



# COPERNICUS ENDOWMENT

Tuesday, January 24, 4-6 pm • Room 1636, International Institute

## *Wiera Gran: A Singer, A Collaborator? The Other Side of Polanski's Pianist*

**Agata Tuszynska**

*Author*



*Accused: Wiera Gran*, Agata Tuszynska's biography of Wiera Gran, the famous Jewish singer from the Warsaw Ghetto, is really the other, untold part of the story about Władysław Szpilman, the pianist made famous by Roman Polański in his film, *The Pianist*. Szpilman and Gran performed together in the cafe at 2 Leszno Street, in the heart of Jewish Broadway. Both survived the war. Years later, the whole world applauded Polanski's film, which portrayed Szpilman's talent, strength, survival skills, and bravery in suffering. Wiera Gran's life was quite different. Accused of collaborating with the Nazis and labeled a traitor, she sat, old, withered, and half-mad in her dark studio apartment in

Paris, as she watched the Oscars and the posthumous triumph of her greatest enemy—the man she blamed for her downfall and tragedy. The book tells two sides of the same story.

The author will discuss her research for the book and the personal interviews she conducted with Gran, who had for many years isolated herself from the outside world. Tuszynska will also reflect on her personal motivations for pursuing this subject. The daughter of a "Holocaust child"—her mother spent two years in the Warsaw Ghetto and then lived hidden on "the other side"—Tuszynska inherited her wartime fears and questions about everyday life under occupation, about the meaning of suffering, and the price of survival. Writing this book was part of the process of sorting out these challenges, finding her own truth about what choices she would make under threatening circumstances. The book is about looking for truth that is impossible to find, about investigating guilt and punishment. It is a story about life in the painful shadow of the war, about a tragic choice, about a collaborator who lives in all of us.

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