

Theatre Festival SPIELART Munich

Director: **Tilmann Broszat**

Ludwigstr. 8, D-80539 München

Tel.: +49-89-280 56 07

Fax +49-89 280 56 79

info@spielmotor.de

www.spielart.org

Documentation of the symposium

"Grotowski, Kantor – and what's next?"

Perspectives of Polish Theatre in an expanded Europe

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A joint project of the Theatre Festival SPIELART München 2003, the Protestant Academy in Tutzing and the Forum Goethe-Institut in collaboration with the Cultural Department of the General Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Munich.

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Foreword:

This documentation is the result (in an English version) not only of the lectures, but also a transcription of all welcoming speeches, discussions and interviews during the symposium **Grotowski, Kantor and what's next**. Some chapters have been noted down in catchwords because of the simultaneous translation. The interpreter are mentioned at the end of the articles.

Many thanks to the Federal Cultural Foundation of Germany, to the Bavarian Ministry of state for Science, Research and Art and to the Langenscheidt Translation Service.

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Friday, October 31st 2003

- Subject of the day **Cultural identity and theatre politics in Poland**
Moderation: Tilmann Broszat (Director of the Theatre Festival SPIELART) and Michael Thoss (Director of the Forum Goethe-Institut)
- 11.00 Introductory words
 Michael Thoss, Director of the Forum, Goethe-Institut
- Welcoming speeches
- Maciej Nowak**, Manager and Artistic Director of Teatr Wybrzeze, Gdansk, Director of the "Zbigniew Raszewski" Theatre Institute, Warsaw
- Hortensia Völckers**, Artistic Director, Federal Cultural Foundation of Germany, Halle a. d. Saale
- Tilmann Broszat**, Festival Director, Theatre Festival SPIELART München
- 13.00 Lecture
 Die kulturelle Identität der Polen (The Cultural Identity of the Poles)
 Thomas Urban, Eastern European Correspondent for Süddeutsche Zeitung, Warsaw
- 13.30 Lecture
 Der Wechsel des polnischen Kulturkodes (Change in the Polish cultural code)
 Adam Krzeminski, Editor of the weekly magazine "Polityka", Warsaw
- 14.00 Lecture
 On the subject of theatre politics in Poland
 Maciej Nowak, Manager and Artistic Director of the Teatr Wybrzeze, Gdansk, Director of the "Zbigniew Raszewski" Theatre Institute, Warsaw
- 15:00 Lecture
 On the losing side: repertory theatre and its alternatives
 Dr Dragan Klaic, Dr of Theatre Science, Amsterdam
- 15.30
- approx. 17.00 Summary of the day and discussion
 Adam Krzeminski, Maciej Nowak, Thomas Urban
 Moderation: Dr Dragan Klaic
- afterwards Video presentation
 Komuna Otwock "Design: Gropius"

Saturday, November 1st 2003

- Subject of the day **The Art of Theatre in Poland: themes and forms – experiences and ideas**
Moderation: Tilmann Broszat (Director of SPIELART) and
Dr phil Jochen Wagner (Tutor of the Protestant Academy in Tutzing)
- 10.30 Lecture
 What is Polish theatre today?
 Malgorzata Semil, Deputy Editor of the Theatre Magazine “DIALOG”
 (till 2002), Dramaturg of Teatr Powszechny, Warsaw
- 11.00 Lecture
 Father of change, kids of change. New Polish theatre – what does it mean
 Piotr Gruszczynski, Theatre Critic, Warsaw
- 11.30 Lecture
 The opening of Polish theatre. The beginning of the process
 Janusz Marek, Curator of performing arts at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lecturer at the Institut of Polish Culture of the Warsaw University, Warsaw
- 13.00 Lecture
 (to be defined)
 Lech Raczak, Artistic Director of the Malta-Festival, Poznan
- 13.30 Interview with an artist
 Renate Klett, Theatre Critic and Publicist, interviews
 Zbigniew Szumski, Director, Teatr Cinema, Michalowice
- 14.30 Interview with the artists
 Renate Klett Theatre Critic and Publicist, interviews
 Katarzyna Kozyra, Artist in Fine Arts and Media, Berlin/Warsaw and
 Grzegorz Laszuk, Director, Teatr Komuna Otwock
- 16.00 Summary of the day and discussion:
- approx.17.30 **Piotr Gruszczynski, Katarzyna Kozyra, Grzegorz Laszuk, Janusz Marek, Lech Raczak, Malgorzata Semil, Zbigniew Szumski**
 Moderation: Renate Klett and Dr Dragan Klaić
- 19.00 Theatre Festival SPIELART München
 Forced Entertainment (GB)
 World premiere “Work-in-Progress (Bloody mess)”
 Carl-Orff-Saal, Gasteig
- or
20.30 Theatre Festival SPIELART München
 Needcompany (Belgium)
 “Images of Affection”
 Muffathalle
- or
21.30 Theatre Festival SPIELART München
 Teatr Cinema & SPIELART Factory
 World premiere “The Dictionary of Situations”
 Theater im Haus der Kunst

Sunday, November 2nd 2003

- Subject of the day **Theatre and Politics in Poland and Germany**
Moderation: Tilmann Broszat (Director of the Theatre Festival SPIELART)
- 10.30 Meeting in the foyer
- 11.00 Lecture
Shall we always be infected by November fever virus? Chances of Polish political theatre
Pawel Wodzinski, General and Artistic Director of Teatr Polski, Poznan
- 11.30 Lecture
Kunst als Waffe (Art as a weapon)
Dr Elisabeth Schweeger, Manager and Artistic Director, Schauspiel Frankfurt, Frankfurt
- 12.00 Break
- 13.00 Lecture
The dialogue through the theatre – facts and fallacies
Krystyna Meissner, Artistic Director and Manager of Teatr Wspolczesny, Director of the DIALOG Festival, Wroclaw
- 13.30
- approx. 15.00 **Final Podium Discussion**
Tim Etchells (Artistic Director, Forced Entertainment, GB), **Stéphanie Jasmin** (Artistic Associate, Théâtre UBU, Québec/Kanada), **Julius Deutschbauer/Gerhard Spring** (Artists, Vienna), **Krystyna Meissner**, **Dr Elisabeth Schweeger**, **Pawel Wodzinski**
Moderation: Renate Klett

General information

Conference languages: English - German - Polish with English translation
Free entrance to Forum Goethe-Institut

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Final version: 31.10.2003

Friday, October 31st 2003

Topic of the day: Cultural identity and theatre politics in Poland

Chairmen: Tilmann Broszat (Director of the Theatre Festival SPIELART) and
Michael Thoss (Director of the Forum Goethe-Institut)

Introductory words / Welcoming speeches:

Michael Thoss, Director of the Forum Goethe-Institut

Audience greeting and opening of the symposium

A remark about the German/Polish dialogue which is possible due to the festival SPIELART. The development of common perspectives of artistic co-operation is thus possible. The symposium offers the chance to learn something new about the national theatre landscape as well as about the artistic co-operation in a united Europe.

Hortensia Völckers, artistic director of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (cultural foundation of the federation), Halle a. d. Saale

Presentation of the work and aims of the Kulturstiftung: The main focus of the Kulturstiftung is on Poland; co-operation of the Goethe-Institut and the Kulturstiftung.

The Kulturstiftung was founded one and a half years ago; in the complex cultural landscape of Germany. The Kulturstiftung has the following objectives:

The Kulturstiftung acts as a stimulus with the aim to keep institutions alive as well as to create areas of artistic freedom. In addition to that it reacts responsively and in a flexible way to the needs of creative artists (for example in the field of project work). Ms Völckers points out the importance of culture nowadays.

Presentation of the project of the Kulturstiftung: "*German-Polish foundation*"

Idea: Dialogue between creative artists and institutions about common projects. Every year a new country shall be added (thus not only a bilateral but a trilateral dialogue becomes possible)

The field and the genre are variable and not fixed

Open attitude towards culture.

A meeting of 25 creative artists from both countries has shown that the voices of present culture are at the moment neglected; a perspective from the 60s is dominant.

Presentation of a small part of the programme for Eastern Europe: Project "*Relations*" (in cities like Sarajevo, Moscow ...) support of very different projects (invitations, residents ...) without any rigid programme.

Note: At the moment European culture is focusing mainly on saving its cultural heritage, voices of the present and that which is created today is often not heard and therefore overlooked.

The Kulturstiftung wants to work against that.

Creative artists need more space for their work and better working conditions.

Maciej Nowak, manager and artistic director of the Teatr Wybrzeze, director of the "Zbigniew Raszewski" theatre institute, Warsaw

Young artists are forming the present Polish theatre.

Nowak answers the question "*and what's next*" by naming many young Polish artists: Grzegorz Jarzyna, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Anna Augustynowicz, Agnieszka Glinska, Piotr Cieplak, Mariusz Trelinski, Remigiusz Brzyk, Lukasz Kos, Pawel Szkotak, Aldona Figura, Grazyna Kania, Jacek Glomb.

These people are shaping today's Polish theatre – Nowak hopes that their talents will be recognised.

In Poland the discussion of the theatre is focusing on how the state works. The theatre of Poland is a theatre of responsibility and of the mind, borders are crossed.

The political level is important as well.

Contemporary performances (German, Russian) are represented in Polish theatres.

The theatre is a model of co-operation – a new Europe is developing. In contrast to the USA the European theatre scene lives due to its diversity. The theatre is Europe!

Tilman Broszat, director of the theatre festival SPIELART, Munich

Ladies and gentlemen, a very warm welcome to this symposium. First of all I would like to thank the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (cultural foundation of the federation), due to which not only this symposium was made possible, but also the whole main focus on Poland during this year's theatre festival SPIELART. I would also like to thank the Goethe-Institut, especially the director of the Forum Goethe-Institut, Mr Michael Thoss, our partner in this event and host for the co-operation. Many thanks also to Mr Dr. Jochen Wagner from the evangelische Akademie Tutzing (Protestant academy in Tutzing) who has joined us in our efforts to organise this event and to Ms Zappel from the Forum Goethe-Institut, as well as to all the people who are involved in the festival with organisation and preparation.

Andrei Plesu, cultural minister from 1989 to 1991 and Foreign Minister of Rumania from 1997 to 1999, is now the principal of the New Europe College in Bucharest. In his essay "*Nostalgia and hope*" he formulates the following thesis:

After the fall of the iron curtain the naive opinion prevailed that a homogeneous Europe would automatically become a reality. So it was an unexpected experience that in spite of countless common interests one cannot underestimate the existing divergence between Western and Eastern European cultures.

"The European integration therefore doesn't only depend on the re-establishment of common interests but also on a wise harmonisation of the differences."

Andrei Plesu juxtaposes in an ideal-typical way the Eastern European cultural orientation and the Western European concept of civilisation: On the one hand there is a past-related focus on a common European cultural history, a Western mentality and attitude of mind and on the other hand there is a future-oriented pragmatic rationality of an optimal administration and of a constructive dynamism:

"The Eastern European has an image of Europe that is full of nostalgia. In contrast to that for the West the pole of orientation is hope. Typical for the East is the cult with old photographs and to remain in a romantic half shadow. The West on the other hand is mad about science fiction but easily succumbs to the ideology of triumph and luciferous exaltations."

Plesu advocates that these two perspectives should be intertwined in a productive way:

"It is necessary to exorcise the evils of the past but also to remember its laudable or at least picturesque époques. An innovative spirit as well as preserving patience are necessary, the bravery of a manager as well as contemplation. Anticipating dreams as well as memory. Hope as well as nostalgia. The East has to rediscover the magic of looking

ahead in a juvenile way, it has to get ready for a perspective that creates unity. The West has to rediscover the taste for tradition, the leisure to look back and recollect"

And he concludes as follows:

"In the East as well as in the West the need for reciprocal perception has to be deepened considerably. That means humane sympathy and an intellectual interest for the alienated half have to be strengthened. To 'understand' means to become one with that which you want to understand. All our endeavours have to be directed towards this 'unity'. Everything else is only administration."

So far Andrei Plesu... So let's get to work.

You will find the complete text in the brochure of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes.

Certainly we cannot cover all the cultural political questions concerning the EU-membership of Middle and Eastern European countries. Probably we have to develop the right manner of speaking first. We are aware of the fact that we won't get very far, if we don't at least acknowledge the cultural differences of the various Eastern European countries and we are focusing here on Poland and on the theatre, an art form which is - due to the language and the social environment of its individual audience - highly linked to local structures. Therefore it is possibly the most resistant art form, as far as movements which transcend borders are concerned.

Our aims for this symposium:

- To draw an outline of the social and cultural background of today's Polish theatre
- We will try to give an aesthetic and structural description of today's Polish theatre - with regard to the need for change or the need for stabilisation - and with regard to whether, and if so, what we can learn to understand from Polish theatre.
- We would like to present several artists from the festival and discuss the relationship between art and politics - in real life as well as on stage. The theatre festival SPIELART has the motto "*Is it real?*" This is meant to be a question about the possibility to reflect reality, politics and social issues in the theatre. But it is also meant to be a question about the contemporary art forms by means of which these reflections come to an expression.

The questions raised here shall be broadened during a further symposium in Poland in March 2004.

Today we will focus on the question concerning cultural and theatre policies at present.

After the lunch break Thomas Urban, correspondent for Eastern Europe from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, will talk about the cultural identity of the Polish people from a German perspective.

After that Adam Krzeminski, publicist of the "*Polityka*", which is the "SPIEGEL" or "*Newsweek*" of Poland, will talk about the change in the Polish cultural code.

Maciej Nowak, manager and artistic director of the theatre Wybrzeze and director of the theatre institute Zbigniew-Raszewski in Warsaw, who has already welcomed you here in place of the Polish cultural minister, will talk about theatre politics in Poland.

Then Dr Dragan Klaic, who was the director of the famous theatre institution in the Netherlands for many years and is now at the university of Amsterdam, an expert on Western and Eastern European theatre, will talk about repertory theatre and its alternatives. In a final discussion we would like to summarise the thesis and start a discussion about Polish theatre and its perspectives.

Tomorrow we will focus entirely on the theatre in Poland and its perspectives. Unfortunately Krystian Lupa who is suffering from a severe flu cannot be with us.

On Sunday we would like to have a closer look at the political in the theatre. This topic will already be touched on to a certain extent on Saturday.

- Translation Bettina Lemke -

Thomas Urban

Eastern European Correspondent for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Warsaw

The cultural identity of the Poles

Until the *Völkerfrühling* (literally 'people's springtime') in 1989, there was a simple formula for Poland and the cultural identity of the Poles: It is highly political. Its key points include the concepts of freedom and nationality. This highly political fervour swept through the arts, not all the time or everywhere, but to a large extent and more than in any of the other cultural nations in Europe.

However, since 1989, the year of the political changes, the collapse of the Eastern Block and the end of foreign rule, the Poles have been seeking to re-establish their cultural awareness, which is a difficult and sometimes painful process. Poland is a pluralistic society which by no means emerged in a day. It always existed beneath the thin veneer of the actual socialism, which never really stood a chance among the individualistic Poles. It is no coincidence that the country was known as the "*funniest place in socialism*", at least until the imposition of martial law by sombre General Jaruzelski 22 years ago. No less a person than Josef Stalin once said among friends: "*Socialism works in Poland like a saddle on a cow!*" But he still tried to force his social order on the Poles. This involved extreme force and the ultimate in brutality – several tens of thousands of Poles did not survive the Stalinist repression, a little known fact in Western Europe – but the Stalinists still failed in Poland. After the death of the Kremlin Ruler, who the Poles were also ordered to worship as a god-like figure, the Stalinists were forced to leave the field open for the Polish National Communists led by Wladyslaw Gomulka. Gomulka came up with the slogan that the nation had to rise again – and was acclaimed by the masses for it in 1956, making him the first communist leader to come to power on a single wave of mass popularity. But this enthusiasm waned again pretty quickly.

The battle to preserve the concept of nation became the key issue in the thinking of the Polish elite after the divisions in the late 18th century. The division lasted 123 years and was only overcome on the defeat of the dividing forces during the First World War. During the division, writers, painters and composers deliberately harked back to nationalist subjects in order to contribute to the survival of a Poland as a cultural nation. They used their methods to reinforce the self-imposed mission of the Catholic Church, which – squeezed between Protestant Prussia and Orthodox Russia – played a no less important role in preserving the Polish culture. The Church became an institution, a cultural sponsor which constantly put pressure on the Prussian and Russian divisional powers.

Frederic Chopin was not just a great composer, he was also known for preserving and refining traditional folk music. Adam Mickiewicz was not just a romantic poet, he also wrote patriotic drama. Henryk Sienkiewicz was not just a writer of gripping epics, but also a narrator of the great political victories over the enemies' armies. The painter Jan Matejko not only painted monumental battles and court ceremonies, but also immortalised them as milestones in Polish history and raised them to mythical status. Finally, Andrzej Wajda, the most internationally famous Polish artist from the last phase of the foreign occupation, Poland's membership of the Warsaw Pact (the Poles always viewed this name, which refers to their capital Warsaw, as pure cynicism on the part of their "*big brother*" in Moscow), not only produced his own distinctive language of images, but also dealt with the communist regime that the Soviet occupiers installed in Poland.

However, it is only natural that the works that these artists produced dealing with their own nation are largely secondary for foreign observers. It is no coincidence that Chopin was most famous internationally for his waltzes and piano concertos and that most critics view the revolutionary epic "Danton" with the unforgettable Gerard Depardieu in the title role as Wajda's greatest work, although it is a film which deals with a chapter of French rather than Polish history. In the same way, Sienkiewicz did not gain international acclaim for his "Polish Trilogy" depicting the victory over the knights, the Swedes and the Ukrainian Cossacks, but

for “Quo Vadis”. Sienkiewicz won the Nobel Prize for Literature for this historical novel about the persecution of Christians in Ancient Rome under Emperor Nero. However, the painter Matejko, whose heroic monumental paintings dominated images of the history of Poland for several generations and who was honoured with a “*Sceptre of the Interregnum*” in the 19th century as a spiritual leader of the divided nation, is completely unheard-of outside Poland.

However, “*Quo Vadis*” is as much a part of the overall context of Occidental culture as Wajda’s “*Danton*” or Chopin’s waltzes. Therefore the artists who created these works contributed to the fact that, in cultural terms, Polish society never left Europe. If you look at art, it becomes clear that Poland has always been a country whose elite feels that it is a part of Western culture and of the Europe of the Renaissance which gave rise to the whole Enlightenment movement – plus there is the Catholic Church to guarantee the link to Rome.

The Polish constitution of 1791 was coloured by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, the American Declaration of Human Rights – Polish officer Tadeusz Kosciuszko was one of the most important comrades of George Washington in the American War of Independence – and by the solutions to the French Revolution, and remains to this day a point of crystallisation for the cultural awareness of the Polish elite. This constitution, which was the very first in Europe, was too revolutionary for Poland’s neighbours in Prussia, Austria and Russia, who saw it as a threat to their own position of power – and erased the country from the political map of Europe.

The idea of political freedom, which was supposed to be a national ideal, could no longer be extinguished. The generations to follow made the struggle for freedom their ultimate goal, a struggle that went hand in hand with the battle to preserve the language and traditions. It was no revolutionary fight for freedom, more a conservative one – which is why the German revolutionaries of 1848 could not find any common ground with the Polish freedom fighters, nor could the social democrats in Posen and West Prussia with the Polish rebels in 1918. The Germans have always particularly struggled with the Polish notion that freedom means fighting for freedom. This tradition can be used to derive the fact that, for example, the Polish left-wing has never been pacifist, unlike the German left-wing – the depth of the mutual misunderstanding first became apparent in the German-Polish dispute over the war in Iraq earlier this year. Because of its experience in the Second World War, German society is dominated by a tendency to put peace above freedom. This was also one of the reasons why the German left-wing never supported the Solidarity movement during the eighties, because the movement was banned and underground. In the eyes of the German left wing, Solidarnosc endangered the fragile balance between the superpowers, although it overlooked the fact that the overwhelming majority did not want to be part of this Eastern bloc.

For the cultural elite of Poland, who were distributed across three countries, this urge to be free shaped the whole of the 19th century. The writers sought to join forces not only with the songwriters and opera composers but also with the Catholic Church to preserve the language and culture, but at the same time they were continually called upon to take up the fight for freedom, either openly or indirectly. Because the Polish publishing industry was subject to strict censorship during the divisions, the most important minds fled abroad, including poets Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Slowacki. “*Polish Messianism*” is often only thinly veiled and shines through in their works: the belief that Poland is the “*Christ among peoples*”, that it has survived martyrdom to be rescued and later rescue others. This Messianism gave the Polish people the strength to rise up against the foreign occupation on many occasions, but they were brutally defeated every time.

The fact that Chopin used Polish folk tunes in his compositions was also seen as a political statement. The German composer Robert Schumann, who was also a music critic, wrote about the effect of the traditional folk melodies on the Polish people, who were still part of the Tsardom at that time:

“If the tsar knew what a dangerous threat the simple melodies of Chopin’s Mazurkas were to him, he would ban the music. Chopin’s works are cannons wrapped in flowers.”

It was only when Poland regained its independence after the First World War that a wide-scale search for new forms of expression in art set in – as in the previous decade, as if the liberation from the foreign rule meant that national baggage could be discarded. This phase of the search, when Polish artists took part in the major discourses of the modern era, reflected them and gave them new impetus, was rudely interrupted by the catastrophe of 1939 – a double catastrophe for Poland as the country was attacked from the west and the east at the same time. The German and the Soviet occupiers tried – using the most brutal methods imaginable – to complete what, in the eyes of the Poles, Bismarck and the Russian governors dispatched to the Vistula by the Tsar had started decades early: to eliminate Poland as a cultural nation. It is a cruel irony of history that National Socialism and Soviet Bolshevism, which were such polar opposites in terms of ideology, agreed on this point. Symbols of the period include, on the German side, Dachau, the concentration camp for Polish intellectuals and priests – a chapter in history which is practically unknown in Germany – and the destruction of libraries, museums and art collections after the crushing of the Warsaw Uprising in Autumn 1944, and, on the Soviet side, the murder of some 20,000 Polish reserve officers, nearly all of whom belonged to the intelligentsia and were professors, doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, etc. by the secret police, the NKWD. 4000 of them were murdered in 1940 by being shot through the base of the skull near the Russian village of Katyn, and the name Katyn became synonymous not only with this policy of destruction, but also with the historical lies later associated with it.

Examination of the historical lies and propaganda under the communist regime in Poland actually threatened to split society. Although historians agree that the German occupation reinforced the cultural identity of the Poles despite all the losses due to deportations and mass murder – after all, it was always clear what was good and what was evil, who was friend and who was foe – the communist system did find its share of supporters, even among the intellectuals, not least because it instrumentalised and replaced national concepts and values after the death of Stalin. The Nobel Prize winner Czeslaw Milosz, also an emigrant like Mickiewicz and Slowacki a century before him, analysed this risk of the society splitting in his famous essay “*Seduced Thinking*”. So the struggle for cultural identity had to take on much more subliminal forms than in, for example, the 19th century, even though the freedom mottoes dating back to that time were still valid in the 20th century: Hence, a performance of Mickiewicz’s “*Funeral Rite*” sparked student riots in 1968. The play was seen as a call for rebellion against the Russian occupiers.

During the final throes of the regime in the eighties, the division was overcome and all the intellectuals found themselves on the other side again – protected by the Catholic church. And there was a major, but clear discourse on art and culture: the intellectuals read the same books, they saw the same films, had the same debates – not least because what was on offer in terms of cultural identity was restricted to finding, testing and analysing their own identity.

The period of major cultural discourse which brought all the intellectuals together ended in 1989. The discourses on a democratic Poland revealed a pluralistic society whose cultural identity is in flux – somewhere between the uncertain, vague, perhaps a little frightening Europe of today and the values and solutions of the divided nation of the 19th century. But two things have become very clear since 1989: firstly, the young generation has rapidly become westernised, even Europeanised or, to a certain extent, Americanised. And, secondly, the Catholic church has lost a great deal of its influence in terms of both culture and social policy. It is the real loser of the changes in 1989.

Many other cornerstones of the national culture and cultural identity seem to have lost importance, lost value and lost colour. But the last few months, with the heated debate between Germany and Poland on the causality between blame in the Second World War and the subsequent expulsion, have shown that the whole apparatus of national positions and identification can be activated again at lightning speed – if the nation has a feeling that, in this case not political freedom, but the ideal perception of history is under threat.

- Langenscheidt Translation Service -

Adam Krzeminski

Journalist of the weekly magazine "*Polityka*", Warsaw

The Change of the Polish Cultural Code

For Poland, the start of the 21st century is far better than the start of the 20th century, but considerably worse than its end. Stated by Alfred Jarry in "*Ubu Roi*" in 1896, the tripartite country constituted a political no man's land hundred years ago. Poland constituted the three peripheries of the three separating powers Russia, Prussia/Germany and Austria. Today, the country exhibits a clear outline on the political map of Europe. As an entity, Poland is in the process of developing its own position in the Euro-Atlantic world. Poland even believes that it can on the side of the Americans to some extent affect global policy, and in the EU—while not yet part of the inner circle—it defiantly attempts to rearrange the existing order in a constitutional dispute. As a result, the "*eternal underdog*" of the 19th century can now perceive itself as a "*victor of history*". Poland is present, is becoming fully fledged, and even attempts to be present in global policy.

After 1989, there was a relief that by liberating itself from communism, Poland reached the end of its two-hundred-year "*cultural code*" that had been characterised by separations, failed rebellions, oppressions, and suppressions by its neighbours and coincided with an indifference of Europe. Experts of the "*Polish soul*," e.g. the "*Pope of Literature*" Maria Janion, even suggested in 1991 that the entire imprint by a "*monolithic romantic-symbolic culture which had represented the foundation of the existence of the nation for 200 years*" had evaporated in plain view. This tradition of the romantic-larmoyant-pathetic aspiration for liberty, but also the mockery of the "*Polish-excessively Polish*," both of which repeatedly provided the Polish culture with important colours in the 19th and 20th centuries, increasingly faded away and appear of little value today. Even during the eighties, the romantically touched—and quite often even overblown—resistance rhetoric appeared short-winded. Afterwards the Polish literature and cinematic artwork lapsed into a temporary speechlessness—the nineties were characterised by the intellect limping behind the political and social changes in Poland for the first time. There was much discussion with regard to the collapse of the cultural sector, the impoverishment of the traditional customers of the literary or cinematic output—the intellect, even the imminent exit from the historical stage. This is due to the fact that this Eastern European "*makeshift*" of the middle class has out-played its historical role. To a certain extent it has repaid its debt to society, and now it is replaced by the climbers, the managers and new entrepreneurs. In contrast, the classical "intellectual" will either moult into a practical expert, accept his social descent, or similar to the pauperised Polish gentry at the end of the 19th century form the medium for a future protest movement.

However, such a movement does not appear to be in the works—despite the serious social disavowals of the previous years or the repeated resentment to the costs of the system change—expressed in strikes of employees of large companies unfit for survival, in furious "protest marches" of disconcerted farmers and workers of the endangered industrial enterprises towards Warsaw, and even in temporary successes of various obscure politicians and groupings. For the time being, the third republic is still a quasi one-third society: This is about the percentage of those satisfied by the political and economical development who are willing to actively contribute to as well as define the process. A further third was burdened with the main load of the dismantling of the system—primarily pensioners and residents of regions exhibiting weak infrastructures. The internal coherence of the society is to a significant extent due to the remaining third which confidently participates in the system change even if so far they had to accept more material disadvantages.

The disconcertion has still not been overcome. This is indicated by the at times rude manners of the young generation which the media enjoys to hawk. The twenty to thirty-year olds should already be free of traumatic experiences and subsequently of the compulsion of heroic self-portrayal. They have the chance of being the first "normal" generation of Poles which knows neither barricades nor prison cells and can claim the future more than the past

for itself. The actual "grandchildren of the people Poland" often act snappily, but they still remain pale in the process. They wipe away the authorities of the prior underground just as the "gurus" of emigration. Understandably they don't want anybody to prescribe them their master philosophers. Still callow and without developing an alternative model, they announce their *votum separatum* against the Polish mythology of resistance, against dubious "Wallenrodism"—a romantic fight against the enemy in the middle of its centre of power and in its uniform—as well as against "cordianic noble impotence"—of a powerless rebel. In 1991, one of these new "angry young men" writes, "If we hear the word 'fatherland,' we become suspicious, the reason being it is enormously worn. In addition, we perceive it more as a dangerous vampire than a mother." Facing the danger of unemployment, they demand substantial education and university reforms and enrol in high numbers in the promising majors: history or polonistics are no longer interesting. Today, law, economics and European studies are fashionable majors. The former boulevards of the university towns are becoming obsolete—there are no coffee house circles of rising men of letters, no student cabarets, no trouble. Nothing is left of the ease and the humour of the "orange alternative" of the eighties which made fun of everything and everybody in Breslau and Warsaw. Instead, there are fierce new "pimpled faces" which in the middle of the 90's are referred to as the "Pampers generation." These emphatically apolitical but career-conscious yuppies have been the actual "cultural revolutionaries" of the third republic. They did not care for the ethos of the *Solidarność* or the "system-inherent reformer" of the past, quite often used pointed elbows and a bulky language, and dictated the tone in the media and the advertising agencies. There is no trace of the elegance of the niche society which even in the official media maintained a noble style against the everyday politicalisation in the sixties and seventies—e.g. in the "Cabaret of the Older Gentlemen" or in lyric chansons and frivolous songs. The tenor of the Polish cultural discourse became more apodictic in the nineties: According to the exaggerated writings of Manuela Gretkowska, one of the fashionable young authors, it did not care about the past, patriotic rubbish or well-meant didactics. Instead, it wanted to count its orgasms in its prose. And it was successful, succeeding in disturbing the every now and then quite weak around the chest Polish male society by providing deeper insights into the true inner life of self-confident women. This has little in common with the traditional image of the Polish woman as Madonna and mother of the nation.

However, this is only one face of the "new Poland." The vast majority of the younger generation reacted with agreement, pragmatism and "positivism" to the changes of the previous years. Even if arbitrary "tribal wars" between hooligans after big soccer games signal unresolved social problems, sociological research has shown that the youth in particular perceives its opportunities optimistically and takes it for granted that the whole world is now openly available. This is also supported by the cultural revival—especially in the Polish provinces—which is driven by a new regional self-esteem and the desire for discovering a new local identity. It was definitely no coincidence that particularly the former German regions—after all constituting a third of the area of today's Poland—developed a cultural society, e.g. "Borussia," which excavates and impartially presents the genuine Polish, German, Jewish, Lithuanian, Swedish and Czech regional histories. Instead, it indicates functional structures and attitudes of the social commitment. It is not a handed-down inhaling of the own myths, but an acceptance of a self-confident solicitation of the overall inheritance and the shadows of all rather than only the "own" former inhabitants of these regions.

During the 90's, the new Poland also developed a new self esteem which is less reliant on the typical crutches of collective identity—Olympic gold medals, soccer world championships or world-renown brand items. As a result, the level of optimism in Poland has for instance exceeded the respective level in the former GDR for years. The quiet joy about the Nobel Prize in literature which was awarded to Wisława Szymborska in 1996 was characteristic. In 1980, the Nobel Prize for Miłosz was still a banner, an international award for the fighting Poland—this is how some perceived the award at that time. This time, the lyric poet from Krakow celebrated in a small circle, and even though homeless people of Warsaw devoutly listened to her poems on the screens in the hall of the train station, some newspapers had grown to value her prize less than a Polish boxing champion that was supposed to fight in

America for the professional world championship. And when the fighter lost, the third republic moaned but did not seek comfort in noble lyrics.

Literature debates, pondering about the philosophy of history, and coming to terms with the past, despite their occasional discussion in the Polish media or their utilization in the political arena, by no means created such neurotic reactions in the nineties as in those post-communist societies which had only lifted the muzzle in 1989. In the context of the Eastern Bloc, Poland at least went its own way since 1956, and for many decades it performed in-depth discussions of its problems, its "white spots" and its "self-inflicted disgraces" in various manners—officially, unofficially, within its borders and abroad. These topics were naturally publicised with a greater level of precision and a larger number of facts after 1989. Once again, the collaboration with Stalinism, the partial responsibility of Poland for "ethnic cleansing" (which despite possibly being forced by the war were nonetheless often barbarous and brutal), the displacement and the evacuation of Germans, "Action Vistula" which was directed at the people of Ukraine, and the sickening of the last Polish Jews in order to force their departure in March of 1968 were subject of the public mind. "Coming to terms with the past" was repeatedly subject of the Polish home policy, but realistically it was approached rather carefully in practice. Adam Michnik told the "Le Monde" in 1998, "In our case, a lustration could not be performed and would only have resulted in chaos." "Today, it is impossible to separate the good Polish people from the bad ones by means of a single cut with a scalpel. The separating line ran on the inside of each individual. It cannot be the case that thirty million Poles were members of the resistance or fighting on the barricades. Living was paramount. The Poland of that time was a twisted type of a "normal" life. The French should be able to understand it well. Petain was no traitor, but rather a human being who was supported by a large majority of the French when he signed the surrender ..." This also constitutes an important indication for a change of the Polish code, the distancing from a myth which depicts Poland as an individual collective freedom fighter and a transition to the analysis of normal complex patterns of behaviour.

In the years after 1989, it is possible to observe relapses to mythical thinking and the ritualisation of history in Poland as much as everywhere else. However, the association with the own history was performed in much more critical and relaxed manners than after 1918 and 1945. The Polish people have less need for defining themselves by means of political suffering and sacrifices of the past. Even the competition with other heavily burdened victims of the holocaust in this century—signified by the controversy with regard to the symbol Auschwitz (excluding the holocaust or the planned destruction of the Polish leadership)—has been concluded in due time. It appears as if a part of the Polish-Jewish animosity after the war not so much based on "virulent Polish anti-Semitism" as it has occasionally been suggested by the German media, but rather on the "egoism of the victims" which as an individual act of terror remained in the shadow of the holocaust and were displaced by the Western European conscience, "put into perspective or promptly forgotten. However, the pan-European debates about World War II and Communism during the 1990's resolved many of the old myths and national mortifications. Today, Polish people search for their self-esteem in the present and the future rather than the past. And while the resentment of the population sporadically broke the surface—at times even in an unpleasant fashion—it hardly ever went beyond the level of verbal aggression. The country may suffer from political complexity, from the inefficiency of still incomplete political structures and from unavoidable social distortions, but it is passing these cliffs without smashing the boat.

Similar to most Eastern Central European countries, Poland is also searching for its new position in the changing environment. Everything is taken into consideration—all familiar patterns of the "Polish being." Even the Polish Catholicism exhibited first cracks the moment the communist adversary had disappeared from the stage. Similar to an "Überfather," the Pope still keeps the Polish church united. However, the first debates with regard to the "church after the victory" indicated a new disconcertion—it is quite conceivable that a "Marcin Luterski" already spends time in a monastery cell and finalises his 95 theses. However, his desired direction for the reformation of the Polish Catholicism is still not finalised. It could be opened in an enlightened manner or, in contrast, be barricaded in a "castle under siege" of

the only true faith in a fundamentalist manner. Does he originate from the region around Krakow and Warsaw or the one around Thorn and Gdansk, once constituting the main base of operation for "Radio Maryja?"

The favourable international constellation of the nineties suggested that Poland might have been granted a break for finding itself. 200 years after being divided, Poland is so unobjected that many historians developed a desire for contradicting aspects of the common Polish history. In contrast to the previous decades, these activities were less focused on the question as to how much east and how much west we hold "within ourselves" after the shift to the west or whether we even have become a little "more Prussian" after we slipped into the old Prussian shoes. Renown historians astonished the readers with provoking theses and revisions. This ease of handling familiar self perceptions testified on the one hand to a reassuring enlightening sovereignty, and on the other hand also to the fact that the departure from many carefully guarded myths had long been under way.

After 1989, the Europeans insecurely looked into the future and searched over and over for the keys from the past. However, these keys no longer fit. The Vienna Congress of 1815, the Berlin Congress of 1878, Versailles in 1919 and Yalta as well as Potsdam in 1945, neither of those provide seminal models for further discussion. Nonetheless all of Europe faced questions with regard to historical continuities and new beginnings: To what extent does Germany return as "the" central power of Europe to the global stage? To what extent has Russia already replaced its imperial driving force by a democratic one? How will the ability of France—the superpower generously nominated by the Anglo-Saxons after 1945—develop with regard to practically shouldering a less "Romanic" Europe resulting from the expansion to the east? The years after 1989 were characterised by the fact that Poland experienced a change of all European coordinates. Not a single neighbour remained the same, and the number of neighbouring states grew from three to seven. While Poland has not yet switched from being an "inland" of the Soviet hemisphere to being the "Eastern Mark" of the European Union and the NATO, it has managed to become the "forefront" and a turntable between the (in the meantime no longer so self-confident) west and the (still quite incalculable) east. The eastern expansion of the NATO and the European Union generates a completely new Euro-Atlantic constellation, and it appears as if Poland advanced to the "solid core" of Europe for the first time in 200 years.

Poland views Germany to be the most stable country among all its neighbours. The few years since the "great treaty of friendship" have still not accomplished any miracles, but all polls confirmed continuously rising sympathies for Germany and the Germans. It appeared as if the Polish people had finally become bored of their anti-German sentiments and developed more self-esteem for facing this difficult neighbour. The advantages of the open border, the successful conversion to cooperating and competing with the Germans, the understanding that it is possible to be both cheaper and at times faster than the sometimes cumbersome Germans, all these aspects gave Poland a new self-worth.

The Polish-German psycho-drama has achieved a new quality: Young people from Poland pecked through the old history of East Germany, cooperated with German refugees to organise exhibitions, established museums with a focus on local history and wrote Gdansk narratives as if they had been raised by Guenther Grass. For some intellectuals of the war generation, these activities almost amounted to a sacrilege. They believe that this integration of the German traditions in the Polish history and culture can be perceived as an abandonment of the familiar Polish identity. In addition, Germany has become the reference point with regard to civilization for most Poles, which is why in a "Polityka" interview, Andrzej Wajda stated his lack of surprise when he pointed out that in this context "the Poles would be generally satisfied if they were Germans."

A "change in paradigms" did not just shake the Polish culture, but instead all aspects of life. And even if the old borders of separation can still be felt: Half a century after being driven from Lithuania's "Polish Paradise" and the Ukraine's "Polish Hell," the Poles have become more westernised. And another aspect that thwarted Stalin's plans: The "shift to the west" did

not accomplish an eternal link between Poland and the Soviet Union, but rather resulted in the country drifting to the west.

This in return is the central issue of the new Russian-Polish psycho-drama which vehemently became obvious in the 1990's. Some Russians react in a brutal manner to the "Polish treason," the drive to join the NATO and the EU. In the monthly Warsaw magazine "WiêŸ," a Russian slavist pointed out, the Poles perceived themselves to be a redoute of the west. The Russians, on the other hand, viewed Poland as a member of the Slavic family which had been "corrupted by the west" rather than a fully entitled contributor to the western civilization. In contrast, the Polish view perceived Russia to embody non-Europe, despotism and barbarity. It was believed that Russians secretly felt in a similar manner about themselves, but denied the Poles the right to address Russian sins.

At the turn of the millennium, "geography" was no longer a Polish trauma. For the first time in two centuries, there was no longer a feeling of being wedged in between two mighty neighbours. Rather, Poland discovered its suitability for bridging the east and the west. And it is at that time that an unexpected turn occurred during this period of change. The same Pope of Literature that had announced a "change of the cultural code" in 1991 reappeared ten years later with an excellent book "To Europe—Yes, but Together with Our Dead." The book derived a European legitimacy for the Polish culture of the 21st century from the Polish romanticism. This was no longer a fundamental revision, but rather a change in direction. No longer was the goal to switch to a completely different road, instead it attempted to build on the existing foundation. Around the turn of the millennium, the time when Poland factually shedded all ties to its unfortunate history of the previous 200 years and arrived both at the NATO and subsequently at the EU, the intellectual Poland experienced an almost retarding period which appeared as if the uncertainties of the futures were to be addressed by finding a foothold in the past. The value conservatives attempted to gain leadership of the opinion. As if Roman Dmowski, the spiritual father of Polish nationalism who crafted the foundation of "modern Poland" from "national egoism," anti-Semitism and an anti-German attitude was still politically correct in the 21st century, a national-catholic politician wrote Mr. Dmowski's name on his EU flag. This suddenly created the impression that to the same extent that Europe—and specifically the EU—grew closer with Poland, it became easier for Polish politicians and intellectuals to resort to the antiquated language. The parliament rumbled "Nice or death" when it became public that Giscard d'Estaing planned less favourable conditions for Poland in his constitutional project than had been assured in Nice in December of 2000. Poland was said to face a condition similar to the summer of 1939, and it was perceived to run danger of losing its sovereignty. And the emotional as well as unanimous Polish refusal of a suggestion for a German centre against displacement voiced by the Association of Displaced Individuals reminded of the 1960's—in particular due to its phraseology and the public temperature. A turn in the period of change? Not entirely; according to opinion polls and the EU referendum, the Polish society does not follow this retarding phase without limitation. The results of the referendum in the former German regions were much more convincing than for instance in eastern Poland, and according to a poll of the "Rzeczpospolita," 57% of those polled even believed that the Germans had also been victims of the war. This result contradicted the belief of the majority of intellectuals, politicians and publishers.

Of course one could ask, what does this have to do with culture, literature, cinematic artwork and theatre? At first sight, not much. However, factually there are some aspects worth considering. The main issues are the moods in the country, the self-assurance, the values and convictions. Poland did not experience the nostalgia which occurred in the former GDR. A "Good bye, Lenin" would have been impossible and incomprehensible, mainly due to the fact that the—increasingly fading—myth of "solidarity" blocks such a minimisation and constitutes a patricide of the communist nation (or rather—in the case of the GDR—a matricide). The focal point is not the communist Poland, but rather Poland as a whole, Poland—in the words of the previously and repeatedly quoted Maria Janion—"our only love." Professor Janion dryly noted, fifteen years after the change, Poles more and more realised that they had lost their love, they were no longer turned on by her, they were no longer hypnotised and "vampirised," and they were no longer moved to sacrifice the body. Love

scatters, the national liturgies as much as the anniversaries: the beginning of the war in 1939, the Warsaw Rebellion in 1944, the defeat of the Bolsheviks in 1920 and the General Strike of 1980, all these anniversaries fail to warm the Polish hearts. Freedom has arrived as much as normality. Growing up coincided with the disappearance of the loved one. Zdzisław Pietrasik, an attentive observer of Poland's cultural scene and editor of the feature pages in the "Polityka," writes, "Poland does not thrill the Poles." The former love greatly disappointed, "she was supposed to be beautiful, caring and full of virtue, but she has turned out to be self-indulgent, freely available, she ages too early and is not even a reliable friend."

As a result, the Poles experience a phantom pain—not for the decaying Lenin as seen in Russia or the GDR—but rather for a disenchanting ideal of Poland. The neighbours take it in a relaxed manner: Romano Prodi addressed the Poles, "Trust us and yourselves. You simply are no martyrs." However, the moment of realisation causes pain to some individuals. What does it mean, no martyrs? No "Christ among the people?" No nation of victims equalling the Jews? A number of intellectuals complain that this is another way of placing us in a row with other culprits, that moral boundaries are blurred and historical relativisations are welcome from any direction. Nowadays, only few appreciate the fact that this is the appearance of chances for the desired liberation from pubertal uncertainties, from the eternal childishness of the Polish nature which Witold Gombrowicz hated and satirised to such an extent. Affairs of corruption which are spread out on television can offend and alienate. On the other hand, they can also increase self-esteem, this is the way policy—as well as its control by the media and parliament—functions. Humiliating errors on the European stage? Learning needs to occur somewhere. Pathetic individuals serving as representatives? The inexperienced and at the same time responsible people searches and makes mistakes, but it also corrects itself. Better a parliamentary than a courtly society. Etc. etc.

Poland has removed its crown of thorns and currently believes to face the European scene in her birthday suit. Skinning as well as a new self-identification takes time. "Identity is not a computer program which can be deinstalled by performing a single click to be replaced by a different, more sophisticated application." Pietrasik continues, "The Pole turns away from the Polish Republic, and at the same time he is unaware which past provides reliability." Today, it is this intellectual and mental space which grows the Polish cultural scene and consequently the theatre life. Where are the buoys in the surf?

One of the most famous Polish theatre directors, Krzysztof Warlikowski—whose exceptional production of Shakespeare's "Storm" was perceived to be an indirect contribution to the Polish *Jedwabne* debate regarding the Polish guilt in relation to a Jewish pogrom in July of 1941—points out that he physically experiences the feeling of loss of the audience in his theatre in Warsaw. This experience is unique insofar that he does not notice such feelings for instance in Paris. "I have the impression that the whole nation feels lost ..." and maybe it is due to that fact that there is such a feverish atmosphere in the Polish theatre. Warlikowski originates from Stettin, his parents were displaced Poles. He resides in Warsaw, a due to the destructions and historical extremes "somewhat barbaric city." He believes that we returned back to civilization. He was shaped by the master of satire, Witold Gombrowicz, though he currently finds his footing with Shakespeare, including all his brutality, his contempt for etiquette and any form of political correctness. He himself is hated and loved because of his provocations. He sees himself as a rebel, and while he has developed an extensive sense of tradition, he desires for in-depth confrontations with the same. At the same time, he belongs to a group of influential directors of this new mood, e.g. Krystian Lupa, Grzegorz Jerzyna, Anna Augustynowicz. Experts agree that one aspect applies to all of them—they could not care less for the cultural death, they produce theatre in accordance with their own tastes, their own beliefs, and the mentality of the Poles.

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Maciej Nowak

Manager and Artistic Director of the Teatr Wybrzeze, Gdansk, Director of the "Zbigniew Raszewski,, Theatre Institute, Warszawa

On the subject of theatre politics in Poland

The relations between theatre and politics may be treated from two different points of view.

- **theatre in the politics**
- **politics in the theatre**

The first-mentioned one is perhaps less interesting, but it is worth drawing up a short statement in order to put things straight.

And so, currently there are about 100 repertoire theatres and ca 400 independent groups in Poland. They are financed from self-governments' own incomes at the level of municipalities, districts or provinces. Two theatres, the Nation Theatre in Warsaw and Stary Teatr in Cracow receive money directly from the state budget through the Ministry of Culture. In the face of such a huge number of regional institutions taking care of theatres, it is rather impossible to talk about any state policy in theatre area. Theatre policy in relation to every stage is determined by local connections. In some towns, the actors are loved and well-financed by the local authorities, in some other are looked with disgust and maintained in torpor. They are not closed down only because of the strong attachment of Poles to the appearances of high culture. And every town theatre, even the one performing only trivial farces or plays from the reading lists for school children, is a cultural alibi for the authorities

Artistic freedom is accepted in Szczecin or Wroclaw, while in other towns, for instance in Łódź, a courtly theatre is preferred, expressing some national-catholic beliefs of the current city mayor. Warsaw, city office is financing typical boulevard theatres, which in other countries have to earn their living themselves, but also the most interesting and daring Polish stage, that is Teatr Rozmaitosci led by Grzegorz Jarzyna. The budget provides money for typical theatres having big toupes, but also for artists from the so-called alternative circles, that is for instance: the Eighth Day Theatre (Teatr Ósmego Dnia), the Gardzienice Centre (Osrodek Gardzienice) or the Kana Theatre (teatr kana). At the same time however, as everywhere, young independent groups have great problems with receiving permanent subsidies.

Consequently, there are no rules in these respects and there is no use talking about some specific theatre's position in the policy of the Polish state.

It is much more interesting to ponder on the presence of politics in the theatre. As a matter of fact, the public discussion did not take up this subject in recent years. It had been otherwise before.

The Polish public theatre has existed for almost 240 years. Its origins date back to the end of monarchy, to a period when our country was losing independence on behalf of stronger and more modern neighbours (i.e.: Russia, Prussia and Austria. Already during the first seasons of the national theatre in Warsaw, the obscurantism of the Polish social and cultural model was a subject constantly present in the repertoire and strongly criticised. A typical conflict passing in many years texts from that period occurs between the hero attached to tradition, backward mentally and in respect of civilisation, and his adversary, representing open western culture. The great Polish historian of the theatre Zbigniew Raszewski wrote as follows: "The robe of a Polish noble and the dress of coat were becoming the symbols, were showing a conflict between the admiration for the western civilisation and the attachment to differences, that appeared in the period when Poland lived isolated".

The last decade of the 18th century brought about the collapse of the Polish State. It is in such conditions, that the actor, stage director, author and theatre entrepreneur Wojciech Boguslawski, named with grandiloquence the father of Polish theatre, was conducting his

activity. Political problems were always present in his performances but due to the censorship, they existed in the form of allusion now and then. However, the audience understood them perfectly. The opening of the opera entitled "Kracowiacy I Górale" from 1794 scored the greatest success. It was one of the factors leading to the outbreak of the so-called Kosciuszko Insurrection against the Russian invaders. When 40 years later in the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, the lines "Love for the motherland is sacred" brought about the revolution against the Dutch, the Belgians were only imitating what had happened in Warsaw before.

In the 19th century Poland disappeared from the maps of the Europe. The theatrical life could not develop freely in the invaded country. Consequently, the poets-dramatists, the works of whose were staged only several decades later, intercepted the burden of the political debate. In most cases, the sense of responsibility for the country and the society, mixed with a romantic mannerism, constituted the basic value. During the almost entire 20th century, after Poland regained independence, these works became a basis for theatre repertoires. The subsequent contacts between theatre and politics came with the works by Leon Schiller, the most outstanding artist of the Polish theatre in the 20th century, the co-worker of Edward Gordon Craig. Persuaded of the social duties of the scenic art, he created the conception of Zeittheater, which he realised in the twenties and thirties. It was a phenomenon inspired by German and Russian achievements and gave the Polish theatre a great amount of energy and a stimulating controversy. Schiller wrote in 1928: "Artists and technical workers in the theatre (...) need to be involved in the most vital social issues (...) They cannot plead art's independence and immunity".

Polish theatre people most of which Schiller's students were faithful to this message during several decades that followed. Sometimes it entailed grotesque effects, as in the Stalinist period, when the social and political commitment gets to schematic propagandist productions. On the other hand, it led also to some truly pathetic moment. The performance of "Dziady" by Adam Micjiewicz, directed by Kazmierz Dejmek in 1967 at the National Theatre in Warsaw, was one of such productions. The enthusiastically received critical allusions to the Russians and to the government made that this performance was taken off on demand of authorities. This in turn provoked anticommunist demonstrations in the streets, which was the beginning of the events called the Polish 1968. Kazmierz Dejmek was faithful to social theatre until the end of his life. Though, after the introduction of the state of war in 1981 he assumed a different pro-government position. In the performance staged at the time, entitled "The liberation" by Stanislaw Wyspianski, the only example of the Polish national drama, he ridiculed the exaltation of the independence movement, Konrad Swinarski, another great figure of the Polish stage, also remembered about theatre's social sensibility. As in the case of Schiller, the inspiration for that kind of reasoning resulted from German roots, he staged many plays in Germany, he happened also to cooperate with Bertolt Brecht in the Berliner Ensemble.

In spite of the strong tradition of social and political theatre, it was rather absent in Poland after the year 1989. It was a custom during the communist times that the representatives of actors' served on the Central Committee of the communist party. In 1989, after the first free elections of the Sejm, the actors became somehow automatically the members of the parliament, too. Izabela Cywinska, theatre manager, became the first minister of culture and from one hour to the next she changed her seat of theatre director for the seat of the head of a ministry. This involvement of theatre people in the systemic transformations was not reflected in a particular way in the artistic life. During the next few years, we lived sustained by hope that together with the collapse of the communist rule all the problems of our country were resolved once for all. And helped by good business conditions, we started mainly paying off the loans for cars, new household appliances and going on holiday to Greece. We had to make money after all! The performance of "Tamara" during which the audience each evening part in a copius banquet given by the just open Hotel Marriot in Warsaw, was a symbol of theatrical life of that period.

Disillusionment came with the economic crisis of the end of the nineties. We woke up to find ourselves in a country, in which 40 % of the population lives at other people's cost (a value

two times greater than during the communist times), where the consumption of meat is lower than during the system of ration-cards of the eighties, and where the children from small villages Schools faint during their lessons because of hunger. This country, the citizens of which perpetrated pogroms of Jews, this country, which having been invaded in in the past by stronger neighbours, becomes the invader itself. This a country with which the entire masses of my fellow citizens do not want to be identified.

For a long time theatre failed to notice this reality and, as a matter of fact, still fails to make a diagnosis of the situation. If there are some artists interested in social declarations indeed, then, according to the Polish tradition, they surely have experience from the German theatre. I have in mind the artists working on German stages such as Krzysztof Warlikowski, Grazyna Kania, educated in Berlin, or Jan Klata, fascinated by the work of Frank Castorf. It is probably not a coincidence that the theatre of Anna Augustynowicz, set in Szczecin – as close as 100 kilometres from Berlin, and as far as 500 kilometres from Warsaw. In general, the atmosphere of territories that belonged to the German State before the war, and that belong to Poland nowadays, makes theatre artists more sensitive to social issues. Besides, it would be impossible to escape from it, as every day you observe monstrous unemployment, the degradation of the formerly flourishing industrial infrastructure, the increasing aggression and prostitution of youths. You will find this type of theatre approaching these subjects in Legnica, Walbrzych and in Gdansk, where I am proud to be head of the Wybrzeze Theatre.

We are staging Brecht there in the dilapidating rooms of the Gdansk Shipyard with the unemployed workers, we are discussing about globalisation performing “Gagarin Way” by Gregory Burk, we had the Polish première of “The Vagina Monologues” by Eve Ensler, we are telling the stories of young people from the back yards, using contemporary texts of Polish and Russian playwrights, staging “The Powder Keg” by Dejan Dukovski we are touching on the subject of the Balkans.

Dramatists are also trying to make a diagnosis of the present-day situation. Tadeusz Slobodzianek, the author of the play continuing the story of “The Bedbug” by Mayakovsky, was a pioneer in this respect. The work entitled “The dream of the Bed bug, that is comrade Christ” relates the events of Prispikin, who after the collapse of the Soviet Union flees the Moscow’s zoo. The entire trend of an unnoticed for many years socially sensitive playwriting is unveiled by the recently published anthology entitled “The porno generation”, edited by Roman Pawlowski. You will find there the text by Marek Pruchniewski, entitled “Lucja”, which is a journalistic description of the tragedy of infanticide. There is also the drama by Przemysław Wojcieszek, telling the story of rioting amidst the unemployed young people from Slupsk, there is Pawel Sala inspecting young delinquents.

Ingmar Villqist, a playwright who came into sight only 4 years ago, occupies another position in these circles. Currently he is the most frequently staged Polish playwright at home and abroad. He came to the theatre from the world of modern art, where during many years he was respected exhibition curator and gallery director. He brought to our world the ideas of the latest art: experiments, social contexts appreciation for the newest forms of expression. In his metaphorical plays, he is defending the right to be different, dissimilar. It is an element of self-promotion, but I am proud that Villqist is a resident dramatist and director at my theatre.

The slowly recovering Polish social and political theatre does not have a good press. Today, Polish theatre taste is dominated by a tone of self-securing and escapism. Harmonious, poetic and linear forms are high-priced. Without making greater mistakes, it is possible to foresee what the tone of critics will be after every performance trying to touch any painful subjects from the first pages in newspapers. Most likely, it will be accused of spreading sensation, of naturalism and, and which is the worst, of publicist journalisms. The last-mentioned accusation is probably the most stupid one. As I am a journalist by profession, I know it very well how difficult and socially needed this publicist journalism is.

Why in Poland, where people are so attached to tradition, the tradition of political theatre is not in high esteem? And why, when such a performance does appear, it is always due to the German or western mediation? Why the Poles are so repelled by political theatre? To the

extent that even Frank Castorf could not have a good grip on our audience. To be frank, the Warsaw presentations of "The Weavers" by Hauptmann as well as of "The Insulted and Injured" by Dostoevsky proved to be disasters. The audience was thinning away from one minute to the next, and the first person that gave the sign for retreat was no one else but Andrzej Wajda.

Only the arrival of "Endstation America" may be treated as a success. During the performance in the Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw, the young audience, usually avoiding theatre, was going mad. At the same time however, a major part of the intellectual, traditional audience was disgusted. It was possible to feel it in critics after all. Why is political theatre something difficult to accept for the Poles? The answer to this question is painful. And well, the theatre expressing itself about political issues shares the responsibility for the world in which it operates. Consequently, by the nature of things, it has to be a leftist theatre. Meanwhile, in my country such a declaration would actually be a social and artistic suicide. After several decades of abuse of leftist expressions employed for unjust purposes, the socially engaged art provokes irritation. Like a glass of vodka, the day after a hard night party.

It does not signify Polish artists are not sensitive to the human distress. I do not want to say they are stupid, but most often they confine themselves to the feeling of compassion and to a deep. Individual psychology, harmonising well with the doctrinally treated liberalism. The question about the systemic reasons of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, intolerance, banditry, drug addiction, terrorism provokes anger. Since it disturbs the order that we established with much trouble a dozen or so years ago, and that we do not want to call in question. And though, an artist creating his scenic world from scratch, needs to put cumbersome questions to himself and to the audience. The church cannot provide answers to all these questions; the CNN service will not inform us about everything.

Konrad Swinarski, I already mentioned here about, divided the scenic literature into two categories: above the waist and below the waist. Above the waist can be exemplified by Ionesco or Mrozek, this is that kind of literature, which after some speculation switches of (...) the lower part of the body and someone plays with the toy blocks. But there exists such a literature as Shakespeare or Genet, which encompasses the entire human being, from head to foot. And so, a major part of the Polish theater today is a play with aesthetic blocks. Fortunately, such artists who perceive the human being with all his filth and extraordinariness have already appeared. They have the chance to express what the today's Poland is feeling.

To summarize my presentation, I would like to underline 5 general topics:

1. For the moment there is no use talking about some specific theatre policy in Poland
2. There is the strong tradition of social and political theatre in Poland, but after the year of 1989 it was rather absent of our stages
3. Only the last seasons some talented artists and playwright started to evaluate social and political question
4. Political theatre in Poland is not in high esteem nowadays
5. The main reason of such a situation is the lack of leftist reflection and attitude, like a result of 50 years of communist regime in the country

Dr Dragan Klaic

Dr of Theatre Science, Amsterdam

Time to think of a reform

Repertory companies dominate but more theater models are needed

I am addressing you today probably not so much because of my rather long and deep involvement with both Polish and German theatre cultures but perhaps more because of my in research, reflection and polemics about the European theater systems and their future. For this occasion I was asked to take a sort of a double look of a foreigner at the German and Polish theatre cultures and to place them into a broader European perspective.

In Poland and in Germany, but also in several other European countries, the repertory theater model - a company with a steady ensemble, administration and techniques - still dominates. It is a critique of this model and the outline of its alternatives that are central in my contribution today. Germany has around 260 repertory theater companies and there are more than 100 in Poland too. Neither the collapse of socialism in Poland in 1989, with a subsequent transition to the market economy, nor the German reunification in 1990 were used as opportunities to instigate some changes in this dominant model. In fact, a study I carried in 1996 showed that in the entire Central and Eastern Europe, plus the former Soviet Union there were still 1200 repertory theatre companies operating, employing something between 150 and 250 thousand people, steadily. They did not necessarily all get their salary on time nor in money. Hardly any theatres had been closed in this whole area in the last ten-fifteen years. And even if the closing of the Schiller Theater in Berlin still lives here as a professional trauma, it seems that it has not been the *mene tekel fares* of the German theatre as it was originally thought, the signal announcing massive closures of venues. Everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe, a lot of repertory theatres continue to exist but their artistic flame has become tiny, they suffer from reduced subsidies and own passivity and disorientation, they lost most of their artistic energy and often lost a significant part of their audiences as well, and with less money they have much less output. The same politicians who, without batting an eyelash, closed so many factories and fired thousands of workers, didn't dare to close theatres because they don't want to be called cultural barbarians.

This model of a repertory theatre is originally a German invention, in the long march of the German bourgeoisie towards respectability and institutional culture, since the second half of the 18th century. The modern variant of the repertory company is linked to the ambitious sense of purpose of Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko, the founders of the Moscow Artistic Academic Theater at the end of the 19th century. They merged intellectual and artistic standards of excellence in serving the audience with the dominant role of the director and pursued parallel reinterpretation of the classics and a development of a contemporary repertoire in the style of psychological illusionism. This system has been very successful artistically, especially in raising the level of acting, in its stylistic coherence, guaranteed by the director and the designer, but it has never been financially successful. Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko were private entrepreneurs and they were making losses from the very first season, gallantly covered by the rich Russian merchants. Their theater quickly lost its artistic and intellectual autonomy in the Soviet state, while gaining steady state subsidy, but this model has been reproduced all around Europe and consolidated with the financial support of the public authorities. The repertory model replaced the actor-dominant model, the model of theater production dominated by strong narcissist actor's personality. Susan Sonntag, in her recent novel *In America*, shows this earlier model on the example of the Polish actress Helena Modejska, who embodied the continuity of the Polish national culture

even without a national state, asserted the unity of the repertoire style in both Austrian-occupied and Russian-occupied parts of Polish lands despite the fact that the Russian

theater censorship was more intolerant than the Austrian censorship. Modejska moved to the USA and after the collapse of her utopian project in California invented herself as an American-European star. Nowadays, theater is still a utopian endeavor, I believe, there is still an utopian edge in the theatre making. But the repertory theatre has very little of utopian features left, the reality is marked by aesthetic conservatism, routine, mediocrity and indifference.

In a cultural-political perspective, quality, diversity and continuity are some desirable features of any theatre system which the repertory company model increasingly fails to deliver, in the big cities and especially in the small ones. We have to look for such alternative models of theater organization that could be more capable of creativity, innovation and efficiency, and be able to invest in audience development. The repertory theatre model is an expensive one; it is in fact getting prohibitively expensive while the public subsidies for arts are shrinking practically everywhere in Europe as the taxes are being reduced, the tax basis is shrinking and the European Union norms on budgetary discipline curb the generosity of public authority towards arts. At the same time (and my colleagues who run theatres know that very well) the costs of running any theater and especially a repertory company are going up all the time - people's fees and salaries, energy, safety, building maintenance and a constant investment in the new technology drain theater budgets without much increase on the income side. Here we see the impact of the famous Baumol paradox: this American economist recognized that the technological innovation does not yield more productivity and cheaper product units in arts as it does in industrial production – a premiere and subsequent performances of a production remain expensive despite the technological investment because they demand each time the curtain goes up a maximum investment of human artistic talent.

Additional costs that are awaiting all the repertory theatres, but especially in the countries acceding to the EU, thus also Poland, are linked to the implementation of the binding EU regulations on fire prevention, air quality, noise pollution and worker's safety. If you would scrupulously apply those norms of occupational hazards and safety, one third and perhaps two thirds of all the venues in Poland and probably in all of the acceding countries will have to be closed. I don't think that their ministries of culture have started calculating in their budgets for the next five or ten years the costs of upgrading these facilities to meet the EU norms. The regulation affects all venues, not just repertory theater companies. The other day, forty West End commercial theatres in London announced that they need 25 million euros a year for the next fifteen years to be significantly upgraded; what makes the operation even more costly is that 35 of them are on a protected monument list, so they have a specific regime of historic architecture renovation that they have to respect. At the other hand, the VAT (= the *Mehrwertsteuer*) that they are paying to the government in one year is some euro 320 million - which is more than the whole amount needed and in place of 15 years, the entire renovation could be accomplished in one single year if financed from the VAT.

There is also a growing competition of commercial theater and of the cultural industry, everywhere in Europe, thus also in Poland. I hope the German colleagues are willing to reflect why my fellow countryman Joop van de Ende, the Dutch commercial theater producer, is so successful in the Bundesrepublik? How come that in very short time he managed to buy or take under control nine or by now perhaps eleven venues in several German cities in order to exploit in them his own musicals and popular theater productions. The Netherlands became quickly too small a market for him but it is worth pondering the question why Germany, despite its subsidized repertory theater tradition, became a growing market for him. Commercial theater is everywhere, even in Moscow, and what is also noticeable are subsidized repertory theater companies that play a repertoire which should normally be expected in a commercial venues, which is a way do devalue own artistic mission but also abuse the purpose of public subsidy. Some subsidized repertory theatre companies chose to do very little of their own productions, but try to earn money by renting their venue. National Theater in Vilnius or National Theater in Bucharest seem to be especially eager to give

preference to a rental for a political meeting or a fashion show over their own work, but also to rent the venue for quite a bit of money to independent theatre groups that work with practically no public subsidies. This is the betrayal of culture policy in the most dramatic sense: a national theatre company receives public subsidy for its artistic tasks and then behaves like an ordinary booking house. And in Moscow you can see how this exploitation of own venue as a piece of real estate goes all the way to a sublet to restaurants, casinos and various shops in the theater buildings, all in order to supplement public subsidies and increase the salaries of the employees. Along the way, much of the money changes hands under the table, criminalization penetrates the theater world.

An ensemble of a repertory theatre company is often underutilized, difficult to renew and the best people tend to leave after a while. Even if they sometimes come back, those who don't dare to leave prefer to stay in the employment, whether they get some new roles or not. A rep company cannot afford to pay wages competitive with those to be earned in the cultural industry and so many of actors, being badly paid in their own repertory company, moonlight elsewhere. Those side jobs destroy the work discipline and undermine all the nice assumptions about the repertory theater as a fantastic model because of a steady ensemble, diverse repertoire and a long run of the productions, preserved from one season into another. About the role of the trade unions, Krysztina Meissner, present here, could tell some stories, I assume, about their rigidity and resistance to any change. In Germany, every Theaterintendant has his or her own stories to tell about the trade union's stifling influence on the creative process. But not every Theaterintendant would be willing to admit that there is an anachronistic hierarchy of power inherent to the repertory theatre model: a directive concept of production process which is today inapplicable to any group of professionals and certainly to the self-respecting artists, the formal authority sustained instead of inspiring leadership; top down assignment of roles to mutually competing artists, a complex departmental structure instead of flexible self-responsible creative teams. Those running repertory companies would have to catch up with at least 25 years of theoretical writing about how to motivate professionals and how to run professional organizations. From the point of logistics, routine and repetitiveness foreground the planning process, so that it becomes more important than the artistic process. Huge resources are wasted along the way and the rhythm is killing.

Another disappointing feature is the immobility of repertory theatre companies. They often feel that travel disturbs the planning process and therefore resent. Travel has become prohibitively expensive, so that the regional and national tours are neglected and foreign tours are undertaken only if there is a very prestigious opportunity or if someone is willing to pay the costs – if the Goethe Institute is generously footing the entire bill. Polish theatre companies are going abroad more often, when they feel that they can make some money out of it. In practice, it is mainly independent, barely subsidized Polish companies that travel abroad frequently because their work is conceived in such a way that it can travel easily. Today there are clearly delineated templates in the political economy of touring, how many people to take along and how much equipment and how quickly you must put it up and strike it down. Independent companies design their work to meet these requirements, the reps usually don't. In repertory theatre companies there is little interest and capacity for international cooperation. It is difficult enough to manage own regular working processes, so working with someone else is seen as an additional complication. You can always invite a foreign director to work in your company for 2-3 months but otherwise the prevailing hierarchy and a static modus operandi do not encourage the companies to take part in a networking or consortium structure. Repertory theatre companies stay outside most of the international networks that have emerged in the last 20 years. European Theatre Convention and Union of European Theaters, themselves networks that regroup repertory companies and preach their mutual collaboration, have not achieved much practical collaboration since their inception. For them, it is even difficult to create a decent festival and many more ambitious plans have remained unrealized.

Many repertory companies are housed in venues that have become too large and are difficult to fill with a potential audience. A small hall with 250 seats is rather easy to fill. Commercial venues with more than 1000 seats are also often doing quite well but getting 500-600 people with paid tickets per evening in a hall with 750 or 850 seats could be quite difficult, even in bigger cities. There is too much competition among cultural events taking place in the evening, and all the performances and concerts have to compete with restaurants, discos, café's, with all the attractions of the entire cultural industry and even the sport facilities that remain open in the evening hours, not to mention the late night shopping opportunities that have arisen with the 24h economy. Audiences are practically everywhere stagnating or shrinking and leisure industry dramatically increases the scale of options for everyone who still has some spare free time. I am always touched in Poland with the astonishing loyalty of the audience of all generations for theater. And even if many citizens rush to make more money, in order to afford all kind of other entertainment and pleasure, there is a hard core of loyal theater goers who often present a more intellectual and less wealthy part of the new post-communist society. But for how long? The socio-economic transformation of the post-communist societies will change the preferences, affinities and the life style habits of their members and make them more divergent, not necessarily more theater-friendly. In Germany, however, there is a serious danger that the theatres will lose a great part of young audiences. Despite the subscription system that pooled several generations to theater, those youngsters could drop out before they developed a strong habit of theatre going, driven by the easy prejudice that theatre is boring, slow, dry, old fashioned, not hype and not good enough.

Looking at various generations of theater goers, middle aged people are everywhere in Europe too busy to go to theatre. They have heavy, demanding jobs, they have children much later than the previous generation used to, they have advance trainings and constantly have to prove themselves, take new courses and degrees. And often they just do prefer going shopping. Or if they have a free evening, they prefer to go out to a restaurant with friends than to go to theatre. It seems that the most loyal audience would be found among older people, who have the money, education, interest and free time and who want to share experiences and avoid the loneliness of the old age. But these old people demand safety in coming to theatre and going home late at night, they want to have some comfort while in the theater venue and they have some very clear expectations of content and style of the performance. If theatre would follow their preferences too much, it would risk even more to alienate the young audience. I increasingly doubt the idea that one theatre can at the same time be attractive to people of different generations. Most theaters do not succeed to appeal to several generations at the same time, with the same program, especially as the young people have their own specific demands and expectations about the performing style and content but also about the ambiance, context, marketing and communication which the repertory theatre can fulfill with more difficulty than a hype disco club.

I'm of course making huge generalizations in talking about the repertory theatres and my diagnosis and critique do not preclude intelligence, excellence, ingenuity, dynamism and creativity in some of the repertory companies. I am objecting to an automatic subsidy inflow benefiting this type of organizations that seem to have an internal subscription to a substantial part of the public subsidy, regardless of the quality and quantity of the output. Repertory theatres still tend to invoke their standing as pillars of national culture. But the national state is eroding under the pressures of globalization, the concept of national sovereignty is also under scrutiny. European integration and demographic shifts, exacerbated by migration, make further a notion of national culture rather problematic. Instead of defensive posture, every theater, regardless of the type, and every cultural organization in fact, could strengthen its position by defining itself not in terms of tradition and national identity but in terms of its capacity to contribute to the development of the intercultural competence of the citizens. Rather than to try to compete with commercial culture industry, every publicly subsidized stage should better strive to serve as a platform of public debate and critique and seek to make strong bond with the educational field.

Any privileged position as a recipient of public subsidy is difficult to rationalize in the discussions with the public authorities, where the difficult spending priorities have to be constantly reconsidered and argued anew. Aesthetic qualities don't weight much because the young generation of politicians is shaped by neo-liberal ideology and not particularly schooled for aesthetic appreciation. The governments are increasingly working under the principles of transparency and accountability, so how do they justify then a huge disproportion between public means given to some repertory theatre companies and miniscule grants allocated to the independent groups, such as those 400 non-government companies in Poland or *freie Gruppen* in Germany? In most European countries, this proportion is 95%:5% if not worse. A government ready to undertake a serious reform of a cultural system would have to look at this built-in privileges of one type of theater over all others.

Such reform of the cultural and theater system is not even on the horizon in Germany, it seems. An outsider is always struck with the self-importance and elitism of the highly institutionalized culture in Germany and with the strong political steering of those institutions. Instead of reformist thinking, *Kulturdezernenten* in Germany prefer to engage in the 'salami' tactic, slicing subsidies little by little and seeking miracle makers, those *Intendanten*, capable supposedly to make more appealing art with less money. Such miracle makers of course do not exist. In Poland, at the beginning of the democracy, the responsibility for theater was switched from the national government to the regional, provincial and city governments. But what is really the role of the theatre in regional development strategies? This is something to be debated with the Polish colleagues, especially as culture could profit from the structural funds of the EU only if firmly anchored in the regional development strategies.

Theaters cannot shift all the blame for their troubles outside their venues. There is a lot of external neglect, but there is also internal resistance to institutional change, coming from within theatres. Is in this perspective the German theater situation essentially different from the Polish one, while the repertory theater dominates in both? Probably not, the difference is only in degree and not in kind. In Germany, there is still quite a bit of money available, much more than in Poland, so there is more output and perhaps more quality. But the structural problems are the same and this 260 repertory theatre companies are besieged by the same problems as 100 Polish rep companies. They produce less and cost more. They have become prisoners of their long-term planning, have little trouble finding artistic staff, but go to the "Berliner Festwochen" or some other festival because it is prestigious and are not otherwise so eager to travel - they are rather indifferent to the opportunities and challenges of the international cooperation. The artistic policy is curbed by the rigid union rules and demands.

There is a counterpoint to this dominant situation. I had the privilege to follow from the very beginning, from 1980, the emergence of Theater an der Ruhr of Roberto Ciulli, whom so many of you know. A very unique initiative since 1981, based on the willingness of the founders to take risks, with very limited local support, with a small stage, later very comfortably renovated, with larger productions presented in the Mülheimer Stadthalle. A company much on the road, all around Germany, but also a lot abroad, in Europe, North America, in Asia. Ciulli and his colleagues have been the real pioneers of interculturalism before we started to use this word in our discourse. They still have 45 people employed, they don't have the rigid job specialization, they don't obey union restrictions, they do one or two premiers per season and succeed to keep these productions for a long time on the repertory, despite the fact that all actors have one or two year contracts only, and they have invested tremendously in the audience development. In Ruhr, they are exposed to an intensive competition of steady repertory theatre companies with much more money, located in the nearby cities... Cologne, Duesseldorf, Essen, Duisburg, Oberhausen, Dortmund, Bochum etc. From the beginning, Ciulli shaped his international perspective, representing foreign theatre systematically at home, starting, if I remember well, with 3 seasons of Polish theatre. Bringing foreign theatre to his Ruhr audiences and creating loyal followers of foreign theatre in Ruhr, Ciulli built up an intercultural audience. But when I go to Muelheim, I see that his audience is also graying, a lot of people around fifty, theater goers who went along with him

since 1981, but the audience renewal is a challenge for Theater a.d Ruhr as for everyone else. Ciulli and his company did some unique breakthroughs, becoming well known in Central and Eastern Europe much before the end of the Cold War, exploring Latin America and Central Asia, going as the first Western company to Iran after 1979, playing in Tehran and working there, making a production of Lorca and bringing it to Europe, and they played a whole series of performances in Baghdad in 2002, after Saddam has fallen out of grace in the West. But after 22 years I have to conclude that Theater an der Ruhr is still the only theatre of this kind in Germany. It did not have any multiplication consequences nor practical followers, it did not become an alternative model. It is a company unique in its position and operation but it has not succeeded to challenge the dominance of the repertory theatre model in the German cultural space.

My intervention here shouldn't been seen as a diatribe against the repertory theatre company model but rather as a plea against its monopoly and for a pluralistic theatre system. The starting point is not the tradition, which the repertory theatre model can claim, but the present needs of the audience. Or rather, different, well targeted audiences, to whom theatre is offering some qualities that the commercial culture, the industrial culture cannot offer and does not offer. If one theater system contains various types of theatre, they can seek to develop their own distinction and specificity instead of being pushed towards uniformity and standardization that are typical for the cultural industry. Of course, there should be large venues for commercial long runs and musicals; of course there should be in every country some repertory theatres, probably in the large cities, as carriers of excellence but with more competence, leaner and meaner than they usually are. But there should be public support for local companies without or with own venue and working from a core team to a changing cast. Some small traveling companies of quality that with subsidy can make one or two productions a year and travel intensively with these productions. To host them you will also need a network of open venues, with budgets for artistic programming. Not booking houses where you pay to perform but open venues that have a budget to program and decently pay traveling companies that come to stay and work with them. And finally some presenters/producers who are artistic visionaries are needed, people who are able to work with different shifting teams of artists. They not only invite traveling companies to play a couple of nights but invite artists and their teams to come in residence for two to four months to develop new work with a proper support and proper coaching, with a firm technical base and expert marketing . They book those companies-in-residence into other open venues and seek to insert them into international cooperation modes.

I'm actually pleading to rethink also the notion of theatre space, the venue, the theatre architecture. For those who run venues in Europe, not just in Poland and Germany, the chief concern today is how to create a sense of business not as usual. How to make the venue be appreciated as a vital multifunctional culture resource of the whole community or of some of its segments. It is difficult if you run the only theatre venue in a town, but in bigger cities you can seek true competition in order to develop a distinct profile and a specific identity. Whether you do long productions or short productions, or you combine performances with something else, you do strive to keep people coming in, you make them come earlier and stay longer and expect excitement and fun, take not just a coffee, so perhaps you have a restaurant, a bookshop, a video rental, organize concerts, storytelling sessions, mix live performance and film screenings, but keep the doors open. I don't think the notion of theatre with the doors closed the whole day till six o' clock and then closed again at eleven o'clock in the evening has a perspective. How to make theatre a community facility, with the doors open all day, that is the main question. I've seen for instance in Leeds, in the West Yorkshire Playhouse, some years ago how this building functions throughout the whole day: if you come there at ten a clock in the morning and start drinking coffee and if you leave it at midnight you could see how this building functions the whole day for different constituencies of this city, with a variety of very different programs. I see that now also in the new building of Toneelschuur in Haarlem, in the Netherlands, which is also a combination of a theatre, a cultural place and a film house, tightly inserted in the matrix of the old city. And the National Theatre in London was already 25 years ago a place where you could have spent your whole day with many activities offered and perhaps not even see one of the productions if it was

sold out, and yet leave not disappointed . It is an architectural question how to create buildings with more flexibility and more fluidity of space but it is also a political and cultural and artistic question: how to contextualize the venue in the urban space? How to increase the interaction of the venue and everything that could happen there with the urban surrounding? How to have the key competencies in the house so that you can do that?

Of course, a lot of venues organize festivals. Today, a festival can be any sort of program package and is often primarily a marketing and fundraising formula but it works in terms of getting the attention of people. You can offer workshops and courses and dance evenings with champagne and disputes and polemics and recording of TV programs and special programs for children and special programs for teenagers and special programs for senior citizens and you can make extra attractions for the foreigners and the tourists...but it is not always easy and possible to do it in the inherited architectural patterns of most theater venues. And yet I remain skeptical about the purpose and success of constructing new theatre buildings, because architects tend to extrapolate anachronistic ideas of theater practice and usage of space rather than to seek new paradigms and politicians tend to meddle too much with their obsolete ideas of what should a proper theater building be like. Consequently, Germany is a mine field of pretentious, ugly, not very flexible and much too expensive theater structures. What works better is to develop theater venues through acquisition and gradual conversion of various buildings that originally did not have a cultural purpose... factories, offices, schools... Without a blueprint fixing their cultural use to the last detail much in advance, in a prolonged process of phased adaptation, directed by discovered needs and opportunities, vibrant and dynamic structures could emerge and interact with their surrounding – moreover serve as magnet structures in developing a part of the city. In fact, some museums have gone much further in adapting themselves to their target audiences than many theater venues.

In conclusion, I'm not talking about one single European theatre model but advocate the necessity of pluralistic theatre models in Europe. What kind of theatre system a country will have depends not only on tradition but on the size of the country and the density of population. Obviously, Sweden will have to invent different provisions to reach its inhabitants in the north than the Netherlands with its high density of population. The quality of roads and the availability of the public transportation will also be a factor influencing the mobility of the audience. What is needed is to redefine the concept of the company and the concept of the venue and their relationship. Also we have to redefine the role of the producer, presenter and the programmer as artistic and not just as managerial roles. Furthermore, we should question the necessity of an elaborate specialization of labor in theatre and ask can we still afford it? And how to enhance the geographic mobility nationally and internationally of the work's produced? Aesthetical originality, freshness, innovation, intercultural dimension - yes, these are qualities which one expect to achieve in theater and address to specific, well targeted audience groups.

What seem to me to be a crucial talent and skill for someone running a theater is an engaged collaborative mentality, invested not only in work with the artists but with other organizations and institutions in the performing arts, in culture and beyond the cultural realm, to create different partnerships and alliances, local, regional, national and international ones. Through these partnerships limited resources are stretched, pooled together and reinforced. A theatre system is constructed of interdependent features and instruments, so theatre people need to play an active role in redesigning theatre systems, they will understand better than others the opportunities and risks of tinkering. And that is something that you do not see happening much in Europe, theater professionals taking themselves the initiatives to modernize theatre systems in their own country. To leave it to the politicians is a fatal mistake, because the politicians will do it clumsily, without understanding, only trying to save money and not to spend more money for a better theatre. Today there many employees and many managers in the theater world but what is still missing is systemic thinkers, visionaries and reformers who can deconstruct the inherited models and shape the new ones, from the inside.

(Edited by the author 22 01 2004)

Summery of the day and discussion: Friday, October 31st 2003

Chairmen: Dr Dragan Klaic (Dr of Theatre Science, Amsterdam)

Participants: Dr Dragan Klaic (Dr of Theatre Science, Amsterdam), Adam Krzeminski (Journalist of the weekly magazine "*Polityka*", Warsaw), and Maciej Nowak (Manager and Artistic Director of the Teatr Wybrzeze, Gdansk, Director of the "Zbigniew Raszewski" Theatre Institute, Warszawa), Thomas Urban (Eastern European Correspondent for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Warsaw)

Dr Dragan Klaic: The presentations we have heard so far provide enough material and questions for a discussion. In your presentation you have said that you don't see any pre-condition for a new theatre policy in Poland. Could you explain this a bit further?

Maciej Nowak: In Poland there is no theatre policy in the true sense of the meaning. In the 90s it was decided that the government/cultural ministry should be responsible for culture. But only some museums and a few national theatres are supported. The culture of everyday life is self-governed.

It is positive that only a theatre which is artistically convincing asserts itself against the others. This kind of theatre is characterised by local components; this is a chance to direct the situation of the theatre. In my opinion this self-government/independence is positive. In the Polish theatre there is a desire for greater political order at the moment. I am opposed to that.

Dr Dragan Klaic: I would like to illuminate my question also from another point of view. You were talking about the regionalisation of Poland in 1989. Does this regionalisation mean more than just extended competencies of the regional administrations? Do you feel for example that the cultural identity of the regions are strengthened? Is there a risk to "create" such an identity? Mr Krzeminski, to what extent is the identity of the Polish created/influenced by culture?

Adam Krzeminski: As a journalist I see the regionalisation of the theatre through the affairs and scandals of the authorities of the cities. The example of the theatre in Lodz shows the dependence of the regional Polish theatre on politics. There a right-wing city president has in a dictatorial way completely changed the theatre by means of draconian censorship. And he drove out the manager. Former theatre politics which used to be directed from Warsaw have been shifted downwards. Polish theatre works only, if one gets on well with the authorities. In Breslaw and Stettin, where there is an actual German/Polish chancellor the lack of co-operation between German and Polish theatre people is obvious; there the programme is more important than the management. As far as this co-operation is concerned the media, literature, the radio and museums are a step ahead, the German/Polish dialogue is more developed.

Maciej Nowak: I disagree with you there. The Stettin theatre is working together with the Mecklenburg theatres.

Adam Krzeminski: This co-operation is limited to a material exchange (stage, technical equipment); there is no dialogue. The exchange that has taken place so far is not enough.

Thomas Urban: We have to take into consideration, that the German/Polish exchange is only beginning. A stronger co-operation would be desirable, but we should not attach too much significance to that. We also have to consider what *is* possible. Let's look at the other side for example. How many French and German theatre groups are working together? I would not hold up a sign or notice now saying "We have to work together no matter what". It is just as important that we recognise each other.

As far as the scandal of Lodz is concerned I would like to point out that the suppression of this theatre has met very strong resistance. The major has pushed himself out into the cold by removing theatre manager.

Dr Dragan Klaic: It is a European phenomenon that some politicians behave like a bull in a china shop. The same happened in Hamburg with the cultural senator Horowitz.

Adam Krzeminski: I would like to add something concerning the German/Polish co-operation. I believe that the theatre bridge worked better in the 60s. It would be desirable to create theatre together. Guest performances as well as guest directors. Theatre is no longer a political institution.

Thomas Urban: The situation in the 60s was different from the one today. Curiosity for the country behind the iron curtain was simply bigger. And in Poland every cultural possession which was within reach was important and it was received by the whole intellectual scene. In today's pluralistic Poland one can observe a fragmentation of society which is also true for the cultural scene.

Dr Dragan Klaic: One must not forget how significant the international student theatre festivals in Wroclaw, Erlangen, Nancy, Zagreb have been for the cultural history of the cold war. In the 60s the student festivals afforded the only possibility for me to cross the borders of the cold war. Today the independent theatre groups in Poland are the ones who are most engaged in international co-productions of theatres.

Maciej Nowak: I am the youngest one here and I am the only one who hasn't experienced the 60s like the other participants in the discussion have. Today the exchange takes place in a different way. Guest performances by Castorf and Marthaler offer a chance for a breakthrough, every contact with the German theatre is an experience of liberation from the conventional Polish theatre.

Adam Krzeminski: The bridge of the 60s did not only lead to the East or to the GDR but also to other European countries like France for example. Today there is no such European discussion about culture any more, and I am afraid that European film and theatre might disappear.

Dr Dragan Klaic: It is important to differentiate between a European discourse and a cultural mishmash - regionalisms will hardly be the topic of a European discourse, on the contrary a renationalisation of the cultural scene will be the result. Theatre and film as a field of the national element.

Maciej Nowak: The change after the referendum in Poland could also be very positive. I do not like the situation in Poland today. When we join the European union it could liberate us from the "Polishness". We need reforms of the theatre administration, a different repertoire, no internationalist culture but cultural communication.

Adam Krzeminski: A liberation from the Polish complexes, from the powerlessness of the Polish people is needed. Before the fall of the wall it was clear what we wanted. Today there is too little dialogue, the fears of the Polish people in the 19th century don't make sense any more.

Dr Dragan Klaic: What are in your opinions the cultural prerequisites for the EU expansion?

Thomas Urban: I don't believe that a kind of European culture will be created in the sense that there will be a general discourse among the élite of these countries. I agree with the thesis that the old members of the EU will rather renationalize themselves due to political insecurity; as a reaction to the political and economic integration culture, which has to do with language - that is film and theatre - will be a field where the national element can be kept up. Although there are tensions on both sides I view the situation optimistically. I guess that in 2004 people will realise that the world has not changed a lot. They will then on both sides be more relaxed and calm and co-operation will therefore become easier. Things will be regulated rather by themselves.

Dr Dragan Klaić: I don't see a particular desire to discover the cultural scenes of the ten new countries. In the early 90s this was stronger. A reduction of the financial means of course does not help to develop that kind of curiosity. Mr Nowak do you think that the repertory theatre will change after 2004?

Maciej Nowak: The Polish theatre is generally open, but despite the economic crises in the "old" EU-countries the financial possibilities there are still much better, so the old countries can initiate guest performances. For the Polish theatre a Castorf guest performance in Warsaw is still a rare event. It is a pity that most of the time foreign theatre in Poland can't be seen for a week, but only one single evening.

Dr Dragan Klaić: Let's take a look at the audience now. I would like to say something about the astonishing loyalty of the Polish audience, which one can perceive as an outsider. Isn't this a specific Polish phenomenon, which is different in Germany? Is this changing? In which respect has the structure of the audience changed?

Thomas Urban: I have been going to the Polish theatre for 15 years and of course a lot has changed, which has to do with the fragmentation of society. Productions today have a weaker echo than 15 years ago. There is no intensive national discourse about a cultural event. All in all audiences are decreasing considerably, because the theatres are not subsidised to the same extent as they were, because life has become more expensive. The frontiers of the cultural dialogue are ruled by money. The repertoire is more international now, but the national theatre has a niche as well, which of course should remain. But of course I see the difference, the audience today, the young generation does not go to the theatre to hear a political message either.

Dr Dragan Klaić: Mr Nowak, how do you react to the fragmentation of society, do you have any strategy for that?

Maciej Nowak: The educated classes do not go to the theatre any more. In Petersburg and Leningrad there are still queues at the box offices, in Poland people would rather buy a new car or go on holiday to Greece.

Adam Krzeminski: In comparison to Russia there is only little development in Polish literature and also the classical writers are less present than Dostoevsky or Tolstoy. Why don't the Polish make use of their cultural heritage?

Dr Dragan Klaić: One has to consider that the Russian cultural industry is focusing on Petersburg and Moscow. In Russia there are 500 repertory theatres but only five of them are artistically relevant.

Thomas Urban: Is a return to the cultural tradition really a sign of self-confidence or is it rather a result of disorientation? In Russia the hope for democracy fades, an insidious restoration prevails.

Adam Krzeminski: The attraction of the big cities might be less prevalent in Poland, but on the other hand there is a process of development in the country. One has to include the development of Stettin and Gdansk as well, and not always only the development of Krakow and Warsaw.

And after all, isn't the new Russian literature of a Sorokin just a pale imitation of Bulgakov?

Maciej Nowak: The discussion should return from Russia to Poland, even if the Russian code is still very dominant in Poland.

Dr Dragan Klaić: So what about the catholic tradition and its influence on Polish culture?

Adam Krzeminski: Classic Polish literature is based on a catholic foundation. The question is, how the conditions will change because of the European Union. The Church congress in Berlin can be seen as a touchstone. The Polish were the largest group of participants, but not one Polish bishop was there. The debate about Catholicism has to take place in Polish society.

Thomas Urban: Poland is a bastion of Catholicism. The pope ties Poland to the church.

Dr Dragan Klaić: To what extent do the media cover such topics?

Thomas Urban: For the German media it is difficult to report on marginal topics; only 10 - 12 % of the readers are interested in them.

Adam Krzeminski: The media are less willing today to lead general debates. Discussions in the media used to substitute for a republic.

Thomas Urban: I disagree with this thesis. The form of the debate changed when the state was restructured. The debate is a guarantee for morality in politics.

Adam Krzeminski: What do we mean by general debate? Today discussions about certain issues are not found in various media, only in one.

Thomas Urban: That is true. In Germany there are debates among the various arts sections of the newspapers. That doesn't happen in Poland. One cannot control debates. Maybe the big questions concerning democracy or market economy have by now been accepted as general values.

Contribution to the discussion from the audience: Thesis: As long as the pope lives, Catholicism in Poland will continue to exist without change. Poland as well as its theatre are suffering from that. How long will Catholicism play this important role?

Adam Krzeminski: The modernisation of society puts the old traditions into a different perspective. So far urbanisation has shown that the Polish people who have moved from the country to the cities keep holding on to Catholicism. The intellectuals are facing a great challenge. Of course we don't know how long this development will last. Probably for quite a while.

Maciej Nowak: Things will change quickly. The young priests in Poland are already turning away from catholic traditionalism.

Thomas Urban: The catholic church will keep playing an important role. A revival of the church will take place, because it will become more attractive. The Polish people view the pope differently than the German people do. Maybe the appointment of bishops who are willing to enact reforms will speed up the process of development.

Adam Krzeminski: The self-critical tendencies of the pope were not considered by the Polish conference of bishops though.

Dr Dragan Klaić: In today's discussion we have talked about the two most important parts of Polish culture: The catholic church and the theatre. Tomorrow we will turn to the theatre again.

- Translation: Bettina Lemke -

Saturday, November 1st 2003

Topic of the day: The Art of Theatre in Poland: themes and forms – experiences and ideas

Chairmen: Dr. Jochen Wagner (Tutor of the Protestant Academy in Tutzing)

Introduction and summary of the previous day

Dr. Jochen Wagner, Tutor of the Protestant Academy in Tutzing

The topic of the previous day was the identity of the Polish people.

Three important aspects were examined:

Nation, history, religion - these three authorities have for a long time influenced the patterns/codes of behaviour of Polish society.

Polish Catholicism especially its relationship with Pope Woytila was discussed.

What will happen with the Polish church, when the cultural code changes? This new code frees itself from the old, the catholic form, also from a catholic church of resistance in a different manner to here in Germany, where religion is more or less forgiveness and conformity. How does this code change influence society? Two keywords were mentioned in this context. First the Rhenish capitalism of German and French character, so there is indeed an orientation towards consumption but also a sense of sociability, responsibility and community. According to the discussion this phase has finished. Today the dominance of American capitalism is obvious. This is cheerful hedonism without sociability, conformity, a lifestyle without resistance or critique.

In the afternoon it was discussed what this development means for the theatre. One can point out two positions here:

- 1) Local theatre politics, artistic work is possible, if one gets on well with local politicians (position of Maciej Nowak)
- 2) Plurality of the forms of theatre, flexibility and competition. "What is good has to sell on its own" (position of Dr Dragan Klaić)

Result:

Poland and Germany have the following tendency in common: Economic desire, a consumer based industry dominating society; the Christian position on denying desire is followed by industry's invitations "you should continuously desire everything". At the moment we are in a paradoxical dilemma. Under the label of spirituality we are directing two questions at our way of life. In contrast to exploding consumerism and all the possibilities of experiences people are asking where is the sense and are trying to obtain immaterial needs - under the label of spirituality. "At the meat pot there is no logos." In the Protestant church the very opposite phenomenon is visible. In contrast to the traditional forms of church life people are calling for sensuality. They are asking how the Gospel and the law can be experienced.

Perhaps it is the keyword today, whether the theatre can be an answer to this dilemma. Perhaps the task of the theatre is to harmonically connect these opposing poles (sensation/reflection, spirit/experience, sensuality/substance, performance/content ...) just as Schiller demanded in his "aesthetic education of man".

- Translation: Bettina Lemke -

Malgorzata Semil

Journalist, *DIALOG* and literary manager of Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw

What Is Polish Theatre Today?

Abstract

What is Polish Theatre Today? - a general view of the present situation of theatre in Poland in its administrative and artistic aspects, placing the most outstanding phenomena and artists (such as Teatr Cinema, Krystian Lupa and Grzegorz Jarzyna) in a broader context.

What Is Polish Theatre Today?

Let us begin with what it is not: it is not a place where the legacy of Grotowski and Kantor is actively cultivated on the stage. Until today, they remain synonymous with Polish theatre for foreign observers who ask to be shown traces of that legacy. However, there is very little to show. Yes, some artists working today were formed by their association with Grotowski, some alternative theatres acknowledge using his techniques and his influence. Traces of Kantor - or his imitations - can be seen here and there. Yes, our understanding of the theatre would be different today if it had not been for them. But they were islands unto themselves, working with a small band of disciples, without creating a "school" or "style" which would impact mainstream theatre while they were active. As a matter of fact, Grotowski's training methods were never taught in Polish theatre academies. Mainstream theatre in those times had no point of contact with alternative theatre to which those two belonged.

So, if you ask me whether Grotowski and Kantor were like two towers with a long shadow, or two pillars, I would rather describe them as pillars, part of the foundation of what happens in Polish theatre today: hard to see, but certainly there.

If you are looking for really tall towers with really long shadows, you have to look to the age of Romanticism. It was Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* with its mystical, Christian and metaphysical elements, but above all with its fervent patriotism and ability to speak to, and for the minds and hearts of a nation under foreign occupation, which has cast the longest shadow of all. The works of the Romantic poets and of the modernist neo-Romantic, Stanislaw Wyspianski, are at the heart of Polish theatre, and they have set the standard for directors' ambitions and theatregoers' expectations. To be an artist in the Polish theatre you have to have tried your mettle by staging, interpreting these classics.

Still, it is true that, theatrically, Poland's trademark abroad has been not so much its mainstream theatre but mostly alternative theatre (in addition to Kantor and Grotowski this has included Gardzienice, Teatr Ósmego Dnia, Biuro Podrózy, Akademia Ruchu, Scena Plastyczna, Provisorium and many others). Alternative theatre has its roots in the student movement of the early sixties and has always been a powerful manifestation of our counterculture, making strong political and social pronouncements as well as testing new aesthetic grounds. Under martial law it suffered greatly - its roots were undercut and it went into a state of hibernation - or stagnation.

Those days are past. The main thing to say about the Polish theatre today is that the shadow cast by the giants of the Age of Romanticism is no longer as omnipresent as it used to be. Different mindsets and concerns have come to the fore. It may be a sign that Poland is at long last becoming a "normal" country, preoccupied with things other than providing your interpretation, or taking issue with the Romantics' vision of man, history, God and society. "Normal", but by the same token infinitely more mundane.

Polish Theatre Today: An Institutional View

In the so-called People's Poland theatres did quite well financially, as they were harnessed to implement the cultural policy of the state. After 1989, the government withdrew from its former role of the patron (the Ministry of Culture provides funds only for two theatres: Stary in Cracow and Narodowy in Warsaw). Following the state administration reform, local

authorities took control over several dozen theatres. None of the theatres was closed, but since money became sparse and expenses considerable, theatres became financially unstable.

A few figures:

According to a recently published report on the state of Polish theatre, in 2001 there were 106 theatres and some 370 alternative groups, all scattered in 43 towns. Among the 106 "official" theatres there were 62 drama theatres; 24 puppet theatres; and 20 musical theatres.

In addition to theatres financed directly by the state, or by local government, a third group is emerging, financed from other sources, or by all kinds of donors available. Traditionally the division between professional and non-professional theatre was very clear. The changes following 1989 created a different situation. What used to be chiefly a political dividing line, with alternative theatre challenging and contesting what official theatres were doing (or were forced to do), had now lost its validity. The divisions became mainly financial, with official theatre able to rely on some state or local financing, and alternative theatre having to fend for itself. So, Drama Academy-educated actors, instead of storming official theatres for contracts, began working independently, forming their own, alternative companies, as is the case with a group of Warsaw graduates who function under the name Montownia, the Teatr Cinema which is present here at this festival, or Teatr Porywaczy Cial from Poznan.

On the other hand official theatres opened up to artists who come from the alternative movement. Such is the case with one of the official theatres in Poznan - Teatr Polski. Also, official mainstream theatres have opened up to the alternative artists, by hosting them and their performances or in some cases collaborating with them. The annual Malta theatre festival - one of the major such events in Poland - accords equal status to alternative and mainstream theatre. This has helped a lot to change perceptions of the alternative theatre in Poland.

This process actually goes much deeper. Grzegorz Jarzyna, soon after taking over Teatr Rozmaitosci (more on this below), declared that he would reform the Polish theatre as radically as Balcerowicz reformed our economy. In a way he is keeping his promise. He and other young directors find the official theatre, with its permanent company system, much too rigid when it comes to casting. For each production they supplement their nucleus of permanent favourite actors with most suitable performers from outside of their company.

Moreover, Polish theatre companies today engage (often for financial reasons) in many co-productions with theatres from other cities, but sometimes also from abroad. The ultimate effect is that it gradually takes apart the old system of permanent companies. Actors are used to permanent employment and recognize its benefits, but are also attracted by the excitement of working with the "hot" directors of today. What could not be achieved by administrative means, may now be happening quite naturally - the company system with all its assets and drawbacks may be crumbling. The almost monastic order of Kantor and Grotowski, or the prospect for developing a unity of artists and a house style, might soon be limited only to independent - alternative - groups. How this will effect the Polish theatre in the future - remains to be seen.

In general, the theatre landscape in Poland is being reshaped. The unrivalled position of Stary Teatr in Cracow, dominating the theatre scene throughout the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and even the 1990s, is over, although meanwhile the theatre was granted "national" status. It is difficult to name the best theatre in Poland now, while it is quite possible to mention several centres of some interest. One such centre is Teatr Rozmaitosci in Warsaw, for reasons which will become clear below. Krystyna Meissner successfully resurrected the Teatr Współczesny in Wroclaw. She achieved this partly by inviting young directors, as well as engaging in some co-productions. On her initiative in 2001 a bi-annual festival in Wroclaw - "Dialog" was started.

Another provincial theatre which received wide acclaim after years of stagnation was Teatr Polski in Poznan. And again, it owed its revival to young directors: Pawel Wodzinski and Pawel Lysak, who had taken over the management of the theatre. They both tried to

transplant to the Polish theatre the current fashion in the Western drama, the so-called “in-ner-face” plays. Their radical view of the theatre gave rise to fierce discussions in Poznan and caused attacks from the conservative circles of local authorities which ended with the directors leaving their posts.

Finally in this section, let us also mention an entirely new phenomenon: the arrival of what elsewhere would be called “community theatre”. The Helena Modrzejewska Theatre in Legnica, a rather remote town in Southern Poland where since the end of the war the Soviet army garrison stationed, can lay just claim to this title. The director Jacek Glomb and his young team have managed to infuse life into their provincial town. Glomb believes that the theatre should reach out to the people, instead of waiting passively for a handful of spectators. Therefore, many performances are staged outside the theatre building: in old factory plants, in the open air or closed down cinemas. Their *Ballada o Zakaczawiu* (*The Ballad of Zakaczawie*) became the hit of the year 2000, and its TV version reached the audience nationwide. It presents a story of a poverty stricken district of Legnica and its inhabitants. In Polish theatre, it is a rare example of a theatre project set in a real, down-to-earth scenery. It is not so much for its artistic quality as for the successful attempt to involve the local community and to speak directly to those who are disappointed and feel forgotten in today’s Poland that the work of Jacek Glomb and his company should be noticed.

Polish Theatre Today: An Artistic View

To speak about Polish theatre today we have to say that “today” began in 1989 when the first (almost) free general election was held in Poland and it set in motion the momentous changes in every field of life. Actors as well as other theatre people played an active role in supporting the trade union movement which brought about the fall of Communism: under martial law, actors boycotted the official media in a spontaneous gesture of opposition against the regime, they took part in clandestine performances while legitimate performances were charged with truths which the theatre shared with the audience above the heads of censors. Therefore, theatre people, like the rest of the nation, welcomed the changes with enthusiasm. However, to the great disappointment of intellectuals - including theatre people - enthusiasm soon fizzled out.

For quite a while, Polish theatre lost its bearings and its sense of direction. In its desperate attempt to stay afloat and capture new theatre-goers it turned to the most unsophisticated commercial repertoire. Large cast productions were replaced by two-handers, four-character plays at the most. As a result, the sense of company work began to dwindle and many actors, just as impoverished as the rest of society, lured by the new-available goods began selling their souls - or rather faces - to advertisements. Prophets became profit-makers, and theatre gradually evolved from shrine to shop. Theatres and the theatre profession lost not only economic stability, but also its traditional status of spiritual leader of the nation, as well as its loyal and understanding audience: for theatre-goers real life became more exciting and engaging than anything the stage could offer, while theatre tickets became for many people too expensive.

Keepers of the Flame

Throughout the 1990s, the best achievements of the Polish theatre were associated with the work of three directors: Jerzy Jarocki, Jerzy Grzegorzewski and Krystian Lupa. Jerzy Jarocki, always faithful to such playwrights as Różewicz, Mrozek, Gombrowicz or Chekhov. Jarocki, who made his debut in the 1950s, is probably the only artist of that generation, who managed to maintain an extremely high level of his productions although recently he has been less active. Grzegorzewski, who has persistently pursued his original, personal vision of the theatre from the beginning of his career in the 60s, became the focus of public attention after his appointment in 1997 as the director of the reopened National Theatre in Warsaw. Voices were heard that Grzegorzewski would tend to dominate the national stage. Indeed, although he invited a number of directors of the older and younger generation, his personality prevailed. What is interesting, without giving up his distinctive style of staging (fine blending of words, images, sounds and acting), Grzegorzewski tried to enter into a serious dialogue

with the Polish cultural and literary tradition. Stanislaw Wyspianski, a distinguished dramatist of the turn of the 20th century, has been adopted as the patron of the stage. In his poetic drama, Wyspianski proceeded to challenge the ever present Romantic tradition in Polish art. At the same time, as the author of *Wesele (The Wedding)*, he carried out a penetrating social and psychological analysis of the nation which had been enslaved for long decades. By successively staging such plays as *Noc listopadowa (The November Night)*, *Sedziowie (Judges)*, or *Wesele (The Wedding)*, Grzegorzewski seemed to test the validity of Wyspianski's diagnosis today. And yet, none of these performances manifested documentary immediacy. As a matter of fact, several critics charged Grzegorzewski for failing to address real life in his theatre. Grzegorzewski ended his term at the National Theatre at the end of last season. His farewell production *The Sea and the Mirror* based on Auden's poem turned out to be a very personal statement on the nature of art and life.

Undoubtedly, Krystian Lupa triumphed throughout the past decade and the last seasons prove his supremacy.

I will spare you a description of his work, since the next speaker – Mr. Gruszczynski - will elaborate on the subject

Lupa's influence on today's Polish theatre is enormous: not merely because of the performances themselves in Kraków, Wrocław and Warsaw which are models of perfection and enjoy success with the audience. His influence is felt through the actors with whom he came to work with and whom he taught total immersion in the character and even more so through a host of young directors - his former students at the Theatre Academy in Kraków - who are now at the lead of Polish theatre.

Plays, playwrights

Polish theatre today does not lack interesting directors and actors. Neither does it really lack the audience. Yet, what it lacks are contemporary plays that would try to answer the question who we are, at the beginning of the 21st century. Things may be changing, however.

Mainstream theatre is less rigid than it used to be. It is more ready to bring in from the cold playwrights and directors from outside its charmed circle. It also feels a growing need to comment on the here and now instead of the past. Accordingly, what has always been the interpretative directors' theatre is finally opening up to playwrights. The example of Die Baracke and The Royal Court was contagious: not only plays which originated there quickly found their way to Polish stages but what is more important their methods were adopted. Play readings and workshops are organised by a number of theatres with some - as the Polski Theatre in Poznan - dedicating themselves to developing new plays. This is something which never happened before.

One can speak of a snow-ball effect which gained real momentum with two playwriting competitions: one which was organized two years ago in Radom which called for "Bold Plays" and another, a well established one, at the Teatr Polski in Wrocław which under the new leadership of Pawel Miskiewicz (one of Lupa's students) gained a new dimension. On both occasions the awarded and mentioned plays turned out to be mostly written by young and yet unknown authors and then staged by young directors - which was an event in itself. Last years' Wrocław competition brought in hundreds of new plays, of which only a few deserved attention. But the attention which they got proved that theatres now are seriously interested in new work. Some of the plays were taken up by other theatres, some were staged specially for television and in most cases their authors have successfully continued to write.

The theatres' demand for new Polish plays is growing. Announcing their plans for the new season, a number of theatres declared that they will develop new plays, open studio auditoria for the presentation of new work and/or invite the youngest generation of directors. In Warsaw, such is the case with Rozmaitosci under Grzegorz Jarzyna, also the National Theatre under new leadership, and Teatr Powszechny. From my own experience at Powszechny I can say that the response from authors, directors and the future audience - is most encouraging.

So, playwrights are finally getting a chance to move from behind their desks into the theatre itself. This helps them improve their skills, builds their self-confidence and - what is most important - delivers them from the stress and complex of having to write a masterpiece every time. Does this mean that the Polish theatre is now shifting gears and will become a "playwrights' theatre" of more or less realistic drama, that it will lose its poetic and metaphoric quality? Hopefully not, although the majority of new plays describe reality in a rather conventional mode. However, there is hope that we might avoid this path: some of the new playwrights are also directors, and their concern about form prevents them from writing straight "well-made" plays. Secondly, the call for new texts comes on many occasions from directors with a strong artistic personality such as Jarzyna, or most recently even Krystian Lupa who publicly announced that he is searching for a new text.

There is no doubt that we are at a moment of transition and witnessing a generation change of guard. A real landmark in this process is a playwright known as Ingmar Villqist (the pen-name of an art historian, Jaroslaw Swierszcz). At the end of the 90s when he made his debut, he was hailed by many critics as the very best and most promising Polish playwright. During the next season his plays - mostly two- or three- character one-acters arranged in cycles were staged all over the country. The author who admits that he was inspired by great Scandinavian artists, on the one hand (Ibsen, Strindberg, Bergman) and German expressionism, on the other - and not as was usually the case in Poland by Witkacy, Gombrowicz, Rózewicz and Mrozek - offered our stage directors and actors something they missed while fulfilling national duties: full-blooded characters with personal problems. His heroes live with their memories of some traumatic experiences from the past which they keep as a secret. Yet these experiences (such as, e.g. sexual harassment in childhood) have been perfectly universalised. Villqist is fond of analysing complex psychological relationships (two homosexuals fostering a child in the first one-acter entitled *Beztlenuwce (Aneorobes)*, a married couple suffering an imaginary parenthood in *Fantom*). *Noc Helvera (Helver's Night)*, Villqist's most popular play, which has been translated into a number of languages and represented Poland at last year's Bonner Biennale tells the story of a relationship between a woman and her mentally handicapped adopted son. History in the form of an unnamed authoritarian power (fascism?) brutally intrudes into their lives. Yet in general his work is free of any historical references. Villqist owes his success largely to the fact that his plays offer actors what they like but rarely get: good parts. Besides, he has a remarkable ear for dialogue. Although Villqist has been lauded beyond any proportion, although his later and more elaborate plays seem not to fulfil the promise of his earlier works, one cannot overestimate the importance of his sudden career. His appearance and the fact that he himself directed some of his plays, that he became an active participant in the theatre process by conducting playwriting workshops was significant and it opened the way for others.

Among those who followed, at least a few names should be mentioned although it still remains to be seen if their work will have lasting value. Krzysztof Bizio who has since written three more plays, achieved noticeable success with his first one: *Porozmawiajmy o zyciu i smierci (Let's Talk About Life and Death)*. In three intertwining telephone conversations, it shows the hypocrisy and the atrophy of emotions within a modern family.

Pawel Sala created quite a stir with his "bold play" *Od dzis bedziemy dobrzy (We will be Good as of Today)* which showed a group of youngsters in a reformatory, who are able to communicate only through violence and of coarse vulgar language. Michal Walczak who has also written three plays since he showed up in Radom, deals - each time in a different way and a different mode - with the search of identity of young people in an urban environment. These are only three of many names of the top of the list but their subject matters are quite typical: "hopeless characters in a hopeless world" according to one of our critics and a desperate cry for contact with another human being.

Although this is not about Polish playwrights, there is one interesting phenomenon concerning the repertoire of Polish theatres - namely the return of playwrights from the former Communist countries into Polish theatres. The young generation of directors quite free from all our national hang-ups and prejudices, as well as of memories of a time when the

Poles were force-fed “socialist culture” from our “fraternal allies”. It is therefore wonderfully open and curious of the culture of our neighbours. Russian playwrights - such as Grishkoviets and Kolyada - are prominently present in the repertoire of Polish theatres. So are post-Yugoslav playwrights such as Biliana Srbijanovic and Deyan Dukovski. A contemporary Czech play by Peter Zelenka has become the hit of last season.

Directors

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a group of directors sometimes called “the younger and more talented” made their debuts. They have not formed a generation group with a specific aesthetic or ideological manifesto. On the contrary, they have tried hard to preserve their individual identities which were manifested in their successive productions. After ten years, their dominating position in the Polish theatre (at some point they were joined by a few new figures) has been confirmed. They differ in age (they are in their thirties and forties), artistic experience, production style, repertoire interests. Most often included in this group are Anna Augustynowicz, Grzegorz Jarzyna, Piotr Cieplak, Zbigniew Brzoza, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Adam Sroka and Jaroslaw Kilian. Later they were joined by Agnieszka Glinska, Pawel Miskiewicz, Marek Fiedor, Remigiusz Brzyk and others.

Their work attests to the fact that not only the division between mainstream and alternative has been blurred; also the line between “artistic” and “commercial” or rather “high-brow” and “popular”. Some of the “younger, more talented”, or the even younger ones, can be found directing sit-coms for television, or music videos. And they move freely between the two worlds, often commenting on mass media and mass culture in their theatrical work, but also using its tools to the maximum. Like Jarzyna - they know that a theatre performance must “sell”. The same is true of the up-and-coming playwrights: their success in the theatre is usually followed immediately by commissions from TV which - as was the case of playwrights in Britain in the 60 and 70 becomes for them an excellent training ground.

The new stage directors are not really keen to concentrate on political theatre, or to launch into great philosophical disputes. This does not mean total insensitivity to social life. Rather, the issues they take up are close to those which surface in Western European theatre: rebellion against the consumer society taking the form of conflicts within the family or with friends and peers, translates into aggression and self-destruction, an identity crisis, an inability to express emotions and into a purely subjective vision of the world practically deprived of a historical context. One could actually say that approach to history is the litmus test of how far a given society is already part of Western Europe: those obsessed with their history have not yet made the transition; meanwhile those who are already free of historical hang-ups have made it successfully.

Two disciples of Krystian Lupa - Grzegorz Jarzyna and Krzysztof Warlikowski - are the strongest personalities and have already managed to win international acclaim. Their permanent home is Teatr Rozmaitosci in Warsaw, where Jarzyna holds the position of artistic director. Owing to their efforts, the theatre is highly valued and also very popular, especially with the younger audience.

Jarzyna and Warlikowski, in spite of their different styles, have been able to win over the fans of contemporary film, music and fashion – partly because they draw inspiration also from other forms of art. They adapt classics to meet present day aesthetic expectations. Warlikowski favours Shakespeare and ancient drama. His productions of *Hamlet* and a much later staging of *The Tempest*, or of Euripides’ *Bacchants*, proved highly controversial, due to his radical manner of interpretation and staging. There are few directors who would irritate part of the public and the critics to such an extent. Hence, he often has to face very trivial charges. Excessive exposure of homosexual motifs was imputed to his *Hamlet*. *Bacchants*, in spite of a somewhat mannered contemporary form, seemed to represent an interesting attempt to address the problem of a religious crisis. Emotional and sexual identity the desperate quest for acceptance and cry for love which underlies so much of contemporary playwriting is always at the centre of his work. No wonder that one of his biggest achievements was *Cleansed* by Sarah Kane.

Grzegorz Jarzyna took the Polish theatre by storm. His debut in 1997 with *Bzik tropikalny* (*Tropical Madness*) after Witkacy. The next two years saw three more productions which won him all the important Polish theatre awards and a faithful audience.

What stands at the root of Jarzyna's success? His theatrical work well reflects contemporary sensibilities, especially those of the young audience. It is common knowledge that this audience is being shaped by film, television, video, pop music. Hence, for the aesthetic of his performances Jarzyna chooses to draw extensively on mass culture. So do many of his colleagues, younger and older directors, but in Jarzyna's theatre these inspirations take on the most spectacular form. His spectacles have the dynamism of film, also a musical rhythm. He is well aware that a performance must "sell well" and does everything to make that happen. "He wants to draw people into the theatre - says Warlikowski - attract them and let them enjoy the show, so that they leave it feeling satisfied". His choice of repertoire is deliberately varied and he assumes that his generation of directors shares his attitude: "Jarocki worked very closely with Mrozek and Rózewicz - he said in a public discussion - because they functioned on the same wave-length. We don't have and don't want to have such an author. Our wave-length is many different plays in many different languages".

Often referred to as the Polish Thomas Ostermeier, Jarzyna has opened the Rozmaitosci theatre to the public and to other artists: his theatre hosted the Polish premiere of Mark Ravenhill's controversial *Shopping and Fucking* - staged by an independent theatre, organizes play-readings and most recently announced a series of new projects which he hopes will attract potential new artists and open the theatre even more to the city.

A separate position among younger directors (though he is around forty - but a late starter) occupies Piotr Cieplak. As a rule his spectacles carry a deep religious message. Like his colleagues, he does not turn his back on the cultural background of his audience (an important role is given in his theatre to music, played by the underground group Kormorany). Possibly, his stage images are less striking than Jarzyna's and his productions display less destructive power than Warlikowski's. In *Historia Jakuba* (*The Story of Jacob*, after Stanislaw Wyspianski's drama *Akropolis*, at Teatr Współczesny in Wroclaw) and *King Lear* at Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw which were marked by his idiosyncratic, austere style he presented these nearly mythical stories in terms of a distinct and immediate human experience. His interpretation of Shakespeare's tragedy was highly symptomatic in this case, with an emphasis on a family drama devoid of historical context.

It is characteristic of the younger directors that they draw only rarely on the most important tradition in Polish literature, Romanticism. Apart from Anna Augustynowicz, Adam Sroka is the only other exception. However, it is a signum temporis, that in his interpretation *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*) by Adam Mickiewicz, the masterpiece of Polish Romantic drama which was always the most direct vehicle of political and historical themes - focused on the existential maturing of a young man.

Conclusion

When trying to sum up the present situation, one must admit that it is too early to diagnose if those who today are at the spearhead of Polish theatre and gaining international recognition will go down in history as artists of a stature comparable to Kantor and Grotowski. They are still in their formative years. What has been achieved by these Young Turks is a shattering of the old structures and introducing variety - which, incidentally, is the meaning of the Polish word *Rozmaitosci*, the name of the theatre which is synonymous with the Jarzyna/Warlikowski generation.

Thus is born a new theatre world, more diverse, filled with more energy, able more quickly and directly to react to events, and more directly to express the artists' ideas. Instead of the old institutional divisions, what we have in the theatre today is a meeting point of different groups and different forms of artistic endeavour, with contemporary drama taking pride of place in this situation.

Piotr Gruszczyński

Theatre Critic, Warsaw

Father of changes, kids of change

A few weeks ago, during “Dialogue” festival in Wrocław we were wondering whether we witnessed birth of a new theatre. This provocative or perhaps naive question is fully justified in Poland. Although no revolution has taken place, no tradition has been broken, the language in the artistic theatre, the acting manner as well as the ways of communicating with the audience have totally changed. Wherever the theatrical tradition had been connected with tasks and vocation of the artistic theatre in Poland, it was absorbed and wherever it had involved what was called a romantic paradigm, it was rejected or abandoned. The theatre turned its back on politics completely. Starting from existence, through ethics, it reached social issues. These, of course, are political. However, the politics understood as power and history mechanisms, disappeared.

It seems that the bases for the change in the theatre language should be sought in the change of the audience. The theatre was gradually reached by a wave of people for whom Polish People’s Republic was a distant history and “Solidarity” seemed as remote as the Second World War. Those people did not want to hear texts about censorship and martyrdom as they had totally different problems to solve in new Poland. What is more, their sensitivity largely changed, they grew up in a new environment and new aesthetics, having new moral liberties. To survive, the theatre was not only forced to react to those new phenomena but it also had to overtake its audience, propose new things they could not invent on their own. To remain the theatre of high artistic risk, the one which blazes new trails, the theatre had to show its vital forces in clash with the new reality, which quickened its pace so much. The most basic questions had to be answered. For example, what should be done with romantic drama, which until recently had been the main part of the artistic repertoire in Poland? (For the time being these texts are not put on stage, we do not know yet how they could be employed.). And how Shakespeare should be played? What parts of Jan Kott’s interpretation should be accepted and which ought to be forgotten? Shakespeare was treated as a contemporary author, but all the bits connected with fight for power, called a great historical mechanism by Kott, were rejected. What turned out to be most interesting in Shakespeare’s plays concerned the matter of existence and ethics.

Without doubt, the father of today’s change in the Polish theatre is Krystian Lupa, who in the 70s carried out his theatrical search on the margin of the official theatrical trend, beside hot, politically and socially conditioned issues. The comfort of working out of the way and perhaps the hardships as well as his giving up an easy applause and admiration gave an amazing result. Lupa created a theatre which worked in the matter of existence, psychology, philosophy and religiousness. Thanks to that in 1989, when the previously followed paradigms had finished, he was an artist prepared for changes in a way. Specifically, his theatre did not have to conduct an urgent search for new themes or ways of speaking (the allusive theatre had disappeared, which was hard to swallow for many artists.) The author’s theatre of Lupa came into being far from current conditions, which did not disturb its development. What is more, soon it turned out that existence was to become the most important theme in the theatre. It was necessary to take care of the audience, which had got confused in the new world and lost the order of values. Also the way Lupa worked with the text and actors turned out excellent. Texts, often non-theatrical, adapted for the theatre were always marked with one feature: certain imperfection; they had to crack, open to hardly presaged worlds; they could not be a literary delicatessen as the latter does not allow irrationality. What is irrational, subconscious became a vital element of Lupa’s theatre. Modification of acting is a real revolution in the methods of actor’s work on the role. Lupa defines it as reaching the character by an actor. An ideal vehicle for an actor is a sleeping body, freed from inhibitions, aiming at the essence of knowledge, the mystery. In practice this means putting a total ban on pretending in Lupa’s theatre. This is probably the biggest sin destroying art. An actor has to allow the character to become rooted in itself, let it lead its

vampire existence. And one more thing taught by Lupa, maybe the most difficult one is putting a ban on faith in one's own perfection. The last performances prove that he undermined his own status of theatrical possession, rejected faith in the only right way. The world has changed, so the protagonist and his spiritual condition have changed as well, which leads to a change in the spiritual condition of the audience who should have courage or be forced to identify with the new protagonist, the rejected man. The necessity to look for a new theatrical form, suitable for the fate of asylum seekers from "At the bottom" ("Na dnie") or Klara from Dea Loher play becomes obvious. One must have guts to do that start a new search, set out on a new journey to reach the intangible.

Before we wander even further, one more remark concerning the theatre of Krystian Lupa: in Poland this director has been often accused of lack of interest in what is happening in Poland. One could not be more mistaken. Lupa said that the things happening in Poland reflect what is happening inside a man living in Poland, and the best way to express it is to refer to foreign literature and make use of the distance created by such an encounter.

Lupa's readiness was not only readiness to create his own performances. Lupa was also ready to teach students in a theatrical school. What is more, he turned out an excellent pedagogue, a real wise man who can pass on his way of thinking, experience and workshop skills.

The theatre of young directors is a dangerous one. It is not established to provide the audience with a possibility of resting called "relaxation". On the contrary, it is a theatre which sets very high standards and breaks hackneyed stereotypes of thinking, eradicates different conceptions held by the audience, especially their undisturbed beliefs about themselves. This theatre is inconvenient, it may lead to discovery of mysteries we do not want or we would prefer not to know about. Isn't it much better to believe we are good and wise both as people and a nation, wallow in hypocrisy of admiration and have a good time at the theatre? This is where the art gets at the audience, disturbs people's tranquillity, usually giving only two options: either you plunge deeply in the performance or you quickly and totally reject it.

Young directors continue the tradition of the theatre which feels responsible for its audience. It has taken over the intellectuals' obligations and is one of few places where these obligations have not been completely eroded. Young directors also continue the deepest tradition of the Polish theatre, believing it is a tool of perception- reaching the truth.

Krzysztof Warlikowski and Grzegorz Jarzyna are the most interesting artists among these young directors.

Grzegorz Jarzyna in his thirties, the prize-winner of nearly all theatrical awards in Poland, is at the moment an artistic director of the Variety Theatre ("Teatr Rozmaitosci") in Warsaw, at the bridge-head of the new theatre in Poland. It is hard to say whether Jarzyna has provoked a revolution in his work with actors. Probably not. He has been very consistent, though, towards the teaching received in Krystian Lupa's theatrical school and his own discoveries made during the journey to the east. As a result, he has enriched psychological acting with elements of techniques observed in Far East theatres. Actors working with Jarzyna are forbidden to act. They mustn't enter the stage and make previously prepared gestures or recite known texts. Each time the stage calls for spontaneity and freshness.

Faith in the theatre as means and way of expression. This is one of the vital features of Jarzyna's theatre. The theatre is not a playground or the place of mutual adoration of the audience and actors. Shortly speaking, its purpose is not to provide entertainment and show funny or sad stories. The role of the theatre is in the first place to discover and express, that is put to light, even by brutal methods, the truth about man, his behaviour, approaches and motives. Secondly, the role of the theatre is to get to know man. Jarzyna is interested chiefly in relations among people. That is why the choice of the theatre as a medium of expression and impact is absolutely right. The theatre is the only place where such intensity of human emotions, feelings and interactions can be observed.

Last but not least the question of irrationality. These precisely planned moments when suddenly the seemingly ordered scenic world is intruded by the wild and unknown.

Irrationality creeps in, destroying all the logic, annihilating the order and carefully built organisation of life. The scenic mini-community is exposed to irrational radiation. These are the most interesting moments in Jarzyna's theatre, when the real destiny of the theatre is revealed.

God has not appeared in Jarzyna's theatre so far. It is puzzling. Despite two performances based on novels openly touching the aspects of God's existence and his attitude to people ("Idiot", "Doctor Faustus"), Jarzyna does not declare any religious attitude. What is more, he pushes the problem connected with God into the background. People and the things they do are more important. Man moves from presence to omni-nonpresence. Love is the only rescue from nihilistic disintegration. It integrates people although it does not come from the rational world. Love is the only important trace of God's existence in Grzegorz Jarzyna's theatre.

Perhaps the word "ceremony" best reflects the essence of this theatre. Something between a ritual where the pagan god takes a superior position and secular emptiness, void of any values. The theatre of Jarzyna should be sought between these two poles of sacred and profaned theatre. For me a ceremony has positive meaning. It is a solemn transition from one state into another. The two states are closely connected with the conscience and unconscious, the zone governed by ratio and the one subjected to the gloom of irrationality. In each performance Jarzyna helps us get to the other side, or at least attempts to do so. In a solemn procession, a procession of actors, we head for an encounter with the incredible, unknown, the only real face of man. The face that looks at us from the other side is our own one. It very much resembles a mask we wear every day among people, but this is not a mask, it is our face.

At the moment Jarzyna is working on a project "Warsaw Area" ("Teren Warszawa"). Throughout the nearest season "Varieties" ("Rozmaitosci") will be a kind of theatrical school teaching actors, directors, dramatists and theatrical managers. The acclaimed directors will work with young actors, the known actors will appear in debutantes' performances. Jarzyna believes this is the only way to reform theatrical life in Poland and many things prove he is right. He is now talking about real theatre.

The theatre of Warlikowski is a consistent and inquisitive study of the evil, its presence in our world, where all the things are believed to be changing for the better. More and more often, however, do cracks open, making way for chaos, gloom and irrationality, which may be fatal for man but at the same time help rescue his humanity. Irrationality attacks with double force. It turns out that man is not necessarily good by nature, that he is not able to fight chaos, that the dark and unknown may easily take over our existence, plans and even the best intentions. We may be involved in crimes and most horrible deeds, almost unwittingly.

Warlikowski's theatre is a place of deep psychodrama for the audience. It does not deal with psychoanalysis, which we carry out on our own later, after leaving the theatre. When the performance is on, the people's minds are snared in the traps of rebellion. Its purpose is to eradicate a directed way of thinking, aiming for effectiveness and achievement of concrete goals. This way of thinking and acting that the daily routine demands of us, blocks our contacts with the sphere of myth and phantasms. If we do not let ourselves get broken, we will not find anything in this theatre, we will remain outraged fools shouting "scandal!". The portrayal of his audience is given by Werlichowski in "Storm" ("Burza"). A ship sinks and the work of the theatre begins. The disaster makes some people reconsider their values and ways of thinking, whereas for the others it is just another opportunity to settle down comfortably in life, in accordance with their own conceited sense of being better.

For Warlikowski the theatrical place is never univocal and defined. On the one hand, it is theatrically functional and completely subjected to the plot of performance; on the other hand, it is strongly marked by elements coming from the loftiest spheres which are strange to human nature, such as religiousness and death. This place may be called a temple/slaughter-house or a temple/dissecting-room. The suspense between what pushes us to live and what peers out from the abyss of death is of utmost importance in Werlikowski's theatre. In this confusing space we may observe conflicts connected with love, desire, guilt

and innocence. In this space the evil plays its Olympic games. It may be easily seen that the space built by Werlikowski is unfriendly to man. It takes a form of sterile space, easy to keep clean, like hospital rooms you go through, trying not to leave any dirt.

Warlikowski obsessively fights for values, for the possibility of surviving in the surrounding world which is a temple/slaughter-house. From this point of view one may say he is extremely conservative. Human dignity, freedom, justice, beauty, kind-heartedness, truth, love are big words that the theatre stands up for, showing almost immediately that the fight for their salvation is a hopeless one.

Warlikowski perversely claims that it is reality, not the theatre which is a scandal. This explains unwelcome reactions on the part of hypocritical audience. But still the issue of utmost importance in this theatre has not been sufficiently emphasised: Warlikowski, an alleged scandal man, defends the truth, kind-heartedness and beauty. Allowing all kinds of transgressions, which only manifest human helplessness towards the tragedy of existence and are of external and actually superficial nature, he defends human dignity, void of sex, race of religious beliefs.

The theatre of Warlikowski is obsessively beautiful. Endowing perversity and grimness of the present day with immaculate beauty is double-edged. On the one hand it gives the possibility of deep identification or even empathy with the scenic events, on the other hand it makes them even more unbearable and increasingly peace-disturbing as you walk away from the performance itself. Beautiful and detailed pictures cannot be forgotten, that is, one must remember what happened in them.

Perhaps the necessity to do the theatre in the case of Warlikowski comes from deep fear? From the fear of the swallowing sexuality, our own subconsciousness, which may lead to personality destruction when unexplored and left alone, unbridled? And maybe it results from the necessity of escape from culture, cold lady imposing many duties and distracting us from the life essence? The theatre created out of fear cannot be a safe and quiet place. It must be a high risk place, where you have to sacrifice to rescue yourself, without any guarantee that art will turn out strong enough to save the importance of existence. But the only place where a miracle may happen is the theatre. This is what Warlikowski believes for sure.

I am wondering about spiritual nature of Warlikowski's theatre. What is really metaphysical in it? God, destiny, fate, everything has undergone specific integration. It has become interhuman. The director declares that he is interested in horizontal rather than vertical relations; everything happens among people. Bad fate is emanation of the subconscious part of our personality. Ill fortune determining history is connected with human frauds and conceit. Merciful God never appears, and the black one, giving punishment beyond human comprehension, is inherent in us, emerges from bad thoughts we should steer clear of, as it is then when we trigger a spiral of evil. Spirituality in its current egoistic form is fatal. We have to work out a new one, recover its former glamour.

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Janusz Marek

Curator of performing arts at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lecturer at the Institut of Polish Culture of the Warsaw University, Warsaw

The opening of Polish theatre.

1. The system of theatrical life and the repertory theatres

The transition of political and economical system and accession to European Union force “the opening” from Polish society and from each of Polish citizens. Like its audience Polish theatre has also to “open itself” and to become more differentiated.

The outdated system of theatrical life in Poland conserves the dominant model of institutional repertory theatre. The decreasing public subventions and “the hunt for spectator” influenced the artistic retrogression and commercialization of repertory theatres taking no risk. On the turn of the XX-th century it was on record the decrease of the number of spectators and the loss of public importance of theatre in Poland. The most important recent changes in theatrical life in Poland include: the coming into the possession of the repertory theatres by the municipal governments, the appointment of several young theatre directors to the management of some repertory theatres and the increasing number of contemporary plays on the stages. The change of generations in Polish theatre is delayed and takes place slowly.

The subjects of the performances change: the description of the mechanisms of power and the dispute of ideas are replaced by the description of the experiences of individual. The complex, metaphorical performances are superseded from the repertory by more realistic and small – audience performances. The many years’ artistic researches of the director Krystian Lupa initiated the alteration of Polish theatre and inspired his pupils, e.g.: Grzegorz Jarzyna, Krzysztof Warlikowski and Pawel Miskiewicz, who form today’s Polish theatre. The artistic output of Krystian Lupa is the most important phenomenon of Polish theatre. His staging of the XX-th century prose (mostly German language) examine psyche and the state of spirit of contemporary human being and open the actors and spectators to irrational and metaphysical dimensions of life. The young theatre directors introduce the foreign contemporary plays on Polish stages and change the style of acting and the visual aspect of the performances. They show the destructive impact of the negative phenomenon’s accompanying the transition on the psyche of individual. They break the conventions and attach the importance to the truth and strength of experience. The three most celebrated recent performances of Polish theatre: “*Ausloeschung*” (by Thomas Bernhard) directed by Krystian Lupa; “*Cleaned*” (by Sarah Kane) directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski and “*Festen*” (by Mogens Rukov and Thomas Vinterberg) directed by Grzegorz Jarzyna/H7 provoked serious public debates.

The “opening” process of Polish theatre has commenced. The “Tomato Revolution” known from the Netherlands, preceding the “release” of the theatre buildings from permanently assigned repertory theatre groups, however, is still far ahead of us.

2. “The alternative scene”, its phenomena and tendencies

In the Polish repertory theatre there has been a furious struggle for its self-opening, and for overcoming the conservatism and commercialisation. In case of the non-institutional theatres – in Poland referred to as alternative theatres – the struggle is to broaden the audience and to allow financial support by the representatives of all levels of authority. As a result of poor support for their projects, granted by the authorities, also because of the “poverty” suffered by the cultural clubs and the lack of impresario theatres, ready to give visiting performances, they are limited to operate in the field of festivals. The outburst of the later has become increasingly noticeable in recent years. They have become a substitute for replacement of normal theatre life.

In the recent years the non-institutional theatre in Poland opened itself especially to the activities on the borderland of art and of ethnology and anthropology (inspired by the activities of “*Gardzienice*” company) and to the open-air activities (presented on many new festivals of street theatre). On the other hand the groups working on the borderland of theatre and visual arts still constitute important part of theatrical landscape.

There has been no spectacular revaluing within the non-institutional theatre in the recent years. We have been facing continuation of artistic attitudes and forms. Some of the outstanding groups have continued with their long-lasting tradition. First of all “*Gardzienice*” company deserves to be mentioned here, and so does “*Scena Plastyczna KUL*” (‘The Scene of Art’) from Lublin, and also “*Akademia Ruchu*” (the ‘Academy of Movement’) from Warsaw, “*Teatr Ósmego Dnia*” from Poznan (the ‘Eight Day’s Theatre’) and “*Provisorium*” from Lublin. It seems that most of the above mentioned groups have already achieved their top performance of their artistic career. Among the most absorbing phenomena are the two theatres established in the 90-ties, “*Cinema*” theatre from Michalowice and “*Studium Teatralne*” from Warsaw (the ‘Theatre Studium’). Performances given by most of the newly established theatres, despite being brilliant, hardly ever succeed in achieving the intensity, power of expression or the appropriate artistic level, compared to performances given by the older groups. Permanent avoiding to address the politics and publicism by the non-institutional theatres is striking.

Alike in case of the previous political system, the most important themes of social character are dealt with by “*Teatr Ósmego Dnia*” from Poznan. It is the most authoritative group of the longest existence in the alternative theatrical landscape. The group have initiated the contestation trends in the Polish theatre. They have also worked out their own actor’s expression model as well as a new form of street performances. The theatre was established in 1964. So far the group has created around 40 performances. In 1991, after a few years spent on wandering throughout Europe, the crew came back to Poland. In their headquarters, offered by Poznan Authorities, the group houses their theatrical and educational activity. Following the departure of Lech Raczak, the group’s activity is directed by actors Ewa Wójciak and Tadeusz Janiszewski. The attitudes and practice of the group were shaped by experiencing by its members the events, which took place in Poland in 1968 and 1970, as well as by the creations of Jerzy Grotowski. The creative method of the group is a collective improvisation-based creation. Members of the groups are at the same time authors of most of the texts used for performances. The performances are of tragic and grotesque form. In the recent years, the crew have been more open to outdoor shows. The recent shows have been less aggressive, but more plastically flavoured, comparing with the past. In 1998 and outdoor performance “*Szczyt*” (“*The Summit*”) was created. The spectators were witnessing a summit – meeting of ‘the World’s Magnates’ depicted as a caricature. The plot of the performance was changing along with the scene of taking the power over by “body-guards”, the role of who had previously been limited just to protect the magnates. The performance ending was the reminiscence of a dramatic scene from streets in Beijing, where an un-armed man halted a column of tanks. In 2000 an extensive international outdoor rehearsal “*Arka*” (“*The Ark*”) initiated the tour all-over the world, the gist of which focuses on the fate of immigrants and refugees. Since June 2003 performance “*Portiernia*” (“*The Door – Keeper’s Lodge*”) is on in the theatre halls. The scenes, being the reminiscence of human tragedy in Chernobyl, Chechnya and Bosnia, are interlaced with an ironic picture of Polish political scene and with adjusting people to obey rules of the new political system. A sad review reveals a brick-wall separating the rich from the poor and ignored rest.

The themes repeating in the non-institutional rehearsals are: the degradation of human’s spiritual condition, manipulating with the consciousness of individuals and the destructive role of mass-media and pop-culture. By analysing the relationship: individual – individual and group – the world, the authors often attempt to “sublimate” the presented phenomena, by showing them in the historical and philosophical setting or in metaphysical context. Artistically, they capture attention: the domination of motion and picture, and searching for aesthetical coherence and originality. The performances given by the leading theatres are

characterised by a limited range of artistic forms employed. The above characteristics as well as the power of mental and artistic transition, distinguish their works among the foreign groups.

One of the most popular (among the young audience) non-institutional theatres is “*Porywacze cia*” (“*The Kidnappers of the Bodies*”) from Poznan. Performances given by this theatre combine sketches and etudes, presenting the stereotypes of consciousness and the behaviour of the participants of the Polish social transformation.

In the recent years, there has been an outburst of street theatre festivals and the outdoor shows. This is mainly provoked by the preferences of local authorities and sponsors, as well as due to a growing demand for cheap, mass entertainment. Unfortunately, none of the outdoor shows lives up to the standard represented by “Teatr Ósmego Dnia” (the ‘Eight Day’s Theatre’) and by “Akademia ruchu” (“Academy of Movement”) in the 70-ties and 80-ties. The last important and satisfactory performance was “*Carmen Funebre*” of 1993. It was a play inspired by the stories of Bosnian refugees, and by the aesthetics of performances given by “Teatr Ósmego Dnia” (the ‘Eight Day’s Theatre’).

The two most acclaimed trends of the non-institutional theatre in Poland are the following: investigations made by the groups operating by body and voice expression (within the group inspired by ideas and Grotowski’s practice) and the groups situated in the borderland of theatre and visual arts.

One of the important phenomena of the recent years is to investigate for the cultural roots. In this field particular attention deserves “*Gardzienice*” centre.

“*Gardzienice*” is the most acclaimed Polish experimental theatre company. The company was founded in 1977 by Włodzimierz Staniewski, theatre director and actor, close collaborator of Grotowski in “Laboratory Theatre”. The name of the company is taken after the name of the village (in south-eastern Poland) in which the group is based. The members of the company are convinced that native culture could be important inspiration for theatre. The group organized a lot of “expeditions” to the rural communities with indigenous songs, rituals and oral history. The main point of the “expedition” is “gathering”, a kind of celebration of the village’s cultural heritage. The company explores and reflects the culture of so called “borderland”, the melt of Polish, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Jewish cultures. The company’s activities include performances, “expeditions”, workshops, concerts of recently founded “Ancient Orchestra” and educational activities, including “The Academy of Theatre”, which started its activity in 1997. Theatrical practices of the company are rooted in the experiences of so called “poor theatre”. The performances of “*Gardzienice*” are composed from etudes created in the process of improvisation. They transform and unite the elements of literature (amplified with great myths of the European culture) with the elements of native culture. Instead of linear plot, there is a stream of sensual, ambiguous etudes arranged according to the principles of musical counterpoint and alternating rhythms. The songs and incantations are the source of musically rhythmized movements, gestures and actions. The acting is ostentatiously unnatural, but a truth of actions is preserved. By dint of intensive training the actors achieved a hitherto rarely – met perfection of organic use of energy, voice and body. The performances of the company can be seen as contemporary “miracle plays” or a new form of music theatre, which the anthropologist Leszek Kolankiewicz called a “staged ethno-oratorio”. He perceives them as fulfilling a ritual function, acting as a modern updating of the tragic chorus of ancient Greek theatre. The most acclaimed performances of the company were: “*The Life of Avvakum*” from 1983, based on 17-th century literary relics of Orthodox Russian literature and “*Carmina Burana*” from 1990, inspired by a collection of medieval songs written around 13-th century. In 1997 the company created performance “*Metamorphosis*” inspired by the novel “*Metamorphosis or the Golden Ass*” by Lucius Apuleius (from the 2-nd century) and by the traces of the ancient Greek music. It was a kind of theatrical essay. In 2002 “*The Scenes from Electra*” based on the tragedy by Euripides, were created by the company (as always under the artistic direction of Staniewski). The tragedy of Electra and obsessions of Euripides became alive as well as the gestures of the other characters of the play, reconstructed after the images on the Greek vases. The practice

of "Gardzienice" in its search of roots inspires the activity of many Polish and foreign groups, for example: Teatr Wiejski "Wegajty" (The Village Theatre "Wegajty") based in the village near Olsztyn and "Teatr Piesn Kozla" ("Song of the Goat Theatre") from Wroclaw.

One of the most captivating theatres operating by the body and voice expression is "*Studium Teatralne*" ("*Theatrical Studium*") from Warsaw. The theatre was founded by Piotr Borowski, who has completed several-year periods of work for "Gardzienice" and for "Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards" in Pontedera. In 1996 Borowski together with students (having no previous theatrical experience) from Warsaw colleges founded a theatre based on the "laboratory method". In his work with actors Borowski employs his experience from Gardzienice and Pontedera. The rehearsals by the "Theatrical Studium" are improvisation-based collective creations. The texts emerge usually at the end of the trial period. The group distinguishes the dialogs with traditional theatre avant-garde of the 20th century (for example with Grotowski), and references to Polish intellectual tradition. Performances of the group depict the spiritual condition of a contemporary man. Some kind of "reincarnation" of the romantic hero is noticeable, who seems to be irrevocably, with no way back put aside, along with the fall of communism. The performances of the theatre are based on an unlimited expression of body and voice. The most significant form of expression is the dynamic, but precise, motion of actors in almost empty space. What distinguishes their actors' play, is the team atmosphere and the energy emanating from the actors. During the performances, some sort of energy exchange between the actors and the audience is present. The group of "Studium Teatralne" have so far directed three plays. In 1996 "*Miasto*" ("*The City*") was created. That play was about a painful confrontation of young people having idealistic attitude towards life with the brutality, cynics of the materialistic civilisation of big metropolis. In 1999 the group performed "*Pólnoc*" ("*The Midnight*"), a play in which the performers confronted scenes of today's youth life with those from "Dziady" ("Forefathers Eve") by Adam Mickiewicz, the most remarkable Polish romantic drama. In 2001 an appealing spectacle "*Czlowiek*" ("*The Man*") was prepared, inspired by the story of 'cadics' who attempted to speed up the arrival of Messiahs. Also excerpts from "Richard the Third" by Shakespeare were used in the play, together with the reports of militia officers taking part in pacification of labourers riots in Gdansk in 1970. Spectators of the performance are confronted with the consequences of characters wishing to 'screen off the world of all evil'. As they authority, they nominate a specially obedience-trained man who provokes a war ended by defeat. The historical and philosophical layer of the play was projected on the background of Polish history of the 20th century (with its victory and defeat). The performance constituted an attempt to describe the threats rooted deeply in human nature, and it was a warning signal against finding easy ways out (for example by the authoritative governments).

The most acclaimed visual theatre is "*Scena Plastyczna K.U.L.*" ("*Visual Stage of Lublin Catholic University*"). It is a theatre inspired by the Orthodox icons, paintings of Jerzy Nowosielski, sculptures of Magdalena Abakanowicz and Alina Szapocznikow, and by personal experiences of its founder. In 1969 painter and scenographer Leszek Madzik founded experimental visual theatre company. It consists of succeeding generations of students. Madzik is the author of all performances. He is directing the performances and invites the composers to write music to his performances. The "Visual Stage" is one of the most unique environmental theatres. The shows take place in a long, empty hall with a very small auditorium of spectators sitting in complete darkness. The shows are short, have no text and no plot. The performances consist of the sequences of moving images accompanied by music. Black colour is dominating. The images are usually on the border of visibility. They are built up by the movement of the human bodies (treated in the sculptor's manner), forms and objects (manipulated by the members of the company who are invisible for the spectators). The images are reached from the darkness by the light operated by Madzik in a masterly manner. Madzik tries to touch the mysteries of life and being. The spectator has the feeling of being in the centre of the Universe. It is the Universe of the fight of the forces of nature and fate. It's the world determined by the lapse of time and necrosis. The performances strongly affect spectators' imagination and emotions. They open the spectators to the metaphysical dimension of life. Among the performances, which are in the repertory of the company especially worth of the attention is artistically mature performance

entitled “*Szczelina*” (“*Slit*”) from 1994. The newest performance of “Scena Plastyczna K.U.L.” presented since October of this year is entitled “*Odchodzi*” (“*She’s Going Away*”). It’s a kind of epitaph dedicated to the memory of our dead relatives.

One of the most praised non-institutional theatre groups established in the 90-ties is the “*Cinema*” theatre, continuing the Polish tradition of the image and motion theatre. Their works are an example of creative usage of inspirations from Tadeusz Kantor works. The attitude towards reality, and the subject of theatre is alike in both cases. (The other examples of artists inspired by Tadeusz Kantor are François Tanguy directing “Theatre du Radeau”, Josef Nadj managing the modern dance group in Orleans and Woron, the Polish director working in Berlin). An important plot inspiration is the detailed study of human behaviour. The inspiration of “*Cinema*” authors in the “Theory of Perception” of Wladyslaw Strzeminski is noticeable, and so are the inspirations by the art of Samuel Beckett, Piny Bausch and Zbigniew Rybczynski. The founders of “*Cinema*” are painters from Gdansk and Sopot and actors, who – after graduation from academy in Wroclaw – worked for the C.K. Norwid Theatre in Jelenia Góra. Their headquarters and permanent address is in Michalowice, a village in Karkonosze, mountain chain situated in the borderland of Poland, Czech Republic and Germany. “*Cinema*” theatre is the author’s theatre. The playwright, scenarist and director at the same time is Zbigniew Szumski, painter, who studied under supervision of Jerzy Krechowicz, remarkable artist, the founder of visual theatre “*Galeria*” (the “*Gallery*”) performing in Gdansk in the 60-ties. The first performance given by the group was “*Dong*” in 1992. The performance was inspired by Edward Lear, the master of English pure-nonsense. In the setting composed of pictures – the quotations from the surrealist Rene Magritte works – anachronic figures appear dressed in black suits. The following performances present the next scenes of ludicrous worlds, in which they are immersed. Showing no feelings, instrumentally addressing each other, people fill distressing empty spaces of rooms in their obsessive ritual of nonsense action. The tragicomically characters perform prosaic (often shameful) operations. The topics of “*Cinema*” plays are: identity of fundamental human’s experience and the inscrutability of human’s internal world. The surrealistic performances of the theatre are distinguished by specific sense of humour. The most acclaimed performance of the theatre is “*Bilard*” (“*Billiards*”) of 1994. In a provincial billiards room, reminiscences of some celebrity are revitalised inclusive of some discrediting events involved. One of the most mature performances of the theatre is “*Albert Lux*”, the premiere of which took place in 2003. The “*Cinema*” crew have also created a series of cabaret shows and rehearsals in partnership with German theatre “*AS PICK*” from Hildesheim, and also several TV shows. The performances of “*Cinema*” referring to the play of imagination and associations constitute serious challenge for the intellect and sensitiveness of spectators.

One of the most experienced experimental theatres is “*Akademia Ruchu*” (“*Academy of Movement*”) from Warsaw. It is a group acting in the borderland of theatre, performance art and visual arts. Its existence dates back to 1973. The founder, author of projects and director of performances is Wojciech Krukowski – artist, historian of art, animator of cultural life, for several years the director of Contemporary Art Centre in Warsaw. The members of the group are united by the conviction of the possibility to interlink the artistic radicalism with some message for the society. Among the inspirations of the group, the tradition of theatrical and art avant-garde may be indicated (e.g. the art of Polish constructionists and John Cage). “*Akademia Ruchu*” have created their own language of expression, which combines forms of the ‘behavioural theatre’ with visual narration. The group members are interested in using the signs of art to depict and interpret the collective awareness and social behaviours. The performances of the group are composed, among others, of common behaviour collages. The actions of actors are deprived of psychological motivation and emotions. The grounds for their activity is the precise movement in space. Since 1974, “*Akademia Ruchu*” – as the first theatre in Poland has undertaken regular activities in the open city space. The outdoor performances of the group, are of art intervention character in the daily life of the city. In the 80-ties the group members participated in the independent culture programmes. In the 90-ties they conducted the most energetic alternative art centre in Warsaw. In 1995 the group presented performance called “*Piosenka*” (“*The Song*”) composed of a series of close actions of performance art, in which the actors made an attempt to recognise themselves in

the new reality. The actions were interlaced with pictures ironically commenting on the condition of social awareness. In 2000 "*Przychodnia. Exit*" ("*Clinic. Exit*") performance was prepared. The spectacle focused on the threat to the individuals of being manipulated by the politics, the creators of consumption market, by media and genetics. Such a multi-medial show was beginning from a distressing scene, in which a propeller was spinning fast in front of the actors sitting at hazardous distance around it, with their faces covered with hoods. The group, in the recent years, have organised numerous outdoor performances and activities, out of which some having a form of some "theatre poster" of social-oriented impact, and others constituting a sort of abstractive 'visual poem'.

One of the most interesting phenomena of the alternative culture in Poland is the activity of the association called "*Komuna Otwock*" ("*The Otwock Commune*"), describing themselves as an "anarchistic commune which tends to broaden freedom, tolerance and social sensitivity. Existing since 1989, the group gathers young people living in Warsaw and in the region. The group have organised concerts and exhibitions, as well as social-oriented events, e.g. pro-ecology campaigns. The most renowned activity form of "*Komuna Otwock*" are rehearsals and theatre events. The leader and director of the group is Grzegorz Laszuk, whose permanent occupation is graphic designer. The group does not consist of actors. The performances given by "*Komuna Otwock*" are collective creations, bearing a social message. They are an appeal for self-reflection and activity. The controversy is provoked by slogans contained in the pronounced texts and by ostentation expressed by "non-acting" position of the performers. The performances of "*Komuna Otwock*" combine elements of theatre of movement, multi-medial show and performance art. Inspirations from the activity of "*Akademia Ruchu*", "*La Fura dels Baus*" and "*Einstürzende Neubauten*" theatres may be found in the performances given by the group. Performances of "*Komuna Otwock*" are distinguished by team atmosphere, simplicity and ritualism. In 2000 the most renowned performance of the group "*Trzeba zabic pierwszego Boga*" ("*The First God must be killed*") was created. The title refers to the myth explained by Mircea Eliade, of the first God, who created the World accidentally and wants to destroy it. Unwanted children of God rejected the existing state of affairs in the world. To change it, however, one has to overcome the passiveness first. The performance of "*Komuna Otwock*" resembled a post-industrial ritual. It was composed of: sequences of repeated rhythmical actions and exclamations, video projections depicting scenes from the city life and visual transmission of the activity of group members and declarations read by Grzegorz Laszuk. The rhythm and temperature of the show was decided by the deafening thundering of drums. In 2001 the group created a performance "*Design. Gropius/Dlaczego nie bedzie rewolucji*" ("*Design. Gropius / Why There Will Be No Revolution*"). By the example of Walter Gropius' autobiography the group showed the process of resigning from individualism and radical ideas aimed at serving the mass community.

In context of activities combining elements of various disciplines of art, special mention deserve, close to the performance art, dance shows by Leszek Bzdyl and his group "*Dada von Bzduelow*" from Gdansk, and the actions and theatrical installations by Katarzyna Kozyra.

In the recent years there has been an outburst of modern dance groups. However, regrettably, the lack of appropriate working conditions causes that the most talented dancers and choreographers (for example Leszek Bzdyl, Katarzyna Chmielewska and Magda Reiter from Gdansk) are forced to fulfil most of their ideas abroad. When the authorities realise this, and create appropriate conditions for the dancing community to function normally, perhaps the quantity will then turn into quality, and best performers will stop leaving Poland.

Should the social tension in Poland increase, and should the gap between the world of politics, business, entertainment and the daily life of citizens continue to spread, perhaps the theatre will have to react (for example by radicalisation). This will particularly apply to the non-institutional and alternative theatres. Out of theatres of long existence, some hope for outstanding achievements may arouse from the opening "*Gardzienice*" group to the Greek roots of European culture. Among the groups established in the 90-ties, it appears that the most captivating performances may be expected from theatres "*Cinema*" and "*Studium*"

Teatralne". Further expansion of author's theatre and generational groups may be expected, having strong artistic and mental expression and distinguishing the Polish "alternative scene" in Europe.

- Langenscheidt Translation Service -

Lech Raczak

Artistic director of the Malta-Festival, Poznan

Presentation

The topic of the presentation has an open structure, the aim is maybe a common definition of the presentation at the end of the presentation. I describe myself not only as an artist but also as a "relic" or "fossil" from the past, at least from the perspective of my artistic colleagues.

I would like to mention the following about the presentation of Maciej Nowak who mentions ten names (see presentation of Nowak) in order to define the contemporary landscape of the Polish theatre: Since these 10 names have been mentioned, Kantor would ask god for a fast end of the world and Grotowski would withdraw his application for reincarnation.

Kantor is rather rebellious, whereas Grotowski is rather reserved – according to Kantor and Grotowski there can be no continuity of dramatic theatre, because both have left the dramatic theatre.

Main topic of the presentation:

So far two forms of theatre have become evident from the presentations and contributions:

- 1) Alternative theatre
- 2) Dramatic theatre

In my opinion alternative theatre is a genre of its own, like the opera or the operetta ...

Dramatic theatre is connected with the place (the theatre building), with the tradition of this building; the building is the home of dramatic theatre.

Alternative theatre is seeking for new places. It leaves traditional theatre; theatre in the open, in factories ...

Dramatic theatre: The basis is the building and the dramatic text is the foundation; alternative theatre needs contact with the place, the starting point is reality – this is not to be understood as political reality, rather reality as a social phenomenon.

An author doesn't exist, the essence of this theatre is the process. A group that is in process.

Dramatic theatre confronts the audience with a finished product/picture; the process is not the topic; the aims of this theatre are social aims (political statements, education ...)

The aim of alternative theatre is to try to get contact with the audience.

The audience of these two forms of theatre has different aims.

In addition to that these forms of theatre are organised in different ways.

Yet there is an overlapping of certain values, and an exchange of these two genres on a professional level is possible, but not in every direction.

A director can stage an opera as well as a play for example. But an actor cannot sing an opera and an opera singer cannot act in a play; and so an actor of the alternative theatre

cannot act in a dramatic play, because he is lacking a certain technique; but the other way round it can indeed be possible.

Alternative theatre is not a new development but has its roots in the 70s. Therefore it has already become conventional and is not opposed to dramatic theatre. Both these forms of theatre have to revive themselves.

A new form of dramatisation which is in fact propagated by Polish critics has led to the development of dramatic theatre.

Also for the alternative theatre a revival is possible. In contrast to Western alternative theatre this renewal doesn't take place by means of new technologies – as far as this is concerned Poland is behind the times – the renewal rather takes place on the level of "basic means of theatre", namely human work.

Problems with financing:

I am opposed to central financing and I disapprove of the fact, that alternative theatres are underfinanced. One of the 106 institutionalised theatres receives as much financial support as 300 independent groups of which only three receive regular subsidies.

In 1968 the support for alternative theatre was stronger, today it is marginal.

Dramatic theatre deals increasingly with political issues. In my opinion this is problematic.

I am critical of the following: The situation with cultural life in Poland is abnormal, because the two forms of theatre are fighting against each other instead of existing side by side and exchanging views. The reaction is gaining power, the institutional has a chance.

What has been pushed to the edge during times of socialism is still marginalized today.

I do appreciate the work of the groups mentioned by Maciej Nowak, but I oppose these forerunners of dramatic theatre with the work of the group "Strefa ciszy" from Poznan, whose artistic director Adam Zijski presented "36,6 °C" at the Malta festival and won important prizes. For me that was the most important Polish theatre experience in the last few years.

Alternative theatre in Poland offers cultural "highlights" just like dramatic theatre.

Maybe Grotowski and Kantor wouldn't have appreciated this kind of theatre. In my opinion a successor of these two great theatre authorities is nevertheless to be found in the alternative theatre – maybe in the area of working with new communication media.

Poland has recognised the greatness of Grotowski and Kantor only due to critics from abroad. Before that the Polish had not taken any notice of the two. I expect a similar development also for their followers.

The title of the presentation could be the following: "Which alternative? The never-ending Polish farce!"

- Translation: Bettina Lemke -

Renate Klett

Theatre Critic and Publicist, Berlin, interviews

Zbigniew Szumski

Director, Teatr Cinema, Michalowice

Interview with an artist

Renate Klett: To recite the motto, that I have looked at for the whole day, I will now say "ceci n'est pas Kristian Lupa, ceci est Peter Brook". This conversation will refer mainly to the final rehearsal of "The Dictionary of Situations" from the previous day. But first of all I would like to comment on the statement of Lech Raczak: New talents are often discovered abroad and not in their own country; this is not only a Polish phenomenon. I have the impression anyway that we are describing things we already know very well as Polish phenomena.

Let's turn to Zbigniew Szumski now. Zbigniew Szumski is a graphic artist, so his background is not in theatre but in fine arts. His hometown is Gdansk. And of course his theatre is influenced a lot by his job as a fine artist.

Following the term "author's film" one could call his theatre author's theatre. In the following conversation I would like to talk about the specific characteristics of his theatre.

Szumskis theatre triggers many associations in the Western audience from Pina Bausch to Marthaler, because the director works a lot with improvisations and designs the set himself. In addition to that he doesn't create "literary" theatre, but writes what little text there is himself. Had Beckett been Polish, he would perhaps have created this kind of theatre. But we don't want to talk now about Beckett but about Zbigniew. I would like to ask you to describe a little bit how you developed this form of theatre. The theatre of Szumski is a surreal theatre full of humour, but it also contains a certain amount of cruelty. But how would *you* describe your work?

Zbigniew Szumski: Since I am actually an artist I would like to modify the term author's theatre. The author's theatre has the problem of domination, because the author has to evoke a kind of authorship in the other participants. I would like to use a different term, namely the term "change". This has to happen voluntarily. An author's theatre has several co-authors as well. My second big point is to tell stories. I am telling stories on my level, so it is my story. In normal life people can imitate, copy and try to be on a different level. Of course one always wants to be on a higher level, one doesn't necessarily want the lower one. I am trying to tell my story on my level; from the outside that often looks fragmentary, but in my opinion man is fragmentary. I feel that it is my task to put a human being together by means of an essay of fragments.

Today's abundance of information which frightens us, is not really a threat. Man can indeed receive a lot of information. Being someone who looks at the theatre from the outside he tries to show this abundance of information and he is sure, that they can deal with it well, because they are fragmentary themselves.

Renate Klett: Well, but you are expressing this fragmentation of man and of information and maybe of the theatre too in a very humorous way. That is not a big gesture of despair, but it is very tiny and sometimes very mean too - that seems to be an important element. But you always insist that your theatre is not metaphysical.

Zbigniew Szumski: I don't want to answer this question, because this fragment of man is something that is very quiet and systematic, one would have to depict the whole system. Ok! I will answer the question. I am replacing metaphysics with loud regrets. It is very good

when a lot of people say that there is so much humour in the performances of Pina Bausch, but for me what you find there most of all are loud regrets.

I can describe this visually also. I have talked with someone who is an expert in music. I am not competent in that field, but I am telling you what I have understood. Imagine three Master singers, three voices singing together; they are standing in a circle singing to each other and all of a sudden a fourth voice evolves, the voice of a child or the voice of a woman.

Another image, in order to complete this story I would like to say something about the flaws in my education. Master and student are working together. When the student reaches the position of the master, the latter steps back and the student takes his position. When the student becomes weaker the master who is standing behind him holds the voice. This is a specific image for the East but this relation between master and student is the same world-wide.

Renate Klett: How does this relation between master and student change, when the actors are German and the director is Polish? Often directors from abroad have problems when they are working with "foreign" actors. Jarzyna for example put on his worst performances at the Schaubühne in Berlin. What predominates when one doesn't work with a familiar group any more, the difficulties or the aspect of gaining much from the experience?

Zbigniew Szumski: I have learned a lot through this work. I am taking a lot when I am working with my actors, sometimes that looks like manipulation. To put it cheekily, I am "stealing a part of their hearts", I guess that is cannibalism in art.

Renate Klett: But how does working with Polish actors differ from working with German actors? Since he is likely to steal also from his Polish actors. What I am getting at with this question is, whether this first big co-production with these new influences brought about a change in Szumski's work.

Zbigniew Szumski: Of course with every work something changes, but I don't see it as a breakthrough. I don't believe there are such "breakthroughs". I rather believe in movements which take place step by step, where one doesn't go beyond one's own abilities.

I have had experiences in "covering up" stories. I would like to tell a story, but for me the most powerful stories always remain hidden. Stories which one is always reminded of, lose their real power because of this continuous reminder. At first I was telling my own covered stories to the audience; it might not have been able to decide about them. But the actors must not interpret my story, they have to find their own stories instead, which they then want to tell. According to my opinion about directing - which is on the one hand naive, but on the other hand mathematical - in order to evoke reactions in people in such a way, the audience has to be the third narrator. I have the naive desire that the director's and actors' stories will evoke a third story from the spectator.

Renate Klett: This form of directing and how your stories connect with the stories of the actors can be seen in "The Dictionary of Situations". One of the stories that I remember is the story about the big man with the beard, one of the many stories that are told. Of course he doesn't come on stage, but is mimed by one of the actresses. A pair of underpants becomes the man's beard. This is only one of the many catchy examples which combine poetic elements and humour and of course it has a background which goes beyond this tenderness of poetic elements and humour. I would be interested to hear how these images/stories come about. Do you plan them or do they evolve during the improvisation?

Zbigniew Szumski: I can tell you exactly how this particular story came about. It emerged thanks to three actresses. We wanted to select actresses for the project, but there was no audition. Instead of an audition we worked with the actresses for eight days in Michalowice, under full tension and with fear of the première. During the rehearsals the performance evolved in such a way that - just as for a diploma from a university of theatre - everyone needed to perform a solo scene. When one of the actresses did a solo scene, we had to create a solo scene for another actress too and during one rehearsal I was attacked by three actresses who thought that I had to find something for her too. I watched this actress

and was thinking about telling a story about the relationship with the mother; while improvising I came up with a fairy-story-like text and that's how this story evolved.

I would like to say something else about the details of the performance.

How do details work during a theatre evening? What is needed is dialogue between the detail and time. The main element of my theatre are the improvisations of the actors. I always tell my actors to remember everything that happens around the improvisation, because detail is not a point.

Detail is at the centre of different reactions, often very private relations. Being someone who doesn't originally come from the theatre I don't understand the meaning of the term "private" on stage. Of course normally it stands for the lack of concentration of an actor - but if you want to show detail you have to be private. But being private is also a memory of the time when it was created. Somebody has written a book about it, because due to a smell he had this memory.

Renate Klett: Of course it is difficult to ask questions, if one hasn't seen the performance, but perhaps your Polish colleagues have questions about your work?

Question from the audience: I see a connection between Szumski and Kantor. Do the details of the performance depend on objects?

Zbigniew Szumski: I don't think that there have to be many objects in the theatre of a painter and sculptor, because every object that appears on stage has consequences. When I was working as a set designer the director said to me "in this scene we need a table with glasses". And I had to ask what would happen with the table later on.

I have great respect, well I am even frightened of objects, and I try to reduce the number of objects. I think that the whole performance could be reduced to three tables; as far as the dramatisation is concerned not a lot would have been lost.

Renate Klett: But the design of the set especially in this performance is rather lavish, for example the two slides which are only used at the beginning and at the end.

Zbigniew Szumski: That is a good question but I don't know the answer.

Renate Klett: Before we finish I would like to share a short anecdote which is in my opinion very typical of Szumski's way of thinking. When I visited Z. Szumski in Michauwiceim in the Giant Mountains I asked him: "What will happen in Poland when the Pope dies?" He answered without hesitation: "The Polish will close the Stalin theatre."

I wish the Teatr Cinema the very best for the world première of "The Dictionary of Situations".

- Translation: Bettina Lemke

Renate Klett

Theatre Critic and Publicist, Berlin, interviews

Katarzyna Kozyra

Artist in Fine Arts and Media, Berlin/Warsaw, and

Grzegorz Laszuk

Director, Teatr Komuna Otwock

Interview with artists

Renate Klett: We are now beginning with the second round of our discussions and I would like to introduce to you Katarzyna Kozyra, who has put together a wonderful exhibition about the "Rite of Spring" at the Haus der Kunst – the presentation is a bit un-conventional.

As far as Gregorz is concerned we have the problem again that his performance has not been staged yet and therefore we don't know it yet. The Komuna Otwock will show two presentations here. I have hesitated now to use the word performance, because both of the artists, who have been invited to this discussion, have in common, that they don't actually create theatre. In the case of Katarzyna Kozyra this is evident, because she is presenting a video installation; in the case of Grzegorz Laszuk it is not so evident, because his work includes a lot of components of a theatre performance. There is a stage, there is an audience, but Laszuk nevertheless insists that this is not theatre. Maybe this is a good point to start our discussion. Why isn't the work of the Komuna Otwock viewed as theatre?

Grzegorz Laszuk: We are not aware that we are creating theatre. I am not interested in theatre.

Renate Klett: Then what are you interested in? Not in theatre, this is something that you have in common with the majority of the people, but what are you interested in?

Grzegorz Laszuk: I am interested in simple things, drinking beer, meeting friends, reading the paper, watching TV – no not watching TV, occasionally I go to the movies – most of the time I have no time for that.

Renate Klett: Why don't you have time?

Grzegorz Laszuk: I have a lot of work, I am a capitalist.

Renate Klett: What kind of work do you do?

Grzegorz Laszuk: I am a printer!

Renate Klett: I have to insist a little bit now. You are not interested in theatre, but are you interested for example in political involvement? There has to be something that you are interested in, apart from drinking beer.

Grzegorz Laszuk: When we invite people to our performances we often deal with the question, why there won't be a revolution. Design: Gropius is telling us why an architect decides in one moment to live differently. Perechodnik/Baumann is also telling us a part of our history. Otwock is a small district, a former ghetto. The history of Perechodnik talks about how we sometimes would like to change something, that the world should change, but we are powerless and have no influence over that. Due to fear we refrain from a moral decision. Our performances are observations about our world, a small but special world.

Renate Klett: I would like to pick up on a keyword that you have – at least in the translation – used several times. You mentioned that you are telling something about this or that. I can only talk with certain reservations, because I have only seen the video of your performance – and we all know that a video is always different from the actual performance, but if I refer

to that now, I would say that actually little was told there in the sense of being "narrative". Yet you are using the traditional term of "narrating".

Grzegorz Laszuk: We are not actors, our actions are stories, are actions for ourselves. We cannot employ the methods of an actor. We are aiming at an entirety. The audience wants to enter into a dialogue with us. As a spectator I am also always trying to enter into a dialogue with the artist. When I watch a performance it is always a story which is looking for an answer from me.

Renate Klett: So your theatre is a chance to start a conversation.

Grzegorz Laszuk: Yes, that is the basis for every human relationship.

Renate Klett: But are we now talking about the theatre or a conversation?

Grzegorz Laszuk: You cannot tell the difference between the two, if you tried that, the result would be something that doesn't sound right, that would be a pure waste of time.

Renate Klett: In order not to waste any more time I would like to ask Katarzyna Kozyra now, who also doesn't present theatre performances. What has now been said about expressing something in artistic form, in order to simulate a conversation is something that you would accept as a possibility too. The starting point of your work has often been controversial. "Scandal" is associated with you and your work. For your project "*The Brementown Musicians*" a horse was slaughtered and stuffed. Just as Demian Hill won't get rid of the dissected cows as long as he lives. But let's talk about your present work, which also has a lot to do with meat in an interesting way. How did your present work the "*Rite of Spring*" come about?

Katarzyna Kozyra: I don't know where to start. I never had a lot to do with dance and theatre. I have always been an average spectator and was never particularly interested. I saw a programme about five productions of "Sacre du printemps" on television. The first production that was discussed, was the one of Nijinsky. The TV programme showed fragments of reconstructed parts of that production. I was moved and shocked by the puppet-like and the two-dimensional of the choreography. Never before had I had anything to do with dance or performance, yet I wanted to reproduce the two-dimensional with video. In order to do that I wanted to have normal people, who were not dancers, lying on the floor, animated to these dances. At first I was sceptical myself whether this kind of animation was possible and I had no idea, how this could later be shown, it was an experiment.

Renate Klett: One notices that in your installation you are working only with old people, who due to their age actually cannot dance at all.

Katarzyna Kozyra: The result was supposed to be marionette-like; the puppet-likeness of the animation doesn't need any muscle power. In that way physical limitations are overcome and by means of technical animation frail people seen to be capable of very demanding movements. The contrast with old people is highly suitable for that.

Renate Klett: In an interview you have stressed even more pointedly that this technique gives you the power to move these people like puppets and to bend them as you like. Could you please comment on that statement, since it is quite a strong claim to be able to bend people, who cannot defend themselves.

Katarzyna Kozyra: I would like to say something about that now, but I'm lost for words. Just as it was with the pyramid of animals I put myself somehow in the place of – I can't express that.

Grzegorz Laszuk: But we don't always have to be able to express everything we do, otherwise we could just as well write an article instead.

Renate Klett: Of course an artist is not obliged to explain everything, but one could at least try, or are you generally opposed to that?

Katarzyna Kozyra: Well, I am not a demiurg, but I can put myself in such a position. So I seem to be the one who animates, but in reality I am not the one.

Renate Klett: I would like to direct a more detailed question about this to you, Gregorz. Possibly you hold an opposite position, because you are pushing aside what obstructs the path and obscures the view of the members of the cast and of the audience. What matters to you – apart from other things - is a kind of self-discovery. Is that a correct interpretation?

Grzegorz Laszuk: It's not about pushing aside strains, what matters are the questions, the search for an answer. We are talking about a normality which every person longs for. We are not talking about ideas, but about the search for normality. We want to create our own world in such a way that is it easy to find.

Renate Klett: Normality is a wide sphere. You seem to be active and committed on various social levels; you are also a political candidate. What you are doing is very similar to what a citizen's action group is doing, but why are you not happy with that, why are you also involved in theatre?

Grzegorz Laszuk: I would be sad, if I wasn't involved in theatre any more. It is normal that people are doing what they like; we just like to do concerts, festivals and also theatre.

Tilmann Broszat: Maybe we have to differentiate here between the plastic arts and the theatre and we have to take into consideration the different possibilities of the interpretation of each. The theatre claims rather to act as a mediator in a different kind of context whereas the plastic arts create more of a singular impact. According to my interpretation the Komuna Otwock is in that respect closer to the plastic arts.

Renate Klett: Would a different label help us here? Would you agree if one classed you as belonging to the plastic arts? You are doing something that according to German understanding would be classed as performance; but I still haven't understood why you are doing that, but I guess, I don't have to.

Grzegorz Laszuk: That is the question now about the meaning of life!

Renate Klett: What is the meaning of life? The performance?

Grzegorz Laszuk: No, the meaning of life is activity. Komuna Otwock emerges out of a feeling of excessive activity. We have to do anything – we don't have words for that – therefore we create art.

Renate Klett: Well, is it normal to create art or is it normal not to create art? What is normal anyway? You have used the term normal quite often, and in my opinion you are using it in quite a contradictory way, therefore I would like to define it somewhat. Could you please define the term normal?

Grzegorz Laszuk: We often quote a song which is appropriate here; the text goes more or less like this: "And I want to live in the West and I want to live in a car."
For an artist creating art is normality.

Contribution from the audience: But is the work of the Komuna Otwock more than a sublimation of a group experience such as drinking beer with somebody?
Make a political statement. Like Janis Joplin who once wanted to drive a Mercedes Benz, you just want to drive a car; that is comparatively modest. What do you want? To criticise consumerist behaviour. I just don't understand, of course also because I haven't yet seen your work, what you are getting at.

Grzegorz Laszuk: You are putting several essential questions now, but we are not a society of mutual admiration. We would rather ask questions than pass on messages. My political attitude is simple: Bush is crap and I want to live in a united Europe. People should have a choice, there should be democracy, because democracy is the best option, even if a lot of boring people participate in a democracy.

Renate Klett: Thank you very much for the interview.

Summary of the day and discussion: Saturday, November 1st 2003

Chairpersons: Renate Klett (Theatre critic and publicist, Berlin) and Dr Dragan Klaić (Dr of Theatre Science, Amsterdam)

Participants: Piotr Gruszcynski (Theatre Critic, Warsaw), Katarzyna Kozyra (Artist in Fine Arts and Media, Berlin/Warsaw), Grzegorz Laszuk (Director, Teatr Komuna Otwock), Janusz Marek (Curator of performing arts at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lecturer at the Institute of Polish Culture of the Warsaw University, Warsaw), Krystyna Meissner (Artistic Director and Manager of Teatr Współczesny, Director of the DIALOG Festival, Wrocław), Lech Raczak (Artistic director of the Malta-Festival, Poznań), Małgorzata Semil (Journalist, *DIALOG* and literary manager of Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw), Zbigniew Szumski (Director, Teatr Cinema, Michałowice)

Introduction by Jochen Wagner:

Perhaps I am emotionally too close to the last act of this symposium or it appeals so much to me that I cannot reflect upon it. I enjoyed the artist's explanations very much, in which he simply refused to accept the established discourses. And at the end of his sequences he always came back to the subject of normality. This morning we heard in a dramatic setting about current Polish theatre, about various reactions to the great discourse of modern age. To make it short, what happens if one steps out of the protected shelter of god, nation, morality and let's say money. The last two artists have confronted us with what one wants, no matter whether one should or shouldn't. And in the audience a last great power stirred, the power of discourse. They asked almost as unrelentingly as God and morality, justifying themselves, defining their point of view, arguing why they felt they had the right to do what they were doing. This afternoon one of the last speakers talked about a new hero who would also show up in Polish theatre. A lot of directors have been named, but when I heard the term hero, it startled me slightly. What kind of hero is that supposed to be? A hero like Che Guevara or rather a charitable type like Mother Teresa?

Finally the keyword "normality". I would like to connect it with a precious term that was mentioned this morning, with the term "love". I had hoped that theatre and love would be brought up in opposition to capitalism - unfortunately that hasn't happened. But I am curious what this panel's discussion will contribute to that. Every intellectual construct like nation, god or morality is worse than ordinary, mild choices - for example to go out for a beer, to play soccer, to work, to love, to do what one feels up to. Provokingly your thesis is saying: Only someone who doesn't know what he wants and who doesn't know how he should shape his energies, goes to the army, to church, to the theatre or to a symposium. There are a hundred thousand ways to spend time better. And then you would cheekily have confronted us with the statement that you are already "born to perform", that you are simply doing what you like, whether it suits the others with their discourse stuff or not. I am very curious now how the final panel discussion will take up the dynamics from earlier on. And whether theatre is perhaps more than just an offer for the audience, maybe an animation for the others to do it themselves, whatever it is. And whether every differentiation might herewith be obsolete, whether it concerns art or performance or ordinariness or normality.

Dr Dragan Klaić: I would like to talk about the differences between the various forms of theatre which have been discussed several times today. On a financial level both German and Polish theatre politics deal quite differently with these forms. The established theatres get most of the money whereas the independent groups only get "peanuts". In Poland it is the same as in Germany. The repertory theatre is characterised by text, the alternative

theatre is distinguished by fluid transitions between the fine arts and theatre. I would be interested in a more detailed description of these differences.

Today's discourse was also characterised by the term "normality". Polish theatre used to be a victim of reality (socialism). Does a change of the situation which leads to normality also bring about a change of the theatre? Furthermore I would like to ask about the real working conditions for artists in Poland. Europe is a continent with a lot of differences. Not only the theatre systems are different, but also is the willingness of the authorities to invest in culture.

Malgorzata Semil: So far nobody has talked about the Polish audience. That would be important! What is a "normal" audience in Poland today? Several theatres in Poland still have loyal audiences. Maybe those theatre goers have been lost for whom going to the theatre is as natural as going to church or visiting the graves of their ancestors or going to the philharmonic hall, people for whom going to the theatre is part of everyday life, no matter which programme is being performed. An audience that in my view also exists in Germany, but maybe I'm wrong here. Perhaps to have such an audience it is necessary that a strong middle class develops?

Dr Dragan Klaic: In Germany there is no guarantee for the existence of such an audience either, even if Germany is one of the last countries, where there still is such an audience. The erosion of this type of audience is international.

Renate Klett: This is an interesting phenomenon. When there was enough money, the theatre opposed season tickets, now that there is little money the loss of the audience who had season tickets is noted with regret. We all want to have our "Tuesday blue" back. It was just as wrong to make fun of this audience as it is wrong to wish now, that it will come back. In the philharmonic halls this audience doesn't exist any more either.

Dr Dragan Klaic: Do you think that the professional theatres systematically ignore the audience in Poland?

Piotr Gruscynski: There are very different examples how theatre and audience react to each other. There is an audience which goes to the theatre out of habit, there is a new young audience who thinks that the traditional theatre is boring. This audience evolved for example at the Theatre Rozmaitosci, where there are no season tickets. The audience is confident that every performance will be interesting and geared to its taste. The theatre Norodof in Warsaw is often empty and only parties of tourists go there. During the festival of dialogue in Wroclaw the audience is gaining confidence as well. At first national performances sell and then international performances with unknown actors/artists. Guest performances by Castorf still have difficulties in attracting an audience.

Dr Dragan Klaic: I think that the Malta festival is very successful in creating a new audience for the theatre. An audience which is very open to surprises and to seeing something new.

Lech Raczak: That is true; the audience comes also from outside, the audience of the festival is different from the normal audience of the theatre.

Comment on Gruscynskis question about the reality of provincial theatres: These are second-rate directors who put on school performances at 10 a.m. - that has been described before are exceptions. Less and less people are coming to the theatre on their own initiative. Normally provincial theatres survive due to school classes.

Malgorzata Semil: I would like to add something to that. The Teatr Rozmaitosci is only a relatively small theatre with about 250 seats in Poland's largest city - the fact that it is well attended is not enough to inspire hope!

Everyday life of the Polish theatre isn't so rosy! The majority of the audience sees what Peter Brook would call "dead theatre". One is more interested in what a famous actor is doing at the moment than in the content of the performances. Often this is a rather superficial curiosity about the actor, but sometimes it is also a sincere appreciation of his work. When one of the best Polish actors was performing as King Lear, I was talking with

an elderly woman who wanted to see the play. She said that she absolutely wanted to attend this performance of King Lear, because she went everywhere where that actor was performing.

Dr Dragan Klaic to Zbigniew Szumski: You are somebody who lives in a small town, I guess you have a different strategy to deal with the problem of attracting people.

Zbigniew Szumski: I have two answers to this question. I was in St. Petersburg and asked colleagues there, if in Nowosibirsk they also have problems with the numbers of theatre goers. They answered "yes, but then we just put in a few more chairs".

Secondly I have to say that the Teatr Cinema lives in the happy enclave of festivals. There the halls are always full. But in fact I am thinking more about the actors than about the audience. First I am creating my performance, then I am looking for the audience.

Dr Dragan Klaic: You live and work under very luxurious conditions. A lot of your colleagues throughout Europe envy you that.

Janusz Marek: I would like to say something concerning my presentation. This phenomenon that the festivals are exploding is a sign, that there is no solid infrastructure. One lives from festival to festival. Perhaps one should give up the repertory and do only festivals. The repertory theatre is only kept alive with subsidies and when there was the socialistic system it had also been supported.

Dr Dragan Klaic: An analysis of the effect of socialism on the suppression or support of theatre would probably be very interesting.

Renate Klett: I would like to add two points. The Teatr Rozmaitosci like the Berlin Schaubühne is a "spearhead of the avant-garde". And such a beginning always has an effect - even if it is not the rule. And now I would like to pose my question. When I saw Polish theatre before '89 I was always fascinated, well even envious of this intensive concentration of the audience, of the fact that the theatre served as an outlet. Is it still like that today or has it fallen into oblivion? But first Krystyna Meissner would like to say something.

Krystyna Meissner: What has been said today worries me. I repudiate the attack of the alternative theatre against the repertory theatre. I don't see a gulf between the two theatre forms. There is an overlap instead. The audience of my theatre is interested and open-minded. The distinction between repertory and alternative theatre doesn't make sense to me: There is good theatre and bad theatre, that is the difference! *To Lech Raczak* A good and successful theatre group can rarely sustain its high standard for more than seven years. The alternative theatre has to be like a butterfly. The work of many repertory theatres is very open to this kind of theatre, both support each other. That hasn't been mentioned in Raczak's presentation.

Lech Raczak: I would like to say that the theatre work of Meissner is unique. The gulf between alternative theatre and repertory theatre does indeed exist. I personally live from dramatic theatre, which I appreciate indeed; but I would rather only do perform alternative theatre, which is not possible, because of the financial situation.

Krystyna Meissner is a positive exception, my criticism was not directed at her. me: There is good theatre and bad theatre, that is the difference.

Renate Klett: I would like to interrupt this inner-political dialogue here. I am surprised about these obviously quite strong fronts between alternative and repertory theatre. In Germany at least in Berlin, people are complaining that there is such a lack of differences, that there is no difference between what they see in the independent scene and on the stages of the big theatres. And almost all the new young directors of the repertory theatres come from the independent scene. So obviously the situation is different here. I would like to ask something else as well. The phenomenon of the Polish alternative theatres has always surprised me. Some of them have been there for 40 years - a continuity which doesn't exist in Germany, because there is a transition from the independent ones to the repertory theatre. I honestly have to say that I think that the German situation is healthier for the theatre. An alternative

theatre that has been working with all these elderly people for 40 years seems a bit strange to me. And I also have to say that Polish alternative theatres like the Academy Rochu have passed their peak.

Janusz Marek: A move to professionalism of the alternative theatres doesn't take place, because there is no support. Of course some of the alternative theatres have passed their peak. It is important to see what happens now. Poland is in a state of transition; also many alternative theatres have gone through the process of becoming conventional.

Krystyna Meissner: I welcome the statement of Renate Klett who has described the natural process between alternative and repertory theatres (the transition from the independent scene to the professional theatre). I am all for various forms of theatre, but the dispute disturbs me.

Renate Klett: Don't worry Krystyna. German theatre people argue about these matters too and often they do it in a much stronger and nastier way. We have enough time for a last question or a last statement.

Tilmann Broszat: In Germany something has changed in the last 20 years. There are no new generations of directors any more which evolve from the state theatres. The city theatres are dependent on the independent scene! I would like to pick up the thesis of Dragan Klaic from yesterday. He advocates a pluralistic theatre system as a European model. But that will work only, if both partners have the same rights, if they both have the right to coexist.

Dr Dragan Klaic: I would like to ask you to imagine what the Polish theatre landscape might look like in five years.

Malgorzata Semil: One can already see the results of a new generation of theatre authors, writers, and people working at the theatre. The trend of the next three years depends on the economic development which will probably not improve. The financial situation of the established theatres will not improve either, unless more people are attracted. We are always complaining that society is continuously becoming poorer, but that isn't really true. In Poland there is now more money and leisure time. The theatre will give two answers to that. One the one hand the possibility of escapism on the other hand a new avant-garde. I believe that the middle course of the theatre will become more interesting and that they will deal more with the problems of society whatever they are.

Janusz Marek: I see two different scenarios in the future. The positive one: A clear separation of artistic theatre and entertainment - but both should be represented. Artistic groups should be represented in a stronger way. New Polish drama. Distinct forms of theatre for a multilateral society. Theatres should be able to work normally, contrary to the present situation of dragging out a miserable existence. The negative one: The alternative theatre will die. G. Jarzyna has to give up the administration of the Rozmaitosci ...

Renate Klett: I agree with Zbigniew Szumski, because the Pope will be dead in five years and the Stalin theatre will be closed. I don't know whether that is a positive or negative scenario.

Maciej Nowak: In five years Polish theatre will be a repertory theatre of young authors, young actors and young directors. The repertory theatre will be young, the alternative theatre will be old. Today the independent scene is no longer an alternative to the repertory theatre. An alternative might be found in the culture of pop music.

Piotr Gruszcynski: I have a vision of a modern theatre which is close to the audience. In relation to that I would like to share a short anecdote: The twelve year old daughter of a friend of mine told me that she would like to stage Romeo and Juliet at her school, with a girl performing as Romeo, because she wants to show a lesbian relationship.

Lech Raczak: The repertory theatre in the cities will certainly be good. The question is, what will happen in the province.

- Translation: Bettina Lemke -

Sunday, November 2nd 2003

Topic of the day: Theatre and Politics in Poland and Germany

Chairmen: Tilmann Broszat (Director of the Theatre Festival SPIELART Munich)

Introduction and summary of the previous day

Tilmann Broszat, Director of the Theatre Festival SPIELART Munich

Again I would like to express my sincere thanks to Malgorzata Semil, who described the situation of the theatre in Poland in a brilliant and astute presentation yesterday, to Piotr Gruszcynski for his sensitive work on the phenomenon Kristian Lupa and the Rozmaitosci theatre, to Janusz Marek for his overview of the independent scene in Poland and to Lech Raczak, especially for the fact that due to his contribution a lively discussion was possible which could certainly not be brought to an end, but which has shown indeed that there are sensitivities and vulnerabilities and that maybe there is a need for further discussion. I don't want to discuss the antagonism between independent groups and the official theatres any further now, but with the following thesis I would like to move on to the topic of today: Maybe independent groups are also financially independent and free of socio-political objectives and can therefore defend art, pure art, and deal with questions concerning existential and maybe also religious issues, whereas the official theatres with money and a political mission have to deal also with political questions in the theatre.

Pawel Wodzinski

General and Artistic Director of Teatr Polski, Poznan

Shall we always be infected by November fever virus? Chances of Polish Political Theatre

1. The most important Polish play, *Forefather 's Eve* by Adam Mickiewicz, is set at a cemetery on 1 November. In Poland this day is celebrated as All Souls' Day. The third part of the play is dedicated to some friends of the author murdered by Russian occupation soldiers. *Dead Class* by Tadeusz Kantor described the bygone period of his childhood. *Replika* by Józef Szajna and *Akropolis* by Jerzy Grotowski, both produced in the sixties and seventies, presented a pure cruelty of the life in concentration camps during the World War II. These performances, based on personal remembrances of their authors, are testimonials of the Past, monuments to the history.

Since the beginning of XIX century, Polish Theatre and Polish Drama have been describing a world of deceased more often than a world of alives, have been using poetical aesthetics more often than a reality, have been looking back more often than looking forward. The continuous process of looking back resembles the tradition of lighting candles on family tombs on 1 November each year. I call the phenomenon *November Fever*. This is an illness, caused by a virus of the Past, going from one generation to another. The illness lets us disdain reality and future.

Shall we always be infected by November Fever? Is it possible to create, focused on the reality and politically oriented theatre? Shall we start to appreciate the reality and the future?

2. The XIX and XX centuries, except the 20 year-period before World War II, were a time of foreign occupation. Poland did not exist as an independent country. Any kind of democratic Polish state institutions, independent Polish authority, free press and free cultural institutions could not exist. There were no rightful spaces for a public debate. Polish public life was one of the most highly censored. Polish patriots were kept in prisons for their convictions.

Demonstrations, manifestations, insurrections for liberation of the country were consequently put down. Poles were fighting for their freedom, being murdered, tortured, dispatched to Siberia, to concentration camps, to soviets „lagers". For Polish people, *reality* meant pain, loss of relatives, suffering.

Any kind of independent participation in the public life, likewise an independent political activity, was repressed and put down. Besides, a political activity was risky. It threatened people with manipulation by extemporary political games, propaganda, hostile ideology and even intrigues of the secret police. *Reality* meant hostile ideology, risk and danger.

Polish people never accepted their captivity. They reckoned it as a temporary difficulty. The forced legal order was for them always full of absurdities. It was never a space of their activity. They were waiting for independence, preparing themselves for the moment, establishing underground organisations, organising alternative ways of life. *Reality* meant an obvious disdain for the temporary and absurd foreign order.

The resistance and liberty aspirations of Poles cost a lot. Polish people became the provincials of the Empires, living banally in small, underdeveloped towns and backward villages without any perspectives for the future. Their possibilities of development were consequently and consciously limited. *Reality* meant also embarrassment and the inferiority complex, a lack of perspectives of development and sad trivial existence.

Everything what is splendid, great and interesting, won battles, certificates of past power, heroic examples, could be found in the Past. We can say that Poles were living in the reality only physically. But their spiritual life belonged to the past. Living spiritually in the past, they were idealising this time, creating its symbols, protecting it from foreign influences, cultivating traditions, meditating historical victories, changing national defeats into moral victories, building monuments for their heroes. It was much more interesting, beautiful, and valuable than real life. The Past was safe, no one had the key to it. In the course of time, Poles created a myth of a nation selected to the fundamental battle with evil. Making offerings in this battle was a central point of the mythology. Poles believed that offerings brought them national resurrection. By these means, they were giving themselves a convincing explanation of their captivity.

The influence of the Catholic Church is more than enough visible.

We were living in a sort of virtual reality. Spiritual life in the past, in the mythical reality, gave us a deep feeling of our own value and national pride. It helped us to stand troubles of every day life. It was a form of escapism but at the same time very efficacious protection. The Past gave us legends and dreams, strength and safety. In this case, Poles are very similar to Jews.

3. Theatre can not exist in vacuum. Artists walk along the same streets, breathe the same air as other people. They instinctively or consciously feel needs of their audience. They understand the rules of the reality. The political theatre could not exist because it was too dangerous, it cost too much, artists could lose their freedom or even their lives. It didn't make sense. Polish artists understood these rules very well. They didn't drop from the sky. Besides, no one wanted to participate in political games, no one wanted to see images of painful, traumatic, oppressive and primitive reality on the stage. The Political Theatre was reckoned as the most boorish and disgraceful. In people's opinion it was connected to ghostlike reality, ideology, indoctrination, foreign authority. Any trials of coming it into existence were not successful. The Political Theatre was totally rejected by the audience. It was natural that Polish artists, consciously or instinctively, being conscious of people's deep needs or just only foreseeing them, picked up the strange game with the Past. The reason was simple. A noble intention of being together with weak and violated people. The artists turned to the Past, started to look for counterweight for the reality in it. In the course of time, Polish artists started to co-form mythical reality, to create their own symbolism. Working on strengthening of the Polish patriotic spirit, they were presenting the magnitude, charm and

values of the Past, at the same time the magnitude, charm and value of Polish people. They were encouraging, assuring the continuity of the culture, creating important elements in alternative forms of the social life. Certainly, their uncommon poetical talent, Polish romantic playwrights were mostly poets, made their works a part of the national myth. In the course of time, it was difficult to distinguish which part of the national myth is known from historical facts, which is taken from dramatic poems.

In the second half of the XX century, the artists were trying to break off the moral obligations, to come back to the reality. But they still had to look back to the past. It was the only possible and acceptable way of communication with their audience. Commentaries to the reality, its description, could be presented on the stage only metaphorically by classical texts and themes from the Past. Classical texts were actual because political and social reality was constant. The main problem, lack of freedom, which was actual in the XIX century, was actual in the XX. The differences between the Russian governor of Poland and I St Secretary of the satellite communist party were minimal. The Past reflected the reality all the more since Polish artists presented it using patterns concerning conflicts between Goodness and Evil, Weakness and Strength.

The prominent theatre artists of that time: Jerzy Grotowski, Tadeusz Kantor, Konrad Swinarski, Tadeusz Rozewicz, Witold Gombrowicz were trying to overcome the national mythology, initiate discussion about it, break off the martyrdom vision of the Polish Art. Their efforts resembled the struggle with dangerous national ideology, falsifying the reality. Their works raised new questions regarding the national identity. Unfortunately, they were not able to cross the borders of Past. They couldn't overcome influences of the Past. They were permanently falling in its trap. They could only present more realistic vision of it, much more complicated, much more true. They only proved that Poland, independently of historical epochs, consists of normal people, making love, betraying, hating each other, sometimes cruel, meticulous and simply stupid, that national values are always only one part of our heritage. Their efforts made numerous conflicts and disappointments, accusations of cosmopolitan outlook of life. It is interesting that the accusations were formulated frequently by the audience, Catholic Church and communist authority together. The Past was too important for everybody to let it be interpreted arbitrarily.

The Polish theatre in the XIX and XX centuries is reckoned as political. In reality, it was using political allusions, had a lot of signs of politically oriented theatre, for example perceptible and permanent political tension around it, but it was never truly political. It was rather the ideological theatre with Freedom and Independence as a main doctrine. It was a theatre of prophets and confessors. Its political function was often casual, frequently caused by outside social incidents and political circumstances. Sometimes performances took a political importance in spite of intentions of their authors.

The most famous example took place at the National Theatre in Warsaw in November 1967. Mentioned at the beginning, *Forefather's Eve* by Adam Mickiewicz, directed by Kazimierz Dejmek and opened at the National for the 50th Anniversary of the Bolshevik October

Revolution was taken off from the programme as dangerous for the Polish - Soviet friendship. The decision of the Political Bureau of Polish Communist Party evoked demonstrations and students rebellion. Today, we know it was a political provocation, caused by one fraction of Communist Party fighting against the other.

In December 1981, the communist authority, for fear of the Solidarity Movement, proclaimed the martial law. It made the Polish people passive and broken down mentally. Their political activity was limited to a minimum. In the middle of the eighties Polish people stopped to present political interest and started to earn money for living, to take care of their families. In the eighties, as a result of the general passiveness, the artists started to explore their own Past time, their childhood, tender age, existential problems of their private lives. We could see remembrances of their own or somebody else's childhood on stage. The Past was stronger again, more interesting than the reality.

4. The most elemental and emotional public debate of the last year was devoted to the responsibility of Poles for the crime and murder of Jewish people in Jedwabne in 1941. This year, the headlines are occupied by the discussion about the Centre Against Expulsions. Political discourse, in the Parliament, in the press, in Polish houses, doesn't

concern, as a rule, the deep analysis of the globalisation process, war in Iraq or terrorism. Some information about these problems appear only as thrilling headlines, or as a connection to the Past. The war in Iraq has been presented in media in the context of liberation war against dictatorship, what is similar to the Polish experiences from the Past. The tragedy of the World Trade Centre has been understood by the tradition of All Souls' Day and making an offering for freedom and democracy. Nihilistic menace, destruction of democratic system, deep feelings of injustice of many poor people and nations all over the world, unfortunately have not become a theme of the discourse, yet. Demonstrations against The War in Iraq are rather a political margin than real power. Discussions regarding possible ways of further development of Poland, political visions of the future are trifling, not worth mentioning Social problems, unemployment, corruption, economic fall of many industrial regions. permanently present in the discourse, are treated superficially. Our reflection doesn't concern their real reasons, chances for overcoming them. Usually, we demand only the conservation of the Past status. We are still looking back to the past. Coal miners want to come back to the seventies, to the golden era of the coal mining industry. Corruption seems to be a heritage of sovietisation, absolutely understandable for many people in Poland and absolved. We demand work and social privileges, trying to come back to the times when both social booties were universal. Suddenly, we have been fulfilled by unexpected nostalgia for the seventies and are trying to idealise our close past time.

Although many press and TV news were devoted to our accession to the NATO and European Union, the discussion was focused on remarking our satisfaction of breaking down the past partitions, making good past prejudices, and historical justice. Many conservatives were afraid of losing the Polish identity inside the EU and demanded protection of Polish national heritage. The Polish society is still afraid of participation in a public debate regarding reality and future. We got accustomed not to be engaged in it. We are afraid of being manipulated. I think we still reckon a public space as a field of experiments. We prefer to discuss our past because we know how to do it. The present time and future require a clear and defined vision, our own view of the world. After many years of living under the dictatorship, in political hibernation, out of real conflicts, partitions and ideas, it is very difficult to define the vision. Our own view of the world is still not popular. We have trouble with it, we don't know what exactly it should mean. Present political partitions are not legible. For example, the most pro-European, Euro enthusiastic and liberal party, the Social democratic Party, consists of former communists. The only real foundation of the Polish public life is made by the monetary policy of Leszek Balcerowicz, the author of economic reforms from the beginning of the nineties and the rules of the free market economy.

For the two last centuries Poles were never taking part in a public debate, in a normal public life. We didn't decide on the form of our country, its political construction and ways of further development because we couldn't. The participation in the public life were put away for a time of independence. But now, we are not able to discuss the reality and the visions for the future because we can't and we don't want to do it. We want to live normally, peacefully, not be attached to an idea, because our experience indicates it makes conflicts, struggle and risk. At the moment, we want to develop our personal skills, to strengthen our financial position, to take care of our career, to secure possibilities of further development for our kids and ourselves. We have just become authentically pragmatic and unbelievably "middle-classed". Our discussions concerning the past time give us sufficient satisfaction and a feeling of participation in the public debate. We are active in this subject. Perhaps we are not anxious about the past indeed

5. The new Polish theatre does not take part in a public debate, either For the last 14 years none of the main and serious problems of contemporary Poland was touched by the theatre. The theatre can not exist in a vacuum The Artists walk along the same streets and breathe the same air as other people and don't want to demonstrate their view of the world as other people. Probably, we don't have our own view of the world or we are afraid of revealing it. Usually, our view of the world is connected to generally comprehended liberalism. Any trials of breaking down the tradition concern social customs and theatrical aesthetics more than politics. The political censorship doesn't exist, although malicious

people think it has been changed by moral censorship, and artists have all possibilities to propagate their opinions. But there are nothing to propagate, except some banal of political correctness. The Polish theatre is also, at the moment, focused on professionalism, career and possibilities of development of the artists. There is a sort of fashion, not to be politically oriented. It's very difficult, after many years of taking the passive role in the political discourse, to become its participant.

It's very difficult to break down all stereotypes, clichés, standards and customs of the Past in a short term. I think this problem concerns all countries and societies experienced by totalitarian regimes. Besides, to revive the idea of political art, theatre would be obliged to collide with expectations of many social groups.. I think about people connected to the right side of the political stage in Poland, conservatives who are still living in a state of menace, with besieged fortress syndrome in their minds, who are still building monuments and constructing a proper vision of the Polish history. For these people culture and art should have only a national function. I think also about political and financial establishment and oligarchic structures, people who are sure that Poland belongs only to them, who don't accept inconvenient questions.

The theatre would be obliged to risk rejection by young spectators, focused on their own careers, not interested in any political commitment. For these people art is one of the many ways of amusement They expect entertainment and even pop-cultural events The theatre would be obliged to become a real avant-garde, to go upstream and this situation would be new for the Polish artists. They were always going at the head, with the stream.

It's easier to produce a performance politically correct and non-controversial. The history of conflicts and reconciliation between Poles and Germans, Poles and Jews, Poles and Ukrainians, Poles and Russians and so on, history of Expelled, intellectual return, full of nostalgia, to the seventies, to our childhood, responsibility of young generations for the crimes of their fathers, are still waiting for their theatrical discovery.

It's easier to change a position of an artist into a media star. It gives popularity and money. It's easier to be an aesthete, focused on universal themes, eternal struggle between Goodness and Evil, the dark side of human mind, need of love, problems of psychological isolation of human being in the contemporary world, the last themes are very popular in the young businessmen's society. It's easier to escape than to collide with many opponents in the public debate, all the more the opponents sometimes box unfair.

6. In the Renaissance, Baroque and Enlightenment Polish theatre and drama were devoted to political and social problems, solely. The artists were criticising the legal order, behaviours and the Polish way of life. They were presenting faults of Poles, attacking conservatives and supporting progress. However, this wave of the Polish theatre has been rejected. For the last two centuries any criticism concerning Poles and their faults was the domain of foreign occupants. The theatre of the XVI, XVII and XVIII centuries didn't bring forth important ideas and works worth continuing. There is no good starting point. We have to start to define the political function of the theatre from the very beginning.

The first term needed for the establishment of The Polish Political Theatre Idea is right, true and authentic understanding of the reality and its problems. Political correctness, popular and substitutional themes, which are discussed every day although everybody agrees to them, should be rejected. The power of the political theatre depends on truth. The second term is an ability to create its own aesthetics. The probable new scenic vocabulary must take into consideration the poetical aesthetics of the past Polish theatre, acting and directing. This is a part of our strong theatre tradition, it's an understandable code, our audience has got accustomed with it. We can not reject it totally But the question is: what is possible to adapt, what is still important and what is strong. The Polish Political Theatre will make sense only if it is original and understandable for the Polish audience. It has to be based on the original Polish theatre ideas. In the other case it will be mannered, false, dangerous in a long term. And last but not least, this theatre needs a political or social vision, a clear view of the world. The political theatre must know what it fights for, why it attacks, what is worth supporting In the other case, it will be a theatre pretending political orientation, bringing only moralising theses.

At the moment, many theatre people in Poland are conscious of the public function of the theatre. For the last two years Poles lost their confidence in the political elite of New Poland. We haven't believed yet, that the group of democratically elected leaders is able to lead our country honestly, uprightly and competently. Now, we know they are similar to us, they walk along the same streets and breathe the same air as other people. We have just started to understand that our absence in the public debate, our passive individual policy means, in fact, our agreement for strange, sometimes bizarre political concepts regarding our country and our lives, for social inequalities, oligarchic structure of the State. Poles have just lost their political virginity, stopped to be naive.

Many groups, including the most populist, are asking the fundamental questions Many theatre people in Poland know that if the Polish theatre doesn't take part in the discourse, if the theatre disdains the reality again, it will become a boring museum or only a pop cultural amusement.

7. The November Fever virus is still active. Although, for the last two centuries we learned to be secure of its dangerous influence. We have a strong remedy. But the temptation of living in the Eden of the Past is still alive. It concerns many people, including myself. There is silence, peace and safety. Everything is explicable and understandable. We can arrange the past however we want. The Past gives us emotions and illusion of the commitment. Participation in the public life, in the real life, may be painful. Our audience left off the idea of the political theatre and can reject the idea of its revival definitely. Polish people might have got accustomed to the traditional XIX and XX century function of the theatre. It could be a real defeat for the political theatre. On the other hand, politicians from the Conservative Party can feel shocked and can start another campaign against modern art. The political establishment can stop supporting inconvenient and uncontrollable cultural institutions. Is it worth doing? Everyone who is involved in the theatre has to answer this question individually. I hope that the political tension of contemporary Poland will find an expression in the Polish contemporary theatre, that many theatre people will answer the question affirmatively.

Of course, there is always a danger that November Fever virus will be mutated. We are not prepared for a new epidemic. We don't have any efficacious vaccine and new remedy.

8. I don't want to disdain the importance of the Past. I know its role and function in the history of every nation. I don't want to criticise the Polish contemporary theatre. I'm a part of it and I know all the restrictions. But I'm sure we need, for our mental health and further development. a discussion about the reality and the future. Theatre has all the possibilities to initiate and lead the discussion. If this text helps the Polish theatre be really politically oriented, I will be happy.

Dr Elisabeth Schweeger

Manager and Artistic Director Schauspiel Frankfurt, Frankfurt

Art as a Weapon

A Polemic Perspective

'The word "essay" weds the utopian intent of hitting the bull's-eye to the awareness of one's own fallibility and temporariness' (Theodor Adorno).

When Adorno described the essay as a utopian intent, which reveals its own fallibility and in particular temporariness, he was referring to the essay as a stylistic device, but his definition can be considered a fundamental guideline for the process of evolution. Essays give us the opportunity to develop selection criteria by which to optimise and then adopt what proves to be of worth. Only variability can engender a dynamic that pushes ahead this social process and avoids standstill.

Today we often speak of the crisis of art. But it is not only art that is in crisis – it always is – but society as a whole at the end of a post-postcapitalist era that appears to have exhausted its resources of welfare and prosperity.

In my view, the general state of depression which has befallen above all Europe and the Western world should in fact be seen more as a crisis of the crisis. We no longer have the consciousness for change, let alone for the necessity of the ongoing flux of evolution. Fear is spreading again, a deadening fear.

At the risk of sounding banal, please let me give a short synopsis of what art has actually been.

Art is one of the ways of cultivating society, and its meaning has changed constantly over the millennia. Often it has only been declared art in retrospect, by later historical analysis – which usually, of course, was a way of raising the market value. But it was always the expression and object of a conception of life and a vital consciousness.

Particular objects that were used in archaic or religious rituals were later declared 'objects of art' and are today seen as part of our cultural heritage. These items were objects of use for special occasions or were devised for individual spiritual purposes. Later, in the age of court culture, this shaping of self-confidence increasingly turned to developing its own prestige and thus to symbolising power. With the end of court society the commercialisation of the cities brought forth a social class which expressed its world view through money, as patrons of the arts. There was more to this than just the desire to gain and exhibit power – it was also motivated by the belief that remembrance was of value and that a love of art could also bring about change in the political profile of society.

Not until industrialisation and the emergence of bourgeois society did art explicitly serve in the search for identity – it was used not necessarily to demonstrate power, but to strengthen self-confidence. It was open to new impulses and felt a need to move closer to the sciences. The age of bourgeois society is now long past and the world is being opening up via networking and global agreements. This naturally leads to massive structural change within communities, which can no longer function by themselves as cells, but must attach themselves to the other cells. Particular social classes are lost – the bourgeoisie, as we knew it in the nineteenth and twentieth century, is disappearing as it is absorbed and integrated into the 'global masses'.

Facilitating the flow of commodities and opening up political channels has changed the spaces in which people live. Modern nomadism, where the demands of the labour market force many people to abandon their settled way of life, impacts on urban structures. The bourgeois logic of the past two centuries – having a museum, theatre or concert house in the centre of a city – now seems to have become obsolete. Those very institutions that concentrated on the production of art and meaning have now become dis-located.

This reveals a tendency that in polemic terms could perhaps be called quasi-Duchampesque artistic totalitarianism – something is declared to be art and then every object, every text,

every aspect of life is raised to the status of an object of art. Though to be fair, Duchamp in his time created a diversity of new ways of seeing, new moral guidelines.

Today, however, it is not the art itself or the artist who produces it that is important, but rather the speech act that declares it to be art.

We could say – albeit with irony – that this is the result of a false concept of democratising or de-elitising art. Democracy and populism have now almost become indistinguishable. But this also means that an essential part of our democracy – the protection of minorities – will slowly but surely and quite democratically go out the window.

It is an irony of history that the spectre that was once ascribed to Communism or totalitarian systems in general – a tendency towards uniformity – is now returning, but this time in the form of the multimedia cripple, the TV-brainwashed mannequin or remote-controlled model designed down to the last detail, or the globalised proletarian squeezed into cyber wear, shorn of all class differences and ground down to ‘one size fit all’ (Latin *proles* = uncut stone). This occurs in the interests of a virtual ruling class.

In Data Trash, Arthur Kroker describes this as follows:

‘Functioning as the political ideology of the virtual class, the information highway delivers up the body to virtualization. While its promotional rhetoric is cloaked in a seductive ideology of facilitation, in actuality the ruling metaphor of the information superhighway is a policing mechanism by which human flesh is gripped in the cyber-jaws of virtualization. The ideology of facilitation? That is the promotional culture of the virtual class which speaks eloquently about how the expansion of the high-speed data network will facilitate every aspect of contemporary society: heightened interactivity, increased high-tech employment in a “globally competitive market,” and a massive acceleration of access to knowledge. Not a democratic discourse but a deeply authoritarian one, the ideology of facilitation is always presented in the crisis-context of technological necessitarianism.’
(Arthur Kroker and Michael Weinstein, Data Trash)

No less ironically, Beuys’ dream of everyone being an artist seems to be proving true: consuming a particular kind of jam, suit or mobile phone, wearing particular brands of clothing or entering particular shops is all it now takes to attain the title of artist.

The mental junk food sucked in globally via the web becomes an elixir of art that helps raise the significance of faked lives. This is global superhype.

On the other hand there is a great openness towards new forms of art and stunning new venues, but these usually have to pass the straits between fabric softener and designer clothes in order to be mass-produced. Subtleties, insights and inspirations – the ingredients of fascination – are channelled through the mills of standardised communication technology in order to make the tills ring. This approach to art has its own dead end built in.

The whole art business runs unaided, but it runs itself to death in the hamster wheel of the Internet world.

The successful fashion collections marketed in rapid succession are no longer the fruit of an active life that informs thought and feeling with vibrant experience, but a breathless rehashing of meaning. What has always been difficult has now become impossible – to develop criteria and standards that would help us to gain an informed view on art and to lead confident, self-determined lives.

‘When knowledge is reduced to information, then consciousness is stripped of its lived connection to history, judgment and experience. What results is the illusion of an expanded knowledge society, and the reality of virtual knowledge. Knowledge, that is, as a tightly controlled medium of cybernetic exchange where thought has a disease, and that disease is called information.’

Arthur Kroker and Michael Weinstein. *The Theory of the Virtual Class, Electronic Media and Technoculture*. Ed. John Thornton Caldwell. Rutgers Depth of Field Series (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 134.

Accordingly, information no longer functions as experience that accumulates in a person and can be built on. People are in danger of becoming devoid of ideas, a shell incapable of thought and with no imagination – an object just waiting to be manipulated.

Kant’s ‘Critique of Judgement’ has fallen into the crawler lane and will not even make it to the next emergency telephone box. Kant, who saw art as the reconciliation of the natural and

practical with the beautiful, would today find a butchered version of his ideas at Prada or Ikea, and the theory of the sublime could only possibly refer to the customers' bank accounts.

There was once the very optimistic idea that art could be transformed into *savoir vivre*, but now we see a tendency for *savoir vivre* to consist in consumption of snazzy craft goods. When we think back to the last big art exhibitions like the *dokumenta* in Kassel and the Venice Biennale, this tendency was easily recognisable. Let us call it 'floating' between the different fields – between social documentation, political statements about life, communicative models and experimental projects between ideology and anarchy, antiquated sculptural thought up to and including second-rate monuments – almost every facet of social aesthetics was touched on. Clear opinions and positions were scarce. These exhibitions could be considered to be taking stock of a state of confusion. I say that impartially; it was just interesting for me to realise that art refuses the conventional criteria, and that even an observer can feel propelled into some state of emergency.

In view of vanishing criteria, and given that art is no longer considered to be a talent or skill but has more to do with a lust for art at dumping prices, art's function, definition and even right to exist are once again open questions. Art is straying into the quicksand of social and cultural systems that are ever more fast-moving.

This has two consequences: on the one hand art must be fast, and on the other it must be light and easily digestible. As I mentioned at the beginning, art thus loses several of the important functions it had in the twentieth century: it was a critical social medium that combined curiosity, the creation of new meaning and words, the joy of experimentation, a close relationship to the sciences, a high level of creativity in the invention of new forms, and the ability to dissent. It expressed a growing self-confidence. With the gradual disappearance of the bourgeoisie – the inflationary use of notions such as 'the middle classes' is a sure sign of this – the above-mentioned virtues also disappear. The relationship of art to the sciences is perhaps the only one that is conserved – if only in the sense that science increasingly uses artistic means such as bivalent logic (a equals a, a is not equal to b) or employs aleatory and other operations, or models based on game theory – but genuine art increasingly falls by the wayside. In another ironic shift of meaning, has the replacement of art by science already occurred, as described in Hegel's *Aesthetics*? And have we reached the stage that art will soon have to be considered a thing of the past?

Adorno wrote forty years ago in his 'Aesthetic Theory':

'It is uncertain whether art is still possible; whether, with its complete emancipation, it did not sever its own preconditions.'

Or does only its character change? Is it only in a transitional stage? Do we have to think again about how and where real art is still possible? Another burning question here is whether art in its institutional form still has any pull.

Established art institutions are faced with considerable pressure to raise their popularity – similar to the pressure on television stations in the form of viewing figures – and compliance is achieved mostly through half-hearted compromises. Aesthetic standards are laid down after studying statistics and cost-benefit analyses. Art is often suffocated and utterly hindered by the deadlocked legal achievements of the formerly well-funded welfare state. It is forgotten that art represents a non-material value that must not and cannot be reduced to figures.

Where do we go from here?

Loss of memory, especially in its collective form, can make it look as if we were busily digging our own cultural grave. This is accelerated by the practice of web archiving which on the one hand makes memory recallable at any time, but on the other hand is memory that can no longer be experienced, that cannot be washed flood-like into our consciousness like silt ready to provide a basis for new growth. Yet is this cultural void not something that new things can spring from? That is what I meant at the beginning by 'crisis of the crisis'. Crisis has always been seen as a painful intermediate phase, a moment of transition from one state of life to another. But this awareness presupposes collective memory, which today, it seems, can be deactivated at the click of a button. For this reason the crisis appears to us today as a

dilemma or even the end, rather than a threshold or necessary phase whose jolt would make us stop producing the tried and tested and instead allow innovation.

Are there alternatives? Just recently a symposium was held in Frankfurt/Main by the Museum for Modern Art, the Städelschule art academy, the Schauspiel Frankfurt theatre and the BHF Bank Stiftung. We raised the question: Why not throw the dice? A cynical variation would of course be to ask 'Why throw the dice?', but the principle remains that we must create variants in order to develop selection criteria – we need experiments to counteract the wane. Art too must face this very real new situation in the process of social development, even to the point of calling itself into question. Art is trapped in various places whose current validity must also be challenged. Wherever possible we must subvert models of funding that suffocate creative energy under the guise of supporting it, and perhaps we will have to part with the museum-like administration of cultural assets. This is not about releasing the so-called democratic state from its obligation and responsibility for the forward projection of culture but about emphasising that a process of rethinking must take place there too – not in art alone.

We must rekindle the awareness that art is not only a locational factor but the very foundation, the vital nerve, of a civil and civilised society.

Theoretically bourgeois art could be conserved as a quaint souvenir of former social life with the darling of opera as centrepiece, that medium which connects all the senses and demands purely emotional intelligence – not rational intelligence, as do drama or the fine arts – and which is therefore more readily consumable and better suited for purposes of prestige. It is also conceivable that art could become a clandestine means of alternative politics, precisely as a means of counteracting the tendency towards superficial culture that the tremendous pace of developments and the power of the media have made virtually unstoppable. Perhaps we should really leave the term of 'art' to the popular variant – in the hope that the system will also devour this child – and instead seek ways of continuing what was the inspiration and original will of bourgeois art. Art defined in this way would have to behave as anti-matter, so to speak, reconnoitring an anti-terrain that in topological terms could perfectly well remain part of the system. I would refer to this anti-terrain as art (with the word crossed out) – in analogy to Heidegger, who, when referring to 'being' in all its inauthenticity, wrote the word 'being' and then crossed it out.

If art in the past had a critical function and has today ended up on the shelves of a cheap discounter, that points above all to neglect of its critical function. But as long as there is still a spirit of contradiction – to my mind the motor of development – and it is hard to give up believing in it, that spirit of contradiction must find a field of activity. In this indeterminate interim stage, art should increasingly rely on its true potential, an anarchistic potential that is effectively a learning process for creative thought and action. This is about non-conformity, not aggressive but subversive, seeing ones self as a spanner in the works, creating productive chaos. Art trains fantasy, and those without fantasy have no future.

As such, 'crossed-out art' should be defined as a weapon, a political instrument of protest with which to revive a programme that has well and truly backfired in its official form. Here we should mention Christoph Schlingensiefel and attac, whose actions have achieved artistic validity. Equally, it is high time for a reversal of the saying, 'Life is serious, so may art be cheerful!' Art must make us serious if it is to survive. If we proceed from a biological understanding, we could point out that art is responsible for the production of cells – cells in an real, organic sense – which cannot be intelligent alone and for themselves, but in union with various other cells can become a dynamic body that organises itself autonomously. Bataille's words that the quality of a society is measured by its abundance mean that learning to recognise and respect differences and diversity gives us the ability to become decision-makers ourselves. The goal must be for people to assert themselves as sovereign beings among equals.

A new long march through the institutions and institutes is about to begin, this time a clandestine one. Art becomes necessary in the real sense of the word. Art has always contributed to cultivating society. The resulting culture had the task of uniting, but art itself was about resisting, exploring and agitating.

Art has run into hard times and is compelled not to worm its way out, but to make a real change. When Baudrillard proclaimed during the strikes in France last summer, 'Culture unites, art divides. Abolish culture and make more art', he was pointing to the necessity of using art to counteract the apparent standstill, using experimentation and art's many different approaches. Art is a tender, ruthless and yet indispensable weapon.

- Langenscheidt Translation Service -

Krystyna Meissner

Artistic Director and Manager of Teatr Wspolczensny
Director of the DIALOG Festival, Wroclaw

Dialogue through the theatre - facts and fallacies.

At a time when almost all communication takes place through the media speaking about dialogue through the theatre sounds obsolete. So much so that, in my opinion, the dialogue in its classical meaning, is disappearing from our public life giving place to substitutes of dialogue or simply being replaced by monologue, monologue by a more powerful partner in front of the other kept silent.

Let us have some examples: the everlasting monologue of politicians who allow us, from time to time, to say "yes" or "no" at various elections and the monologue of the media that feed us with the sensational pulp of information and force us to believe in a virtual world of publicity. Sometimes we deal with a substitute of dialogue in the so-called "TV talk shows" and many "chats" on the internet whose character is that of collected pronouncements rather than dialogue. The same happens during various meetings and symposia, such as the present one, where our opinions on a theme resemble declarations, and we do not wait for any answers to them. There is a danger that such a situation as ours, here, could be regarded more as evidence of political correctness, fulfilment of political requirements than a real good will and need from both sides for a true dialogue ended by a conclusion.

Forgive me for such a provocative introduction to my address, but having long worked in the theatre - as a director, manager director and the organiser of several festivals, including the recent International Theatre Festival "Dialog-Wroclaw" - I have observed a sort of hypocrisy in our cultural life. We declare what should be declared, we organise the activities that should be organised. We are afraid to give voice to our anxieties, our doubts; we are afraid to tell the truth about the situation of our theatres as they are. We have no courage to ask ourselves: is the theatre as a form of contemporary art rather dying? Or is it changing? Or is it in a sort of a crisis? These are the questions I put to myself while organising the two editions of my recent festival. And I treat this festival as a test of the condition of the theatre, our Polish theatre, European theatre and the theatres of the other parts of the world, naturally, as observed from our Polish perspective.

What criteria could be used for such a test? There is only one - the interest given to the theatre by the audience. Here we are at the core of the phenomenon of the theatre. The DIALOGUE, the face-to-face presence of human beings in a direct contact, the participation of two partners: performers and spectators in an event that develops the emotional, intellectual and aesthetic relations between the two sides, an event that encourages every person dealing with it to express his or her own reactions. As long as people feel the need of true dialogue, of a conversation on themes of great personal interest, the existence of the theatre is justified.

But even if you think that the "dialogue through the theatre" is a criterion of a serious, committed theatre, you can observe in that phenomenon some deformations, some fallacies

that should be noticed, should annoy us - the people involved in a real mission of the theatre, I suppose.

What does it mean - dialogue through the theatre?

Normally, a production is created in a place where the artist lives, and it is created for the audience living around him or her. It is based on common experiences of that group of people, their common memory of history, their common behaviour in everyday life /it could be a village, a town or a country/. This piece of art comes into being as a need of dialogue between the artist and the people around him. Sometimes its meaning and artistic countenance is so powerful that it transgresses all linguistic, geographical, social and political barriers, becoming, as we used to say, an international success.

That was the case of Kantor and Grotowski. Their work was a reaction to a traumatic feeling of destruction, the heritage of the Second World War. This feeling was common to the whole the world but specially to Europe. That is why the landscapes of childhood broken by absurdity of life created by Kantor were so impressive for all of us, Poles, Germans and others, everywhere where they were shown. His masterpieces were comprehensible to everybody although they were created from little pieces of local memories: stories, characters, images, a mixture of crumbs of a Polish-Jewish provincial life.

Grotowski was much younger than Kantor, but all his theory of the theatre that influenced European theatre so much arose from the same feeling of disintegration of the world. His very few but famous productions, such as "Apokalipsis cum figuris", were created in cooperation with a great Polish artist, Józef Szajna, deeply touched by his experiences of Auschwitz. That is why the sets and the costumes in Grotowski's productions reminded the world of concentration camp.

Józef Szajna, much less known outside of Poland than Kantor and Grotowski, belongs also to that post-war traumatic art whose traces could be recognised not only in the theatre.

The universal appeal of this overwhelming impression that our world had fallen into decay was one of most important factors that facilitated such a widespread comprehension of Kantor's art. Besides his own genius.

The next big period of Polish theatre (1969-1979), was associated with a change of social atmosphere, a bad feeling in the face of obligatory fallacies in the public and cultural life, a clandestine opposition against the optimism of the official ideology and a pathetic bitterness of our life so limited by censorship. That theatre arose from a common need of the audience and artists to get in touch with the truth could be possible only under the camouflage of metaphors and allusions. The great names of that period are Andrzej Wajda, Jerzy Jarocki and, first of all, Konrad Swinarski. The theatre of that time did not have such a large appeal in Europe as Kantor theatre did. We felt more and more that we had been living in a world incomprehensible to the other side of Europe.

Why was this period so important in Polish theatre and aroused such a big interest among Polish audiences? Because the theatre tried to answer a deep need of consolation and encouragement that could be felt among people in the audience. This answer of the theatre was a proposal of a new, revised look at our opinion about ourselves and our history. Hence the sceptical treatment of our unreal dreams of independence recalled from our romantic literature, hence the irony towards the naive attitudes of our national heroes, the questioning about the meaning of the idea of patriotism. The lack of hope could not be easily cured. The atmosphere of that dialogue was pessimistic. The unique consolation was that we felt, all of us, together, the same. And that through this dialogue between the theatre and audience we could be more reasonable and critical about ourselves in the future.

There was no special need to watch such a theatre in the western Europe. That theatre was more political than it was in any other period in the recent history of the Polish theatre. But, in a sense, it was more local, more incomprehensible to strangers. It did not suit the political and social atmosphere prevailing in the Western world. At that time much more important for our Western neighbours was the rebellion of the young generation against the older one, the students' movements of '68 with all its consequences.

And now... We have a feeling that we have come back to Europe. Is it true? Yes and no. Yes - because we can openly communicate with other parts of the world, no - because we do not understand each other, the Western Europe does not understand the Eastern one and vice versa.

It is the effect of our different mentalities developed during the recent forty years of entirely different experiences. We still look at ourselves through the stereotypes - preconceived, standardised and oversimplified impressions. Hence the Polish inferiority complex, hence the German superiority complex. Both false as far as theatre art is concerned.

In our countries the theatre is entirely different. Could it be a result of different expectations of our audiences? Is the Polish audience more traditional? More difficult in accepting new styles and themes in the theatre? Is dialogue through the theatre not necessary for people so engaged in our ever-changing common life? Or are they already giving it up?

Is the German audience bored with the traditional theatre and expects new, more and more shocking forms of the theatre? Does it treat the theatre as a toy that quickly becomes boring? Are our theatres the hostages of their local audiences?

The German theatre is impressively dynamic. It is a large field of experiments, courageous projects, different types of the theatre, with the politic theatre as the most impressive and most applauded by German audiences.

What has to be noticed in the German theatre is the fact that the new generation of directors presents itself in so numerous and so different figures: Ostermaier, Pucher, Polesch and many other names. The middle-age generation that includes Frank Castorf, Christoph Marthaler, Jossi Wieler, to mention only some of them, is still the most important and still provocative for both the young and the older.

You can feel in the enormous activity of the German theatre a sort of dangerous ranking of the names, a necessity to be the first.

What I cannot understand is whether this enormous activity of the German theatre is the effect of the demand of German audience? The theatres are usually full. But is it thanks to the ideal organisation with the subscription system or is it because the audience is accustomed to going to the theatre as to having a coffee or tea in the long afternoons? Is this dialogue through the theatre compatible with the good will of both partners or it is already a branch of free market of the theatrical life? Is it a theatre business with all its consequences? Has the theatre production become a merchandise?

What surprises me is the fact that the directors are working without a break, one production after another, in a dangerous hurry.

From my Polish perspective I see the German theatre as a huge, gigantic machine which is going on and on; nobody knows what for, where to. The fully automatic system is working perfectly on a high level of power. That is why it so difficult for me to make a choice of a German production for my festival. This difficulty is not in the plenitude of items but in their average similarity. I am never sure whether my chosen production will enter into a real dialogue with the Polish audience; whether for the German audience the project was something more than an interesting piece to watch. While sitting in German theatres I have never felt anything that could remind me of the mutual exchanging of emotion between the stage and the audience just as it sometimes occurs in Poland. It is true that I do not know German, so I even try to prepare myself for the text as well as possible, and although I have a very sensitive and experienced ear and eye, such a lack of language is a serious problem. Anyway, I presume that real great theatre events are as seldom in Germany as in other European countries. In my eight years of working on my festivals, at least two of them I managed to invite were from Germany.

When I invited Christoph Marthaler to Poland for the first time, to Torun festival Kontakt, in the mid-1990s, with his great production "Murx, Murx...", on a special demand of Hamburg Schauspielhaus we did not give any translation of the text. I felt in it a sudden fear of confrontation on the part of the Germans. Our audience was silent. It was the first

performance. For the second one I managed to get a permission, we translated the text and the performance ended with a burst of enthusiasm. The Requiem for the East Germany made by Marthaler was understood by the Polish audience as a Requiem for a toppled regime on our side of Europe. Everybody was deeply touched. Was it what Marthaler intended to get? Or did the Polish audience find an entirely different meaning of that play?

Some weeks ago, as a last production of the festival Dialog-Wroclaw, I presented "The Candidate.They live!" by Rene Pollesch, a director completely unknown in Poland and so significant in Germany. It was the first time that the performance had been shown outside Germany, outside the German speaking region of Europe. I invited it with my heart in my boots, paralysed by a fear that it could be too strange as a theatre for our audience, too difficult to understand, that it might be totally boring and rejected. This risk gave me a feeling that I was going to end my festival with a catastrophe! So much so that my German friends praised me for my courage. I was ready for the worst, but at the same time I wanted to acquaint the Polish audience with the phenomenon of the Pollesch theatre as it was. I prepared some materials which were given to the audience just before it entered the performing space, to explain them the background of the project better. To my great surprise at least the half of the audience, if not a bigger part of it, seemed to understand and enjoy the play. I cannot still believe it, I am still distrustful: was it the case of snobbery or of a real comprehension of the play?

If the acceptance of the audience was true in these two cases mentioned above they could be the best examples of the seldom phenomenon of a true international success achieved by productions created for, let us say, a local, national use. And I consider the Marthaler and Pollesch productions as being born from a natural, deep need of dealing with some ideas with an audience of their own. It is for me a real victory of the theatre!

How does "dialogue through the theatre" look in Poland nowadays? Rather difficult. In the last decade of the previous century there was a great earthquake in the Polish theatre. The audience almost disappeared, the State subsidies grew small, all radical reforms were rejected. The average level of the productions was very low. Theatre was done for the school children or for entertainment. There was no place and no need for dialogue through the theatre. The good companies that had been loved not so long before were completely lost. In those hectic times of political and social changes the theatre was on the margin of interest of the public life.

Only one person was appearing more and more distinctly on this deserted landscape of Polish theatre, seeming to be a knight errant, a Don Quixote of the theatre.

It was Krystian Lupa from Teatr Stary in Cracow. One can say that all the best we have now in the Polish theatre began with his work: in the theatre and in the theatre school in Cracow.

Quite a lot has been said here about his art and the importance of his being a guru for young directors and actors finishing school at that time. Those students and a small group of Lupa admirers created a base for, what we can call, a new dialogue through the theatre, new mutual relations between the stage and the audience.

Now we can speak openly about a new Polish theatre: Krystian Lupa, Krzysztof Warlikowski, Grzegorz Jarzyna, Piotr Cieplak, Anna Augustynowicz, Pawel Szkotak and the others. What is significant - all these artists have their own, faithful audiences sometimes resembling groups of believers. These young directors work in different styles, although almost all of them came from the same school of Lupa.

Once more dialogue through the theatre with a new, young audience has been saved and has been developing more and more. There are much more new themes in this dialogue than new, shocking forms. Polish theatre is focused on a very deep and large co-creation of a project with actors and other artists being participants of the work. A new sort of responsibility for work has been created: of all ensemble as a group. The actors have ceased to be a perfect instrument in the skilful hand of the director. This is probably the reason why the period of preparation of a production is still rather long. At the beginning of the work any definitive shape of a project does not exist. It has to be born in a long process of mutual

creation. But thanks to this unbelievably deep and hard work this theatre has got its magical power, emotional power.

How is the Polish theatre received abroad? What new has the Polish theatre to offer to the foreign spectator? Is it comprehensible to the large European audience?

I think that in the proposal of the Polish there are two factors that make this theatre different from others. In its best manifestations, the best creations, you can feel that this theatre has not grown from the bourgeois theatre, that it is still linked with a romantic spirit so deeply rooted in our nature. So on the one hand, it usually poses the fundamental questions concerning our existence, and on the other - it contains something mystic, mysterious, open to the space where God or infinity should be. It has nothing in common with religious beliefs. It is that strange heritage we have got from our old romantic inclination.

When Krystian Lupa was on a tour in Paris with his "Brothers Karamazow", after almost every performance he was surrounded by young people asking him about the sense of life, God etc. This success was built on the emotional and intellectual link between the audience and the stage that was created during the performance, a necessity of dialogue of all the people in the world on the most important questions.

Anyway, there is something in the recent success of the Polish theatre that I cannot understand: why have the Polish directors invited to work in German theatres been not as successful as in Poland? Do they need their own actors, a different rhythm of work, or something special which could not be found abroad? That was the case of Lupa in Hamburg, Jarzyna in Berlin, Warlikowski in Bonn.

Is it again the question for whom and what for the artists prepare their work? Are we again confronting our general subject of this address: a need of a mutual exchange of emotions and reflections, which I have called dialogue through the theatre?

2. The commercialisation of the "international theatre success" - the fallacies of dialogue through the theatre

At the end of my address I would like to share with you some anxieties that I have felt since I began to observe festivals in Europe.

The first one concerns the process of commercialisation that penetrates the theatrical life more and more. Work on a production should bring profit. The money spent on the project must be regained. The production is treated as a merchandise and, according to the rules of free market, should be produced for a large, international audience and should be sold well. Taking that fact into consideration the projects are often done by the best known artists with the best names / directors, actors, etc./ . The exploitation of the production is planned from very beginning thanks to co-operation of some prestigious festivals and theatres. It does not matter whether it will turn out that the piece is not worthy to be shown, that it is a failure / what should be taken into account as a normal artistic risk /. The premiere is planned in an exposed place. The publicity of the event has to overgrow its mediocrity. The people must believe that they deal with a masterpiece.

The spectator in such a theatre reminds me of an indifferent visitor of a gallery. He watches the item because one has to do so if one considers oneself a cultivated person.

The commercialisation leads the theatre to a virtual world of art without any criteria at all.

I know that the difference between a real success and a created / commercial / success is very difficult to recognise. For such a distinction we have only our instinct and feeling of being touched. If we think about the play for long time, if we keep it in our memory, we must have seen something worthy to be seen. Worthless pieces are forgotten very quickly. But it is much easier to create a success than to find a project that promises it. Business is business.

I have to quote here a strange phenomenon of the difference between the two productions of Krzysztof Warlikowski: "Cleansed" and "Dibbuk". I was a co-producer of both of them.

In my opinion, "Cleansed" is an example of a work made from an inner need of the artist to express a feeling and to deal with it with the people around him. For me it was as if he had

shouted in protest against the sexual intolerance in our country in name of love as it is. This project was carried out with pain but at the same time it cleansed our prejudices, giving us a sort of catharsis. That is why it has been an immense success abroad.

"Dibbuk" - is an example of the opposite. It was created not from a personal need of the artist to communicate something to his audience in his country. It was, from the very beginning, meant to reach a large, international audience, to draw the attention of all festivals. Hence the choice of the subject of the play not so much personal as generally important.

"Dibbuk" is a piece of great beauty and of perfect performing craft but based on a sophisticated message sent to the world.. It does not touch us because it has not been destined for us directly. The temptation of being world-wide artist could be dangerous.

Let us return again to my anxieties growing in my heart when I observe the European theatrical life. So many festivals / including mine/, so many workshops, meetings, conferences, symposia and so few really good productions! Have all these activities replaced the disappearing theatre art? Is it really disappearing or only not allowing itself to be squeezed into limited institutional rules, bureaucratic requirements and free market principles? Maybe it does not suit the structures and systems we would like to put it in? Maybe it is not important to be declared as a "professional", amateurish, alternative or of "off" theatre? Maybe we have forgotten that theatre is an art that can happen but does not have to.

The theatre for me is a dialogue between the stage and audience, no matter by whom begun, by performers or by spectators. It could be real and alive only if it is necessary for both sides to deal with emotions, reflections and sometimes with acts of recognition of the unknown in the world.

That is the reason I am still looking for such a dialogue through the theatre in the theatre I am managing in Wroclaw and in my festival named "Dialogue-Wroclaw".

I have organised two International Theatre Festivals: "*Kontakt*" and "*Dialogue*". There is a difference between the meaning of these two words. "Contact" is more physical, as the first approach of two partners, excited by the touch, surprised by the natural differences that make this contact so interesting. "Dialogue" is a contact but much more intellectual, deeper, opened to a closer understanding of each other. This choice of names of my festivals was deliberate.

Final Podium Discussion: Sunday, November 2nd 2003

Chairperson: Renate Klett (Theatre Critic and Publicist, Berlin)

Participants: Tim Etchells (Artistic Director, Forced Entertainment, GB), Stéphanie Jasmin (Artistic Associate, Théâtre UBU, Québec/Kanada), Julius Deutschbauer / Gerhard Spring (Artists, Vienna), Krystyna Meissner (Artistic Director and Manager of Teatr Wspolczesny and Director of the DIALOG Festival, Wroclaw), Dr Elisabeth Schweeger (Manager and Artistic Director Schauspiel Frankfurt, Frankfurt), Pawel Wodzinski (General and Artistic Director of Teatr Polski, Poznan)

Renate Klett: We have the problem that we have an hour's time and that we have to have two discussions. We have now heard three very different contributions and I would like to start with the last one and put a question to Krystyna Meissner. I have had very similar experiences with the different ways of production in Poland and Germany. But that isn't something which happens particularly in Poland, the same happens to Johan Simons from Holland. When he stages Hannibal in Stuttgart it is most of the time not as good as when he is working with his own group. In my experience the productions of all the directors from abroad are often not as good any when they are torn from their context, because so many problems arise. By the time they find a common language and a way to communicate the largest part of the rehearsals is already over. When directors do guest productions abroad they are under enormous pressure. Directors are not machines that work perfectly everywhere; success can not be programmed, fortunately it is not like that. With that I can elegantly move on to the presentation of Dr Elisabeth Schweeger who has spoken about the theatre under the current conditions. You have asked whether the audience has become merely a "cripple of the media", whether the theatre, the opera, the concert hall as the centre of a city have become obsolete. Is Schweeger's approach not a bit too defensive? I agree with most of the points of your analysis, but I believe that one could do a lot to oppose this development.

Dr Elisabeth Schweeger: My approach should not be seen as a scientific analysis, of course it is a polemic approach. And of course I am of the opinion that the traditional institutions which still exist in the cities are still valid. And maybe this is also a chance that we can bind something here that simply cannot take place elsewhere. On the other hand one has to recognise developments and Frankfurt is a perfect example for modern development. In this city there is an exchange of 40000 to 60000 people every year - this city is constantly moving. That means that in ten years time, calculating numerically, there will be a different population. People are coming to the city to work, but they don't really live there. And if they do, it is only for a short term. So if they want to have moments of life in the city, they focus on something which is powerful and convincing. Artistic or work processes are often too laborious. The question arises how one can attract such an audience. And we have to ask ourselves whether the architecture is still suitable. Can't we use a station or a cellar to attract people who are not coming to the traditional institutions? The theatre has to react to this development from the inside. The economic pressure takes away the courage from the theatre to do that. Also in my work as manager and artistic director I am making a lot of compromises in order to save the institution, but nevertheless we all have to think about how things can go on.

Renate Klett: This symposium is an opportunity to think about these issues concerning the theatre. Frankfurt is not really a city it is a banking centre. If you take a city like Berlin for example which is completely broke, where theatre was never as firmly embedded as in Munich. When you listen to somebody like Zarazin the financial senator of Berlin you start to feel sick, because art for him is nothing but a matter of cost accounting as for waterworks. So this bonus point deriving from the middle class that art makes essential contributions to identity and discourse does no longer apply for artists. On the other hand

the following statement of Gysi is also true: "Berlin is very rich it just doesn't have any money." Here we have to mention the phenomenon of the Volksbühne, which doesn't create consumer-friendly theatre at all, but which attracts a very particular audience all the same. Or a deadly boring theatre like the Berlin Ensemble which also has its audience. These are only two examples.

Dr Elisabeth Schweeger: But exactly that is called into question. We still appreciate this diversity which is suppressed by politics. They only want the unified standard form, everything simply has to function and attract an audience. The Volksbühne sometimes gives performances which attract only a few people. That is a necessary luxury which we claim, but politicians under economic pressure aren't prepared to spend money on that any more. And now we have to try to communicate to them that by doing that, they are in fact pulling the carpet from under their own feet. They have no solid ground to stand on. Art is one form of creative training and if that part falls away, there will be no awareness for new developments in any field, whether it is economy or art ...

Contribution from the audience: When Meissner and Wodzinski talk about their theatre I notice a difference to Schweeger's theatre programme. Elisabeth Schweeger combines various genres. How is it in Poland, do the Polish focus solely on theatre or do they include other genres as well?

Krystyna Meissner: Of course we don't focus on theatre only. In Polish theatre you find a lot of connections and combinations. Theatre has to include every field. At the festival of dialogue not only theatre productions were represented, also guests from the field of journalism, philosophy and even psychiatry were invited and took part in the discussions.

Pawel Wodzinski: My theatre in Posen is also an arts centre. There were two stages, a gallery, there was dance theatre, speech theatre and workshops.

Renate Klett: Also German theatres aren't always sold out, there are big differences between the provinces and the big cities. How about the emotional experience at the theatre? The Germans are strongly influenced by the Frankfurt school and Adorno and hardly ever allow themselves to be emotionally moved - but this is starting to change now. The Polish audience is very different. But the other side of the coin is that Polish theatre sometimes captures the audience in quite a cheap way. How dependent is Polish theatre on financial support and the box office takings?

Krystyna Meissner: Also in Polish theatre a commercialisation is noticeable. On the other hand a lot of productions are realised because of co-operation with other theatres. But in Europe mostly modern dance is touring, speech theatre is at a disadvantage here.

Renate Klett: I have the impression that the Polish are having the same experiences as we are, but everything happens much faster there. I am thinking for example about Marthalers performance of "Murx". It has been on tour a lot and worked almost everywhere apart from Petersburg, although it was a very particular performance. To invite Polesch's "The candidate" to a Polish festival was also quite a risky decision. Theatre with a lot of text can capture the audience all the same even when it doesn't understand the language. I would like to talk again about the differences of the German and the Polish audiences. Obviously it is possible to stage guest performances like Polesch or Jossi Wieler "Wolkenheim" in Poland also. Obviously something is being communicated even in a country where the audience doesn't speak German. I have just come back from a very interesting festival in Sarajevo. At the end "La mort de Krishna" with Maurice Benéchou performing was staged by Peter Brook. It is about a part of the Mahabharata, a very dark part about destruction and war and in the end the world dies - a little bit like in "Forced Entertainment" yesterday. And to see that in a city like Sarajevo, although it was all in French, and to notice how it moves people, who partly don't want that at all, because in Sarajevo war is not a topic any more, people don't talk about it - it shows that there are moments at the theatre where language is transcended and so no longer is a barrier. So there are further questions and since we have already reached the end of the world Tim Etchells will also join us.

The panel is joined by Julius Deutschbauer/Gerhard Spring, Tim Etchells and Stéphanie Jasmin.

Renate Klett: We should ask the artists about that and perhaps we'll start right away with Tim. His performance has two stories, serving as brackets. One is about the creation of the world, the other is about the end of the world; and this is not the Mahabharata and myth, but it is a scientific analysis. And what happens between these two stories is in my opinion a very exceptional form of political theatre, I think one can call it that, although it is not meant in the usual way. I was told that Piotr Gruszcynski would like to put a question to Tim Etchells.

Piotr Gruszcynski: First of all I would like to thank you for the performance. It was my third "First Entertainment" performance and I have a very simple question about it. I have read in the programme that it is a kind of work-in-progress, is that really the case?

Tim Etchells: Yes, that is true, the real première will take place next year in may. We have been working on it for six weeks now. We didn't know how far we would get with it. We did something similar as we did with "First Night". At first we showed only 50 minutes of that, which was only a small part of the possibilities of that play. Fortunately this time we got a bit further, but there is still a lot of work to do. We will learn a lot from yesterday and also from this evening and next year we will work another two months on it. It is not finished yet.

Renate Klett: Tim, since you have travelled a lot and have a lot of experience, I would like to ask you what it is like to perform in different countries. I think you have been everywhere apart from Africa. Have you also been in Poland?

Tim Etchells: Yes in '89 we were in Poland, in Gdansk and Posnan.

Renate Klett: You have this special view of the world - at least as far as you show it in your plays - which not everybody can understand, particularly in Western European cultures. I remember a performance of Quizoola in Beirut which took place in a completely different setting, in a city that was bombed out. Can you describe your experience a bit, the conditions under which you perform your political theatre in different cultures?

Tim Etchells: It always varies; some of our performances remain in the topical setting of Great Britain, and we don't go on tour with them. A few years ago for instance, we put on "Disco Relax", which we liked a lot, but the topic was based a lot on the north of England. We once performed it outside of the UK, I think it was in Belgium and it was a complete disaster. No one understood what we had wanted to say and we never performed it outside of England again. With other plays it's not a problem. "First Night" as well as "Bloody Mess" appeal to a larger audience. When we do a long play like Quizoola what happens during the evening depends a lot on the audience which improvises. It makes a difference when 50 people in the audience are fully concentrated or if some laugh and the rest is asleep. I think that some plays can go on tour and others can't. Normally we don't make that decision, before we begin with something.

Renate Klett: But what are the criteria that make the difference?

Tim Etchells: I think plays which aren't doing well on tour deal with very special, local ways of behaving. For instance "Disco Relax" showed what the streets in Sheffield or the North of England are like at 11 o'clock at night when all the pubs are closing. That is very particular.

Renate Klett: Yes, but people like Alain Platel - he always talks about Gent and people from the whole world can follow these performances which refer to Gent.

Tim Etchells: The unique thing about what we are doing is based on the fact that we mistrust aesthetics. A lot of what we are doing has a problem with beauty and seduction. We want to create something that is perhaps beautiful and which seduces in a certain way, but on the other hand we always criticise the language in which that happens. And most of the time the aesthetics of our plays are a bit shabby. We would never create something "beautiful" like Jan Lauwers. We couldn't do that, because we mistrust the aesthetic code too much.

Renate Klett: But while you mistrust it you are indeed creating your own aesthetic code, which others already imitate.

Dr Elisabeth Schweeger: Looking at Platel we see the same effect, because he is also dealing with this whole mixture of human beings. This is not a special characteristic of Gent, he is dealing with a multinational mixture as well, that's why there isn't such a well defined aesthetic code.

Renate Klett: I disagree with that, but it would take too long to discuss that here. Stéphanie it is the same with the aesthetics of Denis Marleau's, isn't it? His performances are aesthetically very precise, beautiful, very seductive and less political. The question arises whether one can create political theatre by means of employing such aesthetics. I am not particularly asking about "Les aveugles" but in general.

Stéphanie Jasmin: For Denis the aesthetics you have talked about now are always directed to the needs of the text. The text is the foundation of the aesthetic solution. In "Les aveugles" it is rather a minimalist position. Denis doesn't represent a political position, but his position as an artist becomes more and more political. Our work is changing, because in Quebec musicals and circuses were very successful last year, we have to take a stand on that. The expectation of the audience has changed a lot due to this model of reference. The theatre in Quebec is standardised as well, our work doesn't fit into the mainstream. But the productions have no political message.

Renate Klett: So your work becomes political due to the state of society. What you describe is also true for Poland and Germany. The first theatre that was built in Warsaw after '89 was this big music hall.

Stéphanie Jasmin: But you have a great tradition of "artistic theatre" which we don't have. In Quebec there is no distinction between mainstream theatre and "théâtre d'art". The way people work is standardised and Denis works differently, with more time for rehearsals, he works together with other artists and he searches during the work, doing lots of workshops and studios.

Renate Klett: That probably has to do with the choice of authors like Maeterlinck and Thomas Bernhard. I am now taking a step to Vienna. You are political artists in this sense, because you choose political situations - for example press conferences or exhibit openings - demonstrating their absurdity. Can you tell us something about that.

Julius Deutschbauer: We are not political artists as such. Ms Schweeger mentioned in her presentation that art was originally the object of special events. Our art projects or objects are most of the time objects of special events. We react mostly to orders and to special needs of our clients. We are not artists fulfilling needs, we react to the needs of others instead; if their needs are political, well then our art becomes political.

Gerhard Spring: I would like to add something to that. Our "Political Presentations for Artists" came about when the director of an arts hall asked us to perform "something political".

Julius Deutschbauer: When Tilmann Broszat and Gottfried Hattinger asked us to do something for SPIELART, at first we also asked: "Why, do you have a problem? Can we help?" And then they said that after so many press conferences they didn't want to do the press conference themselves and immediately put this proposal forward to the cultural adviser of Munich and also to Mr Gauls from BMW, and so we stepped in and helped out all four and we also were allowed to redefine the programme.

Renate Klett: But then I guess you must be swamped with commissions, because I know so many people who don't want to do exhibit openings or press conferences or political meetings; if they all came to you, then that might be a big help for us all.

Julius Deutschbauer: Yes there are quite a few openings. By now we have three anthologies with our opening speeches. It started in Venice in co-operation with Elisabeth Schweeger. That was again a reaction to a need. Elisabeth Schweeger didn't want to have

politicians at the Austrian pavilion at the Biennial in Venice, which is very unusual for Austria, because there is no opening without political representatives.

So we opened the Austrian pavilion on behalf of the Austrian Federal Chancellor and his permanent secretary. We opened it at the Polish pavilion though; it was also the only one which was willing to grant us asylum.

Renate Klett: Then you could now gain the experience to bring something to an end. An end in a Polish context as well!

Gerhard Spring: There are several categories, which can all be applied. Eulogies, funeral orations.

Renate Klett: Could you please hold a very short eulogy about this symposium.

Gerhard Spring: We declare that the symposium is finished!

- Translation: Bettina Lemke -

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Perspectives of Polish Theatre in an expanded Europe

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Director: Tilmann Broszat

Editor:

Spielmotor München e.V.

Ludwigstr. 8

D-80539 München

Tel.: +49-89-280 56 07

Fax +49-89 280 56 79

info@spielmotor.de

www.spielart.org

Editorial staff:

Annette Geller, Michaela Nothelfer

Cover design:

Gestaltungsbüro Schulte & Hersberger, Munich

Translators:

Langenscheidt Übersetzungsservice

Bettina Lemke

Translators simultaneous:

Lidia Zimmermann M.A., Pawel Surowka, Monika Sapielak



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