

A HISTORY OF POLISH THEATRE

Poland is celebrated internationally for its rich and varied performance traditions and theatre histories. This groundbreaking volume is the first in English to engage with these topics across an ambitious scope, incorporating Staropolska, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Enlightenment and Romanticism within its broad ambit. The book also discusses theatre cultures under socialism, the emergence of canonical practitioners and training methods, the development of dramaturgical forms and stage aesthetics and the political transformations attending the ends of the First and Second World Wars. Subjects of far-reaching transnational attention such as Jerzy Grotowski and Tadeusz Kantor are contextualized alongside theatre makers and practices that have gone largely unrecognized by international readers, while the participation of ethnic minorities in the production of national culture is given fresh attention. The essays in this collection theorize broad historical trends, movements and case studies that extend the discursive limits of Polish national and cultural identity.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-47649-2 — A History of Polish Theatre
Edited by Katarzyna Fazan, Michal Kobialka, Bryce Lease
Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108476492
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108619028

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First published 2022

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ Books Limited, Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Fazan, Katarzyna, editor. | Kobialka, Michal, editor. | Lease, Bryce, editor.
 TITLE: A history of Polish theatre / edited by Katarzyna Fazan, Michal Kobialka, Bryce Lease.
 DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
 IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2021034014 (print) | LCCN 2021034015 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108476492 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108700870 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108619028 (ebook)
 SUBJECTS: LCSH: Theater – Poland – History. | Polish drama – History and criticism. | BISAC: DRAMA / European / General
 CLASSIFICATION: LCC PN2859.P6 H57 2021 (print) | LCC PN2859.P6 (ebook) | DDC 792.09438–dc23
 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021034014>
 LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021034015>

ISBN 978-1-108-47649-2 Hardback

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Acknowledgements

This project has been a collective endeavour, and the editors are grateful to all of the contributors who collaborated on this volume. Preparation of the chapters included two historiography workshops in Kraków in 2018 and 2019, and we would like to recognize the Jagiellonian University's support of these events. Translation is at the heart of this project, and it is imperative to acknowledge the labour of each of the translators: Stephen Dersley, Joanna Figiel, Elżbieta Leśnikowska, David Malcolm, Anna Popiel, Aleksandra Sobczak, Paul Vickers, Timothy Williams, Simon Włoch, Michał Zając and Rokszana Zgierska. We would like to acknowledge the following institutions for their financial support of the translation of individual essays: the Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw (Agata Adamiecka-Sitek and Marek Waszkiel); the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw (Justyna Biernat); the Faculty of Polish Studies at the Jagiellonian University (Anna R. Burzyńska, Karolina Czerska, Katarzyna Fazan, Dorota Jarząbek-Wasył, Tadeusz Kornaś, Marcin Kościelniak, Agnieszka Marszałek, Grzegorz Niziołek, Włodzimierz Szturc and Krzysztof Zajas); the National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków (Beata Gucałska); the Faculty of Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Ewa Guderian-Czaplińska) and the Dean of the Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology (Dobrochna Ratajczakowa) at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; the Institute of Cultural Studies at the University of Wrocław (Mirosław Kocur); the Instytut Sztuki PAN in Warsaw (Joanna Krakowska); the Faculty of Philology at the University of Gdańsk (Zbigniew Majchrowski); and the Faculty of Philology at the University of Łódź (Piotr Olkusz). We would like to thank everyone who gave us permission to reproduce their images: Greg Goodale, Magda Hueckel, Natalia Kabanow, Marika Kuźmich at the Edward Hartwig Foundation, Stefan Okołowicz, Justyna Wąsowska, Maciej Zakrzewski, Piotr Znamierowski and the YIVO Archives. We are also grateful to Tim Heitman for his design concept for the book cover.

Our sincere thanks to Gwyn Donlon for her detailed and careful work on the index. We would like to acknowledge Steven Holt, whose careful copy-editing had a significant impact on the final manuscript.

Time for Michal Kobialka and Bryce Lease to edit sections of this book was funded by an AHRC grant, 'Staging Difficult Pasts: Of Narratives, Objects and Public Memory' (AH/R006849/1). Research for Piotr Olkusz's essay was co-financed by the Polish National Science Centre (State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN); DEC-2012/04/S/HS2/00161). The Faculty of Communication at Vilnius University supported Martynas Petrikas's research for his chapter.

Special thanks are due to Maria Delgado for her support of this project from its very inception, and at Cambridge University Press we are grateful to Kate Brett for commissioning the book and to Emily Hockley for her excellent work as our lead editor.

As this collection goes to press, mass demonstrations throughout Poland have revealed widespread anger at the enforcement of regressive laws against women and religious fundamentalism. These are the largest public demonstrations since the Solidarity Movement in the 1980s. Many theatre and performance makers have participated in and led these protests, as they have done historically. This book is dedicated to that struggle.

A Note on Terminology

Naming Polish cities is both historically fraught and linguistically complicated in translation. We have chosen to keep the Polish spelling for names of cities when they have been accepted as standard in English usage (such as Gdańsk, Kraków, Łódź, Poznań, Wrocław), whereas we have employed the anglicized names for those cities for which the Polish spelling has not been widely adopted in written or spoken English (Lviv, Vilnius, Warsaw). Some of the cities concerned, such as Lviv and Vilnius, are not within the borders of modern Poland. Theatre companies, concepts, or forms have been translated while names of theatres have not, unless their English translation is currently found in popular usage.