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Author(s)	David Stewart Hull
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Dartmouth Film Society

REKOPIS ZNALEZIONY W SARAGOSSIE
(THE SARAGOSSA MANUSCRIPT
(U. S. title: ADVENTURE OF A NOBLEMAN)
Poland (1964-65)

Alfons van Worden, Captain

of the Wallonian Guards	Zbigniew Cybulski	Inquisition envoy	August Kowalczyk
Emina, Moorish Princess	Iga Cembrzynska	Magician	Adam Pawlikowski
Zibelda, Moorish Princess	Joanna Jedryka	Dona Rebeca Uzeda	Beata Tyszkiewicz
Hermit	Kazimierz Opalinski	Don Pedro Velasquez	Gustaw Holoubek
van Worden's father	Slawomir Linder	Don Avadoro, gypsy	Leon Niemczek
Dona Uracca van Worden	Mirosława Lombardo	Don Lopez Soarez	Krzysztof Litwin
Spanish nobleman	Aleksander Fogiel	His father	Stanislaw Igar
Man possessed by devils	Franciszek Pieczka	Toldeo, Knight of Malta	Bogumil Kobiela
His father	Ludwik Benoit	Aquillar, Knight of Malta	Juliusz Jablczynski
Camilla, his foster-mother	Barbara Krafft	Frasquetta, a coquette	Elzbieta Czyzewska
Inezilla, his sister	Pola Raksa	Her husband	Janusz Klosinski
Count Pena Flor	Jan Machulski		

Screenplay by Tadeusz Kwiatkowski, from the novel by Jan Potocki. Photographed by Mieczyslaw Jahoda. Music by Krzysztof Penderecki. Sets by Jerzy Skarzynski and Tadeusz Myszorek. Costumes by Lidia and Jerzy Skarzynski. Produced by Ryszard Straszewski for "Kamera" Film Unit of Film Polski. Dyaliscope.

Directed by WOJCIECH J. HAS

Although the Polish film industry is known in America through only a handful of films (ASHES AND DIAMONDS, KNIFE IN THE WATER), it is one of the most exciting and creative in Europe, each year turning out films which would probably prove popular in America if they could obtain major distribution. In an effort to remedy this situation, for the last two years the Poles have spent over twelve million dollars on two films intended largely for the export market: ASHES, a four hour epic of the Napoleonic wars which is said to make the Russian WAR AND PEACE look like something out of a bargain basement, and PHARAOH, the most lavish recreation of ancient Egypt ever seen on the screen, boasting more extras than any movie ever made. Both films are to be premiered at the Cannes Festival which is currently in progress.

However, for many years Poland has been walking away from film festivals with major prizes awarded to films more modest in scope. THE SARAGOSSA MANUSCRIPT was a surprise success at the last Venice Film Festival and also scored highly at the London Film Festival. Our showing is the first on the East Coast.

SARAGOSSA is based on a fragmentary novel written in 1814 (in French, because it was very un-chic to write in Polish at the time) by the eccentric Jan Potocki. The author was a fabulously rich nobleman whose life was as wild as his literary works. After travelling around the world as a young man, he returned to Poland and is credited with making the first balloon flight in that country in 1788. He fought in the wars which resulted in the partition of Poland in 1792, then went to Russia as an advisor to Tsar Alexander I. Under his patronage, he made a scientific expedition to the Caucasus and later attempted to travel overland to China. In 1812 he returned for the last time to Poland where he wrote his major fictional works, including a series of reportedly witty one-act farces, and the work which served as the basis of our film. Upon completion of The Saragossa Manuscript, Potocki committed suicide.

The work was written as a sort of private entertainment for Potocki's wife, who was an invalid and delighted in stories of the type of The Arabian Nights. It was not published until long after his death and the existing versions appear to be incomplete. A history of the book's complex publishing history is very well described in the preface to the excellent English translation by Elizabeth Abbott, available in paperback (Avon, 1961).

The film follows the form of the novel, which is a series of casually connected short stories, tied together by the presence of the somewhat dim-witted hero, Captain van Worden. This "hero" manages to fall into every kind of adventure, and into the arms of every passing girl,

real or ghostly. As a sort of joke, the scenario writers have worked the adventures into a structure in which flashback goes into flashback, taking the viewer farther and farther from what appears at first to be the central story. While this may tend to annoy at first, it is actually very funny after a while when it becomes obvious that the whole film is really a shaggy-dog story, in which there is no "point" to anything. The intention is merely to amuse and entertain, and the film succeeds perfectly on these counts.

Any viewer who is under the illusion that the current crop of Polish actresses look like something found under a rock on a collective farm will be in for a shock. Few countries can boast such a parade of bosomy, luscious and gorgeously sexy women on the movie payroll, and one or two in our film bear comparison with any practicing European or American love goddess. Barbara Krafft (the lady changed her name to get rid of a jawbreaking suffix) has even appeared in Italian films recently, and viewers can easily see why she is regarded as a valuable Polish export.

The hero of the film is played by Zbigniew Cybulski who is the only Polish actor widely known to audiences outside of his country. Originally billed as the "Polish James Dean" of late he would seem more to resemble a Polish Bob Hope. His trademark in most of his films (but not here) is dark glasses, and some of our viewers might remember him in KANAL, ASHES AND DIAMONDS, one episode in the film LOVE AT TWENTY, or as the amorous protagonist of the Swedish film TO LOVE. The second most popular Polish actor is the comedian Gustaw Holoubek, who is seen as the mathematician Don Pedro.

Another misconception about Polish films seems to be that they are cheaply made and badly photographed. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The camerawork and art direction of SARAGOSSA are the equal of any lavish foreign costume picture, somewhat in the von Sternberg school of cinematic baroque. The critics at Venice and London were enthralled by the stunning sets, which border from time to time on true surrealism.

The musical score by Krzysztof Penderecki should also be singled out for praise. A good part of it is electronic, and very successful even when slightly incongruous. There is also a very good joke involving the use of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony which is too good to reveal here.

Director Wojciech Has is the most literary of the major Polish directors. His specialty is the film adaptation of novels, and he has won many international awards for his films which include FAREWELLS, HOW TO BE LOVED and ONE ROOM TENANTS. He also directed the first really avant-garde feature made in Poland, THE NOOSE, which was so obscure that it was banned for political reasons by a nervous censor. Has' most recent films have revealed a growing interest in the baroque, and his direction has become increasingly elegant, far more in the Ophüls-von Sternberg school than that neo-realist style favored by his contemporaries.

We think that you will enjoy THE SARAGOSSA MANUSCRIPT for many reasons. While it has been programmed in our series as an example of current Polish production, it can stand on its own as a very funny and greatly entertaining comedy without any national ties, the work of an enormously talented group of film creators.

David Stewart Hull

Our next program is TO CATCH A THIEF, presented Saturday, May 7th at 11 pm and Sunday, May 8th at 4 pm. This Hitchcock film is presented instead of VERTIGO, which is listed for the date in the illustrated brochure. On May 10th (Tuesday), the exciting Japanese crime-and-corruption drama THE BAD SLEEP WELL, directed by Kurosawa, is offered at 4 pm and 8:30 pm.