

December 2009 - Austin Polish Society Newsletter

Dear APS Members and Friends,

Austin Polish Society is sharing November highlights with members through our monthly newsletter. Members can review APS events and find out what APS is planning for December. We appreciate the volunteer hours of our members and friends and the great attendance at all of our events! Thank you!

Please remember for current information and updates check the **Austin Polish Society website** at <http://www.austinpolschsociety.org/>.

Do you have a news item or announcement for the Austin Polish American community? Please send your item with a contact name and phone number to mmwgawron@gmail.com. Deadline for news items is the 15th of each month.

Want to advertise or place a notice in the APS newsletter? Send your information to info@austinpolschsociety.org. Thank you!

2009 APS Austin Polish Film Festival: A Great Success!

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 (CREEES), 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 20th 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.

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.

For the full Report of the 4th Austin Polish Film Festival, and sponsor names, please visit: www.austinpolshsociety.org

December 2009 Polish Movie Night - Solidarnosc and Andrzej Wajda

The Sunday, December 13 APS Monthly Movie Night will be at Ventana del Soul (<http://www.ventanadelsoul.org/meeting-space/>) located at 834 East Oltorf Street in South Austin, off IH 35. The phone number is (512) 707-7447. The screening room is on the second floor (no elevator), and water and coffee is served free of charge.

This month, Sunday, December 13, as a tribute to the Solidarity Movement, APS will be presenting selected shorts from the series *Solidarnosc, Solidarnosc*, (2006), featuring individual perspectives on the Solidarity Movement. We hope you will join us for this special screening and discussion of the meaning of the Solidarity Movement in the history of people's movements. The feature presentation will be "Tatarak" by the renowned Polish director, Andrzej Wajda.

Although there is no entry fee, APS is requesting a suggested donation of \$3 to cover the cost of the venue. Joanna Gutt-Lehr and Mary Gawron, the APS Movie Night Committee, has been challenged to find a convenient and no-cost or low-cost film venue for 2010. In pursuit of finding a new home for our APS Monthly Movie Nights, one of our volunteers, Tadeusz Szostak, has contacted the Austin Public Library. Mary Gawron and Joanna Gutt-Lehr will be working with Library staff to investigate the possibilities for a free community meeting space where films can be screened at no cost to non-profit organizations such as APS. Thank you Tadeusz for your research and support of APS and the Monthly Movie Nights!

Thank you Mary, and Joanna for organizing and presenting Austin Polish Society Movie Night!

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!

New APS Board Members and Officers

Austin Polish Society Board of Directors Election was finalized on November 1st. The ballots were open in the presence of APS Secretary, Art Gmurowski and a Board Members, Malgorzata Jurczynska and Mary Gawron. The following directors were elected for a two-year term:

Artur Gmurowski
Joanna Gutt-Lehr
Justyna Okulska
Peter Plotts
Katarzyna Priebe
Beata Zadrozna

Austin Polish Society is looking to fill one more director position for one-year term. All interested parties should submit their resumes to Beata Zadrozna at bmghomes@yahoo.com by Dec 31st, 2009. The Board will review the applications and make a decision by January 31st.

Thanks to all of our board directors for agreeing to serve!

Congratulations to our **2010 APS Officers** that were elected on December 1st:

Beata Zadrozna - President
Joanna Gutt-Lehr - Vice President
Artur Gmurowski - Secretary
Katarzyna Priebe - Treasurer

2009 Austin Polish Society Christmas Party

Christmas is right around the corner! Get ready for the Silent Auction fundraiser at our upcoming **APS Christmas dinner on Saturday, December 12 from 6-9 pm!** Caroline Ulbrich has organized another spectacular silent auction. Unique and exciting items including the commemorative **APFF 09 poster** on canvas signed by our festival guest artists, a **BMX bike, artwork, jewelry, books** and more will be offered for bidding! Come ready to do your Christmas shopping. We will accept cash and checks for winning bids.

The **APS Christmas Party** details are on the APS website and the Evite has been sent. Please plan on bringing a Polish dish to share and enjoy an evening of food, fun, and music. Santa Claus will be making a special visit and children will have games and special treats. All are welcome! Oplatek for the celebration of Wigilia will be available for purchase.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Tuesday, December 1

APS holds its Board Meeting at Priebe Security Service and is open to the members.

Time: 7 pm

What: The APS Board Meeting

Where: Priebe Security Services, 7940 Shoal Creek Blvd., Suite 210, Austin, Texas 78757.

Note: Election of new APS officers.

Saturday, December 5

Time: 10 am to 4 pm

What: Jewelry Designer and Artist, Zosia Hunt is having her annual jewelry show.

Where: Lakewood Clubhouse, 7317 Lakewood Drive

Note: As usual there will be refreshments and lots of holiday cheer.

Directions: Take 360 to Lakewood Drive (one block north of RR 2222). Turn west and the clubhouse is three blocks on the right -7317 Lakewood Drive.

Saturday, December 12, 2009

Time: 6 pm – 9 pm

What: Austin Polish Society Christmas Dinner

Where: Blackhawk Community Clubhouse, 3111 Speidel Drive, Pflugerville, Texas 78660

Cost: \$5 members (\$5 discount if you bring a dish, preferably traditional Polish)

\$10 non-members (\$5 discount if you bring a dish)

Note: Please check the APS website for details

Sunday, December 13, 2009

Time: 5 pm – 7 pm

What: Polish Movie Night

Film title: Tatarak by A. Wajda, selected shorts from Solidarnosc, Solidarnosc

Where: Ventana del Soul (<http://www.ventanadelsoul.org/meeting-space>)

834 E Oltorf St

Austin, TX 78741

(512) 707-7447

Cost: Suggested donation \$3 per person

2010

Celebrating 200th Anniversary of Chopin's Birthday – Dates and events to be announced. If you want to volunteer for this event, please e-mail Joanna Gutt-Lehr at: jguttlehr@earthlink.net.

Thanks!

Important Dates in Polish History

December 1981

The history of *Solidarity*, a Polish non-governmental trade union, began in August 1980 at the Lenin Shipyards (now Gdańsk Shipyards) where it was founded by Lech Wałęsa and others. In the early 1980s, it became the first independent labor union in a Soviet-bloc country. Solidarity gave rise to a broad anti-communist nonviolent social movement that, at its height, united some 10 million members and vastly contributed to the fall of communism.

History

After the Gdańsk Agreement, the Polish government was under increasing pressure from the Soviet Union to take action and strengthen its position. Stanisław Kania was viewed by Moscow as too independent, and on October 18, 1981, the Party Central Committee put him in the minority. Kania lost his post as First Secretary, and was replaced by Prime Minister (and Minister of Defense) Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, who adopted a strong-arm policy.

On December 13, 1981, Jaruzelski began a crackdown on Solidarity, declaring martial law and creating a Military Council of National Salvation (*Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego*, or *WRON*). Solidarity's leaders, gathered at Gdańsk, were arrested and isolated in facilities guarded by the Security Service (*Służba Bezpieczeństwa* or *SB*), and some 5,000 Solidarity supporters were arrested in the middle of the night. Censorship was expanded, and military forces appeared on the streets. A couple of hundred strikes and occupations occurred, chiefly at the largest plants and at several Silesian coal mines, but were broken by ZOMO paramilitary riot police. One of the largest demonstrations, on December 16, 1981, took place at the Wujek Coal Mine, where government forces opened fire on demonstrators, killing 9 and seriously injuring 22. Next day, during protests at Gdańsk, government forces again fired at demonstrators, killing 1 and injuring 2. By December 28, 1981, strikes had ceased, and Solidarity appeared crippled. The last strike in the 1981 Poland, which ended on December 28, took place in the *Piast* coal mine in the Upper Silesian town of Bieruń. It was the longest underground strike in the history of Poland, lasting 14 days. Some 2000 miners began it on December 14, going 650 meters underground. Out of the initial 2000, half remained until the last day. Starving, they gave up after military authorities promised they would not be prosecuted ^[26]. On October 8, 1982, Solidarity was de-legalized and banned.

The range of support for the Solidarity was unique: no other movement in the world was supported by Ronald Reagan and Santiago Carrillo, Enrico Berlinguer and the Pope, Margaret Thatcher and Tony Benn, peace campaigners and NATO spokesman, Christians and Western communists, conservatives, liberals and socialists. The international community outside the Iron Curtain condemned Jaruzelski's actions and declared support for Solidarity; dedicated organizations were formed for that purpose (like Polish Solidarity Campaign in Great Britain). US President Ronald Reagan imposed economic sanctions on Poland, which eventually would force the Polish government into liberalizing its policies. Meanwhile the CIA together with the Catholic Church and various Western trade unions such as the AFL-CIO provided funds, equipment and advice to the Solidarity underground. The political alliance of Reagan and the Pope would prove important to the future of Solidarity. The Polish public also supported what was left of Solidarity; a major medium for demonstrating support of Solidarity became masses held by priests such as Jerzy Popiełuszko, who was murdered in 1984 by the agents of internal intelligence agency, the *Służba Bezpieczeństwa*.

In July 1983, martial law was formally lifted, though many heightened controls on civil liberties and political life, as well as food rationing, remained in place through the mid- to late 1980s.

From an entry at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity_%28Polish_trade_union%29

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Polish Language School for Children

The APS Board has established a committee to explore the possibilities of establishing a Polish Language School for Children in Austin. If you are interested, please e-mail Art Gmurowski at: gmurowski@hotmail.com

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 512-897-0125 or Barbara (908) 377-6528, email: polishcatering@yahoo.com

Hiring international interns is the answer for employers who wish to host qualified professionals and add cultural diversity to their work environment. If you have a talented individual in Poland (or any other country) and would like to host them on a J-1 Internship Visa, we are able to help you and the candidate with visa documentation process. We could also recruit highly educated candidates for you!

The J-1 Internship Program is designed for university students and young professionals to train in the USA up to 18 months within their major field of study as a guided work-based learning program.

If you have an individual in mind or would like us to recruit for you, please contact me for more details:

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www.allianceabroad.com

Ideas? Suggestions? Praise? Let us hear from you! Please contact Beata at bmghomes@yahoo.com or go to <http://www.austinpolsishsociety.org/>