.AustinPolishSociety.org)**

### **Summary of the Austin Polish Film Festival November 2009**

The Fourth Annual Austin Polish Film Festival, sponsored by the Austin Polish Society, was an expanded event that included a poster exhibit, screenings of six feature films, ten short narratives, documentaries and animations, and a special presentation of a virtual film studio project. Films were shown from November 5-8 and on November 14, and the poster exhibit shown for two-weeks from October 24 to November 13. The film festival theme for this year, *The Long and the Short of Polish Contemporary Cinema*, presented the feature films of Jacek Bromski, Dorota Kedzierzawska, Jacek Blawut, Lukasz Palkowski, Magdalena Piekorz, and Michal Kwiecinski. The following directors of short format films and animation were represented at the festival: Pawel Ferdek, Marcel Sawicki, Tomasz Wolski, Rafal Sklaski, Barbara Bialowas, Przemyslaw Nowakowski, Michal Wnuk, Andrzej Titkow, and Tomek Baginski.

#### **Guest Artists**

Mr. Jacek Bromski was the APFF Guest Director and presented his latest film *U Pana Boga za Miedza/God's Little Village*, at the Opening Night Gala held at the elegant Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum's Texas Spirit Theater. Audiences enjoyed this entertaining comedy and were thrilled to see Ms. Agnieszka Kotlarska, the leading female actress in Mr. Bromski's film, who attended the opening as a special guest. The score for *U Pana Boga za Miedza* was created by Austinite, Mr. Ludek Drizhal, who attended the opening with his family. These three special guests participated in a lively question and answer session after the screening.

The second night's offering included Dorota Kedzierzawska's *Pora Umierac/Time to Die* and a film by Jacek Blawut, *Jeszcze nie wieczor/Before Twilight*. A deeply moving but witty and uplifting film, *Pora Umierac* left the viewers in awe for a wonderful performance by the 93 year-old Polish actress, Danuta Szaflarska. The second film, *Jeszcze nie wieczor*, a feature film debut by a director, Jacek Blawut, known mainly as a documentary filmmaker, was a story about love, aging and actors. It took place in the real retirement home for actors where many residents played themselves.

Saturday, the third evening of the festival, featured two young Polish directors. The first film of the evening, Lukasz Palkowski's *Reservat/Preserve*, follows the life of a young photojournalist who moves in to a dilapidated apartment in the Praga, district of Warsaw. A series of events change his life, bringing him new friends and enemies in this bittersweet story about the inhabitants of Praga and the lessons they share. The second film of the evening was *Sennosc/Drowsiness*, directed by Magdalena Piekorz. The film centers on three individuals whose stories become intertwined. An actress, a young doctor, and a writer, all suffer the same burden of disturbed sleep. Owing to a combination of circumstances, the three characters meet and life gives them a chance to escape their lethargy.

*We Are Going to the Movies, Tomorrow /Jutro idziemy do kina*, directed by Michal Kwiecinski, was screened on Sunday, the final night of the festival. This film is a beautiful and touching story about young Polish people in 1938. Born in a free country, these recent graduates meet the reality of war. The war shatters their future, hopes, love, and chance for a normal life. The screenplay is based on the works of author Jerzy Stefan Stawinski, who documented his own memories and his friends' memories and experiences in this time period.

Dr. Gilbert Rappaport, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (CREES), provided an excellent historical overview of the period to prepare the audience for the film. Fulbright Fellowship recipient and visiting film scholar at the University of Texas at Austin, Dr. Elzbieta Durys co-presented with Dr. Rappaport and gave a historical overview of Mr. Stawinski's work and how the film reflected Poland in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dr. Durys also provided insight into director Kwiecinski's work.

Two short films of young Polish directors were also presented on Sunday evening: *Szklana pulapka/Glass Trap* by Pawel Ferdek and *Samotnosc kucharza szybkich zamowien/The Loneliness of a Short-Order Cook* by Marcel Sawicki as an invitation to the series of shorts planned for the following weekend.

### **Reception, Recognitions, and Attendance**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Austin Polish Film Festival opened with an elegant reception catered by Sasha's Russian Market and prepared by Anna Bielecka and Barbara Poloczek at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum's Texas Spirit Theater. Over 100 guests were treated to authentic Polish foods and desserts to the accompaniment of Austin violinist, Aleksandra Kassak and Robert Lehr on the keyboard. Immediately following the reception, guests were ushered into the theater. During the introduction Mr. Bromski, the guest director, Polish actress Ms. Agnieszka Kotlarska, and composer Mr. Ludek Drizhal were recognized for their contributions. A proclamation from the City of Austin, signed by Mayor Lee Leffingwell, was presented by the Mayor's Communications Director, Mr. Matt Curtis. The proclamation declared November 2009 as Arts and Culture Month in Austin, Texas. The Polish Consul for Culture, Science, Education and

Public Affairs, Malgorzata Cup, extended the official greetings and presented a certificate from the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles recognizing the Austin Polish Society for their efforts in promoting film arts, language, culture and history of Poland, as well as for supporting educational opportunities in Austin.

After the screening of *U Pana Boga za Miedza/God's Little Village*, the audience enjoyed a spirited question and answer session with Mr. Bromski, Ms. Kotlarska, and Mr. Drizhal.

APFF sponsors and donors were recognized and thanked. The festival attendees were able to read about the sponsors in the festival brochure, the screen and poster displays and in the theater before and after film screenings. Contributors and sponsors were acknowledged at each presentation.

### **Special Presentation for students and filmmakers**

On Saturday, November 14, Mr. Slawomir Idziak, famous Polish cinematographer and director, presented his project *Film Spring Open* to students via Skype at the University of Texas. *Film Spring Open* is a virtual filmmaking resource and studio. Mr. Idziak's presentation was the first event during an afternoon of Polish documentaries, shorts and animations, presented as a part of the APFF. The event was moderated by filmmaker and UT Professor Andrew Garrison and sponsored by the Radio, Television and Film Department of the UT School of Communications. About 40 people attended the event and enjoyed several Polish productions, including *52%*, *Actors*, *Pro Toto*, *My New Life*, *On Credit*, *What Do the Doctors Say*, *Cathedral*, and *Fallen Art*.

### **Austin Polish Film Festival Poster Exhibit**

#### *The World of Leszek Zebrowski*

The Eastside Show Room Café was a successful venue for the *The World of Leszek Zebrowski*, a collection of 15 dynamic posters created by Mr. Zebrowski. Hundreds of café-goers enjoyed the exhibit and purchased several of Mr. Zebrowski's works. Mr. Zebrowski has designed the posters for three APFF events. Opening night on November 1 drew about 40 guests. The exhibit was an extension of the Austin Polish Film Festival and served as an outreach event into the Austin visual arts community. During the opening night, the guests had a chance to view a video of Mr. Zebrowski, demonstrating his creative process and discussing his work and his philosophy.

### **Design and Festival Documentation**

Ms. Kasia Armada, graphic designer, created a quality brochure, flyer, and postcards for the festival. The distinctive printing was done courtesy of the Whitley Printing Company. Festival

photo-documentation was provided by Caroline Ulbrich, APFF event photographer. Additional video documentation was provided by Bowstring Media.

## **Summary**

The 4th Austin Polish Film Festival was considered a success and the funds for the student/artist scholarship were increased through the donations of businesses, governmental agencies, and individuals. Thank you to all of our attendees, sponsors and volunteers for making the 4th Austin Polish Film Festival such a great success! During the five-day event at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum and a Film Studio at the University of Texas, over 350 guests viewed six feature films and ten shorts. Some of the great accomplishments of the 4<sup>th</sup> APFF are:

- 1) An increased awareness of Polish film, art, and history for American audiences and students in central Texas;
- 2) Enhanced funding for the support of Polish/American students and artists exchanges in the central Texas area;
- 3) Expansion of the participation and representation from Poland; and
- 4) Improved interest, participation and co-sponsorship of Austin film organizations and professionals.

The APS Board is very pleased that this fourth festival has once again represented the best of Polish film arts and culture and has supported the student/artist exchange that will benefit many for years to come. APS can take credit for facilitating three beneficial connections between Poland and Austin:

- 1) The creative cooperation between a Polish film director and Austin composer (Jacek Bromski and Ludek Drizhal);
- 2) Promoting the work of a Polish visual artist at the South by Southwest Festival (Mr. Leszek Zebrowski was contracted for creating a promotional design for SXSW 2010); and
- 3) Submission of a short film by a Polish film-directing student from the National Film School in Lodz, Poland to the SXSW 2010 competition.

Again, thanks to you for your contributions and support and please continue to participate in APS sponsored events!

Thanks also to the APS Board and all the volunteers who assisted in the production and promotion of this event.

Special thanks for assistance in obtaining films for this festival, covering the cost of film licenses, venue expenses, marketing, shipping, and for covering the trip expenses of the guest director go to:

- Mr. Bromski and the Polish Filmmaker's Association
- The Polish Film Institute
- The Krakow Film Foundation
- The UT Austin Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies
- The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland at Los Angeles,
- Austin Film Society,
- Whitley Printing Company, and
- The Canvas Press.

Thank you also to Chale Nafus of the Austin Film Society, Dr. Rappaport and Dr. Durys, Leszek Zebrowski and Kasia Armada, and Sasha's Gourmet Russian Market and Cafe for their contributions and support. Thank you to Julia Kolberger for preparing film director greetings to precede our films.

The Austin Polish Society Board of Directors