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## **A man and a puppet. On Twenty Fifth National Puppet Theatre Festival in Opole**

### **A Little Bit of History...**

The first puppet theatre festival in Opole took place in 1962 and was one of the earliest theatre festivals in this field in the post-war Poland. It was preceded only by the Puppet Theatre Festival of Northern Poland established in Toruń in 1960. The Opole festival was called the Silesian Puppet Theatre Festival and its organization coincided in time with the twenty fifth anniversary of the Opole puppet theatre.

Alojzy Smolka and a group of his friends established the Polish Puppet Theatre aligned with District I of the Union of Poles in Germany in 1937. The first spectacle of the group was performed on 14 October 1937 and this is the date that marks the beginning of the puppet theatre activity in the Opole region. The spectacle based on the play by Maria Kownacka entitled *Cztery mile za piec* [*Four miles behind the stove*] took place in the Polish House in Racibórz owned by the Union of Poles in Germany. Within two years about two hundred spectacles were performed, all directed and set designed by Smolka. At that time it was not a professional theatre, but an amateur one, a road show performing mainly in the countryside which was dominated by the Polish population in the pre-war years. Just before the outbreak of the war, in July 1939 the group performed in Vienna for the Opole Cub Scouts having their summer camp there. Two months later Alojzy Smolka was arrested by

the Nazis and sent to Buchenwald Concentration Camp. He left prison in April 1945.

Already in October 1945 Alojzy Smolka played Dyndalski in *Zemsta* [*Revange*] by Aleksander Fredro staged by newly established Juliusz Słowacki Municipal Theatre in Opole, soon renamed the Opole Region State Theatre. Still in October *Red Riding Hood* puppet play directed by Wanda Jerzmanowska was performed.

The first Silesian Puppet Theatre Festival took place in Opole from 1 - 7 October 1962. Henryk Jurkowski describes it in the following words:

In the sixties when the post-war Poland's borders with its Recovered Territories could still be questioned such a festival was a demonstration of community spirit between the territories of Upper Silesia, Opole Silesia, Lower Silesia and the Polish motherland. The founders of the festival were totally entitled to such a programme for their aim since the majority of them were Polish community activists under the Third Reich<sup>1</sup>.

At this first festival two Opole spectacles were awarded prizes by the jury including: Krystyna Mazur – the then editor of *Teatr Lalek* [*Puppet Theatre*], Janusz Galewicz – an actor, Władysław Jarema – a painter and a director, Henryk Jurkowski – the then representative of the Ministry for Culture and Arts, Monika Snarska – a director, Jerzy Szeski – a set designer, Franciszek Wasikowski – a composer, Wojciech Wiczorkiewicz – an actor. Six theatres took part in the festival: Ateneum from Katowice, Białka from Bielsko-Biała, Chochlik from Wrocław, State Puppet Theatre from Wałbrzych, Zagłębie Children's Theatre from Będzin and Puppet Theatre in Opole. The first prize for the performance was awarded to Zagłębie Children's Theatre for the spectacle called *Przygody Wiercipięty* [*Adventures of a Fidget*] by Józef Pehra and *Koziołek Matołek* [*Matołek the Billy-Goat*] based on a text by Kornel Makuszyński.

In 1964 a next festival was organized, this time without the name Silesian. In reality it was a festival of puppet theatres from the south of Poland since it was attended by all the theatres from the southern voivodships but the one from Rzeszów. The fourth edition of the festival in 1969 was already named the National Puppet Theatre Festival in Opole.

## Twenty Fifth National Puppet Theatre Festival in Opole

Took place from 17 to 21 October 2011. The following theatres participated in the festival: the Białystok Puppet Theatre, Grupa Coincidentia from

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<sup>1</sup> H. Jurkowski, *A Puppet – a play of fate* (Opole, 2011), p.5.

Białystok and neTTheatre from Lublin, the Olsztyn Puppet Theatre, the Opole Puppet Theatre, Ad Spectatores Theatre from Wrocław, the Animation Theatre of Poznań, Baj Theatre from Warsaw, Banialuka Theatre from Bielsko-Biała, Gulliver Theatre from Warsaw, Lalka Theatre from Warsaw, the Puppet and Actor's Pinocchio Theatre in Łódź. In total eleven theatre groups performed twelve spectacles that took part in the competition. The shows were evaluated by a five-person jury including: Aneta Głuch (the chairperson), Piotr Cieplak, Łukasz Drewniak, Leszek Mądzik, and Andrzej Zarycki.

The Festival started with a spectacle of the Opole Puppet Theatre called *Nie płacz Anno [Don't cry Anna]*, based on the text by Július Meinholm and directed by a Slovakian artist, Marián Pecko. The heroine of the drama is Anna, an adult woman (acted by Mariola Ordak-Świątkiewicz) who feels bad as a wife and a mother and drowns her revolt in alcohol. Why does it happen? Is it an individual fate? Or is it rather a consequence of the role of a woman in society? The authors of the spectacle do not give a clear answer to this question, though the playbill reads: 'cultural determinants of the role of a woman (and a man) in society and related limitations constitute a significant part of the ideological message of the play'<sup>2</sup>.

The heroine recalls her childhood and early youth: her family home, her grandmother, her aunts and her sister. Her memories are a story of violence she has been subject to all her life. She had good relations only with her late sister. Even now Emma visits Anna (a beautiful visionary scene with the ghost of Emma rising above the stage was created by Eva Farkašová, the puppet and costume designer for the spectacle). Emma looks after Anna's daughter who is neglected by both her parents; thus violence gives rise to new violence.

The director combines the conventions of drama and puppet theatre. The title role is played by an actress functioning in a live setting, while her stage speech is a monologue addressed to the audience – especially in the initial part of the show. Anna's husband is also shown in a live setting (the final scene), and so is the director (it may be presumed that the action takes place in two dimensions: the protagonist is both an actress presenting the story of Anna, a confused housewife and a theatre actress). Characters from her past are mostly old women (apart from Emma who died young). They also used to 'break Anna in' and they still do since she is unable to get rid of them, though she is aware that they are dead. All these characters were shown through beautiful human-sized puppets created by the above mentioned Eva Farkašová. This combination of the puppet and the live setting is not only a formal device, but it also clears

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<sup>2</sup> Z. Bitka, *Why is Anna crying?*, The Opole Puppet Theatre, programme of the Twenty Fifth National Puppet Theatre Festival (Opole, 2011).

the way for various interpretations of the play and expands the area of the artistic expression. It is worth emphasising that the actors animating the puppets can all the time be seen 'pulling the strings'. Maybe it is not a coincidence that they are men? Moreover, in the scene where Anna is talking to her grandmother and aunts we can see on the side the actresses being the 'voices' of the characters represented by the puppets; they play the role of a chorus commenting on the events. Thus one character is created both by a puppet and a real person – yet the latter is 'behind the scene' – perhaps in the underworld? At the same time puppets on the stage are active bustling, cleaning, making coffee, and admonishing Anna.

*Nie płacz Anno* [*Don't cry Anna*] is a two-voice piece on violence. After the show a documentary *Nie trzeba godzić się na przemoc!* [*You don't have to agree to violence!*] was presented. The film was made by Sylwia Nieckarz from TVP Opole TV channel. It makes a whole with the spectacle – a two-voice piece on violence. The director of the film says:

While making a film I was looking for an answer to the question: what psychological mechanisms govern the people that have been subject to violence for so long that they are unable to defy it. They accept toxic relationships. Why do victims agree to being treated badly and perpetrators use violence? Why don't people react when they can see disturbing events?<sup>3</sup>

During the second day of the festival the tree following plays were shown: *The Case of the Donkey's Shadow* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt directed by Janusz Ryl-Krystianowski and performed by the Animation Theatre of Poznań; *Historia występnej wyobraźni* [*The story of a wicked imagination*] directed by Konrad Dworakowski, based on two works by Brunon Schulz, namely *The Cinnamon Shops* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* and created at the Puppet and Actor's Pinocchio Theatre in Łódź; *Raz, dwa trzy Baba Jaga patrzy* [*One, two, three, the witch sees thee*] directed by Anna Iwanowa-Braszinska and performed by the Białystok Puppet Theatre.

The play *The Case of the Donkey's Shadow* tells the story of a man who has rented a donkey to get to a neighbouring town on its back. He stopped to take a rest halfway through his journey. Then the owner of the donkey, who – as could be guessed – had followed the man through his journey, demanded additional fee for using the animal's shadow. The traveller regarded it absurd and refused to pay any additional fee. This conflict marks the beginning of a whole sequence of absurd events in which the inhabitants of the town become embroiled as the case is sent to the court.

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<sup>3</sup> A Comment by Sylwia Nieckarz, Playbill to a play called *Don't cry Anna* directed by Marián Pecko (Opole, 2011).

The spectacle was created in the convention of a political cabaret. The authors emphasize the universalism of the theme, and not its temporariness. The increasing pace of the events, situational humour and expressive portraying of the stage characters constitute qualities of this spectacle addressed to viewers of all ages. From the formal point of view a live setting coexists here with a puppet theatre.

The director of *Historia występnej wyobraźni* [*The story of a wicked imagination*] drew his inspiration from Brunon Schulz's short stories from *The Cinnamon Shops* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*. It is a spectacle addressed to older youth and adults. On the stage there are five actors playing the roles of a father (Mariusz Olbiński), a son (Piotr Szejn), Adela (Urszula Binkowska), Polda (Ewa Wróblewska), and Bianka (Żaneta Małkowska). We are transferred into the mysterious world of the childhood of the son who – thanks to the power of his memory – recalls long-past events that we can now see on the stage. The show is divided into two parts: in the first one we are at the family home of the protagonist (being a narrator at the same time) since his memories make themselves present on the stage in front of the viewers' eyes; in the other one we are at the sanatorium where he has come to visit his father.

As the seats are placed on the stage the audience right away find themselves in the constructed world, i.e. a tailor's workshop full of lumber such as dummies, props, clothes etc. At the front of the stage a motionless character is sitting on a chair wearing a mask. The video camera revives paper masks of the actors with men's features – at first a young one, then an old one. Women are hanging white, blank sheets of paper on the clotheslines. Thanks to the video camera the sheets will soon turn into pages filled with black letters of a book – a figure of a man is coming to life on the paper, it is evidently the narrator's father, Jacob. Now consecutive scenes are showing his transformation: from a person being a reader and a commentator of the holy book, through an old man fighting his dementia, to a phase of a worm – a cockroach (a wonderful combination of a live setting, masks, puppets and film sequences). At first the father is a paragon for the son, and with time he becomes at the same time saintly and imperfect in a humane way, succumbing to various weaknesses such as Adela or his love for birds that with time will turn into an obsession. This whole world is revived by the power of 'a wicked imagination'. The display of its constructs on the stage is possible thanks to a combination of puppet theatre conventions.

Subsequently we are moved to a sanatorium where the son (now an adult) is coming to meet with his father. It is possible thanks to a mysterious clock

that makes his father still alive, though in the real world he has died. In the spectacle the death of the father is the symbol of the death of God.

The show is not divided into scenes, and actors are present on the stage all the time. Moving images are unfolding one by one before the viewer's eyes like in a film or in memories. It is a very painterly spectacle with words changing into pictures. The hues of grey, black and white are dominant colours. The combination of conventions (puppet theatre, live setting, film sequences) add painterly charm to the show, while at the same time making possible different levels of interpretation of the constructed world. The voices of the actors performing on the stage interweave with audio recordings – as if the voices of those alive overlap with the ones from the underworld. In reality the stage and the seats are located so close that it is possible for the audience to physically feel the presence of the actors, while the action takes place in a completely different, distant world. The plot of the spectacle consists of two parts: in the first one we have fragmentary memories from the childhood, and then we move to the world of imagination full of non-existent events building over and complementing the real ones.

*Historia występnej wyobraźni* [*The story of a wicked imagination*] was awarded the first prize of the Twenty Fifth National Puppet Theatre Festival in Opole. Konrad Dworakowski was also awarded the prize for directing – along with Agata Kucińska – and another one for set designing.

*Raz, dwa trzy Baba Jaga patrzy* [*One, two, three, the witch sees thee*] is a story about ghosts whom a young viewer should learn to fight. The show was the first of spectacles addressed to children – traditional audience of the puppet theatre. The heroine of the play, Malwinka, promises her parents to take care of her little brother, but unfortunately she doesn't keep her word and has to set out on an adventurous journey to find him. Magdalena Mioduszevska received an honourable mention award for the role of Papuga (Parrot).

On the third day of the Festival three more spectacles taking part in the competition were performed. Baj Theatre from Warsaw was the first to perform their show *Garmann's World*. The script was based on the books by a Norwegian graphic artist and writer, Stian Hole: *Garmann's Summer*, *Garmann's Street* and *Garmann's Secret*. The show was directed by Ewa Piotrowska. Addressed to children the spectacle presents the world as seen from the perspective of the eponymous hero - Garmann (played by Kamil Król). The play is about a boy we meet when he is going to school for the first time. *Garmann's World* is a story about growing up, elapsing and death. We observe Garmann's relations with parents, peers – with his school friend Roy, friends Hanne and Johanne – as well as with older people: aunts and Mr Stamp. By asking

his aunts some questions, Garmann finds out about the existence of an old age and death. The friendship between the boy and Mr Stamp is of great importance as the man talks to him about life, elapsing and death. Eventually Mr. Stamp also dies. In the last scene we can see Garmann with Johanne, the boy's first love. Therefore fictional timelines stretch from one turning point in the boy's life (the end of early childhood and starting school) to another (growing up and first, youthful love). Kamil Król was awarded an honourable mention award for the role of Garmann.

*Żywoty świętych osiedlowych [Lives of the Saints from the Estate]* is a story about a housing estate that came into being outside the divine plan of creation. The dwellers of this strange place gather on the roof of a concrete block of flats (the estate was created from a concrete mixer) to tell about themselves demanding their own legend. 'Man, you're nobody if you have not reflected yourself in beautiful words first' – this is the motto of the play directed by Agnieszka Kucińska from Wrocław on the basis of a novel by Lidia Amejko. Agnieszka Kucińska is the author of the script, the director, the set designer, the actress and the puppet master at the same time. She tells the story of four characters: an old man – Egon, a prostitute – Apolonia, a little girl – Angelika who is a victim of violence; and a volunteer – Kunerta who takes care of forgotten dreams. Kucińska was awarded the prize for directing – together with Konrad Dworakowski, while her one person Ad Spectatores Theatre received second prize for the show *Żywoty świętych osiedlowych [Lives of the Saints from the Estate]*.

Ad Spectatores Theatre presents one-person shows. There is only an actress and the puppets on the stage. The artist creates several characters giving every one of them a clear personality. The story about people 'from the block', people that are meaningless and often anonymous, is accompanied by live music by Sambor Dudziński.

The third day of the Opole Festival was finished by a performance of Lalka Theatre from Warsaw entitled *Janosik. Naprawdę prawdziwa historia [Janosik. The real true story]*. The show was directed by Łukasz Kos. As an attempt at a contemporary interpretation of the myth of Janosik who "took away from the rich and gave away to the poor" the spectacle is full of pop culture references to comic books and series. Hunter is the protagonist (who you can compare to characters from *Superman*, *Spiderman* and *Batman*; he is played by Mariusz Laskowski) who at first searches for Janosik upon an order by the burggrave and the priest, but finally joins him when he can see that the evil of this world is not always where you expect it to be. The performance was produced with a flourish, including the set design. On the stage

we can see human-sized puppets whose style refers to folk sculpture. The plane of moving wood statues coexists with the plane of actors, which seems to be a permanent feature of the puppet theatre in Poland. Mariusz Laskowski was awarded an actor prize for the role of Hunter and the show received a jury's honourable mention award.

On the fourth day of the Festival the following spectacles were performed: *Snow White* by the Opole Puppet Theatre, *Hansel and Gretel - the fairy tale known and rewritten* by Gulliver Theatre from Warsaw and *Turandot* by Grupa Coincidentia from Białystok and neTTheatre from Lublin.

*Snow White*, based on the play by Marta Guśniowska, was directed by a Czech artist Petr Nosálek who cooperates with the Opole Puppet Theatre on a permanent basis. The set was designed by a Slovak, Eva Farkašová. The work of Marta Guśniowska plays with the convention of a classical fairy tale by such authors as Perrault or the Brothers Grimm. The author's typical Polish verbal humour, references to the Polish borderline language with its characteristic singing manner were perfectly complemented by the stage creation of the Poland's southern neighbours. The spectacle was designed to be a play performed in the theatre, i.e. a place meant for plays. Here the theatre is a mirror for the games that the characters and the spectacle's creators play with each other – games concerning artistic conventions, art genres, the audience etc. In the Opole spectacle the fairy tale dwarves take up residence in the grand piano. Stylized and perfidious dialogues complete this show addressed both to children (over five year old) and adults. The role of Snow White was played by Anna Jarota who was awarded an actor prize for it.

The author of the play *Hansel and Gretel – the fairy tale known and rewritten* is Piotr Tomaszuk who composed it on the basis of the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm and a fable by Jan Brzechwa. Piotr Tomaszuk is also the director of the spectacle. The Festival's programme says that 'the story of Hansel and Gretel is well known, but the adaptation of the fairy tale is astonishing and is a big surprise not only for children but also for adults'<sup>4</sup>.

These words can be regarded as the motto of the spectacle whose action takes place in the theatre. Hence we have 'theatre in the theatre', i.e. playing with the convention. On the other hand things in this theatre do not necessarily

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<sup>4</sup> The Opole Puppet Theatre, programme of the Twenty Fifth National Puppet Theatre Festival (Opole, 2011).



follow the law (at the end of the show the police – or rather militia as the action moves to the times of Jan Brzechwa – steps in on the stage).

Bravura acting (Hansel is played by Georgi Angielow, a former actor of the Opole Puppet Theatre) as well as expressive and colourful set design are qualities of the play. The story of Hansel and Gretel itself is not only full of humour, but also perfidious and cruel. The wayward parents (the father is a drunkard, but the mother as well ‘likes to bend the elbow’ to put it mildly) want to get rid of their children so as to have ‘less mouths to feed’. It is worth emphasising that it was this way in the Brothers Grimm fairy tale, but not in the ones by Perrault or Disney. The harsh world of a folk fairy tale is cruel and perhaps not suitable to be a didactic story for a young viewer. (The interested can refer to a book by Bruno Bettelheim called *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*)<sup>5</sup>. Left to their own fate the children cope very well by adapting their behaviour to the circumstances – it is so both in the story by the Brothers Grimm and the one by Tomaszuk. The action of the spectacle unfolds swiftly and is full of unexpected turns. It is worth mentioning that a wolf from another (equally cruel) fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm – *Little Red Riding Hood* – also finds his way into the story. The show has aroused a lot of controversy among the festival’s audience.

Turandot is the name of a Chinese princess who puts to death her suitors by asking them three riddles – ‘three riddles – but one death’. Although as many as thirteen suitors have fallen victim to Turandot’s riddles, still new daredevils come to try their luck. Is the princess cruel? The story about her is accompanied by pictures of contemporary China using torture on a large scale. These are pictures copied from the Internet, which is announced by the director/narrator who refers the audience to the net. In the verbal layer of the spectacle three plot threads (told by Paweł Passini) interweave. The first thread is concerned with Puccini himself, the opera’s composer who is fighting death to finish his work in accordance with the motto that accompanies artists all the time, namely: *ars longa vita brevis*. Death accompanies him all the time on the stage after all; the artist struggles with it by fighting physically and verbally. He contrasts the words of death: ‘three riddles – but one death’ with ‘three riddles – but one life’. I believe that the character played by Paweł Chomczyk is death indeed. Death assumes the shape

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<sup>5</sup> B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

of a tall, brawny man wearing high-heeled shoes and ribbons. Death is a hermaphrodite.

Puccini (played by Mariusz Laskowski who received an actor award for the role) is interested only in the opera. Will he make it in time? The narrator tells a detailed story of Puccini undergoing an operation that caused a lot of suffering without saving his life. The opera was finished after his death by Franco Alfano. Another thread from Puccini's life is concerned with his wife and a young woman, Doria Manfredi. Doria was a servant at the Puccinis' house. Falsely accused by the artist's wife of an affair with her husband she committed suicide by taking poison. She has been dying in torment for three days. This story overlaps with an account of Puccini's death. Another thread transfers us to China where we follow the story of Turandot, Prince Calàf and a slave-girl, Liù who in order to save her beloved one exposes herself of her own will to torture and finally dies by suicide just like ill-fated Doria Manfredi. Puccini gets into this world to witness the suffering of the opera characters. Eventually the suffering – both the real one and the one created by an artistic vision – becomes a substance of art. The third thread deals with contemporary China. Next to the Internet pictures we can see twisted Barbie dolls hanging on clotheslines and 'executions' of vegetables and fruit suggesting Chinese torture.

The 'action' takes place on a small box theatre stage. At both sides there is a chorus who comments on the events just like in an ancient tragedy. However, in contrast to the theatre of ancient Greece, the chorus is mute and its members use the Polish sign language. The association with classical antiquity comes into mind also in this case. The research on the origin of the European theatre proves that a language of gestures used by mimes existed in ancient Greece. The language did not survive to our times unlike traditional Indian theatre for example. Directing *Iphigenia in Aulis* by Euripides at the Jan Kochanowski Theatre in Opole, Paweł Passini drew from this tradition by asking actors to complement the uttered words with expressive gesture of iconography from ancient Greece. Above the stage there are puppets hanging in several rows as well as a bandaged and injured dummy. Further back we can see a table on wheels and a grand piano keyboard. In the background there is a frame of a painting covered by a net curtain. When the net curtain opens we can see a figure of a woman (a puppet). On the stage there is also a microphone and a laptop showing pictures from contemporary China that are projected on a screen. The fragments of Puccini's opera

*Turandot* intermingle with hoarse and deformed voices – just like the characters on the stage.

The spectacle has a nonlinear structure. The scenes from the last moments of Puccini's life, fragments from *Turandot*, interweave with pictures of contemporary China. The mute chorus accompanying the spectacle testifies that it is impossible to describe human suffering with words.

On the last day of the Festival two spectacles were shown, namely: *Gulliver's Travels* by Banialuka Theatre from Bielsko-Biała directed by Marián Pecko and *Meet at the Ark at Eight* by the Olsztyn Puppet Theatre, also directed by Marián Pecko.

*Gulliver's Travels* is a theatre adaptation of a novel by Jonathan Swift. Addressed to children the spectacle tells about the adventures of Gulliver in the country of Lilliput (how to be big) and Brobdingnag (how to be small). The puppets and costumes were designed by Eva Farkašová. The story of Gulliver was told using a variety of puppet techniques. The land of Lilliput is inhabited by hand puppets while the land of giants by human-sized puppets. Every land is different and Gulliver finds out that the wheel of fortune can be reversed as well as that a lot depends on him – especially when he becomes big. Both fairy lands share the world of people played by actors in a live setting.

*Meet at the Ark at Eight* based on a book by Ulrich Hub is a humorous and moving story about a friendship of three penguins living in the Arctic. One day there comes a dove – divine messenger with news about the upcoming flood. Dissatisfied with his creation God decided to destroy the world in order to build a better one. With the view of achieving it He instructed his faithful servant Noah to build an arc that will carry two representatives of every species. However there are three penguins. Here two of them face a dilemma whether to fulfil the will of God unconditionally or save a friend. They chose the second option, though they had previously quarrelled with their friend over whether God exists at all. The universal bible story invites questions concerning the existence of God that cannot be seen or the purpose of believing in God's mercy when confronted with calamities that hit the world. The spectacle was created by Slovaks: Marián Pecko, Eva Farkašová and Robert Mankovecký (music). The puppets and the set design are completely different from those elaborated by Farkašová for the two spectacles described above. Both elements are very traditional. On the stage we can see a box with tiny puppets moving inside. It differs from the traditional puppet theatre only by the fact that the puppets are animated by actors that are not hidden behind the screen but can be seen on the stage during the whole spectacle. Every character has two images: a puppet and a live person. It is a pity that such a beautiful and wise

performance was not awarded any prizes but for the following actors: Anna Kukułowicz, Honorata Mierzejewska-Mikosza, Mateusz Mikosza, Tomasz Czaplarski and Monika Gryc.

The Festival also hosted a variety of performances not taking part in the competition, including two spectacles by Leszek Mądzik: *The Passage [Przejście]* and *Ardente*. *The Passage [Przejście]* tells about the human body, its flowering and its passing. *Ardente* is a story about impossible love between two people. It was heard by Mądzik, the founder of the Visual Theatre, in Portugal. He says in the playbill:

I reached Alkobaca. There in the Cistercian monastery I noticed two tombs. White stone connected them by mysterious fetters. The catafalques were crowned like beds with two bodies with feet close to each other so that they were able to start embracing immediately after their resurrection. [...] I crushed those motionless, dreamlike forms with my imagination<sup>6</sup>.

During the performance we are taken to the monastery in Alkobaca where we witness the revival of stone figures standing motionlessly in the church recesses. Before our eyes the story of love between beautiful Inês and Portuguese heir to the throne, Pedro, is repeated. Watching this beautiful, monumental spectacle I recalled the words of Maeterlinck who wrote one hundred years ago that a masterpiece is a symbol, and a symbol cannot tolerate the presence of a man. That is why he turned to the puppet theatre. He wrote:

Il faudrait peut-être écarter entièrement l'être vivant de la scène. Il n'est pas dit qu'on ne retournerait pas ainsi vers un art de siècles très anciens, dont les masques des tragiques grecs portent peut-être les dernières traces. Sera-ce un jour l'emploi de la sculpture, au sujet de laquelle on commence à se poser d'assez étranges questions? L'être humain sera-t-il remplacé par une ombre, un reflet, une projection de formes symboliques ou une être qui aurait les allures de la vie sans avoir la vie? Je ne sais; mais l'absence de l'homme me semble indispensable. (...) Il est difficile de prévoir par quel ensemble d'êtres privés de vie il faudrait remplacer l'homme sur la scène, mais il semble que les étranges impressions éprouvées dans les galeries de figures de cire, par exemple, auraient pu nous mettre, depuis longtemps, sur les traces d'un art mort ou nouveau<sup>7</sup>.

Fortunately a man was not replaced by a sculpture in theatre, while the opposite happened in the puppet theatre: a man entered the stage becoming

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<sup>6</sup> A Comment by Leszek Mądzik, The Opole Puppet Theatre, programme of the Twenty Fifth National Puppet Theatre Festival (Opole, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> M. Maeterlinck, 'Menus propos – le théâtre', *La Jeune Belgique*, Vol. 9 (Brussels, 1890), p.335.

a partner for a puppet or its *alter ego*. However observing the richness and diversity of graphic forms present in the contemporary puppet theatre one has to notice that Maeterlinck was right about the future.

*Translated by Aleksandra Siemianowska*

CZŁOWIEK I LALKA.  
RZECZ O 25 OGÓLNOPOLSKIM FESTIWALU TEATRÓW LALEK  
W OPOLU

Streszczenie

W pierwszej części niniejszego artykułu Krystyna Nowak – Wolna przedstawia historię Ogólnopolskiego Festiwalu Teatrów Lalek w Opolu, zaś w drugiej omawia spektakle, które zostały wystawione podczas dwudziestej piątej jego edycji. Opolski Festiwal jest panoramą polskiego teatru lalek, pokazuje jego osiągnięcia, jak również główne tendencje artystyczne – od tradycyjnego teatru dla dzieci po poszukiwania nowych środków wyrazu. I tak w spektaklu *Nie płacz Anno* tytułowa bohaterka, dorosła kobieta, źle się czuje w roli żony i matki topiąc swój bunt w alkoholu. Dlaczego tak się dzieje? Czy jest to jej los jednostkowy? Czy wynika raczej z roli kobiety w społeczeństwie? Twórcy spektaklu (reż. Marián Pecko) nie dają jednoznacznej odpowiedzi na to pytanie. Walorem spektaklu jest połączenie lalki i żywego planu, które umożliwia różne interpretacje dramatu, jak również poszerza pole artystycznej ekspresji. W Historii występnej wyobraźni inspiracją dla reżysera, Konrada Dworakowskiego, stały się opowiadania Brunona Schulza pochodzące ze Sklepów cynamonowych oraz Sanatorium pod klepsydrą. Fabuła sztuki składa się z dwóch części: w pierwszej mamy urywkowe wspomnienia z dzieciństwa, następnie przenosimy się w świat wyobraźni wypełniony nigdy nie zaistniałymi wydarzeniami, nadbudowującymi się nad tymi pierwszymi i uzupełniającymi je. Gra konwencjami: teatru lalek, żywego planu oraz wstawkami filmowymi – nadaje sztuce malarską urodę, jednocześnie umożliwiając różne poziomy interpretacji świata przedstawionego. *Turandot* w wykonaniu Grupy Coincidentia w Białymstoku i neTTheatre w Lublinie w reżyserii Pawła Passiniego, który jest także autorem scenariusza/libretta oraz muzyki do tego spektaklu, to opowieść o miłości, śmierci, cierpieniu i okrucieństwie. Spektakl ma strukturę nielinearną rodem z polskiego teatru alternatywnego. Sceny z ostatnich chwil życia Giacomo Pucciniego, obrazy z opery *Turandot*, przeplatają się z obrazami Chin emitowanymi przy pomocy komputera. Towarzyszący spektaklowi niemy chór posługujący się językiem migowym zaświadcza, że ludzkie cierpienie jest niemożliwe do wypowiedzenia przy pomocy słów. Z kolei przedstawienie *Na arce* o ósmej w reżyserii Mariána Peckī to pełna humoru i jednocześnie wzruszająca opowieść o przyjaźni trzech pingwinów mieszkających w Arktyce. Autorzy spektaklu posłużyli się tu tradycyjną

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techniką teatru lalek. We współczesnym teatrze lalek w Polsce można zauważyć dwie tendencje. Pierwsza z nich to odejście od tradycyjnych technik, w których lalka występowała na pierwszym planie, zaś człowiek ukryty był za parawanem będąc raczej animatorem niż aktorem. Obecnie daje się zauważyć obecność człowieka/aktora na scenie, a lalki są albo dodatkiem do żywego planu, albo oba wymiary współistnieją na scenie. Druga tendencja to poszerzenie grona odbiorców. Teatr lalek nie jest już adresowany jedynie do dziecięcej widowni; wiele przedstawień jego twórcy kierują do osób dorosłych.