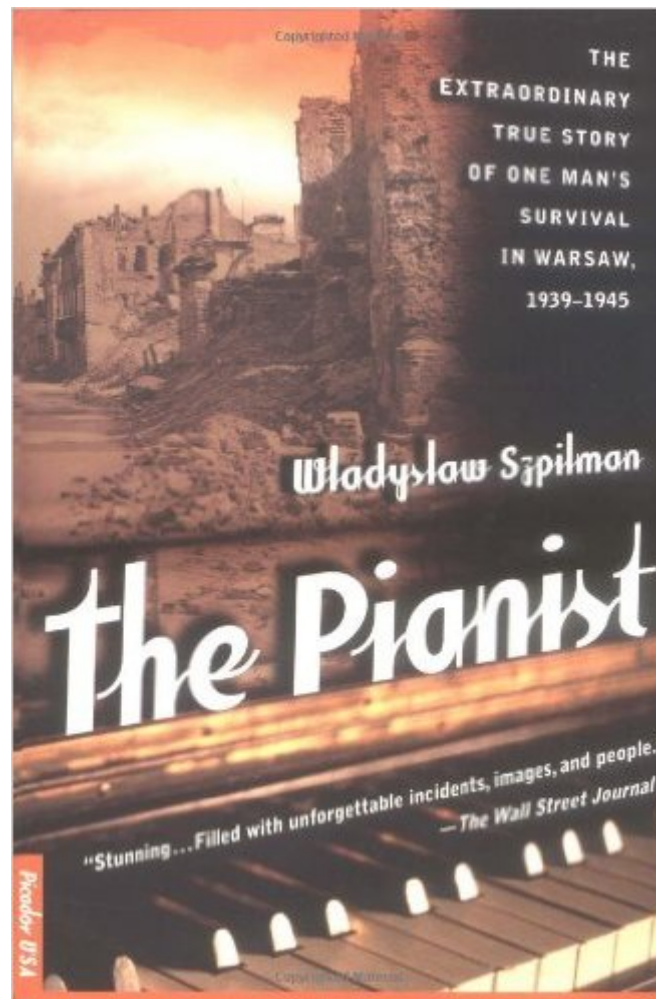


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The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story Of One Man's Survival In Warsaw, 1939-1945



Synopsis

Named one of the Best Books of 1999 by the Los Angeles Times, *The Pianist* is now a major motion picture directed by Roman Polanski and starring Adrien Brody (*Son of Sam*). *The Pianist* won the Cannes Film Festival's most prestigious prize—the Palme d'Or. On September 23, 1939, Wladyslaw Szpilman played Chopin's Nocturne in C-sharp minor live on the radio as shells exploded outside—so loudly that he couldn't hear his piano. It was the last live music broadcast from Warsaw: That day, a German bomb hit the station, and Polish Radio went off the air. Though he lost his entire family, Szpilman survived in hiding. In the end, his life was saved by a German officer who heard him play the same Chopin Nocturne on a piano found among the rubble. Written immediately after the war and suppressed for decades, *The Pianist* is a stunning testament to human endurance and the redemptive power of fellow feeling.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In January 2000, while visiting Warsaw, I met "Pan Wladek," the retired Director of Music at the Polish Radio. I read a book by him about his survival in the Nazi-occupied capital, and I was intrigued by the fact that I knew all the places he mentioned in the book. I was not surprised to learn that he still lives in the same part of Warsaw that I am from. I knew exactly where to find him. Pan Wladek was a composer, honored by President of Poland with a Commander Order with a Star of Polonia Restituta. Although for decades he was known to millions for producing popular rather than classical music. He was responsible for launching the careers of many Polish singers. They often complained at first for choosing them the wrong material, almost every time he proved them wrong.

A composer of nearly 500 songs; many made the pop charts. My favorite was the one about going to the Old Town, how he described the beauty of the restored part of the city, which was almost completely destroyed during WWII as Hitler's revenge against the Home Army's Warsaw Uprising in 1944. As a child, I learned that song from my grandmother and I sang it to my daughter years later. By the age of 2, she knew it by heart. That January, I visited the author. After three attempts (finally, I realized that I was knocking on the wrong door), I met Pani Halina, the musician's wife, a doctor who comes from a prominent Polish family. She was an example of hospitality, feeding me with coffeecake and preserves, chatting but not letting me disturb her husband who as she explained was not feeling well that day. I sighed, but had no right to push my luck any farther. We hugged, and I walked to the door when I looked up the stairs. And there he was, the maestro.

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