

Neither a man of marble or of iron

Today „(A)pollonia” by Krzysztof Warlikowski is going to be shown in the Palace of Popes in Avignon. It is the production from the Nowy Teatr in Warsaw.

It is the greatest recognition for artists from the world of theatre. None among our directors and theatre groups have ever been asked to prepare a production for the main stage of the most important theatre event in Europe.

– I accepted the proposal when I had realized that performances at the main courtyard resemble beginnings of Greek democracy when society of Athenians talked about its major problems in theatre – says the artist. – I also recalled circumstances in which Jean Vilar organized the festival in Avignon in 1947. He wished to begin discussion concerning the catastrophe the World War II had been for France. Our experiences are different. The ecstasy of freedom after 1945 made deep reflections impossible. Then the communism followed and a sincere and serious debate about our history was again out of question. I wish to provoke it now after all these years.

The stage design of „(A)polonia” was made for the stage in the Palace of Popes, which is almost forty metres wide and seventeen metres deep. Its creator, Małgorzata Szcześniak, was called by French critics “the popess”.

— I collect titles. In Poland my friends call me the Empress. The Popess in Avignon sounds good – she is laughing. –I am a supporter of Greek theatres – amphitheatres. It is my dream to be able to design set for a stage in Epidauros. Avignon reminds me of them. The width of the stage enables us to show our fresco and bring up simultaneousness of events. The boxes present more intimate spaces. Just like with zoom we have both close and extensive plans, a large and a small scale. For Krzysztof’s productions I design private and intimate spaces like bathrooms, toilets and showers because he always talks about human secrets. Just like in case of Edward Hopper we peep at situations in which we can see a true undissembled face of a man. We present daily backstage of life. This can’t be done in a typical stage design – such as living room or some metaphorical space.

Jacek Cieslak

„Ani z marmuru, ani z żelaza”

Rzeczpospolita

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French audience charmed by „(A)pollonia” by Warlikowski

Krzysztof Warlikowski shocked French critics with his uncomfortable vision of history proposed in „(A)pollonia”. The first ever Polish production presented at the courtyard of the Palace of the Popes in Avignon shook, outraged and enraptured.

„Let’s applaud” encourages a daily „Le Figaro” after presentation of „(A)pollonia” by Krzysztof Warlikowski on Thursday at the festival in Avignon. The production has been taken very well by French critics with a few doubts such as “lack of intensity and theatre discipline” (AFP agency) or using too frequent video projections (a weekly „Le Nouvel Observateur”). Objections that say more about a taste and training of the reviewers rather than the quality of the production seem bland comparing to never ceasing raptures. Strong words are used: „Masterpiece”. „Disturbing”. „Uncomfortable”. „The shock Avignon has been waiting for ” („Le Monde”). Praises for actors playing with extraordinary intensity and thanks for “unforgettable” atmosphere created by Renate Jett’s songs as well as an amazement at complex form and poetic comparisons.

A lot of emotions were stirred by contrasting the subject of sacrifice and crimes against humanity with a lecture of Coetzee concerning killing animals.

The same thing that was viewed by some critics as a slackness or a lack of discipline, was recognized as “slightly hypnotic trip”, “crazy pulse”, “breathtaking rhythm”, “matter concerning which Warlikowski doesn’t allow himself to have easy coming feelings”. Fabienne Darge writes in „Le Monde”: “...the seriousness of the topic is maintain in the form even when it seems becoming fashionable or provoking, the forms allow the audience to travel by themselves far from pathos ”.

Warlikowski had visited Avignon many time; with „Hamlet”, „The Purified”, „Krum”, „Angels in America”, but the critics had never before shown such admiration in a such open manner.

Joanna Derkaczew, Gazeta Wyborcza nr 168

Applause at 3 a.m.

The French premiere of „(A)pollonia" was ended with the standing ovations. The first Polish production on the main stage of Avignon Festival became very successful. And it had not been obvious from the beginning. The productions shown in the courtyard of the Palace of Popes are usually directed at wide audience and are based on classics or dance. Polish director offered a focus demanding monumental fresco about act of sacrifice that lasted four and a half hours.

The situation from Wiener Westwochen occurred in Avignon as well. At the beginning, during the scene with a national anthem (and it is always a national anthem of the hosting country), Agamemnon who has just returned from the war smokes a cigarette. Austrians were leaving outraged. In Avignon someone shouted after the anthem: "What else are you going to provoke us with?!".

Bravo for Maciej Stuhr, who played Agamemnon much better than in Warsaw. A really moving part was played by Danuta Stenka who did not play Clytemnestra during Warsaw premiere. She played a victim, a avenger and a vampire. All actors were great..

Jacek Cieślak, Rzeczpospolita nr 167

„Le Figaro" has begun summarising International Theatre Festival in Avignon.

The newspaper announced the best production „(A)pollonia" by Krzysztof Warlikowski from the Nowy Teatr in Warsaw. „Le Figaro" lists five top productions of the mainstream festival in Avignon and five which were presented in off-stream part. It talks in praises about „(A)pollonia" directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski. „Le Figaro" writes about "great actors team" of the Nowy Teatr whose performances are supported by music, singing and "extraordinary filming" which are done live on stage.

For those who could not go to Avignon „Le Figaro" announces presentation of „(A)pollonia" in Paris. This will take place at the beginning of November in one of the most prestigious theatres in this capital of France – in Chaillot Theatre.

Among the other top productions „Le Figaro" lists „The coast" and „Fires". Their creator is a Canadian of Lebanese origin Wajdi Mouawad who was an honorary guest of the festival.

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