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German forces bombed Warsaw in September of 1939. This image is from the German National Archives and depicts "Warsaw Burning." Image online via Bundesarchiv, Bild (Picture) 141-0763. License: [CC-BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

Within the first few days of September, 1939, the German army had surrounded Warsaw. People tried to go about their business, despite the constant shelling, death and destruction. Before German troops actually entered the city, Szpilman (when he could) reported for work at the radio station.

On September 23rd, just five days before Warsaw surrendered, Wladyslaw played the last live broadcast that anyone would hear from a Warsaw radio station until the war was over. He had selected a favorite piece by Fryderyk Chopin: the Nocturne in C Sharp Minor.

While he performed, he could hardly hear his own music because of exploding shells. As nearby buildings burned, the pianist played on. (The link takes you to a video of an older Szpilman playing the famous work.)

When his recital was over, more exploding shells kept him from going home for two hours.

At 3:15 p.m. that afternoon, while Warsaw Radio was broadcasting a recording of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor (composed by a brilliant musician with an incredibly wide hand span), a bomb destroyed the power station.

As the beautiful second movement was ending, so too was the cultural life of pre-World War II Warsaw.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-LAST-BROADCAST-Pianist-The>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-LAST-BROADCAST-Pianist-The>

Media Stream



Warsaw Scene from 1939

Image online, courtesy the [Polish Greatness blog](#).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Warsaw-Scene-from-1939>



German Plane Bombing Warsaw - September, 1939

Image online, courtesy thefullwiki.org website.

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Krazinski Square, Warsaw Surrendered

Image online, courtesy the [Polish Greatness](http://PolishGreatness.com) blog.

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Wladyslaw Szpilman Photo

Image online, courtesy the szpilman.net website.

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Fryderyk Chopin - Musical Genius

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Rachmaninov and His Amazing Hand Span

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Rachmaninov - Concerto No. 2 in C Minor and Its Creation

Video clip online, courtesy BBC's WorldWide Channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rachmaninov-Concerto-No.-2-in-C-Minor-and-Its-Creation>



Rachmaninoff - Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Part 2

Video clip online, courtesy YouTube.

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Rachmaninoff- Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Part 3

Video clip online, courtesy YouTube.

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