

**STAN "Stas" WISNIACH
1923 - 2007**



Bandleader for WXYZ-TV's "Club Polka", died on January 12, 2007 at the age of 83. Stas was discovered in the early 1950s by WXYZ's head of programming John Pival at the Tip-Top Inn on Detroit's southwest side. The popular Polka show aired live on Friday nights and was hosted by Warren Michael Kelly. He also made numerous appearances on Soupy Sales' nighttime show "Soupy's On!" as well as "Our Friend Harry" with Harry Jarkey.

From the Great Lakes Folkfest website (2004):

Stas Wisniach
Farmington, Michigan
Accordionist and master of Polish folk music

Stas Wisniach is an outstanding master accordionist and a symbol of Polish traditional music. He began accordion lessons at about the age of 4 when his parents recognized his musical potential after hearing him play an accordion given to him by his uncle. His father once took him to a wedding, accordion in tow, and sat him beside a concertina player. Stas played along in perfect time, and it was then that his father invested in a larger accordion.

When Stas was 9, he organized his own band and played at neighborhood clubs, dances, and many different Polish social events. In 1945 he graduated from the Detroit Institute of Musical Art as the first student with a major in the accordion. In the 1950s he became the orchestra leader of the Club Polka show on WXYZ and also performed on "Soupy Sales" and "Our Friend Harry." He moved to California in 1966 where he lived and performed professionally for Polish communities and others. He returned to Detroit in 2001 to perform at the gala reception of the exhibition, "Polish Presence in Detroit," at the Detroit Historical Museum, and he has remained.

During his more-than-70-year career, Stas has taught accordion to many. He also has made a number of recordings. It is, however, the 1960s collection of Polish folk ballads, "Sentimental Journey to Poland," with the Jan Wojnar ensemble that Polish music historian Laurie Gomulka Palazzolo regards as "one of the most perfect recordings ever made." She states, "Stas's work on this recording represents some of the finest musicianship I have ever heard"

Stas, who has a large following in southeast Michigan, continues to perform and teach. In 2004 he was selected for a Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship award to teach accordion and Polish folk music to Georgiana Leonard. In recognition for a lifetime dedicated to the accordion and his role in the maintenance of Polish traditional music, Stas Wisniach is honored with the 2004 Michigan Heritage Award.

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