

The Polish Studies Center Newsletter

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Spring 2009

Director's Notebook

By Padraic Kenney

It is a daunting task to step into Director Bill Johnston's shoes, even for just a year. But one of the best parts of this job is to share with you some of the excitement at the Polish Studies Center in 2008.

Two great events kept our Center on the world map of Polish Studies this past year. First, April 2008 brought some thirty scholars of Polish culture from North America, Poland, Germany, the UK, and as far away as Japan, to Bloomington for a three-day conference entitled "New Directions, New Connections: Polish Studies in Cross-Disciplinary Context." From the opening address by Clare Cavanagh of Northwestern University through the campfire picnic in Brown County State Park, this was a memorable occasion. You can read more about the conference on page 2.

In November, we welcomed the legendary Theatre of the Eighth Day of Poznań, making their first visit to the United States. After a successful run in New York, they presented their latest play, *The Files*,

in an English translation by Bill Johnston, as well as one performance in Polish, to sold-out audiences at the Waldron Center for the Performing Arts. The actors were counting on drawing students (after seeing very few in New York), and were not disappointed. Turn to page 6 for an interview with members of the Theater, as well as pictures from their

of Greenpeace, who talked with students about her work. Finally, anthropologist Anna Niedźwiedz of Jagiellonian University shared with us her research on the worship of Our Lady of Częstochowa.

I am very pleased to announce two new initiatives in the Polish Studies Center. First, the Executive Board now works with the Director on long-term plans at the Center. One of those plans is to expand greatly our efforts at outreach and fundraising, in order to build a stronger and more visible program. To that end, an Advisory Board brings together members of the community. You can read more about the Board on page 14.

During those moments when we were not welcoming and getting to know our frequent visitors, the Center kept humming with activity. If you missed our annual picnic in September or the Christmas Party in December, look at our photo spread on pages 12-13. Our annual Film Festival continues to bring the best of current Polish cinema every Spring. And there's

much more! My thanks to all who have been involved in the activities of the Polish Studies Center this year – and especially to our hard-working staff, Program Coordinator Gosia Swearingen and Graduate Assistant Magda Sokolowski. Without them, most of these events could not get off the ground. Before you explore this year's newsletter further, take another look at the photo on this page. These prominent figures in Polish culture knew about each other's work, but had never met. Making such encounters possible, and allowing the creative sparks to fly, is what is exciting about our Center. I encourage you to find out what else the Polish Studies Center has to offer, and to continue to stay involved



Angnieska Graff (center) talks with Jacek Chmaj and Ewa Wójciak from Theatre of the Eighth Day at a reception at the Waldron Center

visit here.

In between these blockbuster events, the Center kept busy. Benjamin Paloff of the University of Michigan lectured on Witold Gombrowicz in March. West Virginia University historian Robert Blobaum visited in September to present his research on Warsaw in World War One. Feminist scholar Agnieszka Graff gave a lecture on nationalism and gender in contemporary Poland in November. Also in November, political scientist Jeffrey Kopstein of the University of Toronto discussed pogroms in World War Two. A surprise visit brought world-renowned theologian and mathematician Michal Heller, winner of the Templeton Prize, to the Center for an informal discussion with students.

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New Directions, New Dimensions: Conference Review

by Magda Sokolowski

More than thirty scholars representing an array of disciplines and several countries gathered at Indiana University from April 17 to April 20, 2008 to take part in the conference "New Directions, New Connections: Polish Studies in Cross-Disciplinary Context," co-chaired by Professors Justyna Beinek and Bill Johnston and administered by the Polish Studies Center. Participants presented current research and examined the state of Polish Studies in North America, continuing a discussion initiated at the previous conference in Toronto in 2006 in response to the political and socio-cultural changes in Poland over the last two decades.

Polonists from Harvard, Northwestern, the University of Chicago, UCLA, the University of Kansas, the University of Michigan, and the University of Florida, to mention just American institutions, were divided into ten panels and spent four days grappling with urgent questions confronting the field. What is the place of Polish Studies in light of the shift in humanities toward cross-disciplinary inquiry? And how can specialists in Polish language, literature, and culture be trained to acquire sufficient expertise in matters specifically Polish, while simultaneously managing to function across other fields and multiple disciplines? By examining these questions and others, panelists and attendees of the conference hoped to make new theoretical, substantive, and disciplinary contributions that could reinvigorate Polish Studies and point the field in innovative and productive directions while linking it to other disciplines.

Over the course of four days, the

possibilities of cross-disciplinary discourse were highlighted in a variety of panels – "Psychoanalytic Approaches to Polish Literature and Culture," "Queering Polish Literature and Culture," "The Nineteenth Century: Interdisciplinary Perspectives," "Cinematic Inquiry" – while other panels focused on cultural studies, poetry and prose, and theater. Indiana University's Polish Studies had a strong representation at the conference. Professors Justyna Beinek (Slavic Languages and Literatures) and Halina Goldberg (Musicology) lectured together on nineteenth-century literary and musical albums, Professor Bill Johnston (Comparative Literature and Applied Linguistics) read from his translations of Polish literature, and Professor Padraic Kenney (History) chaired the cultural studies panel. Three IU graduate students delivered talks: Bethany Braley and Bora Chung (both from the Slavic Department) spoke about Modernist poetry and prose, respectively, while Mira Rosenthal (Comparative Literature) addressed issues of translation.

The successful event culminated on Saturday evening with an outing to Brown County State Park where participants and organizers enjoyed food, drink and good conversation over a crackling fire.

Generous conference support was provided by four units of Indiana University: the College of Arts and Humanities Institute, the Office of the Vice Provost for Research: New Frontiers in the Arts and Humanities Program, the Office of the Vice President for International Affairs, and the Polish Studies Center.

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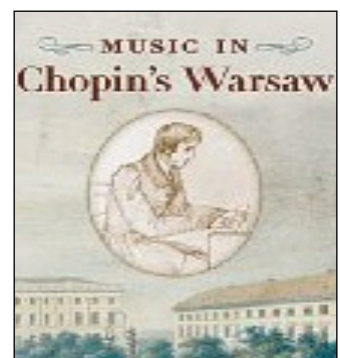
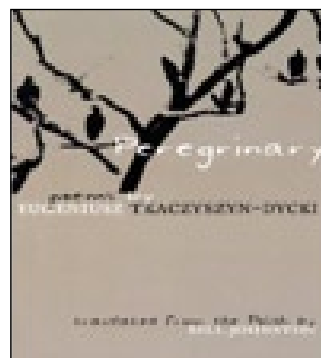
**The Office of the
Vice President for
International Affairs**

Recent Books by Polish Studies Faculty

Building States without Society: European Union Enlargement and the Transfer of EU Social Policy to Poland and Hungary, by Beate Sissenich (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

Music In Chopin's Warsaw, by Halina Goldberg (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Peregrinary by Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki, translated by Bill Johnston (Zephyr Press, 2008).



Templeton Prize Laureate Michał Heller Visits IU

By Magda Sokolowski

This past November, the Polish Studies Center was delighted to host a student gathering with Michał Heller, the Polish cosmologist and Catholic priest, who won the prestigious and highly coveted 2008 Templeton Prize.

For more than 40 years, Heller, who currently holds a Professor of Philosophy post at the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow, has developed sharply focused and strikingly original concepts on the origin and cause of the universe, often under intense governmental repression, particularly during the Communist era.

Professor Heller has become a compelling figure in the realms of physics and cosmology, theology, and philosophy with his cogent and provocative concepts on issues that all of these disciplines pursue, albeit from often vastly different perspectives. With an academic and religious background that enables him to comfortably and credibly move within each of these domains, Heller's extensive writings have evoked new and important consideration of some of humankind's most profound concepts.

On a Thursday morning over coffee



Professor Heller with IU students during an informal gathering over breakfast at the Polish Studies Center

and bagels, undergraduate and graduate students from Indiana University met with Professor Heller in an informal setting with a chance to ask him questions about his philosophy, his work and what winning the Templeton Prize has meant for him.

The Templeton Prize, valued at more than \$1.6 million, is awarded each year (since 1973) by the John Templeton Foundation. The Templeton Prize is the world's largest annual monetary award given to an individual and is guided by the Templeton Foundation's international

efforts to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discovery in areas engaging life's biggest questions, ranging from explorations into the laws of nature and the universe to questions on love, gratitude, forgiveness, and creativity.

During the conversation over breakfast, when asked by one student what Professor Heller aims to do with his award money, he responded in his humble, quintessential way, "I don't need the money ... so I will give it away."

Professor Heller plans to dedicate the Templeton Prize money to help create the Copernicus Center in conjunction with Jagiellonian University and the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow to further research and education in science and theology as an academic discipline.

Professor Heller's visit to IU was sponsored by the Departments of Physics, Astronomy, Mathematics, Philosophy, History and Philosophy of Science, Religious Studies, and the Polish Studies Center as part of the The Joseph and Sophia Konopinski Colloquia Series, at which Professor Heller presented his talk, "The Existence of Singularities and the Origin of Space-Time."

Robert Blobaum speaks on Warsaw in the First World War

Fall 2008 started out with a bang for Polish Studies, as over fifty people, including many undergraduates, filled the Faculty Room in the IMU to hear a talk by Professor Robert Blobaum of West Virginia University. Blobaum is Eberly Family Professor of History and the author of numerous books and articles on turn-of-the-century Poland under Russian rule.

Professor Blobaum's talk, co-sponsored by the Borns Jewish Studies Program with assistance from the Department of History and REEI, was entitled "A Warsaw Story: Polish-Jewish Relations in the First World War." The talk explored a conundrum; how

was it that Warsaw managed to avoid a pogrom at this time when the Jews of other cities, like Lwów, were not so fortunate? The answers Professor Blobaum gave were not particularly rosy. Warsaw had all the makings of a pogrom, and was lucky to avoid one. The talk presented urban Poland on the eve of independence in intimate detail, and indeed there are few in the world who know that important era in Polish History as well as does Robert Blobaum. Look for his forthcoming book, tentatively entitled *A Minor Apocalypse: Everyday Life in Warsaw during the First World War*, in the near future.



Professor Blobaum speaks to a packed audience at the Indiana Memorial Union

Faculty Profile: A talk with Polish Studies Center Director Bill Johnston

by Magda Sokolowski

Bill Johnston is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at IUB and Director of the Polish Studies Center. In this interview, Professor Johnston talks about his current research in Poland involving North American Christian evangelicals, winning the Found in Translation Award and being on Polish television. Johnston will resume his position as Director of Polish Studies this summer when he returns from his Fulbright Fellowship.

You are currently on a Fulbright in Poland, could you explain the work that you're doing?

I have a Fulbright Research Fellowship to conduct an ethnographic study of an evangelical Christian language school in Poland. I'm fascinated by the spiritual and cultural encounter between Poles and North American evangelicals, which is a part of the larger globalizing processes of the last ten or fifteen years.

Where did your interest for the project come from and how does it relate to some of the work you've done in the past, particularly with Native Americans?

In my work as an applied linguist I spend a lot of time working with language teachers. With teachers of English I became interested in teacher identity and the values that any teacher brings to the classroom; for evangelical teachers this includes religious values. As for Native Americans, I work a lot with teachers of less commonly taught languages, including teachers of Native American languages, especially Lakota, a language spoken in North and South Dakota and surrounding areas. I regard this as the most important work I've done as an applied linguist—in helping teachers to know how best to teach the language, I'm trying to play at least a small part in keeping that language alive.

Can you talk a bit more about your interest in the intersection between Poles and North American evangelicals? What are you discovering through your research?

From my work in applied linguistics I knew of two significant developments. First, Evangelical missionary organizations are increasingly turning to the use of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as what is called a platform for mission work. Second, after the collapse of communism evangelical organizations have taken a special interest in the countries of the former communist bloc. I did some research and found that there are large numbers of North American-based evangelical missionaries in Poland, many involved in EFL. I was intrigued by the thought of the encounter between Poles and North Americans in the domain of religious and spiritual beliefs—and by the idea of attempting to convert Catholics to Christianity! I decided I'd really like to observe these processes at first hand, by conducting an ethnographic study of an English school run by evangelicals. It turns out, of course, that the situation is much more complex—for a start, the Catholicism of Poles is often more a matter of religious observance, whereas evangelicals believe in a "personal relationship with God." The whole thing too needs to be seen against the backdrop of broader social, cultural, and political changes in Poland, including the all-present consumer culture that creates its own problems of anomie and alienation, and



the polarizing presence of Radio Maryja. In any case, I continue to be fascinated by the work, and I'm planning to write a book based on my study.

Are you currently working on any translations?

I'm always working on a translation! I just finished revising Juliusz Słowacki's *Balladina*, which will come out later this year in a volume of Słowacki translations; I also recently turned in Andrzej Stasiuk's *Fado*, a collection of essays, and the proofs for Jerzy Pilch's novel *The Mighty Angel* (Pod mocnym aniołem), which will be brought out later in the spring by Open Letter. I'm currently translating a magnificent novel called *Stone Upon Stone* (Kamień na kamieniu) by Wiesław Myśliwski, for Archipelago Books.

This past year, you were awarded the first

ever Found in Translation Prize for your translation of *new poems* by Tadeusz Rozewicz, which was also a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Poetry Award? What does it mean to get this kind of recognition? And for those of us dying to know the details, how was the awards ceremony in New York for the National Book Critics Circle Award?

It was a great honor to receive the Found in Translation award. The National Book Critics Circle nomination was for Różewicz, not me, which was fantastic—he's a forgotten author here in the States, and it was wonderful to see him getting such attention from the American literary world. The book I translated contained his most recent poetry, and it shows how vital he still is as a writer, and still unafraid to experiment and to shock. The awards ceremony was VERY New York—lots of famous writers and literary groupies. It was interesting to be there, but I'm glad I don't have to live in that rarefied atmosphere! I find Bloomington much more conducive to creative work.

Many of our newsletter readers are familiar with your translation work, but for those who aren't, can you talk a little bit about how you decide to translate the work that you do?

At this stage in my career I often have the luxury of choice, which means I opt to translate the books I feel most comfortable with and, even more important, that in my view are the most valuable—that was the case with Różewicz, Myśliwski, and Magdalena Tulli, for instance. But, even though I have some influence with the publishers, the decision is ultimately always theirs, so I don't always get to translate exactly the books I want—for example, I'm still trying to persuade someone to publish Andrzej Stasiuk's *Dukla*, which is his best book, yet still hasn't been accepted by any English-language publisher.

You've been in Poland now for several months while working on your latest projects, can you talk a little about the changing face of Poland as you see it? Does anything appear substantially different since your last visit? I'm curious

too, about Polish national identity and how that might be changing (as well as what you're finding out through your current research).

Perhaps the biggest discovery for me from my research has been the vibrant Polish evangelical Christian community—Kraków, for instance, has about a dozen evangelical churches, and there are many others around the country, almost all led by Polish pastors. As for the country as a whole, what I see happening is a Polish version of the culture wars—a rather outdated right wing trying to hold onto values and practices that are increasingly marginalized, and a liberal side that is struggling to constitute a left-wing identity distinct from the (in my view) morally bankrupt “left” of the former communists. Many young people, for instance, are very cosmopolitan and welcoming of otherness; many others, at the same time, are drawn to more culturally conservative communities often, though not always, gathered around the church. Add to this the impending economic crisis, which is already hitting Poland hard (increased unemployment and so on), and I think the next few years are likely to be highly volatile from a social and ideological perspective.

Poland's been in the Western limelight quite a bit recently with the recent Climate talks in Poznań and, of course, the ongoing issues surrounding the missile defense shield -- do you want to comment on the political climate in Poland right now as you perceive it from a visitor's perspective?

In its current incarnation Poland is twenty years old, and to be honest it behaves like a typical twenty-year-old—at times it's impressively mature and respectable (for example in its participation in NATO), at others it reverts to teenage tantrums (witness the frequent bickering among politicians). Ecologically the country is a long way behind Western Europe, but it's mostly moving in the right direction. I don't know enough about the missile shield to comment about it, but it does seem to me that Poles are somewhat uncritical in their assumption that the shield is in Poland's own best interests.

How are you spending your time when not working, if that's possible? And what are some of your favorite places to frequent?

I don't have a lot of free time! Part of the reason is that, in addition to the research project and the translation, I was also asked to co-host a weekly television program about books on Poland's TVP1 channel. The program is called *Hurtownia Książek* or “Book Warehouse,” and it will run to the end of February. It's been great fun to do—I travel to Warsaw once a week and we film in an actual book warehouse outside the city. But with all the reading and everything else, I rarely even have enough time to see my two oldest children, Ania and Piotrek, who live in Kraków, the former with my grandson Hugo—so whenever I've got some time, I try to spend it with them.

If readers of Polish literature were to be given Bill Johnston's top three, what would they be? I'm thinking particularly of the contemporary scene and what seems to be most interesting on the bookstore shelves at the moment.

To be perfectly honest, I'm not sure that today's literature is up to that of the past, so I'll give you two top threes among books that are available in English. Out of Polish literature overall, I would select Bolesław Prus's brilliant long novel *The Doll*, the short stories of Bruno Schulz, and Witold Gombrowicz's last and greatest novel, *Kosmos*. Of the literature published in the last twenty years, I'd say perhaps Andrzej Stasiuk's *Tales of Galicia*, (*Dukla* is even better but, as I mentioned earlier, not published in English), Stefan Chwin's *Hanemann*, and Magdalena Tulli's *Dreams and Stones*.

And as for those titles Polish titles not yet in translation, like *Dukla* by Andrzej Stasiuk we'll be keeping an eye out for English translations from you, Bill!

Magda Sokolowski is a 2nd year graduate student in the Master of Fine Arts Program with an emphasis in Poetry.

Poland's Legendary Theatre of the Eighth Day Performs at IU

by Magda Sokolowski

*In November, the Polish Studies Center in conjunction with the College Arts and Humanities Institute were delighted to host the phenomenal theater group, Theatre of the Eighth Day (Teatr Ósmego Dnia) as part of their US debut tour in New York city and Bloomington. Prior to their first show, I met up with Ewa Wójciak and Marcin Kęszycki of the group to discuss their experience in the US performing *The Files*. What follows is our engaging conversation about *The Files*, its history and the changing face of Polish theater.*

A big hearty welcome to Bloomington! How are you feeling today on the day of your first performance here in town?

Ewa: Like always when we perform for the first time in a new town among new people, we are full of hope, but also a little nervous and stressed [laughs].

Marcin: Yes, but on the other hand, we are used to performing in new places. We travel a lot in many countries, so we are used to the stress, which is an expected part of performing.

Three of four of your performances of *The Files* here in Bloomington will be performed in English, which I should mention, is based on the translation of the play from the Polish by our very own Bill Johnston. How many times have you performed this play in English? And how is the experience different from performing it in Polish?

Ewa: Well, the English version of *The Files* we've performed now about twenty times, having just spent three weeks in New York

English, though we often perform other plays in English when we travel. But *The Files* are very special because there is so much text in the play. It's probably the most talkative play that we've ever done, and we put a lot of effort in preparing ourselves for such an English-intensive performance, including hiring an American language coach whom



*Theatre of the Eighth day members during a performance of *The Files* at Bloomington's John Waldron Arts Center; (from left to right) Tadeusz Janiszewski, Marcin Kęszycki, Ewa Wójciak and Adam Borowski*

we worked with before we came to the States.

Marcin: For that reason, we had a lot of stress before the first show in New York. We wanted to make sure that the play's ideas were understandable, fully translatable, and that the audience would accept our different way of pronunciation.

Ewa: And, of course, the play, especially the first few times around, was much, much longer than the Polish version because we took such great care to enunciate everything clearly and to be precise.

Marcin: [laughs] And now, we're more

version here because both versions have the potential to get mixed together.

How did New York go? How was the reception of the show?

Ewa: It was wonderful. We are still getting emails from people who came to a performance in New York expressing their gratitude for the show and how it was an emotional experience for them, from Polish as well as non-Polish people. This makes us very happy. And we were so satisfied by the reviews, like in the *Village Voice*, which were overwhelmingly positive. And the reviews helped to increase our ticket sales for the performances in New York. Each performance over the course of three weeks was for a fuller and fuller audience.

Marcin: Yes, we are very surprised by the reaction of the public. What surprised us the most was how the American audience tended to respond to the play in many of the same parts that the Polish audience was receptive to, finding humor in the same places. It was

fantastic, we had no idea that the American audience would relate to the play, its humor, its politics in the same way as the Polish audience does being that they might be more familiar with the experiences of the play. On the other hand, one of the differences we noticed between the two audiences is that in Poland, we have a much younger audience, while in the US, we've experienced a much older, more mature audience.

I'm curious about the historical context of the play, that is, what were *The Files* responding to when they were being written? I wonder if the American audience that you have been experiencing

issues within the play. I can see some strong correlations between the events when *The Files* were being written and the contemporary American political climate, especially under the last presidential administration.

Marcin: Oh, very clearly so.

Ewa: Yes, yes, yes. We counted on that when we came here, that the performance would be universal enough for American audiences. Not only because they would be able to sympathize with those others in the play, but because they also know what censorship means, especially to a democratic state. The irony in the play and its humor—people respond to that because people are sensitive to the political subjects [within the play], they seem to have universal appeal.

You have been performing together since the 1970s ...

Marcin: [laughing] Yes, this is a very hard reality and it's true.

Ewa: [laughing] We are the children of the '68 Revolution.

Marcin: Yesterday in the motel, we saw a copy of a magazine with the Rolling Stones on the cover and we could relate. Though, of course, they are older, we started to wonder if we look as they do [laughs].

Ewa: [laughing] Sometimes friends in Poland call us the "Rolling Stones of alternative theater."

That's hilarious. In many ways, that's quite a compliment. I imagine that the deep relationship that all of you have fostered over the years adds greatly to your stage performances, especially when you are called to improvise. Can you talk a little bit about the benefits of having worked together for so many years and how that adds to the on-stage dynamics between all of you?

Ewa: Of course. We met originally with the idea of creating a performing group as

from the beginning, it was very much about creating something that was our own, alternative and much more spiritual brotherhood of people and more than just theater. And from the very beginning, the



*During the reception following the Polish performance of *The Files* at the John Waldron Arts Center; top: Ewa Wójciak, bottom: Tadeusz Janiszewski*



focus was much more on the group as a place where we could discuss, read, share in spiritual discoveries and we learned that it was very important to work together as a team because theater anyway is very

there is a theater group which doesn't act as a team. They tend to be separate from each other and it lacks the cohesiveness of the group. For us, building strong personal relationships was the foundation of what we were doing and what we wanted to do and from that improvisation, of course, becomes much easier to do when the group dynamics are so strong and interconnected. It's a deep partnership.

Your group is renowned for your outdoor performances. I've seen amazing pictures of some of your outdoor shows on the internet. What prompted taking the theater from the inside to the outside or vice versa?

Marcin: There were many reasons. We started to work on the street during the Communist period, which was a very bad time to do such a thing because performing in the streets required permits, you had to get permission and there was censorship ...

Ewa: It was rather forbidden.

Marcin: Right, it was strictly forbidden. It wasn't easy doing outdoor performances then, but we tried anyway. But eventually we had to take cover, so we started performing in churches, which at that time, were quite independent. So we started performing both inside churches as well as in the spaces outside of churches. And outside was the better space because it was without the hindrance of alters, sacred sculptures, benches and so on, and we obviously had a lot more room, which was a big advantage.

Ewa: We should mention that during that time, under Martial Law in Poland, the Polish Catholic church, not all of them, but some of them were 'underground' meeting places for practitioners of various arts and social movements, which is why we were drawn to those spaces. It was quite different then than what the Polish Catholic church is now. But that was all before we were forced to

Marcin: And when we came back to Poland in the early 1990's, after our experiences in the West, we noticed that the Polish audience had become pre-occupied with other things, different from what seemed to be the concerns before we left Poland and they weren't as interested in theater anymore.

Ewa: When democracy started Polish people stopped going to the theater. Theater had always been an alternative space of freedom during the totalitarian system and suddenly, after 1989 when there was so much more access to other ideas, the people of Poland seemed not as excited by the theater as they once were. And we ourselves had become a little bored of the dark, dingy underground that was so much of the theater back then. And so we decided to pursue the people, which is when we really took the theater outside.

Marcin: Right. If the people don't come to the theater then that means that the theater has to go to them.

Ewa: Yes, and also we decided that we wanted to do shows that people could participate in, so it wasn't that we simply moved the theater from the inside to the outside, but we wanted to redefine the theater. That's when we started thinking about how to perform without using words and how to make it visible enough so that it could be experienced just as equally by one hundred people as say, by two thousand. Taking the theater outside has allowed us a completely different way to interact with our audiences and now we're addicted to these types of large-scale performances.

Marcin: Also, outdoor theater gives us new possibilities for developing theatrical language in a completely different way. Ultimately, these two different types of theater – the indoor and outdoor – inspire each other.

So there was this move from the indoor to the outdoor around the time when Communism fell, the move seemed to

be a response to that, I'm curious about how the actual playwriting changed in response to that political shift and how the subject matter that you were dealing with changed.

Ewa: Maybe the writing became more global, but it was still political. For us the motivation to do theater is always as a reaction to what is going on in the world. That's natural for



Adam Borowski during a performance of The Files

us; it is our character to react to what is going on around us. And of course we do it too because Polish reality is still very far from where it needs to be. It's a democracy, yes, but now we're in a very consumption-oriented way of developing as a country, which in many ways is very superficial. It's heavily American-influenced and not all of that is necessarily in the best interest for Poland. There is an overwhelming move in Poland towards consumerism and adaptation of Western values, which we think need to be questioned. And we feel that there is still a lot of work to do for our theater as it concerns these changes. We are sensitive, too, to other things going on around us, like the series of wars in the 1990's in the Balkans and how those have affected us. The genocide in that region continues. These events have been an inspiration for one of our most well-known shows called *Ark* which is about civil war refugees from the Balkan region looking for new homelands.

Regarding the growing Western-oriented consumption-culture in Poland that you just described, how has that been impacting the arts and theater, in particular? Has that been a chance for greater artistic opportunities or not? Is there an artistic expression forming in response to these new capitalistic, consumerist modes?

Marcin: As you might know, Poland right now seems to be very much fascinated with America. It's not only the Hollywood films, but the mundane day-to-day things too, like eating at McDonald's and those kinds of things. But there is a slow growing resistance to that, which is very new. At first, people were just happy to have all of these new things, but now as the novelty of them seems to wear off, there appears to be a growing movement against these things.

Ewa: And it's probably bigger than we realize. But there is an anti-American movement, in the sense that more and more people, particularly the younger generation are against the mass-

consumerism that they see going on around them. And we're familiar with many of these movements because we are an island, one of the few remaining groups from our generation who continue to be active in the growing midst of these younger generations' movements. We have been very lucky and are quite comfortable now in Poland where in Poznań, owing to our reputation as a legend of the democratic opposition movement, we have set up a cultural and artistic center around the theater space, where we are the hub for many different groups and ideas including anarchists, gays and lesbians and various other minority groups. So, while we were the generation of the '68 Revolution and much has changed since then, we continue to concern ourselves with issues of social justice and resistance.

Marcin: In this way, we were never only a theater group. The theater is one aspect of what we do, which is part of the much larger action to react to the world and to foster social expression and social protest

“Polish is not Difficult”

by Wiola Próchniak

I have been teaching Polish to foreign students for several years, but I had to come to Indiana University in Bloomington to notice that certain things that I had considered obvious are not really obvious. Let me supply a few examples.

Since the fall of 2007 I have been teaching Polish in Bloomington at three levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. I have both undergraduate and graduate students in all of my classes. And that was one of my first discoveries: you can study biology, business, political science, musicology, or linguistics, and find yourself in a group of people who are interested in a completely different field than your own. I can see that this is very stimulating for students: you learn new things about fields that you previously never paid much attention to, and now they become

interesting. This process takes place with the help of the Polish language and in the context of Polish history and traditions. Even at the beginning stages of learning Polish you can discuss important and serious topics, not only building dialogues that have to do shopping or ordering a taxi (although these skills eventually turn out to be quite useful, too).

On the other hand, a student who goes to Poland to study Polish becomes immersed in Polish reality; he or she learns while hearing conversations on the street, observing everyday life, and simply living in the country. When all this takes place in a country that is not Poland, things become complicated; Polish reality is different from the American one. For example, we had to minimize using such words from our textbook as “train station” or “train ticket” because Americans use other modes of transportation. We have

a constant problem determining whether at noon one eats a “second breakfast” or lunch. The answer to the innocent Polish question “what do you study?” is not as clear-cut as a Pole would expect: answers are sometimes vague and the most frequently heard one is “I (still) don’t know.” Such differences in perceiving reality are a part and parcel of our classes.



Wiola Próchniak, IU's beloved Visiting Professor of Polish

P o l i s h Americans constitute more than half of my students. This broad term includes many variants: sometimes they are native speakers of Polish, but most often they are young people whose ancestors came to the United States a long time ago, and their Polish national identity has been preserved in holiday customs, songs, or just a few words. It happens that studying Polish

is a difficult existential experience: every day one has to study new grammatical structures, foreign words, and Polish ways of thinking about the world. One of the biggest challenges that both students and teachers face is what to do in order to study effectively and learn Polish quickly.

Most students have made a lot of progress in learning Polish, and a few have exceeded expectations. This academic year five students of Polish have applied for grants and fellowships that would allow them to continue Polish studies. Let’s keep our fingers crossed for their success!

I think that one student’s evaluation is the best conclusion to my notes on teaching Polish at IU: “I knew Polish a bit. I want to study it because Polish is important to me, and also knowing one more foreign language can be very useful in adult life.”

Last year I taught all my Polish classes

at the Polish Studies Center, a unique place that no other American campus can boast of. There is another place in Bloomington where one can hear Polish: every Thursday at 6 p.m. speakers and students of Polish meet at the Runcible Spoon cafe at the “Polish Table.” We are in the fourth year of these meetings, inspired by Prof. Justyna Beinek in 2005. The Polish Table has become a Bloomington tradition with both steady and seasonal participants. We welcome all who would like to join us.

Wiola Próchniak is currently Visiting Professor of Polish (Fall 2007 – Spring 2009) here at Indiana University and Fellowship holder of the Kosciuszko Foundation Lecturer from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. She will be returning to her home in Poland this summer.

Open Letter of Appreciation

Dear Wiola,

We, your students, just want you to know how much we have appreciated your time, teaching, and fellowship over the past two years. You have been so gracious with your efforts, engaging us in discussion (but not getting too frustrated when we make the same mistake over and over), explaining Polish grammar, and laughing about everyday life. You truly worked to make the language classroom an engaging environment, using literature and film to bring our language study out of the textbook and into real life. You have encouraged us to tackle complicated topics in our research, and have urged us to read, write, and speak about broad cultural issues and concerns current in Poland and around the world. We will definitely miss you next year - both in the classroom and at Polish table - but we wish you all the best as you return home to family and friends!

*Do zobaczenia,
Your students*

FACULTY NEWS

Justyna Beinek (Slavic) published two articles in Polish periodicals: one on Romantic albums in *Rocznik Humanistyczny* and another on women in Polish film in *Postscriptum polonistyczne*. She delivered talks on the dynamics of individual/national memory in Polish and Russian albums of the Romantic Age at the Humboldt University in Berlin and the University of Hamburg in Germany in June 2008. Beinek and Halina Goldberg co-authored a paper, "Literary and Musical Albums" Conventions and Contexts," at the conference *New Directions, New Connections: Polish Studies in Interdisciplinary Context* (see page 2). In summer 2008, she traveled to Jagiellonian University in Kraków to work on *A Critical Guide to Witold Gombrowicz*, a project for which she received a NEH Collaborative Fellowship (2007-2008).

Jack Bielasiak (Political Science) served as Division Chair, Politics of Communist and Former Communist States, American Political Science Association; in September, he was Chair and Discussant of "Post-Soviet Authoritarianism: Regime, Party, Leadership," at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in Boston.

Halina Goldberg (Musicology) published a book, *Music in Chopin's Warsaw*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008 (see page 2). Her article entitled "Chopin's Late Fantasy Pieces in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Fantasy Genres" appeared in *Chopin's Musical Worlds: the 1840s* (Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2007). She also presented a number of papers on Chopin and other topics in Poland, Germany, and the United States.

Bill Johnston (Comparative Literature and Second Language Studies) was awarded the first ever Found in Translation Prize for his translation of *new poems* by Tadeusz Rozewicz. The book was also a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Poetry Award. In 2008 he published *Peregrinary* by Eugeniusz Tkacyszyn-Dycki with Zephyr Press. Johnston is currently in Poland on a Fulbright Research Fellowship, conducting

an ethnographic study of an evangelical Christian language school. He is also working on a translation of Wiesław Myśliwski's 1984 novel "Stone Upon Stone" (Kamień na kamieniu) for Archipelago Books. Finally, he is currently a co-presenter for "Hurtownia Książek," a weekly program about books on Polish TVP 1.

Padraic Kenney (History) conducted research in South African archives in the summer of 2008, gathering material for a book on political prisoners in the 20th century world. He published an article on contemporary performance art in Central Europe, "Pranks for the Post-Coms," in *Modern Painters* (December 2008). An Italian translation of his book *Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe Since 1989* also appeared in 2008. He continues to serve as president of the Polish Studies Association.

Beate Sissenich (Political Science) -- see page 2.

STUDENT NEWS

Alison Behling (SPEA) is writing her WEST thesis on nuclear energy policy in Europe, using the cases of Germany and Sweden. Last summer she worked as an intern with the US State Department at the Embassy in Berlin.

Jolanta Mickute returned in late November 2008, from dissertation research in Poland and Lithuania. She is presently doing dissertation writing and additional research at the Center for Jewish History/Yivo in NY. With support from the Morris and Alma Schapiro Dissertation Research Fellowship, Jolanta is writing her first chapter on Jewish women Zionists in interwar Poland.

Bora Chung (Slavic) presented a paper entitled "Feminine Voice in Modernist Folk Songs" at the AAASS Convention in November 2008.

Hubert Izienicki (Sociology) recently

completed his MA at Purdue University, where he examined the lives of Polish immigrant men who have sex with other men. His current work also focuses on the intersection of sexuality and one's immigrant experience.

Ania Muller (History) -- see *Letter from Gdańsk* on page 11 detailing Ania's family and academic life in Poland while there on a Fulbright.

Daniela Nimmich is an exchange student from the Christian-Albrechts University of Kiel in Germany, spending this year in the History Department. Being of both German and Polish origin, she is very interested in Eastern European History, Modern European History and Literature.

Magda Sokolowski (English, Poetry) has been awarded a grant by the College Arts and Humanities Institute to study in Nepal this summer as part of the cultural literacy project entitled "The Writer in the World: Cultural Space and Displacement" sponsored by Professor Samrat Upadhyay, Director of Creative Writing. Her work in Nepal will focus on the poetics of space and how writers respond to geographical and political exile. She will present her work in the fall of 2009 as part of a larger panel and reading presentation.

Kristen Strandberg -- see Travel awards on page 14 to learn more about Kristen's recent trip to the Chopin Institute in Warsaw.

Lisa Vest (Musicology) received the Mellon Pre-Dissertation Research Grant through the Russian and East European Institute, and traveled to Poland in May-June 2008 to begin researching her dissertation topic. She hopes to focus on the interactions between the communist government and the music community in Poland during the Gomułka era (1956-1970). In April she will travel to England to present a paper on "Issues of Gender and Voice in Penderecki's *The Devils of Loudon*" at a conference on "Polish Music Since 1945," organized by the Music Department of Canterbury Christ Church University.

VISITING SCHOLARS

Agata Barzycka was a visiting scholar from Jagiellonian University in Kraków in Spring 2008. While at IU, she conducted research relating to her Ph. D. project titled "The childhood in bourgeois families in Western Galicia in the second half of the 19th Century". Currently, she works as an editor in the Polish Biographical Dictionary in Krakow (Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw) in the 19th century history section.

Anna Niedźwiedz visited IU and the Polish Studies Center in September-October 2008. During her stay, she was affiliated with the Department of Anthropology. Dr Niedźwiedz (Ph.D. in cultural anthropology, Jagiellonian University) is interested in contemporary approaches to religion and religiosity (especially mass and popular religion) as well as the role of image in modern societies. She is the author of *Obraz i postać. Znaczenia wizerunku Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej* (Image and Figure: Meanings of the Icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa) (2005). While in Bloomington, she presented a talk based upon this research.

Michał Skiba is an assistant professor at the Institute of Geological Sciences at Jagiellonian University. This fall semester he took advantage of a great opportunity to visit IU and work with Professor Dr David L. Bish of the IU Geology Department on several projects focused on clay mineralogy. The work done by Skiba during his stay in Bloomington will hopefully be published in the near future.

Patrycja Szmyd is a Doctoral student at the Institute of English Studies, Warsaw University. Her research interests lie within Psycholinguistics and Pragmatics. From October 2008 until February 2009 she pursued her research on comprehension of proverbs. While at IU she was affiliated with the Department of Linguistics.

photo: (from left to right) Andy Hinnant, Ania Muller and daughter Zosia sailing in Gdańsk.

Letter from Gdańsk

This has been a very eventful year for the (Muller)-Hinnants. Ania's 2007-08 Fulbright year began rather precariously when we arrived to our kamienica (old apartment building) as it was under major construction. Between the noise and commotion of the workers coming in and out, it was difficult to get settled in. Ania had trouble doing her research and I was having trouble maintaining my sanity. We arrived in August, but the project had begun in June with a planned completion date of mid-October. But since the workers seemed to be taking breaks more often than actually working, it wasn't until mid-February of 2008 that the project was finally finished.

Ania escaped much of that chaotic time by making trips to Warsaw to visit the archives and interview her women prisoners. It was a very fruitful research year for her, judging from the progress she's making during this, her dissertation-writing year. Nowadays, Ania can only be found behind her computer monitor and next to her teapot writing away.

Zosia, our five-year-old daughter, wasn't crazy about her pre-school in 2007-08. But we changed schools this year and she's perfectly happy going to school everyday now. She's dabbled in a few new hobbies, like horseback riding and ballet, but her passion remains drawing hearts, flowers, and flying ponies. Since New Year's Eve, she's added fireworks to her drawing arsenal.

Once the renovation was finished in February 2008, I started thinking about improving my Polish and teaching some English. In the fall of 2008, I formally started teaching English through a (very) small, one-person English company I created: "World of English". Also, the apartment renovation experience inspired me to undertake some renovation projects of my own – namely converting basements and attics into livable and rentable apartment space. These projects are underway, but involve more waiting than action, as paperwork and permissions tend to get bogged down while flowing through local government offices.

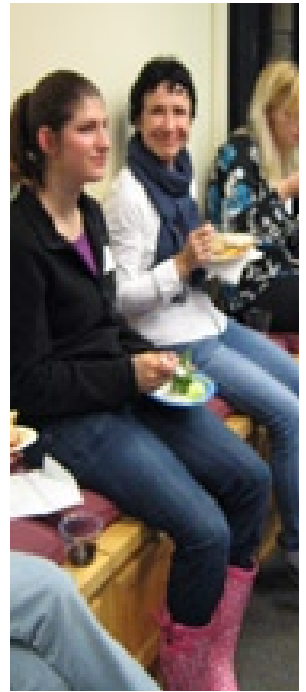
From my observations living here and conversations with my English students, I can tell you that the Tri-city (and presumably Poland as a whole) has dramatically changed since 2003, when we last lived here. The feeling of uncertainty and apprehension that was customary in the pre-EU days is long gone. These Poles are self-confident and optimistic about realizing the kind of lives they'd like to have for themselves. Of course, any self-assuredness built on wealth is being tested by the current economic crisis. Nevertheless, I feel Poles have attained the kind of stability that will help them endure this trying time and eventually prosper along with the rest of the European Union.

**Cheers from Gdańsk,
Andy, Ania & Zosia**



Photo Review of the Year

Our annual picnic at Bryan Park featured everyone's favorite Polish foods and authentic costumes. At the Christmas Party, bilingual Christmas caroling was accompanied by a trio of Emmanuel Borowsky, violin; Anna Sliva, cello; and Grigor Khachatryan, piano. The Polish Culture Association also enjoyed a year full of exciting festivities, on the next page.





This page (clockwise from top left): Theatre of the Eighth Day members enjoy pizza with Agnieszka Graff at the Polish Studies Center; Greenpeace Activist Edyta Sitko visits the PSC and speaks about her recent trip to Poland as part of the Poznań global warming talks; *New Dimensions/New Directions* Conference participants enjoy a warm fire and good conversation at Brown County State Park last April; Polish Culture Association students experiment with fortune telling traditions at their Andrzejki party; Professor Heller meets with students over tea and coffee at the Polish Studies Center over conversations of time, space, religion and environment; Michael Watson of PCA during the pizza party with members of Theatre of the Eighth Day.



Polish Studies Center Executive Committee and Advisory Board

The Polish Studies Center now benefits from the advice of our friends in the Polish community in Bloomington and around Indiana.

Executive Committee Members:

Padraic Kenney, Acting Director, Professor of History
Bill Johnston, Ongoing Director, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature
Justyna Beinek, Assistant Professor, Slavic
Steven Franks, Professor and Chair, Slavic
Halina Goldberg, Associate Professor of Musicology
Jeffrey Veidlinger, Professor of History and Associate Director, Borns Jewish Studies Program

Advisory Board:

The Advisory Board meets from time to time to discuss outreach to the community and fundraising goals and strategies. The Advisory Board looks forward to hearing your ideas about the Center's future. Here are brief profiles of the members of the committee.

John Brian O'Donnell, MD has lived in Bloomington since 1994, and is a family practitioner. His wife, Maria Mastalerz, is a Research Scientist in the Department of Geological Sciences at IU.

Marian Krajewska Bates ~ After completing studies at the Juilliard School of Music and as a Fulbright Scholar in Vienna at the Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Marian Krajewska Bates has enjoyed a long career as a leading opera

singer and classical recitalist in the United States and Europe, and as a professor of voice at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, Drake University and Indiana University. Professor Krajewska is well known in professional organizations, having served on the boards or holding such positions as East Central District Director of Mu Phi Epsilon, Indiana Music Chairman for the National Federation of Music Clubs, annual concert coordinator for Bloomington Worldwide Friendship, and Music Chairman and adjudicator for the Bloomington Chapter of the National Society of Arts and Letters, as well as local chairman and national adjudicator for the Shirley Rabb Winston Scholarship.

Mirka Berkvam has lived in Bloomington for 23 years. She works as a psychotherapist at the Bloomington Hospital Outpatient Behavioral Health Services; previously, she worked in the same field in Poland. She has been an active member of the Bloomington community for many years, especially working on healthcare issues.

Monika Stepień ~ Born and raised in Poland and a resident of the United States since 1983, I have always had difficulty answering questions regarding my nationality. Polish by birth and American by destiny. My daughter, born in Indianapolis, is fluent in Polish with strong interests in Polish art, music, and literature. My days are busy with running a company dedicated to International Export and Import of Industrial Products.

Zygmunt Pizlo is a Professor of Psychology at Purdue University. He received his M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in Electronic Engineering in Poland (in 1978 and 1982, respectively), and a Ph.D. degree in Psychology from the University of Maryland at College Park in 1991. His research interests concentrate on computational modeling of cognition.

Polish Studies Travel Grants, 2008

Each year the Polish Studies Center awards grants to students and faculty who are traveling to present their research at conferences. Here are some of the places where we have been heard from:

Justyna Beinek (Faculty - Slavic) travelled to Philadelphia in November and delivered a paper entitled "Performing the 'Slavic Soul' in Sławomir Mrożek's 'Moniza Clavier'" at the annual convention of the American Association of Slavic Studies.

Halina Goldberg (Faculty - Musicology) travelled to Warsaw, Wrocław, and Berlin in December 2008, presenting three papers on Chopin, Liszt, and Elsner at Karol Lipiński Academy of Music, Wrocław; Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; and the 8th International Chopin Conference, Fryderyk Chopin Institute, Warsaw.

Anna Muller (PhD candidate, History) travelled to Philadelphia in November 2008, where she presented a paper entitled "Together and Apart - Women Communists and Anti-Communists in Stalinist Prisons in Poland."

Kristen Strandberg (PhD candidate, Musicology) travelled to Warsaw in December to deliver a paper entitled "'Une véritable consécration': Revisiting the Question of Chopin's Influence on Gottschalk," at the 8th International Chopin Conference at the Fryderyk Chopin Institute.

Jolanta Mickutė (PhD candidate, History) travelled to Kraków to explore the repositories of the Archive and Library of Jagiellonian University and the Kraków State Archive.

Donate to the Polish Studies Center

The Polish Studies Center is greatly in need of financial contributions for its scholarly, cultural, and social activities. Donations to the Center are crucial in allowing us to build our program. As you know, the Center arranges a wide array of scholarly events like conferences, talks, and symposia; cultural events such as concerts, theatrical performances, readings, and exhibitions; and informal social gatherings. Your help is vital in pursuing the Center's mission, which is to promote the study of Polish culture, history, and society at Indiana University and beyond.

Thanks to state and federal tax laws, your gift to the Indiana University Foundation for Indiana University's Polish Studies Center can be a real bargain! Indiana residents can receive a 50 percent tax credit on their Indiana tax returns, up to a maximum credit of \$100 if you are filing alone or \$200 if you are filing jointly. Add the value of the charitable deduction when you itemize on your federal return, and your gift winds up actually costing you a fraction of its value to Indiana University.

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Thank you for your support of the Polish Studies Center!

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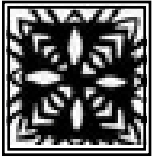
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Take
a look
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*photo: Marcin
Készycki of
Theatre of the
Eighth Day*