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ENTERTAINMENT

POLISH pianist Miss Aldona Sankowska has joined the hotel as an in-house artist. She has over the years acquired a variety of degrees in piano and organ play. After being a teacher and accompanist with the College of Music in Poznan, Aldona started to travel to the Middle East: performing in many top hotels in the region, first as a member of a trio and since 1996 as soloist. She will be performing daily (except Fridays) in the Abu Dhabi Crowne plaza's Crowne Club Piano Lounge on the 9th floor between 8pm and 12midnight.



by Rajiv Poduval

The versatility and value of the piano both as a cultural symbol and a source of entertainment has been well established. It's undoubtedly a pleasant diversion and without pretensions to high artistic value, though with overt claims to cultivated gentility. It's quite a contrast to the delirious experience of discotheques and rock concerts which combine ear-splitting, conscious-numbing amplification and psychedelic light shows.

If you have ever visited Al Ain Hilton's Palm Court Cafe you can't have missed the figure of the five feet-plus Aldona Sankowska leaning over the piano with an almost romantic fondness for the instrument.

Aldona is a Polish national who has been in the UAE for a few years. Before she came to Al Ain Hilton, she was the resident pianist at the Hyatt Regency in Dubai. She received formal training in western classical music and has been playing for the last 25 years or so. Before Aldona came to the UAE, she played the organ in a church in her home town in Poland — located near the Polish border with Germany — and she had travelled over Europe with a choir.

Stemming from her virtuoso command of the piano, she shows an intimate understanding of the possibilities of the instrument. The crowd in Al Ain is not a particularly sophisticated one to enjoy the

nuances of movements in a Chopin or Tsechovesky composition. In this context, does the act of playing become esoteric at times, I asked her.

Not really, people seem to really enjoy my music and some people even come up to me and say nice things about it and request their favourite pieces," she replied. Audiences enjoy listening to partly emotional pieces which have real musical content and "feeling."

Though Aldona is found of Romantic music, at times, to cater to popular taste, she plays a lot of jazz and blues, too. "I like playing Eric Clapton," she said.

How about a "John Cage concert," a silent performance over here one day, I asked her (to drawing her out). The idea of a happy-go-lucky black existentialist in a cafe listening to "silent music" is more romantic fiction than fact.

If you are really bored of the "rock-full-blast-concerts" and discotheques, their weird complexities and feel practically choked by 'Macharena' remixes and smoke machines, you can't do much better than spend a quite evening with Aldona Sankowska at the Palm Court Cafe.

The restaurant has also introduced a new menu recently. 'Tropical Shrimps,' 'Oriental Mezzeh,' 'Tag Hen' and 'Lobster Ahoy' are some of the exotic items included in the menu this summer.

The Red Crescent Society in Al Ain is to take a big leap in charitable ventures and social service. A new building is planned and the Al Ain office

It's easy to forget about places if you don't visit them for a while, and those canny people at the Al Jazira Beach Resort and Hotel are very much aware of that, so much so that later this month, they are hosting another press dinner so that the ladies and gentlemen of the press can enjoy the facilities and hopefully pass on the good news to readers in the UAE.

They have new entertainers in their outlets in the form of Paradise Ballet and The Magic Band in Checkers, while pianist Aldona (below) tickles the ivories in the Tea Lounge.



Aldona Sankowska, the resident pianist at Al Ain Hilton's Palm Court Cafe.