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Against Great Civilizing Missions. Working on “How to Save the World on a Small Stage?”

Paweł Sztarbowski | The Aleksander Zelwerowicz National Academy of Dramatic Art in Warsaw

From a practice-as-research perspective, the author analyses his dramaturgical work on the performance *How to Save the World on the Small Stage?* directed by Paweł Łysak (Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw, 2018). This particular case is the starting point for complex research of methods and tools for ecological theatre. Una Chaudhuri’s idea of “Fifth Wall Dramaturgy” becomes the inspiration to exceed only human perspective and involve inhuman actors to the theatrical structure.

Keywords: ecology; globalisation; climate change; ecological theatre; Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw

Theatre’s Fifth Wall

At the beginning was the story of Dr. Jan Łysak, who for years worked at the Central Laboratory of Cereals Processing and Storage Technologies in

Warsaw on an utopian method of harvesting cereals at the stage of green, immature grain. His idea was ignored, ridiculed even by other scholars. I have been fascinated by it ever since I heard about it from his son, Paweł, a theatre director I have been working with since 2008 when I adapted *Forefathers' Eve* for him at the Polish Radio Theatre. We currently work together at the Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw. The crazy story about his father trying to reverse thousands of years of farming practice — which is to harvest dry grain and mill it into flour — seemed so picturesque that I thought one day it should be made into a monodrama. The idea of such a show recurred in our discussions from time to time. Jan Łysak's several years' tenure in the 1980s as professor of agriculture at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria served as an important context for it. According to Paweł Łysak, it was there, in reaction to the problem of hunger in Africa, that he first conceived of the idea of harvesting cereal grains "at early maturity stages of the caryopsis" (Łysak, 1996). This combination of personal and global perspectives seemed a perfect start for thinking about a potential project.

In our discussions, we were inspired by the films of the Chilean documentary filmmaker Patricio Guzmán: *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010) and *The Pearl Button* (2015). In both, he tells the story of his country from a perspective that is not only global, but actually interplanetary. Light is the main topic of the first film, and water of the second one. In *The Pearl Button*, the image of a quartz cube from three thousand years ago found in the Atacama Desert in Chile sets off a narrative about the conquest and extermination of the native inhabitants of the land who lived in such harmony with water that they even created its language. The documentary then shifts into Chile's recent past when the junta of General Augusto Pinochet murdered dissidents and dumped their bodies into the ocean. Water, otherwise a source of life,

becomes a place of extermination and death. In *Nostalgia for the Light*, women search for the remains of their loved ones, sifting through the sand of the Atacama Desert, one of the driest places in the world. Guzmán himself narrates both films, interweaving the planetary stories immersed in Chile's history with his childhood memories and personal reflections. Light and water are philosophical concepts that allow for seeing the history of our planet and the whole Solar System as a harmonious process, lasting millions of years, of natural development, which was interrupted by the arrival of the "human era" and the conquest- and domination-oriented human culture. Accordingly, both films can considered as a picture of the Anthropocene — an era when we witness "man's active interference with the processes guiding the planet's geological evolution" (Bińczyk, 2018, p. 12) — and at the same time as a painful reckoning with the history of Chile. As Ewa Bińczyk stresses, "The notion of the Anthropocene does not refer to man's impact on individual ecosystems, but on the planet as a whole" (Bińczyk, 2018, p. 152). The point, therefore, is not that human activities merely leave their mark on the landscape, but that they seriously disturb processes that define planetary dynamics as such.

Theatrical narratives, usually functioning within psychological, sociological and political frameworks regulating the construction of the scenic world, are limited to presenting human stories. We often actually speak of "national dramas" that tackle issues connected with the history and experiences of a particular nation, issues embedded within a specific cultural, linguistic and political context. We also speak of "universal dramas," focused on interpersonal relations and psychology. The challenges posed by globalization, and climate change in particular, mean, however, that these perspectives are no longer sufficient. Garbage patches in the oceans consist of bits of plastic produced supranationally. Carbon dioxide or radioactive

materials cross borders freely and uncontrollably. The same applies to viruses, bacteria, or toxins in our food. Timothy Morton has coined the term “hyperobjects” to refer to such objects which activate themselves unpredictably and are beyond the human scale of time and space (Morton, 2017). Since they are often invisible to the naked eye, it is easy to deny their existence. Sometimes they are actually compared to radioactive materials: “Their impact, the impossibility of their removal or recycling, the unimaginable scale of hazard and destruction are shocking, both cognitively and aesthetically” (Barcz, 2018). This means that when dealing with ecological issues, theatre cannot confine itself to representing only human stories, but needs to consider hyperobjects as well. It is necessary to go beyond human-centred narratives in order to forge a broad, global perspective, taking into account human and nonhuman entities. At the same time, it needs to be remembered that the natural and the social ought not to be opposed because they often form an indiscernible tangle of connections that are subject to constant negotiation. This relational and variable world of mutual influences is a challenge, but also a unique opportunity for theatre — a medium where relations are the basic material.

Una Chaudhuri, a researcher long preoccupied with the subject of ecology in the performative arts, has put forth the postulate of “fifth-wall dramaturgy”. She writes:

> We need to redraw the boundaries and expand the frame within which human meaning is created. We need to understand the human in its complex relation to the nonhuman, a relation that is both determining and determined, partly under our control, mostly outside it (Chaudhuri, 2016).

For her, the “fifth wall of theatre” means looking up, towards the sky, into the atmosphere, searching for a “view beyond the social world.” Climate change denotes for Chaudhuri forces as powerful and frightening as the wrath of gods and goddesses in ancient tragedies. The classical definition of a social framework as being limited to people is no longer sufficient in the situation of a climate crisis. To understand it, we need to consider entities more powerful than people — hyperobjects that confront man with the weakness of anthropocentric thinking. The ongoing coronavirus epidemic demonstrates very clearly what Bruno Latour, for example, has long emphasized in his concept of political ecology, postulating that we allow for nonhuman actors in describing social relations in order to create a “pluriversum” — a new kind of community based on multifarious relations between entities. The truth is that it is impossible to find isolated social or natural phenomena; they always exist relative to hyperobjects such as the greenhouse effect, the extraction of fossil fuels, the felling of forests, the production of genetically modified food, or the multiplication of viruses and bacteria. The shape of our life depends on all these factors. Therefore, as Chaudhuri rightly notes, it is also in theatre that we must search for their reflection: “Besides expanding the dramatic frame beyond the social world, Fifth Wall dramaturgy also expands it temporally, pushing past cultural history to locate the human story in the deep time of the earth” (Chadhuri, 2016). This makes the past, present, and future interweave, indicating that it took the work of many generations of our ancestors for the Anthropocene to become possible at all. The exact time frame of the “human era” is in fact a matter of lively debate. Most authorities locate its start-time in the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth century, based on evidence of growing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, or during the “Great Acceleration” after 1950, when human impact on planetary systems began to

intensify. “These attest to an unprecedented ecological pressure exerted by a single species, never before witnessed during any geological epoch” (Bińczyk, 2018, p. 91).

Transgressing the “fifth wall of theatre” and finding a voice from the above, a voice of Earth — not in the sense of metaphysical or magical investigations, but simply to overcome the anthropocentric gaze — became a crucial element through which the personal story of Jan Łysak gave rise to the idea of *How to Save the World on a Small Stage?*, a show I worked on with Paweł Łysak and a group of actors at the Powszechny Theatre in Warsaw (2018). The figure of the director’s father was crucial at the beginning of our work, but soon the subject of his research — cereals, and especially the early maturity stages of the grain as an element of the utopia of solving global hunger — emerged as an equally important protagonist. Together we searched for a context that would make the story larger, and for material that, rather than merely presenting data, would have the power and authenticity of an individual story to impact affectively on the viewer. That is why we decided to add other fathers’ biographies and invited the Senegalese performer Mamadou Góo Bâ, working with the Strefa WolnoSłowa Foundation and the Powszechny Theatre, who talked about his father, Demba Bâ, and the Ukrainian actor Artem Manuilov, who recounted the life of his father, Alexander Voronov. In their case, too, the story revolved as much around the men themselves as about their work, the causes they devoted their lives too — a colonial merchant ship, symbolizing the machinery of capitalism, and coal, a figure of planetary extraction and pollution.

How to Save the World?

For several months our work consisted in weekly meetings with Paweł Łysak, Mamadou Góo Bâ, and Artem Manuilov. We shared family memories, anecdotes, reminiscences of TV shows we watched in childhood, musical fascinations — all that could help compose a joint story. Paweł Łysak brought with him a typescript titled *Grandfathers and Fathers. Subjective Memories* — a family history compiled by his father in 2004. Mamadou Góo Bâ kept a diary with drawings and observations, sometimes written in French and sometimes in Wolof, as well as reflections on the customs of the Fulbe people or the history of slavery. Some of those works were later shown in an exhibition of Polish-based foreign artists, organized by Biennale Warszawa (2019). The Donbas, where Artem Manuilov used to live, has been a war zone since 2014 and many of his family souvenirs got lost. However, Artem asked a former friend from the neighbourhood to film his childhood landscape — the house and an industrial reservoir where he used to swim with other kids. All that constituted three vivid stories and their context. While we were interested in customs and cultural factors, we decided from the very beginning to avoid their exoticization, but rather to situate them in a specific political context.

The group was joined quite early on by Edwin Bendyk, a journalist and writer interested in civilizational changes and designing visions of the future, and Janek Simon, a visual artist preoccupied with the topic of globalization, who was the stage designer of the planned show. Their observations and the books they recommended became important references for the script, which at that stage was merely a swelling collection of loose notes and audio/video clips. It was then that we got hold of Marcin Popkiewicz's *Świat na rozdrożu* [A world at the crossroads] and Ewa

Bińczyk's recently published *Epoka człowieka. Retoryka i marazm antropocenu* [The epoch of man. The rhetorics and lethargy of the Anthropocene]. Besides providing general inspiration, selected fragments of these books, properly edited, became part of the script; particularly interesting was Popkiewicz's theory of exponential growth which demonstrates that it is impossible to increase the GDP, productivity, and expansion forever (see Popkiewicz, 2013, p. 50–66). Naomi Klein's books — *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate* (2014) and *No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need* (2017), published in Polish when the rehearsals were already under way — served as an important reference, to the extent that the character played by Anna Ilczuk was called Naomi Klein in one of the versions of the script. The narrative perspective that we adopted — looking from the future at a postapocalyptic world — was heavily influenced by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway's science-fiction essay *Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* (2017), which imagines a world devastated by climate change. An excerpt from the chapter *The Coming of the Penumbral Age*, covering the period of 1988–2093, was even used in one of the monologues, and the dramatic questions posed by the authors about the causes of the twenty first century's lethargy proved a crucial inspiration for our work.

A coal miner from the Donbas, a Senegalese deck mechanic working for a French carrier, and a Polish grain-technology scientist: worlds so different that there seemed to be hardly any contiguities between them. And yet we soon discovered that their trajectories met through the history of Jan Łysak, who was born in Stryi county, in what is now Ukraine, the native country of Artem Manuilov, and during his stay in Africa lived and worked in northern Nigeria, an area inhabited by the Fulbe people, which Mamadou Góo Bâ comes from; although the latter is a Senegalese by birth, he often stresses

that national identities in Africa are an artificial construct, forced upon the continent by Europeans, and what really matters as anchors of tradition are tribal identities. These geographical coincidences were of course very precious, but we soon decided they were not enough to constitute a dramaturgical axis. Reading Bińczyk and Popkiewicz, we came up with the motif of saving the world through work passed from generation to generation, which is streaked with a desire of conquest and domination. What according to a lofty idea is supposed to be the work of saving the planet, constant development underpinned by the theory of economic growth, is in fact driven by a desire to exploit its resources and devastate the successive ecosystems. Male fantasies about conquering the world and big plans for the future are supposed to serve the future generations, but in fact impoverish them, leaving a legacy of polluted air, poisoned water, and tons of garbage. Paweł Łysak talked about it in an interview ahead of the premiere:

> Fathers are people who care about the future. They build, like men, a world for their children; and they've built it the way they did. The places we're talking about show how the world is being devastated — by exponential growth, by the extraction of fossil fuels; how we are heading into an abyss. And our fathers put really a great deal effort into making the world the way it is. They were convinced it would be so great (Łysak, 2018).

As I said, we soon realized that the topics carried by human actors alone would not support a narrative and that it was necessary to introduce nonhuman actors — geophysical elements, such as climate changes, apocalyptic forest fires, images of a devastated planet, oceans with heaps of

garbage. The ecological crisis — a condition that many generations worked for, billions of individuals fascinated by the capitalist prospect of constant growth — became the leitmotif of our research. Combining the perspective of three fathers and a broad planetary gaze offered a chance for stepping beyond the social framework and tackling the topic of climate change, which has little theatrical tradition in Poland. We felt we were navigating unknown terrain, which is why the documentaries of Patricio Guzmán or Werner Herzog provided such an important context. Polish critical theatre has developed tools for representing historical reckonings, social and identity exclusions, or feminist issues, but has dealt very seldom with ecology and the climate crisis, failing to recognize them as political topics *par excellence*.

In the show, the fathers became representations of historical and social topics related to domination and conquest. The story of Demba Bâ illustrated the conquest of Africa by white colonizers. His ancestors for centuries grazed cattle in the Sahel, a geographical region south of the Sahara, once fertile and now semi-arid to the extent that its inhabitants face hunger every year. Senegal was a French colony and it was the French who introduced an unsustainable groundnut-growing monoculture to the region; without any crop rotation, it quickly led to deforestation and soil sterilization. Since his youth, Demba worked on a merchant ship owned by the French company Maurel et Prom, founded in 1831 at the slave island Gorée (a corruption of Dutch *Goedereede*, "good roadstead") and shipping groundnuts and other goods from West Africa to Bordeaux. When the trade in groundnuts became less profitable and the African soil too sterile for their cultivation, Maurel & Prom switched to oil drilling. "They began at the tiny slave island of Gorée and ended up polluting the environment in Gabon, Tanzania, Nigeria, South America, and Indonesia," Mamadou says in his monologue. The history of the African clan of Bâ, which according to legend traces its roots to ancient

Egyptians, is a history of a forced civilizational leap brought about by colonialism, based on the exploitation of resources and local populations and resulting in the collapse of centuries of tradition.

Artem Manuilov's father was seventeen when he started working at the Barakov Coal Mine in Sukhodolsk, Ukraine. The "Donbas coal fever," which began in the 1880s, attracting experts from all over Europe, mainly Britain, to the area, formed a context for his biography. Also people from all over Russia flocked to the Donetsk coal basin in search of a better life, and that was how Artem's grandparents came here; they worked, in harsh conditions, in the electrification sector. After the 1917 revolution, the Donbas became one of the pillars of the Soviet economy, and coal miners enjoyed great respect. "They said that Donbas coal provided energy for the whole world. To this there are numerous monuments devoted to miners who achieved five hundred percent of norm for the socialist homeland. A miner with a pickaxe, a miner with a lamp, a miner carrying a lump of coal like Prometheus carrying fire. He looks like a saint, blessing people with it," Artem narrates in the show. The exploitation of the planet and of the miners, who worked in hazardous conditions, risking their health, was covered up by a propaganda message: "My father was very proud to be part of this powerful socialist machine. Six hundred thousand tonnes of coal were extracted there annually. In total, during the whole span of its existence, the company mined thirty two and a half million tonnes of coal, digging over two hundred and twenty kilometres of pits. Some journey to the centre of the world!" After the fall of communism, the mines began to be closed down and it turned out that no one needed the recent heroes anymore. Their wages were withheld for many months and safety norms were sharply lowered. Alexander Voronov died of a heart attack at the age of thirty six after a lump of coal fell on his back a few months earlier. Half a year after his death, an explosion of

methane and dust killed eighty one miners at the Barakov Mine. “There is an alley of miner graves at the cemetery in Sukhodolsk. My father rests very close to his colleagues.”

In the case of Paweł Łysak’s father, the main topic was farming — an element of a family tradition, underpinned by an ideology of organic work, of educating the masses about hygiene or the mechanization of farming. In Łysak’s reminiscences there often recur images of his parents working at the farming school in Bereźnica, and of the many uncles and aunts associated with the sector. The school was founded in the late nineteenth century by Count Julian Brunicki, who saw in the development of farming and its mechanization a great economic reform project for the whole area. Jan Łysak’s dream of using living, green grain before it dies was thus deeply rooted in tradition and the upbringing he received. He worked on this dream while being seriously ill, despite ridicule and sarcasm: “The reviewer’s caustic remarks that I had declared a war against bread and noodles are misplaced, to say the least. This is about reducing world hunger! About reducing hunger through the introduction of an efficient technology of using green ear and stalk.” His homemade “civilizing mission” was to be a response to the global hunger crisis: “And so a green goo started flowing out of an old meat mincer screwed to the table. The caryopsis at an early stage of maturity. So that’s the goo that may save the world one day?” asks Andrzej Kłak, narrating the story of Jan Łysak, at the end of his monologue. Naomi Klein calls this kind of responses to crises “explosions of utopian imagination” (Klein, 2018, p. 217).

Presented next to each other, the three biographies inscribed in great civilizing missions demonstrated the failure of different versions of the Enlightenment, which Edwin Bendyk called a classic macho project. In an

essay written for the show's programme, he cited Jason W. Moore and his research into the development of capitalism and its relation to ecology. He notes that the crucial aspect of the capitalist project was to "commodify work and nature. Human labour, grain, or the forest became commodities — concrete abstractions whose value was determined and expressed in money by the market" (Bendyk, 2018, p. 8). Of course, the colonial version of modernity differs from its Soviet iteration, but both share a dream of building a better world, a dream streaked with oppression and violence.

In European culture, Faust is the embodiment of the macho project of conquest. Writing in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Marshall Berman calls Goethe's *Faust* a "tragedy of development," arguing that one of the work's most original ideas is that of an "affinity between the cultural ideal of self-development and the real social movement toward economic development" (Berman, 1982, p. 40). This is particularly evident in Part Two, where Faust "connects his personal drives with the economic, political and social forces that drive the world; he learns to build and to destroy" (Berman, 1982, p. 61). He outlines a great project of harnessing the sea in the service of man, consistent with theories of modern industrial organization:

> . . . man-made harbours and canals that can move ships full of goods and men; dams for large-scale irrigation; green fields and forests, pastures and gardens, a vast and intensive agriculture; waterpower to attract and support emerging industries; thriving settlements, new towns and cities to come — and all this to be created out of a barren wasteland where human beings have never dared to live (Berman, 1982, p. 62).

Economic growth becomes his highest ideal, which is why Berman calls Faust the prototype Developer.

The biographies of three fathers, protagonists of *How to Save the World on a Small Stage?*, even though they never met, have a lot in common and arrange themselves into a structure like tiny cogwheels in the great development machine of the Enlightenment. From the confrontation of their individual stories with the great mechanisms of development there emerges the paradox of the Anthropocene, which is that "although mankind has been hailed as the extraordinary causal power of this epoch, most people are in the position of being victims of the climate crisis rather than causal subjects of the changes" (Bińczyk, 2018, p. 111). The height of the three fathers' careers coincided with the Great Acceleration of the second half of the twentieth century, while the juxtaposition of their stories with that of Faust allows for extending the perspective of the Anthropocene back to the Industrial Revolution. It was the beginnings of the latter that Goethe captured in his work, and especially in its final parts. "Power and Estate to win, inspires my thought! The Deed is everything, the Glory nought" (Goethe, 1870, p. 233), says Faust played by Kazimierz Wysota in the first scene — to then, at the end, sickly and in hospital pyjamas, still defend his indomitable desire. Nothing has changed in his consciousness, he still remains faithful to his ideals of conquest and taming of nature:

> Yes! to this thought I hold with firm persistence;
>
> The last result of wisdom stamps it true:
>
> He only earns his freedom and existence,

Who daily conquers them anew.

Thus there, by dangers girt, shall glide away

Of childhood, manhood, age, the vigorous day:

And such a throng I fain would see —

Stand on free soil among a people free! (Goethe, 1870, p. 294)

Anna Ilczuk was a counterpoint to the male characters. At first, her monologues were to be based on theoretical texts dealing with climate change, serving as a kind of ecological warning. We imagined her as the only character alive, a narrator or guide presenting the post-catastrophe world. She is the only one who responds to the crisis, trying to save the catastrophe-struck planet, and possesses an ethical imagination. We envisaged her character as embodying Naomi Klein's thought that if we are to change from a society based on exploitation into one based on care and renewal, then all interpersonal relations have to be rooted in reciprocity and mindfulness because it is precisely such relations that are our most precious wealth — and that is the opposite of a situation where some people force others into submission (Klein, 2018). Books by authors associated with the philosophy of ecofeminism, investigating parallels between the exploitation of nature and the subjugation of women, can also serve as a reference here. We searched for a form for such a counterpoint for a very long time. Theoretical texts, even when edited for script, conveyed a proper message and narratively bound the stories together, but still seemed insufficient. They lacked the power of affective pull; their didacticism irritated the

actress. In one of the improvisations, she started talking about her own sense of confusion and anxiety over her daughter's future: "My name is Anna Ilczuk. I am thirty seven years old. My daughter is four. In twenty years' time, I'll be fifty seven. I've never assumed I'd live long. It frightens me that if all those reports [on climate change] are true, then my daughter will not only miss healthy food or water, but even air." And so it was the personal perspective of a mother concerned about the future that proved the right counterpoint to the personal stories of sons talking about the past.

Towards an Ecology of Theatre

The idea of the "fifth wall of theatre" and of going beyond the anthropocentric vision of theatre may bring to mind the classic motif of *theatrum mundi*, which originated, after all, in the field of geography. The irony of the title *How to Save the World on a Small Stage?* refers to this idea. How to save the world without exploiting it further? Or at least how to minimize the exploitation? Can a small stage become a great theatre of the world? Consequently, Janek Simon thought from the very beginning about a stage design that would utilize existing elements. He used cubes of compressed waste paper which in a simply way conjured up an apocalyptic landscape of a littered planet. Postulating a dramaturgy of the climate-change era that would break through the "fifth wall of theatre," Una Chaudhuri argues that instead of the "mimetic" mode it should use a "diegetic" one, that is, to simply tell rather than imitate or enact. In the ecological model, all particles are equally important and compose the whole. Accordingly, work on the show provided for community, for sharing stories and adapting them together so that none emerged as dominant. The initial idea of integrating these stories proved impossible because the most interesting thing was how these parallel narratives interacted with each

other.

Making music together was an important part of the work. Andrzej Kłak was responsible for editing it, but it was produced by all members of the team playing together, sharing music from their respective cultures. Mamadou Góo Bâ brought a piece he composed in which a Senegalese drought song turned into a Belarusian rain song. It was during our sessions that we came up with the idea of singing, in the final part of the show, the recently published IPCC Special Report on Global Warming, based on the assessment of around 6,000 peer-review publications. It warned that if global warming exceeded 1.5ºC above levels from the beginning of the industrial era, that is the time when we started emitting carbon dioxide on a massive scale, an ecological catastrophe would become imminent by 2030. A joint song, a lament over a dying planet, gave a voice to science and the experts who signed the report. An artistic project clashed with scientific research, without losing the power of affective action.

Working on *How to Save the World on a Small Stage?*, we approached, in many ways, the making of "ecological theatre." The question remains whether we managed to go beyond exploitation-based structures of theatrical work. Writing that it was the Enlightenment that "pitched nature and culture, 'man' and the 'environment' against each other in what has turned out to be a potentially disastrous opposition," Baz Kershaw accuses performance that as a category it became "synonymous with progress, making theatre a pervasive model for separating culture from nature" (Kershaw, 2007, pp. 15, 63). Consequently, for theatre to continue to matter in a changing world, it is necessary to start transforming it into an ecological medium. Kershaw tries, in an interesting way, to transpose to the field of theatre the concept of the "ecotone," that is an interface between

ecosystems, such as a river and the riparian zone, where a strip of land turns, imperceptibly sometimes, into an aquatic environment. “Ecotones often produce new hybrid life-forms as a result of the ‘edge effects’ characteristic of the meeting of ecosystems” (Kershaw, 2007, p. 19). Theatre as an ecological medium is simultaneously durable and ephemeral, real and unreal, partial and exhaustive. Thanks to these characteristics, it allows for subverting and transgressing conventional ways of thinking and feeling, providing a set of critical tools that offer a chance of bringing the “saving of the world on a small stage” over into the space of the *theatrum mundi*.

If we decide that theatre is an ecosystem, then a theatre ecology should mean more than just dealing with topics related to climate change. Remaining on this level would be but a declarative gesture. A true theatre ecology should not only mimetically represent, but also actually shape relations within the theatre ecosystem, change modes of production, and constantly renew the effort of rethinking them, aware that all of its elements are equally important. By definition, ecology concerns webs of interdependencies and refers to relations between all organic and inorganic parts of ecosystems, from the simplest to the most complex ones. Consequently, it becomes a theoretical model for thinking about new relations in theatre, based on solidarity and care and rejecting domination and exploitation. A single show cannot bring about such a change. It is necessary to rethink the whole ecosystem.

Translated by Marcin Wawrzyńczak

Author

Paweł Sztarbowski (pawel.sztarbowski@e-at.edu.pl) – dramaturg, publicist and teacher at

Theater Academy in Warsaw, Deputy Director of Powszechny Theater in Warsaw since 2014. PhD. of Theatre Arts. He graduated from Philosophy studies at the University of Warsaw, studied Theatre Arts at the Theater Academy in Warsaw and defended his PhD dissertation entitled “Theater and Solidarity. On theater of the community” at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He was the founder of Nowa Siła Krytyczna - a group of young reviewers writing for the Polish Theater Vortal e-teatr.pl. As reviewer and publicist, he has co-operated with an abundance of polish and foreign magazines focused on the topic of theater (Theater der Zeit, Svet e Divadlo and Theater Seasons, Didaskalia, Dialog). He is the author of numerous scientific texts on theater declaimed on both all-Polish and international conferences and published in collective works. He is the editor of books *Liberated Energy* (Warsaw 2011) and *Teatr wspólny* (Bydgoszcz 2013). ORCID: 0000-0003-4787-9959.

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