

THE WARSAW WEEKLY

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No. 11-12



LEGION by Stanisław Wyspiański.
 Sets: Wincenty Drabik (1883-1933). —

TEATR WIELKI, 1930
 Mise en scène: Emil Chaberski.

Polish Dramatic Literature of To-day

A BRIEF REVIEW

By Leon Pomirowski

Like every other form of literature the art of drama has its great moments and its everyday life. Eminent achievements which give the measure of its artistic possibilities and which survive as enduring treasures in the storehouse of a nation's literature are of prime interest to the historians of that literature, but a contemporary observer who wishes to form an opinion on the sum-total of its appearance must base it more on averages than on individual feats.

The drama is the most public form of art. The fulness of dramatic creation can be achieved only through the theatre. Thus it is the form of literature which more than any other is dependent on the tastes, the level, the demands of its public and that is perhaps the most tragic feature in the development of the drama. A full, interested, responsive house is the cardinal condition of its life on the stage and at the same time the taste and level of that house become a dragging handicap in its development. Herein lies the greatest menace to the artistic ambition of the dramatist and an increased tendency to bow before the demands of the public. This is the reason why in this branch of art we find so few new, revolutionary beginnings.

With few exceptions this is the case the world over. In Poland matters are somewhat complicated by the fact that the drama was always the weakest spot of its literature. Considering the splendid development of its lyric and fiction, the ambitious efforts at finding ever new and more original artistic forms and expressions in these fields, we are forced to the conclusion that dramatic literature is on the whole conservative, all too slow and disinclined to break ancient

moulds. The post-War years which in all other branches of literature revolutionized the imagination of artists and brought about so many changes scarcely made any mark on the art of the drama. The changes we note lie rather in the realm of producing, in stage technique, in a greater artistic intensity of the spectacle as such. The stage-manager and the stage-decorator are far ahead of the author as regards modern spirit. They have achieved noteworthy results by their efforts to bring out those factors of the drama which are essentially of the theatre, spectacular in the strictest sense of the word. Unfortunately however they had to deal mostly with works of bygone periods, in the first place those of the Romantic epoch, for the contemporary drama was left far behind by the development of outer form.

The principal reason of the weakness of dramatic literature is probably its inability to realize the essence of the conflict between man and the new post-War world. Writers hover around this problem, but they cannot put their finger upon its vital point, cannot find the contact which should give rise to the new drama and theatre. It is of course no easy task to define the source of that conflict, to say wherein lies the tragic torment that afflicts the soul of contemporary humanity. Assuredly some super-sensitive spirit, some watchful and profound creative imagination will unexpectedly find the answer and the voice of the drama created will become the voice of a whole generation. But while we wait for these revelations of genius which are awaited with equal impatience in the literature of other nations also, let us return to our local achievements. They are insofar superior to those we only dream of

that they form the reality of contemporary art, the living foundations of our criticism and our hopes.

The Polish drama like other branches of contemporary literature tends to increasing realism in the portrayal of psychology and morals. Psychological realism endeavours to find the moving springs of dramatic action in the souls of the protagonists, considering man as the mysterious and chief source of all matters, facts, and relationships. Moralistic realism on the other hand sees the meaning of human life in its functions, in the pragmatic process of events. Contemporary psychological realism forms as it were the continuation of the type once known as "comedy of character", whilst moralistic realism might be termed an echo of so-called "comedy of intrigue". That is of course a greatly simplified definition made for the sake of easier distinction and one which leaves out of account the huge difference between contemporary knowledge of psychology and past one-sidedness of characterisation on the one hand and on the other the difference between present-day subtlety in the portrayal of morals and the standardized devices used even by Molière.

It is impossible to give within the limits of this article a full picture of modern Polish dramatic art. I can give only a selection of names and titles and show they illustrate certain current trends, problems and forms of expression. Our greatest dramatist, the late K. H. Rostworowski who died but recently, was undoubtedly the most eminent representative of the psychological drama in its monumental form. His fine creations ("Judas", "Caligula", "The Surprise") are characterised

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Contemporary Stage Production

By Władysław Zawistowski

In speaking of stage production we must have in mind the transmutation of a drama into a theatrical spectacle, the transposition of literary elements into theatrical ones being effected not only according to the indications of the author but also according to the producer who acts as intermediary. Owing to specific political conditions all great Polish drama of the romantic period and of the following years was written without any possibility or hope of realization and therefore lacked all practical experience of the stage. Wyspiański is the only exception and his work the only inheritance handed down to the theatrical producers of the restored Polish State.

On the threshold of our contemporary independent history we find at work the eldest generation of producers, those who in the immediate past had been struggling with the difficulties of Polish monumental drama and had prepared the ground for modern Polish production. Among the most notable men of that generation which continued its work after

the year 1918 we must count Kazimierz Kamiński (d. 1928) and Ludwik Solski. The first-named was a great impressionist, a perfecter of details who won a great reputation as a producer in the style of scenic realism — the other, an eminent figure of the present-day Polish theatre has always had a passion for great historical drama and has produced a great number of plays both of contemporary and of past origin. Józef Sosnowski producer at the Warsaw and Krakow theatres, and Józef Śliwicki producer at the Warsaw theatres both belong to that same generation.

The activities of Alexander Zelwerowicz, in turn producer and manager of theatres in Kraków, Łódź, Warsaw and Wilno, mark as it were a separate era in the history of Polish stage production. This artist of high-strung sensibility, with a special talent for adapting and fusing the most varied artistic movements and inspirations in the meltingpot of his richly creative individuality, took a passionate interest in solving the many problems of stage production. He was in

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SZOPKA STAROPOLSKA by L. Schiller. Teatr Polski, 1919
 Mise en scène: Zelwerowicz — Sets: W. Drabik.



LADIES AND HUSSARS by Fredro. Teatr Polski, 1934
 Mise en scène: A. Zelwerowicz. — Sets: S. Noakowski

Polish Dramatic Literature of To-day

(Concluded)

by endeavours to clothe symbols and myths in human form. The Judas of legend is in Rostworowski's drama a sufferer whose soul is unable to bear the burden of Christ's teaching. Because he cannot raise himself to the level of his Master he drags down his teaching to the measure of human possibilities. A wretched, unhappy outcast, he thirsts for concrete proofs of divinity and taking Christ's promises as heralding a social revolution he is shattered by a struggle that is beyond his strength. His tragedy lies in the disproportion between the limitations of man and the spiritual might of an idea. Similarly, Rostworowski's Caligula is a man who has been a dreamer and an idealist, who like Judas has wanted his dreams made true immediately, by a miracle if need be, who has no strength to fight against human weakness and so becomes its slave. Rome demoralises him, makes him despise himself and destroys him. In both these dramas Rostworowski showed himself to be not only the true successor of the great romantic tradition of Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Krasiński, and the heir of Wyspiański's poetic greatness, but also a master of modern stage technique, almost a pioneer in the art of using contrasts of individual and collective emotion. Both works are built as symphonies in which the personal and the collective, the individual and choral elements of tragedy ring out in the purest accents of scenic art. The same severe, almost ascetic sense of stage necessity and the same power of tragic expression are to be found in "The Surprise" where the problem of peasant poverty ceases to be a merely material one and becomes an integral part of human character, a mainspring of life, the root of a desperate code of ethics. A mother in ignorance murders one of her sons in order to save the life of the other. The crime against her son is an unwitting crime against the mother's own heart, indirectly it is a blow aimed at the world, a fatal condition of human existence. The weight of

the moral problems treated in these works gives the measure of the author's psychological ambition.

Having mentioned Rostworowski's three chief works I will now pass on to the other representative of the psychological drama. Among the foremost is Zofia Nałkowska, an eminent novelist, whose two plays have brought her well-merited recognition in this field also. "A House of Women" develops the thought that one can never really know the true being of another and that the affairs of men do not retain their original significance, but change continuously, taking on new and astonishing appearances. "The Day of His Return" follows a similar train of reasoning in more dramatic guise. Here also we see the peril of surprises which spring from human nature and which regardless of logic destroy the long-established moral, sentimental, and ethical order of life. "House of Women" treats of a truly loving married couple who have been unfaithful to each other. Neither knows the other's unfaithfulness and only years later the widow, thinking repentantly upon her sin, finds that her affectionate and devoted husband had in secret founded a second family of which she has been entirely unaware. They lived together so many years and yet it is as though they had not known each other at all. In "The Day of His Return" a wife cannot free herself from the mysterious tie of sentiment which chains her to a husband predestined to crime. Both these plays are on a high level of literature.

Jerzy Szaniawski is a highly cultured writer whose comedies breathe a mood of tempered poetry. He is an artist of delicate half-tones, subtle allegories, noble idealism, an untiring seeker for beauty not in any abstract realm but in the very centres of life's naked realism. His plays are full of a mature wisdom and knowledge of life. This gives him a deep understanding of all ugliness, meanness, and all



KORDIAN by Juliusz Slowacki.
 Mise en scène: Leon Schiller. — Sets: Stanisław Jaroński.

Teatr Polski 1935.

symptoms of human smallmindedness in which he sees a necessary background for beauty. He does not seek to show his esthetic ideals in subjects and conflicts that are full of pathos — on the contrary he can strike poetic fire from the most humdrum and prosaic situation. That is precisely the charm of his art. He is quite plainly intent on using the constructive values of ugliness for creating the picture of a finely conceived life. He has written many plays and among them the action of "The Sailor" may serve as a characteristic illustration of the problems which interest the writer. A young man rebels against the homage paid to a national hero whose greatness is based on a falsehood, but he defers to the legend on becoming conscious that the worshipped hero is only the projection of the nation's longing for greatness. The exposure of the false hero would be not only the destruction of a myth but also a blow at the human need for faith.

Szaniawski's spiritual prototype can be found in Tadeusz Rittner, an excellent playwright, one of the most acute in detecting spiritual falsehood, whose comedies ("In a Small House", "Summer", "Silly James", "Wolves at Night", etc.) are a truly artistic satire on conventional souls. Gabriela Zapolska with her passionate castigation of moral hypocrisy is the precursor of contemporary realism in moralistic comedy. Her plays ("Ahasuerus", "They Four", "The Morality of Mrs. Dulaska", "Miss Maliczewska", "Skiz", etc.) have such a force of realism and such power of stage expression, they are so unerringly aimed at the hypocrisy and the ethical monstrousness of spiritual pigmies of every sort that she is as it were a female Polish Moliere who has been followed by numerous generation of playwrights such as Perzyński, Kiedrzyński, Grubiński, Mme Jasnorowska-Pawlikowska, Kawecki, Gorczyński, Grzymała-Siedlecki and many others.

The plays of the late W. Perzyński in particular have always had and still have much success. His chief weapon is a delicate irony and in such plays as "The Imprudent Sister", "Frank's Luck", "Politics", "The Smile of Fortune" he avoids all violent accents in compromising human stupidity and malice, contenting himself with giving a picture of these faults, which is a dispassionate yet skilful and convincing rendering of the grotesque meanness and absurdities of his characters. The plays of Bolesław Gorczyński, a cultured, intelligent, and witty writer once had much success, particularly "July Nights", "A Studied Man" and "The Challenge".

Wacław Grubiński has considerable scenic skill, a sparkling dialogue and a

feuilleton - writer's lightness of touch. Among his more important works are the original and boldly conceived play "The Lovers", treating the problem of incest, "Aladdin's Lamp" which praises the joy of life, "Lenin" — an attempt at historic - political philosophy. Another writer with an excellent feeling for scenic construction is Stefan Kiedrzyński ("Men of To-day", "Penniless Love", "Happiness To-Morrow", etc.). He does not seek complicated plots, nor does he delve into the mysterious depths of human nature but within his limits as a moralist he shows an excellent technique and a knowledge of what the public wants. The same can be said of Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki ("The Lodger", "The Heir", "Maman on the Marriage-Market", etc.) whose farcical comedies are distinguished by technical *bravura* and competently organized plot, but whose artistic ambition is not always on a level with his literary capacities. Of other writers who depict the morals of various seasons and generations, groups and classes of society, we must mention Zygmunt Kawecki ("Kalina's Drama", "School", "The Barber in Love", etc.), Stefan Krzywoszewski ("Actresses", "The Devil and Mine Hostess", "Bronka's Education", etc.), J. A. Hertz ("Prince Joseph Boniatowski", "Young Forest", etc.).

Kazimierz Wroczyński ("History of the Drawing-Room", "Don Juan's Holiday", etc.), Tadeusz Konczyński whose theme are not only contemporary but also past morals ("Silver Summits", "The Lost Ones", "Demosthenes", "The Destruction of Jerusalem", etc.). Among the younger generation there is Marian Hemar ("The Firm"), Antoni Słonimski ("The Warsaw Nigger", "The Family") and last, but by no means least — Maria Kossak-Jasnorowska (Pawlikowska) a notable poet who has established a firm footing upon the Polish stage by her excellent sense of scenic effect in conjunction with considerable literary culture and a strong satirical instinct, particularly as applied to the psychology of erotics. Her plays are entitled "The Heavenly Flirts", "Mummy's Return", "Egyptian Wheat", "The Ants", "Certificate of Identity", etc.

Among playwrights employing the poetical form we must mention the great poet of a generation already gone, Kazimierz Tetmajer, and his work "Judas" which is filled by profound and impressive ethical conflict. Rostworowski, who has already been mentioned, also employed this form and before them both the monumental, visionary works of Wyspiański played an important part in the development of artistic and national ideals. In the present day we have Stanisław Miałkowski who constructs classical recitatorial spectacles by

the transposition into stage values of romantic and Scriptural legends ("Don Juan", "Ball in the Clouds", "The Revolt of Absalom", etc.) and H. L. Morstin ("The Wild Bee", "Along the Way of the Legions", "The Commonwealth of Poets", etc.) who believes that the esthetic ideal of beauty has a moral and decisive value in ruling life.

In the realm of historical drama the first place belongs to Adolf Nowaczyński, a vigorous painter of bygone morals. His plays are more a sequence of pictures than properly constructed dramas, but they are marked by vitality, sarcasm, and a rich style ("The False Demetrius", "Frederick the Great", "Warsaw Bohème", "Casar and Mar", etc.). Two plays of a semi-historical character, both by talented prose writers have recently enjoyed an unusual measure of success: Zygmunt Nowakowski's "Sprig of Rosemary" which treats of the heroic inception of Poland's modern army in the Legion of 1914, and "Summer at Nohant" a delicately painted picture of Chopin's relationship to George Sand, by a well-known young novelist, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. His play is a happy fusion of historical and psychological elements.

Antoni Cwojdzinski's two comedies "The Einstein Theory" and "Freud's Theory of Dreams" are intelligently conceived, intellectually ambitious, and extremely well constructed, an ironical application of scientific problems to real life. In this the author continues and develops the intellectual type of comedy introduced by Bruno Winawer whose witty plays have won him an important position among Polish playwrights ("The Book of Job", "R. H., Civil Engineer", "Simply a Dream").

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, who studies both the theory and practice of new forms in art is the only representative of the experimental drama in the sense of running bold risks on the artistic side and introducing a new conception of psychology in his figures. ("John Mathew Wścieklica", "Tumour Mózgowiec", "The New Releases", etc.). "The Strong Man", an interesting play by a brilliant young prose writer Michał Chorośmański, belongs to a similar category.

The above is but an incomplete informative sketch, neither giving a full picture of the problems confronting Polish dramatic art, nor making any attempt at criticism in regard to the works and currents mentioned. If I have succeeded in giving even a vague general outline of the existing state of things I shall consider that I have fulfilled my task.

Leon Pomrowski

Translated by Wiktorya J. Goryńska.



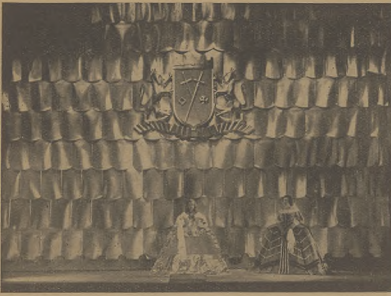
KORDIAN by Juliusz Slowacki.
 Mise en scène: Leon Schiller. — Sets: St. Jaroński.

Teatr Polski 1935



ANCESTORS (DZIADY) by A. Mickiewicz.
 Mise en scène: Leon Schiller. — Sets: Andrzej Pronaszkowski.

Teatr Polski 1934



CID by Corneille. Teatr Narodowy, 1935
 Mise en scène: K. Borowski. Sets: W. Daszczyński
 (Karolina Lubieńska and Helena Sulińska)

Scenic Art Then and Now

By Mieczysław Treter

The modern theatre in Poland owes a lot to the plastic artists, because they succeeded in incarnating a specific spirit of the Polish theatre in a specific external stage form.

It should be emphasized that the theatre was of great significance in Poland, particularly in the pre-war times. In fact, it was of much greater importance than anywhere else in Europe, and that not so much from the artistic point of view, but before all for national and social reasons. A theatre, where the Polish language could be heard loudly spoken (the annexes were steadily and consistently exterminating the Polish language, particularly the German and Russian governments), the theatre — from the stage of which Polish romantic poetry was appealing to the large masses of the population, awakening the national conscience, reminding of the independence period and of the various moments of the struggles for independence — such a theatre was in fact something more than merely a place for artistic diversion of the privileged class of the society, as in other countries.

Such a theatre, simultaneously considered by Poles a tribune for political agitation, — a means of indirect and often at times direct propaganda of revolutionary thought. Emphatically and plainly it pointed out to Polish society its humiliation and slavery; it

maintained the idea of revolt and strengthened the desire of breaking the existing chains by force.

There existed a problem, however, of adapting the theatre to the above aim and to its social mission.

As it was, the old stage, plunged in pseudo-verism, operating a heavy apparatus, ingenious and cheap naturalistic technical means, obviously was not adequate for the purpose.

The obsolete stage apparatus, which actually was borrowed from foreign countries, was bound to fail whenever it touched the fantastic world of the great romantic writers, poets-ideologists, who did not take into consideration the technical conditions and possibilities of the contemporary stage, who even discarded the traditional basis of construction of dramatic composition.

In those days it was stated that these fantastic poetic dramas were not written for the stage, and were entirely "unsuitable for staging".

This faulty belief was definitely abolished by Stanisław Wyspiański painter, poet, dramatist, and stage manager.

To be able to realize how significant to the modern theatre in general, and to the Polish stage in particular, was the new path followed by Wyspiański — the scenographer and stage manager of his own and of other plays — one must take into consideration the views and opinions which

prevailed towards the end of the XIX century.

The two earliest dramas written by Wyspiański: "The Legend" (1892), and "Meleager" (1894), published in Paris, were practically unknown in Poland. His name became famous later, when his dramas "Warszawianka" (1898), "Lelewel" (1899), and particularly the great national and social dramatic poem "Wesela" (Kraków and Lwów, 1901), appeared in print.

What was contemporary European scenography like?

Either the old pattern of illusory opera decorations prevailed everywhere, or — here and there — a new taste based on an entirely ingenious conception of naturalism began to emanate. In fact, it was in those days that A. Antoine when staging "Les Bouchers" of F. Ives, in Paris, had real quarters of beef to be hanged on the stage, while in some other play he arranged a real whispering fountain.

It was only after 1890 that the gifted painters like M. Denis, Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard, K. X. Rousset, etc. were invited to cooperate in stage work. They introduced into contemporary French scenography a new spirit and really artistic conceptions. Everywhere else, however, the dry routine of the professional stage decorators was triumphant.

The generally accepted now principle that each play required a special stage setting corresponding strictly to its spirit, was practically unknown in those days. It often happened that theatres disposing of ample financial means just ordered finished stage settings according to the common patterns. This was also the case in Poland towards the end of 1900.

It was Wyspiański who — with no slight difficulty — first forced through in Kraków, the principle that each drama calls for a specific stage framing, which must conform with its spirit.

What we consider a quite obvious thing today, some 30 years ago was considered an unusual conception, even by many people directly connected with the theatre.

Wyspiański was an exceptional man among the theatre people; he wrote the dramas, composed the sketches and projects for them, and also staged them. He had the good luck of being both an author and the stage realiser of his own compositions.

Wyspiański — the painter and designer — could best and easiest plastically present the fantastic visions of Wyspiański the poet.

His deep meditations on the staging of "Hamlet" have thrown quite a new light on the masterpiece of Shakespeare.

His manner of staging Corneille's "Cid" at the Kraków theatre became a theatrical revelation to the entire Polish theatre world.

His method of staging the fantastic, dramatic poem of A. Mickiewicz entitled "Dziady" convinced everybody that there exist no such difficulties, even those presented by the most fantastic conceptions, which a man feeling the theatre and simultaneously possessing a talent and a painter's fancy, could not overcome by means of realization of these conceptions on the stage.

In several of his dramas Wyspiański reached far back into the ancient past of legendary Poland and succeeded in creating an adequate stage background for them. One may say that he raised before the eyes of the surprised audience the ancient Polish wooden architecture, and the interior of the old fortified mansions, populated with characters which were partly historical and partly legendary. A costume, a gesture, or a plastic shape thought out by him, gave these characters a new specific life.

Wyspiański's poetical and painter's vision animated everything and forced it to



FIGARO'S MARRIAGE by Beaumarchais Teatr Polski, 1937
 Mise en scène: Al. Węgrtko. Sets: St. Słowiński
 (Mmes: Romanówna, Lindorówna, Wasylówna)



THE PICKWICK CLUB by Dickens Teatr Polski, 1936
 Mise en scène: Al. Węgrtko. Sets: Wł. Daszczyński.

participate in the dramatic action. The Wawel, the ancient residence of the Polish Kings situated on the top of Kraków hill, Wawel, the cathedral — in his fancy both link with the world of the ancient Hellade, with the "Akropolis" (the title of one of his dramas); the gods of the Greek Olimpus take part in the Polish struggles for independence of 1831, they influence the fate of the heroes. In his Polish - Greek drama entitled "Achilleis", the waves of Scamander take active part and speak. In his "Wesela", one sees various apparitions — a straw "Chochoł" comes from the fields into the peasant cottage room and begins its dance in the bewitched circle.

The dramatic imagination of Wyspiański bears in its conception a character of a plastic vision dressed up in a scenic colour and shape.

Wyspiański was not a reformer of the theatre, but he was rather its great revelator. He did not discard any of the basic elements on which the stage was existing in his days, but he inspired a new spirit and became — so to speak — the forerunner of the Polish national theatre, which revealed a specific and original scenic form, because it had to express its own original scenic *parnori*.

The example of Wyspiański had a strong effect and created new conditions for the development of the Polish theatre.

Wyspiański's principles were not discarded after his death, they lived on in Kraków and Lwów. Consequently, they were introduced by A. Szyfman,

manager of the "Teatr Polski" (Polish Theatre), founded in Warsaw in 1913.

Several artists grown up in the Kraków atmosphere, animated by Wyspiański's idea of a great national, monumental theatre, such as the famous stage manager and stage designer Leon Schiller, and the two famous plastics K. Frycz and W. Drabik (d. 1933) were attracted by A. Szyfman to work for the above theatre, St. Słowiński joined the group later. Besides the above mentioned Polish scenographers, there are others working in that line, namely: Irena Lorentowicz Karwowska (also known in Paris where she staged K. Szymanowski's "Harnasie" at the Grand Opera); M. Obrebska, T. Roszkowska, J. Kosiński, all working in Warsaw; and W. Makojnik, in Wilno; Z. Szpringier, in Poznań; J. Gał, in Kalisz; T. Rożański, in Lwów.

Some of these artists have been recently made known in Paris and London, due to their stage decorations and costumes drawn for the "Polish Ballet".

Actually the specific and original Polish style of staging and decoration began to shape itself on the stage of the "Teatr Polski" of Warsaw.

The task of a stage manager is quite different in Poland than for instance in the French theatres, where his activities are limited to the stage inspection.

The Polish "stage manager" is usually also a decorator — so called a "metteur en scene" in the best sense of the word, and he

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DON JUAN by José Zorrilla. Teatr Narodowy, 1934
 Mise en scène: E. Chaberski. Sets: W. Drabik



KING AGIS by Juliusz Słowacki. Mise en scène: E. Chaberski



LELEWEL by Stanisław Wyspiański. Teatr Narodowy, 1928
 Sets by Wincenty Drabik (1893 - 1933)



IRENA EICHLERÓWNA
as Judith
("Judith" by Giraudoux)



IRENA SOLSKA
as Lady Milford
("Intrigue and Love" by Schiller)



MARIA PRZYBYŁKO-POTOCKA
as Marguerite Gautier
("La Dame aux Camelias" by Dumas)



ALINA HALSKA
as Gretchen
("Faust" by Goethe)



POLISH ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

By Jerzy Macierakowski

Already from the first moment of the creation of the Polish national stage in 1779 by Wojciech Bogusławski, the comedy and dramatic theatre in Poland and in the first line in its capital Warsaw, has been rich in an unusual number of brilliant histrionic talents, which permitted the players to give in tragedies, dramas, and comedies equally unforgettable characters and by the diversity of their possibilities to dazzle in various rôles and characters.

Bogusławski himself was an eminent actor, who in some characteristic creations became memorable in the annals of Polish theatrical history. In his troupe, consisting of a crowd of talented actresses and actors, able as was then customary to play both in drama and opera, the talent of Agnieszka Truszkowska, the admirable heroine of Bogusławski's stage, the first Polish dramatic "star" and afterward the esteemed teacher of younger generations of players, charmed her contemporaries.

The whole century, during which the success of theatrical performances was based on the brilliance of a single actor — without any care about the mise en scène and stage direction, which was consequently insufficiently developed — was a very good background for the development of histrionic talents and gave to them the opportunity to display all their artistry.

In the first part of that century the greatest star of the Warsaw stage was the fine and beautiful Leontyna Zuczkowska-Halperkowa (1803-1894), whose high artistry and playing, full of temperament and understanding of style, both in drama and comedy was based on a method of observation and studying true life, frequently applied up to this day. This won her many scenic triumphs, and brought to Halperkowa's scenic portraits freshness of expression and truthful rendering of human passions.

No less triumph owes the Polish stage of that epoch to the great tragic actor Jan Królikowski (1826-1886), who among an innumerable list of created rôles gained the greatest triumph of his life, as Franz Moor, in Schiller's "Robbers", as also to an incomparable comic actor, Alojzy Zółkowski (1814-18389), who with his specific vis comica and original style was a capital interpreter of many rôles, including Fredro's masterpieces of comedy in his repertoire. The splendid traditions of Zółkowski

were happily continued by one of the most famous and beloved actors in Poland, Mieczysław Frenkiel (1859-1935), who gave to all his comic parts deep feeling and sincere sentiment, creating colourful and lively characterizations. His repertoire also embraced the leads of Fredro's comedies, many figures from Molière and the beautiful romantic portrait of Cyrano de Bergerac from Rostand's heroic play.

The later part of the XIX century brought among many stars the phenomenon of Bolesław Leszczyński (1840-1918), whose histrionic genius, united with splendid appearance, gesture and tremendous voice put him into the ranks of the most original and great masters of scenic art in theatrical chronicles and whom generations of public admired for his dramatic creations and the portrayals of old Polish gentry. As interpreter of Shakespearean heroes, Leszczyński waited a long time for a worthy successor.

At this time also Wincenty Rapacki (1840-1924), a great Polish actor, in his youth a comedy and heroic artist, playing among others Hamlet, later a prominent characteristic player, and Helena Modjeska (Modrzejewska) appear. Rapacki beside his scenic career was also an eminent historian of the Polish stage.

Modjeska (1840-1909), gifted with an unusual beauty (winning her the surname of Bellissima), regal figure, marvellous artistic intuition and specific originality of dramatic talent was from her début a revelation. All the greatest heroines of classical and romantic drama, headed by Mary Stuart, Juliet, Lady Macbeth, Adrienne Lecouvreur, and all the poetical ladies and girls of Slowacki's dramas and Fredro's and Scribe's comedies received in her an ideal interpreter. This specific art and charm of Modjeska caused her to be rated with Eleonora Duse and Sarah Bernhard as one of the most famous actresses in the world. Her triumphs abroad on American and English stages in the parts of all Shakespearean heroines and "La Dame aux Camelias" belong to the biggest triumphs, noted by the theatrical chronicles of the whole world, while Modjeska herself was acknowledged by foreign managers and press as the greatest actress of her epoch.

The beginning of our century — in spite of the oftentimes hostile atmosphere created for the theatre by the oppressive Russian government was also successful for the Teatr Rozmaitości (Varieties Theatre, to day Narodowy — National), the first Polish dramatic stage at that time in Warsaw. Greater liberty of spoken and written word, given by the Austrian government, caused Polish literary and artistic

circles to be concentrated not only in Warsaw, but also in Krakow and Lwow. The theatres of these towns become, therefore, first-rate centres of culture and art. The stages of Krakow and Lwow lived between 1900-1914 the most splendid pages of their existence. Amassing there many great actors, they were indeed sources from which many fine individualities, some of them being to-day prides of the Polish stage, have originated. It is not possible to mention all the eminent artists of that time, but note must be made of the name of the greatest actor in the history of Poland's theatre, Kazimierz Kamiński (d. 1928), who was also an excellent stage-director. A subtle analyst, a fine psychologist, and a keen connoisseur of human nature, Kamiński studied thoroughly the part and its background before interpreting it. He composed afterwards his creation from the smallest details, as each gesture, word, glance, expression was the result of a long and deep study. This minuteness and precision, on the other hand, never deprived Kamiński's creations of power and expressiveness, making them rich and attractive and worthy to compare with masterpieces of chiselled art. Such of Kamiński's creations as Mephistopheles in Goethe's "Faust" or "Marquis de Priola" will be alive in the traditions of the Polish theatre, as the highest achievements of the dramatic art.

Beside the characteristic of the most eminent figures of players a silhouette of the contemporary Polish actors in general must be given. Polish actors possess each his own style and artistic expression, based on the temperament and character of the nation, united with high artistry of word expression, profound sincerity of feelings and deep emotional insight. Gifted with unusual artistic intuition, freshness of ideas and large imagination, Polish actors and actresses penetrate with ease into different styles and characters; they are at home with fantasy and realism, with past and present, with classic and romantic, with comedy and drama, giving to each of them special expression and incarnation, always however with the traits of truth and inspiration, style and talent. It is no wonder therefore, that the creator of the Great Moscow Art Theatre, Constantin Stanislavsky many times expressed the thought, that with such an enormous number of talented actors as there are in Poland, he would be able to attain miracles in theatrical art. So even today, when in the theatre the epoch of successes, connected with a "star's" brilliant work, belong to the past, the Polish theatre has maintained a steady member of the

en scène, settings, costumes, directing, music and artistic ensemble) are equally prominent, the tradition of great actors and great creations is alive in Poland, and is not overshadowed by the requirement of an ensemble. For this modern ensemble of Polish stages is oftentimes composed of such excellent actors, that each of them would be in the past a famous soloist, and individually a sufficient attraction for theatre goers.

The year 1913 — the opening of the Teatr Polski (Polish Theatre), created by Dr. Arnold Szyfman in Warsaw, began a new epoch of dramatic art in Poland, the epoch of the modern theatre. Szyfman gathered at his theatre some of the best actors of the Krakow and Lwow stages. From the day of Poland's Independence — Warsaw as the capital of free Poland began to amass all the finest representative dramatic players.

The great galaxy of Polish dramatic actresses must be begun with the name of Irena Solksa. This highly original artistic individuality, whose specific beauty (to day qualified as "a vamp") deepened by natural red hair, expressive sensual timbre of voice, and distinguished figure makes her not only the most interesting actress during the first 25 years of our century, but also something more: Solksa was the inspiration and the muse of many Polish playwrights and poets at the literary epoch known under the name of "Young Poland". Solksa's traits, character and style are immortalized in many dramas, written specially for her, and especially in those by Jerzy Żuławski. Her freshness of interpretation of each part, supported by the well-known characteristic traits of her artistry, a subtle nature, perfect culture, and fine understanding of each style, epoch and tone make it that still to-day Solksa remains one of the greatest actresses on the stage. She was the first and up to this time unsurpassed interpreter of Eliza Doolittle in Shaw's "Pygmalion" in Poland, while her rich repertoire embraced all the heroines of Shakespeare, of the Polish romantic poets, and Wyspiański's fantastic plays, and also of Oscar Wilde's comedies, including Lady Bracknell (from "The Importance of being Earnest") and Mrs. Erylynne (from "Lady Windermere's Fan") which are masterpieces of finesse in dialogue and perfect understanding of their style.

The name of Maria Przybyłko-Potocka is united inseparably with the Teatr Polski from the day of its opening. After a successful sojourn in Krakow and some triumphs at the Rozmaitości, this other great Polish actress gained a steady member of the

1. MARIA GOYCZYŃSKA as Milonia Caesonia ("Calpurnia" by Rostrowowski).
2. MIECZYSLAWA CIEKLIŃSKA as Chamberlain's Wife (Mr. Jowitaki by Fredro).
3. JANINA ROMA WÓJNA as Portia ("The Merchant of Venice" by Shakespeare).
4. ELŻBIETA BARSCZEWSKA as Tessa ("The Constant Nymph" by Kennedy-Giraudoux).
5. NINA ANDRYCZ as Lucia Borglia ("Caesar and Man").



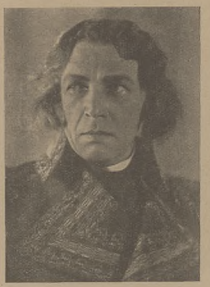
WOJCIECH BRYDZIŃSKI
as Hamlet
("Hamlet" by Shakespeare)



JÓZEF WĘGRZYN
as Don Juan
("Don Juan" by José Zorrilla)



LUDWIK SOLSKI
as Judas
("Judas of Karioth" by Rostrowoński)



JULIUSZ OSTERWA
as Sutkowski
("Sutkowski" by Zeromski)



FROM 1779 TO THE PRESENT DAY

Teatr Polski. The many-sidedness of Przybylko-Potocka, the rich registers of her feelings, including dramatic possibilities and charm of a comedy actress, brought her a chain of triumphs as an interpretress of lyric heroines and charming leads of classical and modern comedy. During the last years Przybylko-Potocka directed her interests to rather characteristic rôles and to deep dramatic characterizations of elder women. From this last period of her artistic achievements must be mentioned the rôle of Thérèse in Bernstein's "L'Espoir", Queen Elisabeth of England in Britten's drama, and George Sand in Iwaszkiewicz's "Summer in Nohant".

Stanisława Wysocka and Wanda Siemaskowa have excelled as great tragediennes. The first, however, will have a secured position in the history of scenic art not only by her former creations in tragedies (amongst which there are Lady Macbeth, Gretchen in "Faust" and Balladyna in Słowacki's tragedy), but also as a capital interpreter of a whole cycle of grand-mothers in French and English plays; to each of them Wysocka gives different and rich characteristic and warmth of sincerity.

Mieczysława Cwiklińska's career began in operette. As a comedy actress she is above all praised for her truly Parisian style in dialogue in drawing-room comedy, and also for some of her characteristic burlesques, amongst which the Chamberlain Jowialski's wife in comedy Fredro's "Mr. Jowialski" is above praise.

The elder generation of actresses includes also excellent representatives of drama, as Seweryna Bronisłówna, Leokadia Panewiczowa, two specialists of artistic burlesque, Maria Dulba and Helena Sulima, a subtle comic actress, Maria Gella, and an elegant comedy - actress Mila Kamińska.

Maria Malicka, to day the manager of her own theatre, is now at the summit of her artistic development. Her beauty and her voice, impeccable diction and high knowledge of scenic art win her many successes in lyric rôles of Schiller's romantic dramas: "Mary Stuart", "Don Carlos", "Intrigue and Love"; her youthful charm triumphs in comedies of Fiers and Caillavet and Nicodem; while this year Malicka gave a deep and profound creation in the title rôle of Shaw's "Candida", which is now being played at her theatre. The dramatic talent of Alina Halska, joined to admirable beauty and deep voice, makes the artist especially interesting in dramas and tragedies. Miss Halska's Gretchen in Goethe's "Faust" is specially memorable. After some dramatic creations Janina Romanówna specialized in comedy, reaching high artistry and finesse in dialogue and acting.

To day she is the best interpreter of Shaw's several rôles, as also of the leads in modern French and English comedy. Maria Modzelewska's appearances always show that she is a first rate dramatic and comedy actress. Her parts, as Ewa in Zeromski's "Story of a Sin" or Katharine in Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew" were artistic events. The charm and pretty voice of Modzelewska, however, cause her managers to exploit her too much often in musical comedy, a field of art which, in spite of her delightful creations ("Jim and Jill", "Widow Jadzia"), is rather too weak in comparison with her possibilities and scope of talent. Maria Gorczyńska (who has not been seen on the stage for nearly a year since her bus-accident), on the other hand, was too long a time exploited in the farce, but lately she has appeared in some dramas and earnest comedies and displayed a great deal of profound feelings and valuable qualities of dramatic actress. This group of artists who are at the moment in the full development of their talents is also brilliantly represented by Karolina Lubińska, the fine lyric heroine (Shakespearean Juliet and Cordelia) and excellent lead in modern comedy, Zofia Jarozewska, the attractive star of the Krakow stage, whose last great success was also "Candida"; and by two characteristic comic actresses Helena Buczyńska and Stanisława Perzowska. This list must be concluded with the names of K. Ankwićzówna, H. Cieszkowska, Z. Grabowska, I. Grywińska, J. Krzymińska, Z. Malynczówna, Z. Lindorówna, J. Piaskowska, Z. Tatarkiewicz-Woskowska, J. Zaklicka and M. Zabczyńska.

Amongst the youngest actresses we must note two revelations: Irena Eichlerówna and Elżbieta Barszczewska. The first unites in her the power of a great tragedienne with the abilities of a first class comedy actress. Her dramatic parts in "Le Cid" or "Cormelle and 'Fraulein Doctor'" by Tapa, as also some of her comedy creations are an infallible sign that it is she who will continue the traditions of Modjeska and Solksa on the Polish stage. The creations of Barszczewska in "Tessa" ("The Constant Nymph") by Kennedy-Giraudoux and Dickens' "Little Dorrit" foretell no less. Her fresh beauty, subtle poetry, and delicate finesse of interpretation show, that Barszczewska represents the purest lyric style, both in drama and comedy. This youngest generation of actresses embraces also Nina Andrycz (whose great talent and temperament easily fall into mannerism), Jadwiga Andrezejewska (specially memorable as Manuela in Ch. Winslow's "Girls in Uniform") as also E. Bonacka, I. Borowska, H.

Brzezińska, J. Kurylukówna, Z. Nakoneczna, I. Malkiewicz, Z. Niwińska (the bride in Wyspiański's "Wedding"), J. Niczewska, S. Stepiówna, N. Świerczewska, I. Waszyńska, L. Wysocka, J. Wilczówna, A. Zellska.

Among the Polish actors a true phenomenon of vitality and eternal youth is Ludwik Solksi, working already 63 years on Polish stages, as manager, stage-director and actor, and always in full freshness of talent and possibilities. His whole scenic career is a chain of successes in characteristic (dramatic and comic) figures, among which the title rôles in Molière's "L'Avare" and Nowaczyński's "Frederick the Great" will remain in history. Solksi's dramatic power gained greatest achievement in the tragic creation of Rostrowoński's ill-fated Judas.

Józef Węgrzyn from his début in Warsaw, as "Irydion" (in the poem of Krasiński, played at the inauguration of the Teatr Polski) up to now usually undertakes the heroic rôles of the great classic and romantic drama and tragedy. His uncommonly beautiful and deep voice, regal gesture and impeccable interpretation of verse make that such of his rôles, as Don Juan (in José Zorrilla's drama) must be counted among best of its kind. In the last years the actor is also interested in characteristic types and comic burlesques.

Juliusz Osterwa excelled firstly as a charming jeune premier of the comedy. The finesse of his talent, subtle intelligence and rare artistic imagination made him soon turn to more earnest tasks. To-day one of the greatest actors and directors in Poland, he is famous for noble, romantic figures from world and Polish drama and as a portraitist of psychologically complicated natures. Osterwa's acting possesses much insight and inspiration. His large repertoire embraces all the prominent rôles from Słowacki, Wyspiański and Zeromski. The Polish public with intense interest awaits for a long time the production of "Hamlet" with Osterwa for the first time in the title rôle. It will be without doubt a highly artistic event. Noble natures and characteristic dramatic parts have also a profound representative in Wojciech Brydziński (among others appearing as Hamlet), an actor of highest culture in word and style, while the manager of the Teatr Kameralny, Karol Adventowicz, justly has the fame of the best interpreter of Strindberg and Ibsen.

The artistry of Kazimierz Kamiński finds a successor in Kazimierz Junosza - Stepowski who after many brilliant triumphs as a lover in the comedies, gives now a series of chiselled characteristic portrayals and some

expressive tragic creations. The greatest of them are Henry IV, of Pirandello, Shylock and Caesar in Shakespearean tragedies, and also the Count in Verneuil "Azais".

While Junosza - Stepowski is admired for his very complicated and intricate human portraits, Stefan Jarażec impresses above all with dramatic visions full of blood, passion and tense dramatism, which often seem to change stage into true life. During recent years as the manager of the Teatr Ateneum he has given also some masterpieces in Fredro and Molière, but his dramatic rôles (headed by Smugon in Zeromski's "Uciekla mi przepióreczka...") will mostly secure him the name of an unsurpassed master in rendering human tragedies, sorrows and the darknesses of life. The son of Bolesław, Jerzy Leszczyński is gifted with imposing scenic temperament and personal charm, winning him many dynamic and humorous parts in comedies, and also some heroic rôles, as "Cyrano de Bergerac", "Coriolan" and Marc Antonius in "Julius Caesar".

The characteristic portrayals of Aleksander Zelwerowicz are always large scenic compositions. Similarly to Frenkiel he is able to fill the comic figure with sincerity and warmth. His Mr. Pickwick is worthy in his artistry to be compared with Dickens' original Stanisław Stanisławski's culture and admiration for Fredro, united with artistry of verse-speaking bring him many fine performances in the rôles of old Polish gentlemen. At the same time, the actor is a master of dialogue in modern comedy. The vis comica of Antoni Fertner and Władysław Grabowski makes of them (in spite of some monotony) definite causes of the success of farce in Warsaw. Antoni Różycki and Gustaw Buszyński, finally, conduct perfectly dialogue in drama and comedy.

The generation coming somewhat later to Warsaw stage brought above all many characteristic talents (with an absence of eminent new heroes of dramas and comedies). The comic temper and original humour of Mariusz Maszyński (displaying sometimes an overlap in burlesque) make of him one of Warsaw's favourites, as a performer of modern French, English and American comedy. The great qualities of Bogusław Samborski's dynamism fiery temper and expressiveness find good resource for artistic successes in Shaw's comedies "The Doctor's Dilemma" and "Widowers' Houses" and in dramatic figures similar to Jago and Danton, which are

(Continued on page 8).

1. JERZY LESZCZYŃSKI as Cyrano ("Cyrano de Bergerac" by Rostand), 2. ALEKSANDER ZELWEROWICZ as Mr. Pickwick ("The Pickwick Club" by Dickens), 3. KAZIMIERZ JUNOSZA-STEPOWSKI as Caesar Borgia ("Caesar and Man" by Nowaczyński), 4. DOBIESŁAW DAMECKI as Kaskinof ("Crime and Punishment" by Dostojewski), 5. JAN KRZCZMAR as the Prince ("Measure for Measure" by Shakespeare).

Shakespeare on the Polish Stage

By Ludwik Simon

Circumstances in the Polish theatre were such that a real acceptance of Shakespeare could not take place until the second half of the nineteenth century. Then everything possible was done to make up for lost time. Translations, commentaries, and theatrical performances crowded upon each other's heels, and the influence of Shakespeare on the Polish drama grew ever wider. From this time onwards, Shakespeare became an integral part of Polish theatrical culture.

Greatest of all the classics, whose classicism (by an irony of fate) the classicists themselves disputed, genius of the poetical drama, inexhaustible source of imaginative vision and profound reflection on life, Shakespeare has always occupied a privileged place in the repertoire of the modern theatre.

Poland had her own great poetical dramas. She had the *Korallen, Lilla Weneda, Balladyna*, etc. of Slowacki; the *Undivine Comedy* and the *Tragedy* of Krasiński; and the *Druids* of Mickiewicz. But these works of the romantic genius, created in exile, detached from the national theatre, were not able for long years to find a place, with their special artistic form, in the contemporary world of narrow ideas about theatrical values, and it was only with difficulty that some of them appeared on the stages of Kraków and Lwów. (Full rehabilitation did not indeed take place until the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries).

Moreover these plays, born of the national spirit and impregnated with the idea of patriotism, for a long time found the route barred to the theatre of the Polish capital, which was under Russian rule. Whilst the great visions of the Polish Romantics were confined to the printed word, in books that circulated with difficulty in the fatherland, it was Shakespeare who, in company with Schiller, as the embodiment of the highest artistic effort of the theatre, became the corner-stone of the theatrical repertoire.

Shakespeare, the old master of the Polish Romantics, who, performed on the stage, represented the *grand style* at its best and most enduring, thereby prepared the way for the genuine Romantic drama, so different from the Parisian models upon which the Polish theatre was principally nourished.

The history of Shakespeare on the Warsaw stage — that is to say, the part which is really interesting and rich in incident — dates only from the late sixties of the nineteenth century, but the germ of Shakespeareanism may be traced to a much more distant epoch.

In the seventeenth century, the works of Shakespeare were included in the repertoire of the English players who sometimes found their way to Poland to give performances at the royal court. When a Polish theatre for the general public was created in 1765, during the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski, the repertoire revealed French influence in the drama and Italian influence in the opera, and drama was represented almost exclusively by comedy. Shakespeare's works were sometimes played by the German theatre during its performance in Warsaw.

It was only during the period at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, when the Polish theatre found itself in a country where there were strong German influences — thanks to the political situation, and the visits of the Warsaw players to Lwów — that serious drama appealing to the public *en masse*, which had been played very rarely up to then, became an indispensable part of the repertoire.

German influences soon disappeared, however, and French models recovered their importance. Classicism, with its orderly tragedies and comedies, was once more seen as the ideal. In any case, the Polish theatre already possessed a well-developed, selected programme, which took into account the public taste in drama. In these circumstances, the voice of Shakespeare was heard through the medium of the German and French theatres. First, *HAMLET* appeared on the stage in the Eschenberg's translation, adapted by Schröder, and polonised by the director of the theatre, the famous Wojciech Bogusławski. The dress rehearsal took place at Lwów in 1797, during the compulsory performances of the Warsaw theatre under the direction of Bogusławski, Bogusławski himself played the part of Hamlet, Pierozńska as Ophelia, but the greatest tragedian of the period, Kazimierz Osiński, played Claudius. Little by little, a change in the distribution of the rôles took place in Warsaw. Marian Szymanowski played Hamlet, followed by his son, Wojciech, and afterwards by Werowski and Piasecki. For some time, the great tragic actress Józefa Ledóchowska was an excellent Ophelia. Later, Bogusławski gave a performance in Polish of Mercier's *Les Tombeaux de Vêrona*, a rehash of Shakespeare's *ROMEO AND JULIET*, using the French translation of a German adaptation by Weisse. This strange production had already been played in Lwów since 1798, before being included in the Warsaw repertoire in 1800.

Then came the turn of *OTHELLO*, which was played in 1801 in the pseudo-classic version by Ducis. From that time forward, Ducis

became the intermediary between Shakespeare and the Warsaw stage, a situation which continued as long as the influence of the classical school, through their representative, Ludwik Osiński, director of the Theatre. LEAR, in Ducis' version, appeared in 1805, and in 1829 his version of *MACBETH*, which had already been played since 1815 according to the German text of Schiller, which was much nearer to the original.

The period of the falsification of Shakespeare finishes with the defeat of the classicists on the eve of the 1830 Revolution, but the nostalgia for the real Shakespeare, in whose name the Romantics violently attacked Ducis' *MACBETH* in 1829 as an anachronism, had no speedy positive result in the domain of the theatre. It was not merely that the translations were lacking, but that the Warsaw theatre abandoned its high aims, and having lost the battle for the classicising of the stage, did not know how to modernize sublime ideals, and chose the path of least resistance by becoming a mere institution for entertainment during the tragic years that followed the insurrection.

After years of interruption, when Polish literature had been enriched by a number of translations (those of Kozmian, J. Paszkowski, and L. Ulrich amongst others), Shakespeare again appeared, this time in an original version on the Warsaw stage. It was Kraków which now gave the example to the capital, by introducing Shakespeare's principal works into its repertoire, starting in 1867. Then were seen in long succession, not merely tragedies like *HAMLET* (1867), *RICHARD III* (1868), *ROMEO AND JULIET* (1868), *LEAR* (1869), *MACBETH* (1869), *OTHELLO* (1869), but also comedies, such as *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* (1867), *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* (1872), *MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* (1873), *MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* (1873), etc., none of which had hitherto been played, even in an adaptation, on the Polish stage.

Following the example of Kraków, and no doubt also of the German theatres, the plays of Shakespeare at last found a place in the permanent repertoire of the Warsaw stage. One after another were seen *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* (1869), *ROMEO AND JULIET* (1870), *HAMLET* (1871), *OTHELLO* (1873), *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* (1876), *MACBETH* (1878), *LEAR* (1879), *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA* (1880), *MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* (1884), *TWELFTH NIGHT* (1885), *AS YOU LIKE IT* (1891), *RICHARD III* (1899), *WINTER'S TALE* (1903), and *MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* (1907).

As creators of Shakespearean characters, the following made their names famous: Helena Modzelewska as Ophelia, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, and Juliet; Bolesław Łanowski as Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth, and Romeo; Jan Królikowski as Shylock; Bolesław Leszczyński as Othello; Jan Tatariewicz as Romeo, etc.

The Warsaw public developed a taste for Shakespeare, and were particularly interested in his tragedies, thanks to the magnificent rôles created by the greatest Polish actors and actresses.

Apart from the Polish performances of Shakespeare, foreign performances were given from time to time and were occasionally arranged as great sensations. A powerful impression was created in 1877 and 1878 by Rossi as Othello, Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Romeo, and Richard III. In 1885, the performances of *JULIUS CAESAR*, *TWELFTH NIGHT*, *WINTER'S TALE*, and others of the plays by the Meiblen Players was a revelation. Later, Moggi gave some



A group from *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* by W. Shakespeare. (Miss en scène: Leo Schiller).

performances on tour (1892), and Sarah Bernhard was dazzling with her company in *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*, (1892).

In the twentieth century, when theatrical art took a magnificent upward flight through the opening of the Teatr Polski at Warsaw under the direction of Arnold Szyfman in 1913, performances of Shakespeare reached a high general level of production, thanks to the direction and the *mise en scène*. The best performances took place at the Teatr Polski. Through Szyfman's influence, a large number of Shakespeare's comedies were played, and their style and colouring were fully brought out. *THE TEMPEST*, played on a revolving stage in 1913, began the series. An artistic triumph was achieved with the *mise en scène* of *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* in 1923, treated by the producer, Aleksander Zelwerowicz, as a fairy story in the style of the Elizabethan epoch, with decorations by Karol Frycz, and excellent casting, including the unforgettable actress Umńska as Puck — a rôle to which, with a touch of genius, she brought the wild and fantastic savagery of a fairy tale. An interesting but rather precious production of *AS YOU LIKE IT* (under the direction of Aleksander Zelwerowicz and Leon Schiller) was made by the Bogusławski theatre in 1925.

Other performances of Shakespearean comedies remain in our memory on account of the individual creations of various actors, such as the Andrew Aguecheek of Ludwik Solski (Teatr Polski, 1918; Teatr Rozmaitości, 1923), the Shylock of Stefan Jaracz and Portia of Maria Przybyłko - Potocka (Teatr Polski 1921), and the Malvollo of Józef Węgrzyn (Teatr Polski 1936).

Side by side with the comedies of Shakespeare, his tragedies were

also introduced into the regular repertoire and given a magnificent stage setting. Here also, the Teatr Polski, under the direction of Arnold Szyfman, was to excel in the performances of *JULIUS CAESAR* (1914, 1928), *HENRY IV* (1924), *OTHELLO* (with Kazimierz Junosza - Stepowski) 1925, *CORIOLANUS* (with Jerzy Leszczyński) 1919, *HAMLET* (with Wojciech Brydziński) 1922, and *LEAR* (with Józef Węgrzyn) 1936. On other stages, the performances of *THE WINTER'S TALE* at the Teatr Bogusławski in 1921, and of *HAMLET* at the Teatr Kameralny in 1934, deserve to be remembered.

It will therefore be seen that the history of Shakespearean drama in Warsaw is so rich in interesting circumstances, and so bound up with the main current of theatrical development, that it fully deserves a monograph to itself. Professor Marian Szyjowski's invaluable book, *The History of Modern Polish Drama: The Shakespearean Type* (Kraków, 1923), as the title indicates, reduces the problems of drama to those of tragedy. It deals very generally with the main flood of events after 1867, but treats the less important period (up to 1830) as the crux of the whole question.

The history of Shakespearean drama in Warsaw during the late sixties of the last century — taking into account the preceding period — is a vast and extremely interesting subject, which no-one has yet explored in detail. Some Shakespearean scholar ought to devote a special monograph to it. In a brief article like this, one can only take a bird's-eye view of the whole field.

Translated by Betty Morgan and E. M. Szarola



MEASURE FOR MEASURE by W. Shakespeare. Teatr Polski. 1933. Miss en scène: J. Warnecki. Sets: W. Daszewski.



ROMEO AND JULIET by W. Shakespeare. Teatr Polski 1931. Miss en scène: Arnold Szyfman. — Sets: Karol Frycz. Juliet (K. Lubieńska), Romeo (W. Pawłowski).



KAROL ADWENTOWICZ
in the title rôle
of Strindberg's "Father"

STEFAN JARACZ
as Napoleon
("M-me Sans Gêne" by Sardou)

MARIUSZ MASZYŃSKI
as Mosca
("Volpone" by Johnson)

MARIAN WYRZYKOWSKI
as Szczepan Kosakowski
("Horsztyński" by Słowacki)

Contemporary Stage Production

(concluded)

Poland the first and the most eminent representative of the historical school of the theatre which aimed at reproducing past theatrical epochs. As producer of the classical repertory of Polish and world literature Zelwerowicz has based himself on the best models of western Europe while adding much of his own. Among his best productions in this style were the "King Oedipus" of Sophocles, (National Theatre) and some plays of Shakespeare, Molière, Fredro, Słowacki, and Ibsen.

Mieczysław Limanowski and Juliusz Osterwa had their own studio - theatre in Warsaw where they put into practice their ideas on stage - production. The first was more of a theoretician and an ideologist of the theatre, the other an experienced practitioner, and their close collaboration resulted in a series of remarkable productions which were distinguished by their profoundly analytical character and an astonishingly subtle portrayal of various psychological states. They introduced a special system of production and staging, evoking the deepest emotional values of the actors and expressing them by simple and spontaneous forms. After the "Reduta" theatre in Warsaw had been closed Osterwa separated from Limanowski and devoted his attention mostly to monumental drama producing the work of Słowacki and Wyspiański in accordance with scenic principles, with a tendency towards rationalising the philosophic aspect of the plays. But his greatest triumphs, past and present, have lain in the production of such plays as are distinguished by subtle dialogue of which Osterwa is an incomparable master.

Leon S. Schiller who at the beginning of his career paid particular attention to musical problems of the theatre soon turned entirely to great plays and became producer and associate-manager of the "Polski" and "Bogusławski" theatres in Warsaw, as also of the theatres of Łwów and Łódź. He has most fully gathered the fruits of the work of his predecessors and contemporaries who prepared the ground for a modern realization of the dramas written by Poland's romantic poets and their successors. These dramas, having taken form upon the stage have become typical of the modern Polish repertory. Schiller held that the Polish drama of the XIXth and XXth century constitutes an excellent modern material for the theatre because it can be suitably interpreted in an entirely modern style. His productions of Krasinski's

"Undivine Comedy", of Mickiewicz "Ancestors", of Słowacki's "Kordian" and of a number of dramas by Wyspiański, Miciński, and Zerowski, in the theatres of Warsaw, Łwów and Łódź are stage transpositions of these works effected by means of expression wholly independent of the scenic imagination of the authors and which were chosen by the producer as being best fitted to express the substance of the drama, provided they were set before the present - day audience in a manner easily comprehensible. After having wrestled with the formal problems of the world's great dramas Schiller has lately devoted his attention to the social problem play and in these productions he always stresses the tendencies and theses of the modern works he presents.

Of late Polish theatre production is experiencing a strong movement of return to a faithful, profound, and extremely wide - reaching realism. Though elements of realism were plainly to be found not only in the spectacular stagings conceived by Zelwerowicz and in the monumental conceptions of Schiller but more plainly still in the work of Osterwa and his "Reduta" theatre, yet this new period of realism is analytical, in contrast to the synthetic style which has in general been characteristic of Poland's post-War theatre and it has profited by the ambitious plans of the producers of monumental drama.

The most eminent representative of these tendencies is Alexander Weggerko, who at first worked for the privately-owned "Bagatela" theatre in Kraków and has now for over a dozen years been working for the Warsaw theatres. Weggerko also began in the synthetic style, as witness his productions of Wyspiański's "Anathema" and of the works of Claudel. Later he turned to spectacular and monumental drama, striving to draw from these presentations the maximum of their pictorial and miming possibilities. His range is a wide one, comprising the production of Beaumarchais' "Figaro's Wedding", Dickens' "Pickwick", Nowakowski's great spectacle "A Sprig of Rosemary" based on the history of Piłsudski's Legion, works by Shakespeare and Wyspiański.

Karol Borowski, Emil Chaberski, Arnold Szyfman, Ryszard Ordyński, Zygmunt Nowakowski, Teofil Trzcicki, Edmund Wierciński Janusz Warnecki, Zbigniew Ziemiński, Wacław Radulski, Henryk Szletyński are producers and stage - managers who have already played an important part in the theatre of

the restored Polish State and who are to-day at the summit of their creative powers.

Borowski, for many years stage-manager of the "Polski" theatre of Warsaw, now works for the "Narodowy". He has proved himself possessed of a talent of no mean range and of a perfect technique in staging whilst showing a decided tendency to keep his presentations to a standard of "plain commonsense". In addition to this he always takes into account the author's point of view and seeks to employ the style and setting which harmonise best with each play.

Chaberski has earned distinction in the first place by his fortunate intuitions as stage - manager in the production of dramas by Słowacki and Wyspiański. He has a sense of scenic rhythm, particularly of crowd-rhythm on the stage and he has a talent for uniting in his productions the esthetic elements of a play with its philosophic essentials.

Szyfman was best known for many years as manager of the "Polski" and "Mały" theatres which both owe him a great deal. Since the War he has been absorbed in managerial work and has almost entirely given up stage - management, but the productions of Krasinski's "Undivine Comedy", of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" and "Hamlet" are among the most remarkable in the repertory of the Polish theatre.

Ordyński is in the first place a film producer - as regards the theatre his greatest merit lies in having produced some classics of English literature, with Shakespeare and Ben Johnson heading the list. Nowakowski and Trzcicki, carry on a varied and fertile activity. Nowakowski is at his best with plays that carry a thesis, Trzcicki (manager of "Letni" theatre in Warsaw) likes to create strong dramatic expression.

E. Wierciński, W. Radulski, and H. Szletyński have undoubtedly emerged from the school of Schiller but their development is very individual. Wierciński in particular is already an excellent stage - manager who knows how to make monumental form harmonise with realism of expression. Radulski has distinct expressionist leanings which

showed most strongly in his staging of Chesterton's "Man Who Was Thursday".

J. Warnecki and Z. Ziemiński move along the lines of analytic realism and both excel in managing a company of actors. Ziemiński has hitherto mostly kept to modern comedy's realization whilst Warnecki is an excellent producer of spectacular shows and his feeling for music often leads him to the musical-comedy type of play where humour, song and dance play an important part.

In the last few years the eminent actor Stefan Jaracz and his collaborators have attracted attention by their stage-managing work. They manage their own theatre, the "Ateneum" and have in a way become the continuators of the "Reduta" studio, with a repertoire both retrospective and modern.

There is a group of women stage - managers who form a separate chapter in the history of the Polish stage. The most eminent among them is undoubtedly Mme Stanisława Wysocka, producer of Wyspiański's "November Night", but two other famous actresses have also achieved excellent results, i. e. Mme Maria Przybyłko-Potocka and Mme Irena Sołska-Grosserowa. Mme Stanisława Perzanowska, stage-manager at the "Ateneum" theatre of Warsaw has in recent years won one of the foremost places in the new analytical movement, but her interests are not limited to the realistic style. She also cultivates the grotesque and period pieces, showing a very good taste and a great ingenuity.

Polish producers of this period owe a great debt of gratitude to their nearest collaborators, the stage - designers. In post - War Poland the most important part was played by the great talent of Wincenty Drabik (d. 1933). Other talented artists who worked beside him and are still active are Karol Frycz, Andrzej and Zbigniew Pronaszko, Stanisław Sliwiński, Władysław Daszewski, Stanisław Jarocki, besides many others whom it is impossible to enumerate here.

Władysław Zawistowski
Translated by
Wiktoria J. Goryńska



BALLADYNA by Słowacki. Teatr Narodowy, 1938
Mise en scène: J. Osterwa. Scen.: F. Ruszczyk (d. 1936).

1. ZBIGNIEW ZIEMIŃSKI as Chopin ("Summer in Nohant" by Inszewicz)
2. ALEXANDER WEGGERKO as Figaro ("Figaro's Wedding" by Beaumarchais)
3. STANISŁAWA WYSOCKA as Madame Rollison ("Ancestors" by Mickiewicz)
4. MARIA MODZELEWSKA as Katherine ("The Taming of the Shrew" (Shakespeare)
5. MARIA MALIKJA as Mary Stuart ("Mary Stuart" by Słowacki).



CHARITAS by Karol Hubert Rostkowski. Mise en scene: Richard Bolestawski (d. 1937). Sets: Wincenty Drabik (d. 1933). Teatr Polski, 1920

SCENIC ART

(Concluded)

is practically a creator of the entire stage performance, as on the Soviet stage; the text of the play is often merely a pretext, sometimes an indispensable pretext for his own stage and decoration conceptions.

Such a typical "stage manager" is before all *Leon Schiller*, who realized his entirely new conceptions first at the "Teatr Polski", then at the "Reduta" and "Boguslawski" theatres, in Warsaw finally at the theatre in Lwów, and the workmen's theatre "Ateneum", in Warsaw.

Collaborating at first with *A. Pronaszko* — a painter of the Polish vanguard — *L. Schiller* created a new type of theatre "performance"; he successfully harmonizes the rhythm of the stage construction and of its elements simplified to the minimum with the rhythm of gesture and movements of the individual figures and of the crowd; he knows how to operate the light in a most expressive manner, and, during the action he concentrates it on one point only, so that the remaining parts of the stage are practically quite dark; he is also a master in the arranging of collective scenes, crowd movement, etc. Besides *A. Pronaszko*, the following designers compose their decorations in the *Schiller* style: *Wl. Daszewski, K. Mackiewicz*, and quite recently *S. Jarocki*, who formerly did not go beyond normal stage realism and illusionism.

The endeavour to introduce the mechanical method of construction of Meyerhold on the Polish ground, in spite of its ultra modernist stamp was not very successful. The "Teatralny Otkłabi" which Meyerhold and *L. Popowa* initiated by the "Rogacz Wspaniały", in Moscow, in 1922, interested merely the few connoisseurs of the theatre but on the whole did not animate anybody, and did not inspire any original conceptions corresponding to that style.

This may be because the style is entirely strange to the Polish spirit, or else that the style of the Polish stage plastic art is based on quite different elements. What is the cause?

In 1931, the Polish Section of the International Theatre Exhibition, in Paris, was exceedingly successful. The prominent French critic writer *Phillipe Soupault* called it "a real revelation", and stated that the great discovery of the young Polish theatre is based on the

Actors and Actresses

(Concluded)

the finest performances of this actor. *Aleksander Wegierko*, thanks to his talent, eloquence and visible culture, is above all interesting in the rôles of intellectualists of every kind. It may be *Professor Higgins* of Shaw or *Figaro* of Beaumarchais. The actor must find the background of interesting, sometimes philosophical thoughts for his scenic portrayals, which become therefore very attractive. The realistic, sometimes brutal creations of men from people, our theatres owe to *Franciszek Dominiak, Jan Kurkaczewski*, a first class comic player links burlesque with deep sentiment, triumphing greatly in purely farcical rôles; and moving us in those of ill-fated humans. The list of these actors must be enriched by the names of *S. Dęczyński, St. Grolicki, S. Hrydziański, L. Łuszczewski, A. Socha, J. Warnecki, E. Wierciński, T. Wesołowski* and *J. Woskowski*.

Recently the talents of *Dobiasław Damięcki* (able to create deep psychological studies, among them *Raskolnikoff* in *Dostojewski's "Crime and Punishment"*), *Jerzy Chodecki* (fine analyst of human nature) and *Tadeusz Białoszczyński* appear in Warsaw.

The youngest generation of actors possesses also many talents among men foretelling a brilliant future for the Polish dramatic stage. *Zbigniew Ziemiński*, an actor of large intelligence, big possibilities and scope, with many resources of his artistic expressiveness gives to each of his creations different and fresh interpretations. His several rôles in dramas (*Lewis Dodd* in "The

architectonic character of the staging), actually, the anxiety concerning the architectonic composition of the stage performance compels the stage manager to take proper care of the uniformity and fullness of the synthesis of the three basic elements: the text, the decoration or construction of the stage space, and acting.

It seems that actually the said architectonic character of staging constitutes the basic and highly characteristic feature of the specific style of the Polish stage plastic art.

It would be very easy to support the above thesis by a whole line of examples on the development of Polish theatre during the last twenty years.

Mieczysław Treter

Constant Nymph, Chopin, the Poet in Wyspiański's "Wedding") as also the charming parts in Achard's comedies "Simone" and "Domino" show that even before the day of the full ripening of his talent Ziemiński is already great actor.

The dramatic heroes *Jan Kreczmar* and *Marian Wyrzykowski* possess the excellent art of psychological analysis and thorough studying of each part; this does not deprive their rôles of romantic temper, poetry and insight, so characteristic for these two great talents. *Kreczmar* excelled many times in Shakespeare, as *Romeo, Oberon* in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and in "The Merchant of Venice" and "Measure for Measure", and also in *Rostrowski's "Caligula"*. *Wyrzykowski* was specially successful in *Słowacki's ("Kordian", "Mazepa")* and *Szczepin's ("Horszyński")* and *Coteaux ("King Oedipus")* and *Giraudoux ("Judith")*.

Actors of great characteristic and comic possibilities are *Józef Kondrat* and *Jack Woszczerzowski*, who are able to impress in dramas and to amuse in comedy. The manly lyricism and charm, and discreet talent of the jeune premier in comedies characterize *Leszek Pośpidowski, Mieczysław Milecki, Jerzy Roland* and *Stefan Michałak*, while wealth of thought and life represent on the stage *Jerzy Pichelski*, who especially after his last rôle in *Nowakowski's "A Twig of Rosemary"* has advanced to the first ranks of players. In the same performance *Władysław Kaczmarek* has shown that he is suggestive actor in rendering of primitive natures and their tragedies.

Concluding this characteristic of Polish dramatic actors and actresses we must also mention *W. Biegański, J. Bonecki, M. Borowy, T. Chmielewski, Z. Chmielewski, S. Daniłowicz, K. Dorwski, Ludwik Fritsche, S. Łapiński, J. Łuszczewski, T. Kański, H. Małkowski, T. Sawan, J. Słiwowski, E. Solarski, J. Strachowski, M. Węgrzyn, K. Wilamowski, J. Ziejewski, M. Znicz* and *St. Zeleniński*, actors of different age, employ and character, whom it is impossible to portray separately, but whose names are worthy to be mentioned in this review of representatives of the contemporary Polish histrionic art. *Jerzy Maclerakowski*

THEATRES IN POLAND

Poland has 2 operas, 30 theatres with stock companies, and 5 musical houses. Apart from these there are numerous touring companies, visiting the provincial towns.

The greater number of the theatres are in Warsaw which has one operatic stage, *TEATR WIELKI*, 10 theatres, of which 6 are run by the Society of Theatrical Art and Culture in Poland (T. K. K. T.). These are the *TEATR NARODOWY* (National Theatre) and *TEATR NOWY* (New Theatre) under the management of *Ludwik Solski*, *TEATR POLSKI* (Polish Theatre) and *TEATR MAŁY* (Little Theatre), managed by *Dr. Arnold Szyfman*, *TEATR LETNI* (Summer Theatre) managed by *Teofil Trzcziński*, and *STOŁECZNY TEATR POWSZECHNY* (Popular Theatre) under the management of *Eugeniusz Poreda*, which gives shows in 5 suburban houses.

The private stages in Warsaw are:

1. *TEATR ATENEUM* — run by *Stefan Jaracz*.
2. *TEATR KAMERALNY* — run by *Karol Adwentowicz*.
3. *TEATR MALICKIEJ* (Malicka Theatre) — run by *Maria Malicka*, and
4. *REDUTA* — run by *Juliusz Osterwa*.

Warsaw possesses also two operettes *The 8.15 Theatre* and *The Big Revue Theatre* and two small revues the *CYRULIK WARSZAWSKI* and the *QUI-PRO-QUO*.

Next come *Łódź*, with three theatres: *TEATR POLSKI* (Polish Theatre), *TEATR POPULARNY* (Popular Theatre) and *TEATR KAMERALNY*, managed by *Kazimierz Wroczyński* and *Hugon Morcyński*; *Poznań* with an opera (*GRAND THEATRE*) and one theatre *TEATR POLSKI* (Polish Theatre) man by *Robert Boelke*; *Lwów* with two theatres: *TEATR WIELKI* (Grand Theatre), and *TEATR ROZMAITOSCÍ* (Varietés Theatre), man. by *Janusz Warnecki*. *Włno* one theatre *MIĘJSKI TEATR NA POHULANIE* (Municipal Theatre at Pohulanka) man. *M. Szpakiewicz* and an

operette *TEATR LUTNIA*, man. by *K. Wyrwicki-Wichrowski*.

The remaining theatres in Poland (one in each town) are:

1. *Bydgoszcz. TEATR MIĘJSKI* (Municipal Theatre) Man. *Władysław Stoma*.
2. *Częstochowa. TEATR KAMERALNY* Man. *Kazimierz Brodzikowski*.
3. *Grodno. TEATR ELIZY ORZESKOWEJ* (Eliza Orzeszkowa's Theatre), Man. *Józef Grodnicki*.
4. *Kalisz. TEATR MIĘJSKI IM. WOJCIECHA BOGUSŁAWSKIEGO* (Wojciech Bogusławski's Theatre) Man. *Iwo Gall* and *Marian Lenk*.
5. *Katowice. TEATR IM. STANISŁAWA WYSPIAŃSKIEGO* (Stanisław Wyspiański's Theatre) Man. *Marian Sobański*.
6. *Kraków. TEATR IM. JULIUSZA SŁOWACKIEGO* (Juliusz Słowacki's Theatre), Man. *Karol Frycz*.
7. *Łuck. TEATR WOLYŃSKI IM. JULIUSZA SŁOWACKIEGO* (Juliusz Słowacki Theatre), Man. *Aleksander Rodziewicz*.
8. *Sosnowiec. TEATR MIĘJSKI* (Municipal Theatre) Man. *Jerzy Golaszewski*.
9. *Stanisławów. TEATR MAŁOPOLSKI* Man. *Zuzanna Łozińska*.
10. *Toruń. TEATR ZIEMI POMORSKIEJ* (Pomorze's Theatre), Man. *W. Bracki*.

The touring theatres are *REDUTA, TEATR ZIEMI KRAKOWSKIEJ* (Krakow Theatre) and *TEATR WIELKOPOLSKI* (Wielkopolska Theatre).

Of these touring theatres a great cultural rôle is played by *REDUTA* remaining under the management of *Juliusz Osterwa*. The theatre visits each year nearly all parts of Poland. In 1924, for the first time the troupe began a road trip to the larger and smaller Polish towns. Special trains are utilized in transporting the sets, costumes and furniture and often the artist and workers live for months in them. Since 1924, *REDUTA* has played in over 200 towns and cities and has given nearly 8000 performances. *ARNO*

TO OUR READERS

The preparation of this special theatre number has been the work of *Miss Cecylia Halpern* and *Mr. Jerzy Maclerakowski*. The photographs are from the Studios of *Stanisław Brozowski* and of *Jan Malarski*.

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