



Latest Polish Plays for Young Audiences

(2020-2022)

INTRODUCTION

In this publication we present the latest plays aimed at younger audience, which were produced in Poland between 2020 and 2022 and became the aftermath of three editions of the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play, organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań, Poland. It is a compilation of works aimed at both children and young adults. The descriptions of the individual plays include their summary, information on the message of each piece, an excerpt from the jury's recommendation and a biography of the author.

The Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play has been organised since 1986, and is the only event of that kind focused on works for young audiences in Poland. The Competition has made it possible to promote plenty of authors and effectively support debutants over the past 30 years. What makes the Competition stand out and even more valued in the artistic community is the anonymity of the submissions.

The plays honoured in the Competition are published in "New Plays for Young Audience" – the only Polish journal series regularly printing plays aimed at younger readers. The series also releases anthologies of texts translated from other languages – except for 2021, when the plays were published online in the drama library of the monthly magazine "Dialog".

In addition to its publishing work, the Children's Art Centre is active in promoting contemporary texts by organising performance readings, playwriting workshops and author events at festivals, collaborating with theatre directors, managing an online catalogue of modern plays (nowesztuki.pl) as well as preparing drama-inspired, educational materials for teachers.

As an aftermath of many years of observing the Polish theatre scene and conducting environmental research in the Children's Art Centre in 2022, starting from 2023, the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play will take on a new form of its writing programme. This will make it possible to respond more practically and adequately to the writers' needs as well as the changes in thinking about theatre works aimed at young audiences that are taking place in Poland.

The Team of the Children's Art Centre in Poznań



About the plays

33rd Competition for Young
Audience Theatre Play

About Alusia from the roof

AUTHOR Paweł Fic

AGE RATING 8 years old and over

THEMES self-acceptance, hope, teenagers, inner struggle, dreams, change, heroine, adulthood, rebellion, imagination, future

CHARACTERS Alusia, Aunt 1, Aunt 2, Aunt 3, Uncle 1, Uncle 2

SUMMARY On the roof of a bus stop, a girl - Alusia - sits in a wicker basket. She is busy collecting feathers, throwing away the ones she doesn't like and making a nest out of the remaining ones. One of the aunts notices the girl and wonders what Alusia is doing. They start talking as more people (aunts and uncles) come to the bus stop. Their discussion reveals that the heroine comes from "the apartment number three" which has a negative connotation for the adults. She initially explains that she climbed onto the roof to get a better view of the world; she calls the basket her nest. Everyone urges Alusia to come down, telling her that it is dangerous and not appropriate for girls. They keep talking about Alusia, and she explains that she is looking for an idea for herself and her life. She is inspired by all sorts of characters: female archaeologists, aviators, prime ministers, and even Simon the Stylite. The Aunts and Uncles ruthlessly show their criticism about the girl's perspective. Meanwhile, Alusia creates a bird costume and finally admits to being afraid of heights. She declares, however, that she wants to overcome her fear. Eventually, the adults decide to call the police to pull the girl off the roof - only Aunt 3 seems to understand the girl as she remembers her own childhood hopes and dreams.

MESSAGE This play, simple in its structure, has a rich interpretative potential. It shows how hostile the society can be to a child's dreams and plans, but it also points out to the gap between children and adults in the way they perceive reality. To her aunts and uncles, Alusia seems bizarre, while from her perspective they seem to simply reproduce clichés and stereotypes. The gesture of climbing up to the roof (and later also coming down) can be read as an attempt at emancipation and rebellion, as well as invitation to question what we perceive as "proper" and "granted" in the mutual relations between children and adults.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2022

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS First Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 49th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Agnieszka Waligóra

PAWEŁ FIC While having a degree in theology, his chosen profession became accounting. An author of fairy tales, novels and dramatic texts. He received an honourable mention in the Drama Competition organised by the ZAiKS Society of Authors and the Warsaw Documentary Studio, and won the 33rd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

On the roof of a bus stop, a girl sits in a wicker basket – climbing to the top “wasn't at all as difficult as everyone said.” (...) So embarrassing for... Well, exactly, who was it embarrassing for? The girl feels comfortable with what she's done. However, it seems problematic to most of her aunts and uncles. (...) The extreme dissonance sketched by the author appears as a consequence of not listening to the child. (Joanna Żygowska, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

How big and heavy elephants die

AUTHOR Mariusz Gołosz

AGE RATING 8 years old and over

THEMES self-acceptance, loneliness, father, mental health crisis, identity, hero, parents, mourning, violence, trauma, loss, school, death

CHARACTERS Marcin, Mother, Teacher, Hygienist, Friend, Non-Friend, Uncle, Elephant, Narrator

SUMMARY The text is formed as an analogy to the structure of a typical school day: divided into eight lessons, an epilogue and a prologue. "Lessons" are metaphorical in nature - the action takes place both during traditional classes and outside the school building. The protagonist is 12-year-old Martin, who has recently lost his father; his dad was called "an elephant". The boy takes this nickname literally and wonders about its many meanings. He musings are fuelled by the ignorance of those around him – the other characters do not understand how grief is experienced by a teenage boy. Meanwhile, Marcin's father - not only "big and heavy," but also strong, wise and caring like the titular animal – becomes a role model in the boy's eyes. This allows the boy to understand and accept himself - his appearance and his tendency to daydream, both of which make him an object of ridicule. The successive "lessons" Marcin participates in - English, biology or physical education, as well as conversations with his mother, the hygienist or his friends - help him to come to terms with his father's death and make peace with himself; he learns that his self-confidence does not require a father figure to refer to. He also manages to recognise the meaning of the death of a loved one and the means to cope with it.

MESSAGE The play discusses the difficulties and complexities of coping with grief after the death of a loved one and points out to the importance of accepting oneself regardless of the surroundings. It also deals with the disregard shown to the adolescent protagonist by his family and at school. Ultimately, however, Marcin recognises that his value lies not in the reactions of those around him, but in himself. Being in a conscious relationship with his inner self helps him to come to terms with the loss he has experienced and accept his life anew. In the text, the imagery of the elephant is open to a variety of interpretations.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2022

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS First Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 49th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Agnieszka Waligóra

MARIUSZ GOŁOSZ Playwright who graduated in philosophy and the Laboratory of New Theatrical Practices at the SWPS University in Warsaw (module: dramaturgy). He worked as a baker for 5 years. Nominated for the 15th Gdynia Drama Prize for his play Songs of Polish Bakers. Winner of the 33rd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

The text is a story of mourning and shutting yourself out when experiencing painful emotions. Although he uses a large and heavy elephant as a symbol of these struggles, the author manages to portray them in an extraordinarily subtle and delicate way. (...) In his text, the author also touches upon the theme of awkward, helpless masculinity – in need of support and someone to look up to, but at the same time incongruous with social expectations. (Michał Buszewicz, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Anew

AUTHOR Beniamin Bukowski

AGE RATING 13 years old and over

THEMES responsibility, adolescence, conflict, mental health crisis, dream, hero, identity, growing up, freedom, parents, passing, adulthood, memories, child, past, future

CHARACTERS Bank Director, Director's Self, Secretary, Stakeholder, Voice, Doctor, Mum, Someone Else

SUMMARY The piece ponders upon the possibility of coming back and changing one's fate. The main character is the Bank Director, who one day refuses to receive the Stakeholder claiming that he has disappeared. The concerned Secretary calls the Doctor, but it turns out that the protagonist's problem cannot be solved by medicine. The only thing the Doctor can only suggest is trying to unravel how the disappearance might have happened. The Director begins to reminisce about his childhood and describes his life through a series of departures. He tries to recall the moment when he stopped being a child and became an adult. He also goes back to the moment when he experienced the loss of a place and a person. This provokes him to reflect on the disappearance as such; he recalls, for example, how death frightened him and how people around him constituted him and therefore, when they died, they took parts of him with them. The Director reflects on the nature of human life, discussing it with his Self: they wonder whether certain life choices can be undone, whether one can change one's fate and begin again. It turns out that the Director dreamt of a different career - he wanted to help people or devote himself to art. He speculates if abandoning his old hopes has made him become someone else. Ultimately, he decides that while adulthood means doing one's best when fulfilling one's responsibilities, it doesn't necessarily mean leaving behind the chance to, as the title suggests, start "anew."

MESSAGE A multi-layered, unobvious drama tackles the problem of missed opportunities and lost hopes, reflecting on whether it is possible to make a fresh start. The protagonist, the Director, did not dream of being a banker - his life has turned out differently to what he wanted it to be as a child. However, he realises that while adulthood comes with responsibilities and obligations, one still has the chance to change their fate. The piece touches on the issues of loss, fear of death as well as building one's own identity and staying true to it.

SOURCE "ANEW, or the Images of a Bank Director Crying About Disappearing and Reappearing, for People of All Ages so That They Can Come Back" entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2022

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Second Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 49th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Agnieszka Waligóra

BENIAMIN M. BUKOWSKI Playwright, director, dramatist. He graduated in art philosophy and history as well as theatre directing. He writes plays he wants to write and then, quite arbitrarily, submits them to competitions for plays intended for adult or child audiences. Since April 2021, deputy artistic director of the Helena Modrzejewska National Sary Theatre in Krakow. Winner of the 33rd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

The play is addressed to "people of all ages" as it gives adults an opportunity to rethink their own life choices, while young people are prompted to seriously consider what they want to do for a living, so that their "self" does not disappear in the future. (Halina Waszkiel, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Come as new

AUTHOR Kuba Kapral

AGE RATING 13 years old and over

THEMES illness, inner struggle, suffering, adolescence, conflict, teenagers, mental health crisis, loneliness, identity, growing up, freedom, heroine, slang, adulthood, rebellion

CHARACTERS 1-2 persons; monologue suitable for various stage productions

SUMMARY The play is divided into three parts. The first one is the longest and consists of a monologue of a person who claims that they have to speak because if she doesn't, she bites (usually herself). She is staying in "a place for which it is impossible to find a name", but there are many indicators in the text that it is either a psychiatric hospital or an educational facility. Signalled in the title, the convention of introducing a new person into the protagonist's familiar reality allows the reader to get to know the architecture and customs (or procedures) of the place, as well as other people there: the doctor or director (referred to as "drdr") and the roommates with "textbook problems." However, the following parts completely change the perspective and theme of the play. The second one presents an adult's response to the "great work" (therapeutic? artistic?) done by the institution. It can be understood as a gesture of clipping the wings and stifling any rebellious potential, trimming the performance and the performer, cutting down potential threats. The third part, on the other hand, is in fact the author's declaration made seemingly to the performers, but also to the whole world: he makes a convincing claim that "anything can be done" - including finding a different ending. The text is packed with many impressive literary phrases.

MESSAGE The play presents the experiences and thoughts of an institutionalised young person. It tackles issues of illness, otherness, exclusion, rebellion and conflict with the existing reality, as well as considers the possibility of turning them into action. The open form of the text leaves the audience with a conviction that frustration and suffering can be worked through without limiting the persons' means of expression.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2022

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Second Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 49th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Justyna Czarnota, Agnieszka Waligóra

KUBA KAPRAL – a native of Nowa Sól, originally affiliated with independent theatre, especially in Poznań. Apart from putting on plays, he has been writing dramas, short stories and making radio plays. Dad of Vincent and Titus, husband of Sylwia. Winner of the 33rd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

[The first part of the drama – Ed.] is a monologue of a person who claims that she has to speak because if she doesn't, she bites (usually herself). She is staying in "a place for which it is impossible to find a name", but there are many indicators in the text that it is either a psychiatric hospital or an educational facility. (...) Her emotional and poignant voice absolutely pierces the reader to the guts. At the same time, the text amazes with many impressive literary phrases. (Justyna Czarnota, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The (Un)forgettable Story

AUTHOR Michał Kaźmierczak

AGE RATING 4 years old and over

THEMES disease, danger, fairytale, closeness, change, animals, passage of time, memories, cooperation, loss, expedition, friendship, nature, death

CHARACTERS Harvest Mouse, Bumblebee, Old Man

SUMMARY The play tells the story of an old man who comes across a harvest mouse and a bumblebee swinging on a blade of grass during one of his walks in the meadow. The characters engage in a conversation which gradually reveals that the Old Man is beginning to forget things. He does not remember what happened in the past, or how to get back home. He even keeps failing to recognise the Bumblebee right after they talked. The characters' subsequent exchanges of thoughts lead them towards sometimes-reflective, sometimes-humorous contemplations on memory, such as potential positive aspects of forgetting or if it makes us appreciate the present more. Ultimately, they ponder upon what it means to forget at all, and how it is to keep company to someone with this affliction. A beautiful, warm day motivates them to lazily play around, but slowly the Old Man loses his memory of everything, including his own identity. It turns out, however, that it does not stop him from still enjoying a peaceful summer.

MESSAGE The piece tackles the problems of memory and forgetting in a witty yet sensitive way. Experiencing old age and accompanying an ageing person are only some of the themes. After all, the play leaves room to interpret the struggle with memory and its loss on many levels. Other question that can be raised by the encounter of the Old Man, Harvest Mouse and Bumblebee is the one of being here and now and experiencing the present deeply as it is.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2022

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Second Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

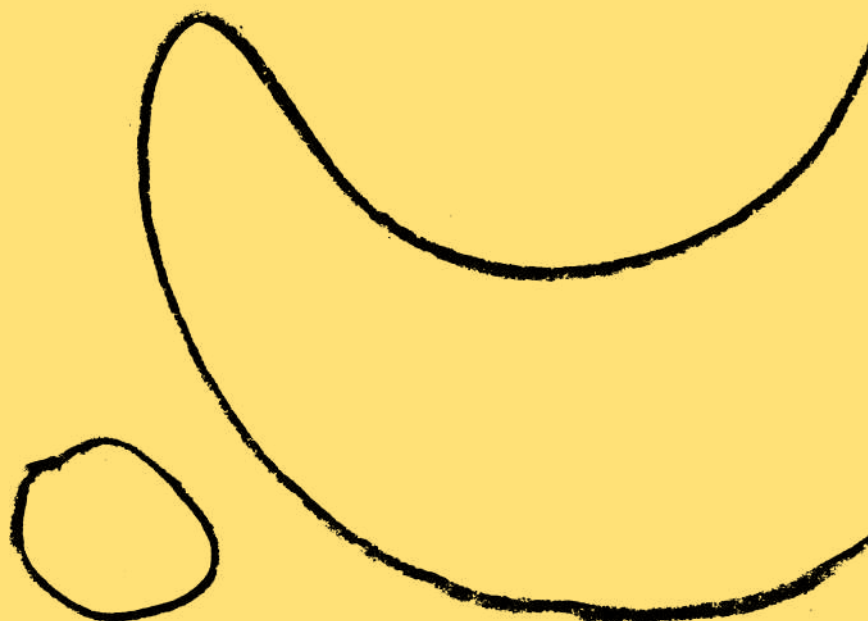
LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 49th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Agnieszka Waligóra

MICHAŁ KAŻMIERCZAK Cultural animator, playwright, circus instructor. Founder of the Olsztyn Street Theatre, co-organiser of the Olsztyn Street Theatre Festival and member of the Drama Workshop at the Olsztyn Puppet Theatre. His texts have been realised in the form of radio plays, performance readings and repertory plays. He is a two-time semi-finalist of the Gdynia Drama Prize. He works as an educator at a forest kindergarten in Olsztyn. Winner of the 33rd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

A harvest mouse and a bumblebee are swinging on a blade of grass when an old man walks by and starts a conversation with them. It turns out that the Old Man is constantly forgetting something and becomes afraid that one day he will forget everything. (...) The play is at the same time melancholic and gentle. It tells a story of coming to terms with what's inevitable – old age and death. (Joanna Krakowska, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS



About the plays

32nd Competition for Young
Audience Theatre Play

Achilleis. 2021

AUTHOR Tomasz Kaczorowski

AGE RATING 15 years old and over

CHARACTERS Achilles, Cassandra, Patroclus, Penthesilea, Briseis, Erynnis, People

SUMMARY "Achilleis. 2021" is an up-to-date, socially-engaged play, reporting on the language and temperature of the street rebellion Anno Domini 2020/2021 as if in the heat of the moment, while having universal ambitions. It boldly inscribes the pulsating present into a cool and distanced antique framework, placing current events in the context of eternal conflicts framed by universal mythical patterns. Achilles, Cassandra, Patroclus, Briseis and the remaining characters communicate their anger, confusion, anxiety and disagreement with reality, presenting the audience with typical masks characteristic for ancient conventions. At the same time, the phrases they use are very topical – echoing at street protests and in social media, making up the narrative of the Women's Strike. By incorporating the slogans – those shouted out, written on cardboards and those from Internet memes – into the roles of the Iliad, the author of the play creates an interesting, mixed language – colloquial, loud, blunt on the one hand and poetic, rhythmical, metaphorical on the other. In the linguistic canvas there is a question interwoven, repeatedly asked both by the characters and the narrator: "Who has the voice here? Who should have the voice?" An attempt to answer the question is made in the drama's finale – in a thoroughly contemporary monologue by Cassandra (with the traditionally Cassandra tone resounding in the tragic statement "I told you so") combined with a proposal to change the title to "Cassandra. 2021".

MESSAGE Educational: the play continues a trend derived from the tradition set by the Homeric epics and the 'ancient theatre' of Stanisław Wyspiański. It is an excellent proposal for a contemporary reinterpretation of ancient models and motifs.

Civic: the play is a kind of manifesto communicating the need for action and involvement, rather than indifference or passivity.

Philosophical: the play shows the present as another incarnation of the ever-repeating history, an element of a larger, universal pattern.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2021

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS First Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Index of plays in "Dialog": https://www.dialog-pismo.pl/sites/default/files/biblioteka/tomasz_kaczorowski_achilleis.pdf

TOMASZ KACZOROWSKI Playwright, dramatist, director and author of workshop concepts. So far, he has directed over a dozen plays in drama and puppet theatres. Winner of playwriting competitions. As a director and researcher, he is interested in theatre and drama for young audiences. Winner of the 32nd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

"Achilleis. 2021" is a socially engaged, topical play which almost on-the-spot reports on the language and mood of the Polish street protests in 2020-2021. It is a play with universal ambitions, deriving from the tradition of Homeric epics and Stanisław Wyspiański's antique-inspired theatre. (...) It places the ongoing reality of the Women Strike in the context of perpetual conflicts framed within classic, mythical paradigms. (Anna Czernow, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Steel Wolf

AUTHOR Katarzyna Matwiejczuk

AGE RATING 10 years old and over

CHARACTERS Marika, Sewera (elderly nun), Agłaja (young nun), Alicja, Remigiusz, Laura Rampal (radio voice), children choir and dog choir

SUMMARY Marika grows up in an orphanage run by nuns in a village called 'Darkness'. Her love of nature and freedom does not work in her favour – she is perceived as a recalcitrant, wild child. Sister Severa (who regularly locks Marika in a cell) takes the girl's behaviour – changing words in prayers, mocking, confessing that morning visits to the chapel make her sleepy – for acts of rebellion. In the convent, however, the girl has an ally in the person of Sister Agłaja, who makes her punishments less strict and helps the girl sneak out to the woods. The main part of the plot brings the character of Alicja, a woman who wants to adopt a child. The orphanage adoption system, however, is supervised by Sister Sewera, who first discourages Alicja from adopting Marika, and then makes the whole process impossible on the grounds that the young woman is not married. Alicja and Marika meet at night time at the house of the watchman, Remigiusz. The former wants to marry the man, the latter seeks solace in the presence of the wild dogs Remigiusz takes care of. Together with Sister Agłaja, the adults plot to free Marika. It turns out that the only thing that can beat the cruel system is a shining steel wolf. The play has its finale with a surreal scene of a pogrom accompanied by the release of all the children.

The drama consists of 15 scenes. The events are announced and commented on by Laura Rampal – a voice from the radio. The formal aspect of the text is also worth noting: the setting of the drama in a monastery has a heavy influence on the language of the play – interspersed with quotations from the Bible and references to prayers, using rhymes and rhythms reminiscent of religious poetry.

MESSAGE "Steel Wolf" can be read on many levels: as a statement in the discussion regarding the organisation of the care system in Poland, as an appeal to respect the subjectivity of a child, as a story about rebellion, as an analysis of the world organised by women, as a pretext to open up a discussion on femininity (or perhaps even divinity?) and connection with nature. Marika's rebellion – although aimed at the system symbolised by the convent as a space where strict norms apply and where there is no room for freedom – is a cry (or rather a howl) for the possibility to fulfil one's needs and be accepted as an independent individual. Since the author takes the side of the child – a fully-fledged individual who has the power to exert agency – the text also allows us to pose a question about what it means today to be a true ally of children.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2021

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS First Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Index of plays in "Dialog": https://www.dialog-pismo.pl/sites/default/files/biblioteka/katarzyna_matwiejczuk_stalowy_wilk.pdf

COMPILATION Justyna Czarnota

KATARZYNA MATWIEJCZUK Film studies graduate, writer and translator, author of theatre and radio plays. She works from home, or rather on the road between her two homes in Jedzbark in the north and Garlica in the south of Poland. Winner of the 32nd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

"Steel Wolf" completes the collection of drama pieces in a unique way, because it gives voice to the issue of adoption. (...) The author unanimously supports child's agency as a fully-fledged person who has the right to self-determination. The uncompromising nature of this stance may both annoy adults and thrill young readers. (Justyna Czarnota, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Dreamcatcher

AUTHOR Karolina Szczypek

AGE RATING 13 years old and over

CHARACTERS Michalina aged 13, Older sister, Younger sister, Woman called Mother, voiceless Father, Józefina the cat

SUMMARY Thirteen-year-old Michalina spends entire days in her room, in the company of her best friend and confidant – Józefina the cat. The animal is the only one who actually listens. Michalina tells the cat about her dilemmas and problems. The adolescent girl lives at home with her father and mother, with whom she finds it increasingly difficult to communicate, speaking to them through the closed door of her room. These are hardly dialogues – they are monologues which, in reality, probably no one even listens to. On a daily basis, Michalina witnesses arguments between her parents and the destructive influence the fights have on the couple's daily behaviour and their relationship. The mother is angry and aggressive, the father falls into sadness. At the same time, their teenage daughter escapes from the harsh reality into the virtual world. She communicates with her peers and her sister via Skype or social media. It's winter and it's snowing. Michalina is listening to music; snowflakes falling into her room. The sounds coming from inside the house are the reason for her persisting anxiety and fear. One day, after another argument between her parents, Michalina decides to go out to see what happened. She finds the persistent silence disturbing. Opening the door, she finds her father crying. The mother has disappeared. The girl falls into despair and throws various objects in anger. Eventually, she decides to set out on a journey to find her missing mother.

MESSAGE In the play, the worlds of dreams, imagination and reality are constantly interwoven. A teenage girl has to confront her family problems in order to establish her own identity and grow up. As time goes by and she becomes older, she realises that her parents are far from perfect, while more and more things happen to intensify the conflict between the two of them. She feels no support from her mother, who keeps accusing and criticising her, nor from her silent father. Michalina feels very lonely; she yearns to feel loved and accepted. The author shows how strongly the child's growing up is affected by the relationship with the parents, but even more importantly, the relationship between the parents themselves. The freezing cold from outside, but also from the fridge (the central object in the house), metaphorically defines the relationship between people who are seemingly close to each other.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2021

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS First Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Index of plays in "Dialog": https://www.dialog-pismo.pl/sites/default/files/biblioteka/karolina_szczypek_lapacz_snow.pdf

COMPILATION Emilia Gałczyńska

KAROLINA SZCZYPEK Director, author of plays and adaptations, including "Calamus/Marta" based on "Calamus", a short story by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, as well as the writer's diaries. Graduate of Polish and film studies. She took part in a scholarship programme for playwrights at the Adam Mickiewicz Institute in Warsaw. Winner of the 32nd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

Dreamcatcher presents several snapshots from the life of Michalina, a thirteen-year-old protagonist, who has locked herself in her room. (...) What emerges from the drama is the image of Michalina whose identity balances between that of a girl and a woman, her former "self" and the new one that is just becoming apparent. This all adds up to a conflict of needs: she wants to rebel, free herself from her parents' custody and reject them, but also to feel her mother's touch and presence that she misses. (Joanna Żygowska, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Babarog

AUTHOR Katarzyna Hora

AGE RATING 12 years old and over

CHARACTERS Alice, Grandmother, Mother, Headless Father, Neighbour

SUMMARY The location is a modest room with a small window. We meet three characters representing three generations – a grandmother, a mother and a daughter. Alicja, the youngest one, behaves like a happy child seeking her mother's attention. Mother seems to be sad and tired. Grandmother, always ready to talk and play, tries to take care of her granddaughter. There is a pervasive atmosphere of danger – they have to turn out the lights, they cannot go outside, they lack food and water. Grandmother explains to Alicja that there is a monster, Babarog, prowling outside. Mother and Alicja miss her father, Neighbour misses her son. It's been a long time since they've heard from them. The times when father was there were happy – Alicja is convinced that when he returns, the world will get back to its original harmony. In addition to the reality of the 'here and now', we get to know Alicja's inner world.

Eventually, the father, named the Headless Father in the drama, returns. Although Mother talks to him, she finally states that she does not recognise her husband, she does not know who he is. Alicja is shocked, she understands nothing. Father leaves again. The girl experiences despair and rebellion. Grandmother guides her through these feelings. With all her sadness, despair, fear, anger and rebellion against the world, the adolescent girl decides to set out alone to fight Babarog. Grandmother as a character also brings additional meanings to the setting. She is the one who tells her granddaughter about the beginnings of the world and its transformations, as if she were a witness to the passing of successive epochs. And does so in a poetic voice.

MESSAGE The author explores the theme of war, although the word 'war' is not uttered in the play even once. She poses a fundamental question about the essence of evil. In Slavic beliefs, Baba Roga is an old woman with a horn on her head who kidnaps children at night and devours them. The titular Babarog kidnaps and destroys children's dreams. Initially described as a monster, it turns out to be someone whose domain is the human inner world. The heroine of the play matures under the influence of traumatic experiences, finding solace in conversations with her grandmother. At first, Grandmother appears to be someone real, but scene after scene, we learn about her ambiguous identity. Trauma and evil are treated as themes in the play, and we see their different faces as they return in successive generations.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2021

KATARZYNA HORA Director of plays for adult and young audiences. Co-founder, director and playwright at the Theatre of Stefan Batory. Received an honourable mention in the 32nd Competition.

Alice is bored locked in the house, unable to go out because it is dangerous outside. It is not said whether it is because of war, occupation or an epidemic. All that is known is that a monster, Babarog, is prowling somewhere close. (...) It is possible that the fear of "Babarog" is passed on from generation to generation, that it is an inherited trauma or a lack of courage to stand up to evil. (Joanna Krakowska, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Deaf Adder

AUTHOR Magdalena Siwik

AGE RATING 13 years old and over

CHARACTERS Adder, Father, Mother, Woman from the bench, Neo-Nazi, Adolf, Old woman (Crow), Truck number 1, Truck number 2, Truck number 3, Police car, Policeman

SUMMARY A child is born, his name is Adder. The boy grows up in an atmosphere of rejection and relentless criticism by his parents, as well as open declarations that he is an unwanted, unplanned child. He only manages to attract his mother's attention when he touches an iron and gets severely burnt. Posing a question about the definition of love ends in a fight with his father. Overtaken by emotions, Adder shouts that he did not need to come to this world and asks where the State is that decided that he should be born. After an argument with his parents, Adder leaves home. He meets a woman who, in exchange for a small fee, hugs all those in need of affection. After she disappears, Adder comes across Adolf and a group of neo-Nazis. Finally, the boy heads to his aunt who is supposed to take care of him, substituting for his parents. However, as a result of a misunderstanding, the boy meets Wrona (Crow) – an elderly woman who survived war, with whom the boy develops a relationship. They also come across personified trucks with anti-abortion banners which start to offend Adder and Wrona, but in the end it is them who end up in prison for offending the truckers' feelings. In the play's finale, Adder once again leaves home, but this time it is his deliberate decision.

MESSAGE The play deals with the situation of a child who is unwanted, unplanned and rejected by his parents, and the emotional consequences that the main character has to deal with. The lack of a secure relationship with his caregivers affects the way he builds subsequent relationships or gets involved in random, not always desirable, arrangements. It is also a text that acutely touches upon the issue of personal freedom and the consequences associated with institutional (state) interference in the most personal decisions of the characters' lives.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2021

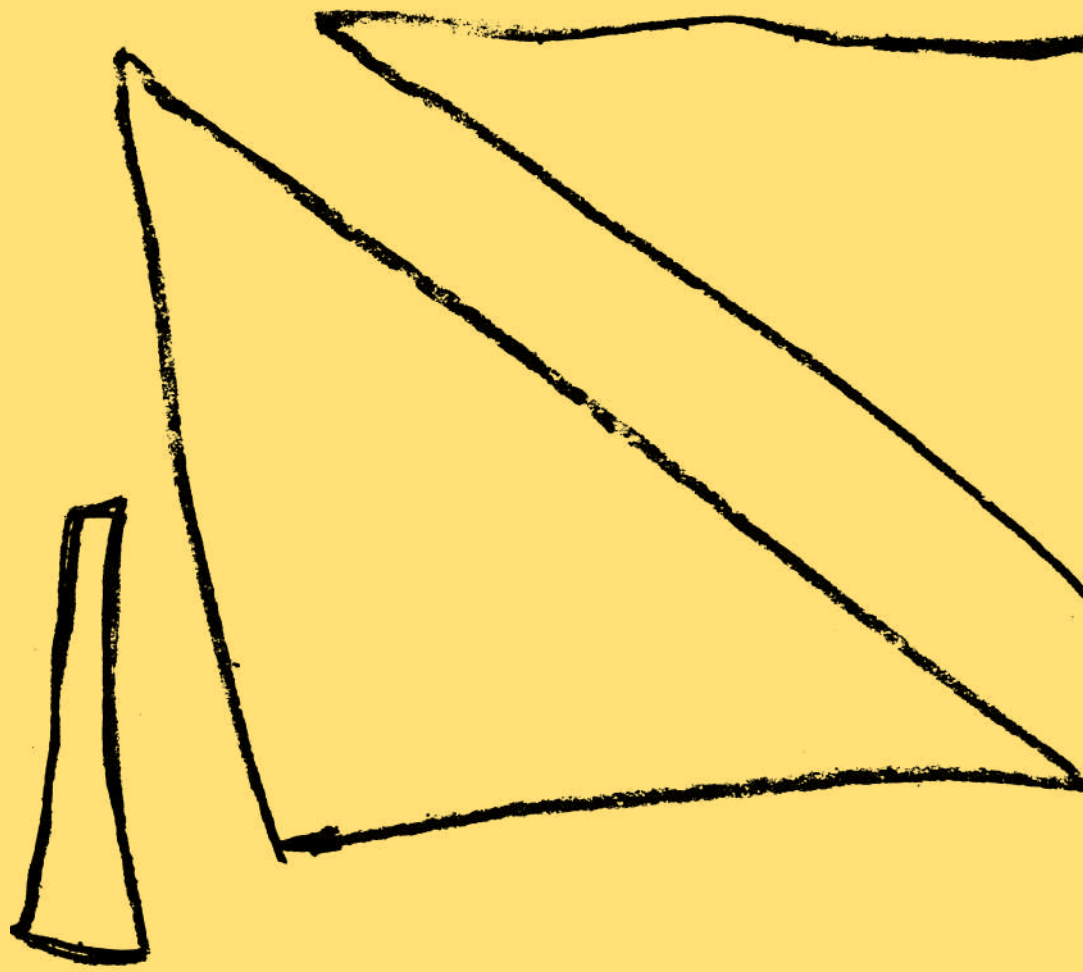
AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Honourable Mention in the above-mentioned Competition

COMPILATION Aleksandra Łozowska

MAGDALENA SIWIK Founder and president of the Olsztyn Street Theatre, author of scripts and music for performances, director of street plays, street performer (flowerstick, juggling, monocycle, slackline). Passionate about theatre, new circus and backyard pedagogy. Trained as a social worker, pedagogue and educator. Works as an assistant for people with disabilities. Received an honourable mention in the 32nd Competition.

The theme of "Deaf Adder" is the life of an unwanted child, Adder. His name is significant, alluding to a deaf adder, a creature without arms and legs, which could help him – both physically and metaphorically – anchor himself in the surrounding reality. As a child left to his own devices, he tries to grab onto anything (e.g. ideologies, accidental relationships) that will help him find his way around and understand the meaning of his own existence. (Anna Augustynowicz, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS



About the plays

31st Competition for Young
Audience Theatre Play

Scratchando, or the attack of the atrocious dotard

AUTHOR Szymon Jachimek

AGE RATING 6 years old and over

THEMES humour, self-acceptance, disease, relations, mother, fairytale, home, dreams, father, siblings, family, parents, support, female character, stabilization, cooperation, imagination, journey, friendship, future

CHARACTERS Katie, Mami, Dadi, Brother, Doctor, Grażynka, Dermicream, AD, Hippolytin, Purafin, Diet, Sage

SUMMARY The play is a record of the difficult struggle that 9-year-old Katie and her family face every day, fighting with AD (atopic dermatitis). Their daily grind is presented on two intertwining narrative levels. One is a tragicomic reportage of the itchy daily life of a family affected by the disease. The other is a story about superheroes. The human characters in Jachimek's text do not stand out in any particular way, apart from their unusual names (given to them by the main character): Lloyd (the younger brother) likes to talk about pooping and farting the most; Mami and Dadi (the parents) are ready to do anything to ease their daughter's suffering. Supporting characters include the doctor, who throws up his hands, completely helpless, and Grażyna (Katie's best friend), who unintentionally causes the girl's great distress. Dermicream, Hippolytin, Purafin and Diet are superheroes invented by Dadi to distract his daughter from her suffering. At one point, these characters begin to live their own lives. Looking for a way to defeat the Atrocious Dotard they even make it to San Francisco. Unfortunately, all the superpowers of the world combined with the knowledge of the American Sage are unable to defeat the spiky monster tormenting the little girl. The story ends on a positive note, although the finale is far from the stereotypical happy ending we would expect from a play intended for children.

The drama is a result of collaboration between the author and his daughter Jana, who has been struggling with the Atrocious Dotard for several years.

MESSAGE The play is as serious as it is humorous in telling the story of a family, mutual support, determination and closeness in dealing with everyday life marked by a chronic disease. Medical knowledge about AD is intertwined with life experience, covering various aspects of Katie's exclusion and that of her loved ones. At the same time, the author emphasises the subjectivity of his protagonist – not only as a person suffering from the disease, but also as a girl who is full of determination to pursue her own dreams and passions.

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS First Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 47th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Agata Drwięga

SZYMON JACHIMEK Playwright, improviser, cabaret artist, literary manager at the Performance Art Theatre in Bydgoszcz. Until 2014, he was a member of the now-defunct Limo Cabaret. Since 2015, he has been mainly involved in writing and comedy improvisation. Winner of drama awards, including the Gdynia Drama Prize. Awarded in the 31st Competition.

"Scratchando..." is a play inspired by the shared experiences of the author and his daughter, Jana Jachimek. There are many stories about illness that can be found in children's culture, including theatre for young audiences, but "Scratchando..." is unique. Not only because it is about struggling with an ailment that is rarely portrayed, but also because of the unusual way in which this struggle is presented. (Justyna Czarnota, Michał Derlatka, Katarzyna Grajewska, Maciej Skowera, Joanna Żygowska, jury members)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The City

AUTHOR Beniamin Bukowski

AGE RATING 7 years old and over, adolescents and adults

THEMES adolescence, mother, inner struggle, home, father, change, family, objects, hero, support, passage of time, adulthood, parents, past, stabilisation, fear, future

CHARACTERS Nonadult, Adult, Mum, Dad, Teacher

SUMMARY A seemingly simple story about a few-year-old boy (the Nonadult) who builds a city out of plastic blocks, toys and household items. The construction intensively expands, eventually taking over the entire flat, including the bathroom and his parents' bedroom. However, unforeseen events build up on top of this venture – the need to clean the floor, the allergy-inducing dust collecting on the blocks, and, finally, moving out, which becomes a critical moment in the city's existence. Despite attempts to safely transport the structure to their new home, it is destroyed in a car accident. Although eventually rebuilt, it is no longer the same city it had been in the beginning. The story of the creation, destruction and reconstruction of the city is told from the perspective of both the Nonadult and the Adult. Because of that, it shows the way reality is perceived and felt by both sides. Thanks to the precise language choices and the lack of stage directions, the author avoids imposing images on his audience and opens the play to a variety of interpretations.

MESSAGE The play thematises fear, not only the one a child may experience, but also that associated with change. Inevitably, the need for stability and certainty is confronted with the dynamic reality. In this way, the metaphorical city is constantly being rebuilt. It is also a story about imagining oneself in the past and the future, depending on one's age at the moment. The text can also be read in the context of the pandemic that, as a change, has come unnoticed, but brought up a yet unknown perspective.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2022

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Second Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 47th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Joanna Żygowska

BENIAMIN M. BUKOWSKI Playwright, director, dramatist. He graduated in art philosophy and history as well as theatre directing. He writes plays he wants to write and then, quite arbitrarily, submits them to competitions for plays intended for adult or child audiences. Since April 2021, deputy artistic director of the Helena Modrzejewska National Sary Theatre in Krakow. Winner of the 31st Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

The story is woven from every day, domestic situations and thoughts on existence. The author of the text does not pretend to be a child – he is an adult who has kept the memories from his childhood and openly admits it. This gesture allows us to see the common denominator in people of all ages – personal sensitivity that allows them to experience the external world and build their own personal universe. "The City" is also a subtle commentary on the current epidemic situation. (Joanna Żygowska, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Story, or a milion bedtime adventures

AUTHOR Kuba Kapral

AGE RATING 5 years old and over

THEMES humour, toys, fairytale, relationships, home, father, dream, family, objects, hero, support, cooperation, adventure, friendship

CHARACTERS Main characters: Wiki, Dad; Characters played by Wikie and Dad: Frog, Mermaid, Wolf, Good Fairy, Tomcio, Piętka, Poor Fisherman, Girl, Ugly Duckling, Goldfish, Charred King, Flamy Duckling, Firefish, Dog, Captain, Chief Ice-Eater, Flies, Million Adventures

SUMMARY Wiki is getting ready for bed. He reminds his dad that he promised to read him a bedtime story. However, Dad is completely exhausted after the hard day that he just had. To make up for it, he suggests telling a story that is far better than the one from the book. Wiki agrees and starts listening to the story. The characters talk about the light coming from behind the half-closed door - the glowing shape it creates on the ceiling is the Tired Story's arms and legs. At one point, the Tired Story comes down from the ceiling, starts looking around the boy's room, and starts eating up his toys - a plush frog and a fire engine. A fire breaks out in the living room. Wiki and Dad jump into the Frog's fire engine to stop the fire. It turns out that it is the collection of fairy tales that is on fire. Dad attempts to put out the flames with water coming from his finger, while Wiki throws lightning bolts at them. A wolf emerges from the debris, having been melted together with the Wishing Table when the temperature was high. Unfortunately, our protagonists are unable to help him. Later on, they meet more characters, including the Good Fairy, who is a seven-league boot from the waist down, and the Poor Fisherman, who imprisons a little girl in a matchbox. Dad exposes the heroine - the Little Mach Girl turns out to be the Charred King. Escaping the flames, Wiki and Dad arrive on an island inhabited by the Ice-eaters. The Chief Ice-Eater explains to the newcomers that his people must leave the island because there is not enough ice. Despite not wanting to go to sleep in the beginning, Wiki becomes hungry and tired. As he falls asleep, the Million Adventures appear in the room. Unfortunately, they are too late.

MESSAGE While describing a daily ritual, the author talks about a close relationship between father and son. At first, the adult only dreams of rest, but he puts his needs aside to spend time with his child. Although they stay in a room, they experience unforgettable adventures. It turns out that there are no limits to having fun together when imagination takes over - any ordinary object can become something amazing, a part of a fairy tale.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2020

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Second Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 47th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Aleksandra Łozowska

KUBA KAPRAL A native of Nowa Sól, originally affiliated with independent theatre, especially in Poznań. Apart from putting on plays, he has been writing dramas, short stories and making radio plays. Dad of Vincent and Titus, husband of Sylwia. Winner of the 33rd Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

"A Tired Story..." is an adventure story for children, set in a dreamlike, surreal narrative – a journey across the fine line between dreaming and being awake that Dad and Wiki embark on. The story transforms the child's bedroom into a world of no limitations, where anything can become anything else. (Michał Derlatka, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Mrs too Tiny

AUTHOR Michał Kaźmierczak

AGE RATING 6 years old and over

THEMES forest, relationships, fairytale, closeness, change, character, support, passage of time, animals, mourning, trauma, loss, friendship, death, future

CHARACTERS Mr Shrew, Squirrel, Deer, Fox, Tit, Weasel, Mole, Woodpecker, Snake

SUMMARY The play is set in a forest. The cold winter is underway. One of the characters, the Squirrel, makes her way through the snowstorms and heads for Mr and Mrs Shrew's cottage. Mr Shrew is still asleep. Annoyed, the Squirrel wakes her friend up and tries to give him a message, but she is unsuccessful in her attempts. Mr Shrew notices that his wife is not in bed. He is frightened and tries to call her. He reassures himself by saying that Mrs Shrew must have just shrunk. This is a normal trait for their species - during the winter, these animals become smaller in size. The Squirrel leaves her friend's house and tells the other animals about what has happened. Mr Shrew, awakened from his sleep, starts looking for a scarf for his wife. On the advice of the Woodpecker, he goes to the Snake, who does not notice Mrs Shrew. He suggests that his friend should visit the Mole, who has great hearing. Like the Snake, the Mole is helpless. Some time passes, and pre-winter arrives in the forest. On the last day of winter, Mr Shrew organises the washing of his wife's dresses. He invites all his forest friends. While working, they all discuss plans for the upcoming spring. Mr Shrew dreams of rest. When spring arrives, he asks his wife to start growing. However, there is still no one in sight. The shrew is visited by friends who have decided to support him and stick around, because it has been an exceptionally hard winter.

MESSAGE The text presents the theme of losing a loved one. The author presents the grieving process in a subtle, warm way. The play talks about the need for taking time to survive, work through and accept a difficult situation. It also shows the reactions of those around, the closer and more distinct friends who keep company to the person experiencing loss. Their reactions range from feeling like they need to articulate the problem to taking a step back. The most important thing, however, turns out to be closeness, being there for the person, and knowing that in difficult moments we can count on the support of others.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2020

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Second Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 47th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

MICHAŁ KAŻMIERCZAK – cultural animator, playwright, circus instructor. Founder of the Olsztyn Street Theatre, co-organiser of the Olsztyn Street Theatre Festival and member of the Drama Workshop at the Olsztyn Puppet Theatre. His texts have been realised in the form of radio plays, performance readings and repertory plays. He is a two-time semi-finalist of the Gdynia Drama Prize. He works as an educator at a forest kindergarten in Olsztyn. Winner of the 31st Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

"Mrs Too Tiny" is a subtle study of coming to terms with the loss of a loved one. It is also a story about the different reactions both closer and further observers might have to it – from the overwhelming urge to tell the truth, through denial and feigned indifference, to compassion and sticking around at all times. (Katarzyna Grajewska, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Quaint Lucian Passion

AUTHOR Łukasz Pawłowski

AGE RATING Adolescents and adults

THEMES suicide, suffering, teenagers, relationships, loneliness, home, father, mental health crisis, hero, change, love, dream, family, passage of time, trauma, mourning, parenthood, past, loss, expedition, death, future

CHARACTERS Lucian, Mary, Hirek, Border Guard, Dwarf of Death

SUMMARY The subsequent scenes of the play form a snapshot story about fatherhood and experiencing the loss of a child. The following parts are separated by fragments of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Saint Matthew Passion". The protagonist sets out to find his son, Hirek. While learning about the relationship between the two, we find out that the teenager committed suicide, and Lucian's escapade is not only geographical (when preparing for it, he packs a lot of things, and crosses the border guarded by the Guard), but also metaphysical. Lucian evokes the image of his son in dreams and made-up conversations. He ponders over moments when he was not supportive enough, but also when they felt comfortable in each other's company. He blames himself for Hirek's suicide, tries to work through the loss in therapy, separates from Mary (the boy's mother), and thinks about killing himself. During his journey, he finally arrives upon the Dwarf of Death, who, like the mythical Cerberus, guards the entrance to the land of the dead. In the final scene, we see Hirek and Lucian talking on the roof of a skyscraper.

MESSAGE The play deals with many aspects of parenthood. Above all, it is about a father struggling to come to terms with the suicide death of his son, his attempt to redefine his relationship with his partner, and a reflection on the possible role of the parents in their child's tragic decision. Despite Hirek being gone, the world of his loved ones is still full of his presence, which manifests itself, among other things, in the play's language.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2020

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Second Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 47th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Agata Drwięga

ŁUKASZ PAWŁOWSKI Actor writing for theatre for over a decade. His plays have been staged by the Mouth-to-Mouth Republic Theatre, the Theatre in Leszno and the Cultural Centre in Jarocin. Finalist of the Gdynia Drama Prize. Winner of the 31st Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

"Quaint Lucian Passion" is yet another addition to a large number of texts about teenage suicide that have appeared on the Polish drama scene in recent years. The inventiveness of this piece lies in highlighting the perspective of the family that is left behind and their suffering, primarily the father struggling with trauma. He travels to the afterlife to meet with his late son. (Justyna Czarnota, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Mary, the Fossil Hunter

AUTHOR Aleksandra Zielińska

AGE RATING 7 years old and over

THEMES ecology, inner struggle, dreams, female character, future, equality, friendship

CHARACTERS Mary, Pterodactyl, Ichthyosaurus, Plesiosaurus, Mr Palaeontologist I, Mr Palaeontologist II

SUMMARY The play is inspired by the life story of Mary Anning, one of the first female palaeontologists, who lived in southern England at the turn of the 19th century. The play is set on a beach, where Mary spends her days looking for fossils to sell. Despite her young age and lack of education, not only is she lucky in finding unique specimens, but also has the knowledge and sensitivity her clients lack. Among them, two Mr. Palaeontologists, who look down on Mary, scorning her. They justify their attitude, among other things, by the fact that they have beards. Their oft-repeated conviction that the practice of science is reserved exclusively for men does not prevent them from making use of Mary's findings. When the news about the discovery of a new species of Ichthyosaur spreads the world, the girl's participation in this achievement is not mentioned. Although it makes her sad, she does not give up looking for rare specimens and soon finds the fossils of Plesiosaurus. The teenager's persistence, knowledge and determination eventually impress one of the Palaeontologists, who decides to support Mary in entering the world of science. Important characters in this drama are the Pterodactyl (narrator and commentator of events) and the skeletons of the dinosaurs. These characters share fascinating information about natural history, allowing us to see the history of the world from a broader (non-anthropocentric) perspective.

MESSAGE Apart from interesting facts about the life of dinosaurs, evolution and climate change, the text contains a message about the need for humans to take care of our planet, a home to all living things. The character of Mary Anning also proves that it is worth fighting for one's dreams, even if they seem completely unrealistic. Her story serves as an interesting starting point for discussion about women's equality.

SOURCE Entered in the Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play organised by the Children's Art Centre in Poznań in 2020

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS Second Prize in the above-mentioned Competition

LOCATION Children's Art Centre in Poznań and the 47th volume of New Plays for Young Audience

COMPILATION Agata Drwięga

ALEKSANDRA ZIELIŃSKA Pharmacy graduate, participant of the Adaptation course at the Warsaw Film School, member of the literary team at the Munk Studio. Author of novels, a collection of short stories and dramatic texts. Semi-finalist of the Gdynia DramaPrize. Winner of the 31st Competition for Young Audience Theatre Play.

(...) The vibrant, almost solemn language, the intertwinement of humour and gravity, the imagery evoking contemplative fantasy fiction and magical realism, the metafictional measures – all are skillfully woven together here to fit the ideological meaning of this play as a herstorical narrative about self-belief and disillusionment, constancy and change, past and future, and, finally: about children and adults, women and men. (Maciej Skowera, jury member)

EXCERPT FROM THE JURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Children's Art Centre in Poznań

THE ORGANISER

The Children's Art Centre in Poznań is a self-government cultural institution run by the city of Poznań, established in 1984. The organisation of Children's Art Biennale (since 1986) was the direct reason for its establishment. The main goals of the institution are to inspire artwork dedicated to children and youth, to promote new, valuable artistic phenomena, and to popularise and support the development of new methods of cultural education of the young generation. It is the only institution of this kind in Poland. The Children's Art Centre (CSD) is the organiser of many projects, including the International Young Audience Film Festival Ale Kino! and the Competition for a Theatre Play for Children and Young People.

Do you have any questions?

Would you like to see the texts in Polish?

Do you want more information about the Polish drama scene?

Or maybe you have an idea for cooperation?

Feel free to contact us:

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