

# PolAm

A Publication of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota [www.pacim.org](http://www.pacim.org)

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Vol. 34, Num. 5

## Local Artist Heads to Poland

PACIM's Artist Exchange program has selected Stephanie Mirocha from Aitkin, Minnesota, as this year's American Artist



in Poland. The judging panel chose Stephanie to exhibit her work and to teach art classes in Warsaw beginning this fall. Her medium is painting and Stephanie has loved it since she was eight years old, sitting at her kitchen table with watercolors.

Thirty years later she plunged full-time into the business of creating, exhibiting and selling her art professionally. In 2007 she also began illustrating children's picture books. Her work includes the titles *Frog in the House* published by Raven Productions; *My Little Book of Bald Eagles* and *My Little Book of Manatees*, both by Finney Company.

She has presented informal Arts Education programs for pre-kindergarten to 6th grade students at public schools and libraries across Minnesota, where she talks about her experiences as an illustrator. She has a B.A. in philosophy from the University of Minnesota and has taken several art courses as part of that liberal arts degree.

Stephanie is the owner of Otter Creations Gallery, a retail store in Brainerd, Minnesota, which displays an assortment of Minnesota art and fine craft. Her work includes landscapes/nature, floral and abstract/surreal, and can be viewed along with a painting demo on her website [www.stephaniemirocha.com](http://www.stephaniemirocha.com).



Tracing her genealogy back to the regions south of Kraków and north of Warsaw, Stephanie is proud of her Polish roots and is no stranger to Twin Cities' Polish events. As a high school student at Cretin-Derham Hall, she was a member of the Dolina Polish Folk Dancers and enjoyed performing with them at the Festival of Nations. She also loves making *makowiec* and helping to prepare the yearly *wigilia* meal when her family gets together in the Como neighborhood of St. Paul where she grew up.

Stephanie views her upcoming opportunity in Poland as an honor. "I will represent Minnesota as an artist dedicated to her professional career, and will represent the United States as a citizen who is proud of her heritage and the freedoms that both countries share."

Before she leaves for Poland, Stephanie will be helping in the PACIM booth at the Twin Cities Polish Festival on August 12. Visit her website anytime, but make a point of meeting Stephanie at the booth.

## Quietly

PACIM member and Co-Founder of the Artist Exchange Program penned this poem to honor the memory of her favorite poet, Wisława Szymborska. Szymborska, who received the Nobel Prize for Poetry in 1996, died in her sleep on February 1, 2012.

### Quietly

The pen is still  
The ink long dried.  
Lines faded on paper.  
Coffee black and cold  
Stares back from the china cup.

You decided to leave  
On your journey  
In the middle of the night.  
No reservations, no ticket,  
no screening, no luggage.  
You took the trip of a lifetime, quietly.

The hejnal sounds  
From the tower  
of St. Mary's in Old Town.  
Hundreds gather in the square  
To remember you, quietly.

The "Mozart of Poetry"  
has left us with her greatest gift,  
Words that she orchestrated  
for the world, quietly.

*Dziękuję, Sweet Poet, dziękuję.*

Irene Colston, April, 2012



Membership Form For  
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www.pacim.org

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— ACPC Membership (optional)..... 5

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$5 to the above membership levels if you wish to join the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) through PACIM (a 50% discount).

**Subscription Note:** Due to postal rate increases and since non-profit mail is NOT forwarded but returned postage due please add \$6 to your membership if you travel south each winter. This ensures that you will receive your *Pol-Am* Newsletter by first class mail all year long wherever you may be. Anyone else who wishes to receive their *Pol-Am* by first class mail all year long should add \$6 to their renewals.

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## PolAm

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Founder: Czesław Róg  
Managing Editor: Jane Mrazek Flanders  
Associate Editor: Steven Ukasick  
Design: Bruce Rubin, Rubin Cordaro Design  
Contributing Writers, Reporters and Staff:  
Judith Blanchard, Events/News Coordinator  
Mietek Konczyk, Writer  
Patricia Beben, Proofreader

We appreciate your continued support. Dziękujemy!

# Thoughts

This month we begin a new feature in *PolAm* — a crossword puzzle. In each issue we plan to draw folks deeper into



the pages of our newsletter as they search for answers to the puzzles in current articles. Clues will also test basic knowledge of the Polish language, history, traditions and customs. We will post the answers on our website ([www.pacim.org](http://www.pacim.org)) and print them the following month. I hope it proves to be fun.

Speaking of fun, do you have your “beach reading list” ready? While most folks are grabbing the latest popular paperback for their summer reading, why not take a closer look at some Polish classics that you may have overlooked. This issue’s review of *Quo Vadis* represents just a sampling of great books by Polish authors. The PACIM library has hundreds of titles, from classics to contemporary authors. Make sure your membership is current and check out books for free.

Lastly, we invite all members to provide their current email address for future event announcements at: [info@pacim.org](mailto:info@pacim.org).

*Do zobaczenia,*  
Jane Mrazek Flanders, *Editor*

## Parking at Riverplace

There is free parking at the meters on Sundays on the street that curves around Our Lady of Lourdes Church (Lourdes Pl and Bank St SE) and this is very convenient and close to Riverplace. Enter Riverplace and the elevators will be just inside the door on the left...this level is Level 3. Go down one floor to Level 2, turn right out of the elevators and go past the escalators and turn right. The Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota library is the first door past the escalators. If you park in the ramp, park on parking level A. When you enter the building, this is Level 2. Proceed straight into the building and turn right at the escalators.



New PACIM Office.

### New & Generous Members

*Welcome New Members*  
Paul Wystepke

*Generous Members*  
*Patrons*  
Elaine Villafana

*Donors*  
John Burgy  
Pat & Joe Beben  
Vickey & Matt Dudley

*Friends*  
Jerome Biedny  
Ronald Protasiewicz  
John Stanek  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Stroncek  
Del & Mary Wojciak  
Audra David



# News From Poland

by Mietek Konczyk

Thousands of people took part in a service at Warsaw's St. John's Cathedral commemorating the second anniversary of the **2010 plane crash at Smoleńsk airport** that killed President Lech Kaczyński, his wife Maria and 94 others.

After a long and heated debate, the lower house of parliament rejected a national referendum on the government's plan to **raise the retirement age to 67** for both sexes. By the end of May, the ruling party Civic Platform (PO) will try to pass a bill increasing the retirement age and avoid public protests during the Euro 2012 soccer championship which begins in June in Warsaw. Public opinion polls show as many as 91 percent of Poles oppose raising the retirement age for women and 84 percent oppose a hike for men.

**The former head of Poland's intelligence service** has been charged as part of accusations that the CIA ran a secret prison in Poland where terrorism suspects were allegedly tortured.

**Bank of China is opening a branch in Poland**, catering to the huge interest in Poland among Chinese investors, but also to encourage Polish companies to invest in China.

**Polish coal mines** produced 75.38 million (metric) tons of coal in 2011. By comparison, U.S. coal production in 2011 was close to 990 million tons.

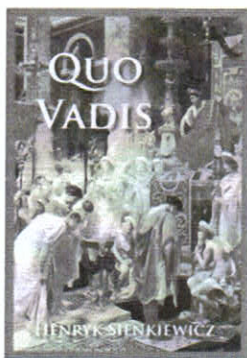
**LOT Polish Airlines and JetBlue Airways announced a new partnership**, allowing their customers to seamlessly book connections through LOT's hub at Warsaw's airport and JetBlue's home at New York's JFK airport.

Spirits producer **Belvedere** may finalize the sale of its flagship brand, **Sobieski Vodka**, in the first half of 2012. The planned sale of the brand draws huge interest among potential investors.

**Poles living and working abroad are transferring less and less money back to Poland**, according to data from the central Polish bank NBP.

# Of God and Circus

It may seem strange for a king to give his tiny daughter as security for a nonaggression pact. But so it went with first century



barbarians in Henryk Sienkiewicz's classic novel, *Quo Vadis*. Known best as an historical novel about Rome under Nero's rule, *Quo Vadis* combines history, religion,

passion, violence, debauchery, devotion and hope. It is also a love story that transcends time.

Before the novel begins, the King of the Ligians, who ruled barbarian tribes occupying land between the Oder and Vistula rivers (Poland), offers baby Ligia as a pledge to Rome. At the time, Rome's powerful armies stretched their tentacles great distances, ensuring protection and control for the empire. Little did they know that their new small hostage would represent the empire's greatest threat. Rome took the little girl, raised her in a patrician home, and forgot about her until she and her new sect of Christians shook the empire to its very core.

When we meet Ligia, she is of age and her beauty has struck one of Rome's noblest warriors, Vinitius. His first words about Ligia are a powerful foreshadowing, "...love's dart has struck me without warning, and just a short distance from the heart of Rome." However, Vinitius seems more struck with lust than love and only wants to possess the maiden.

Kidnapped from her quiet Christian home, Ligia is held in Nero's palace as a "gift" for Vinitius. Filled to the brim with flagrant practices of the seven deadly sins, Nero's nest of debauchery also has a few closet Christians who assist with Ligia's escape. She hides under the protection of Rome's Christians, while Vinitius pursues her with obsessive ardor. Ligia's faith and virtue begin to have an effect on Vinitius. His slow transformation from burning lust to profound love and devotion for Ligia runs

parallel to Nero's increased self-absorption and brutality.

Sienkiewicz, who won the Nobel Prize in 1905 for his work as an epic writer, undertook painstaking historical research for *Quo Vadis*. He traveled to Italy numerous times, visiting museums and historic sites, and was completely familiar with the ancient sources of the period. He wrote the book to encourage his Polish countrymen to withstand the difficulties they faced.

At the time of *Quo Vadis*' publication, Poles were under the fist of imperialist rulers, much like Christians in Nero's Rome. Freedom and tolerance were squashed in countless revolts. Executions and small-scale genocide ensured obedience. Like Rome's early Christians, Poles held onto their faith and hope for freedom. Sienkiewicz used the pen as a national defense and filled the hearts of Poles with optimism and encouragement. In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize, Sienkiewicz spoke of the Prize as an honor for a son of Poland. "She was pronounced dead — yet here is a proof that She lives on...She was pronounced defeated — and here is proof that She is victorious."

At the end of *Quo Vadis* Rome has burned and the Christians wrongly accused as arsonists. Nero and his depraved citizens have glutted themselves on the grotesque games at the Circus and Rome is now sated with the blood-feast of Christian executions. Nero's end as a perverse and wicked emperor is in sight.

Disciples of Simon Peter and Paul of Tarsus still remain. These early Christians and their God are devoted to one another, demonstrating the truest essence of love - sacrifice. Sienkiewicz wanted his fellow Poles to know that their suffering was not in vain. Rome *did* become the seat of Christianity and Poland would someday be free. And, as all good love stories 'should end', Ligia and Vinitius live happily ever after in peace and beauty in their love for each other and for Christ.



# Bar Mleczny: Poland's Best Fast Food

by Jane Mrazek Flanders



Forget cheerful greetings, warm smiles and the perky McService of fast food eating. Think instead of dim lighting, stark décor and dour counter help. While you're at it, forget greasy pre-frozen meat patties, salt-laden fries, and sugary carbonated drinks. Imagine homemade *pierogi*, endless tasty soups and crunchy salads. A visit to one of Poland's *bary mleczne* (milk bars) is a must for the experience and the food. Dotted across Poland, they have the enduring loyalty of thousands of customers who return weekly and even daily for hearty food at cheap prices.

*Bary mleczne* have been around Poland since the late 19th century. The earliest one, established by Stanisław Dłużewski in Warsaw, focused on milk products and some traditional cuisine. The price

was low, the food was nutritious and the taste kept people coming back. When Poland gained her independence, more



milk bars appeared. Even during the Great Depression in the 1930s, milk bars grew in numbers and popularity.

When Poland became a satellite of the Soviet Union, food was scarce and the majority of the people were poor. *Bary*



*mleczne*, like most things, became tools of the government. Meals were subsidized at 40% and workers with no can-



teen at their place of employment could eat there as part of their salary. The government planned to bring people together at milk bars, forcing them to interact and live out socialist ideals.

Polish films used *bary mleczne* to ridicule and criticize life under communist rule. Filmmaker Stanisław Bareja's 1981 film *Miś* is probably the best known example. Images of plates screwed to the tables and cutlery tied

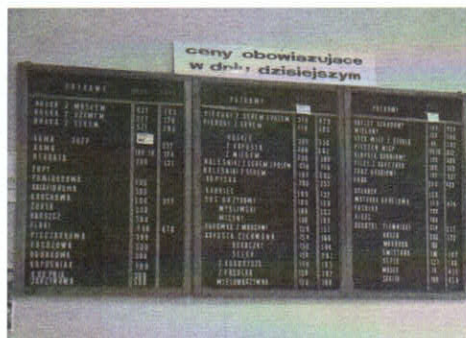


with chains underscore the lack of trust people had for one another during that time of social misery.

Until the late 1980s, milk bars served mostly dairy-based and vegetarian foods. Omelets, "egg cutlets," noodles, *pierogi*, and *kasza* highlighted the menus. When communism collapsed, so did many of Poland's *bary mleczne*, giving way to full-service restaurants. Food was no longer scarce and money was less of an issue for most Poles. However, some milk bars remained as part of historical preservation, and also because they retained loyal

customers. In 2002, the finance ministry tried to end subsidizing food at milk bars, but withdrew its plan after fierce protests from the right and left.

In spite of resistance to socialist ideals, most Poles today agree that a *bar mleczny* is one of the few places where



social classes mix. University students and pensioners are the bread and butter for the restaurants today. However, the nostalgia of the welfare state and the delicious and abundant food at outrageously low prices keep busy professionals coming in. A three course meal costs less than \$5 (even without the government subsidy) and provides the satisfying tastes of home-cooked food. It is not uncommon for a finance



executive grabbing a quick bite to sit next to a homeless man savoring his only meal of the day.

Around 2010, many things old in Poland became new and fashionable. *Bary mleczne* and "peasant food" are among that list. Although only a few have become trendy in their appearance and embraced a vision of customer service, most milk bars remain un-Western, shabby canteens of the communist era.

Blue-haired surly women with aprons over their nightgowns run the places, and disposable cutlery and plastic plates add to the minimalist charm.



As Poles relocate abroad, they are bringing their fondness for *bary mleczne* with them. Ontario, Canada, claims several, and just this year in South London's shopping district, *Mamuška!* opened its doors. Founded by three Polish Londoners and a Canadian, they are



appealing to people who want freshly prepared Polish food for less than an hour's wage. With a "Head Chef" and "Managing Director," the place sounds less like a place where a woman in old house slippers takes your order at the counter; but the food and price are what matter. Everything is made from scratch. As Head Chef Anna Miarka points out, "Even the *pierogies* are hand-made!"

Whether you seek the cultural anthropological experience of eating in old soviet Poland, or you are just looking for delicious food at cheap prices, look no further. *Bary mleczne* offer up a taste of Poland for the visitor without looking like a tourist. *Smacznego!*



# News

The Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible to the extent limited by law. Please consider including us in your tax and estate planning. We appreciate your generous support.

The Board of Directors of PACIM holds their monthly meeting on the first Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Institute: 43 Main St SE, Ste 228, Minneapolis, MN. All are invited. 612-378-9291

## PACIM Library

43 Main St SE, Ste 228  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
Hours: Sundays from 1 to 4 PM  
or by appointment

PACIM extends a heart-felt thank you to Judith Blanchard for her many years as the Institute's Head Librarian. Last month,



after much thought and reflection on her physical ability to work at the new location, Judith resigned.

Judith can be credited with building the library from a few

boxes of used books to its current holdings of more than 5,000 books, movies, audio tapes and other research materials. She devoted 18 years to the project. Her work recruiting library volunteers and providing training ensures that the library will continue after her departure.

The Institute is launching a search for a new Head Librarian. This is a volunteer position and includes purchasing and cataloging new materials, acknowledging donations, recruiting and scheduling new volunteers, and maintaining the new computer-based library catalog. Interested candidates should contact PACIM by phone (612-378-9291) or email [info@pacim.org](mailto:info@pacim.org). In the interim, former PACIM Board Member and long-time Library Volunteer Phyllis Husted has graciously agreed to assume the necessary duties.

## PACIM's New Quarterly Lecture Series

On May 1, PACIM introduced the first in a series of quarterly lectures, "Between Tragic Past and Bright Future: Polish



Society since the Smoleńsk Catastrophe." Visiting scholars from Poland discussed Poland's identity, divisions and controversies. They also examined the relationship between Poland's dramatic past and current optimistic prospects.

The scholars who presented at the lecture were: Stanisław Burdziej, Assistant Professor of sociology at Warmia and Mazury University in Olsztyn, Poland; and Bartosz Pilitowski, a Ph.D. candidate in economic sociology at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. Both men founded the Court Watch Poland Foundation, the first watchdog organization in Poland focused on its judicial system.

The event coordinator, Greg Gramza, who is new to PACIM's Board of Directors, worked with Marta Shaw, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Comparative and International Development Education (CIDE), University of Minnesota, to secure the speakers and advertise the event. "Time was tight from beginning and we didn't have time to mail invitations or advertise in *PolAm*," Gramza shared. He spearheaded an email blast to all members of PACIM who have provided updated email addresses and approximately 35 attended.

After the speakers completed their remarks, there was an engaging Question and Answer session, followed by refreshments in PACIM's new suite. Many circles of the Polish American community were represented in the attendance, as well as members of the broader Twin Cities community.

## Echos from the North

News from Little Falls, Minnesota

Happy Easter season to all! Holidays have always been very important to the Polish people and many delicious foods surround the celebrations. Fish is an important food for Poles and this year my Polish friend (Pilarski) was very generous with his fresh caught walleye. Some of our Echos members made traditional Easter foods and colored eggs. One custom our church continues is the blessing of food, which is really nice. Some folks bring some great baskets!

Easter took on a special meaning for me this year. After having been in Israel and seeing so many places of religious and historical significance, it really brought the holiday to life for me — the room of the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, the dungeon where Jesus was imprisoned as he awaited trial, and the path he walked to His crucifixion. Many times I have heard about Jesus' tomb being hewn out of rock and indeed it was, although the rock was very soft and easy to carve into it. It only hardens by the air and water. They always say one will never forget their visit to Israel and I do believe that.

The Polish Echos will meet soon to make plans for summer events. At our last meeting we decided we would not have the Polish Dinner in celebration of Polish Constitution Day as we have in the past. Maybe at some later date.

I invite any readers to visit us at Our Lady of Lourdes if you happen to be near Little Falls this summer. We are a block from the Mississippi on Hwy 27.

— Phinee Zak, *Polish Echos*  
320-632-2652

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**Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota Affiliate Member of the American Council for Polish Culture**

### PACIM Officers and Board of Directors:

President: Ania Scanlan, Vice President: Paul Rog, Treasurer: Steven Ukasick, Directors: John Bieniek, Charlene Delaney, Greg Gramza, Jane Mrazek Flanders, Terry Kita, Ursula Peterson, Paul Rog, Bruce Rubin, Dan Schyma and Magdalena Zborowski.



# Events

Many dates and times for events are given to us well in advance of the actual date and are subject to change. Please call to verify the particulars.

## May 13

### **Juliana Avdeeva**

This 2010 International Chopin Competition Winner will perform at 3 pm in Sundin Music Hall, Hamline University, 1531 Hewitt Ave, St. Paul. She will perform Bach, Chopin, Ravel and Prokofief. Tickets \$23 or \$20 for Frederic Chopin Society members, \$12 for students. Call 612-822-0123 or email chopinsocietymn@aol.com for details.

## May 19

### **Kolbe Hall Picnic**

A dance and potluck meal to celebrate (belated) Polish Constitution Day. The band "Polonus" under the direction of Marcin Pietrzak will play disco, gypsy, and Polish "hits" both old and new. Cost is \$15. Polish American youth under 18 are free. Childcare will be provided. For time, location and other details, email Ewa Banasikowski at: ebanasikowski@gmail.com or call 952-308-9054.

## June 3

### **St. Hedwig Festival**

Fun, food, games and \$2,000 in prizes highlight this year's festival. 11 am to 5 pm. St. Hedwig Church, 129 29th Ave NE, Minneapolis.

## June 23

### **Midwest Polka Association Summer Dance**

The Polka Family Band from Pennsylvania is back and will play from 7-11 pm at the Maplewood Moose Lodge, 1946 English St. Admission is \$12. For more information email Jim Carlson at: k.carlson55110@yahoo.com or call 651-426-1079.

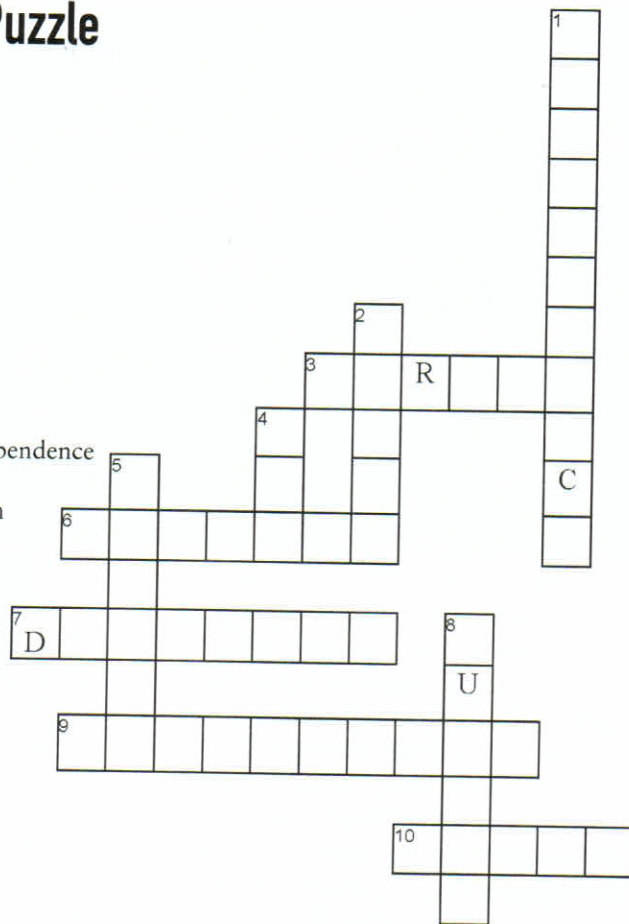
# May Crossword Puzzle

Across:

3. Poland's capital
6. Polish Pope
7. Polish for "I thank you."
9. Polish milk bars
10. Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota

Down:

1. Quo Vadis author
2. Polish mountains
4. Month Poles celebrate independence
5. Local Polish folk dancers
8. Day PACIM Library is open



## June 24

### **PACIM Open House**

Visit PACIM's new location for a festive open house from 1-4 pm. Celebration includes light refreshments and possibly live music. If the weather is good, plan to stroll along the Mississippi River afterward. Riverplace, 43 Main St, Suite 228, Minneapolis, MN. For more information visit [www.pacim.org](http://www.pacim.org) or call 612-378-9291.

## July 15

### **Midwest Polka Association Boat Cruise and Buffet**

Cruise along the beautiful St. Croix River in Stillwater, Minnesota, from 11 am to 2 pm. This river boat cruise features a delicious chicken and rib buffet and cash bar, great polka music and stunning scenery. Andy Zurbey and Friends (Craig, Lori and Christopher Ebel) will perform. A small dance floor provides room to polka! Advance ticket sales \$32. Seating is reserved at 110 attendees. Send check,

payable to MPA to Julie Partyka 2823 Grand St NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418. For more information email Jim Carlson at [k.carlson55110@yahoo.com](mailto:k.carlson55110@yahoo.com) or call 651-426-1079.

## July 21

### **Sacred Heart of Jesus Polish Festival**

Held on the church grounds (22nd Ave NE and Fourth St) from 11 am to 6 pm, the festival is free and open to the public. They promise to have games, raffles, a gift basket booth, and a silent auction. Delicious food (*pierogi*, polish sausage, *kapusta* and desserts) and a Polish beer tent round out the event.

# Email Announcements

PACIM invites all members to provide their current email address for future event announcements at: [info@pacim.org](mailto:info@pacim.org).

# People



**Piotr Michałowski**  
1800-1855

Born in Kraków to a noble family, Michałowski is one of Poland's best examples of a Romantic painter. As a child, he witnessed the entry of Prince Józef Poniatowski into Kraków, symbolizing liberation

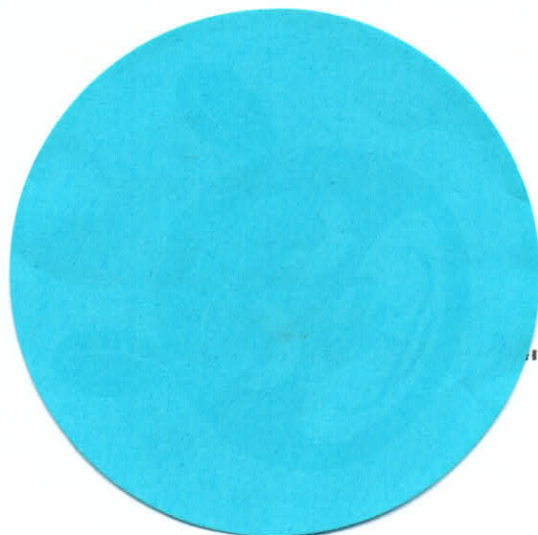
from Austria. He studied natural sciences, economics and the arts at Jagellonian University. He came of age at the end of the Napoleonic wars and much of his work depicts key battles, as well as the uprising of 1830. He was considered an amateur painter most of his life and earned a living painting portraits. In 1948 Pablo Picasso saw his work while visiting the Warsaw National Museum and said of Michałowski, "Here, painter!"



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CULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA  
43 MAIN ST SE, STE 228  
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TWIN CITIES  
**Polish Festival**  
August 11 & 12, 2012  
[www.tcpolishfestival.org](http://www.tcpolishfestival.org)



## Volunteer at the Festival

The Twin Cities Polish Festival has been successful due to the generosity of the many volunteers that donate their time to make it run smoothly.

The Twin Cities Polish Festival hopes we can count on you to help make our 4th annual Festival another success.

Please consider donating some time during the 2 days of the event. There are a variety of options. Go to [www.tcpolishfestival.org](http://www.tcpolishfestival.org) and click on the Volunteer link.