Summary. The aim of the article is to present the development of performance studies in Poland. The author focuses on the process of the institutionalization of performance studies, starting from the history of its "prenatal" stage, which was influenced by two important phenomena: the Polish student theatre movement and the radical breakthrough in the activities of the Polish Laboratory Theatre. The short introduction to the historical background is followed by a theoretical reflection on the influence of the works of Aldona Jawłowska, Jolanta Brach-Czaina, Andrzej Falkiewicz, Zbigniew Raszewski, Leszek Kolankiewicz, Grzegorz Godlewski, Wojciech Dudzik, Tomasz Kubikowski, Agata Skórzyńska, Jacek Wachowski, Dariusz Kosiński and Elżbieta Matynia for the development of performance studies in Poland.

Keywords: performance studies, history of performance studies in Poland

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The "prenatal" stage of performance studies in Poland started in the early 1970s thanks to two important phenomena:

1. The Polish student theatre movement1 entered its countercultural phase of existence after:

– students’ protests against censorship and general oppression, taking the form of strikes, political meetings, street demonstrations and clashes with the militia\(^2\) in March 1968;
– workers’ strikes and riots in the industrial centres of the Polish Baltic Sea coast, ending with the massacre of protesters in Gdańsk and Gdynia (December 1970).

2. Meanwhile, in October 1969:
– The Second International Festival of Student Theatre took place in Wrocław, where young Polish artists could see the performances of Western countercultural groups such as the Bread And Puppet Theatre from New York City, Nouvelle Compagnie d’Avignon, Théâtre Création de Lausanne or Neue Bühne from Frankfurt on Main.

“The world as a theatre” became a very important metaphor at that time, being an extremely useful tool to describe the series of epic historical events with young artists and/or activists playing the main roles in its stormy performances.

In some reports from the festivals of the student theatre movement, especially those written by Konstanty Puzyna, the greatest Polish theatre critic in the second half of twentieth Century, the whole festivals’ day by day reality was seen as a kind of intensive theatrical process.\(^3\) The above metaphor was also perfectly embedded and strongly present in the subtle analyses of the international countercultural theatre movement made by another eminent theatre critic, Krzysztof Wolicki, and played an important role in his conclusions.\(^4\)

The second important phenomenon which marked the “prenatal” stage of Polish performance studies was the radical breakthrough in the activities of Polish Laboratory Theatre. In 1969 its leader Jerzy Grotowski openly declared his lack of interest in theatre and in the following years he quit theatre creation, beginning the “paratheatrical” stage of his research. The “Paratheatrical activities” elaborated in the first half of the 1970s by his company were opened to the general public in the summer of 1975, during the Research University of Theatre of Nations in Wrocław. The area of Grotowski’s “after-theatre” research was the subject of vivid discussion in Poland in the second half of 1970s. Many critics, scholars and theatremakers (including the author of this essay) participated in “paratheatrical actions,” trying to describe and define this area of “no-theatre” touched and experienced during their participation in those “interhuman, post-theatrical” activities, still heavily influenced by the Polish

\(^2\) In the communist countries of the Soviet block the police was named this way to stress the close link (only official, not real) between the people and the forces of order.


Labotory Theatre's experiences from the second half of the 1960s. We may thus crown this description of the "prenatal stage" of Polish performance studies with the conclusion that the theatricality of social life made its way to Polish public discourse thanks to the evolution of the student theatre movement and the development of Jerzy Grotowski's research. So in 1980, when the Polish translation of Erving Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* was launched, our public was already well prepared to absorb its content.

Meanwhile, in the mid-seventies two important books by Polish authors appeared: *The Roads (Paths?) of Counterculture (Drogi kontrkultury)* by Aldona Jawłowska and *On the Roads (Paths?) of Twentieth Century Theatre Thought (Na drogach dwudziestowiecznej myśli teatralnej)* by Jolanta Brach-Czaina. Jawłowska, active in the fields of sociology and cultural studies, was a diligent and intelligent researcher who focused her research on, among other things, the student theatre movement in Poland. In her book she described and analyzed many performative actions by situationists, hippies, yippies and other countercultural activists-performers in Western Europe and in the US.

In the last chapter of her book, Jolanta Brach-Czaina presented a performative analysis of social encounters (gatherings, parties) like French *rencontres aux salons* of the 19th Century. Her analysis was in fact the first step towards performance studies research in Poland. Social encounters (gatherings, parties) had in her opinion a theatrical value and could be analysed by using the methods applied in theatre studies. Brach-Czaina's most courageous and advanced hypothesis was that ritual could not have been the only basic source of theatre's origins, but the whole "theatricality" of social life in general was in this context an even more important factor.

One more name should be mentioned here: Andrzej Falkiewicz, a literary and theatre critic, but also an eminent philosopher. In his book *Theatre Society (Teatr Społeczeństwo)* launched in 1980, he depicted the whole of social life as a kind of "theatre of history." He developed this idea in his book *Existence and Metaphor from 2001*, in its first chapter, entitled *Theatrical Human Being (Człowiek teatralny).*

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6 *The Roads (Paths?) of Counterculture* underwent many difficulties before and after its appearance on book market. First Jawłowska was forced by the communist censorship to make some changes in her book and later on the book was partly confiscated in the bookstores by the agents of secret police (SB) after being already edited and distributed. Luckily many copies had been already sold.
A very important book, which was the milestone on the Polish path towards performance studies, appeared in 1991. Entitled *Theatre in the World of Spectacles* (*Teatr w świecie widowisk*), its author was the most eminent theatre historian in Poland, Zbigniew Raszewski. He placed theatre among other kinds of spectacles and public events based on the theoretical scheme of “system S,” where the letter “S” came from the Latin word “spectator.” The “system S” is, according to Raszewski, based on the preliminary agreement between performers and their potential public. The core of such an agreement is cultural values and conventions.

Before this, already in the 1980s, the Warsaw University school of “anthropology of spectacle” (“antropologia widowisk”) had started its fervent activity, with Leszek Kolankiewicz, Grzegorz Godlewski and Wojciech Dudzik as its leaders. Its representatives had consistently been using the term “spectacle” (“widowisko”), and applying research methods and terminology from the fields of cultural anthropology, sociology, theatre studies and cultural studies to describe and analyse the “world of spectacles.”

In 1998 the leader of Warsaw school, Leszek Kolankiewicz, very strongly attacked Raszewski’s concept of the “system S,” based generally on the research methods of theatre studies. Kolankiewicz’s aim was to introduce a broader arsenal of research tools and to shift Polish research on spectacles into the area of cultural anthropology.10

Such a peremptory polemic with Raszewski (who was no longer with us, as he had died in 1992) provoked another Warsaw scholar, Tomasz Kubikowski from Warsaw Theatre Academy to defend the ideas of the late master and to describe the concept of Raszewski as an innovative introduction of Polish theatre theory into the area of performance studies.11

The breakthrough came in 2006-2007, when several important books appeared on the Polish market. First of all, there were the translations of academic manuals by Richard Schechner and Marvin Carlson.12 There was also the book by the young Poznań cultural studies researcher Agata Skórzyńska, *Theatre As the Source of Postmodern Social Spectacles*.13 The introductory step towards this breakthrough was the


book by Tomasz Kubikowski, *The Rule of Nibelung*, which appeared in 2004.\(^\text{14}\) The author played a major role in this process, being not only the author of the book above but also the translator of Schechner’s manual and the academic editor of the book by Carlson. What is more, he offered Polish scholars original translations of the crucial terms “performance” and “performance studies.” The first translation: a homonym, “performans,” was a kind of Polish direct substitute for the English term, which was embedded in so many fields and contexts that it was impossible to find any purely Polish equivalent. The second translation: “performatyka,” sounded like e.g. “matematyka” or “fizyka” and was thus associated with the field of hard sciences. Both terms made their way into the terminology used in Polish academia on an everyday basis, except the Warsaw school of the anthropology of spectacles.

The two next important steps: in 2008 the Polish translation of Erika Fischer-Lichte’s *Aesthetics of Performativity* appeared on the market,\(^\text{15}\) and in 2011 the Poznań researcher Jacek Wachowski launched the book *Performans*.\(^\text{16}\)

In recent years, the development of performance studies in Poland has been marked by the institutionalization of the research in this field. In 2008, the author of this essay established the Department of Performance Studies (Zakład Performatyki) in the Institute of Cultural Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (School of Social Studies). A year later, Jacek Wachowski established the Laboratory (Pracownia) of Research on Spectacle in the Chair of Theatre Studies at the same university (School of Polish and Classical Philology). In 2011, the Chair of Performance Studies began its existence at the Jagiellonian University (School of Polish Philology) thanks to the efforts of Małgorzata Sugiera and Dariusz Kosiński.

In 2011, the Polish translation of Jon McKenzie’s *Perform or else. From Discipline to Performance* appeared, translated by Tomasz Kubikowski.\(^\text{17}\) In the same year, the Jagiellonian University in Kraków Chair of Performance Studies organized the international conference *Performance, Performativity, Performer* which gathered all the Polish scholars who were focusing their research on these phenomena. The keynote speaker was the Italian scholar Marco de Marinis.\(^\text{18}\) In 2014, the Department of Performance Studies (the Institute of Cultural Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University) organized the international conference *Performance Studies: Sources and Perspectives*


with three American keynote speakers: Marvin Carlson, Jan Cohen Cruz and Ian Watson.\textsuperscript{19}

Every year new translations appear, including original Polish works. The following are particularly worthy of mention: the translation of the book by the American researcher of Polish origin, Elżbieta Matynia’s *Performative Democracy*,\textsuperscript{20} two books by Tomasz Kubikowski\textsuperscript{21}, and the work by Dariusz Kosiński.\textsuperscript{22} Kosiński described the whole process of the mass, nationwide trauma following the catastrophe of Polish presidential airplane in 2010 in terms of performance studies. His current research is focused on the practical dimension of performance studies, he has always been calling on Polish researchers to implement the tools developed in this domain of research in the description and thorough analysis of important phenomena of our social life.

The interdisciplinary character of performance studies enables us, Polish scholars, to shape our research and teaching in a more flexible way and thus to launch on our labour market cohorts of young people better prepared to be active and creative in the world of “liquid, globalized postmodernity.”

**Literature**


\textsuperscript{22} D. Kosiński, *Teatra polskie. Rok katastrofy*, Kraków & Warszawa 2013.