

Polish Heritage Society Expanding Cultural Programming in 2025

This month the Polish Heritage Society invited members to complete a survey to determine interest in Polish fine arts cultural programming. These types of events were once the hallmark of the organization for decades. The board hopes to use the survey information to re-establish sponsorship of professional music recitals and dance ensembles in addition to bus tours focusing on Polish culture.

The survey was prompted by the overwhelming success of the bus trip to the Polish Museum of America last year. One of the highlights of the museum was the exhibit showcasing the legacy of Polish pianist and statesman Ignacy Paderewski which prompted member requests to bring back fine arts

programming. A representative sample from the fine arts programming survey of PHS members showed that 72% of respondents attend concerts, musical recitals, dance performances, film screenings or art gallery tours. The greatest member interest for future Polish fine arts events was musical recitals and dance/choral performances in the survey.

The Polish Heritage Society, originally established in 1963, in the past had a long history of putting on fine art cultural events. Society sponsored recitals of local and touring Polish Choral and Folk Dance Ensembles took place thru the 1980's. The recent growth in membership of the PHS has sparked the need to broaden the current

(Continued on page 2)



Pianist Cezary Karwowski introducing the music at his recital at the Campus Chapel in Ann Arbor, Dec 15, 2024

Bus Trip to Experience Detroit Polonia In the Works for PHS Members

In December, the Polish Institute of Culture & Research at Orchard Lake and the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan chartered a bus and organized cars for people to visit Grand Rapids Dec. 7.

The group of visitors from Detroit, Lansing and Kalamazoo visited Grand Rapids specifically to learn more about our city's Polish heritage. With a suggested itinerary put together by the PHS board member Matt Gryczan, we had much to show them. Their visit, highlighted in a story in last month's Echo,

included stops at Jackson Street Hall, St. Isidores, the Blue Army monument and the downtown Christkindl Market.

Due to the warm response of the visitors as well as goodwill created by this cross-state cultural experience, the PHS will be paying a visit to Detroit in April to learn more about that area's Polish heritage.

Polish Institute of Culture and Research at Orchard Lake (PICROL) director Ania Bieciuk suggested an itinerary that would include a tour of the PICROL Galleria to view Polish

Art and learn about the center. This would be followed by visit to downtown Hamtramck for a hearty Polish Lunch at one of the Polish restaurants. The tour group may then visit the Hamtramck Historical Museum followed by shopping in the business district.

Key shopping destinations could include the Polish Art Center for uniquely Polish items including Polish logo and folk apparel, books, cards and decorative items.

For those wishing to bring

home a taste of Poland, Srodek's Polish Market and Deli is available to pick up some items that you won't find in Grand Rapids.

PHS members Angela Walejewski-Zasuwa and Richard Panek are currently working on picking the date and planning for this trip. Transport will be by motor-coach and lunch and all tour admissions will be included in the cost.

Look for the trip details and reservation form in next month's issue of the Echo.

Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

**PO Box 1844
Grand Rapids MI
49501-1844**

<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes Polish/Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids. The Society meets on the 3rd Monday of every month except for December and general meetings in June and October. The society publishes this newsletter monthly. We invite story ideas and content contributions. For more information, please contact Matthew Gryczan, Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

President
Teresa Bonham

1st VP
John Theisen

2nd VP

Treasurer
Michael Jasperse

Corresponding Secretary
Susan Ulanowicz

Recording Secretary
Matthew Gryczan

Director
Rosemary Maciejewski

Director
Angela Walejewski-Zasuwa

Director
Thaddeus Broda

Director
Eric Tetsworth

Director

(Continued from page 1)

programming options for our members. In fact, PHS exposure through the Echo, website and social media as well as PHS stories in the Polish-American Journal, has given our society increased regional and national exposure. As a result, the PHS is receiving inquiries from Polish artists to perform for the society in Grand Rapids.

Last summer, a Polish classical pianist contacted the PHS via email offering his services to perform music of Frederik Chopin in Grand Rapids. Cezary Karwowski is a 26-year-old student from Poland studying in Ann Arbor. PHS Cultural Ambassador Richard Panek contacted Karwowski by email inquiring about his experience and his ideas for a recital in Grand Rapids. They subsequently communicated by email through the Fall regarding possible program ideas.

As Christmas approached, Cezary reached out to Panek to invite him to attend one of his recitals in Ann Arbor on December 15th. The bustle of the weeks before Christmas was no hindrance for Richard and his wife Mary to scout out talent for a cultural programming opportunity. They made the trip to see Karwowski perform at the Campus Chapel at 1235 Washtenaw Ct. in Ann Arbor. Karwowski played for an hour in an intimate setting for an audience of 12 friends and invited guests. Campus Chapel Pastor Rev. Matt Ackerman, who also happened to attend Seminary at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, is a friend of Karkowski's and hosted the recital.

Born in 1998, Cezary Karwowski started playing the piano at 7 years of age. In 2020 he graduated with honors with a Bachelor's degree in Piano Performance and

Pedagogy from the Kiejstut Bacewicz Academy of Music in Łódź, Poland. He recently graduated with distinction from Baylor University with an Advanced Performer's Certificate and Master's degree in Piano Performance, and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Karwowski's electrifying Ann Arbor performance consisted of the music of Rameau, Strauss, Poulenc, Haydn and three pieces by Polish Pianist Frederik Chopin. In addition to his graduate school studies at the time, Cezary was preparing for the upcoming 11th Bosendorfer USASU International Piano Competition in Arizona. The pieces were part of his preparation for the competition which attracted twenty-eight finalists from nine different counties. During the Ann Arbor recital, Karwowski explained the background of the pieces and some history of the composers between artist selections, which enhanced the appreciation of the music.

After the recital, the Paneks spoke with Karwowski to explore plans for a performance for the Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids. He proposed doing a recital of music by the great Polish artists Frederik Chopin and Ignacy Paderewski as well as that of Polish Americans Josef Hofman and Ignaz Friedman for a PHS event. Work is currently underway to plan a performance hopefully for this Spring pending PHS Board approval.

The success of the Chicago bus trip to the Polish Museum of America showed that broadened exposure to the richness of Polish culture enhances PHS

member benefits.

Other potential future programming options include a performance by the Chicago based Lira Ensemble, the nation's only professional performing arts company specializing in Polish music, song and dance. Lira has performed in Grand Rapids in the past, but it has been many years since they last appeared.



Early in 2024, Rich Panek spoke with Lucyna Migala, the Director of the Lira Ensemble, who puts on shows in Detroit for the Christmas holidays every few years. These productions consist of professional singers in traditional Polish Folk Costumes. She is most interested in putting together a small ensemble performance of traditional Polish Koledy (Christmas Carols) for the PHS around the Christmas Holidays.

It takes some work to organize these events and the PHS needs members who have talents and interests in helping produce this type of programming. If you would like to get involved with sponsorship, marketing, communications, logistics, planning, soliciting underwriters or just volunteering at events as an usher or host, please contact Richard Panek at 616-490-3231 or rwpanek@gmail.com.

PHS Membership News



By Marilyn Lignell

We would like to remind everyone to renew your dues by February 28th. We will be sending out new membership cards shortly after that. With your membership card you can receive a 5% discount at Franks Market, Lewandoski's Market, Sobie Meats and a 10% discount at Pienky Polish Pottery Store.

Some exciting membership news is PHS President Teresa Bonham joining the world of retirees! Teresa worked for Beaver Tile for 30 plus years and has now retired from Serra Honda after 10 years. "I was completely overwhelmed how sweet everyone was on my last day." If you know Teresa, you know that it was well deserved!

We are always excited to welcome new members. This month we welcome Walter Niewiadomski. As a reminder, if anyone has news they would like to share with our members please email phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

The PHS annually gives out scholarships totaling several thousands of dollars to students attending institutions of higher learning as a way of supporting Polish heritage. It's not too early to spread the

word to any High school Seniors of Polish descent you may know about this program.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- be of Polish American descent;
 - reside in Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon or Ottawa county; and,
 - plan to attend or currently attend an accredited 2-year trade/vocational program, 2-year community college program or 4-year college or university.
- submit a scholarship application to the PHS before April 15.

After the April 15 deadline, the PHS scholarship committee will review applications and notify recipients of the scholarships and financial aid offices of the institutions by May 15.

Applications are available online at <https://polishheritagesociety.com> or from the counseling offices at high schools or post high school institutions. Completed applications can be emailed to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com or physically mailed to Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids, PO Box 1844, Grand Rapids MI 49501.

April 15 also marks the cutoff for submission of names of candidates for the PHS board. Those who are interested in submitting their names for consideration for a seat on the 11-member board must be active members who are current with annual dues or who have lifetime memberships. There will be up to 3 seats open for election to the board.

To submit your name for nomination to run for a board position, email:

phsgrandrapids.org@gmail.com



PHS President Teresa Bonham at the Polish Museum of America during last years member Chicago bus trip

Polish Heritage Night at the Griffins on Jan. 31

The PHS has a block of 175 seats at Van Andel Arena for Polish Heritage Night at a Griffins hockey game.

This year Polish Heritage Night is Jan. 31 when the Griffins play the Colorado Eagles at 7 p.m.

To sit in the PHS section, you must buy tickets through the Griffins box office using this link:

<https://griffinshockey.venue.net/promotions/POLISH>.

The link is also posted on the PHS Facebook page. A portion of the sales purchased through this link will be donated to the PHS.

Tickets to the event are \$30, and the game is a Friday special with \$2 hot dogs and \$2 beers.

The Malbork Dance group is scheduled to perform on the concourse, and it's rumored that Busia Queen Dolly Pelton will try her hand at driving the Zamboni.





Join the Polish Heritage Society to receive our monthly newsletter and other benefits!

Annual Student Membership for full-time students through college \$5

Annual Adult Membership \$20

Annual Family or Business Membership \$35

Lifetime Membership \$150

ONLINE

You can join the Polish Heritage Society online by going to our website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com/>, filling out the Membership form and paying by using the PayPal Button.

MAIL

Fill out this form and send a personal check made out to the Polish Heritage Society to this address:

Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids
P.O. Box 1844
Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____