



Mr. Andrzej Seweryn, Mrs. Katarzyna Kubacka-Seweryn, Mrs. Agata Arakel, Ms. Agnieszka Mazanek, Mrs. Aneta Kulesza-Mestrinelli, Mrs. Eva Baker, Mr. Lukasz Bedkowski, Mr. Mirek Chudy, Mrs. Anna Slabicki

# POLISH FILM FESTIVAL MIAMI

BY EVA BAKER

The Polish Film Festival Miami (PFFM) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide a platform to introduce, promote, and nurture the achievements of contemporary Polish cinema and the art of filmmaking itself. Included in the mission is special consideration for the cultural diversity of the cities of Miami and Miami Beach. PFFM serves as a base to promote Polish culture, history, art, and cinematography for a wide spectrum of local communities and visitors alike. It is an opportunity to enjoy, learn and discover as well as a place for community and friendship.

The inaugural Festival took place in November of 2018 in the heart of South Beach at the iconic Miami Beach Cinematheque. This three-day event was greeted with enthusiasm from both the Polish and American communities of world cinema devotees, including members of Miami Beach Film Society, and movie professionals and students, who traveled from Florida cities such as Sarasota, Fort Myers, and Vero Beach to attend the sold-out screenings. We kicked off the gala opening night in true Hollywood style, complete with a red carpet and distinguished guests from Poland - Andrzej Seweryn, film and theatre actor, and executive director of Teatr Polski in Warsaw; Katarzyna Kubacka-Seweryn, co-founder of the annual Extraordinary Movie-Encounter Festival (Festiwal Filmow-Spotkan Niezwyklych); and Agnieszka Mazanek, documentary filmmaker.

After the screening of the acclaimed feature film *The Last Family*, the great energy continued with a fun reception sponsored by Impero Wine Distributors and beer by Zywiec. Our guests left with goodie bags, Zywiec raffle prizes, and most importantly - big smiles on their faces.

On day two of the Festival, we screened Oscar-nominated *Cold War*, a masterpiece of Polish cinema and an incredible love story directed by Pawel Pawlikowski. The documentary *Luxus. A Simple Story* had its North American premiere at our festival, and the di-

rector, Agnieszka Mazanek, shared her stories in a lively Q&A session after the screening.

As part of the celebrations for 100 Years of Poland's Regained Independence, PFFM presented the Polish cinema classic, *The Promised Land*, directed by the legendary Andrzej Wajda, a recipient of an Honorary Academy Award. The event was an opportunity for the star of the film Mr. Seweryn, to celebrate a fifty year artistic career, and we were thrilled to have him as our guest and self-proclaimed "Godfather" of PFFM. We could not have wished for more!

The Polish Film Festival Miami was founded by Miami-based Eva Baker and a business partner who were soon joined by an incredible team of super-women coordinators: Aneta Kulesza Mestrinelli, Agata Arakel, and Agata Jacek. However, PFFM would not have been possible without the help and generosity of our sponsors and supporters. The American Institute of Polish Culture (AIPC) and Lady Blanka Rosenstiel, Founder and President of the Institute and the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland; AIPC's Executive Director and Honorary Vice Consul of the Republic of Poland, Beata Paszyc; and the Miami Dade Department of Cultural Affairs. PFFM also closely collaborated with the Polish American Film Society and Polish Film Festival Los Angeles, whose founder and Director, Vladek Juskiewicz, has been our mentor and industry expert since day one. Many local businesses offered their support as well: Maggie Sadowska (MegaLuxeHomes), Monika Aybar (Aybar Landrau & Nizio, P.L.), Wojtek Horak (Impero Wine Distributors Miami), Kasia Weszczak (Kasia & Co.), and Vice City Bean.

The Second Annual Festival scheduled for November 21-24, 2019 is shaping up to be even bigger and better. We invite everyone to be a part of this exciting initiative. See you at the movies!