

„MIRROR SCENE”

Writer: Patrycja Zajac // 1 September 2020

THE MIRROR OF STAGE – BILINGUAL THEATRE...

Scene Mirror (SM) / The Mirror of Stage (MOS) is an Anglo-Polish theatre project based in the Scottish capital, Edinburgh. Apart from the production of Polish and English performances, we are engaged in the production of a variety of educational and artistic activities, such as drama workshops for all ages, acting lessons, themed, costume photo sessions in collaboration with Mr. Bumble's Photobooth atelier, costume rental and many others.

It all started a few years ago, with art and theatre classes I conducted at one of the Polish Saturday schools in Edinburgh. Over time, as the projects continued, my youth group became a regular youth theatre, together with stage collaborations with adult actors, which made our subsequent performances intergenerational productions.

We had our English-language debut in the Scottish Parliament, during the Celebrating Diversity Day in Scotland – Polish Culture and Language event, where we staged an English version of established Polish author Adam Mickiewicz's ballad "Mrs Twardowska", adapted and expanded for the needs of spectators who may need to be introduced to the adventures of Master Twardowski.

QUOTE

The word is an integral part of acting and as Stella Adler used to say, the actor's job is to understand the size and dimension of the spoken words and to understand in depth what is beyond words.



QUOTE

„Dziady II is above all a spectacle of a dialogue. Bilingualism has been played with surprising rhythm and the mysticism-sewn scene smuggled cultural and educational values”

In conclusion, from the reaction of our audience, we were successful, which, however, I must admit, was not immediately so obvious. "Mrs Twardowska" in Holyrood in Scotland was my first play that wasn't conducted in Polish. Extreme fear, unusual jitters, a big question mark – will it work? Paradoxically, I was not worried about young people – my students, most of whom spoke English often better than Polish. The word is an integral part of acting and as Stella Adler used to say, the actor's job is to understand the size and dimension of the spoken words and to understand in depth what is beyond words. So you have to feel and think in the language you play in, otherwise you'll never be persuasive enough...

So, this performance was groundbreaking for me as an actress. I felt like I passed the exam. One of the guests of honor of that event was Richard Demarco, a legend with whom we spent the rest of the evening chatting about the theater and our future plans... Looking back, I think it was that moment that the Mirror changed its mission from cultivating Polish culture and language among Polish emigration – to promoting Polish heritage among the British community. Because, honestly, has anyone in the world heard of Mickiewicz? Sure, some heard, but not to the extent that Shakespeare is still popular, there's still a long way to go... So I thought, with the encouragement of Richard Demarco himself, that I have to add something from myself here, that we can create here some kind of interesting theatrical niche...

QUOTE

Mickiewicz's romantic theatre and ghost-appealing rituals – perfectly fitted with British Halloween traditions and allowed viewers to follow the plot line without problems.

Since then, LS/ MOS has carried out further Polish and English-language stage productions during many local multicultural events, such as, among others, International Day in Hawick, Multiculturalism Week in Galashiels/Scottish Borders, 7th National Theatre Festival in the "i" stage in Krakow (performance of young people in English), 26th WOŚP Charity Event final in Edinburgh, Recitation Competition in Northampton, fundraising for the East Foundation in cooperation with the Polish scouting in Edinburgh. In addition to performances and drama workshops, as part of an active promotion of bilingualism, we also took part in an international campaign "Give your child your mother tongue" in cooperation with APPLA (Association for the Promotion of Polish Language Abroad).

Everything in life changes, evolves, transforms, and in me at some point there was a desire for certain change. In the meantime, I received training at workshops in English, which I needed, not so much to gain official papers and diplomas, but for building up my inner self-confidence as an English-speaking actress. Professional exams in English were one of the most stressful exams in my career, but I passed. Satisfaction was indescribable, and above all, it was a tangible proof that it is worth trying, even if we are overwhelmed with a crippling fear. In the meantime, filling my educational gaps also included regular flights to Krakow – someone might ask why?



Lilies
a tale between worlds

Cast
Patrycja Zając, Weronika Krawczyk,
Daniele Silvan, Steven McDonald
Mikołaj Figiel, Zachary Wakulicz
Sandra Biernaciak, Maja Gaska

Based on the ballad by Adam Mickiewicz "Lilije"
Translated from the Polish by Charles S. Kraszewski
Adapted and directed by Mikołaj and Patrycja Zając

Isn't it a waste of time and money? Theatre has been present in my life since I remember but my education did not show that. So when my life finally started to come together so that I could think seriously about creating, running and performing in a theatre, I wanted to make everything perfect. Yes, I am a bit like that, but it is also a kind of personal humility in the sense that we learn throughout our lives. For this, I have always liked to learn and many of my friends have long seen me as an eternal student. I believe that if you have the opportunity to do so, you should invest in your personal development, in addition to your knowledge and skills, it adds wings.

So, when I completed the missing diplomas, I gained official confirmation of professional qualifications in Poland and the UK, I moved away from the model of youth theatre. LS/MOS has entered the stage of cooperation with adult, professional actors and guest directors from Poland and the United Kingdom. Our first performance was a bilingual miniature of *Dziady II* Fragments – Forefathers' Eve II Excerpts – staged during Burns' Night of "Robert Burns and the Romantics: Songs and Stories of the Supernatural" organized by the Scottish-Polish Cultural Association. In the audience Poles, Scots and English, on stage were spoken Polish and English languages. The same performance

with an extended version and cast, was staged a few months later in the Assembly Roxy Theatre in Edinburgh, as part of the Polish Heritage Days celebrations in the UK, with the financial support of the Polish Consulate in Edinburgh and the promotional support from the Polish Cultural Institute London. This was a project that I call a theatrical experiment to this day. International cast from Poland, Scotland, England, France, Spain and Argentina. Working language on rehearsals – English, languages on stage – Polish and English. I was directing, and together with our band, I also composed music myself. The enormity of the work, but one that pleases you, because you put your heart and soul into it, was shocking. Interesting fact: the show definitely was more interesting to English-speaking viewers than Polish... Mickiewicz's romantic theatre and ghost-appealing rituals – perfectly fitted with British Halloween traditions and allowed viewers to follow the plot line without problems. Theatre, like any kind of art, is a subjective matter, which one likes, for others it is unbearable, and it is the natural turn of things. In retrospect, after talking to other theatre makers, many aspects of our play would change, but what we did is also enjoyable. Let me cite an excerpt from Michał Nakonieczewski's review of the spirit of romanticism: "*Dziady II* is above all a spectacle of a dialogue.

QUOTE

Recently, moreover, a lot is happening between Edinburgh and Krakow ... in cooperation with Krakow's Totutotam Theatre we are preparing – *Three Sisters* of Chekhov. Scotland, Poland, England... in Polish, English, it doesn't matter, where, and in what language, we play for you, because without spectators there is no theater.

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Our last premieres before the pandemic were our own interpretation of the legend of the Krakow Wawel Dragon, as part of #KrakówExperienceFestival, "Red Riding Hood" written by Brzechwa and monodrama "Mrs. Twardowska, where the devil cannot ...". The pandemic forced us to postpone our plans, like taking part in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival this year, which was cancelled due to COVID, as well as this year's Polish Heritage Days and many others. As much as possible, however, we are working on what we can, longing for our return to the stage. We are currently preparing our participation in the next edition of The National Reading in Edinburgh, in which we try as theatre, to take part

in regularly. In addition, we are perfecting the English play *Holly Wagner The Black Lady of the Forest* and Polish play *The Candle* written by Alexander Fredro, which we are performing at this point in Krakow. The play is directed by Inka Dowlasz. Recently, moreover, a lot is happening between Edinburgh and Krakow ... in cooperation with Krakow's Totutotam Theatre we are preparing – *Three Sisters* of Chekhov. Scotland, Poland, England... in Polish, English, it doesn't matter, where, and in what language, we play for you, because without spectators there is no theater.

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ABOUT WRITER

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