THE 2015 PADEREWSKI EXCHANGE: A CHRONICLE
By Marek Zebrowski

Jointly run by the Paderewski Festival in Paso Robles and Tarnów Province in Poland, the 2015 edition of the Cultural Exchange Program was held June 27-July 6 at Paderewski’s former manor house in Kąśna Dolna, Poland. Initiated with an official agreement signed in 2008, this unique program now joins the three places associated with Paderewski—Paso Robles on California’s Central Coast, Kąśna Dolna in the southern province of Poland’s Małopolska region, and the area of Khmílny in the Podolia Region of today’s Ukraine, where Paderewski was born in 1860. Selected by locally held competitions, young musicians from these three very diverse constituencies gather under Paderewski’s hospitable roof in southern Poland during the odd-numbered years, while in even-numbered years the same group of students visits Paso Robles to participate in the annual Paderewski Festival held in early November.

This year’s program began when Daniel Ha and Kannan Freyaldenhoven touched down at the Kraków Airport on Friday, June 26. These two Central Coast musicians—winners of the Youth Piano Competition in Paso Robles—were accompanied by Kannan’s mother, Misha, who served as the group’s chaperone.

As always, the staff of the manor house in Kąśna sent a car to Kraków to collect the Californians at the Balice Airport. The ever-cheerful Mr. Witold Baran (far right) welcomed the visitors and drove them to Kąśna, located about 90 miles southeast of Kraków. Hot weather and keen interest in sightseeing necessitated a quick stop for ice cream and a stroll through the main square in the town of Brzesko. A statue of St. Florian with a bucket (he is the patron saint of firefighters) elicited much interest from the American visitors. After arriving at the manor house’s peaceful grounds, the group relaxed and unpacked before supper. It was, as usual, expertly catered by Pan Mariusz, the good-natured owner of the Galicja Restaurant in the nearby town of Ciężkowice, the source of many delicious meals throughout the entire stay at Paderewski’s former residence (pictured below).
By the end of Saturday, the entire complement of students had arrived in Kąśna. The Province of Tarnów was represented by two young pianists, Magdalena Kuropatwa and Miłosz Marcinkiewicz. They were delivered to the manor house by their parents, who appeared slightly anxious to leave their offspring with their American and Ukrainian peers.

After a very long drive from Khmilnyk in central Ukraine, Sasha Dzvinkovskiy, Yulia Medynska and their chaperone, Galia Terentieva, arrived at the manor house just in time for supper. With pianist Marek Zebrowski already in Kąśna from Los Angeles, and cellist Lars Hoefs also arriving late Saturday from very distant Sao Paulo, everybody was finally—and happily—under the same roof.

Before the music workshops were formally launched on Monday, June 29, the Exchange Program group visited Tarnów, the regional capital, on Sunday after lunch. Mr. Ryszard Zabielny, manor house director, organized a small van to take the students, chaperones and faculty for a few hours’ walking tour of this historic city. The guide on this occasion was Mr. Ryszard Żądło—undoubtedly the most enthusiastic and knowledgeable local historian and politician, whose pride of Tarnów shone brightly throughout the afternoon. Tarnów’s long and fascinating history was narrated by Mr. Żądło as the visitors walked along the city’s mediaeval walls and ramparts, and traversed the maze of ancient alleyways towards the Main Square dominated by the Renaissance-era City Hall. A tour of the nearby Gothic cathedral with its many treasures and intriguing sarcophagi followed. Emerging onto Tarnów’s wider avenues and elegant Jugendstil edifices dating from the Austrian days, the group finally reached the fin-de-siècle Tatrzańska Café for a delicious repast of home-made ice cream and coffee before returning to Kąśna.
The week of piano workshops that followed at the manor house featured daily individual one-hour lessons for every student with professors Hoefs and Zebrowski. Additionally, there were chamber music practice sessions and group theory-composition-arranging meetings just before the evening meal. Alongside their solo programs, the students had to learn 4-hand piano duets (selected movements from Ravel’s *Ma Mère l’Oye*) as well as harmonize and arrange folk melodies for cello and piano for their performance at the final concert.

After a week of intense work, by Saturday, July 4, the students were ready and the morning master class served as the run-through for the entire concert program. By 6 p.m. on a salubrious Saturday afternoon, the public filed into the manor house for the long-anticipated event. Given that it was the U.S. Independence Day, most students performed works by American composers. The Ukrainians—Yulia and Sasha—performed MacDowell’s piano miniatures, while Daniel and Kannan featured Gottschalk’s *The Union* and *Gallop* in their solo repertoire segments.
After the intermission, the chamber music segment began with Ravel duets. Yulia and Miłosz opened with the *Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant*. They were followed by Daniel and Sasha performing *Laideronette, Impératrice des Pagodes*, and Kannan and Magdalena in *Le Jardin féerique*.

Immediately afterwards, Lars Hoefs came on stage and the young pianists took turns performing their cello and piano arrangements of folk songs. Kannan was first with his version of *All the Pretty, Little Horses*; Daniel then followed with his take on *Pop! Goes the Weasel*. Two Polish melodies—*Raz‐dwa* [One‐Two] and *Weselna* [Wedding tune] were performed by Miłosz and Magdalena, respectively, with Lars bravely carrying on the melody. Lastly, Yulia joined Lars in a Ukrainian tune, *Let’s Sing a Happy Song*, and Sasha closed this part of the program with his interpretation of *Evening in the Outdoors*.

The last part of the concert featured Lars Hoefs performing *Kaprys polski* [Polish Caprice], a solo cello work by Grażyna Bacewicz, followed by three piano and cello works with Marek Zebrowski at the piano. Two Nocturnes—one by Heitor Villa‐Lobos, the other by Frederic Chopin—launched the last segment of the music‐filled evening, which culminated with Chopin’s *Polonaise brillante* for cello and piano. Extensive applause brought all of the performers back on stage for a long series of photos taken by parents, friends and teachers. An elegant reception for the artists, families, visiting Paderewski Festival Board members and organizers was held at the residence right next to the manor house. After a week of hard work and joint music‐making, the party was a welcome relief and a nice conclusion to the workshop portion of another installment of the Cultural Exchange Program.

Misha Freyaldenhoven, Kannan Freyaldenhoven, Daniel Ha, Sasha Dzvinkovskiy, Galia Terentieva, Yulia Medynska, Marek Zebrowski, Magdalena Kuropatwa and Miłosz Marcinkiewicz after the concert in Kąśna Dolna
After breakfast on Sunday morning, July 5, the contingent of fourteen (six students, two chaperones, two faculty and four board members, plus a cello) boarded a large van for a day trip to Łącko, a small mountain resort near the Slovak border, located about 50 miles southwest of Kąśna Dolna. Along the way, the group stopped in Nowy Sącz for a quick stroll around its main market square, taking in the sights of churches, public buildings and colorful streets of the downtown district (left).

A few miles further south down the road was the town of Stary Sącz—with another charming market square, typical of this southern Polish region. A pre-ordered lunch of local specialties (that also included French fries to the intense delight of the young artists) was served on the shaded upper floor terrace of the Marysieńka Restaurant. With blue skies and endless sunshine (and temperatures in the high 90s), the meal offered a moment of repose before the Southward journey continued.

By 3 p.m., the van pulled into the parking school in front of Łącko’s primary music school. The exchange contingent was warmly welcomed there by Jan Kalinowski and Marek Szlezer, professors at the Kraków Music Academy, who are in charge of a summer music program, Małopolska Akademia Talentów [Małopolska Talent Academy]. The music school’s director, Lt. Col. Stanisław Strączek, proved an excellent host and splendid organizer. The firehouse located right across from the music school served as the concert venue where Daniel, Kannan, Magda, Miłosz, Sasha and Yulia provided the first half of the program (with Lars joining them in the folksong arrangements), and students from the Małopolska Talent Academy appeared on the second half of the concert which ended their summer program.
After the joint concert at Łącko

A quick series of farewells and, by 7 p.m., the group was heading back to Kąśna for supper. There the last meal together was followed by all kinds of celebrations, gift exchanges and the “absolutely last” last game of cards for the kids in the upstairs lounge of the Kąśna manor residence hall (right). Packing suitcases took most of the short, midsummer night—everyone had to be ready for an early morning departure right after breakfast.

On Monday, July 6, Mr. Baran departed the manor house with Galia, Sasha and Yulia for the Ukrainian-Polish border, where a waiting bus took the Ukrainian musicians and their chaperone on a long ride back to Khmilnyk. In the same early morning hours, parents of Magda and Miłosz came to the manor house to collect their kids and the rest of the group—i.e. the California contingent—boarded a van and travelled to Kraków.
Kannan Freyaldenhoven and Daniel Ha enjoying the grounds of Kąśna Dolna

All Exchange participants downstairs in the residence at Kąśna Dolna
Having fun at the piano with their teacher, Lars Hoefs

On a run to the nearby town of Ciężkowice
The hot weather continued, but it was no impediment to intense sightseeing throughout that Monday afternoon. After all, Kraków’s cafés and countless ice cream stands provided a nice excuse to rest a little and enjoy the surroundings. Polish history and retracing Paderewski’s footsteps in Poland’s ancient capital were also on the menu, from the opulent theatre (where Paderewski’s friend and benefactor, Helena Modrzejewska performed), to the Battle of Grunwald monument (that Paderewski privately funded), to St. Mary’s Church in the Old Market Square (right) and Wawel Castle—the two iconic Kraków sights.

A late night carriage ride in Kraków

The following morning, July 7, the group paid a visit to the Paderewski Institute of Musicology, part of the venerable Jagiellonian University. Welcomed there by Dr. Andrzej Sitarz, the visitors were ushered into a series of rooms containing a large part of Paderewski’s library. Amazing rarities were especially displayed, including the manuscript of Paderewski’s Piano Concerto, manuscripts of piano works by Paderewski’s teacher, Leschetitzky, and illuminated manuscripts by Artur Szyk, with the author’s inscribed dedication to Paderewski.
At 6 p.m., Dr. Sitarz and the Institute staff welcomed an overflowing crowd to one of the historic chambers of the former Pusłowski Palace, where—continuing the longstanding tradition—an Exchange Program concert was held once again. Daniel and Kannan were joined by their Polish counterparts Magda and Miłosz, who came to Kraków from Tarnów with their parents. Another nice surprise was Michał Niedbala’s arrival with his family for the Kraków concert. Michał participated in the previous round of the Exchange Program in Poland in 2013 and participated at the Paderewski Festival in Paso Robles in November 2014. The July 7 concert ended with Lars and Marek’s performance of Villa-Lobos, Chopin and Paderewski, and was followed by final farewells of Polish and American kids. We’re now looking forward to reuniting the entire group—Poles, Ukrainians and Californians—in Paso Robles in November of 2016!
The next morning, the group boarded the van once again and set out towards the city of Radom, located about 120 miles north of Kraków. Fortunately, the weather turned cooler for a quick visit to the ruins of the mediaeval Chęciny Castle (right), where various members of the group could climb the old towers, don helmets and try sparring with huge swords, or try their luck in an impromptu archery contest. Another quick lunch of local specialties (including fried potatoes) fortified the entourage for the continued journey towards Radom. There, the Honorable Mariusz Brymora, Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles, hosted the group in his Polish home for an evening meal. He also arranged for a two-hour ride in a horse-driven wagon through the Kozienicki National Forest—an ancient woodland with splendid variety of trees, ferns, berries, rivulets, small lakes and ponds and marshes. A healthy rain shower utterly failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the group—the fresh forest air and the prospect of a house party given by the Consul and his wife, Grażyna, who are devoted friends of the Paderewski Festival, kept everything in the right perspective.

As with any Polish gathering, the hospitality and the food were terrific and, long into the night, the group feasted on a myriad of dishes, all lovingly prepared by the hosts. The biggest hit was the blazing hot charcoal fire in the garden and expertly-spiced sausages that had to be roasted on long skewers in the fire. In spite of being quite full by that time, most of the guests went for second round of roasting sausages, savoring every bite as darkness gradually fell upon Consul’s quiet country dwelling.

Exchange participants and Festival Board members with Consul Brymora and his wife
More attractions were in store for Thursday, July 9. Waking to blue skies and cool summer morning, the group departed Hotel Under the Roses in Jedlnia for Radziejowice, a small Mazovian town about 60 miles away. Just short of 11 a.m., the intrepid travelers pulled into a shaded avenue of linden trees leading to the Radziejowice Palace. The original Gothic castle was rebuilt and turned into an elegant neoclassical palace when the Krasiński family inherited the estate towards the end of eighteenth century. The successive generations of Krasiński turned this beautiful palace and extensive grounds into the country salon for Warsaw’s social, intellectual and artistic elite. Among many such luminaries, Paderewski and Sienkiewicz were guests of Count Krasiński and their busts are among the many other artists commemorated with statues scattered over the grounds. Since the mid-1960s the Radziejowice Palace has served as an artistic retreat.
Monika Strugała—who with her husband, Maestro Tadeusz Strugała, joined the group for the tour—had taken care of all the arrangements for the exchange visit before we arrived. As soon as we did, the Radziejowice Palace director, Bogumił Mrówczyński, greeted the delegation and invited us for a tour inside, where we admired an excellent exhibit of Józef Chelmoński’s paintings. With Monika and Tadeusz Strugała as enthusiastic guides, the group also visited the palace grounds and several performance spaces; one of the particularly charming buildings had been artfully converted from an old barn into a splendid concert hall. That’s where Daniel and Kannan had a chance to play some Chopin and Gottschalk for our Polish friends. At the end of the visit, Director Mrówczyński and Monika Strugała accepted medals specially ordered by the Paderewski Festival and minted by the City of El Paso de Robles for this occasion (left).

The group could have easily stayed for several hours in Radziejowice, but an exciting afternoon in Chopin’s birthplace of Zelazowa Wola was scheduled. Fortunately, there were only about 30 miles to travel along the country roads, so by 2 p.m. the van pulled into a parking lot and entered a brand new Visitors’ Center. Attractively designed, airy and spacious, it was opened a few years ago in connection with the bicentennial of Chopin’s birth. The delegation was instantly welcomed by director Tadeusz Owczuk (right), who awaited our arrival (thank you, Monika Strugała!), and he made available to
us a young English-speaking guide. Before the tour, however, the group was fortified with some excellent pierogi [dumplings] stuffed with cabbage, meat, mushrooms, and berries in the Center’s restaurant.

Visiting the Żelazowa Wola manor house was a very moving experience. The actual room where Chopin was born in 1810 is left open, with only a sculpture of his head, an inscription on the wall, and a new Steinway piano. Thanks to the incredible courtesy of Mr. Owczuk who allowed an exceptional short performance, Daniel and Kannan had the opportunity to make music in this truly legendary space. It was a moment to savor for us all, as the music filled the space, spilling into the gardens outside.

The rest of the manor house is tastefully decorated with period furniture and a number of exhibits related to Chopin, his family and the history of the place. One recent addition to the manor house is a magnificent Broadwood piano that had just arrived from England—an instrument very similar to those Chopin played on his 1848 tour. All too soon we were saying goodbyes—and thanking Mr. Owczuk for the gifts of books and recordings that he presented to us. As we drove to Warsaw—another 30 miles due east—the usually festive atmosphere in our van turned more reflective: we drove through the flat countryside crisscrossed by villages, willow tree-lined brooks, and the old Kampinos Forest that still looks as it might have during Chopin’s time.
Warsaw greeted our arrival with a magnificent sunset and a monumental traffic jam. Reaching the center of town and disembarking in front of the Polonia Palace hotel, it was time to say good-bye to our wonderful driver, Mr. Piotr Ogiński as he departed for Tarnów in the south of Poland where our adventures had begun. After a quick regrouping, it was a brisk walk to a good restaurant on Plac Konstytucji for another evening meal featuring more Polish food.

The next morning, July 10, was the last full day in Poland for the Exchange. The morning weather—with howling winds, ominous clouds and temperatures barely reaching 60°F—wasn’t inviting. Nonetheless, the seasoned travelers set out for the old town, riding a city bus from Warsaw’s modern city center to its ancient heart. A quick walk through the Royal Castle and Old Town Square led us to Warsaw’s mediaeval city walls and ramparts. Later, we emerged onto the elegant Krakowskie Przedmieście, an avenue lined up with aristocratic palaces and churches. It is also the address of Chopin’s Warsaw apartment, located almost directly across the campus of Warsaw University.

Our destination was the Chopin Museum, where (again, thank you, Monika Strugala!) the group was warmly welcomed by the staff and invited for a very detailed tour. This brand new museum is a must for anyone visiting Warsaw—its interactive exhibits are as fascinating as they are informative. The collection of documents, instruments, and other memorabilia is certainly of interest to musicians and general public alike. Emerging several hours later almost overcome by an avalanche of impressions, it was time for late lunch and more sightseeing along the Nowy Świat Avenue. This extension of Krakowskie Przedmieście features rows of elegant townhouses where Warsaw’s beau monde still resides.
Another city bus ride took us for the remainder of the afternoon to the Łazienki Royal Palace. Located practically in the middle of vibrant city life, the huge park surrounding a summer palace on a lake provides an oasis of calm and is another favorite destination. Beautifully renovated, the interior boasts rooms covered with Delft porcelain tiles, an extensive collection of paintings by Dutch masters, beautiful furniture, intricately designed parquet floors and choice furniture, mainly from the late 1700s and early 1800s. Washed by a few quick and intense showers, the grounds glistened with reflected sun and several peacocks proudly strutted around.
For a farewell to Poland meal, the young musicians unanimously voted for another round of pierogi. A restaurant serving Polish specialties was found and, once seated, we finally had a chance to sum up the experience of our visit. It was certainly filled with lots of music, history and culture, as well as extensive travel through the Polish countryside. We met several wonderful musicians, starting with Magda and Miłosz from Tarnów and Sasha and Yulia from Khmilnyk. A visit in Kraków continued our close and meaningful ties with the Paderewski Institute of Musicology, while stops in Radziejowice and Żelazowa Wola will hopefully lead to enlarging our Exchange Program’s scope in the years to come. With so much good will shown by Monika and Tadeusz Strugała, directors Bogumił Mrówczyński in Radziejowice and Tadeusz Owczuk at Żelazowa Wola, our next visit in 2017 should gain several new partners and dimensions. It will also continue to fulfill Paderewski’s mission—as the musician, statesman, and humanitarian—to bring young people together through education in music and history, and to make this world a better place for us all.