

Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia



December 2008 Austin Polish Society Newsletter

Dear APS Members and Friends!

APS celebrated the end of the 2008 with a wonderful Christmas Dinner. Thanks to everyone who participated – we received many compliments and gained eight new members. Over one hundred people attended this year’s event, including the Santa. We enjoyed great Polish food and a thrill of raffle tickets and the silent auction. Thanks to Katarzyna Priebe and Caroline Ulbrich for all your work preparing the fundraising! Thanks to Gosia Jurczynska for leading the preparations for the entire event! Great team work!

APS is wishing all its members a wonderful and joyous Holiday Season!

A Report From The 2008 Annual Austin Polish Film Festival

*Festival featured Polish director Jacek Bromski and
Austin based Polish director Mariusz Kotowski*

The Third Annual Austin Polish Film Festival, sponsored by the Austin Polish Society, was held on one weekend, November 7, 8, and 9. The theme for this year, *Polish Films: Universal Stories*, presented the films of Mariusz Kotowski, Jacek Bromski, and Andrzej Wajda.

Mariusz Kotowski, an APFF Guest Director, presented his vivid documentary of the life of one of Poland’s greatest actresses, Pola Negri, on Friday, November 7. The film, *Pola Negri – Life is a Dream in Cinema (2005)*, introduced local audiences to the amazing international acting career of Ms. Negri, who was born in 1894 in Janowa, Poland and became a Hollywood legend. Ms. Negri retired to San Antonio, Texas where she died in 1987. In addition to his many contributions of time and support to the APFF, Mr. Kotowski was also generous in providing a film crew who documented the three evenings of the festival as well as university presentations, providing APFF with a filmed

documentary of this year's events. This DVD will soon be available and sent to major sponsors and guests.

Jacek Bromski, an APFF honored Guest Director, wrote and directed the second film offering of the festival - *In God's Little Garden (U Pana Boga w Ogrodku, 2007)*. While watching his film, audiences enjoyed the simple country life in the Polish village of Krolowy Most, an imaginary "paradise" where life is mostly harmonious in a world created by Bromski as an antidote to the harsh realities of big city life in contemporary Poland. During the week following the film festival APS, in cooperation with two University of Texas departments, introduced Mr. Bromski to the students where he presented excerpts of some of his films. The young directors in training had a chance to view his vignette in the film series "Solidarnosc, Solidarnosc" as well as excerpts from two of his films: *Love in the Year of the Tiger*, (filmed in China, 2005) and *It's Me the Thief* (2000.) The Polish director shared his insights and strategies for casting, writing scripts and seeking out locations, as well as the challenges of working with non-English, non-Polish speaking cast and crew members. Mr. Bromski extended an invitation to the UT students to submit their work for competition sponsored by the Association of Polish Filmmakers that awards scholarships to the winning participants.

Another group of UT students, Dr. Rappaport's Modern Polish History class, viewed two short films from the 13 part TV series "Solidarity, Solidarity" (2005): one by Mr. Bromski, "And you know what", and the other by Juliusz Machulski, "Sushi". With the question "What does "Solidarity" mean today, the Polish television commissioned the films from the most prominent Polish film directors to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the movement. Mr. Bromski was able to provide many insights to students, both as a filmmaker and a witness to these turbulent times in Europe.

Andrzej Wajda, the icon of Polish cinema, directed the last presentation of the Third APFF - the memorable film, *Katyn* (2007). It is a true account of WWII crimes against Poland by both the German army under Hitler and the Soviet troops under the control of Stalin. The film required years of research and Mr. Wajda used a powerful story-telling technique, presenting not only accurate military events, but also telling the story of Katyn through the lives of the loved ones who remained behind and who for many years were not allowed to mourn their losses or to verify the fates of the many men who never returned home. Prior to the screening of *Katyn*, Dr. Gilbert Rappaport, a professor at the UT Austin Center for Russian, Eastern European and Eurasian Studies (CREEES), provided an excellent historical overview of the period to prepare the audience for the film. Graduate student Agnieszka Sekowski also presented a personal insight to *Katyn*, citing her own family's loss.

Reception and Attendance

The Austin Polish Film Festival opened with an elegant reception catered by Bielecka and Poloczek Polish Catering at the beautiful Harry Ransom Center (HRC) located on the University of Texas campus in Austin, Texas. About 100 guests were treated to authentic Polish foods and desserts to the accompaniment of a Polish violinist, Aleksandra Kassak.

Immediately following the reception guests were ushered into the Prothro Theater in the HRC and enjoyed the screening of the first APFF presentation, *Pola Negri-Life is a Dream in Cinema*.

Night two of the APFF opened at the elegant Texas Spirit Theater in the Bob Bullock State History Museum. About 75 attendees were welcome to the museum and enjoyed a great Polish comedy, second in a series directed by Mr. Bromski. Afterward, the audience engaged with Mr. Bromski in a lively question and answer period.

The third day opened to a crowd of about 170, eager to view *Katyn*, directed by Mr. Wajda. This award-winning film has not yet been released in the United States. The screening attracted many Polish viewers, with its theme so personal and so close to the Polish hearts. Also, a sizable non-Polish audience arrived thanks to the publicity efforts of APS. Dr. Rappaport's historical introduction and explanations and Ms. Sekowski's comments were invaluable.

Summary

The Third APFF was considered a success and the funds for the upcoming student intern/scholarship were increased through the donations of many businesses, governmental agencies, and individuals. This great accomplishment for the APFF includes:

- ❖ the increased awareness of Polish film art and history for American audiences and students;
- ❖ an increase in the budget to support visiting Polish students in the central Texas area.
- ❖ a creation of a Polish film section in the library of the RTF department at UT (initiative of Professor Garrison, inspired by the visit of Mr. Bromski.)

The APS Board is very pleased that this third festival has once again represented the best of Polish film arts and culture and has supported the student exchange that will benefit many for years to come.

Funds raised during this festival will support future film festivals and an internship for film students.

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.

APFF Photos by Caroline Ulbrich:

<http://www.austinpolsishsociety.org/austinpff2008/>

Special NOTE to Interested in volunteering? Have a great idea or talents?

Contact: Gosia by e-mail: gosia.jurczynska@oag.state.tx.us or phone: 512-837-9749 (home) or 512-575-4098 (work). Thanks!

Special Thanks to –December APS Volunteers of the Month

Thanks to Katarzyna Priebe, Gosia Jurczynska and Caroline Ulbrich for their efforts in making the Christmas Party a great success! Thank you for your contributions!

If you want to nominate an APS volunteer please contact Gosia by e-mail: gosia.jurczynska@oag.state.tx.us or phone: 512-837-9749 (home) or 512-575-4098 (work). Thanks!

Ognisko Update

The burn ban is still in effect in the central Texas area. With extremely dry weather conditions and no heavy rainfall in the area this summer, the Ognisko has been postponed indefinitely. Please check the APS website for updates and information.

Special Event

Śląsk - the world famous Polish folk song and dance group from Poland, is coming to Texas and will be performing their songs in San Antonio, Houston, and Panna Maria between December 24-28. You don't want to miss this special holiday performance!

Contact: (210) 733-7152

See our website for details: www.austinpolsishsociety.org

Future APS events

- Members Appreciation Party in February – we would like to thank our members for their support and invite them to our First Annual Members Appreciation Party – more details to follow.
- Polish Poetry Reading and much more! For events check our website often at www.austinpolsishsociety.org

Music Lovers--Mark Your Calendar!

Austin Classical Guitar Society presents **Marcin Dylla**

What: Award-winning classical guitarist from Poland in concert

When: February 28, 2009 at 8 pm

Where: Northwest Hills United Methodist Church

Cost: \$20 to \$40, free for ACGS members

Call 300-AGCS for more information.

For more information and to buy tickets click [here](#).

APS Board Meeting

This year APS Board meetings will be usually held at Priebe Security Services on the first Thursday of each month at 7pm. There will be no January meeting. Priebe Security Services is located at 7940 Shoal Creek Blvd., Suite 210 Austin, Texas 78757

A Date in Polish History: December 3, 1857 Birth date of Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski

British author Joseph Conrad is best known for his book *Lord Jim* and short story "*Hear of Darkness.*" He is considered a great British novelist, although he did not start learning English until he was 20 years old. Conrad's stories are primarily based on his adventures at sea.



Early Life of Joseph Conrad

Polish-born British novelist and short-story writer Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) was born on December 3, in what was then part of Russian-occupied Poland. He was christened Józef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski. As a boy, Conrad read Polish and French versions of English novels with his father, but his childhood was not a happy one. His father, a Polish revolutionary patriot, poet and translator, was arrested by Russian authorities for conspiracy.

The family moved in Northern Russia where they lived in exile. A few years later, his mother died of tuberculosis when he was eight years old. Four years later, his father also died of the same illness. An orphan, he became the ward of his wealthy maternal uncle. His uncle's money allowed Joseph to live well, including traveling.

Life with His Uncle

Joseph Conrad's uncle arranged for him to be educated by a young medical student. Although Joseph was more interested in the sea than in learning, he and his tutor sailed about, visiting Bavaria, Austria and Italy. He gave up school when he was 16 years old.

Sea Adventures

Tales of the sea made the young Conrad restless. At 16 he left Poland to work on French ships. At 20 he began 16 years with the British Merchant Navy, making adventurous voyages and rising from deckhand to command a ship of his own. Meanwhile he learned English and became a British subject.

England and Writing

In 1893, aged 36, Joseph Conrad finally settled down in England and began serious writing. Eventually, he became a British subject. His life at sea was a great source of stories. Faraway settings for his books include Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa.

About a year later, he published his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*. That year he also married; he and his wife had two sons.

Conrad used exotic locations for his stories, usually about characters fighting powerful destructive forces torn between the good and evil. One of Conrad's finest short stories is "Heart of Darkness," based on his experiences in what was then the Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Africa.

Late Success

Conrad gained the respect of famous writers such as John Galsworthy, [Henry James](#) and [H.G. Wells](#). He only got his break when an American collector gave him a minimal pension in 1910 so that he was able to write more stories and novels. He did not become successful with a wider audience until his novel *Chance* came out when he was 56. By then two of his best books – *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo* – had also been published.

Joseph Conrad's Works

- Almayer's Folly, 1895
- The Nigger of the 'Narcissus', 1897
- Lord Jim, 1900
- 'Heart of Darkness', 1902
- Typhoon, 1903
- Nostromo, 1904
- The Secret Agent, 1907
- Under Western eyes, 1911
- Chance, 1913

Sources:

Cambridge Guide to Literature in English by Ian Ousby (1993)

Larousse Dictionary of Writers, edited by Rosemary Goring (1994)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Polish Catering

If you're planning a party wouldn't you like to surprise your guests with some Polish meals? It's only a phone call away. A wide assortment of Polish foods for every occasion, you choose-we prepare. Contact: Anna (512) 692 7684, cell 732-407-5485, Barbara (908) 377 6528, email: polishcatering@yahoo.com

Ideas? Suggestions? Praise?

Let us hear from you! Please contact Beata Gmurowska at
bmghomes@yahoo.com