The 42nd International Polonaise Ball
Argentina & Poland in Love with Tango
Saturday, February 1, 2014

The 42nd International Polonaise Ball organized by The American Institute of Polish Culture and under the patronage of Ryszard Schnepf, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, was held in historic Eden Roc Hotel in Miami Beach on February 1, 2014. The Ball was a celebration of Argentina & Poland In Love with Tango and brought over 380 guests together from all over the world including Argentina, Canada, Germany, Poland, Scotland and the U.S. The Eden Roc’s Promenade Ballroom sparkled with hundreds of lights and yards of gauzy chiffon. A feathered Polish white eagle with white and red fabric swags and a yellow Argentine sun with white and blue swags framed the stage, where the Frank Hubbell Orchestra played beloved dance tunes and smooth jazz melodies.

It is a tradition that the Ball is opened by the stately Polonaise dance with Lady Blanka Rosenstiel and President Lech Walesa leading a procession of distinguished guests. At its conclusion, the official segment of the Ball began with a welcome speech by Lady Blanka in which she asked the guests to begin preparing for a special Ball celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Institute.

Mr. Gregory Fyrc, Mr. Leszek Ladowski, Countess Barbara Pagowska Cooper, Dr. Damian Valenzuela Mayer, Mrs. Agnieszka Gray, Mr. Keith Gray, Lady Blanka Rosenstiel, Marquisa Maria Alonso, Marquise Alexander Montague, Mrs. Teresa Lewenthal, Mr. Paul Lewenthal, Mrs. Emma Algarra, Count Rodney Hildebrand, Count Matthew Meehan
Next, the Ambassador of Poland awarded Amicus Poloniae for outstanding efforts to promote cooperation between Poland and the U.S. One was given to Mr. Nabil Achkar, Secretary of the Consular Corps in Miami and First Senior Vice President and General Manager of the Interau-di Bank, who said in Polish, “Long Live Poland” (“Niech żyje Polska”) and the other to Dr. Mark Rosenberg, the President of Florida International University. Both gentlemen share a passion for service to the community-at-large, and a desire to ensure that Florida continues to embrace many diverse cultures and people.
The Gold Medals, the highest honor bestowed by the Institute, went to two outstanding individuals. Mrs. Maria Teresa Carrizo Sliva, a prima ballerina from Argentina who married a fellow dancer of Polish descent, has given her expertise and love of dance to countless performers and groups throughout the world. She founded the very successful company, New Century Dance Company in Miami, and her choreography continues to inspire and excite audiences with its artistry, vibrancy and originality.

Mr. Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, born and educated in Poland, eventually settled in the U.S., where his long career as a civil/industrial engineer with over 50 patents to his credit have earned him the highest honors in his chosen fields. He is a prolific writer of Polish and European history, author of several atlases, an accomplished lexicographer, and his editorials, columns and reviews have appeared in hundreds of publications throughout the world.

The Lech Walesa Media Award was presented personally by the legendary Solidarity leader to author Mr. Andrew Nagorski for his dedication to the cause of freedom and writing about Poland’s history and culture. As the senior editor of Newsweek from 2000 to 2008, Nagorski handled the expansion of the news magazine to several countries, including Newsweek Polska in 2001. In 2011, Poland’s President Bronislaw Komorowski
awarded him the Cavalier’s Cross for his reporting from Poland about the Solidarity movement.

A Special Recognition was also given to Dr. Witold Zajewski, a family practitioner in the Chicago area, for his ongoing support, medical care giving and charitable contributions to the Polish-American community.

During the dinner, which was an homage to traditional Argentinian grill with the delicious wines supplied by Mr. Damian Valenzuela-Mayer of the Latin American Invest Corp of Argentina, the guests were treated to remarkable performances by the New Century Dance Company. Seductive and dramatic tangos depicting old-as-time stories of love won and lost were skillfully choreographed and danced especially for the Ball in honor of the love Poland and Argentina have for this passionate dance. That some of the dancers were Mrs. Carrizo Sliva’s children was an extra special touch.

Guests were then treated to rousing malambos performed by two “gauchos,” each man competing against the other with complicated percussive footwork while playing large animal hide-covered drums to create thrilling, yet melodic music with a compelling beat. One of the men used a boleadoras (two long leather lassos with a wooden ball on one end - one lasso for each hand) that he whirled in complex formations, striking the floor in rhythmic beats and creating another layer of complex music. The standing ovations proved just how wonderful all of the performances were.

Around midnight, the Polish-American Folk Dance Company “Polanie” from Sarasota, Florida performed a graceful and regal Polonaise as befitting this 17th century dance, and invited all guests to join them in a colorful procession on the dance floor.

There were many new faces at the festivities including a large group of government and community officials from Rzeszow, Poland, friends and family of the Latin American Invest Corp., the Polish American Business Club, and editors and journalists from the Polish newspapers Nowy Dziennik in New York City and the White Eagle in Buffalo. Several members of the PANGEA Alliance, a non-profit organization that promotes entrepreneurship and innovation as well as connects young Polish professionals around the world, also attended. How refreshing it was to have so many young guests - the future of Polonia who are already making significant strides in business, entertainment, government and education. It was a wonderful mix of people from all walks of life!
A Very Special Brunch
Sunday, February 2, 2014

On Sunday, 200 guests attended a lovely and sumptuous brunch in the Eden Roc’s ballroom. Several attendees from the Ball, including all of the awardees, and many others spent three hours meeting new people and catching up with long time friends. President Lech Walesa graciously posed for photographs with guests and signed his autobiography, *The Road to Truth*. The Polanie folk dancers performed graceful numbers in traditional Polish costumes and the Frank Hubbell Band provided the melodies. It was a fitting finale to another wonderful International Polonaise Ball weekend.