



THE CLUB'S FOUNDER – LEONIDAS DUDAREW-OSSETYŃSKI

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*Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński (1910-1989) in costume as an actor, grandfather with granddaughter.
Photographs from archives of his daughter, Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.*

Born on October 22, 1910 in the Niebajki family estate near Wilno (now Vilnius; in Russia at that time), Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński grew up in Lithuania and Poland; he was, among others, a graduate of the National Academy of Theater in Warsaw.¹ The actor's biographer, Stanisław Jordanowski, described the first decades of his life as follows:² "He was baptized in the Orthodox Church in Kiev. He was the son of Prince Konstanty Dudarew and Princess Waleria Dusz-Duszezwska. In July 1920, the Bolsheviks occupied Vilnius. His father was arrested and taken to Russia and was never heard of again. His mother died shortly afterwards when she contracted the disease from the wounded she had cared for during the war."

¹ Basic biographical information in *The Polish Biographical Dictionary*, red. Stanley S. Sokol (Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1992). About Ossetyński's theater see Bogdan Danowicz, „Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński”, „Perspektywy”. t.9 nr 14, 8 kwietnia 1977, s. 29-30. Press clippings in the collection of Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken, used by permission. I sincerely thank the actor's daughter for the generous sharing of information and photos that made this article possible. English translation by Maja Trochimczyk, first published in „Album 50-lecia Klubu.”

² Stanisław Jordanowski, *Osętyjczyk z pochodzenia - Polak z wyboru*. „Przegląd Polski” 1989 t. 4, s. 11. Typescript copy in English from the private collection of Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken, the actor's daughter.

His upbringing and teaching was taken over by his maternal grandmother. After graduating from high school and studying theater at Drama Academy in Wilno, he became an actor in the operetta *Lutnia*.” In 1983, a Polish photographer Czesław Czapliński visited the doyen of the Polish theater in Los Angeles. Ossetyński talked about his past as follows:³ “I was born for my own and others’ misfortune ... I got involved with the theater in Vilnius when Szpakowski opened the Theater School at the Municipal Theater. After graduating from school, I went to France and studied with Dullin, then in Poland I worked in the theaters of Wilno, Toruń and Warsaw.” According to a biography published in the *Almanac 1988-1989*⁴, in the years 1936-1937 Dudarew was an actor



at the Municipal Theater in Toruń. He appeared on stage as “Leonidas Dudárew” (or Dudarew, in Polish texts we omit the accent). This was his family name; he added “Ossetyński” only when emigrating to the U.S. to avoid prejudice against Russians, for his name sounded too Russian). He appeared in the roles of: Secretary (*Yacht Love*, 1936), Hetman (*Wesele*, 1936), Fred (*Golden Wreath*, 1937), Baron (*Mysz kościelna*, 1936). Other plays included: *Blue Almonds*, *Skalmierzanki*, *Niespodzianka* or *The Merry Widow*. Jordanowski continued:

“Then the war found him in Paris, where he had just arrived to study at the Sorbonne. He voluntarily joined the Polish Army in Exile in France. He took part in the French campaign as a second lieutenant. After the capitulation of France, he found himself in Casablanca, and then in Lisbon, from where at the end of August 1941 he was able to sail to New York by ship.”⁵

Lucy Dzierzkowska, portrait of Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński, lost, earlier in family collection. Photo from the actor's daughter, Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.

In New York, Ossetyński found himself in a group of Polish actors in exile, the cinema and theater stars of the Second Republic of Poland, who founded the Polish Theater of Artists on November 22, 1942. These famous, displaced actors included: Maria Modzelewska, 1903-1997; Jan Bonecki, 1892-1976; Zofia Nakoneczna, 1910-1976; Stan-Sławek Sielański, 1899-1955; Romuald Gantkowski, 1903-1989; later also Jadwiga Smosarska, 1898-1971, and many others. Financed by the Polish Government-in-Exile in London, the Polish Theater of Artists did not have a permanent site, and performed in Polish diaspora centers in the USA and Canada, with a patriotic and comedic repertoire. For the two years of its operation, the Theater staged: *The Fifth Column in Warsaw* and *The Underground Fight* by Słodziński; Kędrzyński's *Uhlans Lieutenant*; all these plays were directed by Ossetyński himself. Among other plays that he worked on were: *Pastoralka* by Leon Schiller, *Echoes of the Polish Land*, *Warszawianka*, and comedies such as *Józia*, or *The Enchantment of the Uniform*.

According to the 1988-1989 *Almanac*, Dudarew-Ossetyński was elected as the administrative director of the Polish Theater of Artists in November 1942. In the first season he played the role of Adam in Schiller's *Pastoralka* (1942); on this occasion, the magazine *Nowy Świat* described his appearance as follows:⁶ “He is tall, slim, erect. A long, curious face that draws you in. Sometimes strange, always pensive, sometimes absent elsewhere in his thoughts, sometimes cheerful, playful, with incredibly piercing eyes. You cannot see them and not remember them.” Reviews of the Theater's performances were also published in *Tygodniowy Przegląd Literacki Koła Pisarzy z Polski* (*Tygodnik Polski*).⁷

³ Czesław Czapliński, „PORTRET z HISTORIĄ. Barbara Krafftówna & Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński,” blog, <https://www.czczaplinski.com/post/portret-z-historii%20C4%85-barbara-krafft%C3%B3wna-leonidas-dudarew-ossety%C5%84ski>, visited on 2 May 2021.

⁴ Typescript copy in the private collection of Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.

⁵ Jordanowski, *op. cit.* ⁶ Quoted after Jordanowski, *op. cit.* ⁷ S. Marczak-Oborski, *Teatr czasu wojny. Polskie życie teatralne w latach II wojny światowej 1939-1945*, Warszawa: Polski Instytut Wydawniczy, 1967.



Notices about performances appeared in the Polish American press, such as *Dziennik Chicagoski*, *Ameryka Echo*, or *Nowy Świat* – the correspondent of which was Ossetyński himself. Jordanowski recalls the artist from that period as follows:⁸

“We were impressed by Ossetyński’s enthusiasm and energy in promoting Polish culture. He lived quite simply and modestly. He was a vegetarian. He practiced yoga. He dragged us into the world of yoga, which was quite interesting, and for at least a year every day I stood on my head and even tried to meditate.”⁹

In 1945, Zofia Nakoneczna and Romuald Gantkowski left for California; they were members of the group associated with the Polish Artists’ Theater in New York. Gantkowski – a film director and cinematographer – later joined the Modjeska Club and took an active part in its events. During the war, Gantkowski was a member of the French crew filming the Polish Army (in which

Ossetyński was enlisted). A documentary was made from recorded excerpts of this film in England, entitled *Poland Is Not Yet Perished*, in Polish and English. From mid-1943 to the end of the war, Ossetyński worked for the American military; he dealt with propaganda and culture. After the war, he decided not to return to Poland (although some actors from the Artists’ Theater did so, such as Smosarska); instead, he found a job in Los Angeles as a journalist and correspondent for the *New World* (*Nowy Świat*) magazine, and other periodicals like *Ameryka Echo* (where he had a regular column) and *Orzeł Biały*. In 1953, Sylwan Strakacz (former secretary of Ignacy Jan Paderewski) described the personality of an actor who appeared in a small role, but, as Strakacz wrote, dominated, “stole the show”.¹⁰

“Ossetyński is a strange person. He is an actor because that’s his nature. He came to Los Angeles and created the restaurant Wilno, known to all of us. During the day he imagined and at night he dreamed of the theater. He built a tiny theater in Wilno, but when he finished it, he got a chance to rent a studio in Los Angeles. So he immediately seized this opportunity and moved to Hollywood, where he has his own drama school. Ossetyński works with new talents and constantly tries to improve his own art. He has been seen in many movies, theaters and television, and now rumors are circulating that he is working on staging a play.”

The actor also worked in the studio of the famous acting teacher, Michael Chekhov (Mikhail Alexandrovich Chekhov; 1891–1955), nephew of Antoni Chekhov, the famous Russian playwright. Chekhov brought to America the original version of Stanislavski’s method, which he described in *On the Technique of Acting* (1942), published in an abbreviated version as *To the Actor* in 1953.

⁸ Jordanowski, *op. cit.*

⁹ See, about ecology & yoga, Henryk Skolimowski, *Dharma, Ecology and Wisdom in the Third Millennium*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 1999.

¹⁰ Sylwan Strakacz, *Pole Steals the Show, Orzeł Biały*, 31 października 1953.

UWAGA RODACY W KALIFORNII!!!

Polskie pismo „Nowy Świat” od samego swego założenia walczy o wolną i niepodległą Polskę. „Nowy Świat” ma swoich korespondentów we wszystkich częściach świata. Przez łamy „Nowego Świata” Rodacy dowiadują się o najnowszych wypadkach dziejowych. „Nowy Świat” JEDNOCZY W WALCE Polonię Amerykańską i wszystkich Polaków dobrej woli. Przez „Nowy Świat” Rodacy nawiązują kontakty z polskimi żołnierzami. Rodacy z całego świata interesują się jak i gdzie Polacy pracują. Oczywiście chcieliby wiedzieć i o Polonii z nad Pacyfiku. Ponieważ redakcja „Nowego Świata” docenia wielki wysiłek i pracę Polonii w Kalifornii – wydelegowano stałego przedstawiciela na Kalifornię.

— Jest nim weteran polskiej i amerykańskiej armii,

Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński

Przybył do Stanów Zjednoczonych z obozu koncentracyjnego w Oud Zern (Afgan) w roku 1941. Rodacy w całej Ameryce poznali go ze sceny. Zorganizował on „Polski Teatr Artystów”. Czytelnicy „Nowego Świata” znają doskonale Ossetyńskiego z jego wesołych i pełnych dowcipu feljetonów z życia wojskowego. Przez dwa i pół roku rubryka „Pod Gwiazdastym Sztandarem”, którą on prowadził, cieszyła się wielką poczytnością wśród naszych Czytelników. Po wystąpieniu Ossetyńskiego z armii, „Nowy Świat” wysłał go w objazd autem po całej Ameryce. W rubryce „Od Atlantyku do Pacyfiku” Ossetyński informował czytelników jak żyją Rodacy w innych stanach oraz o ogólnej sytuacji gospodarczo-politycznej. Leonidas Dudarew Ossetyński będzie stałym przedstawicielem „Nowego Świata” na Kalifornię. Będzie pisał o radcach, troskach, pracy i życiu Polonii w Kalifornii.

RODACY W KALIFORNI! PROSZENI SĄ o wszystkich wiadomościach informować przedstawiciela „Nowego Świata” na Kalifornię p. LEONIDAS DUDAREW-OSSETYŃSKIEGO. Dla większej wygody Rodaków i Czytelników „Nowego Świata”, Ossetyński prowadzić będzie biuro w znanej polskiej firmie perfumeryjno-kosmetycznej M. S. Chojnackiego — Polo „Parfienne Laboratory”, 4971 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood 27, California. Tel. Normandy 1-5343. Adres kablograficzny: Polonaris Hollywood.

W powyższym biurze przyjmowane są ogłoszenia, wiadomości, zawiadomienia o wszelkich imprezach, obchodach i innych uroczystościach. Można też na miejscu nabyć ilustrowany Kalendarz Nowego Świata, książkę lekarską, oraz zaprenumerować sobie — lub w prezencie znajomym — „Nowy Świat”.

Jako weteran L. D. Ossetyński będzie specjalnie miejsce w swej rubryce poświęcał sprawom weterańskim. Będzie on pisał o przeżyciach naszych chłopaków w ostatniej wojnie, o ich prawach i potrzebach.

Wierzymy głęboko, że Rodacy w Kalifornii poprą wysiłek Ossetyńskiego i pomogą mu w pracy na nowym dla niego terenie — w Kalifornii.

Korespondencje Ossetyńskiego będą się ukazywać pod rubryką — „Z NAD PACYFIKU”. Czytajcie Rodacy i rozpowszechniajcie „NOWY ŚWIAT” wśród znajomych.

Pamiętajcie, że rubryka „Z NAD PACYFIKU” to Wasza kronika. To wiadomości o Was.

Popierajcie i pomagajcie piśmu polskiemu oraz Waszemu korespondentowi, weteranowi dwóch armii — polskiej i amerykańskiej.

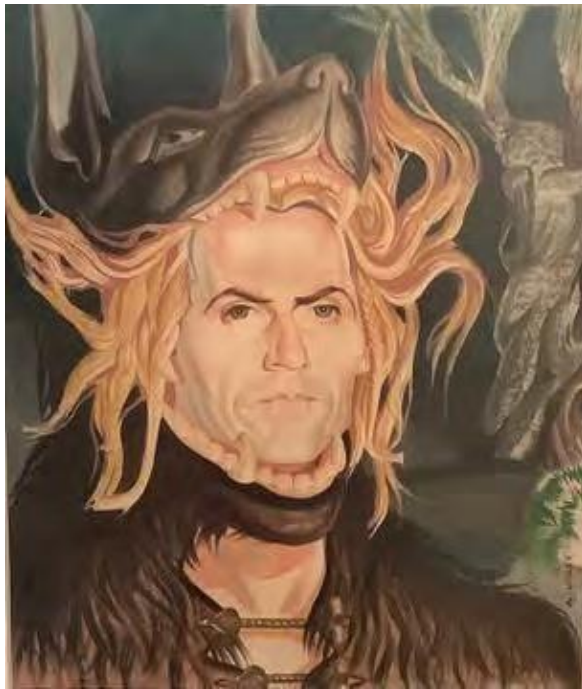


LEONIDAS DUDAREW-OSSETYŃSKI
Przedstawiciel „Nowego Świata” w Kalifornii.



Leonidas and Elizabeth Taylor; Jane Mansfield. Collection of Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken

Yul Brynner wrote the introduction. Some of Ossetyński's biographers claim that he was a co-author of *To the Actor*, which is not confirmed by Chekhov's biographies (he received credit in the book's introduction). It is a fact, however, that Ossetyński taught students using the Chekhov Method for almost 10 years, until the master's death in 1955. Many Hollywood stars passed through Chekhov's school, to mention only Yul Brynner, Ingrid Bergman, Gary Cooper, Clint Eastwood, Anthony Hopkins, Marilyn Monroe, Jack Nicholson, Anthony Quinn, and Gregory Peck. His disciples continue this practice to this day.¹¹



In 1955, after Chekhov's death, Ossetyński established his own theatre group Modjeska Players / Modrzejewska Theater (Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej), which staged plays in English. In *The Almanac 1988-1989* we read: "His greatest artistic and box office success came when he prepared in 1955, in the Modrzejewska Theatre he founded, a theatrical evening consisting of poems, three one-act plays – *Fraszki*, *Visiting at Dusk*, *A Candle Burnt out* – and a poem-song about the Uprising by Zbigniew Jasiński, which greatly moved the audience." In the years 1955-1957, the Modjeska Players toured the United States and Canada with this program entitled, *From Fredro to the Uprising* – they gave several hundred performances. The cast consisted of two people: Ossetyński himself and Lidia Próchnicka. According to the actor, "during our three-year tour we have often been to places that theater troupes had not visited before; sometimes there were five people in the audience, sometimes again, like in Detroit, two thousand."

Stanisław Szukalski, portrait of Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński, Courtesy of Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.

It is interesting that the founder of the Modjeska Club became so interested in the image of a Polish and American theater star who emigrated to California and performed throughout the USA. We should also note that the above commentary on Ossetyński's artistic journeys could be a commentary by Modjeska herself. The actor went on a long tour of America as if following her footsteps, giving hundreds of performances in small, medium and large cultural centers. Almost twenty years before the founding of the Modjeska Club in 1971, the Modjeska Players was one of the oldest cultural institutions in America under

¹¹ MICHA – Michael Chekhov Association, <https://www.michaelchekhov.org/our-story>.

the patronage of the star. The only predecessor was the Modjeska Commemoration Committee, active in 1949; Ossetyński was a board member of this organization. It was in his Modjeska Players that Ossetyński performed as a theater actor on stages throughout the United States and Canada. In 1957, he returned to New York for a few years; during that period, he directed several Polish plays in English translations “Off Broadway.” He corresponded extensively with luminaries of Polish culture, including Aleksander Giedroyc, the leader of the Paris *Kultura*, and the writer Sławomir Mrożek, whose play *The Police* Ossetyński directed in New York in 1961. He also staged Mrożek’s *On the Sea* and Cwynarski’s *Alcesta Comes Back*. According to the *Almanach 1988-1989*, “Lidia Próchnicka, a fantastic actress who emigrated from Kraków to South America, starred in the main female roles.” She came from Chile specifically to perform with Ossetyński!

Ossetyński’s list of film roles is extensive; he also appeared on television. The actor often played secondary, supportive roles of colorful characters in such films as: *The Gambling House* (1950), *Affair in Trinidad* (1952), *The Last Time I Saw Paris* (1954), *Walk Don’t Run* (1966), *Way Way Way Out*, *Mission: Impossible: The Heir Apparent* (1968), *The Man in the Glass Booth* (1975), Rod Serling’s *Night Gallery: Green Fingers*, *The Funeral*, *The Tune in Dan’s Café*. In Poland, Ossetyński appeared in *Hrabina Cosel* (1968) directed by Jerzy Antczak, with Jadwiga Barańska as the star (they later emigrated to Los Angeles and became honorary members of the Modjeska Club in 1990s; Barańska subsequently received the Modjeska Prize in 2018).

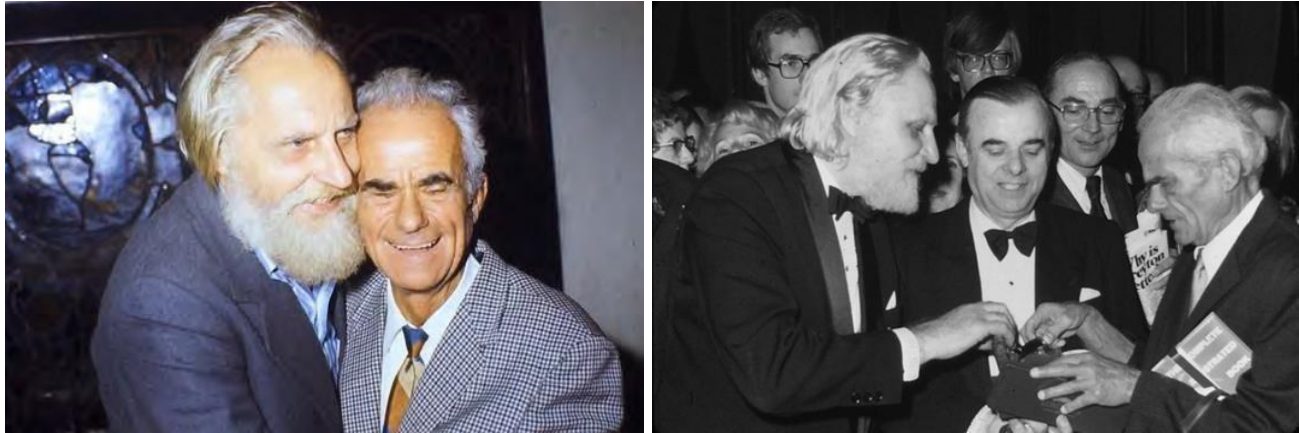


Ossetyński on the table while working with actors for The Police by Mrożek, 1961. Photo from Bella Stadler.

After a final move from New York to Los Angeles in 1964, Ossetyński established his own acting school, called Ossetyński Actors Laboratory. He settled in Mount Washington on an estate on Wollam Street, consisting of four buildings (a house, sauna, workshop, and a guest house) with woodwork details carved in the Zakopane style from the Tatras (“styl góralski”). The actor collected works of art and Polish old prints; he was a bibliophile like his friend from New York, Aleksander Janta-Połczyński (1908-1974), with whom he shared the fate of uprooted emigrants and a similar noble-artistic origin. In 1976, after Połczyński’s death, Ossetyński started working on a volume of memoirs about his friend. The actor married Elizabeth Huguley (1920-2002) in 1946, they had one daughter, Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken, and two granddaughters (Kristina Dudarov Hunken and Monica Dudarov Hunken). The actor died of cancer at Los Angeles Veterans Hospital on April 28, 1989; he was 78 years old.¹²

¹² The obituary appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on April 30, 1989: “Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński , 78; Polish-Born Writer, Director, Actor; “ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-04-30-mn-2955-story.html>.

The actor's archives are preserved in The Polish Museum of America in Chicago and in private collections. As an actor and journalist, a correspondent of *Nowy Świat* (*New World*), *Ameryka Echo* and *Biały Orzeł* from Los Angeles, he had many opportunities to participate in theatrical performances, concerts, and other events of Polish cultural organizations, such as the Roman Choir led by composer Roman Maciejewski (1910-1998) in the years 1950s, or concerts by the Paderewski Arts Club of Los Angeles (e.g. on June 25, 1955, a concert by Roman Maciejewski).¹³ The name of the latter Club, including its location, seems to have been a model for the name of Klub Kultury im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej or Helena Modjeska Art & Culture Club in Los Angeles. In the genesis of our Club, an important role was played by Ossetyński's theatrical passion and reverence for the great star of Polish and American scenes, whom he chose as the patron of his first Californian theater troupe, Modjeska Players / Helena Modrzejewska Theater. Another element in the genesis of the Club is the obsession of the indefatigable cultural activist with staging the premiere of Roman Maciejewski's great *Requiem*.

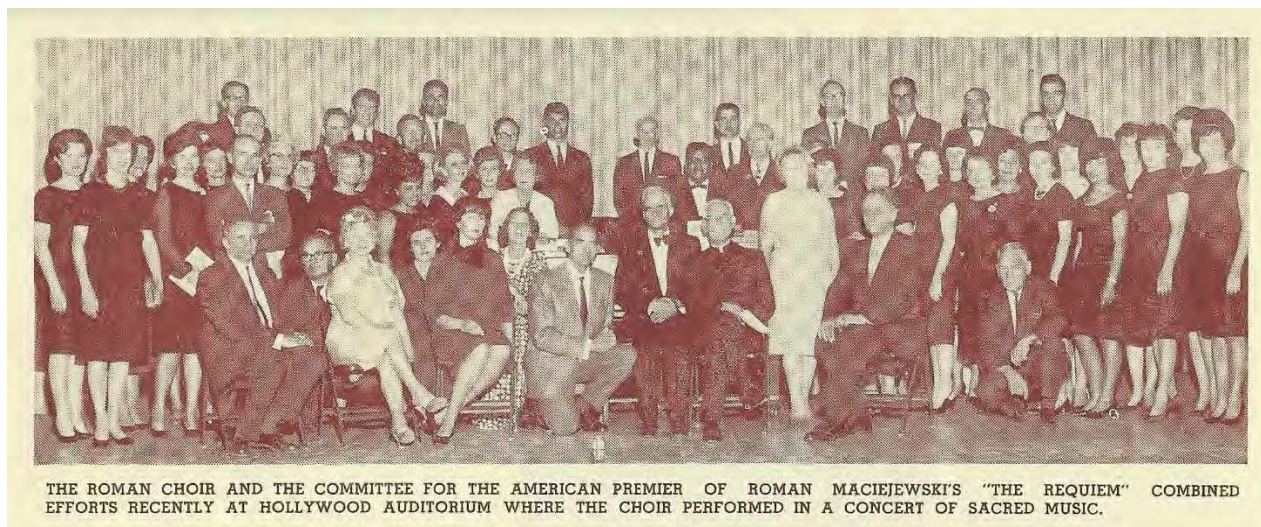


Ossetyński & Maciejewski home of Stefanie Powers, Sept. 1973. Ossetyński with Roman & Wojciech Maciejewski after the premiere, Nov. 1975. Archives of the Club. Gift of Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.

Ever since the artists met in California in the 1950s, Ossetyński was fascinated by Maciejewski's composing talent. They also shared interests in yoga and Eastern philosophy. The materials about Maciejewski in the Ossetyński Collection at the Archives of the Polish Museum of America in Chicago date back to 1955 and include many programs of the Roman Choir and documentation of joint efforts to organize the premiere of Maciejewski's gigantic *Requiem* in Los Angeles. The latter were initiated in 1965, when Ossetyński served as the president of Committee for the American Premiere of *the Requiem* by Roman Maciejewski. In this Committee, he was joined by great stars of classical music and culture in Los Angeles, such as Bronisław Kaper (1902-1983), Oscar winner and chairman of the Board of Directors; honorary president of the organization. The group of Maciejewski's fans also featured: the famous pianist Artur Rubinstein (1887-1982); Ossetyński's theater mentor Michael Chekhov; composer Henry Vars (1902-1977); conductor Roger Wagner (1914-1992); as well as composer Stefan (Stephan) Pasternacki (1891-1981) and Jerzy Stefański, the latter two later associated with the Modjeska Club since its inception in 1971. In 1965, the Committee organized a series of concerts, including joint performances with the Roman Choir, conducted by Maciejewski, in Los Angeles and West Hollywood. The American premiere of the *Requiem* finally took place in November 1975, under the aegis of the newly formed Modjeska Club.

During the first seven years of activity in the newly formed Helena Modjeska Art and Culture Club, 1971-1978, Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński was its President and the driving force behind all activities: he invited outstanding personalities to cooperate as volunteers on the board, he planned and implemented a variety of artistic and cultural programs. The first meetings took place in the homes of actress Stefanie Powers, a composer of film music, Stefan Pasternacki (the so-called "Polska Chata"), and in the residence of Leonidas and Teresa Dudarew-Ossetyński (married since 1968), on Fuller Street in Hollywood, the so-called "Fullerowo." From 1972, the club was a member of two Polish organizations, the American Council of Polish Cultural Clubs and the Polish American Congress. For a while, the Club paid dues to the Polish-American Cultural Network, a small, local organization in Los Angeles.

¹³ See the concert programs in the Ossetyński Collection in the Archives of the Polish Museum of America



*The Roman Choir and Committee for the American Premiere of Roman Maciejewski's Requiem at the Hollywood Auditorium;
The choir gave a concert of sacred music. Archives of the Polish Museum of America, Chicago.*

The Modjeska Club President sent regular activity reports to ACPCC's *The Quarterly Review*; thanks to these reports we can recreate the themes of the Club meetings in 1973-1976. The invitation to one of the meetings from 1973 is copied below. We see a beautiful initial, an "Old Polish" text, and a valuable initiative – a listening session to a recording of Roman Maciejewski's *Requiem* in order to prepare the American premiere of this monumental work.



*Brothers Wojciech and Roman Maciejewski, Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński and guests
after the premiere of Maciejewski's Requiem on November 1, 1975 at the Los Angeles Music Center.*

In the establishment of the Club, Dudarew-Ossetyński collaborated with many outstanding representatives of the Polish community in California. Dr. Franciszka Tuszyńska, director of the Polish School in Los Angeles and the Millennium Library, was the Vice-President. The board included actress Stefanie Powers, composers Roman Maciejewski and Stefan Pasternacki, as well as writers and artists, including Stanisław Szukalski (1893-1987). This talented and extremely eccentric artist designed the Club's first logo, a distinctive "neo-Piast" eagle, which was replaced by a real Piast eagle. Szukalski created designs for a monument to Helena Modrzejewska, which Ossetyński planned to erect in Los Angeles. The implementation of this project has not been carried out. Szukalski also designed special printed envelopes to commemorate the Copernican Year in 1973 that were used for the Club's fundraising. According to the actor's daughter, "They were best friends. My father loved to argue and Szukalski loved to do the same. It was a game between them. My father mourned him for a long time after Szukalski died." Nonetheless, in Szukalski's biographies, Ossetyński is described as a "friend-foe" ("frenemy") of the eccentric artist.¹⁴ Szukalski had very sharp and controversial opinions on every subject; he criticized Ossetyński's vision of theater, focused on acting. The artist believed that the text and meaning were far more important and did not mince words when comparing actors and other performers with waiters serving delicious dishes in a restaurant, dishes prepared by excellent masters hidden in the kitchen. "I think that theater, when it deserves the name, is completely dependent on high-class literature, unless it's a circus in disguise."¹⁵



Ossetyński and Stefan Pasternacki (on the right) at the Club meeting in September 1975. Stanisław Szukalski (second from the left) and guests at Ossetyński's house after the artist's lecture on his own art in May 1973. Club archives, donation from the actor's daughter, Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.

As mentioned above, the key element in the Club's genesis and one of the largest undertakings of the Club led by Ossetyński was the organization of the American premiere of Roman Maciejewski's *Requiem* in 1975. After over 10 years of Ossetyński's efforts, on 1 November 1975, the concert was held at the Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles Music Center: 235 artists, 2½ hours of music, Roger Wagner as a conductor, reviews in the press ... In the entire history of the Club, there was no event of greater size and prestige. The project illustrates the goal and methods of the club's founder. The aim was to promote the masterpieces of Polish culture for the American public, including the Polish community, but not exclusively. The method was to bring together a small group of highly educated and energetic enthusiasts, volunteers who spend their time working "in the service of Poland" for free. The way to gather such a group and involve them in volunteer work was elitism: a feeling of a certain elite uniqueness and superiority of members of the exclusive Club over mere mortals. The master of theater and the Club's "king" who came from the lineage of real princes had done it ... until his courtiers and subjects revolted.

¹⁴ Glenn Bray & Lena Zvalve, ed. *Inner Portraits by Szukalski*, San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2020.

¹⁵ Stanisław Szukalski, "Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński", written in 1952, published in *Inner Portraits*, p. 148.

In the 1970s, when Ossetyński was planning to build a monument to Modrzejewska designed by Stanisław Szukalski, the following rhyme-riddle with a caricature, probably drawn by Szukalski, was published in the press:

Z cyklu zagadek – Kto zacz?

Prince, dziennikarz, aktor, książę
Z wazeliną się nie wiąże
Rżnie od uda epistoły
Krzywią się więc nań matole

Gedymina gród majstrował
Na Modjeskiej wylądował
Grać już nie chce – produkuje
Helki pomnik proponuje

W ilczej skórze ciągle hasa
Konia woli od fordasa
Dziwny dziwak, nie na czasie
Wołają go LEO-NIDASIE

From a set of riddles – who's that?

Prince, journalist, actor, duke,
Does not stick with brownnose crowd
Writes long letters on his lap
Making idiots really mad

He tampered with Gedymin's town
He arrived on Modjeska's plan
He will not play – but will produce
A monument to Helka he'll design

He runs around in wolf's coat
He prefers a horse to a Ford
A weird freak, so out of date
He is called LEO-NIDAS



Not all of the Modjeska Club's projects during Ossetyński's "reign" as its President were as serious as the severe and dramatic *Requiem*, devoted to the victims of all wars and totalitarian prisons. In October 1976, after the performance given by the amateur Eskulap Theater of Warsaw, the actors danced "trojak" with the President, and then he took them to the airport, making sure that all packages were delivered.



The president dances with the actors of the Eskulap Theater. At the airport. Gift by Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.

As an example of a humorous mood in the Modjeska Club, let us use the invitation to a meeting at the Stefanie Powers residence from 1973. The president himself signed it by hand as "Leonidas I. Niewyparzony, herbu Brodaty Ozór ("Untethered, coat of arms: the Bearded Tongue"; in a version at the Polish Museum of America, Chicago) or "Leonidas I, Bearded and Discouraged" (in the version from Jerzy Zagner's collection, see the next page). Friends in the Club also called the President "Leonidas Wielki i Brodaty ("the Great and Bearded"), which can be seen on his name-day cake from 1976 (photo below).

Embittered by the Modjeska Club's members' lack of a deeper interest in voluntary work to promote Polish culture in California and treating club events primarily as social gatherings and parties, in 1978 Ossetyński resigned from his presidency. As a farewell, he made a speech full of interesting remarks about the purpose of the existence and mission of the Club, highlighting the most prominent events and members, and focusing on the promotion of Polish culture for Americans and educating Polish Americans about their own history & culture.


He was quite adamant about the primary orientation of the Club outside the local immigrant community and quite critical of those who used the Club meetings as occasions for flirting and eating, not learning and thinking. He retained the honorary title of Founding President for a while, but in 1981 he was formally removed from the Club's list of members.

HELENA MODJESKA ART AND CULTURE CLUB

AFFILIATED WITH
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF POLISH CULTURAL CLUBS
AND POLISH-AMERICAN CONGRESS

KLUB KULTURY IM. HELENY MODRZEJEWSKIEJ W LOS ANGELES

1601 NO. FULLER AVE. HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA 90046



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September dnia 10 Roku Pańskiego 1973



a, łaskawie panujący na Fullerowie Północnym i zarządzający Bractwem Kulturalnym w Grodzie Aniołów — Zapraszam Jaśnie Wielmożnych Państwa pod gościnną strzechę sławetnej białogłowy Stefanji i Małżonka jej Imię Pana Grzegorza Lockwood'a na uciechy dworskie w czasie których to Imię Pan Maciejewski Roman kompozytor znakomity, rodem z Lechistanu, nowożytnym zapisem magnetofonicznym Requiem własnej kompozycji, otworzyć nam raczy.

Stoły i piwniczka obficie zaopatrzone będą w krzeczne potrawy i konfekty rozmaite.

Aby jednak sławetnej Pani domu zbytniego uszczerbku nie przysporzyć przyniesienie własnej okowity byłoby wskazane.

Przyodziać chędogo bardzo się uprasza. Konie i czeladź żarcie i dach nad głową mają zapewnione.

Początek obrzędów szesnastego Septembra. Anno Domini 1973 o trzeciej przed zachodem słońca, czyli po tutejszemu P.M., a Requiem rozpocznie się o zmierzchu. Impertunem wstęp wzbroniony.

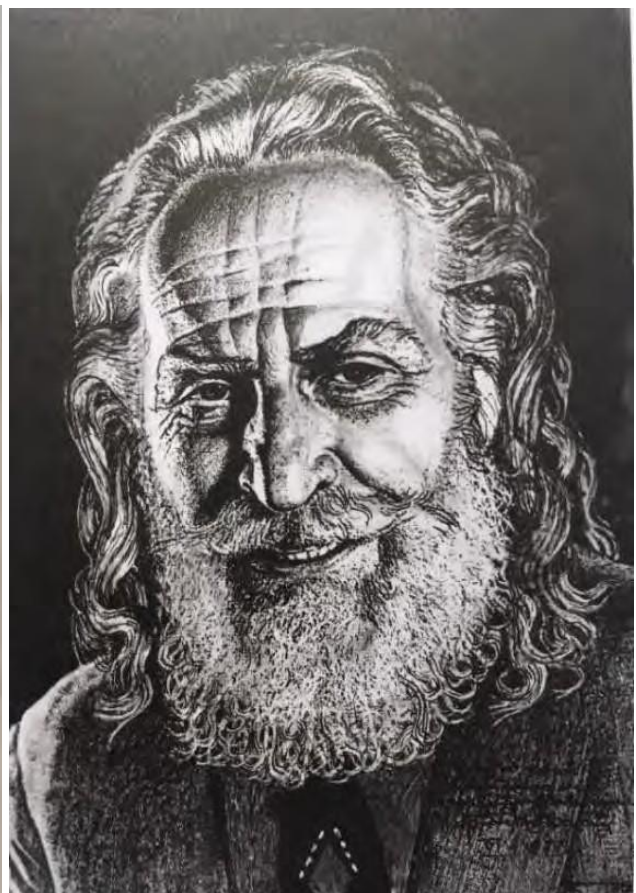
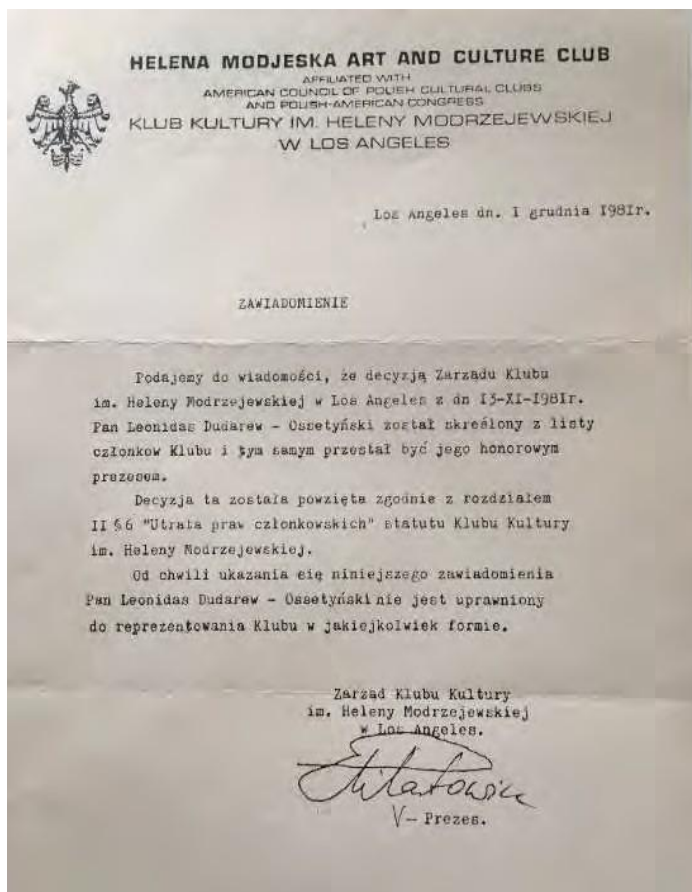
Z należyłym szacunkiem, ściele się uniżenie i Waszmościankom rączki całuje.

Józef I-Brodawki i Janickowy



It could be said that the Modjeska Art & Culture Club took over Ossetyński's life in the 1970s, from 1971 to 1978. At the same time, he also founded his acting school, Actors Laboratory on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, where he educated hundreds of students to work in TV and film, among others Stefanie Powers who joined him in the Modjeska Club. In 1977, she was with Ossetyński and a group of his students that visited Poland with a repertoire of etudes. During this trip to Poland, Ossetyński appeared in television program "Pegaz."¹⁶ After leaving his job as President of the Club in 1978, he continued to promote Polish culture in California, focusing on Polish theater. In 1982, he invited Barbara Krafftówna to Los Angeles to appear in Witkacy's play *Matka* (*Mother*) the following year.¹⁷ He directed and produced the play, translated by Daniel Gerould and staged at Safe Harbor Theater,

The performance was a massive effort, with a 20-person ensemble led by Ossetyński himself. It was an artistic triumph and received 11 awards for the best theatrical performance in Los Angeles that year. When asked by the Polish journalist Czesław Czapliński why he chose Krafftówna for the main role, Ossetyński replied: "Krafftówna is the best. She can deform realism." An interesting fact is that Krafftówna did not know English at the time and learned the role phonetically!



Notice about cancelled membership in Modjeska Club, 1981. Portrait by Stanisław Szukalski.

¹⁶ The Club's documents contain copies of an undated article by Zbigniew K. Rogowski from his "Mieszkanka Firmowa," "published in Poland in *Przekrój* with a polemic about Ossetyński's appearance in the TVP program *Pegaz*. The text may have been written after the actor's interview in 1986, when he was in Poland for the last time.

¹⁷ See. Czesław Czapliński, "Teatr Ossetyńskiego," *Przegląd Polski*, 4 October 1983.

Since her travel to California coincided with the crackdown on the Solidarity movement by the Polish military (started on 13 December 1981 and lasting through 1983), the actress decided to stay in Los Angeles. The stay of Witkacy's star overseas lasted for over twenty years and included participation in many cultural events - she was active as an actress and theater director. She collaborated with the student theater at UCLA, which staged plays based on Witold Gombrowicz's texts. Many years later, in 2012, Krafftówna received the Helena Modjeska Prize for lifetime achievement as an actress.

The extensive correspondence of Dudarew-Ossetyński in the Archives of the Polish Museum in America (donated to the Archives by the actor's daughter, Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken) shows the Renaissance personality of the actor who was interested in theater, literature, film, music and all the arts. Throughout his career in the USA, he was looking for interesting, original Polish projects to implement and promote in America. When he traveled to Poland – and he visited the Old Country three times, in 1968, 1977 and 1986¹⁸ – he gave interviews in the press and on television, attended theatrical performances with great enthusiasm, visited actors and directors.¹⁹ PMA's collection includes a series of recordings of interviews with such famous celebrities of Polish theater as Konrad Swinarski and Kantor. In reports made after his return to California, Ossetyński told his audiences about plays by Różewicz, Szajna, Mrożek and others. He was primarily interested in the latest, most original, and experimental performances. After the death of Ossetyński in 1989, Bogdan Danowicz summarized his achievements in the *Kultura i Życie* magazine, describing him as “a true Ambassador of Polish culture in the United States” and “a man of the Renaissance.”²⁰ A full biography of one of the most outstanding representatives of Polish post-war émigré generation of WWII veterans is still waiting for its author.

In 2011, in an application to award the founder of our Club with the Golden Cross of Merit, as the President of the Club, I wrote: “Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński founded the Helena Modjeska Club to promote Polish culture and art in Los Angeles. He invited famous Polish actors and activists to cooperate and establish the new organization; it quickly became the most important site for promoting Polish culture. He was the President of the Club in the years 1971-1978, but from November 1978 he did not take an active part in the Club activities. He has directed and acted in many theater productions. Thanks to his efforts, the opportunities for promoting Polish culture in California have been greatly expanded.” The medal was given posthumously to the daughter, Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken, and the presentation was made during the ceremony at the residence of the Consul General of the Republic of Poland, Joanna Kozińska-Frybes, on March 15, 2013.



Stanisław Szukalski and Barbara Krafftówna in Ossetyński's house. Collections of the Archives of the Polish Museum of America, Chicago. Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński, Mira Zimińska-Sygietyńska (founder of the Mazowsze ensemble) and Stanisław Szukalski, private collection of Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.

In the history of Polish culture, we remember Ossetyński not as the founder of the Modjeska Club, but as a director, actor, acting teacher, and writer. Although his school did not survive, it is worth recalling how Bogdan Danowicz described “The Ossetyński Method” in *Perspektywy* in 1977. According to the visionary actor and director, two elements are essential for an actor to achieve an amazing mood in the theater and create unforgettable performances on stage: “additional power” and “radiation”:²²

“Each of us, because we do not use up all the possibilities that lie dormant in him, and he does it only in exceptional situations, such as fear or unexpected joy. Therefore, there is always something that is a reserve of our mental strength, which we must be able to summon at the right moment, keep it at a sufficiently high level, and be able to operate it effectively, and thus reduce the intensity of tension. The same applies to modulating mental tensions between people, that is, “mental radiation.” You can see it even when two people are arguing – says Ossetyński – as if sparks were falling. This peculiar psychic radiation is also clearly visible in the lovers who accumulate his unique strength, because, as Schopenhauer claimed, every drop of blood radiates in a secret way. An actor who wants to control his psyche should become a true charmer of this inexhaustible strength inherent in each of us.

An attempt to release this force says Ossetyński, may awaken in us a fear of the unknown, of a certain limit, which, however, must be boldly crossed in order to overcome this fear, that is to overcome ourselves, our weaknesses, our distrust, imposed on us by tradition, upbringing, conventionality. our behavior, self-esteem tightening our field of view.”



Ossetyński by Szukalski, 1950s.

Dr Maja Trochimczyk



Meeting of the Modrzejewska Club in the founder's house: from the right, Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński, painter Andrzej Kołodziej, guest, around 1977. Private collection of Valerie Dudarew-Ossetyńska Hunken.

¹⁸ Acc. information from his daughter, Valerie Hunken, Ossetyński was in Poland in 1968, in 1977 with students and Stefanie Powers, and in 1986 with students of his acting studio. Email dated April 19, 2021.

¹⁹ Lesław Peters, Being Human. Interview with Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński. *Gazeta Krakowska*, July 16, 1986.

²⁰ Bogdan Danowicz: The truth of the scene, the truth of life. *Kultura i Życie*, 1989, No. 13, pp. 2-3.

²² Bogdan Danowicz, “Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński”, *Perspektywy*, t. 9 nr 14, 8 kwietnia 1977, p. 29.

CLUB NEWS

MILWAUKEE, WIS.

• The new ACPCC affiliate MAZUR POLISH DANCERS was to be the subject of a special illustrated feature in this issue, but space did not permit it. It will definitely appear in the next issue!

DETROIT, MICH.

• The FRIENDS OF POLISH ART-sponsored exhibition of 12 American and Canadian Artists of Polish Descent, held at Orchard Lake Schools last May, was again exhibited by the club in October, but this time at the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York. By cooperating with this prestigious institution, FPA gave the 57 works of contemporary Pol-Am artists a chance to be seen by a much wider public. • Also in October the FPA took active part in the "Old World Market" all-nation festival at the International Institute in Detroit. It also cosponsored with the Polish American Congress and the local Polish clergy a Testimonial Banquet for the Lutnia Women's Choir, winner of the Cardinal Hlond trophy in the national Polish Singers Alliance competition. • To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Joseph Conrad's death the club organized a "Conrad Dinner-Lecture" with Prof. Jerzy Krzyżanowski of Ohio State as main speaker, and an all-Chopin program by pianist Marta Szyndler-Dyczewski. Also a bust of Conrad done by Marian Owczarski was presented by FPA to the Hamtramck Public Library. • An "Afternoon of Music and Poetry" cosponsored by FPA and Veritas was held in December, featuring recitations of Polish poet Bronisław Przyłuski's verses accompanied on the piano by selections from Polish composers played by Andrzej Dutkiewicz of Poland.

LOS ANGELES, CAL.

• The HELENA MODJESKA ART & CULTURE CLUB has recently created a theatrical circle within its ranks which will hold once-a-month play-reading sessions of avant-garde Polish authors such as Mrozek, Gombrowicz, and Witkiewicz. Two such sessions on Różewicz's play *Wyzwał z Domu* (Gone Out) have already been held. • On October 22, a "Memorial Tribute to Aleksander Janta-Polczyński" was prepared by his long-time friend, Club President Leonidas D. Ossetyński. The program was divided into three parts: A Biographical Sketch, Janta — The Man, and Janta — Writer and Poet. Excerpts of his works were recited and read by actress Ewa Wolf de

Rutkie, Dr. Tadeusz Samulak, and Mr. Ossetyński. Actor-film director Romuald Gantkowski added his reminiscences of Janta's youth, Polish composer Roman Maciejewski spoke of Janta's hidden musical talents, and the Third part of Maciejewski's "Requiem," taped at a "Warsaw Fall" Festival, was played.



Stanisław August Poniatowski, last King of Poland. Portrait by Marcello Bacciarelli.

• The Club has learned that a portrait of the last King of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski, painted by Marcello Bacciarelli, one of the greatest Italian masters of the late 18th century, is for sale in Los Angeles. Bacciarelli, court artist of King Stanisław, lived for many years in the Warsaw Castle and became so Polonized that he was ennobled by the Polish diet. He is buried in Warsaw Cathedral. The Modjeska Club feels that funds should be raised to buy the portrait, so that this, one of the most beautiful likenesses of the King, would not fall into private hands, but either be returned to the Warsaw Castle or placed in some Polish public institution in this country. Your comments are invited. Write: Mr. Leonidas D. Ossetyński, 1601 No. Fuller Ave., Hollywood, Ca. 90046.

MIAMI, FLA.

• The AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF POLISH CULTURE has initiated a nation-wide Frederic Chopin piano competition. Organized in cooperation with the University of Miami School of Music, it will take place in Miami on February 28 and March 1, 1975. The First Prize of \$1,000 also entitles the winner to a paid guest appearance with the Miami Philharmonic Orchestra, and the first three winners will be flown to Poland to compete in the world-famous Warsaw Chopin International Competition to be held next October. • The "Ascent of Man," a series of 13 films by the late Polish scientist, Dr. Jacob Bronowski, exploring scientific discoveries that have shaped humanity's history, will be shown on South Florida's WPBT Public Television, starting in January. The Institute is sponsoring these remarkable programs which were telecast on BBC last year, and urges other Pol-Am organizations to follow suit. The cost is surprisingly low. • To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Joseph Conrad's death, the Institute, together with the English Department of the University of Miami, organized in November a three-day international conference at which Conrad's life and works were discussed by ten distinguished scholars, and a rich Conradiana exhibit was displayed. • The \$500 Scholarship in Public Relations Fields for students of Polish origin is still open. Write: American Institute of Polish Culture, 1000 Brickell Ave., Suite 1110, Miami, Fla. 33131.

CHICAGO, ILL.

• The POLISH ARTS CLUB opened its season with a color slide show on "The Art of Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia" narrated by John Tryba, art professor at Milwaukee's Cardinal Stritch College. John Sipka, singer-guitarist, also appeared. • An illustrated lec-

LOS ANGELES, CAL.

• THE HELENA MODJESKA POLISH CULTURAL CLUB which was accepted into the ACPCC ranks last summer has had an impressive program during the past year. Among the long roster of lecturers were sculptor Stanisław Szukalski of Los Angeles; Roman Maciejewski, Polish-born California composer; Andrzej Strachocki, professor at the Warsaw Academy of Art; Dr. Henryk Skolimowski, philosophy professor at Michigan University, Ann Arbor; author and poet Leszek Szymański; and Warsaw Opera ballet master Stefan Wenta. • Outstanding in the year's program were two presentations: an 8-hour workshop meeting with the world-famous reformer of modern theater, Henryk Grotowski, director of the Laboratory Theatre of Wrocław, and a most unusual performance by a two-actor team from the Polish Esperanto Theater which staged a full-length play in the intimate setting of the Hollywood home of club president Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński, a prominent Polish emigré actor and journalist. • To help finance its activities the Club, with the permission of the U.S. Postal Service, issued an attractive "First Day of Issue" envelope for the Kopernik stamp (see below) with a special Club seal designed by Stanisław Szukalski, selling at \$1.25 each. Address orders to the Helena Modrzejewska Polish Cultural Club, c/o L. D. Ossetyński, 1601 No. Fuller Ave., Hollywood, Cal., 90046.



As you battle the snows think about the sunny times you'll have
at the
ACPCC 1975 CONVENTION
June 26-28
in
MIAMI BEACH, FLA. — HOTEL BARCELONA
on the Ocean, 43rd to 44th streets
Hosted by the American Institute of Polish Culture in Miami
1000 Brickell Ave., Miami, Fl. 33131

Club News

(Continued from page 17)
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

The HELENA MODJESKA ART AND CULTURE CLUB kept up its usual pace this year. • At the beginning of the year the Club was instrumental in bringing to the Polroom Gallery an exhibit of artistic tapestries by Barbara Hulanička from Poland. • At a special re-

ception composer Roman Maciejewski (see QR No. 4, 1975, p. 8) recounted in a philosophical and humorous way his impressions of a recent visit to Poland, Sweden and Germany. • An "Author's Evening" for General-Pilot Stanisław Karpiński, last commander of Polish Air Forces in England, and a popular author of aviation-related novels and books, was held at the

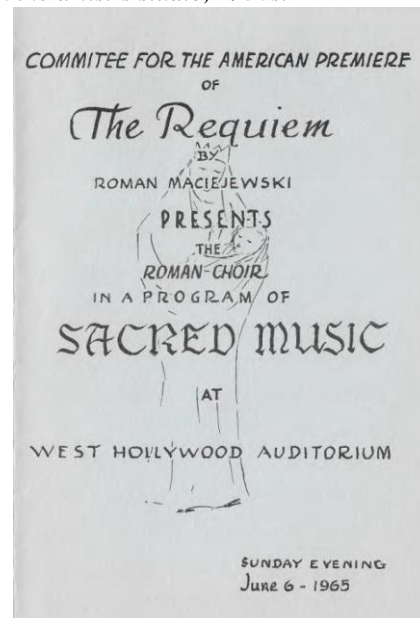
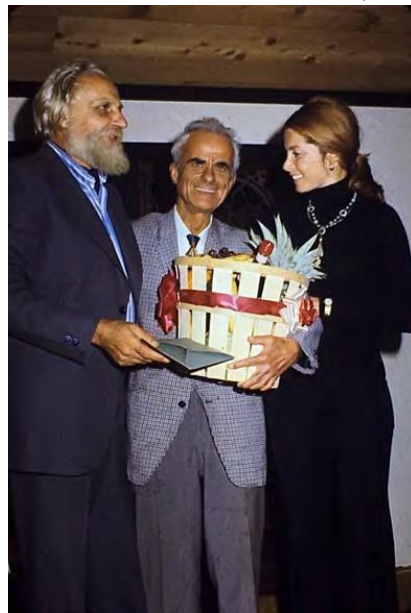
club president's home. General Karpiński's latest four-volume semi-novel on the feats of Polish flyers during WW II, "Na Skrzydłach Huraganu" (On the Wings of a Hurricane) is due to appear in London next year, published by Veritas. Pre-subscriptions at a reduced rate are now being invited; write: Gen. S. Karpiński, 3810 West First St., Los Angeles, CA 90004. During

the meeting excerpts from this book were read by the General's wife Barbara, one of three Polish women transport pilots in England during WW II, and by Dr. Andrzej Mikulski. • During yet another meeting, art historian Dr. Kleofas Rundzjo gave a slide-illustrated lecture on the "History of Modern Slavic Art Including Primitives."

Three Ossetyński reports from Club activities in 1975 published in The Quarterly Review of the American Council of Polish Cultural Clubs. ACPCC Archives, courtesy of Peter J. Obst.



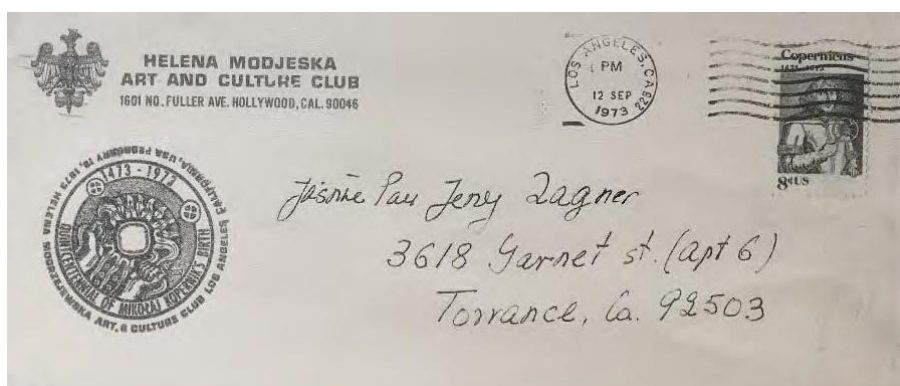
Szukalski and Ossetyński in the artist's studio, 1950s.



Ossetyński, Maciejewski and Powers after the event at her home in September 1973. / An invitation to the concert of sacred music organized by the Committee for the American Premier of The Requiem by Roman Maciejewski, June 1965,



Ossetyński and Artur Rubinstein after the premiere of Requiem, Los Angeles Music Center, Nov. 1975. / Amateur theater from Warsaw, Teatrzyk Eskulap at President's home, October 1976.



Above: Szukalski's Copernican designs. Below: Roman Maciejewski, Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński and the public at the Sacred Music Concert, 1965. Review of the 1975 performance of the Requiem in Los Angeles, in ACPCC The Quarterly Review.



Maciejewski's "Requiem"



At reception which followed the "Requiem" performance composer Roman Maciejewski chats with friends. From left: Oscar-winning composer Bronisław Kaper, piano greatest Artur Rubinstein, guest of honor R. Maciejewski, reception host Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński, and Master Chorale manager, Francis Thredgill.

Roman Maciejewski, whose powerful 2½-hour "Requiem" was presented on November 1, 1975 in the Chandler Pavilion of the Los Angeles Music Center under the

baton of Roger Wagner, is a composer Americans have not heard of until this performance, but according to music critics will be hearing of from now on.

Maciejewski was born in 1910 in Berlin of Polish parents, attended the University of Poznań, then the Academy of Music in Warsaw, and became a protegee of Karol Szymanowski. Later he studied piano with Nadia Boulanger in Paris.

The outbreak of WW II in 1939 caught him vacationing in Sweden where he stayed for 12 years. Diminutive, frail, once doomed to die according to his doctors, he cured himself by turning to natural foods and Yoga, and in 1950 moved to the warmer climate of California. He now lives in a garage apartment overlooking the ocean at Redondo Beach. He composed his giant "Requiem" between 1944 and 1959 dedicating it to the "victims of human ignorance."

He keeps fit and trim by strict diet and exercise, and his happy, infectious smile attests to his good health and belies his 65 years. He has written orchestral pieces, chamber music, incidental music for stage, and choral works, some deeply religious, but his music is virtually unknown, and, as he says, "to make a living" he is organist-choirmaster in two churches.

The world premiere of the

"Requiem" was held in Warsaw in 1960. It was then acclaimed by critics as "music of tremendous emotional intensity," but according to one American critic "Maciejewski never lifted a finger" to have it performed in this country. However, Roger Wagner who stumbled on its score accidentally was so impressed that he declared it "a masterpiece" and decided to present its American premiere using his own Master Chorale, the Sinfonia Orchestra of Los Angeles, and four soloists (235 musicians). Wagner knew the costs would be staggering (over \$32,000) so he donated his conductor's fee. The great success and tumultuous applause with which the "Requiem" met well justified his decision.

The mainspring promoting the "Requiem" premiere in Los Angeles was the Helena Modjeska Art and Culture Club under the leadership of actor Leonidas Dudarew-Ossetyński.

Such luminaries as Artur Rubinstein and Bronisław Kaper, Oscar winner for his music in "Lily", were among the over 3,000 who came to hear the master work of this unusually gifted and unusual man.



Ossetyński presents a gold watch to the composer with the Maciejewski brothers / Artur Rubinstein & Maciejewski.



Name-day celebration of the President, November 1976. | Club events from Polish Museum of America Archives..

