

# PolAm

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

January/February 2013

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Vol. 35, Num. 1

## Baltic Imports: Well Worth a Visit

A hushed quiet greets visitors to Baltic Imports, the small shop in northeast Minneapolis known for its extensive collection of handcrafted Baltic amber and gifts. Natural light from the large front display window casts a warm glow on the shop's fire colored amber and inspired religious icons. Baltic Imports feels part museum and part sanctuary; and its proprietor, Sean, is somewhere between a curator and minister.

The shop's story began in the 1970s when Sean, with Irish roots, and Ingrida, born in a Displaced Persons Camp in Germany, married in Soviet Latvia. The graciousness of Latvians won them over and they returned yearly, collecting folk tales and learning folk customs. Sean, an accomplished artist, began working with amber and studied the healing qualities of the gem. Ingrida learned weaving, knitting, ceramics and working with bronze jewelry.

They supported the rise of Latvian writing, visual art, photography and film. In 1991, Sean's work was exhibited in Riga's Foreign Art Museum. His drawings and paintings filled five long rooms in the museum, and his work strongly captured the interest of Riga natives and other visitors. So many bunches of flowers were offered in gratitude to the artist that there was hardly any room to walk.

With the new found freedoms in the Baltic States' post-communist era, support of folk art declined. Ingrida and



Ingrida and Sean.



Baltic Imports in northeast Minneapolis.

Sean founded Baltic Imports to "preserve and celebrate the spirit of traditions," and are dedicated to preserving quality amber design. Part of their mission is to teach the role of amber in folk traditions, healing and mythology. They travel to the Baltics regularly to meet with artists in their workshops, and select handcrafted pieces for their shop. Many of these artists are recognized internationally and some exhibit in national museums.

Baltic Imports continues on page 3

## Amber's Ancient Trade Route

The Amber Road was an ancient trade route that linked Poland to southern Europe and the heart of the Roman



Empire. This communications and trade hub allowed the transport of Europe's most valued luxury item. Beginning in the north at the Baltic Sea, down the Elbe River to the Oder and the Wisła, and then on to the Black Sea, the route continued on land through Italy into Rome. It was a well-travelled path whose origins and prized cargo can be traced back tens of thousands of years.

The desire for amber's beautiful and unusual qualities began as early as the Paleolithic Era (c. 12,000 B.C.). Archaeologists discovered amber pendants

Trade Route continues on page 3

Membership Form For  
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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 *PolAm* Newsletter by first class mail all year long wherever you may be. Anyone else who wishes to receive their *PolAm* by first class mail all year long should add \$6 to their renewals.

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## PolAm

*PolAm* (Permit #31798) is the official publication of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota and is published monthly with July/August and January/February issues. Non-profit bulk permit paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota is located at 43 Main St SE, Ste 228, Minneapolis, MN 55414. Please direct all inquiries to our mailing address, or email us at info@pacim.org, or call 612-378-9291.

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We appreciate your continued support.  
*Dziękujemy!*

# Thoughts

For those of us who can't escape cold Minnesota, let's bask in the warmth of this issue's Polish amber coverage. In the



midst of the cold and flu season, the centerspread offers an alternative approach using amber as a remedy.

Also, our cover story provides a local resource to purchase the gem and learn about its healing qualities.

There is still time to make reservations for our *Bal Karnawałowy*. This year we mailed invitations to all of our members hoping for a big turnout. Even if you live outside of the Twin Cities, consider spending the night at the St. Paul Hotel and making our *Bal* your winter event.

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

## Celebrate PACIM's Founder

Chester Rog, PACIM's founder, celebrates his 89th birthday on February 15. In honor of his long dedication to our



Polish and Polish American community, PACIM is hosting a birthday open house for Chester. Drop by the Institute (43 Main St. SE, #228, Minneapolis) on February 15 from 6-9

pm to raise a glass to this great man.

## News From Poland

by Mietek Konczyk

**Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski** announced that Moscow has promised to hand over wreckage of the plane that crashed in Russia in 2010, killing President Lech Kaczyński and 95 others.

President Bronisław Komorowski remains **Poland's most trusted politician**, with 69% of Poles considering him trustworthy.

**Poland's złoty** was the second biggest gainer to the American dollar in 2012, rising nearly 9.7% on the back of monetary easing by the Fed and the ECB.

Poland's flagship airline carrier **LOT posted \$65 million loss** in 2012 and will downsize its labor force by at least 30% in the first quarter of this year.

The Polish government has **banned cultivation of certain genetically modified (GM) strains of corn and potatoes**. As many as 65% of Poles oppose the cultivation of genetically modified organisms.

Poland placed 57th in the **2013 annual ranking of economic freedom** compiled by the Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal, moving up seven places as compared with the 2012 ranking.

**Jadwiga Kaczyńska**, the mother of the late President Lech Kaczyński and his identical twin brother Jarosław, the leader of Poland's main opposition conservative party Law and Justice (PiS), died at the age of 86.

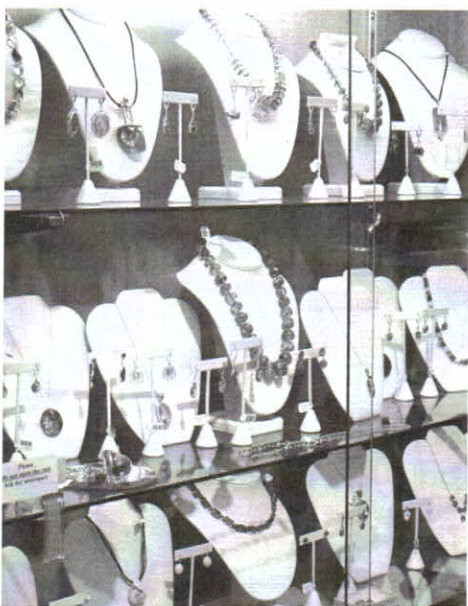
The Polish skier and the 2010 Olympic 30 km classical champion **Justyna Kowalczyk** won the seventh stage of Tour de Ski on Alpe Cermis in Cavalese, Italy, and secured her fourth consecutive overall victory as the first ever woman in this event.

## Renewal Date

Please check each issue's mailing label for your renewal date. *PolAm* is a benefit of PACIM members and contributors. Keeping your membership up to date ensures you don't miss an issue. It also helps us save money sending out renewal notices. Thanks!

## Baltic Imports continues

Baltic Imports is a member of the International Amber Association and the International Conference on Amber in



Baltic Imports is known for its collection of amber.

Archaeology. They are a direct importer of museum-quality amber from select amber masters and small studios in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. They offer only the highest quality Baltic amber available that has not been pressed, fused or headed in oil. After a purchase of amber is completed, each piece is delicately wrapped to avoid damage. Ensuring that the piece will maintain its beauty and value, a small instruction sheet on the care of amber goes home with each purchase.

Most days Sean and Ingrida are at the shop to help customers. Their hands gently polish the silver and amber jewelry, while they answer questions about current stock or the history associated with an item. Even the clerks they employ seem more like museum docents as they provide small tours of sale items exhibited. The shop exudes beauty, calm and warmth. There is a feeling of intimacy about shopping at Baltic Imports. One almost feels a kinship with the artist by the time a transaction is completed.

Drop by Baltic Imports in person or shop online at [www.balticimports.com](http://www.balticimports.com).

## Trade Route continues

dating back to this time, demonstrating the value prehistoric people attached to the gem. As time progressed, amber's value only increased and, by the Neolithic Era (c. 10,000-8,000 B.C.), the quantity of amber possessed indicated status and wealth. Archaeologists in Denmark unearthed Neolithic evidence of amber jewelers' workshops and stashes of amber embedded beneath the foundations of houses.

By time the Celts re-established the route in the 1st-4th centuries B.C., it had been dominated by trading societies,



Early amber hunters.

including the Phoenicians, who brought amber to Greece and Babylonia. The charm of the gem reached into Egypt and was found in the tomb of King Tut (c. 1323 B.C.). During this same period it was brought to the English coast, where a ceremonial cup made of amber was discovered in an ancient burial mound.

The 1st century Romans had a particular affection for amber and used it for special issue coins. Romans also put a value on it greater than the fair-haired Baltic men they enslaved to harvest the gems. Ancient writings by Pliny the Elder stated that "the price of a small single piece of amber sculpture was worth more than a healthy slave." Pliny also wrote in *Naturalis Historia*, XXXVII that, in the time of Nero, an expedition sent by Julianus to gather amber at the Baltic coast brought back such an abundance that a stage was made of it for a gladiatorial fight. Even the mesh which restrained the wild animals and covered the podium had a piece of amber in every knot.

The fall of the Roman Empire and the onset of the Dark Ages (400-800 A.D.) brought misery and suffering for much of Europe. Amber, no longer affordable for

most people, became a fixture of the Church's décor and sacramentals. The Amber Road was eclipsed by the Danube River as a principal artery of trade, and the flow of amber from the Baltic to the Mediterranean died down.



The Amber Road series of coins, issued by Mennica Polska, commemorate the route.

In 1200 A.D., the Teutonic Knights assumed the possession and rule of the Baltic sources of amber. They also claimed complete authority over its harvesting and distribution. They selected and controlled the manufacture of amber objects, such as Paternoster beads (rosaries). Anyone found in the possession of amber that was not part of a rosary was severely punished, often by hanging. Baltic fishermen who found and kept these highly regulated gems were standard fare for art under the Knights. Grim images of them in the gallows served as a stern warning to people tempted to appropriate amber.

More than eight hundred years later, Project Amber Road in Europe is at work promoting the Amber Road as a tourist corridor between the Baltic and the Mediterranean. The Amber Road Project hopes to increase travel to many of Europe's museums, archaeological sites, castles, palaces and historic cities along the route.

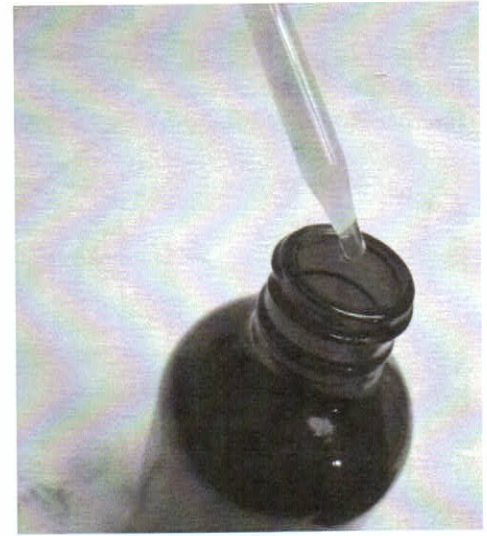
Today the ancient trade route is also a popular long distance bike and walking trail. Organized trips run from Budapest to Kraków, taking in UNESCO world heritage sites with abundant amber shopping along the way.



Baltic amber contains the highest concentration of Succinic Acid which helps balance cardiac rhythm, bolster immune systems, improve reflexes and reduce stress. Succinic Acid also helps support lean muscle mass while reducing muscle breakdown. It is used in the treatment of fibromyalgia.



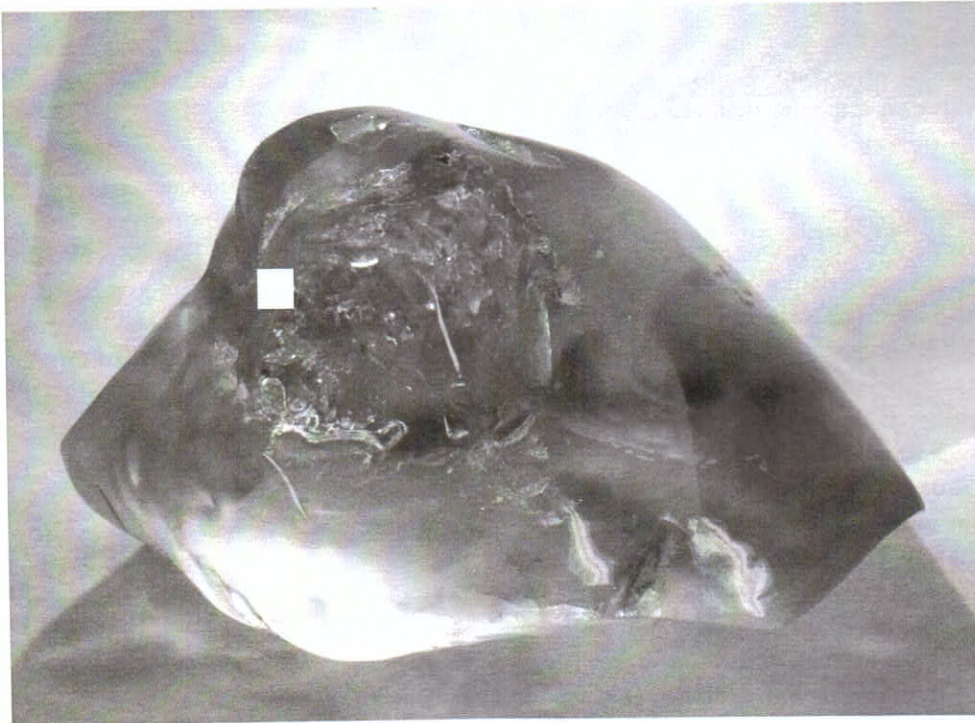
Amber bracelets and pendants are worn to ease joint and nerve pain. The anti-inflammatory properties of amber's succinic acid helps people with osteoarthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome and migraines.



An old Polish recipe for tincture of amber, using crushed amber chips soaked in vodka for at least 10 days, claims to improve digestion, calm nerves, improve healing and boost the immune system. Drops were administered each day, increased by one until day ten, then decreased by one until day 20. If needed, this was repeated after ten days. The dose for children only went up to 5 drops.

## Amber Each Day Keeps the Doctor Away

By Jane Mrazek Flanders



Warm to the touch and with colors of the setting sun, amber is a perfect contrast to the dark, cold nights of winter. Some people claim that the sun's power is harnessed in the prehistoric tree resin. Others praise amber's strength as a talisman warding off ill fortune. But for centuries, amber has been seen as a natural healing tool, and modern science now supports many of the uses of amber.

Ancient folk healers always relied on nature's bounty to find cures and ease discomfort for the sick. They did not understand why leaves, seeds, roots and berries brought relief. They just knew it worked. This is the origin of many of our pharmaceutical products today. Aspirin, which has lowered fevers and stopped blood clots for more than a century, is a product of salicylate-rich plant material like willow bark. 5th century B.C. Egyptians were some of the first to document this use.



Amber necklaces have been used on babies in Europe for generations to relieve pain from teething, colic and gas. Its analgesic properties, which are released when amber is placed against warm skin, make the comfortable and lightweight necklace a safe option to drugs.



Amber is used in cosmetics as a bio-energetic complex to protect skin cells from aging, to minimize wrinkles and regenerate healthy skin.



Amber's succinate acid alleviates many biochemical symptoms related to menopause as well as psycho-emotional disorders, and is free of side effects.



Warming or burning pure Baltic amber releases fumes which can be inhaled to bring relief from acute respiratory distress, rheumatism and thyroid problems.



Research shows that micronization of amber improves its assimilation of the body. Poultices and massages using amber powder, or walking barefoot on amber chips have therapeutic effects.

The Father of Medicine, Hippocrates (460-377 BC) was the earliest recorder of amber as a medicine. It was worn against the skin, rubbed as an amulet, and ground up to a powder and burned like incense to treat stomach aches, asthma, whooping cough and thyroid problems. His application of amber continued to be used by scientists until the Middle Ages.

In the 12th century, a Dominican monk later dubbed "Albert the Great" gave natural Baltic amber the name "succinium" and declared it the most effective medicine of the time. Amber tinctures brought relief from a variety of ailments including stomach aches and rheumatism. During the plagues which ravaged Europe in the middle ages, amber was burnt as a fumigant. A Prussian priest in 1680 recorded that "During the plague not a single amberman from Gdańsk, Klaipeda, Konigsberg or Liepaja died of the disease."

"If a little is good, then more is better," was the approach of many early scientists. The thought that a higher concentration or a greater number of ingredients in a medicine would increase its potency was held by a great Polish scientist. Mikołaj Kopernik documented that his formulas for medicine included 22 specific ingredients, one of them being Baltic amber.

In 1865, Nobel Prize winner Robert Kock showed that succinic acid, found in Baltic amber, is also a substance naturally found in the human body. European biochemists in the mid-20th century discovered that succinic acid is an amino acid created naturally in every cell of the body capable of aerobic respiration. This is how carbohydrates, fats, and proteins are metabolized into energy. Succinic acid is a powerful anti-oxidant that has been shown to stimulate neural system recovery and bolster

the immune system. Researchers at the University of Hamburg in Germany confirm that succinic acid has a positive effect on cellular metabolism.

Now produced commercially, succinic acid is approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Some of its common uses in the current pharmaceutical industry are as an acidity regulator, anti-inflammatory and flavoring agent. Two popular prescription drugs that contain succinic acid are effective for treating infections and attention disorders.

Today we understand that using amber as a healing tool is less magic and more science. Many of the reasons for its effectiveness are known and, like many of the remedies passed down through the ages, we can embrace the use of amber and expect results.

# 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.

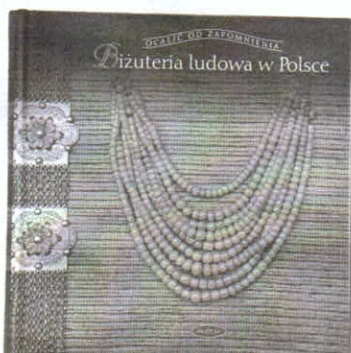
The Board of Directors of PACIM holds their monthly meeting on the first Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Institute: 43 Main St SE, Ste 228, Minneapolis, MN. All are invited. 612-378-9291.

## PACIM Library

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

We extend a warm welcome to our newest Library volunteer, Vicky (Wiesia) Korsak. Vicky volunteered with us before and we are pleased that her schedule allows her to return. She reads in both Polish and English, and beginning in January she will be part of the regular rotation.

Check out the Library's books on Polish amber. Some are coffee table size with beautiful illustrative plates. Get the full story and pictures on the tight control Teutonic Knights held on amber trade and harvest, where anyone caught collecting amber without permission could face hanging!



Of particular interest is a Polish language book in the Ocalic od zapomnienia

book series titled *Bizuteria ludowa w Polsce (Folk Jewelry in Poland)*. In addition to amber, there is great coverage of coral (*korale*) and its reputation as a good investment—often bequeathed instead of money.

Bring the whole family when visiting the Library. We have books, tapes and films for all ages. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Basia Kiernoziak  
(Kiernoziak@gmail.com)

## Echos from the North

News from Little Falls, Minnesota

The other day the bright January sun shone through the beautiful stained glass windows of our parish up here. Hues of blues, reds, greens, gold and amber dazzled in the colorful windows donated by early members of Our Lady of Lourdes. There is much amber color in the win-



dows and I'm not sure if it was chosen out of a longing for the Polish amber of their home country or just for its beauty.

I'm pleased that my paternal grandfather donated the window of St. Joseph the Carpenter. He and many of the Polish people on the west side of Little Falls labored and gave generously to build our church from 1917–23. I know all churches are beautiful on their own, but we up here in Little Falls are especially proud of our community.

The Polish Echos hosted their Bouja supper recently. At our monthly meeting we elected new officers: Charlie Stanek, President; Dave Sobania, Vice President; Helen O'Brien, Secretary; and Kathy Millet, Treasurer.

Our library added some very interesting tapes, books and DVDs, which were gifts upon the passing of our faithful member, Roman Bonczek. Stop by to check out our library or visit our beautiful parish when you are up this way.

God's blessings to all,  
—Phinee Zak, *Polish Echos*  
320-632-2652

## Festival of Nations – Call for Volunteers

The Festival of Nations is May 2 – 5, 2013 at RiverCentre, 175 W. Kellogg Boulevard, in beautiful downtown St. Paul. The Festival includes 35 cafes from around the globe offering unique ethnic food, global artists providing incredible ethnic cultural events, and the opportunity to purchase one-of-a-kind ethnic items from the international bazaar. One of the nation's largest and longest running multicultural events.

This is a great showcase of Polish heritage and culture. Consider volunteering at the Polish Café and receive an entrance ticket to the festival. Duties include sales, setup/teardown and food preparation.

Please contact John Bieniek (home) 763-566-8812, (cell) 612-810-4477 or email [jvbien@msn.com](mailto:jvbien@msn.com) for volunteer shifts. The volunteer signup calendar will soon be posted on the PACIM website [www.PACIM.org](http://www.PACIM.org).

### PACIM Officers and Board of Directors:

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

# 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.

## January 27–February 14 Baltic Imports Amber Sale

Baltic Imports, a member of The International Amber Association and the International Conference on Amber in Archaeology, presents their semi-annual public amber sale. All amber will be discounted 25%. 207 East Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis. For store hours and directions call 612-331-3296.

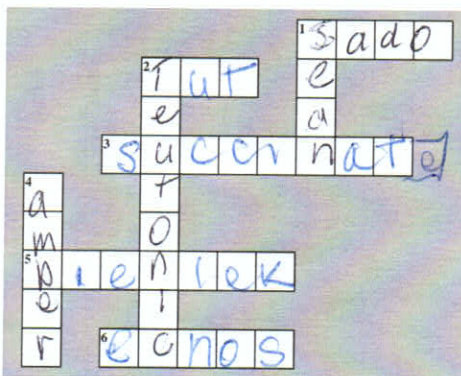
## February 3 Pianist Daniel Trifonov

The Fredric Chopin Society of Minnesota welcomes 21 year old Daniel Trifonov for a concert that promises to be powerful and deeply moving. In 2010–2011 Trifonov won the bronze medal at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw, first prize in Tel Aviv's Rubinstein Competition and the gold medal at the Tchaikowsky Competition in Moscow. He has performed with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic and other notable orchestras. His concert will include Chopin's 24 Preludes, Op. 28, Liszt's Sonata in B minor and Scriabin's Sonata No. 2, Op 19. 3–6 pm, Macalester College's Janet Wallace Fine Arts Center, 130 Macalester St, St. Paul. For information and tickets visit [www.chopinsocietymn.org](http://www.chopinsocietymn.org).

## February 9 PACIM's Bal Karnawatowy

An elegant celebration at the historic St. Paul Hotel, the evening offers fine food, an award ceremony and festive dancing. A Silent Auction precedes dinner and raises money for PACIM's library, programs and *Dom Dziecka* Fund for needy Polish children. Cost \$65, PACIM members \$60, table of 8 \$500. Register at [www.PACIM.org](http://www.PACIM.org) or leave a message at 612-378-9291. Reservations deadline February 1.

# January/February Crossword Puzzle



December 2012 Answers:

Across: 3 Mario, 4 Polonez, 7 Carnival, 8 Zupa, 9 Rubin

Down: 1 Trifonov, 2 Sylvester, 5 Epiphany, 6 Beben

Across

- 1 Trade Journalist Specializing in Amber
- 2 Amber Found in Tomb of Egypt's King
- 3 Amber's Medicinal Acid
- 5 Festival of Nations Polish Cafe Coordinator
- 6 Little Falls Polish Group

Down

- 1 Baltic Imports Owner
- 2 13th Century Knights in the Baltic
- 4 "Bursztyn" in English

Program:

- 5:30 Social Hour and Silent Auction. Incidental Music by Bonnie Frels
- 7:15 Welcome followed by Dinner
- 8:30 Award Presentation to Marian Pierzchalski
- 8:45 Dolina Polish Folk Dancers
- 9:00 Bal opens with a Polonez
- 9:15 Dancing with DJ Demex
- 10:00 Wall of Wine Raffle closes
- 10:15 Silent Auction closes
- 1:00 am Bal closes

March 9

## Finding Family History in Newspapers

The Minnesota Genealogical Society hosts instructor J.H. Fonkert, CGSM as he presents, "Beyond Obits: Finding Family History in Newspapers." Learn how to locate newspapers in your ancestor's communities and identify family news in documents, microfilm and the Internet. 10 am–12:30 pm, 1185 Concord St, N., South St. Paul, MN. For details and registration call 651-455-9057 or visit [www.mnsgs.org](http://www.mnsgs.org).

March 16

## The Genealogical Photographer

Learn how to take photos of gravestones, computer screens, microfilm, heirlooms and documents. Bring a camera for hands-on help at this free program sponsored by the Minnesota Genealogical Society. 1:30–3:30 pm 1185 Concord St, N., South St. Paul, MN. For details and registration call 651-455-9057 or visit [www.mnsgs.org](http://www.mnsgs.org).

April 11–28

## International Film Festival

The Film Society of Minneapolis and St. Paul's centerpiece event is their annual International Film Festival. Exhibiting more than 200 films from 70 countries and drawing audiences of more than 40,000, this event is not to be missed. Included in this year's program is *Songs of Exile: Cinema of Displacement and Dispossession*. This special selection of new independent documentary and narrative feature films from around the world uses fresh and contrasting perspectives to examine an age-old predicament: the movement or displacement (geographical, cultural or psychological) of peoples around the globe. A number of the films featured will be representative of the new and growing international populations in this state. For more information visit [www.mspfilmfest.org](http://www.mspfilmfest.org).

MINNEAPOLIS ST. PAUL  
INTERNATIONAL  
**FILM**  
FESTIVAL  
APRIL 11-28 2013

# People



Anna Sado

Anna Sado is a trade journalist specializing in amber and is known as the only Polish journalist who presents the contemporary, new face of the jewelry and amber industry to Western

European media. In 2007, Sado co-developed the Amber Portal ([amber.com.pl](http://amber.com.pl)) and has written 466 of the 775 articles available. The site's commitment to extensive in-depth analysis and photos rendered Sado co-recipient of the Mayor of Gdańsk Medal in 2009. Sado was also awarded the title "Amber Personality of the Year" in 2010 for her long-standing contribution to amber promotion.



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The Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota Presents  
A Polish Formal Ball

## *Bal Karnawalowy*



You Are Invited To A Formal Carnival Ball with  
Fine Food, Entertainment, Dancing and Silent Auction  
Saturday, February 9, 2013, 6:00 PM  
Historic Saint Paul Hotel (Valet Parking Available)  
350 Market Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota

Sixty Five Dollars (PACIM Members Sixty Dollars) per Person / Five Hundred Dollars for Table of Eight  
Register Online at [WWW.PACIM.ORG](http://WWW.PACIM.ORG) or For More Information, Call PACIM at 612.378.9291