

[polishtheatrejournal.com](http://polishtheatrejournal.com)

## Call for Papers for the Third Issue of the Polish Theatre Journal

We announce an open call for papers for the next issue of the Polish Theatre Journal, the theme of which will be “Theatre and Democracy. Institutional Practices in Polish Theatre”. The final submission deadline for the paper proposals for the third issue of PTJ is 30 September 2016.

Polish Theatre Journal (PTJ) is an on-line English-language academic periodical examining contemporary Polish theatre and performance, published twice a year by the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in Warsaw.

The third issue of the “Polish Theatre Journal” will be devoted to institutional critique, which in Polish reflection regarding theatre and the performing arts is still only marginally present, even though in the international circuit it is one of the leading critical trends. We have decided to tackle this issue, because Polish theatre seems to outright demand it: in the recent seasons there has appeared a clear trend in shows that x-ray the institution of theatre and question the explicit and implicit mechanisms governing it, the role, subjectivity and responsibility of artists working within its framework, as well as its relationship with the public. Those include shows produced both by independent companies and by repertory theatres, created by, among others: Agnieszka Błońska, Michał Buszewicz, Agnieszka Jakimiak, Anna Karasińska, Wiktor Rubin and Jolanta Janiczak in cooperation with Joanna Krakowska and Magda Mosiewicz, Justyna Sobczyk, Agata Siniarska, Anna Smolar, Weronika Szczawińska, Magda Szpecht, Janek Turkowski, Komuna Warszawa. The topic has also been taken up by curators – the politics of production processes and conditions of functioning of theatre became the leading themes of such projects, as Teatr POP-UP, Mikro Teatr or XXI Konfrontacje Teatralne.

We observe therefore the emergence of a new trend in Polish theatre, which talks about democracy not so much by creating representations of what is political, but rather by attempting to practice politics by democratizing the work methods and raising questions about the mechanisms governing the process of production and operation of art.

Self-reflexivity of theatre understood in such a way can lead to actual political activism, but it can also – as critics observing similar phenomena in theatre and the performing arts in the world indicate – morph into post-political pseudo-activism, which uses the meta-language it has built mainly to celebrate the political impotence of art. Without a doubt, this trend calls for a description and an in-depth analysis that would take into account the tools and categories worked out so far by institutional critique.

We deem it important that the questions taken up by institutional critique be posed in the context of today’s circumstances of functioning of theatre in Poland and in the world. While examining the processes of the democratization of art initiated by artists, one should also ask about the threats to the autonomy of culture resulting from a new way of understanding of the role of the state and its cultural politics, as well as about the economic and ideological manifestations of censorship and the restrictions imposed by the system on the critical function of art.

All these questions need to be posed within the context of the impasse in which the model of repertory theatre, still dominant in Poland (as in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Germany), has found itself. Public stages are struggling with underfunding imposed by the system, as well as with high production and exploitation costs of the performances. Subjected to a growing pressure on the part of economists and politicians attached to the idea of a self-regulating market, only with great difficulty (if at all) do they attempt to take up the challenges related to the contemporary crisis of democracy and civil society. Especially that frequently they themselves are a space of violent management practices and a rigid hierarchies that subordinate the work of an entire institution to the vision of one person, and which prevent the formation of a critical or an alternative perspective on the institution itself, on its objectives and way of functioning.

It is also possible that the model of the institution and organization of theatre along with the way it is understood and practiced, adopted in modern Europe and then popularized in the world, is based on the tacitly accepted assumption about the integrity of structures and divisions that we would like to be discussed. In other words: theatre is an undemocratic institution and the profound changes in its basic structures lead necessarily to its transformation – either into another form of performing art, or into “non-art”. The discussion about theatre and its institutional form turns out therefore to be a discussion of the principles of understanding art and culture, as well as the function they can and should serve in the modern world.

In the third issue of the “Polish Theatre Journal” we would like to start a debate concerning the above-mentioned problems, opening it also up to the phenomena from outside the Polish theatre. We have the impression that the situation we are facing does not apply only to Poland, and in the search for possible solutions (or to diagnose threats) one has to use the experience of other countries, especially those of Central and Eastern Europe.

We kindly invite you to submit your proposals. We are looking both for analytical papers examining specific performances, artist strategies or institutions, as well as for broader takes on the problem. We are also interested in the comparative approach, showing the processes taking place in Polish theatre against the background of similar phenomena in other countries or art disciplines. In addition to critical texts we welcome projects of revolutionary utopias and visions of emancipatory action for the future, even if today they may only seem a dream. We care about opening the discussion and gathering inspiration that would prevent the deepening sense of helplessness, uncertainty and powerlessness, which today is perhaps the most dangerous enemy of artists, researchers and people participating in culture.

**Abstracts limited to 300 words (both abstracts and papers can be written in Polish or in English) should be sent to the Editor at the address [ptj@instytut-teatralny.pl](mailto:ptj@instytut-teatralny.pl) or by login by [polishtheatrejournal.com](http://polishtheatrejournal.com). The final submission deadline for the paper proposals is 30 September 2016.**