

# Polish Plays 2020

AGENCJA DRAMATU I TEATRU **ADiT**

A D iT

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**The ADiT Agency for Drama and Theatre** has been promoting Polish and foreign plays for 25 years. Today, in the time of a pandemic, when we are all forced into social isolation, we have decided to lift a certain barrier and open up – that is why for the first time we would like to present you with a selection of contemporary plays by Polish authors who we represent. Many plays have been translated into one or more languages and have been produced outside Poland. Among them are also plays awarded with many prestigious prizes.

We invite you to read the dramas' summaries. Among them you will find both the plays of renowned authors, who can be considered as the canon of contemporary Polish drama, and the new plays of the young generation of authors, which deserve to gain recognition also outside Poland. The choice of topics covered by the authors is wide: Among the works we will find texts that are feminist, political, pop culture-inspired, comedies... In this year's edition of the catalogue, we decided to particularly honour Malina Prześluga, who was this year's laureate of the prestigious Gdynia Drama Award for her play entitled *The Retard*.

If you are interested in a play that is not available in a particular language, we can help you. We will help you to contact the relevant institution that could subsidise the translation. We also encourage you to personally contact the Adam Mickiewicz Institute: [iam.pl/en](http://iam.pl/en).

We provide assistance and repertoire advice on the Polish contemporary work of the represented authors. You can contact us by e-mail, writing to [agencja@adit.art.pl](mailto:agencja@adit.art.pl). We invite you to use the English version of our website ([adit.art.pl/en](http://adit.art.pl/en)), which includes a search engine dedicated to our plays. The website will soon be updated, making it more functional. You can also follow us at [facebook.com/AgencjaADiT](https://facebook.com/AgencjaADiT) (only in Polish, but we regularly publish interesting audiovisual materials).

We hope you will find our selection inspiring and wish you perseverance in these difficult times.

You can also order plays by writing to us:  
[elzbieta.manthey@adit.art.pl](mailto:elzbieta.manthey@adit.art.pl) – boss  
[marta.orczykowska@adit.art.pl](mailto:marta.orczykowska@adit.art.pl) – agent / editor  
[agata.tomasiewicz@adit.art.pl](mailto:agata.tomasiewicz@adit.art.pl) – agent / editor

Best regards



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### XIII GDYNIA DRAMA AWARD FOR MALINA PRZEŚLUGA

**Malina Prześluga became this year's winner of the Gdynia Drama Award, the most important Polish distinction for authors of dramatic texts, awarded for the 13th time. She won thanks to her drama *The Retard*.**

Prześluga is the author of eleven books for children (including *Bajka and Majka, A Tale of Patrick the Hair, A Tale of an Old Granny and the Moth Zbyszek, Ziuzia* – awarded with the title of Book of the Year by the Polish Section of IBBY). Her dramas are published in *Dialog (Everything's Fine, Derelict, The Dog who Bites His Own Leg)* and the collection of *New Plays for Children*, including a volume printed in 2011, containing seven works (fairy tales) written by Malina Prześluga especially for the Children's Art Centre in Poznań, entitled *New Fairy Tales for Children*. Performances based on her plays are staged in Baj Pomorski in Toruń, Osterwa Theatre in Lublin, Wybrzeże Theatre in Gdańsk, Puppet and Actor Theatre in Opole, Norwid Theatre in Jelenia Góra, Lubuski Theatre in Zielona Góra, Polish Theatre in Poznań, Guliwer Theatre in Warsaw. She is a laureate of the Young Art Medal, a winner of many awards and distinctions in subsequent editions of the Competition for Theatre Art for Children and Teenagers organized by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań. In 2013, she won the main prize, as well as audience and journalists prizes in the 'Metaphors of Reality' competition for her drama *Sour Milk*. In 2015, she won second prize (the first prize was not awarded) in the closed competition of the Wrocław Contemporary Theatre *Strefa\_Kontaktu\_2016* for the drama *The President's Suit*. Also in 2015, she was awarded by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Prof. Małgorzata Omilanowska, for her achievements in the field of literature and drama for children during the Evening of Cultural Creators for Children. She is the winner of the Poznań City of Arts Award (2020). Every year, several of her works take part in the National Competition for the Staging of Polish Contemporary Drama.

Malina Prześluga has written about sixty plays for children, teenagers and adults, translated into several languages, including French, English, German, Croatian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Belarusian, Russian and Hungarian. She also writes lyrics, e.g. for performances directed by Robert Jarosz: *Dudi without a Feather* at the Baj Pomorski Theatre in Toruń (2010) and *Puss in Boots* at the Groteska Theatre in Kraków (2008). Most of the plays, but also her prose (published by the Trashka Publishing House) are addressed to children, but from the very beginning, the author addresses part of her work to adult audiences.

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Photo: Roman Jocher

Recently, Prześluga's texts are often present on the web as radio plays and so-called readings, e.g. *Derelict* within the project Bufor Kultury – An Internet Stage, *The Retard* at the Teatr Miejski in Gdynia. In Teatar & TD in Croatia, the reading of the play *Tenderness* took place as part of the Croatian International Theatre Institute Center project. There are rumors that Zagreb's theatre is considering staging the drama – of course we keep our fingers crossed for this to happen.

Prześluga's dramas for adults are constructed like ancient tragedies. Toxic emotions, loneliness, lack of understanding, they all lead to tragic consequences. Fatum is inevitable regardless of the decisions of the protagonists, although the author does not propose a clear interpretation of her texts. Prześluga rejects patterns, gives the viewer various clues, thoughts, plays with conventions. The narrative often goes from the first to the third person, which at these moments distances the viewer from the character. She manipulates time, which she does not perceive linearly – often different time planes overlap. The reality that has been displaced turns out to be untrue and the present time does not really exist. Death plays an important role in her dramas. She also brings this topic back to the plays for children, making it just a part of life. In plays for an adult viewer, death is a catalyst for action, a kind of liberation from the current situation. It is not considered in ethical or eschatological terms, it is absurd and grotesque.

In her latest text, which won the Gdynia Drama Award, the author addresses the important and difficult subject of intellectual disabilities. It is not just a sad story about exclusion. It reveals our approach to disability and drives us out of the comfort zone. It literally shows the protectionism on the part of privileged groups and the dreams of the excluded. The play can also be read on other levels, e.g. referring to politics or social class. The jury of the award also decided to acknowledge the text for its formal qualities – “a clearly defined language, a convincing performance, and, finally, stage potential, brought out during the reading”.

Luckily, the author presents a more positive world view in her work for children. She can write about difficult matters, at the same time entertaining young viewers. Their protagonists look for and often find positive solutions to problems, so the endings of these texts are optimistic.

See more on page 35.



### MARIUSZ BABICKI

Born in 1990. He studied acting at the Theatre Academy in Warsaw. He received a scholarship from the SPOT private theatre school in Krakow. Participant of the Artur Pałyga School of Drama (Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz). Graduate of Theatre Studies at the University of Gdańsk. Co-founder of the A.YES! group in Trójmiasto (Tricity).

Plays:

- *Odysseus Geron* (written together with Paweł Niewiadomy, semi-final of the Gdynia Drama Award, radio play on Radio Gdańsk, audience award at the Two Theatres Festival 2015)
- *In Search of the Lady of Spades* (the final of the one-act competition in Och-Teatr, the final of the Word/Actor/Meeting competition)
- *Pat-a-Cake* (written together with Paweł Niewiadomy, the semi-final of the Gdynia Drama Award, performative reading during the Premiere Festival (Festiwal Prapremier) in Bydgoszcz, at the PC Drama in the Żak Club in Gdańsk and the New Theatre Festival in Rzeszów)
- *Art on Credit* (semifinal of the Gdynia Drama Award)

#### ***Art on Credit***

Original title: *Sztuka na kredyt*

Genre: comedy

Additional info: The play made it to the semi-finals of the Gdynia Drama Award

Cast: 2F, 2M

Premiere: 09.2016, PC Drama, Klub Żak, dir. Tomasz Kaczorowski

She and He want to get divorced, but unfortunately, as is often the case now, their mortgage ties them together forever. He tries to write a computer game that will conquer the world and allow for the repayment of the loan, but she does not have that much patience and decides to take matters into her own hands. One day she shows up at the apartment with a safe that was robbed from a bank. Now the spouses are wed to each other by complicity in crime. As if that wasn't enough, they are being pursued by an inexperienced Detective and Amor, who is threatened with dismissal if He and She split up. When it turns out that all the protagonists are just playing a computer game, the situation gets even more complicated.

The incredible twists and turns of the action keep you at the edge of your seat until the last scene, and the funny and light dialogues that sparkle with wit and finesse provide a perfect opportunity for actors to show off their skills.

***Queen of S.***

Original title: Królowa Ś.

Genre: crime fairy tale

Cast: 3F, 3M

Premiere: planned for 10.2020, Kubuś Theatre in Kielce

A wonderful reworking of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, full of humour and witty dialogues. Little boy Kay is missing. His friend Gerda is in a coma. There wouldn't be anything unusual about it if it weren't for the fact that the girl was found near her house, in the middle of summer, with severe frostbite on her feet. A man named Andersen hires the best detectives in the city to investigate this case: Shnauzer Holmes and Special Agent Cat Cooper. Each of them has different working methods (and interesting intertextual connotations), easily recognized by adult viewers. Will everything end well this time, as in the original play, and will the characters live happily ever after?

**ANNA BURZYŃSKA**

Playwright, writer, professor at the Faculty of Polish Studies at the Jagiellonian University, head of the Department of Literature Theory, and former literary director of the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Krakow. She is also the author of scholarly treatises and books on contemporary theory of literature, postmodern philosophy and postmodern art. She received numerous scientific, literary and dramaturgical awards. What's more, she was a juror at many theatre and film festivals. She has also cooperated with radio and television, as well as theatre and film schools throughout Poland. Author of novels, short stories and plays, translated into several languages and staged many times in theatres in Poland, abroad, and on Polish radio and television, she has published two volumes of dramas: *Nothingland. Four Plays (Nicland)* and *Los hombres al borde de un ataque de nervios (Mężczyźni na skraju załamania nerwowego)*, which was translated in 2007 into Spanish by J. Bielak and X. Farré for the Association of Spanish Directors, Madrid. Burzyńska is also a member of the European Federation of Theatre Authors' Societies (FATE) based in Madrid.

**Accompanist**

Original title: *Akompaniator*

Genre: crime fairy tale

Cast: 1F, 1M

Premiere: 11.2008, Słowacki Theatre in Kraków, dir. Józef Opalski, then staged in Słupsk, Warszawa, Poznań, Toruń and abroad (e.g. in Salzburg, Austria)

Translation: German

There are two characters: 55-year-old opera singer and her accompanist – man of the same age. He's been accompanying the singer for 30 years and is hopelessly in love with her, but he's never spoken a single word to her. Finally, he decides to tell her about his feelings, but chooses the worst possible moment for that – and this is the beginning of the play, which starts as a comedy and evolves to become a psychological thriller.

At the beginning, the singer seems to be the main character of the play and the one who controls the situation. She ignores his feelings, has her own priorities (work, work, work, and finding younger and younger lovers). She is not interested to hear what he has to say and gives him three minutes for that. But while listening, she is shocked how much he knows about her life and, to her utter surprise, realizes that it's been him who decided about her contracts and personal relationships. Gradually, the shy, sentimental man reveals his disturbing, psychopathic personality. We find out he has created a fictitious world in which he cooks and buys clothes for his beloved woman, goes to sleep with her, discusses music and shares with her all his mundane life. As the singer sees the madness in the man, she gets more and more scared. She feels trapped and desperately tries to find a way out of the situation. She stands on the window sill, threatening to jump, but he convinces her it's not high enough and she'll only end up in a wheelchair having him to take care of her. The woman then gives up and tells him she's ready to marry him. Will this make the man happy? Will it be "happily ever after"? Get ready for a surprise.

See also: <https://www.kleinstheater.at/programm/stuecke/615-der-begleiter/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Znv5iiuo4I>

***The Night Doorman and the Final Woman***

Original title: *Nocny portier i kobieta finalna*

Genre: dark comedy

Cast: 1F, 1M (+a dead body, male, middle-aged)

The night porter for a large company – an eternally unlucky man who is not even able to record the last goodbye to his mother's answering machine – decides to commit suicide at work. The final step is made impossible for him by an unexpected appearance of an attractive woman. She calls herself the Final Woman because every single one of her men lost his life due to an accident or a heart attack. The woman is tired of the deaths that follow her and, in order to break the streak of bad luck, she decides to commit herself to the biggest loser in town. Google points her to the Porter, to whom she declares that the next day she will move into his apartment, they will get married and have a wedding.

Just like in every real black comedy, the corpses fall in great number in Anna Burzyńska's play. The first one is, as it later turns out, Porter's CEO, who, jealously following the woman, slipped on a rotten kiwi. What to do with the corpse? – the Porter is wondering hysterically. The Final Woman is the one who suggests a little role swap: since the Porter is strikingly similar to the CEO, all he has to do is put on his clothes and try to figure out the situation. However, being president is not all that easy – it means a dozen children, at least as many jealous lovers and the mafia breathing down his neck. The Porter plays his role so credibly that he eventually falls prey to the jealous Final Woman. Although he is rescued by a bullet-proof vest, he eventually dies slipping on a rotten kiwi. So how can you not believe in fate?



**KATARZYNA DWORAK-WOLAK & PAWEŁ WOLAK**

Since the beginning of their artistic career, they have been associated with the Helena Modrzejewska Theatre in Legnica as actors. Each of them has over seventy theatre premieres and numerous individual and group awards under their belt. In 2007, they wrote their first play *Sami*. In 2010, another jointly written text was created – *Pracopospolita*, staged at the theatre in



Legnica in 2010, directed by the authors. The play was presented at the festival Presented Reality, where it received an individual acting award. They usually write together, signing the plays as PiK (Paweł and Kasia). *The Rural Tales* trilogy was inaugurated in December 2013 in Legnica with the premiere of the play *A Road Slippery with Grass. The Time a Devil Passed Through the Village*. The text was awarded in the National Competition for the Staging of Polish Contemporary Drama as the best dramatic text, and the Legnica performance at the festival Presented Reality in Zabrze received an award for the text, staging, roles and set design. *When the Sleep Comes* is a beautiful story about difficult love, loss and maladjustment, in which comedy mixes with tragedy. It had its premiere at the Lubuski Theatre in Zielona Góra in September 2015. At the festival of contemporary drama Presented Reality, the play received awards: for the text, direction, audience and several individual acting awards. The third part – *Sometimes the Moon Shines from Down Below* – is a story about a family. The play focuses on the description of relations between brothers. The play had its premiere at the Lubuski Theatre in September 2016.

***A Road Slippery with Grass. The Time a Devil Passed Through a Village...***

Original title: *Droga śliska od traw. Jak to diabeł wsią się przeszedł...*

Genre: drama

Cast: 4F, 7M

Premiere: December 2013, Modrzejewska Theatre in Legnica

On Christmas Eve, Bogdan returns to the village. From prison. He's coming back and he's disturbing the festive mood. Fear has once again entered the hearts of the villagers. The only person who is not afraid of the newcomer is Jasiek. He's got his faults, and he's impulsive and ready to fight. Strict and brutal for his own family, however, he has some sense of justice in him. And a weakness for his sister, Sabinka. He resists, but finally accepts her relationship with Paul, Jehovah's son. But evil is hard to stop. Bogdan sets fire to Jehovah's possessions, and the barn, grain, and cows go up in smoke. Everyone knows he did it, but they remain silent. They fear for their lives and their loved ones. Acceptance of evil triggers greater evil. Bogdan murders Jehovah and Paul. Jasiek finds the murderer's bloody clothes by the river and sets off to meet him. He is overpowered by Bogdan and his wife, Marysia, who, like a hypnotized woman,

has passed to his side. They want to hang Jasiak. In the barn. Quickly, don't let him suffer, because he was good to them... Meanwhile, Jasiak's mother brings the whole village to the rescue. With pitchforks, stanchions, shovels. They've already found Jehovah and Paul's corpses. Bogdan tries to save himself by jumping into the river, but the peasants do not let him go ashore. He's sinking. The village doesn't go to communion for a year, because the priest wouldn't give the absolution anyway. And then a big flood washes half the village away. Is that God's punishment? Have the trespasses been redeemed? Evil driven away? Or is it just lurking and waiting...

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvlgJBE5WSY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7csShSmVrg>

### ***Sometimes the Moon Shines from Down Below***

Original title: *Czasami księżyc świeci od spodu*

Genre: drama

Cast: 3F, 5M (+ three boys)

Premiere: September 2016, Lubuski Theatre in Zielona Góra

"If you knew everything, there wouldn't be so much evil in the world. Unless God and Demon are the same." This is a continuation of the dialogue with God that the PiK's heroes have. Paweł comes to see his brother, Jasiak, together with his wife and son. He is in his family home for the first time in twenty years. And only because their father is dying. As children they used to love each other very much. But Jasiak cannot forgive his brother for running away from home, leaving him and his mother at the mercy of his father, an abusive alcoholic. The atmosphere between the brothers is very tense. It culminates in a fight. Meanwhile, Bożena, Paweł's wife, communicates the message clearly – after the father's death, she expects the inheritance to be split in half. Of course, she does not want anything for herself. She thinks only about her son and his future. Jasiak invites God to his kitchen for a chat, he even prepares a stool, but does God ever come? Or maybe Jasiak can't properly hear his voice? God doesn't even help him with personal matters that end in a complete disaster. After a while, the brother comes to him alone, without his wife. Then it turns out that Janek's hopes for a great treasure buried by the Germans are no more than fantasies. There is a sincere conversation between the brothers, but the old intimacy was irrevocably destroyed. Because closeness is something that is not given to people once and for all. It is something to be nurtured. To be respected. And the price for neglect is loneliness. How often we forget that...

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FTrUkMdvX8>

### ***When the Sleep Comes***

Original title: *Gdy przyjdzie sen*

Genre: drama

Cast: 6F, 6M

Additional info:

Premiere: September 2015, Lubuski Theatre in Zielona Góra

"I don't like the water here, the flowers don't smell, I keep tripping. No money to run away... and with no money, there is no place to run to either. I'm getting cold, and I'd rather be hot." That's what Baška says to

the priest at confession. This is not her place and not her life. Jasiiek's madly in love with her, but without reciprocity. Because what can he offer? A dance at the clubhouse and a pint of beer? But even Jasiiek has his dignity. When Baška betrays him with a guy from the city, he throws her out. Now she has nothing left to lose. She packs a suitcase, leaves her child and runs away to her dream city. She seduces her best friend's boyfriend as soon as she has a chance. Meanwhile, Lady Luck has smiled at Jasiiek – he won the lottery. And suddenly the whole village is at his doorstep... If he is rich, he should share... Baška also found out, came back and suddenly fell in love. All night long and all day long she was standing in front of his cottage, and nothing. Finally Mietek came for his sister. "Because the whore only causes embarrassment". He took her home, released the dog from the chain, tied up the sister, and put her in the doghouse. But Jasiiek found out, he came for Baška, pulled the chain out of the kennel and led her home. She kept saying that she would hang herself if he didn't want her. She wants to hang herself – fine. They go to the barn, she washes herself with water from a bucket before she dies, all wet... and since it's hard to free oneself from infatuation, Jasiiek succumbs to her charms and they lay down on the hay together, for a short trip to heaven. But the hay catches on fire, quite mysteriously. Jasiiek can't unhook Baška, still tied to a chain. He runs to get help, but nobody's there. They hide in the dark, cowards... Even Baška's brother, Mietek. Jasiiek wants to come back, but it's too late. The barn has burned down. Together with Baška. And since people saw him leading her on the chain, the police took him away. And that's all he got from love.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMlul5Dkqwl>

### ***Loyal Pack***

Original title: *Wierna wataha*

Genre: drama

Cast: 5F, 6M

Additional info: the play got into the semi-finals of Gdynia Drama Award 2018; it was published in the anthology *Poland is a Myth. New Dramas. (Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty)*, ADiT, April 2019

Premiere: 01.2018, Modrzejewska Theatre in Legnica, dir. Katarzyna Dworak, Paweł Wolak

Translation: German

*It is a bloody tale stylized as a folk ballad about two families taking turns to send their male descendants to serve the Church. When there is a shortage of men and only daughters are born in the town, the order is disrupted. It is supposed to be restored by giving up Anthony's youngest daughter, Joanna, to the monastery. The girl has been raised to be a saint since childhood, but she rebels against taking on this burden. And so it's only a step away from the catastrophe that can only be averted by a bloody ritual... Loyal Pack represents all the best in PiK's writing: the palpability and vividness of the characters, the aura of a cruel fairy tale, the anxiety-laden poetry of the piece. It is worth to get to know it in reading, however, one should remember that Dworak and Wolak's real element is theatre. They write their plays in order to test them on stage, so that they become part of the performance's space.* (from Jacek Wakar's introduction to the anthology *Poland is a Myth. New Dramas*)

See also: <https://www.teatr.legnica.pl/spektakle/na-afiszu/item/253-wierna-wataha>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iGHQOUYAja>

**JAROSŁAW JAKUBOWSKI**

Born in 1974 in Bydgoszcz. Poet, novelist, playwright. He studied construction at the Gdansk University of Technology and political science at the University of Gdansk. He has published several volumes of poems, prose and plays in anthologies: *General i inne dramaty polityczne* (*The General and Other Political Dramas*, ADiT, Warsaw 2016) and *Prawda i inne dramaty* (*The Truth and Other Dramas*, ADiT, Warsaw 2017). Four-time winner of the Strzała Łucznicki Award for the best book of the year in Bydgoszcz. As a playwright, he made his debut in 2007 at the Drama Laboratory in Warsaw with a stage reading of a play *Mother's House*. A number of his plays premiered on Polish stages: *The General*, which won the Grand Prix of the Festival of Polish Contemporary Drama "Raport" in Gdynia in 2011, and *Eternal April*, for which he won the Main Prize of the Metaphor of Reality 2012 Competition in Poznań. In 2016, his play *Viva Violetta!* was awarded a distinction in a national competition for a play inspired by the life and work of Violetta Villas. The drama *Upside Down* had its radio premiere at the Theatre Three Stage in 2013. *Truth* was realized as a TV show by Teatroteka in 2016. The last premiere of Jakubowski's play took place at the J. Szaniawski Theatre in Płock (*The Magician*, directed by Mateusz Olszewski, premiere: 14.12.2017). An associate of *Topos* bimonthly literary magazine. Member of the Association of Polish Writers. Lives in Koronowo.

**Dog**Original title: *Pies*

Genre: drama

Cast: 1M

Casting details: +4 voices (2 male, 1 female, 1 of any gender)

The poetics of the drama brings to mind Beckett's work. The ritualisation of physical and verbal actions through repetitiveness, precision, regularity and concentration gives them an almost religious character. Stage directions are as important as dialogue. You can implement the clues in them on stage, but it is no less fun to simply read them. In this ritualisation of trivial everyday activities, in giving them a poetic dimension, in creating a picturesque effect "from nothing" the play relates to the prose by Wiesław Myśliwski or the theatre of Jerzy Grzegorzewski.

All we know about the Old Man is that he once loved, and he loved two beings: a woman and a dog. He could not live without her, every short parting was an ordeal, but he also could not live *with* her – only "with and without her". He stared with reverence at the window of the house, standing in the shade of an increasingly leafless apple tree, postponing the moment of his return infinitely, enjoying the fact that she "is there for him". So the woman left, but there was the dog, which, as well as the memory of her, got to be the sense of every day – and at least he could get truly close to the dog. But after the woman, he lost his dog. The Old Man was left alone with his emptiness filled with a ritual of trivial, unnecessary activities, physiology (washing, toilet, dressing, eating, sleeping or insomnia) and constant consideration of finally washing the piled up dishes....

*Dog* is a beautiful, lyrical impression – about love, loneliness, emptiness and filling it up, about waiting – the value of which is intensified by the lack of definition, the lack of closure. This drama is a bit like a prayer of supplication, like moving the beads of a rosary in your fingers. This supplication will probably not be answered, but it will relieve despair, give meaning to your days.

### ***Kingdom***

Original title: *Królestwo*

Genre: existential tragicomedy

Cast: 1F, 1M

Among the garbage heaps, a wretched man, the Lone Man, walks. His everyday life is filled with reciting newspaper headlines found in the dump and collecting junk. Suddenly, there appears the Lone Woman, who – initially unsuccessfully – tries to pull him out of isolation. Soon, the first barrier is broken – the Lone Man offers his companion fruit and vegetables (like Beckett's Vladimir towards Estragon), although the residual interactions are far from real communication.

Jakubowski openly plays with Beckett's work, especially with *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days*. But Jakubowski's dump is not only a representation of a destroyed culture, language, and recycling of used up ideas. The image of the dump serves him primarily to emphasize the individual perspective of the protagonist; objects help to build a memory palace. The Lone Man remembers his grandmother through the prism of the things he uses. Phrases taken from old songs also appear as artifacts of bygone times. The author gradually reveals to the reader the details of a private drama. The Lone Man avoids contact with others, is distrustful (he cites the story of Magellan who was killed by the natives of the discovered archipelago), but this does not discourage the Lone Woman, who initiates a game of "kingdom", assuming the roles of monarchs and peasants, which reveals the close nature of the relations that once united the characters. In the meantime, we recognize the behaviour of two ex-lovers, each wounded.

This multi-level piece is an intriguing challenge for potential directors and a pair of actors who can find their own interpretations in it. Finally, the staging of the play creates many opportunities for stage designers – mirages of an idyllic countryside are drifting over the apocalyptic dump...

### ***Life***

Original title: *Życie*

Genre: comedy

Cast: 1F, 1M

Additional info: The play received the main prize in the "Comedy Writing" competition in 2011 of the Powszechny Theatre in Łódź

Cast: 4F, 6M

It starts out a little bit unconventionally. A phone rings. The phone of a deceased who lies in a coffin – That is idiotic! – admits the corpse. It's his Soul calling. It doesn't know where it is, but it asks to be retrieved from there. The corpse sets off in search of the Soul. The play presents the protagonist's life in

the form of snapshots seen at the moment of death. The dead man is forced to live his life anew. But this is not Dante's cleansing journey through hell. The protagonist meets women whom he has hurt (even though he loved them, he hasn't committed himself to a relationship with them); friends whom he has forgotten; his mother – hysterically harassing him, and his father – a clown. Confronted with his faith, he also meets Jesus calling out to God the Father: "Oy!". The Saviour hanging on the cross admits that he doesn't care much for suckers like him. The hero duels with a priest with quotations. He also has a mandatory conversation with Elvis Presley. He realises the opportunities that he had wasted. He's jealous of the Polish Pope due to the impression that the latter makes on women.

Jakubowski's comedy has no shortage of absurd comments, diagnosing the contemporary pop culture and its impact on our lives. The protagonist of the play asks himself many questions, including whether the human soul is immortal and what it really is? Is solitude an indispensable element of existence? He seeks the answer "during his journey to the distant and closer past".

### ***A New World***

Original title: *Nowy świat*

Genre: drama

Cast: 1F, 1M

The title refers to Huxley's dark anti-utopia, but also to Shakespeare, from whom Huxley took this title. And there is even a storm and an island here – except that for Shakespeare's heroes the promise of happiness is the world of the civilized land, while here it is the other way round: the remedy and the achievement of dreams of a better future is to come from the wild. The text is not devoid of humour, although it is difficult to classify it as a comedy drama. The author employs the metaphor and poetics of a surrealistic dream. Initially, the dreams are only dreams, with time the oniric reality will dominate the realistic action. The play is full of meaning on several levels.

In the description of the dramatis personae, the author outlines the initial situation: "Married couple. He, A, past forty, she, B, still before. Experienced in life. A is a prominent man, he holds an important clerical position, but he is deadly bored. He devotes every free moment to working on his life's work, which he calls "The Book", in his opinion a synthesis of literature, philosophy and religion. B is fully devoted to her husband. She suffers, disappointed by A, but patiently abides by him and cherishes him, fulfilling all his desires. Both of them live for their dreams – A dreams about the immortality that his work is supposed to provide him with and B about familial happiness and a sense of security at the side of her beloved man.

And, although he dislikes guns and prides himself on his pacifism, A works in a company that benefits from the war the country is currently waging. Comfortable, fearful, withdrawn, clumsy, erotomaniac raconteur, compensating for his complexes by constantly verbalizing his desire for sex. He doesn't want anything, God forbid, to change, he's clinging to his wife, his job, his piece of land. B is the opposite. Exposing mercilessly his weaknesses, she wishes something unpredictable would finally happen, she wants a "New World"...

**Halfway**Original title: *W połowie drogi*

Genre: drama

Cast: 3F, 3M (+voice)

Arthur comes to his family home in the countryside from England for his mother's funeral. On this occasion a meeting is held with: the younger sister, Father and a "friend of the house" (Father's former lover, now functioning as his caretaker and nurse) – Mrs. Lila. Arthur is in his 40s, he is "halfway there", but he has not achieved much in his life, although he used to show so much promise. He has fallen from his dreams of designing lofty structures down into a bleak reality: he is an overworked lorry driver. He drinks, does drugs, sets up fake accounts on erotic portals, multiplying his conquests. Ever since he parted with his former love Hania (from whom he fled fearfully, unsuccessfully searching for the erotic ideal of his mother in women), everything is just a "fall"...

In this drama, everyone has trouble showing their feelings. Siblings are clumsily hugging, Hania and Arthur, unable to talk to each other, "play a game", Father is eternally contemptuously ironic, Hania finds talking to dolls easier than to her family. They also have problems with communication – as illustrated by the symbolic scene with little Arthur walking by his mother's side, trying very hard to say something important (he will make another attempt only when his mother is already dead). Everyone has deep and long-standing grudges against everyone else.

The contemporary, natural language of the dialogue has been deprived of any punctuation – as though the author wanted to leave the distribution of accents and tensions in the utterances up to the actors, or maybe emphasize the "roughness" of verbal contacts of the presented family.

**Welcome, Barabbas**Original title: *Witaj, Barabaszu*

Genre: drama

Cast: 1F, 4M

We are watching a TV talk show "On the edge of a knife", featuring "briefcases" of confidential information, God, abortion, euthanasia, hosted by Barabbas. Barabbas admits that he has trouble getting out of character, taking on more masks, and has the impression that his "life is a continuous TV show". He is as confident as he is lying. Appearing to have an open discussion, he does not allow the voices inconvenient for him to speak. For viewers, he is an objective moral authority, but – although he says goodbye to his wife Madeleine with the words of Saint Louis to Mary – "Totus tuus" – he rents a room with his lover for hours. He won Madeleine's affections by fighting fiercely for her, not so much out of love as out of jealousy for his colleague (with the nickname Messiah): his courage, moral infallibility, and a woman by his side,

as if from a beautiful picture. So he got involved in order to take over at least the woman. And he did it when Messiah, after someone's denunciation, found himself in prison for a long time. Did Barabbas denounce Messiah? We don't know, although, apart from uncertain signatures on the documents, there are other indications...

This play is a battle of attitudes. On the one hand between Barabbas and Messiah, but also between Guest I and Guest II, who pronounce in the studio the familiar arguments of the two sides of the Polish political scene. "This drama – as the author explains – asks a question about the price you pay for staying loyal to your truth".





### TOMASZ KACZOROWSKI

He is from Sopot, and he's a director and an author of texts for theatre and concepts of educational activities. A graduate of Theatre Studies at the Jagiellonian University, he also studied directing at the Faculty of Puppetry Art at the Theatre Academy in Białystok, currently a PhD student of philology at the University of Gdańsk. He

directed productions at the Miniature Theatre in Gdańsk, Kochanowski Theatre in Opole, Puppet Theatre Tęcza (Rainbow) in Słupsk, New Theatre in Słupsk, BOTO Theatre and Theatre on the Beach in Sopot, Cricoteka in Krakow, Horzycza Theatre in Toruń, Dorman Theatre in Będzin, Fredro Theatre in Gniezno, on the Stage of the Joint Children's Art Center in Poznań in co-production with T. Łomnicki New Theatre and Pinocchio Theatre in Łódź. He made his debut at the Contemporary Theatre in Szczecin with his own performance *Trollgatan. Troll Street* as part of Piotr Ratajczak's PIKSELOZA curatorial project. His performances have been shown at national and international festivals and reviews, including: the "m-teatr" festival, the Polish Theatre program, the BETWEEN.POMIĘDZY festival, the Young Directing Forum, the "Ale Kino!" festival. Previously he worked as an assistant director with Marcin Liber, Wojtek Klemm, Anna Augustynowicz, Erling Johannesson and Stanley Gontarski. He participated in playwriting workshops with N. Kolada, stage design workshops with T. Dreissigacker, radio workshops with M. Kipfmüller, reportage workshops with M. Szczygieł, in the project run by the Center for the Newest Drama at the Słowacki Theatre in Krakow (J. Roszkowski, M. Pakuła) and in the Stół Powszechny at the Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw (T. Gromadka). He is the winner of the main prize in the dramaturgical competition organized by Nowy Teatr im. Witkacego in Słupsk and Teatr Nowy in Krakow (*Las Villas*) and the third prize in the 28th Competition for Children and Youth Theatre CSD in Poznań (*from the top...*) and an honorable mention in the 29th Competition for Children and Youth Theatre Art (*JREK-Jin Pol*); his play *Conrad Machine* got to the final of the CONRAD.21-PRO; he is a four-time semifinalist of the Gdynia Drama Award; awarded in the twenty-first competition for the Golden Quill of Sopot for his story *Phone Booth*. Winner of the scholarship program of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage "Young Poland", twice the scholarship of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education for outstanding scientific and artistic achievements, artistic scholarships funded by the city of Sopot and the Marshal of Pomorskie Voivodeship. He published artistic and scientific texts in, among others, literary bimonthly magazine *TOPOS*, philological irregular magazine *Próby* (Faculty of Philology at the University of Białystok), in the issues of *New Arts for Children and Young People* (CSD in Poznań), in the *Place of Presence* anthology (MBP in Sopot) and in the anthology of contemporary Polish drama *Poland is a Myth* (ADiT). His latest realizations are: *Better Forests* (Contemporary Theatre in Szczecin, March 2019), *The Crusades* (Pinocchio Theatre in Łódź, November 2019) and *Ander-Sen* (Pinocchio Theatre in Łódź).

**#darkness**

Original title: #ciemność

Genre: drama

Cast: 3F, 3M

Casting details: it may vary, depending on director's decision

Additional info: play nominated to the semi-finals of the Gdynia Drama Award 2018; the play was published in the anthology *Poland is a Myth. New Dramas. (Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty)*, ADiT, April 2019.

Prapremiere: Wilam Horzyca Theater in Toruń, dir. Tomasz Kaczorowski

Translation: German

*#darkness by Tomasz Kaczorowski is an ambitious and attractive travesty of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, embedded in corporate culture and told in the language of social media displayed on smartphones; the language of brief text messages, instant questions and instant answers. Kaczorowski found a unique narrative formula and style for his play, reflected in its distinctive structure, which reminds us of programming language, text from chatrooms and instant messengers etc.). It is worth noting that the target group of #darkness mostly consists of young people (teenagers and young white collar workers), which is why Kaczorowski tries to communicate with his peers in their own language. It is vital to define who may stand for Kurtz and Marlow figures in the modern world, but readers are free to imagine. #darkness is an invitation to critical thinking, a fascinating intellectual exercise already done by the author, so now the time has come for readers to do the same. (Jacek Wakar, introductory essay to Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty anthology)*

*You hold a smartphone. And inside this device there are text messages, Facebook, Instagram. It's hard to imagine life without it. There are about 16 milligrams of copper in an average smartphone model. And where can you find copper? Mainly in Chile. More and more smartphones are needed, so more and more mines are opened. Let's take another look: there is cobalt in a phone's battery, its main source are the mines located in Congo. The heart of darkness is closer than you think... Hearts of darkness are the real places on Earth: anywhere civil wars and exploitation of natural resources take place. #darkness is an attempt to reflect upon our indifference and responsibility for contemporary world, and also a chance to rethink Conrad's novel. (from promotional materials of the Horzyca Theatre in Toruń)*

**#beingzlatanibrahimović**

Original title: Z czuba albo być jak Zlatan Ibrahimović

Genre: drama

Cast: 1K, 4M

Translation: to English (translated by Magdalena D. Healey)

Additional info: *#beingzlatanibrahimović* won a prize in the 28th Young Audience Theatre Play Competition established by the Children's Art Centre in Poznan in 2017; in April 2018 project *#beingzlatanibrahimović* won the Jan Dorman Competition

and was awarded by The Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in Warsaw to be staged  
at the Aleksander Fredro Theatre in Gniezno (Poland)

Prapremiere: 09.2018, Aleksander Fredro Theater in Gniezno, dir. Tomasz Kaczorowski

Translation: English

*#beingzlatanibrahimović* is not a biography of famous Swedish soccer player who moved from Europe (Manchester United, PSG) to Los Angeles Galaxy. The play is a story of 3 teenagers who love football. Zlatan Ibrahimović is an idol for one of them and antihero for another one. Originating from a poor immigrant family in Sweden, he became a star in popular culture. The text is open to director's interpretation: the performance can take place on the pitch, at school or in theatre. Characters (teenagers) are telling their own stories about dreams during playing football in their backyards or on the street. They initiate an interpersonal game: who would be a leader during the match, who would score a goal or pass the ball. Teenagers are arguing who is the best. They are telling each other about their best actions on the pitch. They are watching goals of Zlatan and trying to repeat them in "pitch-acting". They are also talking about their parents who keep complaining forever. Teenagers are under pressure – their coach wants them to be like Zlatan, to be the best and invincible. In the play, there is also a voice of Ibrahimović (watched on YouTube or just imagined by characters), who talks about pressure, media, hard work and being in the team. In the final, one of the teenagers actually meets Zlatan on an abandoned Polish pitch and plays with him. The other teenagers do not believe their friend. They think that their friend is naive and someone played a practical joke on him.

See also: <https://teatr.gniezno.pl/spektakl/z-czuba-albo-bycjakzlatanibrahimovic/>

### ***Trollgatan. Troll Street***

Original title: *Trollgatan. Ulica trolli*

Genre: political-fiction drama

Cast: 2F, 3M

Casting details: director's preference: 2F, 1M

Andżela works in Ikea and dreams about going to Sweden. In a chat room she establishes a relationship with Lars and decides to visit him. She doesn't realize there may be danger lurking in Ikea's land. Mint Boy, a guy from Grodzisk, is already there, but is that what he really dreamed about? Sven, a journalist, is writing a story about neo-Nazis. They all meet at the Ultima nightclub in Malmö, where a terrorist attack occurs. Their meeting is observed by a demonic figure who manipulates their statements and what and who, and in what media format we listen to at the moment. Did any of them survive the attack? *Trollgatan...* is a painfully current play – especially in the face of the events in Orlando – about media manipulation and dreams that collide with crises threatening to break up the European community.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV61is520Sg>

**[REK]in Pol**

Genre: drama; for teenagers

Cast: 2F, 2M (in fact you need 4 actors of any gender + voices)

The shark Pol lived for almost four hundred years in the dark ocean depths until it confronted the largest predator on the planet, a human being. Pol is no longer whole, his story is told by individual parts of the fish body: fins, jaws, torso, creating, as the author writes, "a musical reconstruction in several scenes for drums and bass guitar". (maybe even eco drama). Kaczorowski juxtaposes the ancient wisdom of nature with human expansionism, without avoiding pop-cultural references. The leitmotiv of the play is the iconic theme from the film *Jaws*. But the parts that used to make up Pol's body do not understand the human world. His home was a silent, dark, unfathomable depth; the mystery of nature:

- "1: underneath
- 2: was the same darkness
- 3: darkness
- 2: all-encompassing
- 4: all-embracing
- 3: all-mighty
- 1: altogether pulling in
- 2: for people
- 4: dangerous
- 3: because apart from the pressure change
- 1: nothing signals
- 4: where
- 2: is
- 3: the bottom
- 1: and where
- 4: is
- 3: the surface [...]"

Pol questions the stereotype of a bloodthirsty man-eater. The shark's purpose is to explore quiet, cold depths. The first interest in the presence of man leads to the animal's perdition. The man who murders Pol does not need meat or fish fat to survive. It is only a test of strength for him:

"I ate it. Not all of it. I tried it. But he was bitter. Tough. He was dry. I had to try what cost me so much effort. I looked death in the eye."

He does not know that a shark, unprovoked, does not want to attack two-legged creatures.

Kaczorowski's musical eco-drama offers great staging possibilities: the author anticipates the presence of musical instruments and a video camera. The important theme and artistic form make it possible for the play to be addressed both to adults and teenagers.



### ANNA ELŻBIETA KAMIŃSKA

She made her debut as a writer in 2005 with a dark novel *Girl from Buenos* published by Wydawnictwo Czarne. The book was met with great critical acclaim and became the subject of seminars, among others by Professor Jolanta Brach-Czaina at the University of Warsaw. For the novel, the author was nominated for the *Gazeta Wyborcza's* Storm of the Year award. Earlier, she took first place in the Ireneusz Siwiński Competition for Film Review, organised by the *Kino* monthly magazine, and the Grand Prix in the competition for works devoted to Fellini's art.

Kamińska graduated in French Studies at the University of Gdańsk, and also studied screenwriting for sometime. She received two scholarships from the Minister of Culture and National Heritage and the Marshal of Pomorskie Voivodeship. In 2018 she collaborated on the creation of the stagework *Tatiana and Oleg's Sky* (*Niebo Tatiany i Olega Dziewianowskich*), creating the text for the stage production. In the *Zwierciadło* magazine, she published written portraits of people of culture.

She is currently working on her next novel and a book on the return to eating meat after more than twenty years of vegetarianism. The plays *Elderberry* and *Birds are Coming Home* are her theatrical debuts.

#### ***Birds are Coming Home***

Original title: *Ptaki wracają do domu*

Genre: psychological drama

Cast: 3F, 4M

She is an attractive, athletic thirty-year-old. He is a charismatic hypnotherapist of German origin. They meet in a park; he stands up for her and saves her from oppression, she takes the bait. In a plot that could develop into a simple story with a happy ending, the true characteristics of the two quickly become apparent. The protagonists are not the people they want to be seen as. The game begins with the discovery of dark secrets, mental health and even life at stake.

Ela, the young woman we meet in the prologue, is in fact a woman-child. She experienced the trauma of harassment in her early childhood, which the reader learns about slowly, and she only seems to exude independence. The mysterious saviour, Helmut, wastes no time and gains her trust step by step. Noting the woman's obsession with a healthy lifestyle, he feeds her unhealthy snacks. The gesture, which in other circumstances can be considered paternal, in this case bears the hallmarks of a hidden need for domination. Sensing the woman's subcutaneous fears, he offers her a hypnotherapy session. The mother tries to reach the inner world of the heroine, insisting – almost violently – on meetings with a psychiatrist. It turns out that for a long time now the young woman “felt nothing”, she is blocked both in the sexual sphere and on a deeper level – in the sphere of feelings. There is one person that Ela can expose herself to. At first aggressive and closed towards Helmut, she gradually begins to open up and feel happy under his influence. However, these positive feelings are only associated with Helmut's presence. In the

end, she rejects everything else – her work, her interest in reality, she breaks off all contacts. The relationship between Ela and Helmut turns into a kind of dark power struggle. It seems that there is chemistry, suppressed eroticism between the characters, but this is only Helmut's strategy. Ela becomes a toy in the hands of a psychopathic hypnotist. Helmut gradually takes away her self-confidence, promises her work, promises intellectual development (importantly, he gives her de Sade's *Justine* to read), exquisite life, and finally – earth-shattering sex. He instinctively senses the victim's repressed trauma and knows how to deepen her addiction to him. Soon, the final confrontation takes place, a deep hypnosis lined with possessive intentions. As in a good thriller, at the last moment the victim awakens a dormant power to articulate the "NO" clearly. Rational sense returns, the capacity for self-determination returns; Ela wakes up as if from a dream. Birds return home...

In this dark psychological drama, there are several levels of interpretation, including those of a psychoanalytical nature. The fact that the action is taking place today in Gdańsk, a multicultural city, leads to ambiguous overtones. Helmut is, after all, a German, and young Ela was hoping to follow her father's footsteps and become a Hebrew translator. Helmut's toxic, almost organic sadistic attitude towards Ela is an echo of the pathological relationship between the race of "masters" and "subhumans", a destructive energy that has not stopped resonating in contemporary Europeans. The text, much like a labyrinth, leads us into the darkness of the psyche and does not allow us to break away until the last line of dialogue.

### ***Elderberry***

Original title: *Dziki bez*

Genre: drama

Cast: 4F, 3M

Grandfather "died of fear of love". Grandmother's body is alive, but for years her thoughts have been circulating around her fiancé from the war, a Home Army soldier, who picked elderberries for her. Suffering from Alzheimer's disease the heroine no longer distinguishes between truth and fantasy – but maybe she never did? The spectre of Grandfather and the memory of the Home Army soldier are no less real than the Granddaughter, a woman of blood and bone who visits her grandmother in a nursing home. In this space, the living and the dead meet as if they were not separated by any boundaries. As the author writes: "the everyday reality of the meeting of both worlds is crucial, despite its fatalism, uncertainty and horror that it entails".

Paradoxically, it is the Grandfather's Spirit that seems to be the most rational, clear-eyed character. "ONE CANNOT DIE, THE OTHER CANNOT START LIVING!" – he accuses the Grandmother, his wife, and his neurotic Granddaughter. The old lady did not even try to find happiness in marriage. She fell into the routine of everyday rituals – cleaning, cooking – without trying to create a successful relationship with Grandpa. Her heart was always occupied by someone else – the idealised image of the man who brought her elderberries and danced kujawiak with her. Grandfather took a ghost for a wife: a woman present only in body, absent in spirit.

"You, so in love with life, you don't like life... Because life just is what it is!" – says the bitter Spirit. "And you've clung to what is not there! A dream of Poland, for which you have to give your life. The man

dancing kujawiak, who once held your hand... Life is not something that you will fucking erect a monument to! You do not recognize the smell of bread, sweat and burnt pots...”

The Granddaughter, on the other hand, does not want to allow any admirer to come close. She defends herself against the intimacy, but at the same time she desires it. Both female heroines are in a clinch. Will a voice from the afterlife be able to change their mental perspective?

**JOANNA OPAREK**

Poet, writer, playwright. She graduated in psychology from the Jagiellonian University, worked as a PR specialist, journalist and screenwriter. She has published the following poetry volumes: *Po kostki w niebie*, *Czerwie*, *Berlin Porn*, novels: *A Barcode Man*, *Autumn in New York*, *The Lodge*. As a playwright, she collaborated



with the Narodowy Stary Teatr (*Project America*) and the Teatr Nowy in Krakow, where the premiere of her drama, *The Snake Pit*, took place. She also took part in the international theatre project Krakow-Berlin XPRS, realized by the Narodowy Stary Teatr in Krakow and Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin. She has published prose in *Przekrój* and poetry in literary magazines. In 2018, she attended the International Czesław Miłosz Literary Festival and chaired the jury of the Rafał Wojaczek National Poetry Competition. In cooperation with the Otwarta Pracownia Gallery, she runs an independent theatre stage in Krakow and organizes regular events combining visual arts and literature. Her drama *Stranger. The Greek Tragedy* was staged in Poland and Germany as part of the project “Game over? – on building transnational Poland-Germany-Ukraine relations”. Her latest drama, *The Whole Life*, was staged in November 2019 in Krakow, at the Łażnia Nowa Theatre, as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of obtaining voting rights by Polish women, organized by the Association Sto Lat Głosu Kobiet (100 years of Women’s Voting Rights). In 2013–2016 Joanna Oparek ran WeGirls S.A. publishing house and created educational and adventure literary series under the pseudonym Joanna Charms: *Girls’ World Club*, *Butterfly Club* (children’s poems), *Travel Friends*, and a series of psychological guides for girls *It’s Quite Easy*.

***Berlin Porn***

Genre: drama

Cast: 1F, 3M

*Berlin Porn* is a 21-part poem/drama about lust, insatiability and violence, in which the report from a porn festival is intertwined with the story of Jacek Unterweger, a famous Austrian prostitute murderer from the 1980s and 1990s.

*Strong reading, exciting and painful [...]. Torn apart by contradictions, stretched as if on a torture device, between hunger and excess, Eros is a source of eternal torment. The logic of desire makes fulfillment impossible, a man tortured by desire feels either lacking or overwhelmed. ... from nothingness, from emptiness, desire emerges. At the other extreme, there is the confrontation with the traumatic redundancy of the body, with matter (“cut something out of me”). Sex imperceptibly turns into violence, the boundary between the two is very unclear here, it is perhaps a matter of taste, not to say consumer choice. The title of the poem refers to the name of the Berlin festival of pornographic films. I have the impression that Oparek uses an ironic*



tension between the unbridled content of the films (it is often just about violence, mainly against women) and the “civilized” setting of this content: discussion panels, “discourses” about sexuality, a euphemistic language that dictates speaking about “actions” rather than about deeds. In this setting, or perhaps simply never, there can be no talk of “healthy” love. (Julia Fiedorczuk, Biuro Literackie)

### **Whole Life**

Author: Joanna Oparek

Original title: *Cafe życie*

Genre: drama

Cast: 2M, 2K

Additional info: The text was created as part of the project celebrating the 100th anniversary of obtaining the electoral rights by Polish women, organized by the Association Sto Lat Głosu Kobiet  
Polish premiere: November 2018, Teatr Łaźnia Nowa in Krakow, dir. Sebastian Mylek

*Whole Life* is a raw, contemporary drama with a lot of comedy and strongly outlined characters. At the end of the summer there is a meeting between a couple with complicated relationships and random tourists who travel by coach surfing. The tourists are taken to a spectacular villa in Tuscany, where, contrary to their expectations, they are welcomed by a mature couple from Poland – a feminist journalist and the author of not very popular crime stories. It soon turns out that the villa does not belong to them – they only use their friends’ house during the holidays. The tourists are a beginner actress and a student still searching for his way in life. They act like a couple, but the girl stresses that they are not a couple. During an extended evening, after dinner and a lot of wine and whisky, there are violent discussions and true vivisection. The young actress receives a call informing her she got a role in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, which further stimulates the atmosphere, as everyone notices the analogy of the situation: two drunken couples and a harsh psychological game. Consciously referring to the popular play, the writer and his wife arrange a real show of marital hatred for random guests. Frustrations, resentments and secrets that can only be revealed to complete strangers who are never to be seen again, come to light. The biting irony turns out to be a more dangerous weapon than a shotgun taken out of a showcase in the hands of the drunken host. After all, humiliation and insults can only be endured up to a certain point. And only until the accidental witnesses of the marital carnage remain uninvolved. The game begins...

See also: <http://teatrbarakah.com/barakah-wp/events/event/cafe-zycie/>

***Stranger. A Greek Tragedy***Original title: *Obcy. Tragedia grecka*

Genre: drama

Cast: 1F, 2M

Premiere: October 2017, Galeria Otwarta Pracownia, Krakow, dir. Sebastian Mylek

The main point here is fear, apprehension and suspicion, which are provoked by “historical traumas”. It’s also about pride and the thin line beyond which it gives rise to conceit. Numerous stereotypes are viewed under a magnifying glass, stereotypes which often block the possibility of joint actions, and which represent many shades of chauvinism. It is interesting that the text was created as a result of the international workshops conducted in the summer with young artists from Poland, Ukraine and Germany. Their idea was to create a common space in which the artists would have the opportunity to create and talk about many topics together. As Joanna Oparek said, during the workshops, the young artists themselves set boundaries where they could talk about their prejudices and fears without hurting each other. It is hard not to have associations with the most famous stranger in literature, the one from Albert Camus’ novel. While the French writer in his book shows a man alienated in the world of hypocrisy, it is different in Joanna Oparek’s drama. Her stranger becomes the driving force behind the action. It is thanks to him that the characters of the play have a common task. He unites them and he divides them at the same time. He triggers fear in them. But who is he? Perhaps a guest? Maybe an invader? After all “sometimes the guest and the invader are just a question of naming.” Where is the stranger? Do we know him? Or is the stranger only inside us? Bred in our imagination, he steals our rationality? He grows inside us, making us turn into puppets driven by deft puppeteers?

**ŁUKASZ PAWŁOWSKI**

Born in 1977. He graduated from the National Academy of Theatre Arts in Wrocław in 2002. Until 2009, he was an actor of the Polski Theatre in Poznań. For many years he has been cooperating with the Teatr Usta Usta Republika in Poznań, for which he writes plays (the show entitled *Uczta* was awarded the Main Prize at the XXII Alternative Theatres Meeting “Klamra” in Toruń).



His plays have attracted countrywide attention: many of them reaching semifinals (*Never Ending Sorry*, *Donnie & Glide*, *Inne miasto*) and the finale (*Metro Afghanistan*) of the prestigious Gdynia Drama Award. In 2012, *Safari Zebra* was selected to be staged within the 33rd edition of the National Festival of Actors in Song in Wrocław. In 2008, *A+B=Rh-* received a distinction in “Mirror. Image. Illusion” contest in Łódź and was staged in 2017 at the Miejski Theatre in Leszno. Pawłowski is also a songwriter (he worked e.g. for Krzysztof Kiliański, the Snowman Band and for the Capitol Theatre in Wrocław).

***Never Ending Sorry***

Genre: drama

Cast: 4F, 3M (+ a child)

A dense and gloomy family drama at the centre of which is the mother. Her husband, their three daughters and lovers and husbands are people caught up in something strange that holds this family together: betrayals, lies, denials and a tree that grows in the living room. In this drama, the author sketches various psychological portraits and complicated arrangements. The father, who for years “fails to notice” his wife’s infidelity and naively confuses love with a morbid addiction, and after her death decides not to get out of bed, obsessively waiting for his own death. A younger sister, Su, aggressive and addicted to sex, who as a child was a silent observer of her mother’s summer indiscretions; Su’s lover, addicted to her and slowly getting absorbed into the family; Meg and Piotr’s marriage, based on silence and deception. Mutual hatred and desperate attempts at forgiveness. Dissolving relationships and a crippling loneliness.

The open construction of this drama allows for different stories to be composed – the author points out that the sequence of scenes can be freely chosen. And just as the editing in the film can completely change its tone, so the director has the opportunity to put different accents and create different chronologies of events. The stuffy atmosphere marked by family dramas will be the axis of the plot anyway. Pawłowski’s play resembles Bergman’s famous *Whispers and Cries* and undoubtedly gives the actors and the director great opportunities for creative explorations.

***Afghanistan Metro Station***

Author: Łukasz Pawłowski

Original title: Metro Afganistan

Genre: drama

Cast: 2F, 4M (+ students)

Additional info: with this play, the author reached a select group of finalists of the Gdynia Drama Award 2018; the play was published in the anthology *Poland is a Myth. New Dramas. (Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty)*, ADiT, April 2019

*The author takes a closer look at the image of the Polish war hero, showing that this heroism is only a pose and trauma, engraved in the DNA of Polish society. In the world of Pawłowski's drama, the protagonists are like zombies from a horror movie – Father Kolbe, Captain Pilecki, Bruce Willis from Armageddon, Kunta Kinte from Roots. The spirit of Kmicic and Sienkiewicz, already considered by Gombrowicz as a specific Polish curse, hangs over everything. Afghanistan Metro Station ends up like a low-budget gore style horror movie, while Pawłowski has fun with his grotesque cruelty. Not often in recent years have I read such brazen, truly courageous and even hooligan texts. At a time when Poland "gets up from its knees" and celebrates its old heroism, immerses itself in the blood of the fallen and encases them in monuments, plays like this are like the nightmare of those in power. Should be staged immediately – I can't wait.*

(from Jacek Wakar's introduction to the anthology *Poland is a Myth. New Dramas*)

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgbeiQ8cwpo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSJmIS7Acvk>



## ARTUR PAŁYGA

*...what you write in the newspapers has no comparison at all with the power of stage communication. In the newspapers, it all disappears in some maddening crowd, in the mass daily production of gigantic amounts of texts, which are mostly skimmed. And here we are, face to face, only the stage and you, the viewer. And you have to listen or leave, which is not easy. So you listen. So I'm not underestimating you, I'm not disrespecting you, but if I already have this time that you're going to listen to these stories, these words, I want to tell you something that has some meaning, something real. That's what I think.*

A playwright, winner of many literary and journalistic awards. Born in 1971 in the borderland between Poland and the Ukraine, spent his childhood in the borderland between Poland and Czechoslovakia... A graduate in Polish studies at Krakow the Jagiellonian University; also graduated from a teacher training college where he specialized in musical education. He was awarded a PhD in literature studies. In his youth a declared "punk", an author of punk song lyrics and a singer. Since 1989 a journalist. Pałyga is a winner of many literary and journalistic awards.

### **Unfinished Story**

Original title: *Nieskończona historia*

Genre: drama

Casting details: ensemble piece, but can be staged with a smaller cast: 2F+M, 2F+2M, 3F+2M;  
the choir can be off-stage, the actors can recite the choir's lines, taking turns,  
to signal that they're out of character at the moment

Prapremiere: March 2012, Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw, dir. Piotr Cieplak, then staged in Zabrze, Białystok, Toruń and abroad

...for 30 characters, choir and a brass band

What are the inhabitants of a typical Polish tenement house like? Aniela Dąbkowa and Wiktoria Dworniczek are two pious old ladies. They often visit each other and go to church. One day Dąbkowa finds the absence of her friend terrifying. It soon turns out that the old lady fell in the hallway and died. Her death is reported by successive residents of the tenement house, whose names do not accidentally refer to the biblical ones. Andrzej – an ambulance driver, waiting for the body of the deceased – tells a well-known radio presenter his dreams about angels. Aniela Dąbkowa is visited by her grandchildren, Anna and Paul... but they actually just give her a pot of anti-wrinkle cream and run away quickly. Jacob, pushed by some mysterious force, makes a purchase in the antique shop "Gilgamesh". In his dreams, Matthew learns the secret of the Holy Trinity, but just after waking up he forgets everything. In Artur Pałyga's play, even everyday objects get their chance to shine, such as the Calendar or A Piece of an Old Yellowed Newspaper.

The drama shows the protagonists right after waking up, when the boundaries between sleep and reality are still blurred. It is a poetic fresco about the crisis of faith and passing away.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J23ublAPvCA>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sZu88rvC2w>  
<https://thetheatretimes.com/poland-on-stage-what-when-and-where-1/>

***Ashes Accumulate in the Centre of the Sun***

Original title: *W środku słońca gromadzi się popiół*

Genre: drama

Cast: 1F, 2M

Premiere: March 2014, Narodowy Stary Teatr in Kraków, dir. Wojciech Faruga; then staged in Wrocław Doll Theatre, dir. Agata Kucińska

The play is a kind of continuation and development of the masterful *Unfinished Story*. However, Artur Pałyga here touches upon a darker sphere of life and human experiences – because he analyses the mystery of the end of the world that has just happened, or actually occurs every day before our eyes. It is a record of the endless history of horror, in the light of which the end of the world can be a sudden, unexpected death of a loved one, a deadly illness – every incomprehensible loss that clashes with the human desire to live. The ends of the world of the drama's protagonists have been framed by a performance that starts with three characters: Lucy, Spark and Ashes. They are the survivors of the end of the world, hiding in a shelter. Now they emerge from the darkness and ashes to remember what just happened, evoking memories and real people who experienced the disaster. This process takes the form of a ritual to help us understand.

The action takes place in an undefined space, equally undefined are the characters who impersonate the people they knew before the "end". Apart from poetic metaphors, the very form of writing resembles the best traditions of linguistic poetry.

The axis of the play is composed of poetic, sensual images of the tragic death of a woman in a fire, which nobody could have done anything about. It was the result of coincidences that emerge in the course of the plot's development: objects become sharper, situations are symbolic, but this does not bring us any closer to unraveling the mystery of life and death. Even Aristotle and Alexander the Great, who comes alive from the pages of books. This will not be understood by a woman suffering from cancer, who wants to photograph herself before death or a drastic procedure, or by a father who unsuccessfully tries to communicate with his paralysed son. The closest to understanding are Lucy, Spark and Ashes, who see that the incomprehensible death is always the fault of another man, too busy with his own life.

See also: <http://teatrlalki.opole.pl/spektakl/w-srodku-slonca-gromadzi-sie-popiol-wroclawski-teatr-lalek/>  
<https://teatrlalek.wroclaw.pl/pl/home-2/39-w-srodku-slonca-gromadzi-sie-popiol>

***Our Father***

Genre: drama

Cast: 4F, 9M (+ episodic roles)

Premiere: February 2009, Scena Prapremier In Vitro in Lublin, dir. Łukasz Witt-Michałowski;  
then staged in Krakow and Wrocław

The father is a tyrant, the head of the family and the lord of the house, a dictator who arouses fear and respect. As he confesses to his son in a pre-mortem conversation, only during the journey could he be nicer, because he took off the burden of responsibility. The role of the patriarch of the family did not allow him to show his feelings and be a nice “understanding daddy”. In the Father’s understanding this would be his end, the denial of being a strong man. Showing affection would be like admitting one’s weakness, becoming an object of mockery on the part of his military colleagues and his extended family. Military discipline was effective in covering up helplessness and fear.

Fathers’ time has passed, now we have only mummy’s partners and sweet dads. Such a reflection on paternity is the starting point for Artur Pałyga’s play. The old fathers have passed away, they are gone with the arrival of new times, but the memory of them is not gone. *Our Father* speaks about such old, unfashionable fathers. It begins and ends with the memory of the funeral. The content of the play is filled with single scenes/pictures in which the play’s protagonists, remembered through the eyes of Franio, appear. Not only does it show the figure of the Father, the severe lord of the house, who arouses fear in everyone, but also the image of the family and its relations, where the Father was a kind of axis.

Scene by scene, we follow the fascination, pride, longing for the eternally absent, for whom we waited for hours. When at the end of his life the Father asks his son why he was afraid of him, Franio cannot answer.

The play gives an impulse to reflect on the contemporary role of the father and the patriarchal model of the family: do we miss our former fathers or do we want a different model? Does the word “father” still have its place in our language?

See also: <http://www.teatr.tarnow.pl/spektakls/view/248>

<https://www.bagatela.pl/spektakl/tato>

***Jew***

Genre: drama

Cast: 2F, 3M

Premiere: February 2008, Teatr Polski in Bielsko-Biała, dir. Robert Talarczyk; then staged in Warszawa, Lublin, Krakow and produced as TV theatre

A play about anti-Semitism that remains hidden in Polish society, but is nevertheless still alive. The play is located in a declining school in a smaller Polish town. The school is falling apart, it has debts, it is in danger of being closed down. One day the headmaster of the school receives an e-mail from the titular Jew, David Wassersztajn. The man asks for the return of an essay he wrote when he was a student of this school. The headmaster sees in this event a chance to get a big donation that will save the school. For this reason, he calls for a night meeting of the school’s board of teachers.

As the meeting proceeds and more and more absurd ideas are gathered (such as naming the school after Mosze Wassersztajn), Polish anti-Semitism, saturated with stereotypes and ignorance, is revealed. Artur Pałyga's play is a good lesson in history, free of bias, in harmony with Gross's *Fear*. It contains reverberations of post-war pogroms, digging up Jewish graves in Treblinka, post-war persecution, the unwillingness of many people to admit that they hid Jews during the occupation, emigration. It turns out that before the war Jews constituted 50% of the town's population. None of the heroes (not excluding the youngest of them, the English Teacher Agnieszka) is without blame. Things that have been kept hidden for years come to light.

The play is written very seriously and very directly, there are no understatements or ambiguities. They are dry and therefore terrifying, although mostly known facts, which, among others, thanks to Gross and other writers and journalists, have seen the light of day. The tone was skillfully undercut by the author's comedic presentation of characters, funny, intelligent, naturally sounding dialogues and a form that opens the play up to interpretation.

See also: <http://www.wfdif.pl/en/film-production/teatroteka/spectacle/jew>  
<https://www.bagatela.pl/spektakl/zyd>

### ***Radiant***

Author: Artur Pałyga

Genre: drama, monodrama

Cast: 1F

Premiere: November 2017, Polish Radio Theatre, dir. Wojciech Urbański (radio premiere); September 2019, Maria Curie-Skłodowska Museum in Warsaw, directed by Edyta Łukaszewska (the performance was qualified for the monodrama review of the 7th Koszalin National Monodrama Days – Debuts "Arrow of the North 2019")

*The biographical monodrama about the life of Maria Skłodowska-Curie by Artur Pałyga takes on the shape of a poetic epistolary drama, in which the heroine writes letters addressed to herself. Radiant is a work enclosed in the form of correspondence between eighteen-year-old Mania and adult, dying Maria, portraying an intimate and complicated picture of the life of an exceptional and extremely sensitive woman: daughter, mother, beloved wife, widow, lover. [...] Pałyga frees Skłodowska-Curie from the stiff image presented in schools, filling her character with the reality of experiences, human tragedy, but also unspeakable happiness and fulfilment. She gives voice to what she valued most in her life – honesty, passion, perseverance, truth.*

Agnieszka Górnicka, *Letters to oneself*, "Teatr" 12/2016

*Radiant has nothing to do with a commemorative compilation of Skłodowska's letters or their critical "transcription". Rather, it is the writer's personal response to those thoughts of the scholar that caught his attention the most, and the amplification of those motifs present in her correspondence that most strongly appealed to his imagination. Pałyga reads Maria's letters and literally grabs her by the words, but not in order to point something out to her, sneakily deforming the meaning of the quoted phrases.*

Jacek Kopciński, *Faust/yna*. Radiant by Artur Pałyga, Załącznik Kulturoznawczy 4/2017



**PRZEMYSŁAW PILARSKI**

Playwright, writer, scriptwriter. Lives in Łódź. In his previous lives, he was a journalist, editor and a stand-upper. A graduate of Polish philology at the Jagiellonian University, a screenwriting course at the Warsaw Film School and the New Theatre Practices Laboratory (Nowy Teatr/SWPS). Author of plays, screenplays for short films, programmes and TV series. With his own stand-up monologues he performed on HBO and Comedy Central.

For his first dramatic text, *Dad Hangs Himself in the Forest*, he won First Prize in the 1st National Drama Competition for Contemporary Chamber Art Słowo/Aktor/Spotkanie 2016 (Staging – Studio Theatre, Warsaw). Pilarski's second text, *Reality Show(s). A Cabaret about Terrible Things*, won the 9th Metaphor of Reality 2016, organised by the Polski Theatre in Poznań; he also received an award from the journalist jury there. In 2018, the Gdynia Drama Award was given to his next play, *Wracaj (Return)*.

Pilarski is also the author of the script for the play *Glass Beads. Play. Recon* at the J. Słowacki Theatre in Krakow (2017). He is constantly cooperating with the Strefa WolnoSłowa Foundation, currently operating at the Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw, with which he has produced, among others, the spectacles *I drew more than you can see here* (2016) and *If we were cats, no one would stop us* (2017). He has published in *Ha!art*, *Machina*, *Playboy*, *Czas Kultury* and *Dialog*, among others. His texts and their stagings have been presented in Prague, Bologna and Berlin, among others. Co-author of the books *Jak facet z facetem (Like a Guy with a Guy)* (2016) and *Sztuka obsługi penisa (How to Handle a Penis)* (2018) – with sexologist Andrzej Gryżewski. Winner of the Gdynia Drama Award 2018 for the play *Return*.

**Return**

Genre: drama

Cast: 2F, 3M

Additional info: the play won the Gdynia Drama Award 2018; the play was published in the anthology *Poland is a Myth. New Dramas. (Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty)*, ADiT, April 2019.

Prepremiere: March 2019, Teatr Powszechny in Łódź/Teatr Współczesny in Szczecin,  
dir. Anna Augustynowicz

*A strange, oneiric story about returning to your home town. A wandering musician, quite like Bob Dylan, appears after many years in his home, but there are already strangers living there and nobody explains anything to him. The story is based on the fate of the survivors of the Holocaust in Radom, persecuted after the war by Poles who occupied their homes. Understatements and symbols create an atmosphere of mystery like in the series Twin Peaks [...] The atmosphere is defused by a perverse, anarchistic ending. The memory of the past casts a shadow over the lives of the drama's characters. With Bobby's appearance, the trauma of round-ups, escapes, denunciations and transportations to gas chambers returns. The tragic experiences of war and being witnesses of extermination make the characters feel compelled to repeat and process history over and over again.* (from monthly magazine *Dialog* nr 4/2018 and Gdynia Drama Award website)

*Return is a picture of Polish-Jewish relations reduced to a poetic micro-scale, where the Jew returns to his own home, although there is no home waiting for him – but you can find much more in Pilarski's drama. For example, a play on Poland and its most sophisticated ideas, revealed in the issues of the Forest Elders, who serve as a vulgarised antique choir here. One can see a small stabilisation, like the one proposed by Róże-wicz half a century ago, but flavored with spice known from today's news and newspapers. It is not without reason that Esterka, and above all Gombrowicz, appear among the characters. Although this is just a coincidence of names, it is well known who Gombrowicz was for Radom, so it's clear he must appear in a play set in this town. In Pilarski's case, however, it is not only a spectacular dramatic trick, but also a clue given to interpreters. The oneiric layer of the play brings to mind not only Lynch's Twin Peaks, but also Gombrowicz's The Marriage, where everything we see takes place in Henryk's persistent nightmare. (from Jacek Wakar's preface to the anthology Poland is a Myth. New Dramas)*

*Pilarski's text is a linguistic drama, using tricks known from New Wave poetry, such as juggling word clichés, phraseologisms, worn out proverbs, quotations that merge to form a jarring neighborhood ("In March, like in a pot, and in Poland, whatever you want", "The most important is invisible to the eyes. What the eyes can't see, the heart doesn't regret"). And the exposing discourse of the ABC-book (repeated like a mantra "butter is not cheap"). Mother, Daughter, Son, Forest Elders, Esterka and Gombrowicz are not "real" characters, but bits and pieces, linguistics mannerisms. This way of writing has been associated with Masłowska's Między nami dobrze jest (It's Good Between Us), but while the author of Paw królowej (The Queen's Peacock) describes "Polishness" with some strange, sadomasochistic fondness, in Pilarski's case there is no buffo, there's only terror. (Izabella Adamczewska, Gazeta Wyborcza-Łódź online)*

See also: <https://powszechny.pl/pl/teatr/spektakle/wracaj/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwdnynKKDnY>

<https://wspolczesny.szczecin.pl/wracaj/>

### **Reality Show(s). A Cabaret about Terrible Things**

Genre: tragicomedy

Additional info: the text won the Metaphors of Reality 2016, and was also awarded by the journalists' jury

Cast: 2F, 2M (+ cabaret, Jews, public)

Premiere: February 2019, Kochanowski Theatre in Opole, dir. Jan Hussakowski

Twenty-five years of beautiful freedom! Lofty slogans about democracy, capitalism and... poverty? The sudden end of the world, unpaid bills and other plagues are just an excuse for God to hide from the world. Somewhere along the way all dreams are exhausted, and the reality is so painful that it can only be turned into a reality show. "My wife Bożena is hiding in the closet from poverty", in such way the neighbour begins his story. He has not seen his beloved for more than 25 years. It would seem to be a story about the costs of transformation. But in a moment it comes to light that the protagonists – yeah, not only them, but also the audience! – are dependent on the whims of the TV show's host. Not only that, but also the Jews, who used to hide in the same tenement house, appear out of the blue. And although they have been gone for a long time, they still scare some people.

*Reality Show(s)* is a tragicomedy about fear. The one developed by trial and error. And the inherited, transgenerational fear. For some, it may be a play about struggling with the present, for others – with the past; there will be those who notice the tragic love story. And the Germans? And the Jews? And the body? And death? Suffering? God? The point of departure is cutting yourself off, isolating yourself, shutting yourself out. It is waging war against life and a war to survive at the same time.

See also: <https://teatropole.pl/spektakle/reality-shows-kabaret-o-rzeczach-strasznych-4/>

### ***Daddy Hangs Himself in the Woods***

Genre: drama

Cast: 1F, 1M (can be a monodram for a man)

Additional info: The text won first prize in the First Polish National Drama Competition for Contemporary Chamber Art *Słowo/Aktor/Spotkanie* 2016. Premiere: 21.08.2016 in Teatr Studio, Warsaw, dir. Monika Rejnter

Here is the Hero, a young man who seeks good advice on how to live to find happiness. He searches in contemporary guidebooks, in old books, but finally finds real help in another person on the Internet, on webcams. At first, he treats her as an ordinary object to satisfy his sexual fantasies, but it soon turns out that they are both scarred by life.

“Some have had a disorder from childhood. I guess I’ve had one from my father,” says the Hero at some point. Both he and she are lost and don’t quite know what to expect from each other. He, locked in a prison of entanglement and trauma, is afraid to leave his comfort zone and work through childhood events related to his toxic father. She – at times seems to be his projection, the question arises whether she is not one of his selves. The unhappy childhood is just another gadget in his collection of peculiarities. The question, repeated like a mantra, “Will you play with me?” leads them through various games, but it is not sure if any of these games offer a way to a happy ending.

See also: <https://www.teatrstudio.pl/storage/app/media/Impresariat%20i%20wynajem/Oferty%20spektakli/tata-wiesz-sie-w-lesie.pdf>

## MALINA PRZEŚLUGA

Born in 1983. Graduate of Cultural Studies at the Adam Mickiewicz University, playwright at the Animation Theatre in Poznań. Author of six books for children (including *Bajka i Majka*, *Bajka o Włosie Patryku*, *Bajka o starej babci i Molu Zbyszku*, *Ziuzia* – awarded with the title of Book of the Year by the Polish Section of the IBBY). Her dramas are published in *Nowe Sztuki dla Dzieci i Młodzieży*, *Dialog* and staged, among others, in Baj Pomorski in Toruń, Osterwa Theatre in Lublin, Wybrzeże Theatre in Gdańsk, Doll and Actor Theatre in Opole, Norwid Theatre in Jelenia Góra, Lubuski Theatre in Zielona Góra, Polish Theatre in Poznań, Guliwer Theatre in Warsaw. She is a laureate of the Young Art Medal, winner of several awards and distinctions in the editions of the Competition for Theatre Art for Children and Young People organized by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań. In 2013 she won the main prize, audience and journalists's prizes in the Metaphors of Reality competition for the drama *Sour milk*. In 2015 she received the second prize (the first one was not awarded) in the closed competition of Wrocław Contemporary Theatre *Strefa\_Kontaktu\_2016* for the drama *The President's Suit*. Also in 2015, she was awarded by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage Prof. Małgorzata Omilanowska for her achievements in the field of literature and drama for children during the Evening of Cultural Creators for Children.



Photo: Roman Jocher

### ***The Retard***

Original title: *Debil*

Genre: drama

Cast: 4M, 2K (can be slightly modified)

Details: For this play, Malina Prześluga was awarded the Gdynia Dramatic Award 2020

Kuba is an adult guy with intellectual disabilities. His dreams are simple. For everyone to be “gud”. For the world to be more comprehensible and easier to understand. The text, which could become a banal story about the noble naivety of the protagonist from the underprivileged group, quickly reveals the traps set for the reader.

In the justification of the verdict, the Jury of the Gdynia Drama Award writes: *Malina Prześluga used her experience as an author for children, but in order to write an uncomfortable play, definitely for adults. The fairy-tale frame of the Hundred Acre Wood, which forms the framework of the protagonist's imagination, is cleverly disassembled here to reveal the danger and false infantilisation in our approach to intellectual disabilities. The author precisely and quite cruelly pushes the viewer (and perhaps herself) out of the comfort and easy empathy zone, constructing a character that is neither wise, nor nice, nor pretty, nor good. He does not dish out morals or simple solutions, he does not allow his character to be liked easily and does not succumb to the pressure of political correctness. The play resonates on several levels, it can also be read as a political text, about class resentments, about the fantasies of excluded groups, about the false protectionism of privileged groups, about the sources of violence, and finally about helplessness [...].*

The author uses very different rhythms and registers (everyday language and the language of political populism intertwine with the poetic and prose-inspired language of A. A. Milne). *Prześluga* creates a story which is an expression of frustration growing in the face of deepening inequalities. At the same time, it avoids the temptation to design a social utopia. Kuba does not agree with the world that he does not understand, a world that limits him – but his opposition is a spark that quickly turns into an unmanageable fire. The hero, having gained total power in his fantasy, takes revenge on random people and does not avoid violence. The words of the jury become extremely important in this context: *The Retard* “from a simple story about a man excluded turns into a disturbing parable about the birth of evil”. After all, the 20th-century history has shown that the roots of evil are not at all obvious.

### ***Not There***

Original title: *Nie ma*

Genre: drama

Additional info: the play was produced as a part of Teatroteka by WFDIF (dir. Natalia Sołtysik, 2017); performance reading of the play took place as a part of the ART OF CONTACT Drama Festival in Wrocław Contemporary Theatre (dir. Paweł Kamza); the play received first prize (ex-aequo) at the ART OF CONTACT Drama Festival 2016.

Cast: 5F, 2M

Here’s a story that happened and didn’t happen. There are people in it who aren’t there – dead, or have they never existed? Maybe they had no right to exist, because their existence is conditioned by the perception of the countryside by people “from the outside”. And for many, the countryside remains *terra incognita*. According to some, it is the habitat of all pathologies: alcoholism, violence, darkness. For others, it is an idyllic scenery straight from a sentimental postcard. The Polish countryside seems to have no identity of its own.

The play *Not There* arises from this observation. The action takes place in the village of Żabki Małe, populated by residents who want to break out of this hell at all costs. The prose of life is disturbed by a peculiar danse macabre – the dead are wandering around the village, as if they felt equal to the living. This liminal suspension does not have to end with the resolution of the conflict – both the inhabitants and the spirits are “tied” to the ground, they cannot go either way to change their average life in any way. Kaśka wants to go to Spain and become a flamenco dancer, although we know that this is just a dream. The turn of events has led her to lose her outfit – she has to return to Żabki to her father – an abuser. Similarly, Gosia called Beata, accidentally found herself in the countryside even though she was in the city – all attempts at denying her true identity have been of no use. These and other characters form a somewhat grotesque – but most of all, a deeply sad parade of people lost in life. In the finale, the only possible destination for an “escape” is the cemetery.

See also: <https://www.ckis.konin.pl/teatroteka-nie-ma/>

<http://www.wfdif.pl/en/film-production/teatroteka/spectacle/passed-away>

***Derelict***Original title: *Pustostan*

Genre: drama

Additional info: printed in *Dialog* – February 2015

Cast: 3F, 3M (+ a dog)

Premiere: February 2017, Teatr Współczesny in Szczecin, dir. Paweł Paszta;  
then staged in Bielsko-Biała and Polish Radio Theatre

A play for adults by Malina Prześluga written in 2013–14 starts off on Christmas Eve – a holiday on which we promise ourselves harmony and joy, and often go to sleep with a sense of greater emptiness than usual. The situation at the Christmas table shows, in a nutshell, the family's relations: lack of understanding, quarrels over the smallest things. The only person representing the old order, peace, confidence, and warmth is grandma.

The characters are surrounded by a multitude of layers and phrases that express nothing true about them, that hold no feeling. According to the author, what is important are feelings, the ability to love, expressing and sharing affection.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOYEOGmwESE><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAXPkA7JxHc><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FvWnaMQ9-Qk><http://www.wfdif.pl/en/film-production/teatroteka/spectacle/abandoned>***Tenderness***Original title: *Czułość*

Genre: drama

Additional info: drama published in *Dialog* monthly magazine, issue 4/2017

Cast: 2F, 2M (+train conductor's voice)

Translation: Croatian

Train operating on the Prasno-Żyrostaw line. In one compartment – Elderly Woman, Disney's Princess, Slim Man and the Obnoxious Creep. The first scene is like a look through a camera lens: objective, cool, invaluable. Passengers exchange a casual politeness. But the camera reaches deeper and deeper, penetrates, explores the inner world of characters. The train, which may never reach the planned station, becomes a limbo, suspended between life and death, the journey and the station. What awaits these people, not living, not dead, at the final station – remains unknown...

Initially strongly stereotypical, not very sophisticated friendly characters quickly plunge into their inner monologues. Gradually each of them reveals the hidden side of their personality. Passengers become increasingly obsessed with thinking about their phobias, fears and a difficult past: the air becomes heavy, and the dog, the leitmotif of art invoked by the train manager's voice, is sinking its fangs into its body, finally drawing blood:

“THE TRAIN CONDUCTOR’S VOICE

He clenches his eyes, his nose wrinkles, he wants to howl, he feels the taste of blood.

You know very well how it hurts.

He jerks once, then a second time, let’s hear these silent growls.

Since when is he trying to destroy himself?

When did he become his own enemy?”

In the culminating scene the Elderly Woman hangs herself on the belt unfastened from the elegant bag of the Disney Princess. Passengers sit squeezed together in the company of a dead body. On a train to nowhere chaos reigns. Gradually, however, the titular “tenderness” appears. The characters get names, find connections between themselves – even if distant. A moment of closeness, even the temporary and epidermal one, allows to forget about the pain of existence. The train moves on, the dog is tamed, a sentimental scout song can be heard.

Malina Prześluga wrote her play with the Television Theatre in mind – in fact, in the way the narration is conducted, one can see the way cinematic tricks inspired it, but it is nevertheless a drama that can be equally well represented in the theatre in the hands of a director who allows the two narratives to coexist: the spoken and the silent. Ultimately, these two perspectives intertwine to create a poignant tale of human loneliness and loss. The author treats her story with a characteristic astringent humour and irony, which does not take away any seriousness from the play, but instead brings the audience even more emotionally close to the characters: mundane, funny, but in their own way sublime. In the text, the author uses different types of narration and ways of conducting monologues and dialogues, a varied language, confessing that “during the writing of this play, language was a very important point of reference: it reflected the level of immersion in the personality of the characters, the colloquial dialogue was transformed into poetry, a free stream of consciousness into a descriptive and external narrative...”

The play has been translated into Croatian, so far it has had three stage readings – one at the Warsaw Dramatic Theatre directed by Magdalena Miklasz, the second at the Opole Puppet and Actor Theatre directed by Adam Nalepa, and the third at the @TD Theatre in Zagreb, directed by Rajna Racz.

***Sour Milk***

Original title: *Kwaśne mleko*

Genre: drama

Additional info: drama published in *Dialog* monthly magazine, issue 4/2017

Cast: 4F, 3M (or 7F / 5F, 2M / 6F, 1M)

Premiere: November 2013 in Teatr Polski in Poznań, dir. Ula Kijak

Additional info: Text awarded in the 6th edition of the Metaphors of Reality competition – won the main prize (ex-aequo), the Journalists’ Award and the Audience Award.

The main characters in this text are women: Alina, her daughter, Mum, and Mum’s Mum. Alina becomes pregnant at a young age and encounters ostracism from women related to her and then stubborn indoc-trination to the role of mother. The lack of support and her inability to find herself in a difficult situation

force Alina to make the dramatic decision to have an abortion. It is easy to judge her as the only one responsible, but is it right? All the women in her family are burdened with some kind of genetic flaw, and the question of what it actually is remains the central theme of this play. Is it about the gene of a stereotypical Polish mother responsible for compassion and entering into many roles at once? Between them there are auxiliary characters, elements of the cultural or metaphysical order: The First Cell, the Primary Social Cell, Our Lady, the Light, the Choir of Passers-by and the Choir of Saints, which conduct the narrative, allowing us to approach the problem from many perspectives.

The author refers to the topic of infanticide, a subject eagerly taken up by the media, particularly in infamous cases like that of Katarzyna W. (Polish child murderess). Malina Prześluga, however, avoids easy judgments and accusations, wondering about the universal concept of the origin of evil and its causes, social conditions, motherhood, inheritance. *Sour milk* poses questions without imposing clear answers.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSPVvT-EMrU>

### **Frame**

Original title: *Stopklatka*

Genre: drama; for teenagers

Cast: 1F, 1M (one actress plays three characters)

Premiere: January 2015, Centrum Sztuki Dziecka, dir. Łukasz Chruszcz

Additional info: play received a distinction in XXI CSD Competition in Poznań.

*The drama is to a large extent a monologue of the main character, who also presents his views and attitude to life through the performance. We get to know the story of a boy who, after a serious accident, is paralysed and sentenced to a wheelchair. The new situation affects his relations with his loved ones. His mother becomes his nurse and the girlfriend only visits him out of pity. Subsequent scenes show the daily struggle with the disease, the nervous looks of the people he meets, the lack of understanding and longing for life before the accident. His world turns into one of an unlimited imagination, thanks to which he can experience things that even healthy people do not dream of. The protagonist treats both himself and others consciously and not entirely seriously.*

*In life – unlike in a film – you can't keep anything in a stop frame. For the main character, it is the moment of an accident that reappraises and changes his life forever. More and more often we see the real world through the lens of films or computer games, sometimes a momentary pause is needed to see that reality is governed by completely different laws.*

(source: [nowesztuki.pl](http://nowesztuki.pl))

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EfpnZOKWF4>



***Everything's Fine, We're Happy***Original title: *Wszystko jest dobrze, jesteśmy szczęśliwi*

Genre: drama

Cast: 3F, 4M (or any cast)

Premiere: September 2019, Teatr Współczesny in Szczecin, dir. Natalia Softysik

Additional info: play published in the *Dialog* monthly magazine, issue 9/2019

Life is made up of small activities, funny little things. Walking the dog. Renovating a house. Feeling the child kicking in the womb. This bliss can be suddenly interrupted in an instant.

This is what happens in the polyphonic drama of Malina Prześluga. A sudden bombardment knocks the characters out of their rhythm, disrupting the seemingly inviolable order. All "problems of the first world" cease to matter. Someone's husband doesn't come home, a dog dies, cinemas and cafés are closed, buildings turn into rubble. The war continues at full strength. And it gets worse and worse. The average middle class becomes refugees. But Prześluga does not mention about, e.g., Syria – she writes about hypothetical Poland (but not only Poland) from the future, torn apart by a military conflict.

Seemingly privileged citizens are effecting a massive exodus abroad. This escape is preceded by a scene of an absurd course of being a refugee (which "helps" to get into the mindset of the upcoming decline). Not everyone will succeed in this journey. But a person in an extreme situation can develop an unbreakable will to live, like "wasps in a tea glass, trees that grow on concrete, a two-year-old potato that sprouts in a basement without light"... It is precisely this power that makes yet another person sail on overcrowded pontoons towards the borders of Europe, despite being aware of the great risk. This problem may once affect us too, even if for now we are seemingly untouchable and alienated.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHrm3ekBGbk>

***Bleeh...***Original title: *Bleee...*

Genre: for children

Cast: 3F, 35M

Additional info: Text awarded in the Centrum Sztuki Dziecka Competition

Premiere: Teatr Maska in Rzeszów, 2011, dir. Laura Stabińska.

Swallowtail Butterfly (pl. Queen's page) is accused of infidelity for doubting the existence of the Queen. As a punishment, he is locked up in a bus terminal with all other outcasts from the world of arthropods. Among them, there is Daria – a pupa who's been locked for two years in a cocoon, which she does not want to leave because she is afraid of being a fat and nasty butterfly whom nobody will like. Victor shows up – the hull of a spider, with all his legs ripped off by people. Daria and Victor came there themselves, because they consider themselves worthless. There are also Antonio and Banderas, cockroach brothers, banished here for being filthy and stinky, and the wasp Mańka, who lost her sting. However, the most intriguing of all is Bleeh – a disgusting pile of dirt, dust, mud, fern and undefined secretions. Nobody knows who Bleeh is and what they are there for. Mostly they are silent, talking nonsense and depressed, but they seem to pay a special attention to the Swallowtail... The other arthropods do not trust the beautiful

butterfly, thinking that he came to mock them. To give his miserable companions some sorely needed self-confidence, Swallowtail decides to organise a talent competition. It is a chance for arthropods to be liked and appreciated. They are preparing to perform: Bleeh sings a song by Edith Piaf, the cockroaches recite Romeo and Juliet, Mańka gives a flamenco show, Daria does a performance in the middle of the cocoon, Victor does impressions of everyone. The insects prepare the hall and sing a song of talented arthropods. Gradually, however, they find out that no one will come to the show and that Swallowtail has deceived them. The sad butterfly wants the Queen, in whom he lost faith, to come and comfort him. Bleeh suggests Swallowtail that the best audience is made up of the insects on the bus. Daria slides out of the cocoon as a beautiful butterfly, and Bleeh turns out to be the long lost Queen, who was in hiding because she couldn't stand that everyone was looking after her. The insects are beginning to see the bright side of their imperfections.

Malina Prześluga's play with songs about doubt and faith, overcoming complexes and finding beauty within oneself.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5BA308BPyl>

### ***I Don't Sea Why Not***

Original title: *A morze nie*

Genre: for children

Cast: 4F, 5M (can very well be played by less numerous cast)

Premiere: 06.2016, Teatr Baj Pomorski, dir. Zbigniew Lisowski

Mr Carrot confides in his Barber while having his leaves trimmed – because, as is well known, barber-shops are the best places to gossip. With the possible exceptions of bars, like the Salad Bar. That's how this humorous story about living life to the fullest starts, a story based on many unusual relations between the characters.

By coincidence, Mr Carrot gets stuck in the head of a certain Snowman, becoming his nose. The vegetable, as more experienced (after all, it escaped the torturers ready to make him into broth), shows his new friend around the world. They bring a pigeon back to life, meet people who are celebrating New Year's Eve, as well as a slightly enchanted Carrot bartender with a charming name – Greek Salad. Above all, however, the Snowman wants to see the endless sea – and when he starts to melt, he wants to become one with it. There is only one way out – to find the end of the sea. And for that they need to go to the North Pole...

*I Don't Sea Why Not* is a warm story about a journey. About a friendship which is not afraid of the chef's clever, expiry date or positive temperatures... But Prześluga's play is not only a tapestry weaved of retort and brilliant jokes, sometimes with an eye on an adult viewer. It has a deeper message – everything flows, life is short, so you should take full advantage of it. Sacrifice in the name of friendship makes this experience even more complete.

Carrot and Snowman are the main characters, Greek Salad and the Pigeon have smaller roles, while Barber Fred, the Lemon, and people are background roles – the play may well be staged with a smaller cast.

See also: <https://bajpomorski.art.pl/a-morze-nie,12,pl,2,1,115.html>

**MARIUSZ WIĘCEK**

Born in 1983. Poet, stand-upper, playwright. A graduate of Polish philology at the University of Gdańsk. Winner of the Gdańsk City Award for Young Artists (2006), scholarship from the Fleszarowa-Muskat Foundation, distinguished in the national competition for modern comedy "Komediopisanie" (3rd edition, 2010, Powszechny Theatre in Łódź) for the play *How Gods Seduced*, written with



Jerzy Wójcicki. Winner of the National Competition Złoty Środek Poezji Kutno 2006 for the best poetic debut of the year 2005. He published volumes of poetry *Dar języków i inne przejęzyczenia* (*Speaking in tongues and other misunderstandings*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego 2005) and *Equilibrium* (Biblioteka Toposu 2009). Co-author of the plays *Wyrok* (*The Judgement*, semi-final of the 4th edition of the Gdynia Drama Award 2011) and *Life is Loading* (semi-final of the 6th edition of the Gdynia Drama Award 2013). First prize for *Life is Loading* in the international dramatic competition "Talking About Borders" for the best Polish play (Nuremberg 2016). The premiere of *Life is Loading* took place at the Municipal Theatre in Nuremberg (13 April 2017), directed by Julia Preschl.

**JERZY WÓJCICKI**

Born in 1983. Playwright, scriptwriter. Graduate of the Stanisław Wyspiański Academy of Dramatic Arts in Krakow at the Faculty of Directing with a specialization in drama. Awarded in the 3rd edition of the National Competition for Contemporary Polish Comedy "Komediopisanie", organised by the Powszechny Theatre in Łódź for his play *How the Gods Seduced* (2010). Awarded at the 9th National Review of the Contemporary Monodrama in Warsaw for his play *Do Not Shoot the Pianist* (2011). Semi-finalist of the 4th edition of the Gdynia Drama Award for the play *Wyrok* (*The Judgement*, 2011) and the 6th edition for the play *Life is Loading* (2013). Together with

students of the Faculty of Vocal and Acting at the Academy of Music in Gdańsk, he prepared a diploma – W. A. Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (adaptation of the libretto and directing – premiere: 27 April 2012). First prize for *Life is Loading* in the international dramatic competition "Talking About Borders" for the best Polish play (Nuremberg 2016). The premiere of *Life is Loading* took place at the Municipal Theatre in Nuremberg (13 April 2017), directed by Julia Preschl. Primarily interested in the psychological and social drama of the 20th and 21st century.

**Marital Problems**

Original title: *Kłopoty małżeńskie*

Genre: comedy

Cast: 1F, 2M

Premiere: 09.2018, BOTO Theatre in Sopot, dir. Maciej Konopiński

Translation: English

Kinga and Robert decide to get a divorce. The spectators act as witnesses to the dispute. The spouses blame each other for the failed relationship, revealing to the audience embarrassing facts of their lives: financial problems, an unsevered umbilical cord with their parents, a tendency to indulge in pornography, controversial upbringing methods, flirting.

In the second act, the conflicted couple go to the lake house to repair their relationship. The situation changes when Robert's friend Ziggy appears on stage unexpectedly. The man has acquired a key to the cottage and regularly invites his lovers there. This time, however, the new girlfriend blows him off and has no intention of coming. Between Kinga, Robert and Ziggy there is a sharp dispute, which will irreversibly affect their further relationship. Ziggy is a single person who enjoys the charms of life. While Kinga and Robert struggle every day for the quality of their relationship, Ziggy carelessly enters into new romances. In the finale, Kinga and Robert see in their colleague the harbinger of their own failure. The frivolous Ziggy turns out to be a lonely alcoholic who tries in vain to chase his demons away, jumping from one flower to another.

The comedy *Marital Problems* is a tribute to those who, regardless of the hardships of everyday life, have the courage to get married, which often involves endless sacrifices and emotional crises. What is the Philosopher's Stone that makes people want to be together? What do we really argue about when we argue over an unmade bed? Ziggy's tragicomic figure reveals an old but not easy truth – the fulfillment of a relationship depends largely on our personal attitude towards the world. Whether we are reconciled with each other, whether we accept our weaknesses, or whether we prefer to run away from our own problems, looking for help in a partner's arms.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jh3eUb01dqI>

### ***It's Coming...***

Original title: *Nadchodzi...*

Genre: drama

Cast: 6F, 10+M (it's possible to combine certain roles)

Translation: English

Eve's terminal illness becomes an excuse to escape from her otherwise bland life: badly paid work, a cramped flat, an apodictic mother, a crook of a brother and a burnt-out relationship. When the main character finds out that she has little time left, she leaves her husband, has an affair with her boss and her closest friend's husband, travels, wanders around clubs, tries drugs, spends all her savings and borrows money. Unfortunately, what she has always dreamed of does not satisfy her at all, and yet she has sacrificed so much to get it. Instead of indulging in pleasures, she starts to punish herself and wants to die.

Eve burnt all her bridges: she left her family, her friend and her job. After an unexpected recovery, she has to face reality: hurt relatives, pregnancy from the affair, lack of means to live. With nowhere to go, Eve is beginning to attend meetings of a ufologist sect that announces that the end of the world is near and it shall come with the arrival of aliens on Earth. Although she is sceptical about the idea of the approaching apocalypse, she participates in the sect's subsequent initiations.

*It's Coming* is an excellent psychological drama with brilliant dialogues and well defined characters. The play explores the issue of being aware of our choices: are we able to live our own lives or are we a result

of the expectations and failures of others? And finally: will the answer to this question really change anything in our current existence?

***Life is Loading***

Genre: drama

Additional info: the play won first prize in the International Drama Competition

“Talking About Borders” in 2016

Cast: 3F, 4M

Premiere: Staatstheater Nuernberg, dir. Julia Prechsl

Translation: German

*Life is Loading* is a play about a new way of experiencing the world, of which the Internet is an inseparable part. Here we are witnessing a metaphorical colonization of the Wild West, where violence, struggle for territory, gold rush, religious awakenings are not subject to any legislation. Sexaholics, inspired prophets of conspiracy theories, self-proclaimed sheriffs-hackers, prankers, haters, home-grown coaches, trolls – this whole menagerie of human wickedness and beauty wanders through no man’s land in search of their five minutes of fame. The play shows the Internet as a wild, barbaric land, which is still awaiting a long process of civilization. It is like discovering the customs of a tribe unknown to science. YouTube channels, social networking sites, sex-chats, memes, private apartments that are online twenty-four hours a day, big corporations that follow the tastes of the customers create a panorama of this new, wonderful world. Here is Donald Trump arguing on Twitter with Vladimir Putin about the size of Kim Kardashian’s buttocks, which ends with the declaration of World War III by the United States. A desperate woman, caring for her paralyzed husband, looking for consolation on a sex chat. Mark Zuckerberg, who invites a rebellious teenager who wants to close her Facebook account, to improve the world of the Internet with him. Two nerds who don’t leave the house at all, having contact with each other only via Skype. A morbidly obese guru and life coach in one, leading a quasi-mass celebrating obesity and fat, who absolves bulimic and anorexic women from the excess weight. How do you find yourself in this beautiful/cursed excess?

See also: [https://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=13867:life-is-loading-das-polnische-autoren-duo-mariusz-wiecek-jerzy-wojicki-geht-im-sieger-stueck-des-nuernberger-dramen-wettbewerbs-talking-about-borders-auf-empowerungs-shopping-im-internet&catid=247:staatstheater-nuernberg&Itemid=100190](https://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13867:life-is-loading-das-polnische-autoren-duo-mariusz-wiecek-jerzy-wojicki-geht-im-sieger-stueck-des-nuernberger-dramen-wettbewerbs-talking-about-borders-auf-empowerungs-shopping-im-internet&catid=247:staatstheater-nuernberg&Itemid=100190)

<https://www.der-theaterverlag.de/theater-heute/archiv/artikel/wiecek-wojicki-life-loading/>

**MARIA WOJTYSZKO**

Writer, playwright and dramatist. She studied cultural studies at the University of Warsaw, screenwriting at the Łódź Film School and feature directing at the Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing. She also studied at the Drama School at the Drama Laboratory. She has written scripts for television series and short films. She regularly participates in international workshops, such as Midpoint, Passion to Market or Films For Kids Pro. In 2006 she won an award from the Narodowy Stary Teatr and the monthly magazine *Dialog* for her drama *Macica (Uterus)*, which had its Polish premiere at the S. Żeromski Theatre in Kielce. The play was also staged at the Lofft Theatre in Leipzig, Brett Theatre in Vienna and at the Theatre Academy in Brno. For adults, she also wrote the musical *End of the World in Deer's Hill City*, staged in 2015 at the Norwid Theatre in Jelenia Góra, and *Cizi Jazyk (Foreign Language)*, which had its premiere in 2017 at the X10 Theatre in Prague. In 2010, she received the first prize in a competition organized by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań for her play *First Man in the World*. The play was staged at the Rawa Theatre in Katowice in 2015. She is the author of plays for children such as *Pacan – a Story about Love*, *Mika sull on janonen?* commissioned by and produced at the Finnish Teatteri Mukamas, the *Princess Logorea and the Bear* staged at the Guliwer Theatre in Warsaw, *Gniazdo (Nest)* played at the A. Fredro Theatre in Gniezno, *Sprzedawcy Bajek (Fairy Tale Merchants)* at the Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz. As the author of stage adaptations and playwright, she has worked, among others, on Michał Walczak's *The Sad Princess*, Kornel Makuszyński's *Koziołek Matołek*, Michael Ende's *Momo*, Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Antoni Libera's *Madame*, and *Nicholas on Holidays* by Rene Goscinny. Since 2012 she has been the literary director of Wrocław Puppet Theatre. Her play *SAM, or Preparation for Family Life*, was directed in this theatre by Jakub Krofta in 2014, and the play won the main prize in the 20th National Competition for the Production of Polish Contemporary Art. Also for the theatre in Wrocław, a drama *Heaven and Hell* was created, which was awarded the prize for the best dramatic text in the 23rd Competition for the staging of Polish Contemporary Art, and as the first ever text for children was in the final of the Gdynia Drama Award. For her play, the author also received an award from the Little Premieres Festival and the Wrocław Theatre Award.

***The End of the World in White City Hill***

Genre: comedy/western

Cast: 5F, 10M

Premiere: 27.09.2014 in C.K. Norwid Theatre in Jelenia Góra, dir. Jakub Krofta

White Hill City is almost extinct, and the president is about to arrive with a pre-election message. He's threatened by a local band of Brothers D planning an attack. The town's residents hire a paid assassin, Gloomy Jim, to kill the murderous Brothers, which would be perfect if it wasn't for the fact that Jim is old and can't shoot anymore. Whores from the saloon are looking for a way out of this situation and decide to take matters into their own hands and not to rely on the courage and heroism of the men. Will they manage to defend White Hill City and save the president?

*The End of the World...* is a western-style feminist comedy in which the protagonists are thoroughly modern and their problems are very topical.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-i7-SvjMzM>

### ***Heaven and Hell***

Original title: *Piekło-Niebo*

Genre: for children

Cast: 7F, 10+M

Casting details: some of the roles can be joined, some of them can be played either by women or men

Additional info: the play was in the semi-finals of the 10th Gdynia Drama Award in 2017, and received an award for the best dramatic text in the 23rd National Competition for the Exhibition of Polish Contemporary Art and at the Wałbrzych "Festiwal Małych Prapremier"

Premiere: 04.12.2016, Wrocław Doll Theatre, dir. Jakub Krofta

Children are usually presented with an oversimplified explanation of the world. Those who deserve it go to heaven, and sinners are left in a sad corner (or a bubbling cauldron) in hell. Has anyone ever wondered what might happen if an unruly mum – a DJ who died in an accident and did not manage to say goodbye to her beloved son – were to enter the afterlife?

The play by Maria Wojtyzsko, full of twisted but also warm humour, is a record of the escape of two unusual renegades – a DJ named Jola and the silly devil Osmolka – through the corners of the afterlife. The journey through heaven and hell, dreamt of in the middle of a dark wardrobe, helps the young Tadzik to cope with the loss of his parent. The chase conducted by a host of somewhat garish angels and mouthy devils abounds in many gags, but gradually different thematic layers are also revealed. For example, multiple aspects of maternal love. The devil Mania, the mother of Osmolka, loves him with toxic love, resorting to deceit to keep her adult son at her side. Jola, though seemingly irresponsible and distracted, thinks only about the safety and peace of Tadzik's spirit. There will also be the Mother of God, who waits for a phone call from her Son all day long. But, as God will say, "if he doesn't call, he is happy and doesn't miss anything".

Jola's visit to the afterlife turns the patterns of thought upside down, but it also brings comfort. Just look at some of the characters. Trapped ("for whining") in one of the circles of hell, the condemned realize that no one really requires eternal penance from them. In turn, Grandfather, Jola's father, consists of only one half – he is incomplete because he has never met his children. The meeting with the heroine helps him find solace.

*Heaven and Hell* is not a play explaining what happens to a man after death, because it focuses on life: how to solve the unsolvable and correct life's mistakes, how to tame the thought of leaving a loved one; that it is worth breaking stereotypes and making unconventional friendships, and all this without the slightest drop of too obvious sentimentality. The author shows that the slapstick style does not rule out including important life wisdom in the play. It is a twisted offering showing that the full-blooded characters, together with their weaknesses and aspirations, give the reader and viewer more than one-dimensional characters from the story of the "fox and duck" (vide: a wonderful scene which breaks away from

outdated conventions of the theatre for children). One thing is certain. No one will be consumed by hell. You will be devoured by the theatre.

See also: <https://teatrlalek.wroclaw.pl/pl/component/sppagebuilder/16-pieklo-niebo>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpoTQ4FrC3o>

### **Foreign Language**

Original title: *Język obcy*

Genre: comedy

Cast: 5F, 5M

Additional info: play written for the Divadlo X10 in Prague; the play was published in the anthology

*Poland is a Myth. New Dramas (Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty)*, ADiT, April 2019

Premiere: November 2017, Divadlo X10 in Prague (dir. Jakub Krofta)

Translation: Czech, English

A quasi-autobiographical, full of absurd story conceived in the mind of the character called simply "I". The action takes place during screenwriting workshops for filmmakers from Central Europe. Dull small-talks about the model plot structure do not translate into a normal life. The main heroine, brought to life by "I", starts to create new, sometimes gargantuan characters. Fiction merges with reality, the characters invent each other and defy the omnipotent power of their creators.

*Foreign Language refers not only to the internationality of the filmmakers' team – this term conveys an inability to freely express one's feelings despite strong skills of pitching. Foreign language stands also for alarming fascist tendencies emerging in Central Europe. People can be united by their basic need of integration – whether against hatred and xenophobia or through aggression and fanaticism. It's a comedy drawing from the very process of writing, unveiling complicated yet amusing relation between the author and her heroine. These are the words that may ring the bell: "You are the main character. You need to do something to make something happen. People hate it when it doesn't happen". That's an allusion to Tadeusz Różewicz's The Card Index. Maria Wojtyszko peeps at the backstage of filmmaking and theatre-making, studies screenwriting process, invites to the stage filmmakers from Hungary and Slovakia, and a scriptwriter from the United States, to present us with the new The Card Index, adjusted to contemporary times and new modes of sensitivity. (Jacek Wakar, introductory essay to *Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty* – Polish contemporary drama anthology)*

### **Uterus**

Original title: *Macica*

Genre: feminist comedy-drama

Cast: 10+F, 7M

Premiere: 24.03.2007 in S. Żeromski Theatre in Kielce, dir. Piotr Szczerski

Poland, tail end of the 80s. Victoria is expecting her first child, but is not sure who the father is. The pregnancy happened to her by accident and the girl doesn't know if she is mature enough to be a mother and



if she wants to give birth at all. Anyway, she does not want to be like her parents. Victoria's grandmother suffered during the German occupation and Victoria's mother during the Communist era. Victoria lives in a time of apparent freedom and wants to do everything differently – she wants to be free and independent, to live her own life. But can you be free and independent and live your own life when a frightening stranger grows in your body? The story of a lonely young woman, experiencing a personality crisis due to an unwanted pregnancy, and having long – sometimes comical – conversations with her uterus (symbolizing corporeality, femininity, instinct, motherhood), as well as reality confronted with absurdities, remains extremely topical in the era of discussions about tightening the anti-abortion law.

See also: <https://odpalprojekt.pl/p/macicaspektakldyplomowy>

### *Sam*

Genre: for children (ages 10+)

Cast: 8F, 6M

Premiere: 08.03.2014 in Wrocław Doll Theatre, dir. Jakub Krofta

Sam is thirteen. As if that alone wasn't enough of a disaster, his parents are just getting a divorce because his mother fell in love with an expatriate from the former Yugoslavia. Sam is an intellectual, so he's having trouble with the school bullies. He is lonely. His only friend is a hamster with a split personality. In addition, a new girl appears in the classroom, Wiola, whose family seems perfect to Sam. But only for a time... Sam, an outsider lacking self-confidence and a weirdo, tries to deal with his school enemy, Grzesiek, with the difficult situation at home, with his aversion to his mother's new man and his dad's parade of new girls, and most of all, with love. A funny, warm and wise story about problems with growing up, love and friendship, written in youthful language and comprehensible to everyone who has ever been thirteen years old.

See also: <https://www.teatrlalek.wroclaw.pl/pl/component/sppagebuilder/38-sam-czyli-przygotowanie-do-zycia-w-rodzynie>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqBXXk4cQ3E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdzPkrNGWFw>



### MAGDALENA WOŁŁEJKO *vel* MEGGIE W. WRIGHTT

When writing for television, Magdalena Wołłejko used the pseudonym Maciej Pisz, while on the theatrical posters she appears as the mysterious Englishwoman, Meggie W. Wrightt. The experience gained on stage and upbringing in a family with a rich acting tradition allowed the author to develop an incredible sensitivity to dialogue.

Theatre and film actress, author of plays, for many years associated with Warsaw theatres, specializing in comedy plays and farces (Kwadrat, Komedia, Na Woli Theatre, Dramatic Theatre, Capitol, Syrena). She comes from a family with long acting traditions. In 1978 she graduated from Warsaw's Theatre Academy (PWST) and was hired by Edward Dziewoński at the Kwadrat Theatre, where she performed in several farces. She also played in several dozen feature films. She has worked with many directors, but created her best performances in Stanisław Różewicz's cinema and television pictures. In 1998 she wrote her first text *The Third King*, which was produced by Jan Kidawa-Błoński for the TVP1 television channel. At the same time, she established a literary collaboration with Gambit Production, for which she wrote over a dozen scripts for the TV series *Taksówka Jedyńki*. Since then she has been using her stage, comedy experience to write TV scripts, films, monologues, song lyrics and, above all, theatrical plays. In 2003 the cult comedy *Klub Hipochondryków* (*Hypochondriacs' Club*) premiered. In 2012, a book entitled *The Merry Plays, or Hypochondriacs and the Abandoned* – with lyrics and photos from her three comedies, staged in Warsaw and Sydney, was published.

#### ***The Hypochondriacs' Club***

Original title: Klub Hipochondryków

Genre: farce

Cast: 2F, 5M

Premiere: 11.04.2003, Teatr Syrena in Warsaw, dir. Wojciech Malajkat

Translation: English

There is a common opinion that middle-aged men sometimes simply lose their minds. Looking at the behaviour of three friends: the distinguished homosexual Leo, a ladies' man Tom and Ken, who's going through various tribulations with his ex-wife, one can conclude that men in their prime come from a very extravagant planet.

The titular hypochondriacs meet to celebrate the birthday of one of them. One of their "entertainments" is to study the atlas of diseases. Each of them finds symptoms that are supposed to be fatal. Boasting who suffers more and who dies the fastest makes the atmosphere hotter. But the men's party turns into a night they will never forget. Ken's ex-wife, Pam, appears at the apartment door. Some time later she's followed by: her lover, a plastic surgeon named Vito, Leo's former partner Ben, and young Gina, Tom's heavily pregnant lover and at the same time the daughter of the possessive Vito. The various mechanisms of *qui pro quo*, verbal and situational jokes, skillful gradation of the dramaturgy and the skillfully woven sensational plot make this play a great, energetic farce, as evidenced by its presence in the repertoire of the Syrena Theatre for over a decade.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0v0QfoZUfc>

**MICHAŁ ZDUNIK**

Born in 1990, author, director. Graduated in Polish philology (Master's degree) from the University of Warsaw. His thesis dealt with the author's concept of Polish post-sacral drama. He is currently a doctoral student at the Institute of Polish Literature of the Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw, he also studies directing at the A. Zelwerowicz Theatre Academy. He received a scholarship from the Minister of National Education (2007) and the National Fund for Children (2008/09), and in the academic year 2012/13 he received a scholarship from the Minister of Science and Higher Education. In 2010, in the 7/8th issue of *Dialog*, his debut play *Dolls* was published. Its premiere took place at the St. I. Witkiewicz Theatre in Zakopane (dir. Szymon Budzyk). In May 2011, during the *Universcènes* festival at Toulouse II University – Le Mirail, the drama premiered in French translation (directed by Kasia Kurzeja); it was also published by the Presses Universitaires du Mirail publishing house in a bilingual book edition (translation: Kinga Joucaviel). *Dolls* were also presented in Paris during a reading organized by the Polish Institute and Théâtre Laboratoire Elizabeth Czerczuk. In September 2011, as part of the XII Days of Drama "Jeszcze ich Po-znacie" at the J. Szaniawski Drama Theatre in Wałbrzych, the premiere of his play *Origami* took place (inspired by *Ozimina* by Waclaw Berent, dir. Tomasz Węgorzewski). Zdunik writes essays as well – he writes about music, literature, theatre and film – and has published in *Dwutygodnik*, *Ruch Muzyczny* and *Teatr*, among others. In 2018, he was awarded the Talanton Prize for the best dramatic debut on the radio Jedyńka. His play *The Detailed Theory of Life and Dying* was published in the monthly magazine *Dialog* No. 5/2018, then published in April 2019 by ADiT in the anthology *Poland is a Myth. New Dramas*.



Photo: Agnieszka Zielińska

***Dolls***Original title: *Lalki*

Genre: drama

Cast: 1F

Premiere: 15.01.2011, St. I. Witkiewicz Theatre in Zakopane, dir. Szymon Budzyk;

French Prapremiere: 13.05.2011, Théâtre Sorano Toulouse

Translation: French

*Dolls* – Michał Zdunik's debut play – is a story of a woman who, led astray by illusions, decides to adopt all abandoned children. She begins her monologue, in which many different "voices" clash, representing different speech registers, press and literary genres. It is a portrait of a person lost in schizophrenia, without a coherent identity, with a completely broken up personality, but also a picture of a woman and womanhood in the modern world. There are excerpts from newspapers, fragments of colloquial conversations and TV reports, constantly repeated conventional phrases and so-called "common wisdom".

The main protagonist of the play is the language – deconstructed, carried to the limits of absurdity in its fossilized, media and dialoguing forms, arranged in a musical, strongly rhythmic structure. *Dolls* can

be sung, chanted, shouted, you can let yourself be swept away by a deluge of words hiding a real tragedy underneath. It is so difficult to reach it today – it is constantly erased by everyday gibberish, clickbait phrases, and the noise of conversations. They hide the real drama of women, who must be artificial, socialized, enslaved. Like dolls.

### ***Detailed Theory of Life and Death***

Original title: *Szczegółowa teoria życia i umierania*

Genre: drama

Cast: 2F, 2M (it may be expanded)

Additional info: play nominated to the semi-finals of the Gdynia Drama Award 2018; published in *Dialog* magazine, 5/2018 issue; the play was published in the anthology *Poland is a Myth. New Dramas. (Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty)*, ADiT, April 2019

Premiere: September 2018, radio play, dir. Michał Zdunik, Polish Radio Programme 1

Translation: German

*Detailed Theory of Life and Death* is a polyphonic play written initially for the radio; it consists of the voices of the living and the dead. It tells the story of Jan and Antonina Żabiński, who were hiding Jewish people in the Warsaw Zoo, of which they were directors. Zdunik, instead of writing a traditional storyline, created a polyphonic structure, which resembles a score with many voice parts; a kind of improvised radio broadcast, in which we can hear a speaker and an author himself, struggling with his own work of art. Apart from that, Zdunik is far from preserving the myth of Polish heroism, brought up a little while ago by the Hollywood movie about the Żabińskis, starring Jessica Chastain as Antonina. For him, the Żabińskis' story differs depending on the current storyteller's background and experience. Zdunik treats theater and drama as a one of a kind medium.

Jacek Wakar, introductory essay to *Polska jest mitem. Nowe dramaty* anthology

**PREMIERES IN 2019/2020:**

*Der Begleiter (Accompanist; Akompaniator)*, Anna Burzyńska

19th of September 2019

Miluna Theatre in Salzburg, played in Kleines Theater, dir. Susanna Szameit

*Pustostan (Derelict)*, Malina Prześluga

26th of September 2020

Radio play, dir. Anna Rozmianiec

*Akompaniator (Accompanist)*, Anna Burzyńska

3rd of October 2020

Mały Theatre in Manufaktura in Łódź, dir. Mariusz Pilawski

*Sam, czyli przygotowanie do życia w rodzinie (Sam)*, Maria Wojtyzsko

24th of October 2020

Jaracz Theatre in Olsztyn, dir. Dorota Abbe



**We would like to announce a German Edition of the anthology  
POLEN IST EIN MYTHOS. Neue Dramen in 2021:**

1. **Tomasz Kaczorowski – #ciemność / #darkness/**  
(German translating: Antje Riter-Jasińska)
2. **Łukasz Pawłowski – Metro Afganistan / Metro Afghanistan**  
(German translating: Saskia Herklotz)
3. **Przemysław Pilarski – Wracaj / Return!**  
(German translating: Andreas Volk)
4. **Paweł Wolak, Katarzyna Dworak (PiK) – Wierna wataha / Faithful Pack**  
(German translating: Antje Riter-Jasińska)
5. **Maria Wojtyzsko – Język obcy / Foreign Language**  
(German translating: Andreas Volk)
6. **Michał Zdunik – Szczegółowa teoria życia i umierania / A Detailed Theory of Life and Death**  
(German translating: Saskia Herklotz)

