

**The Aleksander Zelwerowicz State Theatre Academy
(Akademia Teatralna im Aleksandra Zelwerowicza w Warszawie)**

by Ela Wtulich

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History:

The Academy was founded in 1932. Since 1955 it has the status of academic institution. The character of the school was formed by the frontrunners of Polish theatre and founders of the National Institute of Theatre Art. From the beginning, the image of Polish theatre has been shaped by graduates from the Academy. Together with Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna in Krakow, both schools represent the most important educational centers for theatre art in Poland.

Departments:

- The Acting Department
- The Directing Department
- The Theatre Studies Department
- The Department of Puppet Theatre Art (external department in Białystok, branch of Akademia Teatralna)

THE DIRECTING DEPARTMENT

MA DIRECTING

Contact:



The Dean of the Directing Department: Ph.D. Mr. Jarosław Kilian
e-mail: dziekanat@at.edu.pl

Date of opening: The Directing Department was founded in 1933 by Leon Schiller. It is the oldest department at the Academy.

Professions the degree prepares students for:

The graduates are prepared to work in all fields that require professional directing skills. Skills acquired in school allow them to work as directors in dramatic and musical theaters, feature films, to be artistic directors of the institutions, screenwriters and dramatists and to work in television.

Student's Profile:

Until now, only graduates from Arts Faculties and professional actors have been admitted. Although currently it is possible to admit candidates straight after completing secondary education (Baccalaureate) it is still a rarity. Usually candidates need to finish one or two years of different studies before applying. More life experience is desirable so that the world might be better represented.

Specificity:

The school is trying to educate students in a very interdisciplinary way and to form not only artists but also humanists. The Directing Department is characterized by its strong focus on theoretical subjects. Artistic performance is always regarded in its different (i.e. cultural, historical) contexts. Thanks to humanistic background it is possible to better explore and understand the world of theatre.

Aims:

To educate not only theatre directors but also dramatists, artists with a dramaturgical background and sufficient practice, able to create theatrical performances and have the necessary background in order to become alert and active participants in contemporary culture, embracing humanistic knowledge with their artistic experience, aware of camera work and screenwriting, able to write and speak out as humanists and scholars;
To encourage collaboration with students from other faculties (The Acting Department, The Academy of Fine Arts).

Average number of admitted students per year: 4 (next year probably 6 or 7)



Admission requirements for regular students:

Secondary education certificate and positive result of the entrance exam.

Duration of the program: 5 years (10 semesters) – (this case represents an exception made by Ministry of National Education – acting and directing departments are not organized in a three-cycle structure – bachelor’s-master’s-doctorate - because of their unique nature).

Total number of ECTS: 300

Credits distribution:

Credits distribution depends only to a small extent on the student’s individual selection of subjects. Most of the subjects are obligatory and only small variations can be made.

Selection procedure:

Selection procedure is composed of three phases:

I PHASE: First elimination: Candidates are to prepare written work presenting staging concepts on the basis of a drama or adaptation of another text. The paper is read by two reviewers. At a special meeting of the committee, on the basis of the written opinion of the reviewers, the committee evaluates the candidate papers.

Afterwards, during the interview, candidates defend their concept.

II PHASE: PRACTICAL EXAM: There is no elimination in this phase. It consists of: defending candidate’s staging concept (0-11 points), preparing one etude (0-11), defending the etude (0-11), evaluating student’s aptitudes regarding: working with actor (0-11), drawing (0-11), musical training (0-11), perceptiveness (0-11), imagination (0-11), associations (0-11), narrative skills (0-11), comparisons (0-11), comics (0-11), acting skills (0-11); test checking the suitability and capacity to work as a director (0-20 points)

III PHASE: THEORETICAL EXAM verifying candidate’s specialized knowledge concerning history of culture, literature, art and music in relation to the directing studies (history of Polish and world theatre (0-8 points), history of Polish and world drama (0-8 points), visual background of theatre movements (0-8 points), music background of theatre movements (0-8 points), literature and theatre (0-8 points), contemporary socio-cultural life (0-8 points).



Evaluation criteria: The selection is made on the basis of the amount of credits obtained by the candidate.

Financial aspects: Students can apply for social and housing scholarship. Every year fellowships are awarded to students with adequate grades. It is also possible to receive allowance aid two times a year.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Learning approach:

Although the studies are functioning in the frames of an assigned and unified plan, there is strong emphasis on the individual approach of each student. The educational axes are: working on texts, propaedeutics – introduction to directing, practical staging classes, working with actors, choreography and stagecraft. The aim is to integrate theoretical knowledge acquired in the course of studies with student’s practical background and creativity translated into practice – the process of creation. It is also very important to teach students to think autonomously, logically and in more creative way (i.e. by introducing heuristics).

Learning methodologies:

The first two years of studies are characterized by a strong focus on theoretical classes. There are more theoretical than practical courses (especially during first two years) but in reality, the latter are more time-consuming and require more commitment. The aim of theoretical classes is to educate the directors as humanists and scholars, and to give them necessary theoretical background. Concerning the master-student relationship: the ‘master’ presents methods and his approach towards working in theatre and directing. Students follow or confront it with their own way of understanding theatre. The pedagogues help students to realize their creative ideas.

SEMINARS:

- **directing seminar:** this is the most important subject (I-VIII SEM); during first three years, students are obliged to prepare **12 stage adaptations** (short forms of performance) – four each year (half-semester system). This system enforces meetings and collaboration with twelve professional directors - active participants in contemporary theatre, which means twelve different approaches and different aesthetics concerning theatre. After the third year students chose specialization – for example, opera director, film director. Debriefing method after exams helps students to improve their artistic work. During the



first two semesters students work with professional actors, during the second – with students from the Acting Department, from the third year they get more freedom in developing their projects in order to learn how to organize artistic work autonomously.

- **dramaturgy seminar:** (I-IV SEM) classes consist of analyzing stageplays, the second semester focuses on researching and analyzing great theories of theatre, those classes require student participation, students discuss previously read drama texts, comment on them and learn about theories of theatre
- **heuristics, psychological and sociological textual analysis, contemporary drama, text interpretation**

LECTURES

Lectures for theoretical subjects often require students' participation: preparing presentations and speeches. As the amount of students is very small, lectures are usually followed by discussion. Those classes also require a lot of individual reading: art history, introduction to directing, realistic movement in theatre, the Bible and its tradition, philosophy, history of literature, English Renaissance theatre, history of music, modern history, theory of literature, the ancient world and its traditions, cultural anthropology, history of customs, Biblical tradition in theatre, contemporary drama, historical background of theatrical movements, philosophical background of theatre movements.

TUTORIALS

There are also tutorials for some lectures: history of literature, introduction to directing, technology in theatre, sound in theatre, scenography, history of customs, biblical tradition in theatre.

PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION - ASSISTANTSHIP

Two compulsory assistantships in professional theatres are obligatory for each student. Apart from theatre, students can assist directors in films or in television. The extent of assistantship depends on the director, usually it consists of helping professional directors in preparing staging, observing his work, working with actors.

WRITTEN WORK

Students must write five additional works in the course of study – those works should not only be theoretical, but also based on practice and experience. A master's thesis should be developed as an expansion of one of these works. Students work on their papers under the guidance of a professor.



PRACTICAL SUBJECTS – TRAINING

These subjects usually take the form of seminars, tutorials and workshops.

- Acting: students learn through acting to better understand the actors – their techniques, and methods of work
- Working with set designer
- Working with camera

GROUP DISCUSSIONS:

There are group discussions concerning gender studies (gender theories are discussed through examples of texts and films confronting this area) and history of dance. Some of the subjects have a mixed form of a lecture and discussion (for example, realistic movement in theatre).

WORKSHOPS :

Every year different workshops are prepared for students (for example, lighting in theatre). Workshops are voluntary.

ASSESSMENT:

Students are evaluated by professors every semester or annually (depending on the duration of each subject). Assessment of the directing seminar is the most important one and is based on student's individual staging of work – for example directing performance. There are various forms of evaluation – oral exams, written work, debriefing method, assessment based on continuous student progress.

FINANCES:

It is possible to receive a small budget for making etudes– to pay the actors and prepare scenography. It is not possible to receive a budget for the final project.

FINAL WORK:

The final work consists of:

- staging drama performance in a theatre
- writing theoretical piece (MA thesis)

- DIPLOMA PRODUCTION:

This is an autonomous work. Students are thrown in at the deep end so that they are prepared to work autonomously and organize their artistic work independently. Each student needs to



find a theatre that will allow them to stage and prepare their diploma. Students can make use of their previous artistic and professional contacts (assistantship, collaborating with other students). The school does not help them with this matter. The evaluation is made on the basis of the product – directed performance.

- WRITTEN WORK (Master thesis):

Written, theoretical diploma does not have to be connected thematically with the practical diploma. It has its individual advisor. The subject of this work should concentrate on widely understood theatre, dramatic theory and dramatic practice. Students work under the guidance of a professor (thesis advisor).

Evaluation criteria (written work):

The ability to apply appropriate methods, knowledge of sources and literature in terms of the chosen subject; the ability to compose logical arguments, to precisely formulate judgments and conclusions; detailed knowledge of the issues in terms of the subject of the work.

Frequency of education:

Courses usually take up 40-50 hours weekly per semester

**THE ACTING DEPARTMENT
MA ACTING**

Contact:

The Dean of the Acting Department - PhD Tomasz Grochoczyński
e-mail: dziekanat@at.edu.pl

Date of opening: 1932

Professions the degree prepares for: The degree prepares students to work as actors (in theatrical performances, film, radio, television), cultural animators, television presenters, instructors, pedagogues.

Specificity:

Studies in the Acting Department are very time-consuming. Usually students spend around 50 weekly hours in school (including Saturdays). They are also required to do individual work. Studies combine practical and technical subjects (necessary in this profession) with a thorough academic knowledge in humanities and art. The craft of acting is regarded as



equally important in the professional career of an actor as is general, theoretical knowledge in culture and humanities.

Aims:

To develop not only acting techniques but also interpersonal skills, so that the graduates can realize their professional potential not only in theatres; to build up students' creativity and artistic activity and to prepare them for autonomous, professional work.

Duration of the program: 9 semesters

Total number of ECTS: 300

Credits distribution: All courses are obligatory therefore credit distribution does not depend on student choice.

Number of admitted students per year: 24

Admission requirements for regular students:

The conditions of acceptance are to complete secondary education and obtain positive results in the competition testing artistic abilities.

Selection procedure:

The selection procedure consists of three phases:

1st : PRELIMINARY SELECTION

The candidate presents in front of the commission an interpretation of a text prepared beforehand. The candidate has to obtain a positive result in this phase to go through the second phase. The evaluation is made on the basis of his diction, voice, interpretation and general suitability to these kind of studies.

2nd phase: THEORETICAL EXAM: its aim is to examine candidate's intellectual competence concerning the interpretation of contemporary culture and art. During this entrance exam candidate's knowledge of drama and theatre as well as historical, philosophical, literary and aesthetic background is assessed.

3rd phase: PRACTICAL EXAM: this is composed of two parts: 1. rhythm and movement exam (physical abilities, dance and rhythm); 2. acting (diction, voice, interpretation, acting tasks, song interpretation and general suitability).

Evaluation criteria for admission:



Candidate is evaluated and can receive points for each element of the exam. The selection is made on the basis of the amount of points received.

Financial aspects:

Students can apply for two kinds of available scholarships: social scholarship and fellowship for students with best results.

Total number of ECTS: 300

Learning approach:

Apart from practical subjects developing acting skills, studies focus also on the theoretical aspects of theatre. Good interpretation and acting need to be backed by the general knowledge of the cultural, historical and philosophical context of the text actors are dealing with. Therefore, there is a need for theoretical subjects promoting a wide understanding of drama and theatre. Also a part of every acting class (interpretation, acting, scenes, singing) is devoted to discussion concerning drama or other texts students are dealing with and its different contexts as well as the psychological and behavioral aspects of acting.

Learning methodologies:

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

The aim of these classes is to develop future actors' skills concerning textual interpretation and their behavior on stage. They include: basic acting, prose interpretation, verse interpretation, scene study, dialogs, working in role, working with camera, working with directors. During the third year, students work with future directors from the Directing Department.

Assessment: The evaluation is made on the basis of a group performance.

PRACTICAL CLASSES: speech training and elocution; There are no separate exams for these subjects. The pedagogues watch the group performance at the end of every semester and make evaluation on the basis of each student's progress.

PHYSICAL TRAINING: dance, fencing, rhythm, stage movement and stage combat

THEORETICAL COURSES

Theoretical courses usually take the form of lectures or tutorials. Their aim is to provide students with theoretical, general humanistic knowledge as well as to foster their individual research in this field. They consist of: history of Polish theatre (tutorial), history of Polish drama, history of world drama, Polish literature (tutorial), history of film, history of music, history of art, cultural anthropology, basic management and marketing



Assessment: the most popular form of the examination is oral exam; very often students are also asked to write essays or to prepare presentations.

WORKSHOPS

workshops are usually organized every year. They are conducted by invited pedagogues and professional actors.

FINAL WORK:

The final work consists of:

- taking part in two drama performances (acting)
- writing theoretical piece (master's thesis)

- DIPLOMA PRODUCTION:

During last three semesters, students prepare three different performances. Graduates should take part in two of the three performances. Preparations take the form of rehearsals as in professional theatres.

The diploma performances are open to the public – each performance is played several times in a month, until the end of academic year. Diploma production is also a way of promoting and presenting young actors (among the guests invited are theatre and film directors).

Assessment: the leading pedagogue together with the Faculty Board evaluate each student taking into account progress and work in course of studies as well as the final effect of his work.

- WRITTEN WORK (MASTER'S THESIS)

From the third year students attend diploma seminars– individual consultations with the professor (thesis advisor) under whose guidance students prepare written work. this should concentrate on theory or history of drama but can also be based on previous artistic experience. The formal requirements follow the usual standards for a master's thesis.

Evaluation criteria

The ability to apply appropriate methods, knowledge of sources and literature in terms of the chosen subject; the ability to compose logical arguments and precise formulation of judgments and conclusions; detailed knowledge of the issues in terms of the subject of the work.

Frequency of education: 50 – 56 weekly hours.



Skills obtained by the student on completion of the degree:

Graduates gain mastery of acting technics and are able to combine these creatively along with autonomous reasoning based on the knowledge acquired in course of studies. They are able to stimulate their creativity and are conscious of various forms of contemporary culture and art (especially theatre).

**THE THEATRE STUDIES DEPARTMENT
MA THEATRE STUDIES**

Contact:

The Dean of the Theatre Studies Department. Lech Śliwonik
e-mail: dziekanat@at.edu.pl

Date of opening: 1975

History:

The faculty is now in the process of adaptating to the Bologna guidelines. In 2007/2008 the Department started the reorganization of the program to adjust it to the three-cycle-structure (bachelor's, master's, doctorate) and bachelor's studies were opened. In 2010/2011 the two-years master's studies will be opened in new, restructured form. Up until now, the master's program was conceived as a unified five-year-cycle.

Professions the degree prepares for:

The graduate has the necessary background to become a theatre critic, literary manager of the theatre, PR and media specialist, journalist, theatre producer, cultural animator. They can work in various cultural institutions, advertising departments, media, as well as in academic institutions.

Student's Profile: Studies will be open for students with BA degree, specializing in the theatre field. For most of the students graduating from Bachelor studies in The Theatre Studies Department this will be natural continuation of their educational path.

Specificity:



Those studies join academic, humanistic education with experiencing the theatre through various practical subjects. As a result, students investigate historical and present functions of theatre, learn how to analyse classical and contemporary drama pieces, broaden their knowledge concerning other fields of study: cultural anthropology, philosophy, literature, art, music, film and television. The process of acquiring theoretical knowledge is reinforced by student theatrical practice throughout their studies so that the theatre can be not only recognized, but also understood.

Aims:

To provide wide academic education and firm knowledge of theatre, so that the graduates are prepared to develop their professional activity. **They strive towards contributing to further academic research in the field of theatre** in a broader sense.

Admitted students per year: ~ 20

Duration of the programme: 2 years

Total number of ECTS: 120

LEARNING METHODOLOGIES:

THEORETICAL SUBJECTS

Most of the theoretical subjects take the form of lectures, although they usually involve students' participation (for example, discussion, presentations). Based on different texts, they also require individual work (reading and analyzing texts). Theoretical subjects can be divided into:

General subjects: for example: modern history, law, anthropology of performance, foreign languages

- Theatre studies: for example: history of drama and theatre, contemporary drama and theatre, theory of theatre, theatre and media, theatrical performance;

PRACTICAL SUBJECTS

The aim of practical subjects is to familiarize students with theatrical practice, and as consequence, to help them better understand the mechanisms and techniques of theatrical performance as well as the methods of working on stage as directors or actors. This module consists of subjects like: introduction to directing, working with actors, scenography, basic acting, speech training.



DIPLOMA SEMINAR

Diploma seminar consists of discussing and observing student's progress in preparing his written diploma work. The subject of this work should concentrate on theatre and dramatic theory, history of drama and theatre. Students work under the guidance of a chosen professor (thesis advisor) whose specialization covers the subject of written work.

FINAL WRITTEN WORK – MA THESIS

Although the program of this master's is also based on practical subjects, the condition of graduation and attribution of master's diploma is to prepare and defend only theoretical work (MA thesis).

Evaluation criteria

The ability to apply appropriate methods, knowledge of sources and literature in terms of the chosen subject; the ability to compose logical arguments, precise formulation of judgments and conclusions; detailed knowledge of the issues in terms of the subject of the work.

Detailed description of the assigned master's program will be available in the next academic year as the reorganization is in process.

INFRASTRUCTRE: recording studio, rooms for theoretical classes, rooms for practical classes, two stages (Collegium Nobilium Theatre), gym and library.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Akademia Teatralna is a member of ELIA – European League of Institutes of the Arts. The Academy actively participates in European research projects:

INTER ARTES THEMATIC NETWORK FOR HIGHER ARTS EDUCATION IN EUROPE – research project (financed by the European Commission - Socrates program) with aim of establishing and recognizing the situation and character of the training of artists in Europe regarding European Integration and Bologna Process. The Academy is the first university in Poland to coordinate the thematic network.



TRANSMISSION ART EDUCATION (www.transmissionarteducation.com)

The Academy is a partner in the project. Aims: to identify opportunities for artists' collaboration with social environment - especially the Third Sector. Project is coordinated by Kunstenaars & CO in Amsterdam. Other partners: Great Britain, Austria, Holland, Finland, Ireland. The project is financed by the European Commission (2004-2006).

THE EUROPEAN ARCHIPELAGO OF HUMANISTIC THEMATIC NETWORKS HUMAN PLUS 2006 (www.archhumannets.net)

Aims: It is a platform for information exchange and cooperation between 20 Erasmus-Socrates Thematic Networks operating in Europe. The archipelago covers many areas in the field of science and humanities, such as language, cultural memory, history, geography, political science, feminist studies, architecture, art, music, human rights. The project is coordinated by the University of Pisa and financed by the European Commission (Socrates Erasmus).

BILATERAL COOPERATION, ACADEMIC NETWORK

Bilateral cooperation with Saint Petersburg State Theatre Arts Academy results in the organisation of many workshops.

ERASMUS/SOCRATES : The Academy has signed agreements with: Université Paris X Nanterre, Université Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle, Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático de Madrid, Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático de Sevilla, Freie Universität Berlin, Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart, Università di Bologna, Latvijas Kultūra Akadēmija Riga

PUBLIC EVENTS:

International Theatre Schools Festival (<http://www.festival.at.edu.pl/>)

Festival organized annually by The Academy since 2002 (collaboration with Ministry of Culture and National Theatre).

