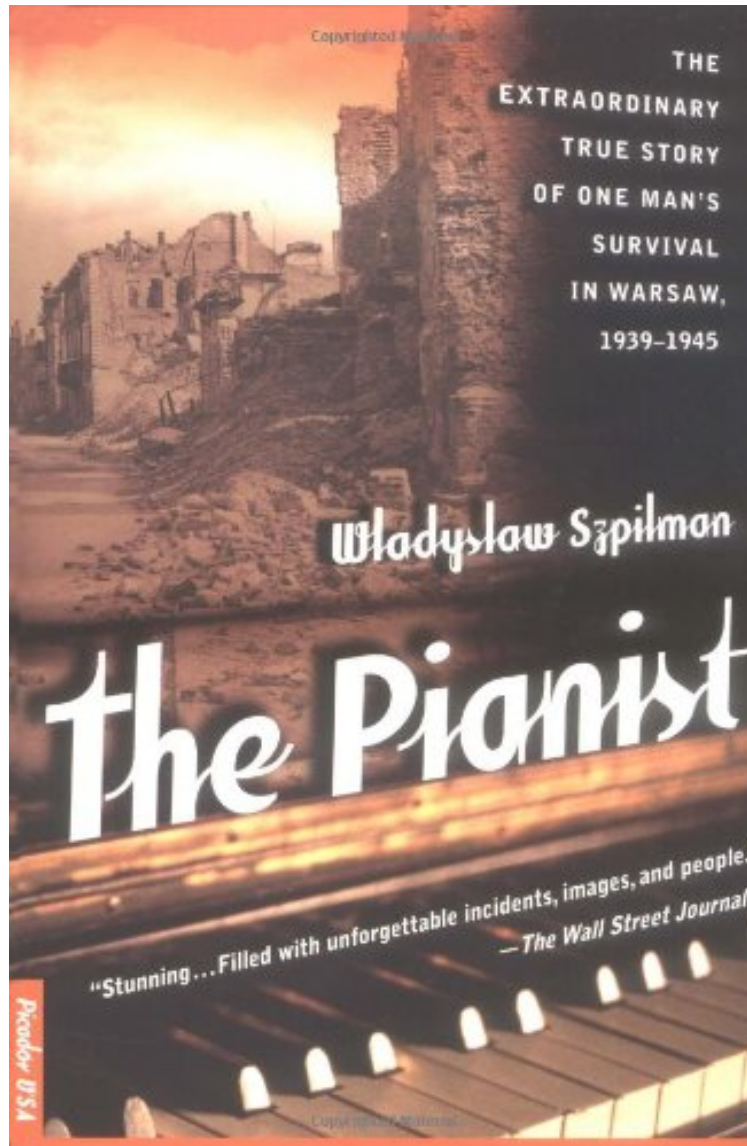


(Mobile library) The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945

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

Wladyslaw Szpilman

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#93971 in Books Szpilman, Wladyslaw 2000-09-02 2000-09-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 .32 x .64 x 5.49l, .45 #File Name: 0312263767224 pagesPicador USA | File size: 39.Mb

Wladyslaw Szpilman : The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A true story that reads like a great novelBy Claudia MoscoviciThe

Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Mans Survival in Warsaw 1939-1945 Until The Pianist, I have never read a piece so moving that I had to bring it to the screen, declared the award-winning movie director Roman Polanski, himself a survivor of the Krakow Jewish Ghetto, from which he escaped as a child after his mothers death. The story Polanski would make into an unforgettable film in 2002 is the war journal of the world-class pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman and his incredible tale of survival (The Pianist, Wladyslaw Szpilman, New York: Picador Press, 1999). Szpilman lived through the Nazi occupation of Poland between 1939-1945. His life was constantly in peril, and doubly so: both as a Jew and as a Pole. His family was rounded up in the Warsaw Ghetto and was liquidated along with its nearly half a million Jewish inhabitants, who were shot, died of disease or starvation, or were sent to concentration camps. (For more on this subject, see my earlier article on the Warsaw Ghetto, Heroism in Hell): <http://literaturadeazi.ro/content/heroism-hell-resistance-warsaw-ghetto-uprising-israel-gutman>) Time after time Wladyslaws intuition, luck, connections and resilience save him from a near-certain death. Although his brother, sisters and parents perished in the Treblinka death camp, the young man manages to survive thanks to the last-minute intervention from a friend who works for the Jewish Ghetto Police, who helps him right as hes about to board the cattle train to the concentration camp. To evade death yet again, Wladyslaw gets a work permit and becomes a slave laborer, along with the 50,000 working Jews (and their families) left in the Warsaw Ghetto, who, for a few more weeks or months, were still deemed useful by the Nazis. Later the young man becomes involved in the Jewish resistance movement in the ghetto, made up mostly of very courageous young men, who would rather die fighting than let the Nazis slaughter them like sheep. Right before the Nazis stomp out the rebellion, killing almost every last Jew and burning the ghetto to the ground, Wladyslaw yet again manages to miraculously escape by hiding with two Polish friends, the married couple Andrez and Janina Bogucki. Once their neighbor discovers him there, however, he is obliged to flee into an empty room with a piano, where he tries to recover from jaundice and malnutrition. When in the midst of the Polish resistance his apartment hit by bombs, he escapes from place to place in the stark and empty shell left of what was once the beautiful and prosperous city of Warsaw. Just as he believes he has cheated death and found a safer building that hadnt yet been destroyed, Wladyslaw runs into an elegant German officer. Had this man been a typical SS officer this would have meant certain death for the Jewish Pole. But in a twist of fate that seems to be the stuff fiction is made of, it so happens that this particular German officer, Wilm Hosenfeld, is a rare breed: a refined, humane man who hates the Nazi totalitarian regime and what it has done to Germany, to the Jewish people, and to the rest of the world. Wilm also adores classical music. Once he finds out that Wladyslaw is a musician, he asks him to play something on the grand piano. Szpilman chooses Chopins Ballade in G Minor. When he hears this beautiful music, the German officer is not only convinced of Wladyslaws talent, hes also deeply moved by it. He returns several times to give the starving young man much-needed food provisions, without which he no doubt would have died. Germans have almost lost the war by the time of this fortuitous meeting between the German officer and the Polish Jew. In gratitude, Wladyslaw tells him his name, in case hes ever taken prisoner by the Poles or Russians and will need his help someday. In a twist of fate--and strange role reversal when captured by the Red Army Wilm Hosenfeld mentions Szpilmans name to save his own life. Unfortunately, by the time the Wladyslaw learns of this fact, its too late. The Soviet prisoner of war camp had already been abandoned. The most memorable aspects of The Pianist, for me, are its beautiful writing this journal reads like a great novel and its nuanced descriptions of life in the Warsaw Ghetto: the overcrowded and increasingly desperate, deplorable conditions, where Half a million people had to find somewhere to lay their heads in an already over-populated part of the city, which scarcely had room for more than a hundred thousand (59). Class hierarchies may have saved the richer inmates from the worst conditions for a while, but eventually almost everyone meets their death. Even the children of the orphanage are doomed. They go to their deaths with dignity, sheltered by their beloved leader, Janusz Korczak, from knowledge of their tragic fate: The evacuation of the Jewish orphanage run by Janusz Korczak had been ordered that morning. The children were to have been taken away alone. He had the chance to save himself, and it was only with difficulty that he persuaded the Germans to take him too. He had spent long years of his life with children, and now, on this last journey, he would not leave them alone. He wanted to ease things for them. He told the orphans they were going out into the country, so they ought to be cheerful. At last they would be able to exchange the horrible, suffocating city walls for meadows of flowers, streams where they could bathe, woods full of berries and mushrooms. He told them to wear their best clothes, and so they came out into the yard, two by two nicely dressed and in a happy mood. The little column was led by an SS man who loved children, as Germans do, even those he was about to see on their way into the next world (95-96). Claudia Moscovici, Literature Salon 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Spellbinding, Masterful Memoir By daddysawbux Published in 1946, The Pianist is an eye-witness account of daily life in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, inside and outside the Ghetto walls, by a Jewish survivor. It deserves a high place in the body of Holocaust literature. The pages are filled with horrifying snapshots that are sure to burn their way into the reader's memory: A 20-something woman shot between the eyes for innocently asking a Gestapo officer where she and others who had been rounded up are being taken; a small boy stuck in and struggling to get through a too-tight opening of a ghetto wall being beaten to death from blows delivered to the lower half of his body by an unknown individual on the other side; a malnourished family of six in the Umschlagplatz spending its last few zloties on a last meal, a bite-sized caramel divided equally

into sixths. And, yet, as other reviewers have observed, Maestro Szpilman wrote of those horrors as if he were an objective, dispassionate reporter, lifting and burnishing the reading experience while making an important contribution to the historical record. As others have noted, Szpilman reminds us of the human points of light that flickered in the smoke and darkness of Warsaw, especially those Poles who protected the Jews, knowing that they and possibly their families would, if discovered, be executed for having attempted to harbor them. Wehrmacht Captain Wilm Hosenfeld kept the author's hiding place a secret and saved him from starvation. (The savior of others as well, Jew and Gentile alike, Captain Hosenfeld would be recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.) Alternately, Szpilman describes instances of the Nazis' Ukrainian lackeys brutalizing Jews with unrestrained enthusiasm and Jewish Ghetto police, sometimes with physical cruelty, helping deport carloads of Jews to the concentration camps. Due in good measure to those realities of the war, Polish Communist officials banned *The Pianist*, and it would not again see the light of day until a half century had passed. Soon after completing the book, I viewed the highly-acclaimed film version of *The Pianist* directed by Holocaust survivor Roman Polanski. Produced in 2002, the film makes a faithful companion to the book, an uncommon achievement. It earned Oscars for Best Actor, Best Director and Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay. Finally, on a somewhat related note, those who may be interested in reading an absorbing, scholarly account and analysis of The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising should consider Moshe Arens' *Flags Over the Warsaw Ghetto*. Dr. Arens' book includes the complete text of The Strop Report, a valuable bonus. General Strop commanded German forces in the Warsaw Ghetto. After the war, he was tried and hung. In Warsaw. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Enjoy and learn. By tleeminnieme The book was better than the movie. I read this one in conjunction with "Country of Ash" by Reicher. Reicher was a doctor in the Warsaw ghetto at the same time as Szpilman. They didn't know each other but their concurrent tales of suffering make for powerful reading. This book is better written than "Country of Ash"- however, in Reicher's defense his book was written from memory (his diaries were destroyed) and was written in Polish, then translated to French, then translated to English. Things can easily get lost or poorly related after that kind of journey! So, I found Szpilman's book clearer and easier with which to build a picture of the ghetto. Singly, or together with Reicher's book, the story is compelling. I honestly can't figure out how anyone survived that horror. What a treat that we have their words forever available to us.

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.

Written immediately after the end of World War II, this morally complex Holocaust memoir is notable for its exact depiction of the grim details of life in Warsaw under the Nazi occupation. "Things you hardly noticed before took on enormous significance: a comfortable, solid armchair, the soothing look of a white-tiled stove," writes Wladyslaw Szpilman, a pianist for Polish radio when the Germans invaded. His mother's insistence on laying the table with clean linen for their midday meal, even as conditions for Jews worsened daily, makes palpable the Holocaust's abstract horror. Arbitrarily removed from the transport that took his family to certain death, Szpilman does not deny the "animal fear" that led him to seize this chance for escape, nor does he cheapen his emotions by belaboring them. Yet his cool prose contains plenty of biting rage, mostly buried in scathing asides (a Jewish doctor spared consignment to "the most wonderful of all gas chambers," for example). Szpilman found compassion in unlikely people, including a German officer who brought food and warm clothing to his hiding place during the war's last days. Extracts from the officer's wartime diary (added to this new edition), with their expressions of outrage at his fellow soldiers' behavior, remind us to be wary of general condemnation of any group. --Wendy Smith From Publishers Weekly Originally published in Poland in 1945 but then suppressed by the Communist authorities, this memoir of survival in the Warsaw Ghetto joins the ranks of Holocaust memoirs notable as much for their literary value as for their historical significance. Szpilman, a Jewish classical pianist, played the last live music broadcast from Warsaw before Polish Radio went off the air in September 1939 because of the German invasion. In a tone that is at once dispassionate and immediate, Szpilman relates the horrors of life inside the ghetto. But his book is distinguished by the dazzling clarity he brings to the banalities of ghetto life, especially the eerie normalcy of some social relations amid catastrophic upheaval. He shows how Jewish residents of the Polish capital adjusted to life under the occupation: "The armbands branding us as Jews did not bother us, because we were all wearing them, and after some time living in the ghetto I realized that I had become thoroughly used to them." Using a reporter's powers of description, Szpilman, who is still alive at the age of 88, records the chilling conversations that took place as Jews waited to be transported to their deaths. "We're not heroes!" he recalls his father saying. "We're perfectly ordinary people, which is why we prefer to risk hoping for that

10 per cent chance of living." In a twist that exemplifies how this book will make readers look again at a history they thought they knew, he details how a German captain saved his life. Employing language that has more in common with the understatement of Primo Levi than with the moral urgency of Elie Wiesel, Szpilman is a remarkably lucid observer and chronicler of how, while his family perished, he survived thanks to a combination of resourcefulness and chance. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Szpilman's memoir of life in the Warsaw ghetto is remarkable not only for the heroism of its protagonists but for the author's lack of bitterness, even optimism, in recounting the events. Written and published in a short run in Poland soon after the war, this first translation maintains a freshness of experience lacking in many later, more ruminative Holocaust memoirs. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.