



An Evening With Adam Zagajewski At The Polish Consulate In New York City



Photo Credit: Zofia Twarowska

Ewa Bronowicz (right), *Post Eagle* journalist, interviewing Adam Zagajewski.

By Ewa Bronowicz

"The Task of a Poet is to Write a Good Poem," says Zagajewski.

An evening of poetry with Adam Zagajewski, Poland's renowned poet, novelist, essayist and translator, held at the Polish Consulate in New York on Wednesday, March 23rd, started with a short film from the international project *Poetry Unites*. Urszula Dudziak, a leading Polish jazz vocalist living in NYC, recited Zagajewski's poem called "Try to Praise the Mutilated World". The poem had appeared in *The New Yorker's* issue dedicated entirely to the tragedy of 9/11, and it reminds Dudziak of Poland's painful history, but also makes her realize that New York City, "this belly button of the world, in the face of tragedy, finds hope in a Polish poem." As Dudziak recites the poem, Manhattan's skyscrapers shine in the background. The poem is indeed about hope—it urges us to seek beauty in our lives, despite the horrors of the world. "It is not by chance that we chose to show you this movie tonight, in the aftermath of the disaster in Japan," said the Consul General Junczyk-Ziomecka after the screening, alluding to the universal messages of Zagajewski's writing.

Adam Zagajewski, now in his mid-sixties, dressed for the occasion in an elegant black suit and a pale-blue shirt, sat down at a small table and announced that he would read only one poem in English, titled "About my Mother." But it was clear that the audience, predominantly Polish people, waited for Zagajewski's poetry in the original. And they were in for a treat because the poet proceeded to read in his native Polish, and didn't stop for a long time. In "Mysticism for Beginners," the narrator talks about the irony of history, saying that this is just the beginning. In another poem, Zagajewski's alter ego says goodbye to Zbigniew Herbert, Zagajewski's contemporary, even if twenty years his senior, and a friend. The narrator calls Herbert by the familiar "you," and evokes

his life during two occupations, his joy of seeing Paris after the war, and the nostalgia of an emigrant's life. In yet another poem, titled "My Aunts," which Zagajewski introduced by saying that he'd always had many aunts, the poet writes about women's practical concerns and responsibilities, even in the face of death. Finally, in the heavily autobiographical poem called "Self-Portrait," full of almost mundane details, the narrator recounts his life "in strange cities," a displaced life of a traveler or an emigrant, in which a day gradually turns into a century. This reflection on time, and a man's place in history, is a common theme in Zagajewski's poetry.

At some point during the reading, Zagajewski confessed that he was going to read just a few poems because he worried that his audience was getting hungry. "You must be thinking about the sandwiches in the other room," he said. When the Consul General assured him that there were, in fact, no sandwiches on the table that night, "only pretzels," the poet seemed pleased. "Okay, so if there are no sandwiches, I'll read more," he then announced, evoking a burst of laughter from the audience. At another time, lightning struck as the poet read from his new collection of poems, titled *Unseen Hand* (forthcoming in its English translation). "It was all planned," he said, took a brief pause, and continued reading.

After a poetic feast, Zagajewski took some questions from the audience. Asked about his friendship with Zbigniew Herbert, he recounted history and a time when Herbert visited his high school in Gliwice. "Later, when I became a published poet and met him again, he couldn't remember that visit," Zagajewski said. "But I had his autograph to prove it," he added. To the standard question that artists always get: "Does a poet have to be unhappy?," Zagajewski answered that he was not unhappy, just melancholic. "Melancholy is not

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 12)

Museum Hopes To Catalog, Promote Polish American Polkas

GDYNIA, Poland — Waldemar Rudziecki, chairman of the non-profit organization **Stowarzyszenie Fotoplastikon Gdynski** is hooked on polkas and is interested in adding Polish polkas from the United States to its online collection.

Established in 1999, the organization runs the Museum of Contemporary Pomeranian Marine Handicraft in Gdynia (www.e-fotoplastikon.org), which houses the largest collection of contemporary marine art in Poland.

The Museum also administers the E-Fotoplastikon Digital Library of Illustration and Music. The library holds illustrations (photographs, postcards, albums, wall-

Ocean County Library Holds Fifth Annual Film Festival

TOMS RIVER, NJ—The fifth annual Ocean County Library Film Festival is coming to the Toms River branch (101 Washington St.).

The two day festival will show films made by high school filmmakers on Fri., April 15 and films by adults on Sat., April 16. The screenings begin at 5 pm each night.

This festival highlights the projects of filmmakers from Ocean County in a variety of categories, including documentaries, news features, animation, public service announcements, feature films, and music videos.

Prosthetics and makeup artist Tony Mandile will speak about special effects during the Friday screening. Mandile, an Ocean County resident, has worked in film, television, and theater, as well as been the makeup supervisor for Fright Fest at Great Adventure since 1999.

The Saturday night screening will feature two special guests; screenwriter Jim Uhls and movie critic Glenn Kenny. Both will be speak about the film industry.

Uhls is a UCLA film school graduate and is best known for his script adaptation of "Fight Club." He has also written the screen adaptation of the novel "Jumper" and teaches classes on screenplay writing.

Kenny is an accomplished film critic, having written and edited the movie magazine "Premiere." He has contributed to a variety of print and online publications, most recently serving as chief film critic for MSN Movies.

Check the library's website—www.theoceancountylibrary.org—for more information about the festival and the schedule of the screenings.

This program is free and open to the public. Festival information is also available on Facebook by searching for "Ocean County Library Film Festival."

Ocean County Library Film Festival is sponsored through a partnership of Ocean County Library, Kiwanis Clubs of Ocean County, and the Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission.

papers and other prints) from all over the world in digital format.

"I began collating these images in 2006 and at present have about six million scans that can be viewed," said Rudziecki. "The library also contains music from

Witamy na stronie Polish Polka

around the globe and includes all styles and genres from traditional, classical and folk through to pop — again, all available exclusively in digital format."

Dating back over 35 years, the collection comprises of around 40,000 archived radio broadcasts and about 100,000 published works. The library's contents are available free of charge via the internet for educational and research purposes.

While art will always be a pas-

sion for Rudziecki, music is his priority. In the 1970s he was a promoter of the alternative music scene in Torun, and in the '80s and '90s was promoting bands and artists from Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot. Many of these bands are now top selling artists in Poland.

While working on expanding his collection, Rudziecki discovered an article in the *Rzeczpospolita* newspaper entitled "How a punk rocker fell in love with Polka." The article discussed polka festivals in Cottbus, Germany and Zielona Gora, Poland.

That brought back memories to Rudziecki, who remembered the popularity of Chicago-born polka artist Li'l Wally Jagiello in Poland during the 1960s and '70s.

While looking online for information about polkas, Rudziecki

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 12)

Passaic County 2011 Film Festival Set

NEW JERSEY— Passaic County 2011 Film Festival will be held 10 a.m. Saturday, April 16 at the Fabian Theater at City Center Mall, Paterson.

Forty four films were received and judged by members of the Passaic County Film Commission.

Entries were received from West Milford High School, Lakeland Regional High School, Wayne Valley High School, Rosa Parks High School, De Paul High School, Passaic High School, Eastern Christian High School, Mary Help of Christian Academy of North Haledon, Passaic Valley Regional High School, Passaic County Technical Institute and from inde-

pendent film makers.

Winners will be announced after the films are shown in four categories: general, public service announcement, music video and documentary. There is free admission to the festival. There will be free parking voucher for those who attend the festival.

The Film Festival is sponsored by the Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders with additional financial support from the Passaic County Cultural and Heritage Council; Passaic County Community College Foundation; Bascom Corporation, Columbia Bank, Patriot Pickle and Jacobs Enterprises.

West Caldwell Public Library Celebrates

"National Library Week" With Book Talk x Two

WEST CALDWELL, NJ – To celebrate "National Library Week," the West Caldwell Public Library, 30 Clinton Road, will present "Book Talk x Two" featuring bestselling mystery writers Brad Parks and Wallace Stroby on Saturday, April 16 at 2:00 pm in the Community Room.

"National Library Week" is an annual celebration of the contributions of our nation's libraries and librarians. This year "National Library Week" will be held from April 10-16 and the theme is "Create Your Own Story @ the Library." Renowned bestselling author John Grisham is the honorary chair.

Mr. Parks, winner of the 2010 *Shamus* and *Nero Award* for his debut crime novel **Faces of the Gone**, will discuss his new mystery **Eyes of the Innocent**. He is a former reporter for the *Star-Ledger* and the *Washington Post* and has won awards from the New Jersey Press Association, the National Association of Black Journalists and the National Headliners Award. A graduate of Dartmouth College, he currently resides in Virginia where he is working on his third Carter Ross murder mystery about an investigative reporter working for the fictitious *Eagle Examiner* in Newark.



BRAD PARKS



WALLACE STROBY

Mr. Stroby, author of four critically acclaimed crime novels, will discuss his new mystery **Cold Shot to the Heart**. His debut novel **The Barbed-Wire Kiss** was a finalist for the 2004 *Barry Award for Best First Novel*. A graduate of Rutgers University, he is an award-winning journalist and a former editor of the *Star-Ledger*. He is a native of Long Branch and sets his crime novels in New Jersey.

Copies of **Eyes of the Innocent** and **Cold Shot to the Heart** will be available for purchase (cash and checks only) and autographing. This program is free and open to the public, but advance registration is required. For more information or to sign-up, call the Library at 973-226-5441.

