

Annual 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 for promoting and nurturing the achievements of contemporary Polish cinema and the art of filmmaking, with special consideration for the cultural diversity of Miami. The 1st PFFM took place in November 2018 in the heart of South Beach at the iconic Miami Beach Cinematheque. The 2nd annual Festival, a four-day event on November 21-24, 2019 was held at Miami's beloved, independent venue, O-Cinema. It was a great success with a sold out opening night gala, five screenings, a festival wrap party, and the highly anticipated Family Day with programming for children.

We kicked off in true Hollywood style—a red carpet gala opening night which welcomed notable guests from Poland: Andrzej Seweryn, film and theatre actor, and executive director of a leading theater stage in Warsaw; Kinga Debska, acclaimed director and screenwriter; Zbigniew Domagalski, film producer; Philippe Tlokinski actor; Katarzyna Kubacka-Seweryn, co-founder of the annual Extraordinary Movie-Encounter Festival; Lukasz Srodka, filmmaker; and Liliana Komorowska, Q&A host and actor.

These stellar guests were an invaluable part of our program, the entire festival experience, and were present at the screenings of the award-winning films *Playing Hard*, *The Messenger*, *In Absolute Silence*, *Dolce Fine Giornata*, and *Animations for Children* by Momakin Studio in Lodz, Poland.

Shortly after we wrapped our Festival and entered a new decade, the Academy of Motion Pictures announced the nomination of the Polish film *Corpus Christi* by Jan Komasa as a contender for International Feature Film Award. For the first time in the history of Polish cinema, two films were nominated back to back for a prestigious

Oscar – *Cold War* in 2019 and *Corpus Christi* in 2020. Fresh from the success of the latter, which had a theatrical release in Miami, came another masterpiece by Jan Komasa - *Hater* in Tribeca Film Festival's Best International Narrative Feature winner.

During the Spring of 2020, we were busy preparing for the 3rd Annual Polish Film Festival Miami, and then life as we know it changed. After several discussions, with heavy hearts we decided to cancel the 2020 edition of PFFM. However, we started a collaboration with the Polish Embassy in Washington, DC to present an online launch of *The Stories From Behind The Iron Curtain*.

PFFM would not have been possible without the help and generosity of our sponsors and supporters -- The American Institute of Polish Culture (AIPC) and the Founder and President, Honorable Lady Blanka Rosenstiel; AIPC's Executive Director and Honorary Vice Consul of the Republic of Poland, Beata Paszyc; The Chopin Foundation of the United States; LOT Polish Airlines; the Miami Dade Department of Cultural Affairs; O-Cinema; and many local businesses including Keith and Agnes Gray (Gray & Sons Jewelers), Maggie Sadowska (Mega Luxe Homes), Monika Aybar (Aybar Landrau & Nizio, P.L.), Wojtek Horak (Impero Wine Distributors Miami), Kasia Wesczczak (Kasia & Co.), Vice City Bean, Matthew M. Slowik, Ewa Kucia (Century 21), Zywiec Brewery, and D&V International. We thank all our supporters and sponsors!

A heartfelt debt of gratitude for months of work must be given to the fantastic Festival Coordinators, Aneta Kulesza-Mestrinelli and Agata Jacek. And last but not least, a huge thanks to all of our volunteers and organizing partners. You are all stars!



Mrs. Agata Jacek, Ms. Ewa Sama, Mrs. Katarzyna Kubacka-Seweryn, Mr. Andrzej Seweryn, Mrs. Aneta Kulesza-Mestrinelli, Mrs. Eva Baker, Mrs. Kinga Debska, Mr. Zbigniew Domagalski, Mrs. Agata Arakel, Ms. Kasia Wesczczak, Mr. Philippe Tlokinski