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## Ancient Plays on Stage in Communist Poland

We reached this shameful impasse, when the entire world drama, from Aeschylus to Shakespeare, to Brecht and Ionesco, became a body of allusions to People's Poland. (...) I dream of a form of socialist life that will abolish the unbearable and destructive state of affairs, where the authorities see cultural creations and their reception as a constant threat requiring the use of force.

Leszek Kołakowski<sup>1</sup>

Using ancient drama as a vehicle for propaganda or as a weapon in the ideological struggle is neither simple nor predictably successful. The Greek and Roman plays have been established in European culture for millennia, their ideas, conflicts, characters remain part of human psyche “for all seasons”; whether interpreted from the point of view of the past, present, or future, they have been used “for and even against” conflicting ideologies, as per Lech Wałęsa’s famous *bon mot*.<sup>2</sup> Intuitively, we would be inclined to lay such attempts at politicising antiquity at the door of the anti-communist intellectual opposition, who knew their classics almost as well as they knew their Polish Romantic bards, rather than blame “working class” politicians for such

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1 Leszek Kołakowski (1927–2009) was Polish philosopher and historian of ideas. This is his statement at the meeting of the Union of Polish Writers held on 29 February 1968, devoted to the banning of Adam Mickiewicz’s *Dziady* [The Forefathers] directed by Kazimierz Dejmek at the National Theatre [Teatr Narodowy] in Warsaw; quoted according to Marta Fik, *Kultura polska po Jalcie: Kronika lat 1944–1981*, Vol. 2 (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1991), 523. All translations in this article are by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

2 Wałęsa’s words “Jestem za, a nawet przeciw” were broadcast in an interview on Polskie Radio 3, on 25 May 2003, and he expressed his position on the Polish accession to the EU before the June 2003 national referendum on the subject.

unlikely sophistication. We will test this intuitive hypothesis and its scope against the data on the staging of classical plays in communist Poland.

It may be useful to start with a few thoughts on the complicated process of reception of classical antiquity.

## THE PROCESS OF RECEPTION

While the first mode of reception is based on contact with the original text, its language naturally limits dramatically the number of potential recipients – how many people today fluently read and understand Ancient Greek or Latin? The fact of being able to reach only small, classically educated elites disqualifies original ancient texts as desirable propaganda or persuasion carriers.

The second mode of reception relies on the translation of the original, its quality as artistic or literary text and its reliability in adequately rendering the sense; this leads us directly to the role of the translator as an intermediary, or interpreter. The translated text may advance to the next level of reception and serve as a script for the production on stage (live theatre, radio, television, or film) in the region where the language of the translation is spoken. Ancient texts, especially Greek dramas, have repeatedly been translated, as each successive period finds its reading of some of these masterpieces that is particularly relevant for the times. The latest existing version may sound obsolete because of archaic vocabulary favoured by certain philologists; other fluctuating tendencies relative to the rendering of the metre create the need for a new, more modern approach before producers tackle the play. While the text of a play is already designed to be used for a performance, theatre directors usually proceed first with some form of revision or adaptation, if only to compress the text to the length their performance requires, using a variety of devices, namely eliminating parts of dialogue, cutting out scenes, or removing secondary characters. At the level of ideas and plot they may decide to activate one of the many other modes of reception, such as a faithful rendition of the original, remake, remix, re-visitation, paraphrase, transformation, re-interpretation, re-deployment, inspiration, etc. The director instructs the actors and shares with them his understanding of the text; they follow his guidance but imbue the words with their talent and know-how. The director, the actors, and the whole production team work in concert to present to the audience a specific vision and performance co-created by the author, the translator, the director, literary managers and dramaturgs,<sup>3</sup> set and costumes designer, musicians, and actors. The same ways of appropriating ancient material may be used

3 The directors may rework the text themselves, order a new translation (like Juliusz Osterwa, who asked Ludwik Hieronim Morstin to translate Sophocles' *Antigone*), or request the services of a dramaturg. The 58–59 issue of *Notatnik Teatralny* from 2010 was entitled “Zawód Dramaturg” [Profession Dramaturg]; cf. in particular Rafał Węgrzyniak's article “Ale dramaturg, kto to jest?” [And Dramaturg, Who Is That?] for a discussion on the role of the dramaturg and its tradition in the Polish theatre.

by modern playwrights who seek to create their texts, painting their visions of an ancient dilemma, a universal problem, or an archetypal figure, and relating them to their own time and reality, using the ancient text as a source of inspiration.

This is hugely complex and fertile area of research.<sup>4</sup> One can divide it into what is done directly to the text, its content, and values at the various creative levels (by translators, playwrights, directors, dramaturgs, actors), and what the recipients (readers, listeners, viewers) make of it according to their mode of engagement with the text. Here, performances of ancient plays in translation stand out as a separate category. They define the scope of this article, i.e., we sidestep the later playwrights<sup>5</sup> inspired by classical antiquity and explore the impact of the ancient texts as they were transmitted through the ages and translated into modern languages. Such restriction allows us to explore the full spectrum of the extant texts in a shorter study, such as the present article, and examine all instances of their occurrence on the Polish stage. It also provides for more homogenous material on which to test our hypothesis reformulated as follows: ancient drama was used by theatre directors for artistic, aesthetic,<sup>6</sup> and educational rather than political purposes during communism and by the opponents rather than supporters of the regime. What the theatrical public made of these performances occasionally came as a surprise to the directors, although they should have been able to anticipate the reactions given the situation of totalitarian censorship, when words pronounced on the stage were expected to have a double meaning and refer to what nobody was allowed to criticise openly.

## POLISH THEATRE UNDER COMMUNISM

The Soviet revolutionaries knew, instinctively, that theatre should play an essential role in shaping the new, post-October 1917 communist society. This

4 Cf. *'Antigone' on the Contemporary World Stage*, Erin B. Mee, Helene P. Foley, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8–13; Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), passim; Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006), 17–41.

5 By “later” I mean not only Shakespeare – a frequent guest on the Polish stage – but other playwrights like Racine, Molière, Polish Romantics, Shaw, Giraudoux, Cocteau, and Anouilh, as well as Polish interwar and World War II writers who became fascinated by ancient mythological themes resonating with current events. Most of these (Tadeusz Miciński, Karol H. Rostworowski, Ludwik Hieronim Morstin, Aleksander Maliszewski, Stefan Flukowski, Tadeusz Gajcy, Anna Świrszczyńska) are discussed in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland: Ancient Theatre as an Ideological Medium; A Critical Review*, Elżbieta Olechowska, ed. OBTA Studies in Classical Reception (Warsaw: OBTA, 2015), 123–281 passim.

6 Marta Fik, Polish theatrologist, in her chapter on “Topos (?) antyczny w polskim teatrze” [Ancient Topos (?) in the Polish Theatre] for *Topika antyczna w literaturze polskiej XX wieku* [Ancient Topics in Twentieth-Century Polish Literature], ed. by Alina Brodzka and Elżbieta Sarnowska-Temeriusz (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1992), 152–153, emphasised that during the entire twentieth century ancient dramas were staged fairly regularly in Poland only through the efforts of scholars and connoisseurs, much less theatre directors and actors. “The theatre of the inter-war decades remained deaf not only to [Greek mythology] but also to plays like O’Neill’s *Mourning Becomes Electra* or travesties of antiquity, or to Jean Cocteau, André Gide, and Jean Giraudoux, so fashionable at the time in France.”

universal conviction was at the basis of the early Soviet theatrical revolution, its short-lived avant-garde experiments, and its fleeting infatuation with ancient drama.<sup>7</sup>

Polish theatre directors resumed their regular activities in 1945, marked by the six-year-long horrific ordeal of Nazi rule and under a cloud of forthcoming Soviet domination. While they could have had an almost thirty-year historical perspective on what Soviet communism did to the theatre, this knowledge was second-hand, and they had no choice but to test for themselves the limits of their freedom under the new regime and try to adapt. Their collective experience also included two decades of activities in inter-war independent Poland, followed by the underground theatre during the German occupation and preceded by over a century of dealing with foreign partitioners bent to varying degrees on forced assimilation and denationalisation rather than the development of Polish culture. Polish Romantic playwrights delved deep into the Graeco-Roman tradition, reworking myths and ancient history according to patriotic aspirations and dreams of independence. The classical examples of civic virtues and heroism expressed all that one could say openly without a swift reaction from the foreign authorities. Audiences were accustomed to such subterfuges, looked for them in theatre, and found them, often despite directors' intentions. There is a considerable wealth of scholarship on the attitude of the Polish Romantic poets to classical Antiquity to which we need not refer here.

Polish theatres as cultural institutions were not all created equal. Since the nineteenth century they have been developing in all three partitions of the country, and particularly after the restoration of the independent Polish state in 1918, in all regions, beginning naturally in urban centres: Warsaw, Krakow, Lviv, Vilnius, Poznań. During World War II, the occupying forces operated theatres for the Germans and allowed very low-quality entertainment for the Polish population at a few small stages in Warsaw and Krakow. The underground organisations of theatre artists declared a relatively well-respected boycott of these theatres in 1940.<sup>8</sup> The Clandestine Theatre Council [Tajna Rada Teatralna – TRT] whose driving force was provided by three outstanding artists and teachers: Leon Schiller (1887–1954), Edmund Wierciński (1899–1955), and Bohdan Korzeniewski (1905–1992), organized educational activities, sponsored underground spectacles, and also worked on plans for the restoration of the Polish theatre and its future development.<sup>9</sup>

The underlying conditions after the war were appalling: considerable losses in talent, professional teams decimated, or worse, completely non-existent

7 See Nina Braginskaya, *Symbolist Ideas in the Scripts of Gubpolitprosvet: The Theory and Practice of Proletarian Performance* in the present volume.

8 Cf. Stanisław Marczał-Oborski, *Teatr czasu wojny: polskie życie teatralne w latach II wojny światowej (1939–1945)* (Warsaw: Polski Instytut Wydawniczy, 1967), 44–48, 123; Marta Fik, *Trzydzieści pięć sezonów teatry dramatyczne w Polsce 1944–1979* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1981), 11–12.

9 Cf. Marczał-Oborski, *Teatr czasu wojny*, 118–138; Fik, *Trzydzieści pięć sezonów*, 11–13.

infrastructure, especially in Warsaw, Gdańsk, and Wrocław; buildings, if not wholly ruined, were devastated and required costly reconstruction. Still, sixteen theatres started working even before May 1945. Others followed quickly. By the end of 1946 there were forty repertory theatres, five operas, eight musical theatres, and twenty-eight theatres for children and young people.<sup>10</sup> The Ministry for Culture and Art, or, *sensu stricto*, its Theatre Department, subsidised, first only selected theatres, later – once private theatres disappeared – practically all of them. Various short-lived bodies, such as Repertory Commission and Advisory Committee were created in 1946, along with the Theatre Council, a most promising agency composed of the best minds and talents of Polish cultural life, designed to implement plans prepared during the war by the Clandestine Theatre Council. The new council met only once and was promptly deactivated. The process of nationalising theatres and making them part of state structures was completed in 1954, but already in 1950 the Council of Ministers decreed that theatres had to transform into state enterprises operating under a full planning and financial reporting regime.<sup>11</sup>

The Polish Radio, until 1989 the only radio broadcaster in the country, inaugurated its theatre in 1925; Homer's *Odyssey*<sup>12</sup> was the first classical text in the repertory of the Polish Radio Theatre after World War II. The monopolistic Polish state television founded its theatre in 1953; a year later it staged the first ancient play, Aristophanes' *Peace*.<sup>13</sup> Both theatres were hugely popular and appreciated, had mass audiences, and reached the entire Polish population. Various national and international theatrical festivals, usually but not always<sup>14</sup> held in the capital, allowed the public to enjoy performances from abroad but also to see the best productions from the provincial theatres. With some historical and regional variations, theatres were under the

10 Cf. Fik, *Trzydzieści pięć sezonów*, 115–116.

11 Cf. Fik, *Trzydzieści pięć sezonów*, 117–118.

12 Cf. the *List of Theatres* at the end of this article.

13 *Ibidem*.

14 At first, festivals were one-time events, such as the Shakespeare Festival in 1947, Festival of Russian & Soviet Plays in 1949, and Festival of Polish Contemporary Plays in 1951. Later a number of annual festivals appeared, such as Theatres of Northern Poland in Toruń (1959), Theatrical Meetings in Kalisz (founded in 1961 but fully active since 1969–1972 and still continuing), National Theatrical Confrontations – Polish Classics in Opole, and Counterpoint in Szczecin. Cf. Fik, *Trzydzieści pięć sezonów*, 18–19; Magdalena Raszewska, *30 x WST: Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne* (Warsaw: Instytut Teatralny, 2011), 15–16; as well as Zenon Butkiewicz, *Festiwal w czasach PRL-u: O Festiwalu Teatrów Polski Północnej w Toruniu (1959–1989)* (Toruń: Zapolex Media, 2004); and *Konkurs Szekspirowski wczoraj i dziś*, ed. by Jan Ciechowicz (Gdańsk: Fundacja Teatrum Gedanense, 1997). The most influential were the Warsaw Theatrical Meetings, held annually from 1965 to 2010, with interruptions for 1980, 1982–1986, and much less regularly after the collapse of communism in 1989. They assumed the function of decentralisation or integration of theatrical life and offered a chance for national fame to provincial or “outside of Warsaw” theatres, the term ‘provincial’ being considered derogatory. From 1967 to 1993 the International Festival of Open Theatre in Wrocław presented alternative performances from abroad. In the last season before the change of regime (1988/1989), thirty theatre festivals were organized in Poland. See Zenon Butkiewicz's entry “festival teatralny” for [www.encyklopediateatru.pl](http://www.encyklopediateatru.pl).

control of the party and the government and were dependent on them for budgets. The choice of plays needed approval for each season or planning period. Provincial theatres were occasionally less strictly controlled than their counterparts in big cities, but that was due to people in positions of power rather than to general regulations. Theatre under communism was not a static bloc but a living and diversified organism, evolving and reacting to social and political events and manipulations of the authorities that funded its activities and controlled them.

Every ancient play performed during that time should be discussed in the context of the political situation at the moment of staging, as well as of the prestige and position of its director, and the theatre itself. The importance of these variables forms one of the central premises of our research. A recently published register<sup>15</sup> of ancient (and inspired by antiquity) plays staged in Poland during communism allows us to explore systematically and with a high degree of accuracy which plays were staged (and in whose translation), when, where (the theatre), and by whom (the director). It also provides an excellent checklist to which one can quickly add the rare new finds.

The presence of classical plays on the Polish scene from 1945 to 1989 as analysed by all the criteria discussed above would undoubtedly require a full-length book. For this volume, and the present article, we will rather follow the basics necessary to present a comprehensive but general picture of the use of classics in theatre under communism.

## WHAT DO THE FIGURES SAY?

The data, by the author, may not appear predictable, but it is indeed not entirely surprising. During the forty-four years of communism all extant plays by Aeschylus were staged. The *Oresteia* trilogy was produced nine times. (Additionally, in 1973, the Greek National Theatre performed it in Warsaw; and in 1980 during the International Theatre Meetings, also in Warsaw, Poles watched the famous nine-hour production of the Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer from Berlin, directed by Peter Stein.) *Seven against Thebes* was produced eight times, *Prometheus Bound* five times, *The Persians* and *The Suppliants* were staged only once. *Agamemnon*, the first part of the *Oresteia*, was produced on the same bill with Euripides' *Electra* and Aristophanes' *Frogs* at the National Theatre in Warsaw by Kazimierz Dejmek in 1963, one of the most impressive examples of ancient theatre on Polish stage, in its intent, design,

15 Cf. *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland*, 17–121. The number of times each production was performed is indicated, if the records are available. Other sources include Stefan Srebrny, *Teatr grecki i polski* (Warsaw: PWN, 1984), 714–736; Fik, *Trzydzieści pięć sezonów*, passim; Raszewska, *30 x WST*, 235–254 and passim, as well as monographs on individual theatres and websites, such as [www.e-teatr.pl](http://www.e-teatr.pl) and [www.encyklopediateatru.pl](http://www.encyklopediateatru.pl).

and performance. All Aeschylus' plays combined were produced forty-three times (counting three for an *Oresteia* production).

The same period saw the staging of four out of Sophocles' seven surviving plays: *Antigone* fifty-one times, *Oedipus Rex* twenty-one, *Electra* four, and *Oedipus at Colonus* once. Altogether, Sophocles' plays had seventy-seven different productions.

Euripides with his almost twenty surviving dramas fared slightly worse. Twelve of his plays were produced thirty-two times. The most popular were the *Trojan Women*, nine times (seven in Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation, once in Jerzy Łanowski's translation from ancient Greek, and once in modern Greek by the visiting Theatre of Northern Greece from Thessaloniki). Then *Medea*, eight times, *Electra* three (including the 1963 Dejmek's production), *Iphigenia in Aulis* twice, *Helen* twice, *Bacchae* twice, *Andromache*, *Hercules Furens*, *Ion*, *Cyclops*, and *Suppliants* once each. Ancient Greek Drama Theatre Verghi came from Athens in 1977 to perform *Iphigenia in Tauris* in Wrocław, Krakow, and Warsaw.

Roman tragedy during the same period was represented by two of Seneca's plays: *Phaedra* staged twice and *Medea* once. Concluding the numbers game, we come up with one-hundred-fifty-two productions during forty-four years, or on the average, three per year, just for the tragedy.

Two names from Greek comedy stood out: Aristophanes with eight plays (*Lysistrata* – staged eight times, *Birds*, *Frogs*, and *The Assemblywomen* three times each, *Plutos*, *Peace*, *Thesmophoriadzousai*, and *The Knights*, once) and three adaptations of texts excerpted from *Wasps*, *Acharnians*, *Lysistrata*, *Peace*, *Clouds*, and *The Assemblywomen* (all Aristophanes' titles combined were produced twenty-four times),<sup>16</sup> as well as Menander, with unavoidably only one comedy, *Dyskolos* (staged once). From the Roman comedy, Polish viewers saw Plautus with three plays (staged eleven times). The most popular among Plautus' comedies was *Mercator* staged seven times, followed by *Miles Gloriosus* (three times), and *Amphitryon* (once). Altogether, thirty-six productions which put up the average number of classical plays staged at the Polish theatres under communism to above four per year.

While it will not significantly change the averages, the picture would be incomplete if we excluded other genres of ancient literature adapted for the stage. These were epos – Homer's *Odyssey* (produced five times), philosophical dialogue – Plato's *Defence of Socrates* (nine times), and poetry – staged Greek lyric poetry readings (two editions, one devoted to Sappho, Pindar, Simonides, Anacreon, and Solon, the other focusing exclusively on Sappho).

16 These statistics may have been different, if the masterly contemporary translation of all Aristophanes' plays by Janina Ławińska-Tyszkowska had still been published under communism; cf. *Arystofanes: Komedie I; Acharnejczycy, Rycerze, Chmury, Osy, Pokój* (Warsaw: Prószyński i Ska, 2001) and *Komedie II; Ptaki, Lizystrata, Thesmofofie, Żaby, Sejm Kobiet, Plutos* (Warsaw: Prószyński i Ska, 2003).

The numbers game should not be confined to productions. Another critical variable must be introduced, the stage itself, i.e., the theatres. Altogether sixty-three Polish repertory theatres, the State Television and Radio Theatres (both with mass national audiences), and two theatre schools staged ancient plays during communism. Out of the sixty-three, nine were in Warsaw, six in Krakow, five in Wrocław, five in Łódź, three in Poznań, and three in Szczecin; the remaining theatres operated in twenty-eight provincial centres all across Poland.

## THE DIRECTORS

Who were the theatre directors fascinated enough by classical tradition to reach for ancient plays during communism? Our records show one-hundred and thirty names across live theatre, television, radio and dramatic school performances. Eighty-eight directors staged only one such play. Twenty-six produced ancient plays twice. Ten went up to three instances, two to four, another two to five, one directed six plays, and one seven. Greek and Roman theatre had its fans, but such productions were marginal compared to the total number of plays performed on sixty-seven Polish communist stages.

Focusing on four among those who displayed the most apparent interest for classical antiquity and produced the highest number of classical plays,<sup>17</sup> we will rapidly sketch their profiles, hoping they will lead us to a better understanding of what were their objectives in staging classical plays.

We start our reflection with the legendary theatrical couple of high integrity, Tadeusz Byrski (1906–1987) and Irena Byrska (1901–1997),<sup>18</sup> who managed between them to stage eight ancient plays during communism. They were both dynamic actors, directors, and teachers, with considerable pre-war experience. Both were connected to Juliusz Osterwa's theatre Reduta, as well

17 One can only mention briefly specific examples, like Maryna Broniewska (1911–1989), a choreographer from 1934–1939 at the Teatr Miejski and Opera [Municipal Theatre and Opera] in Lwów, and from 1944–1945 director at the Polski Teatr Dramatyczny Lwów. Her real name was Tarnawa, and later Szlemińska, once she got married; cf. *Almanach Sceny Polskiej* (1989/90) 216–217. She directed Aristophanes' *Peace* at the Television Theatre in 1954, *Lysistrata* in 1959, Homer's *Odyssey* in 1968 (Television Theatre), and Sophocles' *Antigone* in Wałbrzych in Lower Silesia in 1973. Mieczysław Daszewski (1926–1990), who produced and repeatedly directed only one ancient play, Plautus' *Mercator*, in 1960, 1961, 1977, and 1978, merits a separate brief mention. Daszewski spent forty-five years of his career at the New Theatre in Zabrze, a provincial theatre in Upper Silesia. Another unusual case is that of Włodzimierz Herman (1937), active in avant-garde theatre in Wrocław in Lower Silesia, where he staged Aristophanes' *Clouds* in 1964 and *Assemblywomen* with fragments from *Frogs* in 1968. In Koszalin/Ślupsk in 1968, he produced Aristophanes' *Plutos*. In 1962–1968, he worked as director and artistic manager at the Student Pun Theatre (*Teatr Kalambur*), and as director at the Polish Theatre and Television Theatre (1966–1970). In 1970 he emigrated to Denmark and worked in Switzerland, and later in New York, Germany, Sweden, and Russia. In Denmark he worked at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen and at the theatre of the Danish Radio.

18 See their bios in Tadeusz Byrski, *W pogoni za teatrem* (Warsaw: Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszczyńskiego, 2015), 425–427.



as to Vilnius and its intellectual and artistic elite. Both believed in the educational, social, and cultural value of theatre and in bringing the theatre to all. Friendship with the eminent Stephen Báthory University classicist and ancient theatre specialist Stefan Srebrny provided the couple with additional incentive and expert support in approaching ancient repertory. The couple often worked together, sometimes separately, at a series of places, most often but not only in the provinces. Tadeusz taught at the State Theatre School in Łódź (1946–1949) and became director of the State Theatre in Opole (1948–1949), where his wife also played an essential managerial role. He began directing the Polish Radio Theatre in 1949 (a position he held for two years before the war) and stayed there until 1951. He moved as artistic director to Theatres of Pomerania in Toruń (1951–1952) with his wife directing plays; the couple spent the next six years managing the Stefan Żeromski Theatre in Kielce and Radom. In Kielce they also opened a theatre school where Irena staged Aristophanes' *Peace* in 1956. From Kielce they went on to assume the same functions at the Dramatic Theatres in Poznań until 1959. From 1962 to 1966 they worked at Juliusz Osterwa Theatre in Gorzów Wielkopolski, where, among many other important plays, they directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* in 1964. Tadeusz spent the five years following their stay in Gorzów Wielkopolski directing at the New Theatre in Łódź. Irena retired in 1967 but over the following twenty years or so occasionally directed plays at various theatres, like Menander's *Dyskolos*, staged in Jerzy Łanowski's translation at the Dramatic Theatre in Wałbrzych in 1969.<sup>19</sup>

In all these provincial centres the couple played a crucial role in instilling the love of theatre among the local population and offering an ambitious repertory with the participation of many well-known theatre personalities as collaborators. They considered this their sacred mission, putting it ahead of any aspirations to great national fame, despite the difficulties and discomforts such an itinerant way of life presented to a family with three children. Personal and professional integrity founded on Catholic values did not endear the couple to communist authorities; they had to battle with many obstacles and lack of official support building up small-town theatres after the desolation of World War II. Some of their projects did not succeed, like the Artistic Institute, which they founded in Kazimierz Dolny after the war. The Polish theatrical community recognised the value of the couple's contributions as evidenced in publications and other tributes by Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in Warsaw.<sup>20</sup> The reason why the couple staged a fair number of classical plays had no political background: they were convinced that Greek drama was a valuable cultural

19 Cf. *Monografia Teatru Dramatycznego w Wałbrzychu 1964–2015*, ed. by Dorota Kowalkowska (Wałbrzych: Teatr Dramatyczny im. J. Szaniawskiego, 2016), 301, available online.

20 Cf. *Teatr Byrskich: refleksje, dokumenty wspomnienia*, ed. by Małgorzata Iskra and Magdalena Rzepka (Kielce 1992); Tadeusz Byrski, *W pogoni za teatrem*, ed. by Iwona Arkuszewska, Dorota Buchwald, and Monika Krawul (Warsaw: Instytut Teatralny, 2015); "Irena i Tadeusz Byrscy," *Mówiona encyklopedia teatru polskiego*, available online.

legacy and theatre had the duty to offer such plays to the public, for pleasure, appreciation, and education.

After these two exceptional personalities, ideologically on the side of the anti-communist opposition, we pass to an entirely different artist who nonetheless in his own way was as committed to the mission of theatre as the Byrskis. An outstanding, hugely popular, and appreciated yet unequivocally pro-communist figure, at least initially, Kazimierz Dejmek (1924–2002),<sup>21</sup> directed ancient Greek dramas seven times in a total of approximately one-hundred-seventy productions. This represented barely four percent of Dejmek's output from 1945 to 1989, and not a single ancient author was staged after the change of regime and until his death in 2002. Even these seven productions were in fact based on only four plays: Dejmek produced Plato's *Defence of Socrates* three times, in 1960 at the New Theatre in Łódź, in 1964 at the Warsaw Athenaeum Theatre, and in 1975, again at the New Theatre in Łódź. He staged Aristophanes' *Frogs* twice: in 1961 at the New Theatre in Łódź and 1963, at the National Theatre in Warsaw. The latter performance was staged as the final part of a trilogy also composed of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Electra*. It is undoubtedly a logical and appealing idea for someone who already produced and admired the *Frogs*, to want the public to be provided with a proper background for a more informed appreciation: he decided to let the audience sample the two playwrights' wares first, and then expose them to Aristophanes' comparative criticism and judgment. The public and the critics were almost unanimous in praise,<sup>22</sup> especially because Dejmek was able to cast truly outstanding actors in all the roles. Curiously enough, there was even a review from the first rehearsal of the three plays published in a popular Warsaw daily that – in an innovative marketing move – served to prepare the public for the delights to come.<sup>23</sup>

Here, we must digress to discuss productions of more than one play in one performance. The only other combination of three ancient plays staged together in the Polish theatre, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (trans. by Stanisław Dygat), Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* (trans. by Stefan Srebrny), and Sophocles' *Antigone* (trans. by Kazimierz Morawski), was directed by Stanisław Wieszczycki (1921–2015) under the title *Against Thebes*, in December 1961, at the provincial Theatre of the Opole Region. There are no reviews available about Wieszczycki's production, as is often the case with provincial theatres

21 Cf. his biography, e.g. in the *Almanach Sceny Polskiej* 44 (2002/2003) (Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki PAN, 2008), or in Tadeusz Byrski, *W pogoni za teatrem*, 446.

22 Cf. Stanisław Ostrowski, "Tryptyk antyczny," *Świat* (23.06.1963), available online; Jaszcz, "U źródeł tragedii i komedii," *Trybuna Ludu* 7/663 (05.06.1963), available online; Leonia Jabłonkówna, "Antyk u Dejmka," *Teatr* 15 (01.08.1963), available online; Andrzej Wirth, "Tu stoję gdzie zadałam cios," *Teatr* 15 (01.08.1963), available online; Karolina Beylin, "Antyk i nowoczesność," *Express Wieczorny* 7/663 (05.06.1963), available online; Maria Czannerle, "Szansa Eichlerówny," *Życie Literackie* (05.06.1963), available online.

23 Cf. Ludwika Woyciechowska, "Express przy narodzinach przedstawienia teatralnego," *Express* 73 (27.03.1963), available online.

in that period. Two classical plays staged together were produced a year later, when Irena Babel directed *Antigone* and *Seven against Thebes* at the Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw in 1962. Babel's design of merging the texts of two entirely different authors linked only by the continuation of the same myth, instead of presenting one play after the other, failed to convince the critics, who emphasized the difficulty the actors had in speaking the texts produced by two different translators (Stefan Srebrny for Aeschylus and Ludwik Hieronim Morstin for Sophocles). The anti-war message of Aeschylus mixed badly with the anti-Creon message of Sophocles, leaving no room for the more subtle tragedy of Antigone herself.<sup>24</sup> Not every modernisation of ancient tragedy leads to the discovery of a new, contemporary key to the ancient text.<sup>25</sup> The spectacle was a misunderstanding: too many symbols, too many visions, and too much invention dominated and blurred the meaning of the ancient texts.<sup>26</sup> Despite biting criticism, the same selection (*Antigone* and *Seven against Thebes*) was staged at a provincial theatre in Sosnowiec in the Upper Silesia in 1965 by Antoni Słociński (1925), an actor, theatre director, and artistic manager; the spectacle was not a particular success.

Another instance worth mentioning is a combination of an ancient play with a contemporary one staged together for contrast and comparison. It was due to Dejmek's former student, Michał Pawlicki (1932–2000), an actor and occasional director, who also assisted Erwin Axer<sup>27</sup> in 1966 and Bogdan Korzeniewski<sup>28</sup> in 1967. He paired Euripides' *Medea* with Jan Parandowski's<sup>29</sup> play of the same title, to the collective displeasure of the critics and a relatively weak approval rating of the audience: it closed after twenty-four performances. The ancient masterpiece was flattened and reduced, as one critic said, to a comic book, unsuited to compete with Parandowski's poetic modern vision of Medea as a smart, beautiful, and powerful woman facing a weak, ungrateful, and unfaithful Jason. In fact, both plays suffered from having been compiled from two sources, despite an excellent program booklet boasting of contributions from experts such as Kazimierz Kumaniecki, Lidia Winniczuk,

24 Cf. awk, "Ajschylos i Sofokles w jednym widowisku," *Teatr* 21 (Nov. 1, 1962), available online.

25 Cf. Grzegorz Sinko, "Nasienie, które nie wschodzi," *Nasza Kultura* 38 (September 6, 1962), available online.

26 Cf. Jan Kłossowicz, "Siedmiu przeciw Antygonie," (September 13, 1962), available online.

27 Erwin Axer (1917–2012) was one of the eminent directors of the period but while he did produce a number of plays inspired by classical antiquity, he never staged an ancient drama as such in his internationally successful career.

28 Bohdan Korzeniewski (1905–1992), director, theatre historian, critic, teacher, and translator. He was also more interested in plays inspired by antiquity than in the actual ancient drama, but he did supervise young colleagues directing such plays, such as Jerzy Markuszewski, who staged under his guidance Euripides' *Medea* at the Dramatic Theatre in Warsaw in 1962, and Wojciech Jesionka, who produced Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* in 1969 at the Juliusz Osterwa Theatre in Gorzów Wielkopolski.

29 Jan Parandowski (1895–1978), classicist, essayist, and writer, author of the popular *Mythology*, prose translator of the *Odyssey*; published his version of Medea's myth as a play, in *Dialog*, in 1961. It was staged in 1964, twice in 1966 (once by the Polish Television Theatre), and finally in 1969.

Wojciech Natanson, and Jan Parandowski, who placed there an epilogue to his play claiming ironically that Euripides himself came to the performance, and gave praise and advice.

Coming back to Dejmek and his position in the communist theatre, there is no doubt that his career, which started only after the war, is divided into quite distinctive periods reflecting his rapport with the ideology and the communist authorities. He began his adventure with theatre as an actor, then continued as director and artistic manager. In the later nineteen-forties, Dejmek, member of the Polish United Workers' Party, participated with great enthusiasm and full ideological conviction in the attempt to create a genuinely socialist theatre in Łódź, suited for the new Polish reality. Disillusioned with the performance of the communist regime,<sup>30</sup> especially after his visit to Moscow in 1954,<sup>31</sup> he still thought that the idea was sound, but the execution needed fixing.

Fascination with old Polish literature and early religious theatre alternated in Dejmek's output with devotion to great Romantics resulting in his canon of Polish national theatre and his longstanding concern: "we still lack the courage to cling to what is truly ours, to develop it, disseminate, and elevate."<sup>32</sup> These convictions became the basis of Dejmek's dream of a Polish national theatre under his creative guidance.<sup>33</sup>

In 1967, to celebrate the half-century of the October Revolution, Dejmek, still a party member, decided to stage the national Romantic masterpiece, Mickiewicz's *The Forefathers*. Contrary to his intentions, the public took it as an act of defiance against the regime and among many others who suffered as a consequence was Dejmek himself, expelled from the party and fired from the National Theatre. It was the end of the second period of his career. He was not allowed to work abroad until 1969. His first foreign contract was at the National Theatre in Oslo (Marlowe's *Edward II*), followed by a series of other guest productions in Vienna (Ionesco), Essen (Chekhov, Gombrowicz), Belgrade (Fernando de Rojas), Düsseldorf (Hochhuth, Berrigan), Milan (*La Passione*), Novi Sad (Gogol, Dürenmatt, Molière), Zürich (Dürenmatt), and Hamburg (Gogol). Dejmek returned to Poland in 1972; in 1974 he took over the direction of the New Theatre in Łódź. The Polish Security Service (Służba Bezpieczeństwa – SB) became interested in Dejmek right after the *Forefathers*' debacle in 1968. He was under secret police surveillance in Łódź – codenamed "Theatre Director [Reżyser]" – and later until 1988,<sup>34</sup> as described in his police files.

30 Cf. Wanda Zwinogrodzka, "Dejmka cena wierności," *Gazeta Wyborcza* 15 (January 19, 1994), 10.

31 Cf. Joanna Krakowska, "Święto Wilkenrida, czyli torsje," *Teatr 4* (2013), available online.

32 Cf. Anna Kuligowska-Korzeniewska, "Kazimierz Dejmek – 'nieprzedawnione?'" *Teatr 4* (2013), available online.

33 Cf. an analysis by Magdalena Raszewska, "Opętany teatrem" [Possessed by Theatre], *Dialog 12* (2014) – 1 (2015), available online.

34 Joanna Godlewska, "Kryptonim 'Reżyser', czyli Kazimierz Dejmek w oczach SB," *Teatr 4* (2013), available online.

In October 1980 he criticised Polish cultural policies in response to questions included in the poll conducted by *Kultura*: “What qualities should define an authentic, autonomous cultural life? How should it function? What is required for its development?” He stated: “History should not be explained using conspiracy theory, but what was happening [...] in the last years necessarily indicates that the reached impasse could not have been only the result of stupidity, voluntarism, the style of government, and other ‘errors and deviations’ of the helmsmen of our state. It was the result of conscious, systematic activities undertaken to achieve a total annihilation of our talents and cultural, scholarly, and agricultural potential.”<sup>35</sup>

In September 1981, at the time he assumed the direction of Teatr Polski in Warsaw, he talked about his belief in the mission of theatre:

Theatre should be a good, interesting newspaper. Like it was when Aeschylus was staging *Persae*, Shakespeare *Julius Ceasar*, Molière *Tartuffe*, Gogol *The Government Inspector*, Wyspiański *The Wedding*. I would like to be the editor of such a theatrical newspaper.<sup>36</sup>

Briefly a member of Solidarity, Dejmek was perceived later as siding to a degree with the communist authorities and was accordingly shunned by the opposition. Still, his stage was populated by eminent dissident actors, some of whom he was able to bring from internment. His idea of an “exterritorial theatre” that would allow the artist to take a neutral stand was far removed from the audience and its attitude to whatever was happening on the stage. Dejmek was against the boycott of television by actors during the martial law and even suggested recording live theatre performances to present them to television viewers, which also evoked an adverse reaction among his colleagues.<sup>37</sup>

Post-communist governments according to Dejmek had no interest in developing theatre and significantly disappointed him, leading to launching his political career (*out of despair*)<sup>38</sup> as an MP and Minister for Culture and Art in 1993–1996, in the government of Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak (Polish People’s Party – PSL). His time in office was not particularly memorable.

As a director of classical plays, Dejmek cannot be considered as someone who tried to use ancient drama for political purposes. They remain a very insignificant margin of his artistic output, and while he had an obvious admiration for classical Greek playwrights, he considered Polish classics to be his favourite and most beloved repertory, as well as the core of what he saw as his artistic mission.

<sup>35</sup> Fik, *Kultura polska po Jalcie*, 849.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted from Dejmek’s interview in *Teatr* 21–22 by Marta Fik, *Kultura polska po Jalcie*, 935.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Wanda Zwinogrodzka, *Dejmka cena wierności*, passim.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

The last director discussed here is Helmut Kajzar (1941–1982),<sup>39</sup> a playwright, theatre director, essayist, and translator. He selected *Oedipus Rex* as his first production in 1962 at the student Theatre 38. In his 1965 director's exam assignment at the Theatre School in Warsaw (preserved in manuscript), he explained his understanding of Sophocles' play: *Neither fate, nor gods bring us to justice, but we do it ourselves. The Chorus chooses among themselves a victim whose fear and death should confirm them in their faith. The 'Other' is expelled from the social organism, not only to cleanse it but also to strengthen it.*<sup>40</sup> In 1970, Kajzar produced *Oedipus Rex* again, at the Stefan Jaracz Theatre in Łódź; he considered the play as crucial for the development of his playwriting.

In 1971 Kajzar wrote his adaptation of *Antigone* based on a faithful transcription of some translations into Polish and into other modern languages, intended for his friend, the actor Wojciech Zasadziński, “for the March generation, generation of contestation. Moreover, later I produced it in Warsaw as a memorial for my late friend.”<sup>41</sup> He staged the play altogether three times, at the Teatr Polski in Wrocław, in 1971, in 1973 at the Teatr Propozycja in Warsaw – ‘*Antigone*’ is for us a play about the need for love. The third staging, in 1982, the year of his premature passing, took place at the Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw; Kajzar, commemorating his friend, saw the play as an *Elegy to Death*.<sup>42</sup> Kajzar's intention had an apparent ideological background but not one of active, instrumental propaganda but rather a homage to past courageous deeds.

## SOPHOCLES' ANTIGONE – A SPECIAL CASE

The extraordinary and continuing appeal of Sophocles' *Antigone* to the Polish theatre directors requires particular attention. Several scholars, with one exception all of them Polish, wrote about this phenomenon exploring it not only in theatre but also in poetry and literature.<sup>43</sup> The numbers for *Antigone* under

39 He directed in Poland and abroad and was known for his productions of Tadeusz Różewicz's plays. He translated Peter Handke, Franz Xaver Kroetz, and Sophocles; for his evolution as a playwright and director cf. Marcin Kościelniak, *Prawie ludzkie, prawie moje: Teatr Helmuta Kajzara* (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!Art, 2012).

40 Ibidem, 38–39, 354.

41 Ibidem, 62–63.

42 Ibidem, 63.

43 Cf. Tadeusz Zieliński, “Antygona – Tragedja władzy” [*Antigone – a Tragedy of Power*] in his *Sofokles i jego twórczość tragiczna* [Sophocles and His Tragedies]. Trans. from Russian by Koło Klasyków U. W. (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1928) 229–274, available online; Stanisław Zabierowski, “Polskie Antyfony,” *Rocznik Komisji Historycznoliterackiej* 15 (1978), 163–181; and more recently Marta Fik, *Kultura polska po Jalcie*, 154–159; Alicja Szastyńska-Siemion, “Polskie Antyfony, stan wiedzy i postulaty badawcze,” *Eos* 84 (1996): 345–353, who lists other scholars writing about *Antigone* in various publications and in introductions to the translations of the text; Jerzy Axer and Małgorzata Borowska, “The Tradition of the Ancient Greek Theatre in Poland” in *Productions of Ancient Greek Drama in Europe during Modern Times*, ed. by Platon Mavroumoustakos (Athens: Kastaniotis, 1999), 71–72; Barbara Bibik, “Antigone: A Study of the Character; The Analysis of Selected Polish Translations and Theatre Stagings,”

communism are overwhelming; curiously, the change of regime in 1989 did not put an end to new productions but, on the contrary, during the following decades *Antigone* appeared in the repertory even more often than before.

In fact, *Antigone* began her career as a Polish cultural icon in the early twentieth century when the eminent classicist Kazimierz Morawski (1852–1925) preceded his translation of the play (1898) with his poem, an invocation to *Antigone* likened to a Christian martyr, asking her to bring hope to Poles still suffering under foreign rule. Morawski's prologue made a significant impression on Stanisław Wyspiański (1867–1907), who in his play *Wyzwolenie* [Liberation], strongly inspired by classical antiquity, published and staged in 1903, talks about a Polish incarnation of the Sophoclean heroine, born out of national destiny and historical events that nothing could render better than a full-blown Greek tragedy. Another translator of *Antigone* (1938), Ludwik Hieronim Morstin, was asked to translate the play by the famous actor/director Juliusz Osterwa.<sup>44</sup> This text was used even more often than Morawski's in staging the play after the war. He also wrote his prologue to the play staged for the first time during World War II by the Morstins Home Theatre at the family estate Pławowice near Krakow, where several artists, actors, and directors found refuge during the German occupation.<sup>45</sup> According to available, potentially incomplete records, *Antigone* was the only Greek drama performed during World War II in Poland.<sup>46</sup> In Pławowice, the play was directed by Henryk Szletyński, who staged it again in 1946 in Katowice, following Teofil Trzcziński's *Antigone*, also in Morstin's translation, staged in 1945 in Krakow. Morstin saw *Antigone* as an archetypal model for Polish women participating in armed conflicts, ready to die for all the unburied victims and give them back their dignity.<sup>47</sup>

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*Eos* 97 (2010): 313–318 (which is a short English version of Bibik's PhD dissertation, cf. below); Marc Robinson, "Declaring and Rethinking Solidarity: *Antigone* in Cracow," in *Antigone on the Contemporary World Stage*, ed. by Erin B. Mee and Helene P. Foley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 201–218; Michał Mizera, "Sophocles, *Antigone*," in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland: Ancient Theatre as an Ideological Medium; A Critical Review*, Elżbieta Olechowska, ed. OBTA Studies in Classical Reception (Warsaw: OBTA, 2015), 311–330.

44 Cf. Bibik, "Polska Antygona," *Litteraria Copernicana* 2, 16 (2015) 135, available online, who quotes Ludwik Hieronim Morstin, *Moje przygody teatralne* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1961), 134.

45 Cf. Marczak-Oborski, *Teatr czasu wojny*, 154, 223, 303.

46 Apparently, at the Offizierslager (Oflag) VII-A in Murnau am Staffelsee in Bavaria, the Camp Theatre performed Aristophanes' *Birds*, directed by Zbigniew Bessert; cf. Marczak-Oborski, *Teatr czasu wojny*, 275; Danuta Kisielewicz, in her *Niewola w cieniu Alp. Oflag VII A Murnau* (Opole: Centralne Muzeum Jeńców Wojennych w Łambinowicach-Opolu, 2105), 113, mentions only the name of Aristophanes without specifying the title of the play. After the war Bessert worked in theatres in Warsaw until 1953, and was later active in Lublin, Kalisz, Wałbrzych, and for a decade until his retirement in 1977 in Białystok. I was unable to identify the play from the 300 photographs of life in the camp recovered a few years ago in France by the photographer Alain Rempfer, who kindly made the collection available to me; cf. also his website for more details.

47 Cf. the analysis by Szastyńska-Siemion, 346–351, and other scholars, such as Stanisław Zabierowski, "Polskie Antygony," *Rocznik Komisji Historycznoliterackiej* 15 (1978): 163–180, and more recently Bibik, "Antigone," 314–315, and "Polska Antygona," 132–146.

Writing new prologues is an exciting mode of adaptation, as it manifests an intense desire to bring the translator's contribution to the classical play and to influence the understanding of the critical issues by the contemporary audience or readers. It also demonstrates the highest respect for the text and the need both to render it accurately and, at the same time, to speak one's mind.

The Polish *Antigone* shares naturally the tragic choice facing the universal *Antigone* analysed by generations of scholars. Tadeusz Zieliński labelled the play a "tragedy of power;" Stefan Srebrny identified three ways of looking at the conflict between *Antigone* and Creon: antithesis between state law and divine law, or written and unwritten law; between polis/state and its citizen – the individual; and between the truth as seen by reason and the truth illuminated by emotions.<sup>48</sup>

While Giraudoux's *Electra*, directed by Edmund Wierciński in Łódź in February 1946, a spectacle virulently contested by the communists,<sup>49</sup> was openly a homage to the heroic soldiers of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, *Antigone* remained a personification of womanly sacrifice in times of war and struggle. Her appeal to Polish society, which since the Romantic period had identified with classical values and with a mystical national mission powerfully felt in spite (or because) of being deprived of statehood, relied on her significance as a symbol of civil disobedience challenging the imposed, unbending, and unnatural laws.<sup>50</sup> Refusal of the right to burial or depriving of burial is a theme often occurring in situations of war. There is no lack of World War II examples of such hideous crimes against the divine laws. A quintessential example is, of course, the Holocaust with its countless unburied dead and, on a different scale but no less hideous, the Katyń massacre with its anonymous mass graves of over twenty-thousand executed victims.

Polish history provides valid but not *all* the reasons why *Antigone* has been so well ingrained in the Polish psyche and appealed so strongly to theatre directors and audiences. Classically educated elites in the nineteenth century read *Antigone* in the original at the high school, theatre audiences of the time belonged unquestionably to the same elites; they should have been logically the ones particularly interested in attending such performances. Nonetheless, *Antigone* had to wait until 1903 for its first-ever Polish theatre production. An obvious explanation for this delay was the lack of a truly successful (for theatrical purposes) translation. There were four translations of the play in the nineteenth century, but only the last one (Kazimierz Morawski's of 1898) attracted theatre directors. Forty years later, a modern and popular translation

48 Cf. Zieliński, "Antygona," 229–274; Stefan Srebrny, *Teatr grecki i polski*, ed. by Szczepan Gąssowski (Warsaw: PWN, 1984), 340–347.

49 Cf. my introduction to the early postwar period in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage*, 24–25, and comments by Erwin Axer made fifty years after the performance, quoted there from Elżbieta Wyśniska, "Łódź, Teatr Kameralny," *Teatr* 6 (1994).

50 Cf. Axer and Borowska, "Tradition of the Ancient Greek Theatre," 71–72.



(Ludwik Hieronim Morstin's of 1938) was gratefully accepted by the theatre community and often used on stage.

Brożek,<sup>51</sup> Hebanowski (1912–1983), and Kajzar<sup>52</sup> were the best-known translators during communism. Stanisław Hebanowski's version produced in 1968, at the request of his colleague Marek Okopiński for a spectacle at the Szczecin Contemporary Theatre, became immediately an almost standard text.<sup>53</sup> Helmut Kajzar (1971) and Józef Jasielski (1971) translated and paraphrased Sophocles' text for their productions; Kajzar's adaptation was used as well by three other directors.

Independently of being read in classical high schools in the original Greek, *Antigone* in translation was on the list of compulsory reading at the secondary level during the interwar decades and later, after World War II. The knowledge of the myth and familiarity with the play were widely established. *Antigone* remained in the curriculum until 2008, when it was removed; the only required Sophocles' play is now *Oedipus Rex*, added to the high school list in 2007.<sup>54</sup> The first cohort of students who were not required to read *Antigone* are now twenty-four years old; counting a minimum of five years for obtaining a director's diploma at the School of Theatre, this cohort could have in theory began directing a year ago. A future scholar should check how many times *Antigone* will have been staged in twenty-five years, by A. D. 2041, when this Antigone-less cohort reaches the respectable age of fifty. Curiously, after the fall of communism, four more translations were published, a fact indicating a lasting fascination with Sophocles' tragedy throughout the two decades of transition to democracy, as well as a certain discontent with the existing translations and a need to update them.

In the reception of *Antigone*, the entangled mythical background becomes somewhat blurred and distant. The Labdakides of Thebes is a family doomed by fate. Eteocles and Polynices, and Antigone and Ismene are children of incest between Oedipus, the unwilling killer of his own father, and his mother Iocasta, who commits suicide when she learns the truth. Their very existence is an abomination against the divine law. Eteocles and Polynices mistreat their blind father, who curses them, predicting their death in a fratricidal fight. Whether we consider that Antigone is right, or that Creon is, a tragic outcome is inevitable. Antigone, Haemon, and Eurydice, Creon's wife, die like dominoes – Haemon takes his own life because Antigone is dead, Eurydice kills herself because Haemon died.

51 Mieczysław Brożek (1911–2000), the only classicist among the three, published his translation in 1947 at M. Kot in Kraków; it had multiple later editions by the Wrocław Ossolineum but was used on stage only three times in the mid-1960s. His version of the chorus was combined with Hebanowski's translation by Ewa Bułhak in 1984. Hebanowski and Kajzar were not using the Greek original; they relied on translations into modern languages.

52 Cf. the section in the present article entitled 'The Directors.' Kajzar produced *Antigone* in 1971 in Wrocław at the beginning of his career and at the end, in Warsaw, in 1982.

53 It was used twenty-one times between 1968 and 1989; cf. the list of theatres and productions. Cf. also Sofokles, *Antyгона* (Gdańsk: Słowo / Obraz / Terytoria, 2003), 64–65, available online.

54 Cf. the list online.

Antigone inspired Polish playwrights beginning just before World War II and continuing until after the collapse of communism.<sup>55</sup> Some such inspired plays were staged. Their authors are not the focus of this article, but I mention them here to complete the picture and document the general familiarity of the Polish society with the archetypal heroine and the moral dilemma she personified. Five such authors wrote plays influenced by Antigone<sup>56</sup> between 1939 and 1960 but did not meet with much theatrical success:

1. Krystyna Berwińska (1919), *Ocalenie Antygony* [Saving Antigone] (1948, publ. 1954); staged only once by Irena Byrska at the Stefan Żeromski Theatre in Kielce, in south-central Poland, in 1957;<sup>57</sup>
2. Aleksander Maliszewski (1901–1978), his *Antigone* written in 1939, was staged only once under communism by Waldemar Zakrzewski at a school theatre “Teatr Młodych” [Theatre of the Young] in 1963, in the provincial, south-eastern Polish town of Zamość;<sup>58</sup>
3. Artur Marya Swinarski (1900–1965), *Godzina Antygony* [Antigone’s Hour] (1948–1959, publ. in 1960 in Paris, by Instytut Literacki in Biblioteka Kultury 60); the action takes place in Aragon in 1937 during the civil war. The local parish priest refuses burial to a Polish soldier who fought on the Republican side. The play was never staged;<sup>59</sup>
4. Nora Szczepańska (1914–2004), *Kucharki* [Cooks] (1959–1960, publ. in 1961); it was staged once by Jan Kulczyński, at the Polish Theatre in Warsaw (Scena Kameralna) in 1965; the play is divided into three acts, each referring to a different celebrated drama (Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and Beckett’s *En attendant Godot*;<sup>60</sup>
5. Roman Brandstaetter (1906–1987), *Cisza (Winogrona Antygony)* [Silence (Antigone’s Grapes)] (1958–1959, publ. in 1961); staged only once, by Maria Dzięgielewska, who adapted the text and directed the play for the Polish Radio Theatre; it was broadcast 2 November 1986.<sup>61</sup>

55 The last one, Janusz Głowacki’s *Antygona w Nowym Jorku* [Antigone in New York], was written after the fall of communism and published in 1992.

56 Cf. Cezary Rowiński, “Moda na mity greckie,” *Dialog* 9 (1962): 116–127, and Alenka Jensterle-Doležal’s article on Antigone in West and South Slavonic cultures in the present volume.

57 For a biography of the author and a summary of the play cf. Paulina Klóś, “Krystyna Berwińska-Bargielowska,” in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland*, 246–248.

58 For a biography of the author, a summary of the play, and the story of its staging cancelled by the censors at the Theatre Athenaeum in Warsaw just before World War II, cf. Julia Hava, “Aleksander Maliszewski,” in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland*, 202–205.

59 For a biography of the author cf. Paulina Klóś, “Artur Marya Swinarski,” in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland*, 196–199. Swinarski wrote a series of plays that constitute a humorous rereading of myths. The most popular and most often staged, *Achilles and the Maidens*, was produced fifteen times between 1955 and 1985. Since 1985, it was staged only once, in 2011.

60 For a biography of the author and a summary of the play, cf. Małgorzata Glinicka, “Nora Szczepańska,” in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland*, 240–244.

61 For a biography of the author and a summary of the play, cf. Joanna Koziół, “Roman Brandstaetter,” in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland*, 226–232.

On the other hand, Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* (next to Cocteau's, Giraudoux's, and Sartre's adaptations/remakes of other ancient plays)<sup>62</sup> was incomparably more popular under communism<sup>63</sup> than the Polish plays inspired by the Greek *Antigone*. However, its success paled in comparison with the reaction to the Sophoclean original. The French version of the tragedy was staged sixteen times: five times in 1957 – clearly in the wake of the October 1956 thaw; twice in 1958 – by the same director (Jerzy Rakowiecki, who directed Sophocles' *Antigone* for the Polish Radio Theatre in 1956), first at the Warsaw Teatr Dramatyczny and then at the State Television Theatre just one year after Tadeusz Aleksandrowicz's production. Another spectacle at the Television Theatre followed thirty years later, in 1987. Andrzej Łapicki directed it, and it remains the last Anouilh's *Antigone* on Polish television.

Looking at all thirteen live theatre spectacles, it is important to note that only two were staged in Warsaw and two in Krakow, the remaining nine at provincial theatres. After the collapse of communism the popularity of Anouilh's *Antigone* dwindled considerably: from 1989 to 2015, only five theatres offered it to the public; out of these five, three spectacles were directed by the same person, but none was staged in Warsaw.

Despite the post-Romantic appropriation of *Antigone* as a "Polish" heroine under the partitions, until 1945 *Antigone* had been staged in Poland only three times. All three cases are memorable because of the outstanding actresses playing the title role. In 1903 at the Municipal Theatre in Krakow (dir. Józef Kotarbiński), *Antigone* was played by Helena Modrzejewska. In 1908 at the State Theatres in Warsaw, directed by Kazimierz Zalewski, Seweryna Broniszówna played *Antigone*. And in 1911 in Krakow, at the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre, directed by Leonard Bończa and performed by the Academic Artistic Circle of Classical Drama at the Jagiellonian University, *Antigone* was Wanda Siemaszkowa. This last production was also staged in Warsaw the following year, at the Grand Theatre. Once independence came in 1918, there is no evidence of any interest in staging the play, which is hardly surprising, as there was no foreign domination and no need to look for powerful allusions.

The forty-four years of communism yielded fifty-one productions of *Antigone*: six staged in various Warsaw theatres, three at the Television Theatre, three at the Polish Radio Theatre; the remaining productions were staged at smaller centres; three of these provincial spectacles were shown at the Warsaw Theatre Meetings.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, after the collapse of communism, during the twenty-five years from 1990 to 2015, in stark contrast to the total lack of interest in the play during the 1918–1939 independence mentioned above, *Antigone* was staged

62 Cf. Axer and Borowska, "Tradition of the Ancient Greek Theatre," 71–73.

63 Cf. Michał Mizera, "Sophocles, *Antigone*," in *Classical Antiquity on the Communist Stage in Poland*, 327.

64 In 1965, 1968, 1973, cf. Raszewska, 30 x WST, 235, 237, 239.

forty-four times: only four times in Warsaw, once by the Television Theatre, and once by the Polish Radio Theatre (both public broadcasters). The vast majority of the remaining productions were staged in smaller provincial centres.

## THE RELEVANCE OF ANCIENT PLAYS TO POLES UNDER COMMUNISM

In his essay *The Issue of Relevance in Theatre*,<sup>65</sup> written in 1946, at the beginning of the period of interest for the present study, Stefan Srebrny, one of the best Polish experts on ancient, as well as modern theatre, an eminent classical philologist, translator of ancient theatre and pre-war theatre director, discusses the idea of political theatre. He is interested in the way it was developed before the war by the German director Erwin Piscator, who thought that staging plays on contemporary hot topics would bring the public to the theatre and would renew vibrant and dynamic relations with the audience. Greek drama and especially Greek comedies reflect the times in which they were written. Part of this reflection is impossible to identify today, as our knowledge of their reality remains only fragmentary. This relevance to the classical audience is not the reason why ancient plays reached the peaks of artistic values.

The theatre is an art; it is ruled, like all arts, according to principles and laws of aesthetics. Moreover, what about relevance? It is neither a plus nor a minus for the artistic value of the play: it is merely a phenomenon of a different nature.<sup>66</sup>

The case of *Antigone* most prominently speaks to the issue of relevance. A theatre director who wanted to stage *Antigone* had the advantage of being able to justify this choice by the guaranteed audience of high-school students and educated intelligentsia; if he could secure known actors, their fans would also be tempted to come. In large centres like Warsaw, or Krakow, something new and original was the ingredient required for success, whether in the attitude towards the dramatic conflicts – who was to be favoured: Antigone, Creon, Haemon; or in the staging itself – scenography, costumes, music, special effects, allusions to current events, etc. Several different translations could be selected, or if none suited the selected vision, the director could adapt, paraphrase, or arrange the text accordingly. There were also political considerations – a strong Creon and an immature and entitled Antigone could please the party and its mouthpiece reviewers, but all sorts of subtle configurations were possible. Morawski and Morstin had shown how to make the play relevant to Poland by adding prologues that from the outset gave a specific tone to the performance.

65 Cf. Stefan Srebrny, *Teatr grecki i polski*, ed. by Szczepan Gąssowski (Warsaw: PWN, 1984), 693–697.

66 Srebrny, *Teatr grecki i polski*, 696–697.

There were also off-stage means like extended booklet programs that, besides the necessary info on the spectacle, could provide the audience as well as the critics, censors, and other stakeholders with an explanation, justification, an advance defense against possible accusations, or facts and information useful for better understanding the play and the director's intentions. The "tragedy of power" naturally contained many elements that one could refer to the current state of affairs; it was up to the director to highlight, or minimise these clues, but in practice, it was even more up to the audience, traditionally sensitive as it was to anything that one could construe as an allusion. The public from experience knew in advance that theatre directors had to toe the line, compromise, exercise diplomacy, and they were certain that the director was able to only allude to his intention, never to speak about it openly. If the message were pro-regime, such caution on the part of the director would be unnecessary; the public accordingly always assumed that the words coming from the stage had a double meaning and reacted accordingly. Not only the audiences but also the censors, and occasionally an accidental witness could contribute to the "shameful impasse, when the entire world drama, from Aeschylus to Shakespeare, to Brecht and Ionesco, became a body of allusions to People's Poland", to repeat after Leszek Kołakowski, quoted in the opening of this article. The need for universal values is a galvanising force that will erupt despite restrictive measures devised against social discontent.

## LIST OF THEATRES BY LOCATION, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER, INCLUDING ANCIENT PLAYS' TITLES AND THE NAMES OF DIRECTORS

### BIAŁYSTOK

*Teatr Dramatyczny im. Aleksandra Węgierki w Białymstoku – Aleksander Węgierko*  
*Dramatic Theatre in Białystok*

Jerzy Zegalski directed Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, opening night 22 May 1965

Stanisław Wieszczycki directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 23 November 1972

Stanisław Wieszczycki directed Seneca's *Phaedra*, opening night 4 January 1974

Wojciech Pisarek directed Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen*, opening night 23 June 1979

### BIELSKO-BIAŁA

*Teatr Polski w Bielsku-Białej – Polish Theatre in Bielsko-Biała*

Józef Para directed Aeschylus' *Persae*, opening night 30 September 1972

### BYDGOSZCZ

*Teatr Polski w Bydgoszczy – Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz*

Stanisław Bugajski directed Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, opening night 2 December 1961

Leszek Czarnota directed Aristophanes' *A Paradise of Lazybones, or the Athenian Democracy* (fragments of *Assemblywomen*, *Knights*, *Clouds*, *Lysistrata*, opening night 25 May 1980)

Hieronim Konieczka directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night December 10, 1982

Marek Mokrowiecki directed Aristophanes' *Knights*, opening night 15 March 1985

#### KRAKOW

*Stary Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej w Krakowie – Helena Modrzejewska Old Theatre in Krakow* (Inaugurated 1 April 1945)

Lidia Zamkow-Słomczyńska directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 4 February 1960

Bogdan Hussakowski directed Euripides' *Troades* (in Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation), opening night 11 February 1967

Zygmunt Hübner directed Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, opening night 19 June 1982;

Andrzej Wajda directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 20 January 1984

*Teatr im. Juliusza Słowackiego w Krakowie – Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Krakow* (Inaugurated 19 February 1945)

Teofil Trzciniński directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 21 September 1945

Mieczysław Górkiewicz directed Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, opening night 20 October 1959

Lidia Zamkow directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 6 April 1968

Jerzy Goliński directed Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, opening night 6 October 1973

Marcel Kochańczyk directed Euripides' *Ion*, opening night 13 June 1976

Aleksandra Domańska directed Euripides' *Troades*, opening night 9 April 1983

*Teatr Ludowy w Nowej Hucie – People's Theatre in Nowa Huta* (Inaugurated 3 December 1955)

Krystyna Skuszanka and Jerzy Krasowski directed Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, opening night 6 May 1960

Olga Lipińska directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, and Piotr Paradowski directed Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, opening night 18 July 1964

Vojo Stankovski directed Homer's *Odyssey*, opening night 15 June 1986

*Teatr Rapsodyczny w Krakowie – Rhapsody Theatre in Krakow* (Inaugurated 1 November 1941, after the war 22 April 1945; closed for political reasons in 1953, the opening night of Aristophanes' *Attic Salt* (a mix of four plays), directed by Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, did not take place; theatre re-opened in 1957 and closed definitively on 5 May 1967)

Mieczysław Kotlarczyk directed Homer's *Odyssey*, opening night 28 June 1958

Mieczysław Kotlarczyk directed Aristophanes' *Attic Salt* (Fragments of several plays), opening night 21 September 1963

Mieczysław Kotlarczyk directed Homer's *Odyssey*, opening night 15 April 1967

*Teatr Rozmaitości w Krakowie – Variety Theatre in Krakow* (opened 1 January 1958, closed 19 June 1973)

Ryszard Smożewski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 27 July 1969

*Teatr 38, Kraków – Theatre 38, Krakow*

Helmut Kajzar directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 2 March 1963

## CZĘSTOCHOWA

*Teatr Miejskie, Częstochowa – Municipal Theatres, Częstochowa* (Inaugurated 3 February 1945; 1 December 1949, the name change to Teatry Dramatyczne – Dramatic Theatres; 2 March 1957, another name change: Teatr Dramatyczny im. Adama Mickiewicza w Częstochowie – Adam Mickiewicz Dramatic Theatre in Częstochowa)

Kazimierz Czyński directed Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, opening night 22 September 1949  
Eugeniusz Aniszczenko directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* [Gromiwoja], opening night 5 November 1955

Wojciech Kopciński directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 19 October 1979

Bogdan Ciosek directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 26 October 1986

Michał Pawlicki directed Plato's *Defence of Socrates*, opening night 17 December 1988

## GDAŃSK

*Teatr Oświatowy Gdańskiego Zespołu Artystycznego – Educational Theatre of the Gdansk Artistic Ensemble*

Malwina Szczepkowska (1909–1977) directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 10 December 1946

*Teatr Wybrzeże Gdańsk – Coast Theatre Gdańsk* (Inaugurated 20 November 1946)

Maria Chodecka directed Plautus' *Menaechmi*, opening night 5 May 1961

Piotr Paradowski directed Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, opening night 19 April 1969

Stanisław Hebanowski directed Euripides' *Helen*, opening night 3 March 1973

Marek Okopiński directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 23 October 1983

Ryszard Ronczewski directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* [Bojomira], opening night 23 August 1986

## GDYNIA

*Teatr Dramatyczny, Gdynia – Dramatic Theatre, Gdynia*

Kazimierz Łastawiecki directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 1 April 1976

Kazimierz Łastawiecki directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* [Gromiwoja], opening night 2 February 1979

*Teatr Muzyczny, Gdynia – Music Theatre, Gdynia*

Pierre Cunliffe directed Seneca's *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 30 November 1986

*Teatr Wybrzeże Gdynia – Coast Theatre Gdynia*

Kazimierz Łastawiecki directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, opening night 2 February 1979

## GNIEZNO

*Teatr im. Aleksandra Fredry, Gniezno – Aleksander Fredro Theatre, Gniezno*

Halina Sokołowska-Łuszczewska directed Plautus' *Amphitryon*, opening night 8 October 1949

Eugeniusz Aniszczenko directed Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, opening night 23 June 1963

Eugeniusz Aniszczenko directed Euripides' *Bacchae*, opening night 8 April 1979

## GORZÓW WIELKOPOLSKI

*Teatr im. Juliusza Osterwy w Gorzowie Wielkopolskim – Juliusz Osterwa Theatre in Gorzów Wielkopolski*

Irena Byrska and Tadeusz Byrski directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 14 March 1964

Wojciech Jesionka directed Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, opening night 25 January 1969

Krystyna Tyszarska directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 30 September 1972

## GRUDZIĄDZ

*Teatr Ziemi Pomorskiej – Theatre of Pomerania, Grudziądz*

Krzysztof Rościszewski directed Sophocles' *Antigone* (in Helmut Kajzar's paraphrase), opening night 13 January 1973

## JELENIA GÓRA

*Teatr Miejski im. Cypriana Kamila Norwida w Jeleniej Górze – Cyprian Kamil Norwid Municipal Theatre in Jelenia Góra*

Janusz Kozłowski directed Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, opening night 18 May 1973

Wojciech Kopciński directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 4 December 1980

Irena Dudzińska directed Sophocles' *Antigone* (in Helmut Kajzar's paraphrase), opening night 22 March 1987

## KATOWICE

*Teatr im. Stanisława Wyspiańskiego w Katowicach – Stanisław Wyspiański Theatre in Katowice* (initially called *Teatr Miejski w Katowicach – Katowice Municipal Theatre*)

Henryk Szletyński directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 12 October 1946;

Mieczysław Daszewski directed Plautus' *Mercator*, opening night 29 April 1960;

Józef Para directed Euripides' *Troades* (in Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation), opening night 16 July 1966

Zofia Petri and Michał Pawlicki directed Plato's *Defence of Socrates*, opening night 6 August 1981;

Jan Sycz directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 7 October 1982

## KIELCE

*Teatr im. Stefana Żeromskiego w Kielcach – Stefan Żeromski Theatre in Kielce* (initially called *Teatr Województwa Kieleckiego – Theatre of Kielce Voivodeship*)

Irena Byrska directed Aristophanes' *Peace*, opening night 17 September 1956, staged together with a selection of Greek lyric poetry (Sappho, Pindar, Simonides, Anacreon, and Solon) directed by Tadeusz Byrski and Leon Witkowski

Tadeusz Byrski directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 1965

Jarosław Kusza directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 19 July 1978

## KOSZALIN-SŁUPSK

*Bałtycki Teatr Dramatyczny w Koszalinie – Słupsku Baltic Dramatic Theatre in Koszalin-Słupsk*

Lech Komarnicki directed Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, opening night 12 June 1965

Włodzimierz Herman directed Aristophanes' *Plutos*, opening night 20 July 1968

Andrzej Przybylski directed Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, opening night 17 April 1971



## LEGNICA

*Teatr Dramatyczny, Legnica – Dramatic Theatre, Legnica*

Józef Jasielski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 17 December 1989

## LUBLIN

*Teatr Miejski, since 1949 im. Juliusza Osterwy w Lublinie – Juliusz Osterwa Municipal Theatre in Lublin (until 1949 Municipal Theatre)*

Józef Jasielski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 21 February 1971

Andrzej Kruczyński directed Plautus' *Mercator*, opening night 27 June 1974

*Lubelska Szkoła Dramatyczna, Lublin – Dramatic School in Lublin (A private dramatic school connected to the Municipal Theatre, active from 1945 to 1949)*

Irena Parandowska directed Homer's *Odyssey*, opening night 11 October 1947

## ŁÓDŹ

*Teatr im. Stefana Jaracza w Łodzi – Stefan Jaracz Theatre in Łódź (Inaugurated in 1888 under the name of Teatr Polski; during World War II the building was taken over by Theater zum Litzmannstadt – a German theatre; 1945–1949: Polish Army Theatre [Teatr Wojska Polskiego] inaugurated 26 January 1945, ended activities in Łódź on 31 August 1949, and moved to Warsaw; 1 September 1949, Stefan Jaracz Theatre in Łódź began operations)*

Helmut Kajzar directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 24 October 1970

Jerzy Grzegorzewski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 8 September 1972

*Teatr im. Juliana Tuwima, Łódź – Julian Tuwim Theatre, Łódź (later Teatr Studyjny '83 im. Juliana Tuwima – Julian Tuwim Studio Theatre '83)*

Józef Jasielski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 27 February 1981

Marek Mokrowiecki directed Aristophanes' *Knights*, opening night 30 May 1989

*Teatr Nowy w Łodzi – New Theatre in Łódź (Inaugurated 12 November 1949)*

Kazimierz Dejmek directed Plato's *Defence of Socrates*, opening night 11 September 1960; another staging of the same play took place at the same theatre, opening night 23 November 1975

Kazimierz Dejmek directed Aristophanes' *Frogs*, opening night 15 February 1961

Aleksander Strokowski directed Euripides' *Troades* (in Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation), opening night 16 April 1966

Janusz Łosiński directed Plautus' *Casina*, opening night 19 June 1966

Jerzy Hoffman directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 3 March 1974

*Teatr Powszechny Towarzystwa Uniwersytetu Robotniczego (TUR) w Łodzi – Theatre for All, the Society for Workers' University in Łódź (Inaugurated 8 March 1945, but already in the fall the same year became the second stage for Polish Army Theatre; Became a separate entity in 1948/49, when the Polish Army Theatre moved to Warsaw)*

Roman Sykała directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, opening night 20 June 1970

*Teatr Ziemi Łódzkiej – Theatre of the Łódź Region, Łódź* (Inaugurated 2 May 1953, as a touring theatre; in 1980 ended its activities; in 1983 the building was taken over by Julian Tuwim '83 Studio Theatre; in 1998 became the property of the State Higher School of Theatre and Film)

Aleksander Strokowski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 19 February 1966

#### OLSZTYN/ELBLĄG

*Teatr im. Stefana Jaracza w Olsztynie – Stefan Jaracz Theatre in Olsztyn*

Tadeusz Kozłowski directed Plato's *Defence of Socrates*, opening night 19 December 1965

Bohdan Głuszczyk directed Aeschylus' *Danaids*, *Seven against Thebes*, and *Oresteia*, opening night 27 March 1968

Andrzej Przybylski directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 5 December 1970

Andrzej Kruczyński directed Seneca's *Medea* in his paraphrase, opening night 2 July 1976

Krzysztof Rościszewski directed Sophocles' *Antigone* (in Helmut Kajzar's paraphrase), opening night 24 January 1980

#### OPOLE

*Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej w Opolu – Opole Region Theatre*

Stanisław Wieszczycki directed Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* under the title *Against Thebes*, opening night 20 December 1961

*Teatr im. Jana Kochanowskiego, Opole – Jan Kochanowski Theatre, Opole*

Stanisław Wieszczycki directed a mix of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, *Peace*, and *Lysistrata* under the title *War Shattered*, opening night 12 July 1970

Bohdan Cybulski directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 15 September 1979

Jan Nowara directed Euripides' *Electra*, opening night 11 March 1989

#### PŁOCK

*Teatr Dramatyczny im. Jerzego Szaniawskiego w Płocku – Jerzy Szaniawski Dramatic Theatre in Płock*

Andrzej Koper directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 19 December 1987

#### POZNAŃ

*Teatr Nowy w Poznaniu – New Theatre in Poznań* (2nd stage of Teatr Polski)

Izabella Cywińska-Adamska directed Sophocles' *Electra*, opening night 23 April 1970

Wojciech Szulczyński directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 19 May 1979

*Teatr Polski w Poznaniu – Polish Theatre in Poznań*

Jan Perz directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 25 May 1960

Jowita Pięńkiewicz directed Euripides' *Troades* (in Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation), opening night 16 November 1966

Leszek Czarnota directed Aristophanes' *A Paradise of Lazybones, or the Athenian Democracy* (fragments of *Assemblywomen*, *Knights*, *Clouds*, *Lysistrata*), opening night 12 November 1982

Jacek Pazdro directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 18 January 1985

*Teatr Satyry w Poznaniu – Satirical Theatre in Poznań*

Mieczysław Daszewski directed Plautus' *Mercator*, opening night 10 March 1961

## RZESZÓW

*Teatr Wandy Siemaszkowej w Rzeszowie – Wanda Siemaszkowa Theatre in Rzeszów*

Jerzy Pleśniarowicz directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 7 September 1962

Jacek Andrucki directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 31 October 1982

## SŁUPSK

*Słupski Teatr Dramatyczny – Dramatic Theatre in Słupsk*

Jowita Pieńkiewicz directed Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen*, opening night 30 October 1981

Ryszard Jaśniewicz directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 17 March 1984

Ryszard Jaśniewicz directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 23 November 1985

## SOSNOWIEC

*Teatr Zagłębia w Sosnowcu – Coal Fields Theatre in Sosnowiec*

Antoni Słociński directed Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, opening night 31 January 1965

Antoni Słociński directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, opening night 20 December 1975

## SZCZECIN

*Teatr Krypta w Szczecinie – Crypt Theatre in Szczecin*

Plato's *Defence of Socrates* staged, opening night 12 October 1970

Ireneusz Szmidt directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 16 June 1975

*Teatr Polski w Szczecinie – Polish Theatre in Szczecin*

Aleksander Strokowski directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 20 October 1973

Janusz Bukowski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 3 November 1977

Andrzej May directed Plato's *Defence of Socrates*, opening night 10 October 1987

*Teatr Współczesny w Szczecinie – Contemporary Theatre in Szczecin*

Marek Okopiński directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 20 September 1968

## TARNÓW

*Teatr Ziemi Krakowskiej im. Ludwika Solskiego, Tarnów – Ludwik Solski Theatre of the Kraków Region* (Inaugurated 1 January 1945, as the Municipal Theatre; nationalised on 1 January 1957)

Kazimierz Barnaś directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 7 February 1964

Jacek Andrucki directed Euripides' *Troades* (in Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation), opening night 11 October 1980

## TORUŃ

*Teatr im. Wilama Horzycy w Toruniu – Wilam Horzyca Theatre in Toruń*

Lech Komarnicki directed Euripides' *Troades*, opening night 8 June 1973

Michał Rosiński directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 18 April 1975

## WAŁBRZYCH

*Teatry Dolnośląskie, Wałbrzych – Lower Silesian Theatres, Wałbrzych* (1964–1979 changed its name to Teatr Dramatyczny – Dramatic Theatre; in 1979 became Teatr Dramatyczny im. Jerzego Szaniawskiego – Jerzy Szaniawski Dramatic Theatre)

Michał Bogusławski directed Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, opening night 5 May 1962;

Irena Byrska directed Menander's *Dyskolos*, opening night 21 December 1969

Maryna Broniewska directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 26 July 1973

## WARSAW

*Teatr Adekwatny, Warszawa – Adequate Theatre, Warsaw*

Henryk Boukołowski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 4 September 1970

Magda Teresa Wójcik directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 14 January 1979

*Teatr Ateneum im. Stefana Jaracza w Warszawie – Stefan Jaracz Theatre Atheneum in Warsaw* (Inaugurated 25 July 1951)

Kazimierz Dejmek directed Plato's *Defence of Socrates*, opening night 16 May 1964

*Teatr Dramatyczny w Warszawie – Dramatic Theatre in Warsaw* (Inaugurated 22 July 1955)

Konrad Swinarski directed Aristophanes' *Birds* in Andrzej Jarecki's and Agnieszka Osiecka's adaptation, opening night 19 March 1960

Ludwik René directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 27 May 1961

Jerzy Markuszewski directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 17 January 1962

Stanisław Brejdygant directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 13 May 1978

Gustaw Holoubek directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 21 April 1982

Paweł Pochwała directed Aristophanes' *Birds*, opening night 17 February 1988

*Teatr Narodowy w Warszawie – National Theatre in Warsaw* (Inaugurated 13 December 1949)

Kazimierz Dejmek directed Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Euripides' *Electra*, and Aristophanes' *Frogs*, opening night 5 June 1963

Adam Hanuszkiewicz directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 11 January 1973

*Teatr Polski w Warszawie – Polish Theatre in Warsaw* (Inaugurated 17 January 1946)

Arnold Szyfman directed Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, opening night 20 March 1947

Stefan Burczyk and Teresa Żukowska directed Sophocles' *Antigone* in December 1957, as a State Higher School of Theatre diploma performance, stage of Teatr Kameralny

Czesław Wołłejko directed Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, opening night 27 February 1963

Jan Kulczyński directed Euripides' *Troades* (in Jean-Paul Sartre's adaptation), opening night 23 March 1966

Michał Pawlicki directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 4 January 1969

*Teatr Powszechny w Warszawie – Theatre for All in Warsaw* (Inaugurated 2 February 1945)

Maryna Broniewska directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* [Gromiwoja], opening night 10 October 1959

Mieczysław Daszewski directed Plautus' *Mercator*, opening night 28 May 1961

Irena Babel directed Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, opening night 6 September 1962

Ryszard Major directed Aristophanes' *Birds*, opening night 27 February 1975  
 Helmut Kajzar directed his paraphrase of Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 18 June 1982  
 Zygmunt Hübner directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 25 March 1988

*Teatr Rozmaitości, Warszawa – Variety Theatre, Warsaw*

Giovanni Pampiglione directed Aristophanes' *Frogs*, opening night 16 February 1963

*Teatr Studio, Warszawa – Studio Theatre, Warsaw*

Maciej Z. Bordowicz directed Euripides' *Hercules Furens*, opening night 22 December 1973  
 Hanna Skarżanka directed Euripides' *Medea*, opening night 5 February 1977  
 Maciej Z. Bordowicz directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 31 March 1977

*Teatr Ziemi Mazowieckiej w Warszawie – Theatre of Mazovia in Warsaw (Inaugurated 1 January 1956; in 1978 TZM was renamed Teatr Popularny – Popular Theatre)*

Krystyna Berwińska-Bargiełowska and Stanisław Bugajski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 26 April 1969  
 Andrzej Ziębiński directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 10 October 1986

WROCLAW

*Drugie Studio Wroclawskie – Wrocław Second Studio (The stage existed from 1985–1989)*

Zbigniew Cynkutis directed Seneca's *Phaedra* (I version), opening night 24 January 1986  
 Mirosław Kocur directed Seneca's *Phaedra* (II version), opening night 2 May 1986  
 Mirosław Kocur directed Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, opening night 25 October 1986

*Teatry Dramatyczne, Wrocław – Dramatic Theatres, Wrocław*

Włodzimierz Herman directed Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen*, opening night 16 January 1968

*Teatr Kalambur, Wrocław – Pun Theatre, Wrocław*

Włodzimierz Herman directed Aristophanes' *Clouds*, opening night 23 March 1964

*Teatr Polski we Wrocławiu – Polish Theatre in Wrocław (Inaugurated 20 December 1950)*

Włodzimierz Herman directed Aristophanes' *The Assemblywomen* with fragments of *Frogs*, opening night 13 January 1968  
 Helmut Kajzar directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 15 May 1971  
 Piotr Paradowski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 3 March 1980  
 Ewa Bułhak directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 26 February 1984

*Teatr Rozmaitości we Wrocławiu – Variety Theatre in Wrocław (Inaugurated as the Puppet and Actor Theatre on 18 October 1946; nationalized 1 January 1950 under the name: Teatr Młodego Widza – Young Viewer's Theatre; on 1 January 1957, it became the Państwowy Teatr Rozmaitości – State Variety Theatre; in 1967 another name change: Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny im. Edmunda Wiercińskiego we Wrocławiu – Edmund Wierciński Contemporary Theatre in Wrocław)*

Halina Dzieduszycka directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 6 June 1964  
 Raul Zermeño directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, opening night 17 March 1973

Józef Para directed Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, opening night 31 October 1973

Travis Preston directed Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, opening night 20 May 1979

#### ZABRZE

*Teatr Nowy im. Gustawa Morcinka w Zabrzu – Gustaw Morcinek New Theatre in Zabrze* (inaugurated as Teatr Nowy 7 October 1959)

Mieczysław Daszewski directed Plautus' *Mercator*, opening night 30 April 1977

#### ZAKOPANE

*Teatr im. Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza, Zakopane – Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz Theatre, Zakopane*

Andrzej Dziuk directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* under the title *e. g. Oedipus*, opening night 18 December 1987

#### ZIELONA GÓRA

*Teatr Ziemi Lubuskiej – Lubusz Region Theatre, Zielona Góra* (since 1964 called Lubuski Teatr im. Leona Kruczkowskiego – Leon Kruczkowski Theatre of the Lubusz Region in Zielona Góra)

Jerzy Zegalski directed Sophocles' *Electra*, opening night 4 June 1960

Zbigniew Stok directed Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, opening night 14 May 1967

Jerzy Hoffman directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, opening night 22 May 1971

Andrzej Kruczyński directed Plautus' *Pseudolus*, opening night 22 March 1975

Jerzy Głapa directed Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, opening night 19 February 1977

Mieczysław Daszewski directed Plautus' *Mercator*, opening night 18 February 1978

Wojciech Maryański directed Sophocles' *Electra*, opening night 30 April 1982

Krzysztof Rotnicki directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 28 February 1987

#### SCHOOLS OF DRAMATIC ARTS

*Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna im. Ludwika Solskiego w Krakowie (PWST) – Ludwik Solski State Higher School of Theatre in Krakow*

Mieczysław Górkiewicz directed Sophocles' *Electra*, opening night 26 April 1962

*Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna i Filmowa, later Filmowa, Telewizyjna i Teatralna im. Leona Schillera w Łodzi – Leon Schiller State Higher School of Film, Theatre and Television in Łódź*

Kazimierz Brodzikowski directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 27 October 1962

Jadwiga Chojnacka directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, opening night 27 October 1970

#### RADIO AND TELEVISION

*Teatr Telewizji – Television Theatre*<sup>67</sup> – in 1953, TT produced its first play: "Okno w lesie [A Window in the Woods] by Soviet authors Leonid Rachmanov and Yevgeniy Ryss

67 *Teatr Telewizji* – originally part of state television, later public broadcaster – has produced more than four-thousand plays during well over half a century. Ancient drama constituted a small margin of this output. In 1999 a specially created Akademia Teatru Telewizji, composed of artists, scholars, and entrepreneurs, identified one hundred key spectacles among all the productions of Teatr Telewizji, the so-called "golden hundred." None of the ancient plays staged by the theatre figure on this golden list.

Maryna Broniewska directed Aristophanes' *Peace*, broadcast 1954<sup>68</sup>  
 Wanda Laskowska directed a selection of Sappho's poetry, broadcast 18 June 1960  
 Mieczysław Daszewski directed Plautus' *Mercator*, broadcast on 23 September 1960  
 Ewa Bonacka directed Homer's *Odyssey*, broadcast 15 April 1962  
 Barbara Borman directed Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, opening night 16 December 1963  
 Olga Lipińska directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, broadcast 19 December 1966  
 Jerzy Gruza directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, broadcast 18 September 1967  
 Adam Hanuszkiewicz directed Euripides' *Electra*, broadcast 27 March 1968  
 Maryna Broniewska directed *Odyssey* under the title *Return to Ithaca*, broadcast 21 October 1968  
 Jan Maciejewski directed Euripides' *Andromache*, broadcast 16 February 1970  
 Henryk Boukołowski and Magda Teresa Wójcik directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, broadcast 18 June 1972  
 Stanisław Brejdygant directed Euripides' *Medea*, broadcast 15 March 1974  
 Lidia Zamkow directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, broadcast 24 March 1975  
 Jerzy Wójcik directed Euripides' *Medea*, broadcast 6 February 1978  
 Antoni Halor directed Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, broadcast 16 March 1979  
 Jerzy Gruza directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, broadcast 23 March 1981

*Teatr Polskiego Radia – Polish Radio Theatre*

Rena Tomaszewska directed Homer's *Odyssey*, adapted by Irena Parandowska under the title *Odysseus on Ithaca*, broadcast in 1953, available online  
 Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* – the name of the director unknown – broadcast in 1956, available online  
 Jerzy Rakowiecki directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, broadcast in 1956, available online  
 Tadeusz Byrski directed Aristophanes' *Peace*, broadcast in 1966  
 Tadeusz Bradecki directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, text adapted by Tadeusz Byrski, broadcast 1 January 1969  
 Tadeusz Byrski directed Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, broadcast 1969 (recording available online)  
 Helmut Kajzar directed Euripides' *Helen*, broadcast 1975  
 Jerzy Rakowiecki directed Euripides' *Cyclops*, broadcast 1978  
 Tadeusz Łomnicki directed Plato's *Defence of Socrates* under the title *Socrates' Victory*, broadcast 4 May 1980  
 Zdzisław Dąbrowski directed Euripides' *Suppliants*, broadcast 1981  
 Wojciech Maciejewski directed Euripides' *Electra*, broadcast 1981  
 Henryk Rozen directed Sophocles' *Antigone*, broadcast 1984

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68 This production is mentioned only on two pages of the public television's (TVP) website.

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## SUMMARY

### *Ancient Plays on Stage in Communist Poland*

A recently published analytical register of all ancient plays and plays inspired by antiquity staged in Poland during communism, provided factual material for this study of ancient drama in Polish theatre controlled by the state and of its evolution from the end of WW2 to the collapse of the Soviet regime. The quasi-total devastation of theatrical infrastructure and loss of talent caused by the war, combined with an immediate seizing of control over culture by Communist authorities, played a crucial role in the shaping of the reborn stage and its repertoire. All Aeschylus' plays were performed at various points during the period, four out of seven Sophocles' tragedies – with *Antigone*, a special case, by far the most popular – about half of the extant Euripides' drama, some Aristophanes, very little of Roman tragedy (Seneca) and a bit more of Roman comedy (Plautus). The ancient plays were produced in big urban centres, as well as in the provinces, and nationally, by the state radio and later television. The various theatres and the most important directors involved in these productions are discussed and compared, with a chronological and geographical list of venues and plays provided.

## POVZETEK

### *Antična dramatika na odrih komunistične Poljske*

Gradivo za pričujočo študijo je priskrbel nedavno objavljeni analitični register vseh antičnih dram in z antiko navdihnenih predstav na Poljskem v obdobju komunizma. Posvečena je antični dramatici v gledališčih na Poljskem, ki jih je obvladovala država, in razvoju tega področja od konca druge svetovne vojne do sesutja sovjetskega režima. Skoraj popolno uničenje gledališke infrastrukture in izguba talenta, ki ju je prinesla vojna, sta imela skupaj s takojšnjim prevzemom nadzora nad kulturo s strani komunističnih oblasti ključno vlogo pri oblikovanju ponovno rojenega gledališča in njegovega repertoarja. V tem obdobju so uprizorili vse Ajshilove igre, štiri od sedmih Sofoklovih tragedij (pri čemer je bila daleč najbolj priljubljena *Antigona*, ki je poseben primer), približno polovico ohranjenih Evripidovih dram, nekaj Aristofana, peščico rimskih tragedij (Seneka) in nekaj več rimskih komedij (Plavt). Antične drame so uprizarjali v velikih mestnih središčih, pa tudi na podeželju in v nacionalnih medijih, na državnem radiu in pozneje na televiziji. Članek obravnava in primerja različna gledališča in najpomembnejše režiserje, ki so sodelovali pri teh predstavah, ter predstavi kronološko-geografski seznam prizorišč in predstav.