

Skalny Center

FOR POLISH & CENTRAL EUROPEAN STUDIES

Portrait Artist Stanley Gordon Receives Recognition



On March 17, 2002, the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester held a reception in honor of Stanley Gordon in the Roslyn Cominsky promenade following the performance of the Penderecki String Quartet at the Eastman School of Music, which was sponsored by the Skalny Center at the University of Rochester. During the reception, Virginia Kobylarz presented Gordon with a Proclamation from the City Council. The Proclamation was signed by the City Council President Lois J. Giess, Robert J. Stevenson and Benjamin L. Douglas, and commended Gordon for his contributions to the world of art and the culture of our city. Gordon also received a plaque from the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester, which was presented by Dr. Frederic Skalny, President of PHSR.

Stanley Gordon is of Polish heritage and is an internationally known portrait painter. His portraits of several US presidents



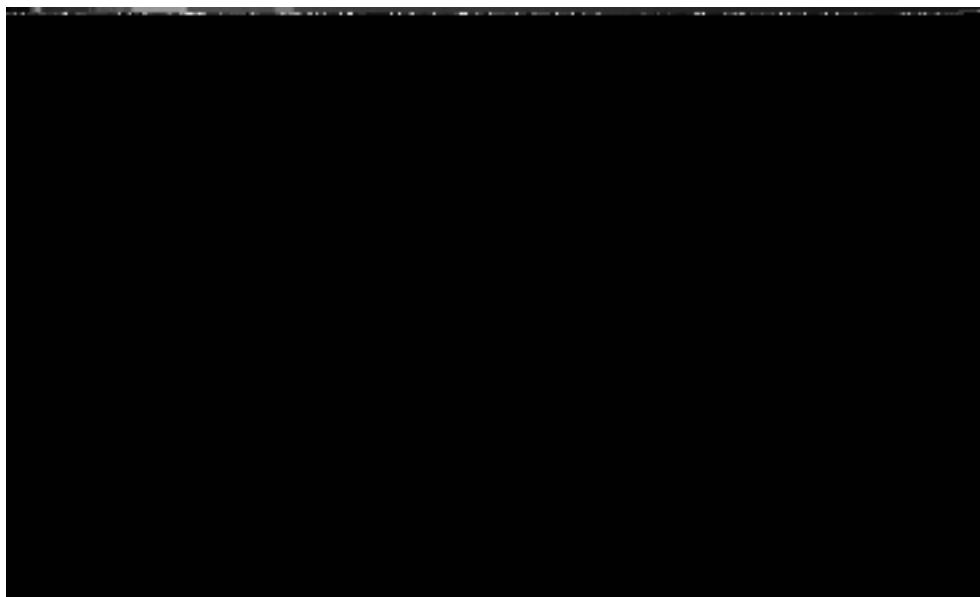
Penderecki Quartet in Rochester



Whoever missed this great musical event in March 2002 lost a rare opportunity to listen to the Penderecki quartet, which has become one of the most celebrated chamber ensembles in the music world. Penderecki Quartet began in Poland in 1968 by the group of talented music students, who won a prize founded by the well-known Polish composer and philanthropist, Krzysztof Penderecki. With his support, influence, and encouragement these young musicians formed an ensemble under his name. They have performed throughout the world since 1970. The ensemble has collaborated with many eminent groups such as: The Borden Trio, the Fine Arts Quartet as well as with artists like: Janna Fialkowska, James Campbell, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, Randolph Peters and many others.

Most of the original members and founders of the Penderecki Quartet left the ensemble over the years and were replaced by other fine musicians. At present there is only one native Polish violinist, Jerzy Kaplanek, who spoke with me at length about the quartet's history. Currently Jerzy Kaplanek performs with Jeremy Bell (violin), Christine Vlack (viola) and Paul Pulford (cello). All of them have settled in Canada. In addition to their frequent international performances and recordings they are highly involved in music instruction and education.

They just entered their tenth year as Quartet-in Residence at Wilfried Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. Under the quartet's direction, the string program has become one of Canada's most prestigious. The Quartet offers chamber music and studio instruction to students from all over the world. Their most




prominent recordings include Brahms Piano Quintet with pianist Lev Natochenny and authoritative interpretation of Penderecki's String Quartet. Last spring the ensemble recorded six Bartok quartets under the auspices of the Napa Valley Chamber Music Society.

On March 17th the Quartet played in Eastman School of Music Kilbourn Hall works by Haydn, Beethoven and Szymanowski; all of them ended with standing ovation. As

an encore they presented the audience with an interesting, but difficult-to-absorb composition of their patron – Krzysztof Penderecki. After the con-

Joseph Conrad's Polishness



Wieslaw Krajka is a professor of English at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Lublin Poland and University of Wrocław Poland. He was a Kosciuszko Foundation Senior Teaching Fellow at the English Department in the University of Rochester. This is a summary of the talk he gave for the luncheon lecture series, "Joseph Conrad's Polishness: A Curse or a Blessing," on Wednesday, February 6th.

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) was one of the greatest writers in the history of English and world literature. Having spent his childhood and early youth in Poland, he emigrated in 1874 (at the age of seventeen) to Marseilles, France. The four years which he spent there (1874-78) were a period of his initiation into seaman-ship, politics and love. Between 1878 and 1894 he served in the British Merchant Marine: as a regular seaman, a first mate and a captain. In 1894-96 he terminated his sea career, married, settled in Kent, England and started his writing career. He created many literary masterpieces, includ-

ing Lord Jim, "Heart of Darkness," Nostromo, The Secret Agent and Under Western Eyes. However, it was only with the publication of *Chance in America* in 1914 that he gained financial success and became very popular in this country. He died in 1924 in Canterbury.

Many of Conrad students, readers and admirers are surprised to learn that he was Polish. His Polishness is one of the most intriguing issues considered by literary critics. What was its actual impact upon the author's personality and writings? Was Polishness a blessing or a curse for him?

After his emigration from Poland in 1874, Conrad avoided discussing Polish issues. He lost his hopes for a possibility of Poland's regaining her independent statehood. He changed his view after his visit to Poland in 1914, when old memories revived, and as a result of the political-military developments in the course of World War I. He became much more hopeful about Poland's future and much less critical about Western aggressive imperialism. He came to perceive a moral backbone in the politics of Western powers during World War I.¹

During this time he wrote his two important political essays – "A Note on the Polish Problem" (1916) and "The Crime of Partition" (December 1918-1919) – in which, as well as in his earlier essay "Autocracy and War" (1905),² he strongly pledged for the Polish cause, demanding restoration of Poland's independent statehood in the interest of both Poland

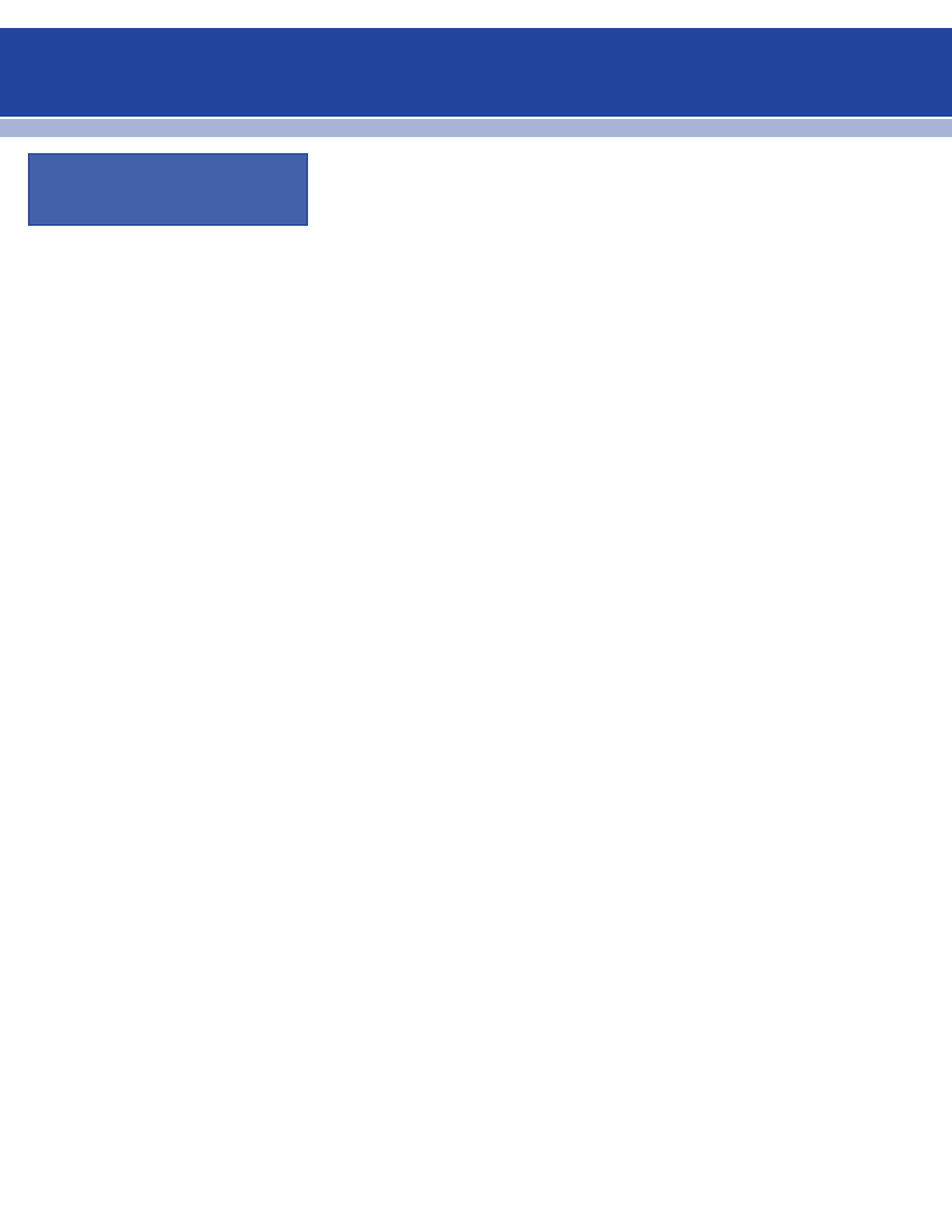


By Kathleen Parth

This year two faculty members, Professors Celia Applegate and Lynn Gordon, received course development funds for a new course they will co-teach called "Refugees, Emigrants, and Displaced Persons: Eastern Europe and the United States, 1776-2001."

The pioneering efforts of Dean William Scott Green and Professor Ewa Hauser have meant that the generosity of the Skalny and Klimasewski families has the maximum impact. The new office suite, and increased student interest in pursuing graduate study at JU are just two developments that show that the Skalny Center is poised to grow in its interest and value to students and faculty, and in what it offers the wider Rochester community. The support that Deans Green and LeBlanc have given my own Russian Studies Program made me more than happy to take on the duties of Acting Director of the Skalny Center when Ewa received a Fulbright to spend the year in Warsaw. Through Ewa's activities in Warsaw and Krakow, the University of Rochester connection to Poland will gain even greater publicity and respect.

After ending my year as Acting Director, I will be exploring three of Poland's closest neighbors - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania - in July. I look forward to seeing you all at Skalny Events during the coming year. Sto lat!



I was very fortunate to visit Krakow, Poland this summer for a three-week intensive course in the Polish language. This was made possible by the grant from the Skalny Center. By studying Polish, I learned the intricacies and complex nature of the language, as well as the beauty of the words. I found that the language is very advanced, using many sounds, cases, tenses and genders. My teachers spoke almost exclusively in Polish during class, so we had to figure out the meanings of phrases from context, as well as search our limited vocabularies for the words to answer questions. This experience, along with that of fending for myself in the real-world, dynamic city of Krakow, forced me to listen carefully and to take risks in order to accomplish tasks. The daily challenge gave me a new way of using my mind in real time.

In addition to half-day classes in Polish grammar and conversation, I was able to attend a series of classes on Polish film, as well as a series entitled "Introduction to Poland." These courses also helped me to develop a deep appreciation of Polish culture. I grew to find the history to be even more amazing than I had imagined. A people who have preserved a complex language, a strong national religion, a strong cultural tradition, and most of all, a national identity, even though they have not been free for most of their recent history, is more than impressive. It reflects a hope and pride passed down through generations.

This was tangible when I met Polish people and asked them questions about their lives and country. They were always willing to help me with my Polish, in a way that showed how they loved and respected their language. Many times eyes would light up



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