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DÉBALLAGE

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BOGDAN CIOSEK



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Reżyseria i scenografia
JÓZEF SZAJNA

OBSADA:

ANIMATOR – BŁAZEN	— PAWEŁ WIŚNIEWSKI
POETA	— KAZIMIERZ MOTYLEWSKI
IDIOTKA – ŚLICZNOTKA	— BARBARA NAPIERAJ
KULAS	— JACEK KUZDAK
ANIOŁ ZE ZŁAMANYM SKRZYDŁEM	— GRAŻYNA NESTOROWICZ
ONA Z NITKĄ CZERWONĄ	— IRENA ADAMIAK

Perkusja
PIOTR SOWIŃSKI

Inspicjent-sufler
BOGDAN RZUCIDŁO

21.

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Wybory i odniesienia

Urodziłem się w 1922 r. w Rzeszowie. W latach gimnazjalnych cechowała mnie fantazja, ale uczniem byłem przeciętnym. Fascynował mnie sport, lubiłem rysować. W 1938 roku zdobyłem mistrzostwo Polski w skokach z trampoliny i wicemistrzostwo w pływaniu, w ogólnopolskim konkursie szkół średnich. Były to moje młodzieńcze sukcesy.

Druga wojna światowa rozbiła rodzinny dom, złamała dotychczasowe pojęcia o szczęściu i życiu. Przedwcześnie stałem się żołnierzem, mając 17 lat sam za siebie byłem już odpowiedzialny. Sport zamieniłem na działalność konspiracyjną w Związku Walki Zbrojnej, a zamiłowanie do rysowania w akcje sabotażowe. Poszukiwany przez Gestapo i aresztowany podczas ucieczki na Węgry stanąłem wraz z przyjacielem przed nowym światem, który nosił tytuł «Arbeit macht Frei».

Tutaj wszystko staje się metafizyką — i przemoc, i okrucieństwo, i bohaterstwo, i poświęcenie. Nie liczą się podziały na rasy, klasy, przekonania polityczne, podziały religijne. Stanowimy archipelag psychik ludzkich-nieludzkich, kiedy człowiek staje się numerem. Obóz jest także szansą samobójcy. Próbę ucieczki z obozu przypłacam wraz z dwoma kolegami wyrokiem śmierci. Potem już tylko bunkier na bloku śmierci, pomieszczenie bez wyjścia, bez okna, powietrza i nadziei. To świat wielkości 90 × 90 cm, na wysokość głowy. W steh-celi panuje wieczna ciemność, nie liczą się dni ani noce — to tak jakby zatrzymał się czas. Oczekiwanie na rozstrzelanie zbliża do spraw ostatecznych, do Boga. Jestem bliski rezygnacji, chcę umrzeć. Los chce inaczej. Jedyna amnestia w 1943 r. spowodowana zmianą komendanta (Hoess-Liebehenschel), skazuje mnie ponownie na życie w obozie i na karę dożywocia w karnej kompanii. A jednak sądzony mi był pobyt po raz drugi na Bloku Śmierci. Wyszędłem. Opatrzność? Po latach piszę w »Cervantesie«, przedstawieniu zrealizowanym w 1976 r. w Teatrze Studio: »Jestem z pętle odcięty — śmierć jest we mnie, a ja spać z nią muszę«. Eschatologia? przeszłość i odniesienia? Pamięć jest rzeczą ludzką. Czy można być jednostką — społeczeństwem bez

zobowiązań? Przemijanie w czasie, destrukcja, jest nie tylko pejzażem obozu, ale zagrożenia w ogóle. Nie dzielę czasu na wczoraj i jutro. Do przeszłości odwołuję się jak do doświadczenia. Stan głodu pamiętam jako transformację osobowości bliską nirwanie, jej rezygnacji i odczuciom, bez bólu i strachu. Lata wojny i okupacji stały się moim wielkim uniwersytetem, czasem próby charakteru i ludzkich przyjaźni. Pierwsze dni wolności, to próżnia bez radości — ale to czas powstawania z kolan. Nikomu niepotrzebny, pełen kompleksów, szukam szansy w nauce. Wstydzę się swego »garbu« i nie przyznaję do przeżyć. Rozpaczam studia w Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Krakowie w 1947 roku. Otwiera się przede mną świat wyobraźni, fascynacji pozarealnej w malarstwie i scenografii. Mało chcę, a mam tak wiele. »Zrzucam skorupę czasu, bo ja żyję« — mówię słowami Dantego w 1974 roku. Na rozbiegu w nowe życie unieruchamia mnie choroba. Mimo to nie przerywam studiów i dużo czytam: Nietzsche, Tatarkiewicz, Balzak, Witkacy, Mann. Zagłębiając się w teorię sztuki Kleego. Przywileje młodości omijają mnie, a zbliżam się do trzydziestki. W 1952 i 1953 uzyskuje dyplomy z wyróżnieniem. To daje mi otuchy. Zakładam własny dom. Samodzielną pracę rozpoczynam w teatrze. Nie tracę czasu na socrealizm, startuję z odwilżą w 1956 roku i wprowadzam abstrakcję na scenę. W pierwszym socjalistycznym mieście na świecie, w Nowej Hucie, pojawia się wykpiwany formalista. Szajнизм i szmacizm to jedno — głosi krytyka »Trybuny Ludu«. To także dodaje mi sił. Zamieniam dekorację teatralną na kompozycję przestrzeni, otoczenie aktora — w swoiste environment. Zawieszane formy, struktury, ich ruch, przeprute horyzonty, pełne tajemniczych otworów, i zasłony-kurtyny, ogarniają całą salę. »Imiona władzy« Broszkiewicza, »Oresteja« Ajschylosa, »Myszy i ludzie« Steinbecka, »Antygona« Sofoklesa wyrażają się strukturalizmem form, sztuką informel. W 1957 roku otrzymuję prestiżową Nagrodę Krytyki »Przeglądu Kulturalnego« — obok S. Mrożka i Z. Mycielskiego — za współtworzenie kształtu nowatorskiego Teatru Ludowego w Nowej Hucie. Niemal wszystkie projekty realizuję w skali 1:1. Powroty ze stypendiów w Paryżu w 1957 i 1958 r., mimo fascynacji sztuką abstrakcyjną Malewicza, Kandinsky'ego, Braque'a czy Picassa nie rewolucjonizują moich własnych poszukiwań artystycznych. Omijam konstruktywizm, w tym teorie Craiga i Meyerholda, zapoznając się z ruchem Dada i Bauhausu. W roku 1961 powstaje drabina do nieba, która przebija horyzont

w »Dziadach« Mickiewicza (reż. K. Skuszanka i J. Krasowski). Zastygłe w ruchu formy przestrzenne i zbliżone do tableaux objets obrazy z cyklu »Dramaty«, które powstają w latach 1957—64, cechuje montaż różnorodnych materiałów, darte płótna i wypalane tła. Na kartonach powstają »Wariacje teatralne«, zbliżone do techniki collage'u, na polu surrealne. Są to moje koszmary? postacie-figury i »plenery wyobraźni« do nie napisanych utworów scenicznych? Zaklęta magia teatru autorskiego? Pełna jest magicznych, nadrealnych przedmiotów scena z rozhuśtaną lampą w przedstawieniu »Wariat i zakonnica« Witkacego z 1959 r. (reż. W. Laskowska). Rozhuśtane, rozkiełznane, apokaliptyczne konie dopowiadają symultanicznie scenę dżigitówki w »Radości z odzyskanego śmietnika« wg Kadena-Bandrowskiego (adapt. i reż. J. Krasowski) w r. 1960. Inny rodzaj ekspresji uzyskuję przez lśniące formy pogiętych blach, spadających w finale »Nie-boskiej komedii« Z. Krasieńskiego (reż. B. Korzeniewski) w 1959 r. Wprowadzam na teren gry i na sale wystawowe stare, zardzewiałe taczki, połamane wanny, rury z piecyka, poszarpane worki zamiast kostiumów, drewniane buciory, jak m.in. w »Akropolis« w 1962 r. (współrealizacja z J. Grotowskim). Następnie w latach 1963—1966) w Teatrze Ludowym w Nowej Hucie pojawiają się przedstawienia autorskie: »Rewizor« Gogola, a w nim stare »sitzbady« na kółkach, podwieszane stare sienniki, jako mieszkania prowincjonalnych dygnitarzy, »Puste pole« wg T. Hołuja z bandażowaną krową-karmicielką i utopijny »Zamek« Kafki, rozsypujący się w finale. »Śmierć na gruszy« W. Wandurskiego ze sceną wojny, wyrażoną rozbieganiem metalowych kół w pędzie samozniszczenia w światłach krzyżujących się reflektorów. Wiele z tych przedstawień uznano za prowokację polityczną i humbug, dlatego musiałem złożyć rezygnację z prowadzenia teatru w r. 1966. Jednak nie skapitulowałem. Dopiero, kiedy w 1969 r. zdjęto mi będącą w próbach sztukę H. Kajzara w Starym Teatrze w Krakowie, opuściłem to miasto. W plastyce z lat 1966—1968 w cyklu obrazów »Epitafia i Apoteozy« reszty przedmiotu zamieniam w jego pierwotność i używam jako budulec. Ten z kolei przekształcam w obiekty o innej formie i znaczeniu. »Deballage«, performance zrealizowany w Nicei w 1967 wraz z aktorami »Vagants«, jest metaforycznym pokazem rozpadu konstrukcji i formy. Staje się on ważnym przykładem mojej twórczości w 1969 r. W holdzie zamordowanym przez hitlerowców artystom buduję kompozycję przestrzenną na 140 metrach kwad-

ratowych pod tytułem »Reminiscencje«, prezentowaną z okazji jubileuszu 150-lecia Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Krakowie w 1969 r., a potem na Biennale Sztuki w Wenecji w 1970 r. »Reminiscencje«, to nie tylko rzecz o pamięci, ale ostrzeżenie przed zagładą i dziś możliwą. To świat wielkiej ciszy, który obrazuje nagle przerwane życie. To atelier bez ludzi, spektakl milczenia, składający się z lasu starych sztalug, sterczących niby gilotyny, krzyże z nadpalonych sylwet i niedorzeźbionych konstrukcji, z zakurzonych fotografii, ze spisu obozowych kartotek. Bez patosu poświęcam tę kompozycję wszystkim ofiarom faszyzmu i totalizmu. Dla »Życia Literackiego« piszę artykuł w 1962 r. »O nowej funkcji scenografii«. Sięgam w nim pojęć teatru i sztuki, staram się scharakteryzować metodę mojej pracy i poszukiwań nowych środków ekspresji. Myśl tę rozwijam w Warszawie po objęciu dyrekcji Teatru Studio-Galerii w 1971 r., w którym zogniskowały się również pracownie-warsztaty dwuletniego, podyplomowego Studium Scenografii ASP, kształcące pod moim kierunkiem studentów polskich i zagranicznych. Zbiorowy akt twórczy i jego narracja plastyczna są rozwinięciem myśli o teatrze organicznym. Wizje poetyckie, obszary konkretne, łączą się tu w obszary zespolone. Słowo, obraz, dźwięk ukazuje proces powstawania i rozpadu form w ich przemienności. A więc życie, śmierć — i życie. Ożywają martwe przedmioty, zmieniają role. Aktor gra kukły, kukła staje się postacią tego teatru. Od prapremiery »Fausta« w Teatrze Polskim w 1971 r. (na kanwie Goethego) poprzez »Witkacego« (przedstawienie oparte o teksty St. I. Witkiewicza) w 1972 r., »Gulgutierzy« z 1973 r., »Repliki« w wersjach od I do VII, powstających w latach 1971—1986, »Dantego« z prapremierą na festiwalu we Florencji w 1974 r. i późniejszymi realizacjami w Dubrowniku i Essen, aż po »Cervantesa« z 1976 r. i »Majakowskiego« z 1978 r., powstaje cykl autorskich przedstawień — od scenariusza poczynając, na reżyserii i plastyce kończąc. Ideą tego teatru staje się egzystencjalny sens życia i uniwersalizm problematyki. Trudno nie dostrzec utożsamiania się autora z bohaterami scenariuszy. Trudno też nie dostrzec akcentów politycznych, jak prekursorska (1978 r.) wizja budowy i rozpadu komunizmu w »Majakowskim« (scena wznoszenia »pałacu komunizmu« z czterwonych krzesel i jego rozpad w finale spektaklu).

»Replika I«, zaaranżowana jako instalacja plastyczna dla Muzeum w Göteborgu w 1971 r. daje początek »Teatrowi paniki«. Wynurzają się z ziemi i tworzą martwy pej-

zaż kikuty manekinów, zdezelowane protezy, odpady naszej cywilizacji, jej resztki. W »Replike II« na festiwalu w Edynburgu w 1972 r. w Galerii Demarco, pojawia się już aktor-animator i akcja. Obok »ściany butów«, kompozycji »Uzurpator«, »Ołtarzyk«. »Partyzant«, »Matka«, »Dziecko«, »Ciężarna« i in. powstaje »Rzecz o agonii świata i naszym wielkim optymizmie« jak komentuję to w programie teatralnym przy okazji światowego festiwalu w Nancy w 1973 r. Prawdziwy dramat nie wymaga wielu słów i zbędnych gestów. Odniesienia — konteksty? Etyka a estetyka? Moralitet? »Replika« wędruje przez świat ze swoim posłaniem. W Meksyku jest przyjmowana jako misterium — obrzęd po trzęsieniu ziemi, w Niemczech jako sztuka rozrachunkowa, w Izraelu jako pamięć o zagładzie — holocauście. W 1986 jest nagrodzona na międzynarodowym festiwalu w Kanadzie nagrodą za spektakl najbardziej godny zapamiętania. »To nie tylko epopea czasu komór gazowych i Hiroshimy, to krzyk naszych czasów«. »przedstawienie, które powinien zobaczyć cały świat« — pisała prasa amerykańska.

Z końcem lat siedemdziesiątych pojawia się kompozycja »Sylwety i cienie« — statyczne environment, pokazywane na Biennale Sztuki w Saõ Paulo w 1979 r. Od 1978 r. do dziś powstają obrazy, w większości czarno-białe w cyklu »Mrowiska«. Linearny zapis ludzki jest ledwo rozpoznawalny — zostaje bezimiennym śladem zunifikowanej zbiorowości, bez bohatera, na swojej »drodze do nikąd«. Układy rozprzestrzeniają się, rozrastają, tworząc swoisty kosmos. Dezintegracja i chaos, rozpad struktur efemerycznych w ich krótkiej egzystencji — migracje, manifestacje, wiece, schyłek XX wieku. W grudniu 1981 r., po ogłoszeniu stanu wojennego, składam rezygnację z dyrektury Centrum Sztuki Studio, i na szereg lat wycofuję się z życia publicznego. W 1987 r. buduję kompozycję przestrzenną na 240 metrach kwadratowych pt. »Drang nach Osten — Drang nach Westen«, będącą rozrachunkiem z barbarzyństwem faszyzmu i totalizmu. Pokazana w Moskwie i w Warszawie w 1987 r., na Biennale w Saõ Paulo w 1989 r. i na Biennale w Wenecji w 1990 r. była politycznym wyzwaniem.

Życie zamieniam w obraz — sztuka jest uzmysłowieniem tego, co w nas samych wymaga wyzwolenia. Jest też samoobroną przed bezbronny poddaniem się.

Szajna

13 marca 1997 r. odbył się w Rzeszowie wielki jubileusz 75 lecia urodzin i 50 lecia pracy twórczej prof. Józefa Szajny — plastyka, scenografa, reżysera, teoretyka sztuki, nauczyciela, jednego z najważniejszych artystów polskich II poł. XX wieku znanego szeroko w świecie.

Uroczystość ta miała dla Rzeszowa szczególnie doniosłe znaczenie, albowiem wiązała się z przekazaniem przez Jubilata daru w postaci kolekcji jego artystycznego dorobku.

Uroczystości rocznicowe rozpoczęła konferencja naukowa w Rzeszowskiej Wyższej Szkole Pedagogicznej, w której wzięli udział m.in. wybitni znawcy twórczości Szajny. Rektor rzeszowskiej uczelni wręczył artyście list z życzeniami od Senatu, a rektor warszawskiej ASP statuetkę Pegaza — najwyższe jej honorowe wyróżnienie, co przez Szajnę zostało skomentowane: „Teraz mogę być artystą, Pegaz jest we mnie”. Sesja spotkała się z dużym zainteresowaniem licznie zgromadzonych studentów, do których zwrócił się Szajna dziękując słowami: „mnie ze starymi dużo dzieli, a z młodymi wiele łączy”.

Uroczysty wieczór w Teatrze zgromadził wielu znakomych ludzi kultury z całej Polski oraz przedstawicieli władz państwowych i samorządowych. Zostały odczytane licznie nadesłane listy gratulacyjne. Swoje odznaczenia przyznali artyście: Prezydent RP, Wojewoda Rzeszowski, Fundacja Kultury Polskiej oraz Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki. Od Prezydenta Rzeszowa Józef Szajna otrzymał tytuł Honorowego Obywatela.

W czasie trwania jubileuszowego święta na scenie teatru odbyła się prezentacja warsztatu zatytułowanego „DÉBALLAGE-ROZPAKOWANIE” przygotowanego przez Jubilata i grupę aktorów rzeszowskiego Teatru. Po okresie kolejnych prób warsztat ten przerodził się w autorskie przedstawienie Józefa Szajny.



„ROZPAKOWANIE” W NICEI W 1967 R.

„Przechodzący wieczorem 23 listopada do nicejskiego Klubu Wagantów zaproszeni goście spodziewali się «normalnego» wernisazu z lampką wina i rozmowami na temat sztuki. [...]

Wchodzą do pustej sali wytapetowanej białymi papierami. Nikt ich nie wita, dyrektor teatru i organizator wystawy siedzi na bufecie i czyta gazetę. Podchodzącym do niego gościom wręcza milcząc pisaki i dalej czyta. Powiedział tylko jedno: że wolno pisać i śpiewać, lecz nie wolno mówić. Na podłodze wyrysowano poślądki oznaczające miejsca do siedzenia. Niektórzy tam siadają, próbując coś zaśpiewać, napisać. Słychać stukot maszyny do pisania; dziewczyna siedząca w kącie wystukuje teksty Szajny na temat założeń tej wystawy.

W pewnym momencie rozlega się z głośników muzyka Bogusława Schäffera i wtedy dyrektor teatru odrzuca gazetę i zaczyna się zwyczajnie rozbierać. Pod ubraniem ma kostium Mefista z inscenizacji „Fausta” w operze krakowskiej. Aktorzy, za nimi inni, zaczynają robić to samo. Zaczynają się przebierać w przygotowane kostiumy z papieru, w torby, w peleryny. Dominuje kolor biały, aktorzy roznoszą usłudnie szminkę, proponując charakteryzację, rozdają wąsy i brody, dziewczyna pisząca na maszynie powtarza monotonnie: rozpakowanie, deballage...

Tak się odbyła część pierwsza — rozpakowanie widzów, w części drugiej miało się odbyć rozpakowanie eksponatów.

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Deballage, czyli rozpakowanie.

Kiedy i gdzie powstało pojęcie „deballage”?

Józef Szajna: Ten francuski termin został mi przypisany w 1967 roku w Nicei, z okazji zbiorowego happeningu, czy też może lepiej performace, zrealizowanego przez „Klub Wagantów” przy współpracy nicejskiego „Teatru 06”. Oni szczylicili się tym, że nawiązują do teatru Artauda, który był im bliski. Tak więc pomyślałem, że miast urządzić, czyli rozpakować wystawę, wszyscy wspólnie, łącznie z widownią i pod dyktando aktorów Klubu stworzymy coś w rodzaju spektaklu, który oni nazwali „Deballage”, czyli „Rozpakowanie”. Obecnie, gdy realizuję spektakl w Rzeszowie, słowo „deballage” ma u mnie znaczenie formalne. Ścisłe rzecz biorąc chodzi o rozkładowania emocji, rozpakowania czyli mówiąc inaczej otworzenie puszkii Pandory.

Co Pan, jako reżyser, autor scenariusza i scenograf rozpakowuje w tym konkretnym „Deballage” A.D. 1997?

J.S.: Jest dużo myśli do rozwikłania. Jedną rolę rozbijam na kilka postaci, które składają się, na jedność. Jest to przedstawienie autoironiczne. Jeżeli kiedyś pomawiano mnie, że jestem patetyczny, że moja sztuka rozciąga się od piekła Dantego, do nieba Cervantesa, to w tym wypadku chciałem zredukować to wszystko i mówić o rzeczach, może nawet przyziemnych. O troskach ludzkich, ale i o ich małości i śmieszności. Jeśli siedem grzechów zobaczymy w tym przedstawieniu, to można zauważyć, że są w nim podteksty moralizatorskie, aforyzmy i myśli

zebrane. Tą formą chciałem nawiązać kontakt z widzem poprzez zaatakowanie odbiorcy i zarazem wciągnięcie go we współuczestnictwo a zatem i współodpowiedzialność. Bo rzecz jest o nas samych, o naszym sposobie rozumowania, o śmiesznościach, głupocie, troskach i dramatach.

A przecież wszystko zaczyna się od żartu?

J.S.: Ale w trakcie akcji tężeje, by w finale nabrać wymiaru metaforycznego, treści poważnych, nawet historiozoficznych. Wszystko odbywa się w formie nie opartej na wykładzie, ale na redukcji pojęć estetycznych i artystycznych, do najprostszego języka wyrazu jakim jest gra aktorów. Cała reszta jest domysłem odbiorcy. To przedstawienie stawia widza przed pytaniami dnia dzisiejszego, na które on sam powinien sobie odpowiedzieć.

Ślady których poprzednich Pańskich przedstawień chciał Pan pozostawić w tym spektaklu?

J.S.: Odchodzę od „monumentalnych” spektakli sprzed lat jak: „Dante”, „Cervantes” czy „Majakowski”. Natomiast wracam do czegoś, co jest resztką, agonią, deprecjacją naszych czasów, często blahych myśli, bo już nie idei, czy myśli. One nam najbardziej umykają. Tak więc opanowały nas drobiazgi. Stąd też po „Replice” znalazły się „Ślady”, później ślady „Śladów”, które realizowałem w Chorzowie i w Turcji. Po „Śladach” były „Szczątki” w Portugalii. Teraz zostało jeszcze coś nierozpakowane. Jest to spektakl o degradacji rzeczy, które dokonują się w człowieku i poprzez jego pasywność. Spektakl o naszych małościach, braku miłości, o nienawiści.

W tej inscenizacji dają się zauważyć Pańskie wątki biograficzne, które brzmią często ironicznie. W jakim stopniu ten spektakl jest autoironiczną summa Pańskiego życiorysu artystycznego?

J.S.: Niczego w tym przedstawieniu nie kalkulowałem, gdyż nie miałem gotowego scenariusza. On był pisany na bieżąco, najpierw na okoliczność mojego jubileuszu. Ten spektakl — warsztat, to raczej prowokujące wydarzenie artystyczne, które miało rozbić jubileuszową sztafpę. Później, w miarę upływu czasu, rozbudowaliśmy to okolicznościowe zdarzenie do pełnego spektaklu. Nie do końca zdaję sobie sprawę, czy są w nim elementy biograficzne. Można też powiedzieć, że w tym spektaklu rozdałem siebie na kilka ról czy epizodów. I w tym sensie jest on autobiograficzny.

Na ile zatem Błazen czy Poeta są Pańskimi — alter-ego?

J.S.: Błazen jest śmieszny, bo jest także tragiczny. Jest osamotniony i szuka kontaktu z innym człowiekiem. Przywołuję tutaj postaci nieistniejące w rzeczywistości bo one są resztkami czegoś. Może i mnie samego?

Czy po tym spektaklu widzi Pan sens kolejnych rozpakowań?

J.S.: Zawsze robię ostatnie przedstawienie. I to tak trwa od lat i będzie tak dalej. Bo to jest niekończąca się sprawa spełnienia życia.

Rozmawiała
JOLANTA CIOSEK

Wypowiedzi artysty

Podstawowym pytaniem dzisiaj jest: po co tworzyć, a nie — jak.

*

Sztuka jest ryzykiem i zarazem odpowiedzialnością za sytuację, którą tworzymy.

*

Rzeczywistość artystyczna powinna obejmować szerszy czas niż nasze dzisiaj. Idzie bowiem o kondycję człowieka i kształtowanie jego wyobraźni, w czasach kiedy on sam siebie zaniedbał.

*

Żyjąc w chaosie świata, wydarzeń, postaw — próbuję poprzez sztukę uporządkować napływające przemyślenia, doznania.

*

Decyduje mój sposób myślenia, mój wybór. Mój świat, moja mentalność.

*

Teatr jest we mnie, we mnie rozgrywa się spektakl. I dlatego nie potrzebuję zinstytucjonalizowanego teatru.

*

Nie chodzi mi wcale o aplauz, a po prostu o reakcję.

Trzeba walczyć z pasywnością, obojętnością. Jestem przeciw głupocie, nieuctwu, generalnie przeciw brakowi wartości. Najpiękniejszą cechą człowieka jest jego dociekliwość, ciekawość poznania nowego o. Widzę to jako społeczny sens istnienia sztuki.

*

Człowiek nie jest wolny od lęku. Więc sięgam w swojej sztuce po symbole, po znaki przedmiotów, aby stała się ta sztuka uniwersalna, w każdym czasie i w każdej kulturze zrozumiana.

*

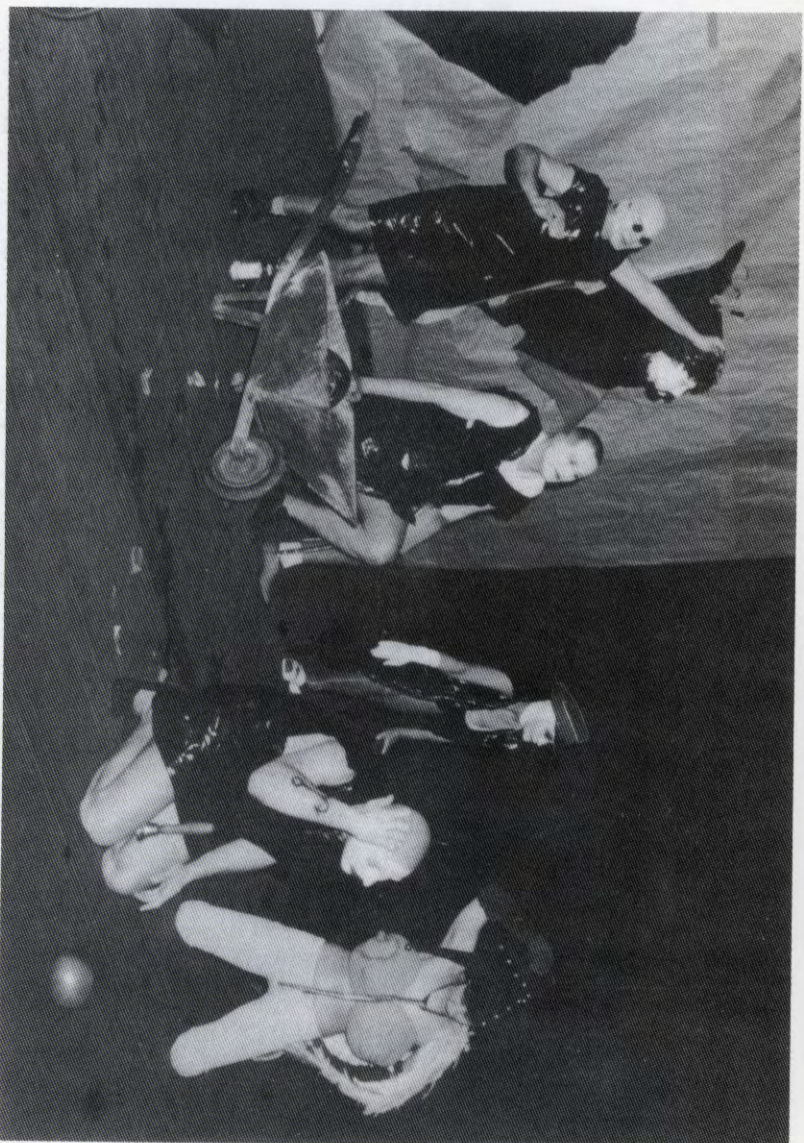
Sztuka zawsze jest naszą perspektywą. Żyjemy w epoce wyzwalającej dość powszechnie bezczelność i chamstwo. A sztuka uczy jednak pokory.

*

Sztuka jest dla mnie wielkością, patosem, metaforą, sięganiem gwiazd. Z drugiej jednak strony jest zejściem na ziemię do rzeczy najprostszych, aby pokazać coś wielkiego.



DÉBALLAGE
— próba



DÉBALLAGE
— scena ze
spektaklu

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ZBIGNIEW RYBKA

Koordynator pracy artystycznej
MONIKA KOZIEN

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THE WANDA SIEMASZKOWA DRAMATIC THEATRE



Déballage

- Desembalaje

INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL
CERVANTINO

Déballage - Unpacking
Déballage - Desembalaje

C A S T

Angel with a Broken Wing
Małgorzata Machowska

Beautiful Idiot
Barbara Napieraj

She with a Red Thread
Katarzyna Słomska

Poet - Stammerer
Kazimierz Motylewski

Cripple from a Military Store
Piotr Napieraj

Animator - Jester
Paweł Wiśniewski

Script and stage direction by
Józef Szajna

Apart from numerous guest stagings in the theatres in Poland, the play has been presented abroad:

Košice - Slovakia
(18 May 2000)

Lviv - the Ukraine
(22 October 2000)
- Grand Prix in the "Golden Lion"
Festival 2000

Kiev - the Ukraine
(25 October 2000)

Prešov - Slovakia
(24 November 2000)

R E P A R T O

El Ángel con ala rota
Małgorzata Machowska

La Tonta Bonita
Barbara Napieraj

Ella con hilo rojo
Katarzyna Słomska

El Poeta - Tartamudo
Kazimierz Motylewski

El Cojo del demovil
Piotr Napieraj

El Titiritero - Bufon
Paweł Wiśniewski

Dramaturgia y Dirección
Józef Szajna

P R E S E N T A C I O N E S

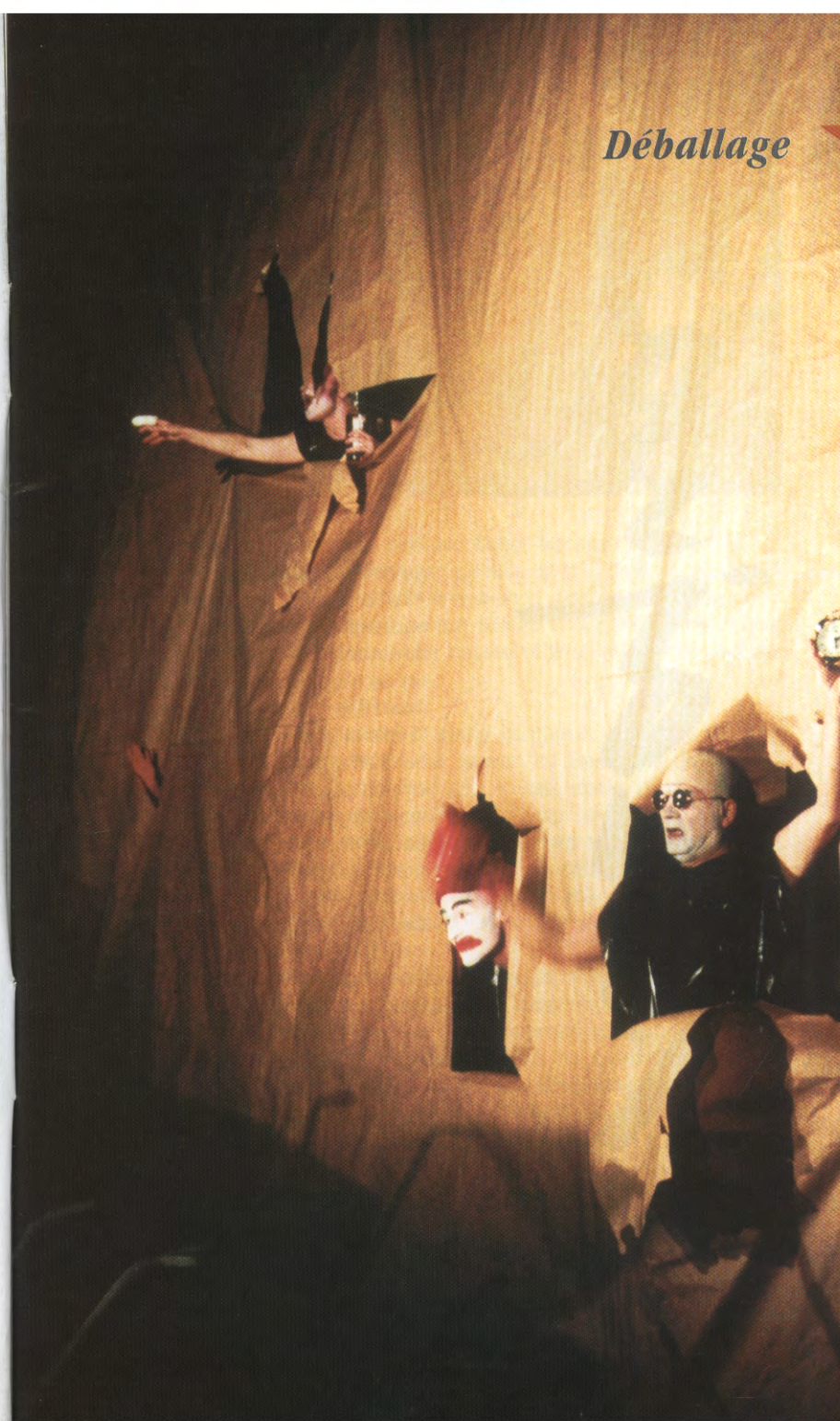
México D.F.
14 de octubre Teatro El Galeón
15 de octubre Teatro El Galeón

León
16 de octubre Teatro María Grever
17 de octubre Teatro María Grever

Guanajuato
18 de octubre Plaza San Roque
19 de octubre Plaza San Roque
20 de octubre Plaza San Roque
21 de octubre Plaza San Roque

En el marco de la XXIX edición del
Festival Internacional CERVANTINO.

Déballage



Artaud

Déballage - Unpacking

This French term appeared together with my name in Nice in 1967, at the time of the group happening or, to use a more adequate label, performance put up by the "Vagrants' Club", in cooperation with the municipal "Theatre 06". The organizers boasted especially of the links emphasized with Artaud, who was very close to them. So, it occurred to me that instead of putting up an exhibition, i.e. unpacking it, we all, together with the audiences, and according to the direction of the actors from the "Club", could create something by way of a performance, which was given the name of *Déballage, Unpacking*.

At present, while being involved in staging of a performance in Rzeszów, I treat the word *Déballage* merely as a formal term. To be more precise, what I mean is revealing the emotions, unpacking, so, in other words, opening Pandora's box.



Nothing in this staging was pre-calculated, because I had no script available. It was being written step by step at that time, in honour of my 75th birthday. This performance-workshop was originally designed as a provocative artistic event, which should break the cliché routine of the celebration. Later on, in the course of time, this event was expanded into a full play.

Some time ago I was accused of being pompous, of that my art ranged from the hell by Dante to the heaven by Cervantes. In this case, I intended to reduce all of it and to talk about plain, down-to-earth things, about people's trouble, but also about their little-mindedness and ridiculousness. (...) My characters tell bitter truths that we prefer to forget about, but I make the spectator involved in the performance and burden him with a share in the responsibility. This is a story about his own self, about the person stuck in the seat (...)

For many years now, I have been going away from the "monumental" plays staged years ago, such as *Dante, Cervantes, Mayakovsky*. I am coming back to something which is the remnant, agony, depreciation of our times, oftentimes just shallow thoughts, not even ideas. We are overwhelmed by trifles. Hence, *Replika* is followed by *The Remnants*, and then the remnants of *The Remnants* are staged in Chorzów and Turkey¹. *The Remnants* were followed by *The Remains* in Portugal. There is still something left unpacked now. (...)

This is a play about deterioration of things which happen in a human being and through his passivity. This play is a critical judgement of the time and the roles played, I address with it our little-mindedness, lack of love, and hatred. Everybody, including the actors, becomes a



hero-jester. And when everything is drawing to an end, I think that everything should be started from the very beginning. That is why I finish *Déballage* with *Alléluia* by Haendel (...)

I always prepare the last play. And it has continued like this for years, and is going to in the future as well. Because this is the never ending issue of life consumption².

Józef Szajna



1. *Dante* (1974), *Cervantes* (1976), *Mayakovsky* (1978), *The Replika* (1972) - the most famous plays designed by Józef Szajna, which were staged in the Studio Theatre in Warszawa, Poland. The plays were presented in a number of countries, where they gained utmost praises on the part of the critics, as well as the audiences. The stagings have won a number of awards in leading theatrical festivals.

2. Quotations from Józef Szajna come from the interview made by Jolanta Ciosek and from newspaper comments of the artist.

Déballage surprises the spectators who have been accustomed to Szajna's gloomy images of destruction and ominous warnings.

Against Despair

The stage shows an empty space. It is dark everywhere. ... A wheelbarrow, known from other Szajna's plays, may be discerned on the floor. In the left wing, a percussion is shining with silver. The interior of an artist's studio (a ladder, an easel-like object) becomes filled with light. In the background, it is closed with a lustreless transpa-

rent wall, which separates the real world from the realms of imagination. This wall, lit from the underneath like a screen, is most probably a painting. Some living creatures are getting out of it. They move restlessly, rustling with cardboard and knocking on the frame of the canvas. One by one, laboriously, six monstrous creatu-

res, wearing black plastic thrash bags (they used to wear the striped clothing of the Auschwitz prisoners, or paper clothing of those executed by a firing squad), are characterised by symbolic attributes: a blind ideologist (Poet - Kazimierz Motylewski), a cynical leader, continually changing the military cap he is wearing (Cripple - Piotr Napieraj), indolent good with a broken wing (Angel - Małgorzata Machowska), the female element incorporated in brainless sex (Beautiful Idiot - Barbara Napieraj), and wretched sacrifice (She with a Red Thread - Kata-

ryzna Słomska). Before our eyes, the shadows and spectres that oppress the artist's imagination are turning into harpies sucking out the living, or into horrors of history dragging their feet along the highroads of the contemporary worlds. They are led by the Animator wearing a jester's cap with little bells (Paweł Wiśniewski), a piteous scoffer at the matters both human and divine. He is going to lead *Déballage* with a skill equal to that with which he has been controlling human conduct, history, and the world for ages, sharing his power with the leader



and the ideologist; accompanied by carefree tunes or military marches, he will oppose the pompous symbolism of a Haendel's oratorio.

Déballage has got three meanings in French. The simplest is: unpacking, unloading (the first *Déballage* by Szajna, Niece 1967). Also, *déballage* may mean the goods unpacked and put up for sale. The third meaning is of a figurative character: the things disclosed and told in confidence; there is even a certain theatrical link: an itinerant stall (of a vendor or an artist).



All the aforesaid meanings are discernible in the present day *Déballage* by Józef Szajna. It was first staged during the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the artist, at the time of opening his gallery in his hometown Rzeszów (March 1997). Subsequently, the play was expanded (June 1997).



... The *Déballage* performance is concise and compact. It shows a legible structure and sharp borderlines between consecutive sections. The team of actors from the Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre in Rzeszów play precisely and expressively, with a complete understanding of the message included in the keywords, which open consecutive images, without any pretence to literary beauty though (which is characteristic of Szajna). A significant role is played by the discreet musical and acoustic layer, unfolding in tune with the actors' movement in space and their play in volatile lights and shadows.

This play includes the whole and most important of Szajna: the subject matter, the attitude to word and image, the character of acting, and the atmosphere on the stage. There are reminiscences of his previous theatrical productions, as well as some older challenges to theatrical artists.

The subject matter has been placed between the changing ideologies and inhumane experience of ideologists, the brutality of leaders, and the calls for morality and goodness fading away in the noise, between the mission of art and the distress of human existence. Upon a map of these universal meanings, Szajna has superimposed some references at specifically Polish experiences, evident in sharp, although not meddlesome, hints: enthusiastic

creation, deplorable combatants' attitudes, brave shortcuts, and satiation with *our little stability*. All these scenes, together with conspiracies at night and desperate attempts at a rescue, disappear in a blizzard, in disorderly marches to the right - to the left, in a hopeless struggle of people looking for happiness, love, understanding, abundance, and peace. When the phrase "scrambled eggs," shouted in chorus, begins to overwhelm everything,





we already know that this down-to-earth and embarrassingly uncomplicated statement is a diagnosis of the real state of the world and Polish political and social affairs.

... *Déballage* arranges and creates the fear of existence, known from previous Szajna's productions, the dismay at the prospects opening before the world, humanity, and art. Nevertheless, the artist's ironic conviction that the world, humanity, and art will manage to go on without his fears is also legible. Regardless of our attempts and observations,

the force of common existence is going to overcome the most atrocious ideas, and the drive for self-complacency and satiated existence is going to endure all the disasters, both natural and historical.

This equipoise and renunciation, this state of forbearing tolerance for human frailties, seem to be a novelty in Szajna's viewpoint, as they did not appear in his previous art. Also, the sensualist delight at the beauty of the earth used to be non-existent, as well as sentimental compassion for a human being, feelings of forbea-

rance or even understanding of his frailties, miseries, and naivety. And Szajna's convictions that there is no heaven on earth, and the sky above us is empty used to seem so rigid...

The majority of his performances, coloured in the shades of black, white, or blood, with the plot set in the cemeteries of nations and in the battlefields of ideas, depicted mainly the dangers of the contemporary world: uniformity of an individual, enslavement of whole societies, the destructive power of war and the nuclear calamities the world is imminently facing. Rubbles of values remaining after the ages of creation of culture and civilisation (*Acropolis*, *Replika*) were symbolised by the reality of a concentration camp (old rusty wheelbarrow, pipes of the incinerators, rugged bags, camp wooden shoes). Appearing in almost all the statements, they played the role of an ominous sign, a formidable warning. Nevertheless, in the finale of *Déballage*, the melody of the *Messiah* is holding a victory over the stage, and its tune envelopes the space of the house in sound. It may be suggestive of the belief that there is still Someone looking after us, of the conviction that Beauty is an objective entity, in which the meaning and significance of life is vested.

A distance from the matters universal and final has not eradicated the interest stimulated in

Szajna by the matters of theatre and art. Their attraction, weakness, and power are still lighting up the artist's emotions anew. Consequently, in the play there are so many references to his own productions and quotations from the masterpieces of the contemporary literary vanguard, especially theatrical, of which Szajna is a keen observer, a scornful diagnostician, and a merciless healer. *Déballage* makes a disquieting impression on the spectators accustomed to Szajna's gloomy images of destruction and ominous warnings. Without losing the acuteness of intellectual observation and satirical malice, the play makes one wonder through its previously unknown strain of sad understanding, calm persuasion, expressions of speechless compassion, and reflexive self-irony.

Bożena Frankowska
in *The Cultural News*
1997, issue No. 37





József Szajna

I have reached the sky with my hand...

- I have reached the sky with my hand...
- Can one write a book on Szajna?
- No. One cannot write a book on Szajna, exactly as one cannot write a book on a river. A book on a river shall never be able to grasp its essence. It may say about the pebbles, meanders, streams, about the sunrises and sunsets on its other bank, about the faces of the moon reflected in it at midnight. But when you want to catch it with your hands, there are only a few drops left, with which you will not extinguish your thirst. You immerse your hands once more and it turns out that it is not the same river any longer, not the same chill, not the same moisture, and not the same thirst as at the time of the first gulp.
- So why do you intend to write a book on Szajna?
- Due to exactly the same reasons as the reasons why books on rivers appear and why a child, on seeing a river, runs towards it and tries to learn its mysteries with its own hands.

This time that magic river of childhood made me follow the staff of the Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre, and master Szajna with his *Déballage* to the Ukraine. I like this play. The images appearing in it reveal human frailties, bad qualities, the wish to be more important than others - all expressed by visual interpretation of word. Paradoxically, in Szajna the stage director, in Szajna the stage designer, in Szajna the dramatist, as in hardly anyone else, literature originates through an image and a word or a shred of it in the head of the spectators. Once, Szajna said that "values borne by words did not prevent mass manslaughter, and that is why I have rejected theatre based on literature." In *Déballage*, words, or aphorisms in fact, constitute a unity with what is seen. Words are comments. The author undersigns the images with aphorisms. Actors present to us a full picture of what is happening on stage while acting. *We are taking a shortcut, aren't we... You won't fathom the ocean depths with your little finger...* This is not written in prose or verse, however in combination with the plot and acting it produces an impression of both poetry and prose. Is it possible that Szajna is not only a pioneer of theatre, but of literature as well? But of course. Szajna's theatre is built on the discrepancies which shake life and the world, the antinomies of at once creative and destructive forces. Such theatre may exist, gains meaning only in combination of an image and Szajna's literature.

In Lviv (former Lwów)¹ we hire a taxicab. It is towards the end of October, the weather is beautiful and sunny. There are still a few hours left before the evening performance in the Young Spectator Theatre. We quickly decide on what to see before that. The Łyczakowski Cemetery? Yes. Crosses on the tombs of the Eaglets of Lwów² look magnificent, shining softly with their newness in the autumn air. A representative of the Ukrainian government will declare later in the evening that the whole controversy and misunderstandings about this cemetery are caused by a group of fanatics comprising as few people as those few old women in front of an Orthodox temple in Przemysł, who protest against God in the name of God. The majority of Ukrainian people want this cemetery and want friendship with Poland.

- *Yes, definitely. Nothing has changed here. Even the walls have not been plastered. We get out of the car. The highest floor, the first window on the right - Szajna lived here in September 1939. He was seventeen. He set off for the war from Rzeszów, on September 6 - via Tyczyn, Dynów, Przemysł, and further to the east. On September 17³ he was standing in the window of this building. He reminisces: I could see a mounted Polish soldier descending down the street, a non-commissioned officer. He turned right. He turned back. He turned left galloping, than returned again. He stopped just below my windows, restless. He was thinking hard. He nestled his head against the horse's head, as if he was whispering something into its ear. He jumped down off the saddle. He smashed his rifle against a lantern post. The butt came off. He took of a pistol out of the holster. A bang. The horse fell to the ground dead. The soldier turned away and ran towards the Łyczaków Cemetery. For a while, the horse was still kicking its hooves in agony, as if it wanted to dig itself in the ground. A few minutes later, Red Army soldiers came running along the same street. Awesome. Wild. Badly dressed. Unstoppable. I already knew that was the end. For me, September 17 has been always associated with that scene, the tragic scene of hopelessness and despair of a soldier without an army, hunted down to a dead end, exactly as the whole Poland at that time. I decided to escape in the opposite direction, to Rzeszów. I escaped towards those, from whom I had been running away just a short while before. It was not the question of which evil was better. To be with the family - it is an impulse of any person in danger. And my family, father, and siblings remained in Rzeszów.*

400 seat house of the Young Spectator Theatre is filled to capacity. Various people approach Szajna, want to greet him, exchange a few words, remind themselves to him. The audiences are looking out for him. I am standing next to the Professor, trying to do some interpreting from time to time. A ring. First, second, another. We had seats



booked in the first rows. Szajna refuses to go there. He makes for the other end of the audience room. *I want to be alone and at the back. My stage starts not with the footlights, but with the last rows of the house. I have got to see everything. The spectators' reactions are as important to me, as the acting.* It was only later that I came to understand why. This performance is being created all the time. Scenes are added, episodes and actors' gestures are changed. Szajna adds things to the painting, glues them in, so that the image and the audiences may be "unpacked." The *Déballage* in Lviv is different from the one I saw in Rzeszów a year before. This is what Szajna is like, each of his performances is different, each rehearsal brings in something new - in Lviv he added a scene with telephones, expressive of a life in chaos, feeling lost and stupefied... *How to do nothing but earn much...*

He is excited. The performance begins. A vast plane of the curtain made of grey wrapping paper. The curtain placed towards the background of the stage, a washbasin and wheelbarrow in front of it... and all of the sudden, in one place of this cocoon-grey plane... a finger.

The audiences reacts spontaneously - frequent clapping, laughter, silence at the moments designed by the director. It means that everything is getting in, and the difficult, hint-strewn text is understood. This is the case during two performances. A success - Grand Prix in the *Golden Lion* theatrical festival in Lviv.

In the evening, at the meeting with the festival audiences, he said: *... I have gone through all the stages of life. From the very bottom, where I was so far away, that I reached the sky with my hand... I needed little, but was always given more, I rejected trends in total, as if it had occurred to me that one could go beyond the historical conventions of art, or even beyond the art of the 20th century.*

The meeting is a roaring success. Wise questions of young people of the Ukrainian and Russian theatre. You can see the beaming eyes and stoical calmness of the master, who is answering the questions clearly and precisely, and is teaching his knowledge, as well as his life... I believe that an image should be created as if by foreseeing its meaning, so - it should be made go beyond the time, beyond the contemporary, not by way of a one-day manifesto. It should perpetuate what will be worth perpetuating tomorrow.

Szajna makes young creators of theatre - and they constituted the majority of those present at the meeting - sensitive to the importance of a spectator, a reader, or a student who will come tomorrow. The one who is present today is important, but he already is here, he knows what he needs, whereas the one who will come tomorrow means hope, a chance for a deeper understanding of what the author dreams about.



The Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre Troupe, Kiev, 2000

One more question: How to live, how to learn the truth about oneself?

... I believe that human being learns the truth about himself why overcoming his own weaknesses. When he provokes himself to face difficulties - he learns even better. Creating art is also a choice of a more difficult path of life. It is also on this path that human being puts himself to tests and is looking from his own self. Nevertheless, if we were to compare art with life, the capacity of life will turn out much greater.

During the dinner a group of artists and a director of a theatre in Armenia join the company at our table. They are delighted at the performance, and invite the Professor and his staff for a few days' stay in Erevan. Does the invitation flow from the post-performance euphoria? No. A few weeks later director Zbigniew Rybka receives a phone call in Rzeszów. The invitation is confirmed, the funds are being raised. Perhaps the theatre from Rzeszów will be at the river Razdan in Spring. We come back to the hotel. Tomorrow we make for Kiev. A dozen or so hours on our theatre coach - we could do with a better one.

In the evening, Kiev welcomes us with a sunset and the Slavutich hotel which, in comparison with the *Gastynitsa Lviv* in Lviv, belongs to a different epoch, obviously to the advantage of the former. We are looking out of the windows at the 8th floor at the lazy waters of the river Dnieper, the Lavra monastery. Professor Szajna, who arrived at Kiev by a night train, is at the author's meeting with students. On appearing at the hotel, he asks myself and Andrzej Piątek⁴ about the Armenian cognac he was presented in Lviv by the actors from Erevan. We look at each other, pretending not to know about anything. The Professor discerns our joke, thinks for moment and says: **Gentlemen, you cannot be impudent enough to be so courageous.** We burst out laughing. This is what Szajna is like. A quick retort, aphorism, or joke to anything. The cognac is obviously here. And it will remain, but only for the three hours to come.

The Russian Drama Theatre of Lesia the Ukrainian has got a magnificent stage. The actors, technical staff, and the director are impressed by its vastness and equipment. There is no need for a rehearsal. Szajna invites the actors to a meeting in a theatre cafe. Everything is discussed once again. The Professor offers his comments, puts emphasis on certain details. They decide to incorporate a few lines in Ukrainian in the text. This brings a great success during the performance. The audiences are applauding at these parts for a long time.

End of the rehearsal. We are driving to the meeting with the Ukrainian minister of culture, Bogdan Stupka. His office has got a size of a little gym. Tall, slim, good-looking, smiling, and truly happy at the meeting, the minister talks about the first encounters with the art of Szajna in Warszawa, in the Studio theatre. Bogdan Stupka is a minister and an actor acting every day on the stage of one of the theatres in Kiev. He is known to Polish audiences due to his part of Khmielnitsky in the film "With Fire and the Sword." The conversation turns towards existential subjects.

Unification of our life is my great accusation against this century, the unification that led up to the situation that we are below a number in Auschwitz. Below the state when human being still had a number at all.

Stupka promises to come to Rzeszów. From the office of "Khmielnitsky," we make for the Khmielnitsky street, to the Theatre of Lesia the Ukrainian. the audiences do not want to part with the master and actors from Rzeszów. The meeting with the audiences on the stage prolongs until late. The Déballage play and Szajna's art do not fear borders. I am convinced that it would stimulate similar reactions anywhere it might be staged.

During my first conversation with Szajna, he said: Please remember that I throw away bad reviews on my art, I retain only the good ones. So you have got a chance...

Can one write a book on Szajna?...

Jerzy J. Fařara

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1. Lviv (former Lwów) - One of the oldest Polish cities, a major economic, cultural, and scientific centre for centuries. Seized by the Soviet Union in 1939, it has been never returned to Poland. At present within the borders of the Ukraine.

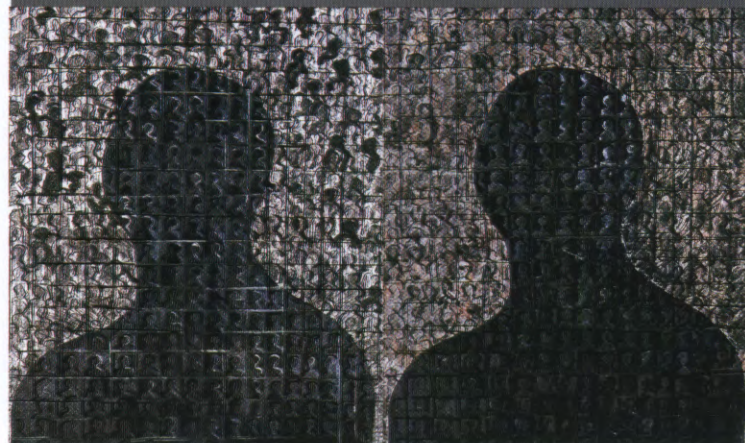
2. Eaglets of Lwów - the name adopted for reference to the children and youngsters in Lwów (at present Lviv) who participated in the heroic defence of the city against Ukrainian nationalists (1-23 November 1918). The youngest fighter was 7 years old, and one hundred and thirteen were not older than 13. In total, 439 Eaglets of Lviv got killed. The cemetery of the Eaglets of Lwów was devastated by Ukrainians after the Second World War. At present, it is being reconstructed by Poles living in Lviv and Polish companies.

3. On September 17, at 4 a.m., troops of the Red Army in the number of one million soldiers crossed the eastern borders of Poland, breaking the non-aggression pact of 1932. Thus, they delivered the final blow to the Polish troops withdrawing from the west while fighting Nazi invaders. The symbolic date commemorating the division of Poland between Nazis and communists in accordance with the secret German-Soviet pact of August 1939.

4. Andrzej Piątek - a journalist, author of numerous articles on the life and artistic work of Józef Szajna.

5. Auschwitz-Birkenau (Oświęcim-Brzezinka) - the largest Nazi concentration camp. Józef Szajna was a prisoner of this camp in the period 1941-1944

Szajna the Tragic, Prophetic Clownish and Erotic



Józef Szajna, *Anthills with a Silhouette*

One of Szajna's favourite theatrical requisite is a wheel. It symbolises the universal message of his art, as well as the problems reoccurring in it, such as the dialectics of life and death, crime and punishment, a victim and an oppressor, creation and destruction, solemnity and clownery. In one of the scenes from his famous play entitled *Dante*, three wheels: a red, a green, and a white one, bring to mind the sacral symbolism of numbers and colours drawn from the *Divine Comedy*. The mutilated and down-trodden characters and dummies,

chained to these wheels, depicted the condition of a human being in the 20th century, which period was named "the new middle ages" by the Russian philosopher Nikolai Byerdyayev.

Szajna, in order to give vent to his experience of totalitarianism, has often fallen back on the medieval tradition, and the character of a number of his plastic productions is that of a reliquaries. The artist honours the despised remnants, thus commemorating human martyrdom, Job-like experiences of millions of peop-



Józef Szajna, *Pandora's Box*



Józef Szajna, *A Comedy Play Character*

le, the restoration of slavery. Exactly as medieval artists, Szajna emphasises the motifs of *vanitas* - the vanity of life and fragility of beauty. This latter subject appears even in a cycle of nudes and erotic pictures. Szajna is careful with administering beauty, which is especially conspicuous in the colours of his productions. Colours are used thriftily, they are dimmed and subdued. This is because the point is not to render the beauty of the world, but to suggest the spiritual atmosphere of this century and to find the visual signs expressive of his own reflections on the status of the human being, history, laws ruling the world, and the role of art, which are always confronted with his experience of a concentration camp.

The tragic and dramatic are essential, but not the only features of Szajna's world. There are also entertaining, clownish, scoffing, and grotesque qualities. This is because art is also fun and games for the artist, it is forms that are juggled, a space for implementation of the most implausible ideas engendered by his imagination. In the latest of his plays, the *"Déballage"*, falling back on his happenings in the 1960's and 1970's, components of self-parody may be found. The unpacking referred to in the title symbolises an important cognitive process: a critical vivisection of inter-personal relationships, as well as contemporary social,

political, and cultural phenomena. The play is farcical at places: Szajna distorts parts of his former performances, scorns at art and its creators (not sparing himself), scoffs at snobbish audiences of the contemporary theatre, commanding the actors to present them with hard-boiled eggs during the finale. Thus, he reverses the situation, when audiences dissatisfied with a performance throw raw eggs at the actors. Apart from its satirical and comedy-related connotations, Szajna's egg remains a symbol of rebirth of life, a song of optimism and unusual vital forces of the artist.

It is surprising that the process of ageing and dying, which fills an average European with religious awe and is a taboo of the contemporary culture of the West, is actually amusing to Szajna. His attitude to eschatology is reminiscent of the Mexican Halloween - the carnival of death. His plays have always received enthusiastic reception and boasted great understanding in Mexico. One of the reviewers wrote these important words then: "It is not about the theatre of cruelty or despair, nor about the theatre of death. It is the passion for life that determines the power and meaning of Szajna's work." Nevertheless, it is a specific kind of affirmation of life. It shows when one has the courage to reveal and disclose everything in a human being and his existence that



Józef Szajna, *The Usurper*

is terrifying, painful, vexing, repellent, or even odious, as well as when one finds shapes for expressing such feelings. Innumerable representations of decaying corpses, crippled or injured bodies, remnants of objects, shreds of fabrics, and surviving photos of the dead constitute the personification of fear in Szajna's art. Evil, on the other hand, assumes the form of soldier's boots, and shooting targets (the environments: *Reminiscences, Wall of Shoes, Silhouettes and Shadows, Drang nach Osten, Drang nach Westen*).

A separate strain in Szajna's work is the prophetic art. The visual motif and the subject of gigantic canvasses in the *Anthills* cycle is a vision of humanity in the 21st century, perceived as an immense crowd, covering our planet closely, as if a swirling swarm of insects. It is no longer an individual human being, but a crowd that is offered epiphanies and is watching cosmic phenomena in the prophetic visions of the artist. Shadows of sub-celestial crosses, outlines of sky-high shapes, magnified celestial bodies are reflected in the human swarm, as if in a gigantic mirror. Szajna keeps on repeating a vision of the human kind awaiting a forthcoming Armageddon, as if it was an incantation able to divert the course of history. In the *Gnome* composition, a large head made of thousands of little heads in the crowd, has been gi-

ven a countenance deprived of individuality, cleared from any feelings, thoughts, or anxiety. Szajna's comment on the cycle is this: "A feature of our civilisation is the freedom of people, which means migrations of people, easy movements of crowds. ... As if we were coming back to nature, but the nature of unruly crowds. This is no longer a community of dummies, but some computer numbers. Computer kills something in a human being, but also releases something biological. I attempt to articulate these anxieties in my theatre and in its visual narration. Even if I do not think in political or journalistic terms, it is in the *Anthills* that this critical aspect is in a way present."

As far as the erotic strain is concerned, Szajna's art brings to mind similar drawings by Picasso in the late period of his art. Sophisticated simplicity of linear drawings attracts attention in both masters. Szajna is not so explicit as Picasso; in his images of erotic scenes, the inner states and emotions felt by lovers are to be evoked, rather than naturalistic recreations of a physiological act. Male and female bodies in the amorous struggle exchange the attributes of sexes, are dismembered, strewn all over, swirling in chaos, just like in cubist pictures. Lovers in the *Struggle* cycle, burning with passion, constitute something reminiscent of a battlefield covered with mutilated



Józef Szajna, *Wall of Shoes*



Józef Szajna,
Drang nach Osten, Drang nach Westen

bodies (the subtitle of one of the pictures is *Cruel Love*, symptomatically). In the domain of eroticism, of great interest to Szajna is also its eschatology - the tortures of the body and soul inflicted on humans by Eros. Nevertheless, subtle lyricism, infrequent in Szajna's art, may be found among the drawings of the love theme. The artist, with self-irony so typical of him, has made the following comment on his late fascination with the erotic: "The question on whether these pictures flow from the memory or imagination results from that they are winged facts that I have and have not seen, things known and hardly realised; sometimes they are a joke, and always the joy of living." Thus, he praises the finite, and at the very same time never-ending, existence, for eroticism evokes the power of life in the most beautiful and complete way.

Józef Szajna has been contesting the classical aesthetics for fifty years now, but his art is a paean in honour of the creative force of being - the powerful stream, which destroys while creating, and which creates while destroying.

Magdalena Rabizo-Birek

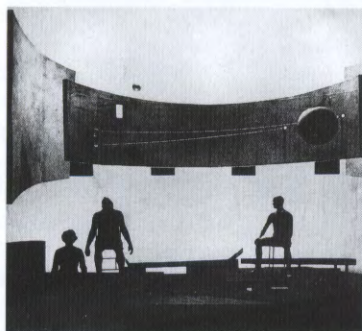
Choices and References

I was born in 1922 in Rzeszów. During my college years I was known as a boy full of fantasy, but I was not a very good pupil. Sport fascinated me, I also liked to draw. In 1938 I won championship of Poland in divining-board and vice-championship in swimming; during national competition of high schools. There were achievements of my young years.

World War Second has smashed my home, has broken previous meanings of happiness and life. I became a soldier too early, being only 17 I took full responsibility for myself. Sport was replaced by resistance movement - I was an activist of Union of Armed Fight. My interest in drawing was replaced by actions of sabotage. Searched by Gestapo and arrested while trying to escape to Hungary, I found myself in completely new world, entitled: "Arbeit macht frei".

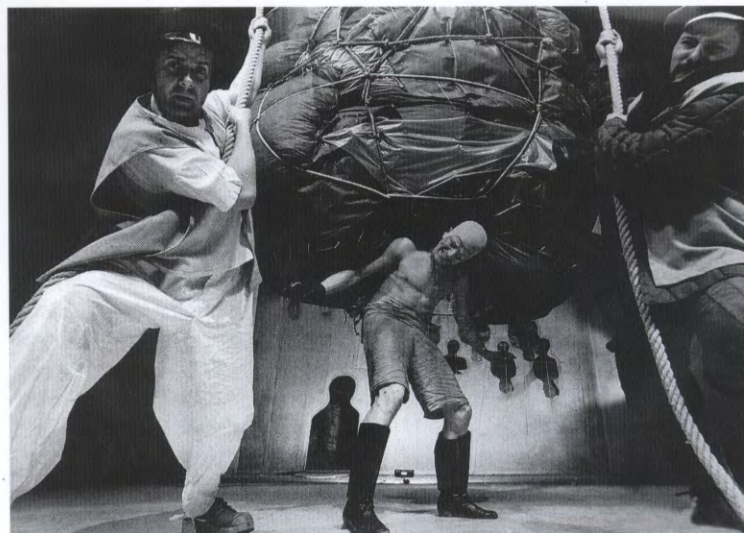
Here everything became meta-physics - violence, atrocities, heroism, sacrifice. Repartitions into rases, clases, beliefs and political views are not important anymore. We are an archipelago of human - unhuman psyches, when a man becomes just a number. The camp is also a chance of suicide. The attempt to escape costs me, as well as my two friends, a sentence of death. Later there is only a cell in Death Block - a room

without no entrance, no windows, no air and no hope. This is a world with dimensions 90 x 90 cm, and very low. There is a permanent darkness here, you don't count either nights or days - time seems to stop. Waiting for execution makes me closer to problems of eternity, closer to God. I am very close to resignation, I want to die. The fate wants otherwise. The only amnesty in 1943 - a result of replacement of the



J. Broszkiewicz, *Imiona władzy*, Ludowy Theatre in Nowa Huta, dir. K. Skuszanka, 1957

commander - once again sentences me to life in the camp and life in penal company. But it was fated to me to stay in Death Block one more time. And I left it. Providence? After years I write in "Cervantes", the performances realized in 1976 in Teatr Studio: "I am cut off from the halter - death is in me, and I have to sleep with Her". Eschatology? The past and references? To remember is human. Can one be a human



J. Szajna, *Witkacy*, Studio Theatre in Warsaw, 1972

being - a society without any commitments?

Vanishing in time, destruction is not only the camp's landscape, but a threat in general. I do not divide time into yesterday and tomorrow. I treat the past like an experience. I remember a hunger as a transformation of personality close to nirvana, its resignation and feelings, without pain and fear. Years of war and occupation became my great university, time of checking up a character and friendship. First days of freedom were like a vacuum without joy, but also a time of standing up from my knees. Feeling needless, full of complexes, I try to find my chance in learning. I am ashamed of my "hump" and I do not confess my experiences. I start my studies at Academy of Art in Cracow, in 1974. In painting and scenography the world of imagination, fascination and

unreality is open. I do not want much, yet I have plenty of. "I shake the shell of time, because I live" - I say through Dante's words in 1974. In the beginning of new life I am stopped by sickness. But I do not give up my studies and read a lot: Nietzsche, Tatariewicz, Balzac, Witkacy, Mann. I deepen into the theory of Klee's art. The privileges of youth pass by me and I'm close to thirty. In 1952 and 1953 I receive my diplomas, both with awards. It gives me some confidence. I have my own home. I start my independent job in the theatre. I don't waste time for socialism - I start together with the thaw of 1956 and introduce abstraction on the stage. In the first socialist city in the world, in Nowa Huta, ridiculed formalist emerges. Szajnizm and szmacizm (rag-ism) it is the same - "Trybuna Ludu" ironizes. It enforces me, too. I change theatre

decoration into the composition of space, actor's surrounding - into a kind of environment. Hanging forms, structures, their motion, ripped horizons full of mysterious holes and curtains cover the whole. "Names of Power" by Broszkiewicz, "Oresteia" by Aeschylus, "Mice and Men" by Steinbeck, "Antigone" by Sophocles are expressed by structuralism of forms, the art of informal. In 1957 I win a prestigious Award of Critics of "Przegląd Kulturalny" ("Cultural Review") - together with Stawomir Mrożek and Z. Mycielski - for co-creation of the shape of modern Teatr Ludowy in Nowa Huta. Nearly all my projects are realized in a scale 1:1. Coming back from scholarships in Paris in 1957 and 1958, in spite of my fascination of abstract art of Malewicz, Kandinsky, Braque and Picasso did not revolutionize my own artistic research. I pass by constructivism, including theories of Craig and Meyerhold, I get

acquainted with Dada and Bauhaus movements. In 1961 the ladder to heaven is created, which perforates horizon in Mickiewicz's "Dziady" (directors K. Skuszancka and J. Krasowski). For space forms, frozen in motion and pictures from "Drama" series, similar to tableau objects created in 1957-64, an installation of different material is characteristic - ripped canvases and burned backgrounds. The series "Theatrical variations" are made on cardboard, similar to collage technics - half surrealist. Are they my nightmares? Silhouettes - figures and "imagination plain-air" for unwritten dramas? Magic of author's theatre? The stage with swinging lamp in "Madman and Nun" by Witkacy from 1959 are full of magic, surrealist objects. Swinging, wild, apocalyptic horses simultaneously add the scene of dijjigit in "Joy of Regained Scrap-Heap" by Kaden-Bandrowski (adaptation and direction by

J. Szajna, *Witkacy*, Studio Theatre in Warsaw, 1972



J. Krasowski) in 1960. I receive another kind of expression through shining forms of bended sheet-metals, falling down in "Non-Divine Comedy" by Z. Krasieński (dir. B. Korzeniewski - 1959), to a stage and to exhibition halls I introduce old, rusty wheel-barrows, broken bath-tubs, pipes from a heater, ripped bags instead of costumes, wooden boots - like in "Acropolis" (1962) (corealization together with J. Grotowski). Later, in 1963-66 in Teatr Ludowy in Nowa Huta,



J. Szajna, *Replika*

author's performances are staged: "Revisor" by Gogol with old "sitzbads" on wheels, hanging old straw mattresses as flats of provincial establishment; "Empty Field" by T. Holuj with bandaged milking cow and utopian "The Castle" by Kafka, spilling out in the final scene. "Death on a Pear-Tree" by W. Wandurski with a batallistic scene, expressed by metallic wheels rolling down to self-destruction, in crossed spot-lights. Many of these performances were acknowledged to be political provocation and a humbug, so in 1966 I had to resign and

leave the theatre. But I didn't give up. Only in 1969, the rehearsals of Kajzar's drama in Cracow Stary Teatr have been stopped, I decided to leave the city. In my art, during the period of 1966-1968,



J. Szajna, *Dante*, Studio Theatre in Warsaw, 1974

in the cycle of pictures called "Epitaphs and Apotheoses", I transform the remnants of objects into other objects, different in form and meaning. "Déballage" - the performance staged in Nice in 1967, together with "Vagants" actors is a metaphorical show of splitting the construction and the form. There is a very important example of my work in 1969. Paying the homage to artists, killed by Nazi, I build a space composition, called "Reminiscences". It was presented during the 150 anniversary of the Cracow Academy of Arts in 1969, and then during Biennale of Art in Venice in 1970. "Reminiscences" - it is not only about remembrance, it is a warning about destruction possible even today. There is a world of a great silence that reflects a suddenly broken life. There is an atelier without people, the spec-

tacle of silence, consisting of a forest of old easels, standing up like guillotines; crosses made from half-burned silhouettes and unfinished sculptures, dusty photographs and concentration camp registers. Without pathos, I dedicated this composition to all victims of fascism and totalism. In 1962 I write an article for "Życie Literackie" - "On new function of scenography". I reach to such expressions like theatre and art, I try to define a method of my work and my research of new means of expression. I develop this thought in Warsaw when I become a chief manager of Teatr Studio - Galeria in 1971, where two years Scenography Studies were also located. I thought there - both Polish and foreign students.

Collective creative act and its artistic narration are a display of a thought about organic theatre. Poetical visions, space of concrete, here are united into combined spaces. A word, picture, a sound show the process of creation and destruction of forms in their exchange. So life, death and life again. Dead objects become alive again, they exchange their roles. An actor plays dummies, a dummy becomes a personage from the theatre. Science "Faustus" premiere in Teatr Polski in 1971 (according to Goethe), through "Witkacy" (S. I. Witkiewicz text were used) in 1972, "Gulgutiera" in 1973, "Replika" in I-VII versions created in 1971-1986, "Dante" with its premiere during

Florence Festival in 1974 and later stagings in Dobrovnik and Essen till "Cervantes" from 1976 and "Mayakovsky" from 1978, series of author's performances are created - starting from the scenario, ending with direction and scenography. The idea of this theatre is existentialistic sense of life and universalism of the problem. It's easy to see how the author identifies himself with personages from scenario. It's also easy to notice political accents, like completely new (1978) vision of building up and destruction of communism in "Mayakovsky" (the scene with building up "the palace of communism" from red chairs and its destruction in final scene).

"Replika I", arranged as artistic installation for the Museum in Göteborg in 1971 is the beginning of "The Theatre of Panic". Stubs of dummies, artificial limbs, remnants of our civilisation emerge from below to create dead landscape. In "Replika II", during the festival in Edinbourg in 1972, an actor-animator is already present as well as action. Besides "Ściana butów" (The Wall of Shoes), composition "Uzurpator" (Usurper), "Ołtarzyk" (Little Altar), "Partyzant" (Partisan), "Matka" (Mother), "Dziecko" (Child), "Ciężarna" (Pregnant Woman), "Rzecz o agonii świata i naszym wielkim optymizmie" (The history of world's agony and our great optimism) is created - as I used to comment this in the programme published for Nancy Festival in

1973. The true drama of our century does not need pathetic words and unnecessary gestures. References - contexts? "Replika" travels all around the world with its mission. In Mexico it is welcomed as a real miracle play - the ceremony after an earthquake. In Germany - as an art of confession; in Israel - as a remembrance of holocaust. In 1986 the play is awarded during International Festival in Canada as the most unforgettable spectacle. "It is not only the epos of the times of gas chambers and Hiroshima, it is a scream of our times." "The performances the whole world should see" - American press used to write.

In late seventies the composition "Sylwety i cienie" is created - static environment, showed during the biennial of Art in Sao Paulo in 1979. Since 1978 up to now the pictures are created, mostly black - and - white. It's a cycle called "Mrowiska" (Anthills). Linear human record is nearly unnoticed - it remains to be nameless trace of unificated community, without a personage, on its way to nowhere. Disintegration and chaos, destruction of ephemeral structures in their short existence - migrations, manifestations, meetings, the end of twentieth century. In December 1981, after the martial law was introduced, I leave Teatr Studio and for many years keep out of public life. In 1987 I build a space composition called "Drang nach Osten - Drang nach Wes-

ten" which tries to cope with the atrocities of fascism and totalism. Shown in Warsaw in 1987, in Moscow in 1988, during the Biennial of Art in Sao Paulo in 1989 and during Biennial of Art in Venice in 1990 - it was a political challenge.

I transform life into a picture - the art is visualizing what should be liberated in ourselves. It is also a selfdefence against helpless giving up.

Józef Szajna

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1. Armed Fight Union (ZWZ) - an underground military organisation operating in the territory of Poland during the years 1940-1942. The main objective of the ZWZ Armed Fight Union was to participate in liberating the country and restoring the Polish state through establishing a nationwide underground armed force. In 1942 the Armed Fight Union was renamed into the Polish Underground Army (AK).

2 Arbeit macht frei (Work makes you free) - the notice over the gate leading to the death camp in Auschwitz.

3. Social-realism - a stream in the European and Asian art in the 20th century, officially expressive of the ideas of a communist state about art; originated in the 1920's in the Soviet Union. The high point of social realism fell to the period of rule of Joseph Stalin (until 1953). Characteristic features: realism, politically important subject matter, glorification of the state policies.

4. People's Tribune - a daily newspaper, the organ of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). Issued in Poland at the time of communist rule.

When he visits the town of Rzeszów, he is walking along the streets he knew before the Second World War.

Time for an Epilogue

Despite his turning eighty just a few days ago, he bursts with energy of a 30-year old man. *I believe that I have completed a part of my life. Nevertheless, what has not been completed fills me with optimism about having a few dozen more years to live*, says Józef Szajna in his flat in the Tamka quarter of Warsaw. What is he going to do when a dozen or so years elapse? *You can have an interview with me in 20 years' time, if you are still alive*, he answers jokingly.

Two hours ago he parted with a friend from the grammar school in Rzeszów, Staszek Szpunar. He is still linked with Rzeszów with people and memories. This place was, is, and will be the most important. *I do not have any reason for talking about returning to Rzeszów, I have always felt at home there*, he admits. *It is in Rzeszów, where I got my wings to fly away into the world. Just as Adam Małysz...*

It is in Rzeszów, where his nephews Adam and Wojciech live, whereas his niece Małgorzata lives in Łańcut nearby. Out of his friends only the aforesaid Staszek Szpunar is alive. Many of them have already passed away.

But their graves are also something.

Graves are not the world of the dead. For us, who are alive, this is a world of living, still living people, he claims. *I think that this how we all understand it in the Christian and Polish culture.* The graves in Rzeszów are the parents, brother, sister. The turmoil of the war broke the Szajna family life into pieces. ... In Rzeszów there are graves of the friends. Those, who were with him in Auschwitz, and those who were not there...

When Professor Szajna comes to visit Rzeszów, he prefers to walk along the streets he knew before the war... *These stays in Rzeszów are pleasant, as if I were coming to a birthday party, and definitely not to a funeral banquet*, he adds with irony. *I live in two worlds: that of my memories, and that of the present day.*

The house where the Szajna family used to live before the war was destroyed by it.

Szajna's father worked as an engine driver.

He knew how to support our family and how to teach us, the

children, obedience with an Austrian trousers belt, reminisces the artist. There were two brothers and two sisters at home. None of my siblings is alive now, and I, who was

Grammar School in Rzeszów became imprisoned in the death camp in Auschwitz. Until today, the experience acquired there have been a predominant influence on his art, which is mostly an



doomed to perish in Auschwitz during the Nazi occupation, have survived, says Professor Szajna and becomes wrapped up in thoughts. *I am waiting for a phone call from St. Peter now, but he has not phoned yet. So I have still some more time.*

Józef Szajna – one of the major creators and reformers of theatre, an outstanding visual artist, stage designer and stage director – as a 17-year-old student of the 2nd

outcry against totalitarianism. His visual productions are displayed all over the world, just as his plays: *Acropolis, Faust, Gulgutiera, Witkacy, Dante, Cervantes, Replika, Mayakovsky.* Szajna's creative powers have been at their best until the present day. A few years ago he staged his own play *Déballage* in the Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre in Rzeszów, which – slightly modified – has been shown in Košice, Lviv,

and Kiev. In the theatre in Rzeszów there is a permanent gallery exhibiting the works Szajna has donated to his native land of Rzeszów. *By joining stage design, visual arts, stage direction, I have been creating del-l'arte, rather than theatre, Szajna comments on his own art. I am not talking about the holocaust, I am talking about the Apocalypse of our times. I used to be a naive optimist, when assuming that the end of the Second World War would be the end of all wars. As a result of the fact that wars and violence continue, your art, paradoxically, remains up to date, and has even become universal, I remark. This is only because politics is the devil, the artist answers vehemently. And the devil is equal to evil. Conformity is included in the concept of politics. I myself have something in my soul, which may be called „being infected with slavery,” whereas the most beautiful words the human being knows are freedom and independence. I have not lived to see this so far, but I have long, long years before me, he concludes sarcastically.*

Culture is endangered by stupidity. By eliminating creativity and the word „art” we are making our artistic inventory impoverished. What we create is merely museums and trash. Culture is enriched only by creating. An artist is a person who brings in new values to art. It is not somebody who only paints pictures,

for example. There are people who paint beautifully, but do not introduce much into art.

The performance entitled *Déballage* (Unpacking), created in Rzeszów, and applauded in Košice (Slovakia), Lviv (where it was awarded the Grand Prix in the Golden Lion Festival), and Kiev (the Ukraine) originated from the thoughts and experiences accumulated in Szajna. *What was accumulated in myself, has become disclosed, unpacked, and expressed, says the artist. I did not treat „Déballage” as a gift for Rzeszów... Simply, I created that play because it was deep in my own self.*

Recently, a young theatre director has staged his *Reply* in Canada. The girl has emphasised in the *Reply* not the motif of an apocalyptic war, but of a rebirth of the contemporary people through a new generation. She intends to establish a theatre in Vancouver – the Szajna Studio.

Against some advice, Szajna has not put an end to his creativity.

If I treasured reviews, I would not have achieved much. I entered theatre with the wide-opened eyes of a long-sighted, not a short-sighted person, who just goes about his profession: illustrates the facts, or produces a political theatre, offering situational updates. There is meta-

phor in my theatre, I cross borders, whereas the world of politics wants to contain peoples' reasoning within certain borders. I do not belong in anything, all I do is fight for the freedom of an individual. That is why I do not want to hear, but I want to know more instead. And that is why when they say that Szajna has become silent, they show their souls of slaves. In such a situation, I can be nothing more than an unruly boy (who is not that young, after all), who does not discuss, but wants to create things. Just as Malysz who said: I want to go on jumping well...

He keeps painting, drawing, writing. It is aphorisms – the whole desk is strewn with napkins. When in town he stops somewhere to have a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, and important thoughts dawn on him, he records them on napkins. This is how *Déballage* was born – out of thoughts and aphorisms that came to be put in order. If you listen closely, many of them can be found in the play.

Before the war he was a champion of Poland in diving-board jumps. It is what made him stand out in the school. He was also a swimming champion. Later on, he was winning himself, in art. Now, he wants to unpack what has accumulated in him and to pass it on in some form. *There is something mystical in a human being, which is seen in any of my*

attempts, he says. I have been expressing it through metaphor, a language known to me. Now, I am trying to pull it together. If my prologue was in Rzeszów, now it is time for an epilogue, which I am writing. It may last for 10, perhaps 20 years, but not longer, I think, he smiles.

He has a wife, who means a lot in his life. Bożena Sierosławska is an art historian. Their only son is a visual artist, the grandson Mikołaj, who attends a secondary school, is 17 (just as his grandfather at the time when he was taken from a grammar school in Rzeszów to the death camp in Auschwitz).

Auschwitz was my university, Szajna recollects, of life and co-habitation of defeated people. Of what a human being is, how he behaves, how he lives and dies. In a community without any divisions into Poles, Jews, Russians, or Germans. The resulting conclusions remain for a lifetime. My further education only confirmed the apocalyptic quality of time. Where does the drive for freedom and independence, ever-present in Szajna, come from? You should not be subject to politics, he claims, unless we shape it to a humanist measure. But who was able to shape Stalin or Hitler like that? It is rather they, who shaped some of us. Such an attempt is just a noble idea. Still, when deprived of it, life is miserable.

Andrzej Piątek



The Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre in Rzeszów

The Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre has been active in Rzeszów, as well as in the province and all over Poland, since 1944. The theatre regularly stages plays in a few larger towns in the region. On average, it offers 300 performances for approximately 69,000 - 70,000 audiences yearly. The theatre employs 84 people, including about 20 actors and is housed in two historical buildings, where apart from the offices, two stages are located: the "Great Stage" with 380 seats, and the "Chamber Stage" with 80 seats.

The repertoire includes both Polish and foreign classics, as well as modern drama. A number of Polish eminent directors and stage designers, working full time in the cultural centres of Warszawa, Wrocław and Kraków, co-operate with the theatre, as well as actors from Slovakia and the Ukraine.

Since 1985 the International Biennial of Theatrical Poster has been held by the theatre, which has earned great favours both with the participating graphic artists, and the viewers, who are especially eager to visit the poster exhibitions, not only in Rzeszów, but in Prague



Computer Art Biennale
since 1994

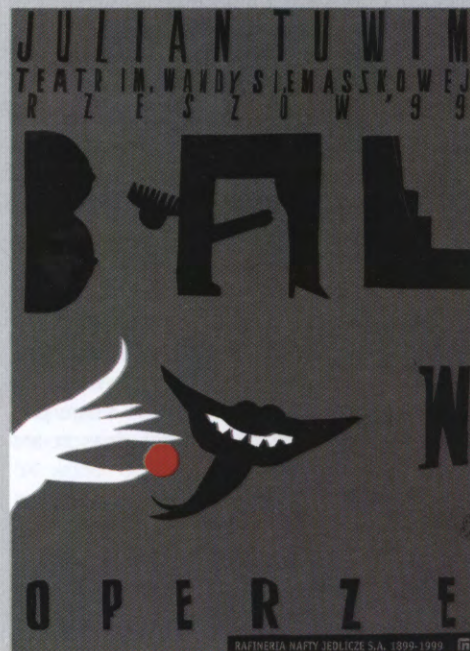


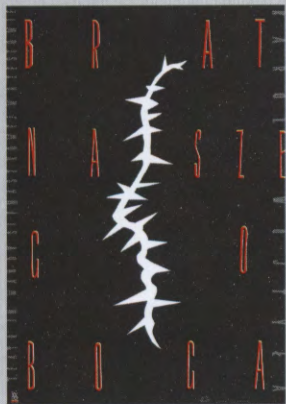
International Biennale of Theatre Posters
since 1987



DESIGN

LECH MAJEWSKI





(the Czech Republic), Lviv (the Ukraine), Budapest (Hungary), Košice (Slovakia), Prešov (Slovakia), Pocs (Hungary), Tucson (USA), Usti (the Czech Republic), Las Vegas (USA), as well as in art galleries in Kraków and Warszawa, where the newest editions are on regular display. At present, a unique collection of about five thousand theatrical posters is stored in Rzeszów.

For eight years now the theatre has been in charge of the International Exhibition of Computer Art Biennale, which is an event focused on the latest achievement of this field of art.

All the first night performances are accompanied by visual art exhibitions held in the Foyer Gallery, which present production of the most outstanding artists from Poland and from abroad.

Also, the theatre boasts its permanent exhibition of the visual art objects donated to the town of Rzeszów by its citizen Józef Szajna, the eminent Polish artist.

Events important to the theatrical life in Poland are held in our theatre, including the most important one, which is to be held for the fortieth time this year, the Rzeszów Theatrical Events, where the most important Polish stage productions of the last season are presented.

The latest initiative of the Wanda Siemaszkowa theatre is the Festival of Central European Theatres, whose first edition is to be held in December this year.



Szajna Gallery

On 13 March of 1997, which was the 75th birthday and the 50th anniversary of the artistic work of Józef Szajna, the Szajna Gallery was opened at the Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre in Rzeszów.

It is the only permanent exhibition, both in Poland and in the world, of works by Professor Józef Szajna, one of the most important artists in the 20th century. All the works of art which are displayed in the Gallery have been donated by the Professor to the town of Rzeszów, the town where he was born.

The vast room of the Szajna Gallery, filled with the works of one of the most significant masters of theatre in the 20th century is characterised by an unrepeatabe mood and atmosphere. There are 54 works on display in the Gallery: monumental paintings from the Anthills, Assembly and The Nameless cycles, as well as drawings, collages, spatial arrangements, and stage design compo-

nents for the most inspired Szajna's theatrical productions (Replika and Dante). Since its very beginning, the Gallery has been a meeting place for the artists of different arts: visual artists, writers, musicians, and theatrical artists, especially those, who follow their master while discovering new and unknown realms of human expression.

The expanded attic of the theatre housing the permanent exhibition of Professor Szajna's art is bursting with life. Theatrical education classes are held there. Lectures on the history of theatre and theatrical means of expression are illustrated with parts of plays by the most eminent masters of the contemporary Polish theatre (Szajna, Kantor, Grotowski, Swinarski, Wajda).

Individual or group visits to the Szajna Gallery may be organised at any time, as long as appropriate arrangements are made in advance on the phone.

Kantor Collection

The Kantor Collection exhibition opened in the Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre on 15 April 2000.

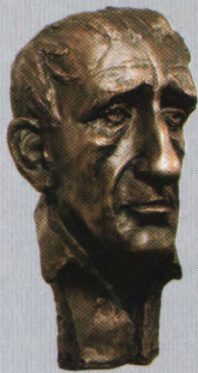
Tadeusz Kantor was born in Wielopole Skrzyńskie, a small village in the vicinity of Rzeszów. He was one of the most outstanding masters of theatre in the 20th century. His most famous plays (*Dead Class*, *Wielopole*, *Wielopole...*, *Let Artists Die*, *It is my Birthday Today*, *I will Never Return Here*) have been staged all over the world, and gained appreciation and admiration. According to the author of the artist's monograph, Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, "Tadeusz Kantor was actually the latest great avant-garde artist of the 20th century. Those few of his kind determined the European Polish culture." Tadeusz Kantor showed himself on the stage - his past, memories, thoughts, life, and death...

At the exhibition there are items related to Kantor, brought from the old vestry in Wielopole, where Tadeusz Kantor was born. The exhibition is complemented by the stage design components made available by the Cricoteka Centre for Records of Tadeusz Kantor's Art in Cracow. An important section on display is the photographs of a *Wielopole*, *Wielopole...* staging, which took place in 1983 in the parochial church in Wielopole, as well as the original letters written by Tadeusz Kantor.



T. Kantor, *Dead Class*

Tadeusz Kantor,
sculpture by Krzysztof Brzuzan



Jerzy Grotowski

Jerzy Grotowski was born in Rzeszów. He was an avant-garde artist, stage director, reformer and originator of the Laboratorium theatre - one of the most significant phenomena in the Polish culture in the 20th century.

Grotowski was an experimenter through all his life. Falling back on the experience of anthropology, he attempted at finding new ways for theatre, and new forms of actor's expression in particular. As a result of this search, he abandoned the whole decor of the traditional theatre and came up with the idea of "the poor theatre," where the inner processes in the actors were regarded as the essence of the performance. The most famous plays by Grotowski: *Apocalypse cum Figuris*, *Prince Unbent*, or inspired stagings of Polish classics: *Acropolis* by St. Wyspiański (stage design by Józef Szajna), *Forefathers' Eve* by A. Mickiewicz, or *Kordian* by J. Słowacki, were based on unbelievably true acting.

Grotowski has had numerous followers trying to master his theories and theatrical phenomenon all over the world. He was the other Pole, next to Adam Mickiewicz, to be a lecturer at the College de France. One of the most famous contemporary stage directors, Peter Brook has remarked that "Grotowski is the only one who has been able to reach the sources and who, through his discoveries, brought the world theatre to the knees." Grotowski died 14.01.1999.

Jerzy Grotowski,
sculpture by Krzysztof Brzuzan



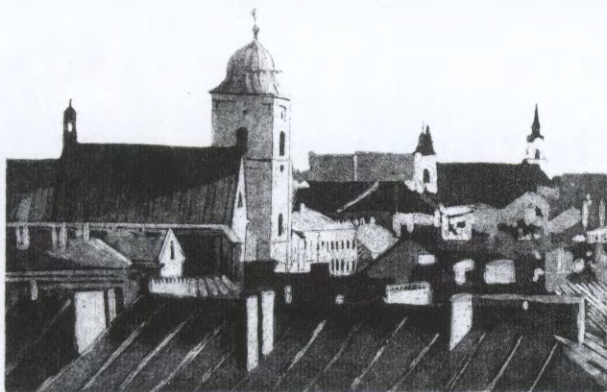
In the archives of the theatre documents and items are kept related to the outstanding theatrical artists born in Rzeszów and its vicinity: Józef Szajna, Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Grotowski and Zdzisław Kozień.

Zdzisław Kozień,
sculpture by Krzysztof Brzuzan



Zdzisław Kozień

Zdzisław Kozień (1924-1998) - the most famous actor of the Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre. He had played about 100 movie roles and over 300 theatre parts. In 1976, at the Film Festival in San Sebastian he was awarded Grand Prix for one of his movie roles.



Anna Poprawska, *Clouds over the city*

Rzeszów (164 000 inhabitants) is the economic, scientific and cultural centre of south-eastern Poland, the capital of the Podkarpacie Voivodeship.

Its localisation, at the crossing of communication routes and in close proximity to the frontiers with Slovakia and the Ukraine (about 90 km), exert a favourable influence on the development of trade and foreign contacts.

The city is an important academic centre. More than 40 000 students are being educated at the local University and others colleges. The Rzeszów University of Technology is the only one in the country which has a faculty for training civil pilots.

24 thousand pupils from the city and the region attend numerous secondary schools, and a further 19 thousand are in gymnasiums and primary schools.

For those tourists interested in the history of Rzeszów, we recommend its monuments, whose preservation and renovation receive particular attention from the self-government.

Among the city's most interesting monuments are the following: the 14th century Fara Church with a free-standing belfry; the Town Hall, dated from the 15th century, rebuilt and extended upon many times; the 16th century Castle of the Lubomirski Family; dated from the 17th century: the Church of the Bernardine Fathers, the Monastery Complex formerly belonging to the Piarists and the Summer Mansion of the Lubomirski Family; the 18th century Church and Monastery of the Reformati Fathers; as well as the tenement-houses in the Market Square, which gained their present architectural form gradually, beginning in the 17th century.

For centuries, the community of Rzeszów constituted a mixture of cultures and nations.

In the city there are museums, photography and painting galleries and culture centres. The Franciszek Kotula Ethnographic Museum houses one of the largest collections in the country.

The Office of the City of Rzeszów
www.rzeszow.um.gov.pl

Anti - Nazi Resistance, in Auschwitz and Buchenwald 1939-45; Lecturer, Academy of Arts, Cracow 1954-65; Co - founder and scenographer Ludowy Theatre in Nowa Huta 1955-63; Main Director 1963-66; Director and Scenographer, Stary Theatre, Cracow 1966-70; Main Director Klasyczny Theatre, now Art Gallery and experimental theatre called Studio Theatre, Warsaw 1971-82; Professor Academy of Arts, Warsaw, 1972-, and Director School for Stage Designers 1972-78 member jury World Council of Culture, Mexico; Direction: Acropolis (1962), Inspector (1963), Puste pole (1965), Zamek (1965); Direction and Scenario: Faust (1971), Replika I - Göteborg (1971), Replika II - Edinburg Festival 1972, Replika III - Nancy Festival 1973, Replika IV Poland 1973, Replika V - France, Théâtre des Nations 1980, Replika VI - Istanbul Festival 1984, Replika VII - Tel Aviv 1986, Witkacy (1972), Gulgutiera (1973), Dante - International Theatre Festival, Florence 1974, Witkacy II (1975), Cervantes (1976) - First Prize, XIII Kalisz Theatre Encounters 1977, Majakowski (1978), Śmierć na gruszy (1978), Dante żywy (Dante Alive), - Dubrownik 1981, Dante III - Essen 1985, Dante 1992, Ślady, Ślady II - Ankara 1993, Workshop, Ziennia, Cairo 1993, Vida y muerte del Poeta Cervantes, Alcalá de Henares 1993,

Szczątki - International Theatre Festival, Portugal 1995, oneman exhibition Reminiscence, XXXV Venice Biennale 1970, Gegenwart Vergangenheit (Present of the Past), Frankfurt am Main 1978, Silhouettes, Sao Paulo 1989, Pictures of Man, West Berlin 1980, Essen 1984, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem 1986, Cracow 1986, Warsaw 1987, Moscow 1987, Biennial Sao Paulo 1989, Venice Biennale 1990, Paris 1990, Gdańsk 1991, Warsaw 1992, Poznań 1992, Scenography Centre, Katowice 1993, Museum, Ankara 1993, Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid 1993, contribution to many international exhibitions and theatre festivals, including Quebec Festival 1986 (award winner); works of art in galleries and museums in Poland and abroad; Honour Member International Association of Art; numerous awards including Gold Centaur Award 1982, Merituous award for National Culture 1986, Gold Medal, 40th Anniversary of War Veterans, U.S.S.R. 1987, International Honour Citation from Experimental Theatre, Cairo 1992, Alfred Jurzykowski Foundation Award (USA) 1995; Kt.'s and Commandor's Cross with Star of Order of Polonia Restituta, Great Cross of Polonia Restituta 1997, Order of Banner of Labour (1st Class), International Theatre Festival "Golden Lion", Lviv 2000 (Grand Prix).



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 Janusz Wojewoda (cover, p. 1, 4-10)



Arjuna