

Summary

Teatr żydowski w Gdańsku 1876–1968 (Jewish Theatre in Gdańsk, 1876-1968) by Mieczysław Abramowicz is a doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of Professor Dr Hab. Małgorzata Jarmułowicz.

In the opening chapters of this study, the author discusses the history of Jewish theatre from ancient times. It is true that Judaism forbids all theatrical and circus shows, but in antiquity individual Jewish actors appeared in Roman theatres, for example, Aliturus, Nero's favourite actor, who is mentioned by Flavius. In modern and contemporary times, many Jewish actors have had fine careers in non-Jewish theatres, for example, Sarah Bernhardt, Marcel Marceau, Ludwig Chronegk, Max Reinhardt, and many others.

The contemporary Jewish theatre has a relatively short history. It derives from traditions celebrating the holiday of Purim, during which Purim players (*purim-szpiler*) performed, and from the traditions of the so-called Broder singers (*Di broder zinger*). Abraham Goldfaden is considered the father of the Jewish theatre. In 1876, in the town of Jassy (Iași) in Romania, he established the first professional Jewish theatre. In this study, the author presents the development of the modern Jewish theatre (both the Yiddish and Hebrew theatres) and of Jewish dramaturgy in various countries, including, for example, those of Ester Rachel Kamińska, Maurice Schwarz, Jonas Turkow, The Wilno Troupe, and Habima.

The first performances given by Jewish actors in Gdańsk were in 1876: a quartet of Broder singers, Nathan Schwarz and the Semmel Brothers, appeared in the Wilhelm-Theater. Some years later, in 1883, the Leon Berger troupe performed in Gdańsk in repertoire by Goldfaden and with the participation of former actors of the company of "the father of Jewish theatre," including, Sophia Goldstein (later Karp).

A clear invigoration of the activities of Jewish theatre companies in Gdańsk followed the end of the First World War and the creation of the Free City of Danzig. In the Free City, an important element of Jewish theatrical life were the guest performances of companies or of solo actors. In 1921, Jonas Turkow's *Wędrowny Dramatyczny Teatr Żydowski* (Travelling Jewish Dramatic Theatre) from Warsaw came to Gdańsk. In the years that followed, artists like Abraham Morewski, Khayele Grober, Jakob Wajslic, the Jakow Żytomirski company, and actors of the

Wilno Troupe made guest appearances in the city. With the establishment in 1933 of the Gdańsk *Kulturbund* (*Der Kulturbund der Juden in Danzig* – the Cultural Union of Jews in Gdańsk), artists from the *Reich* made frequent guest appearances.

From the very beginnings of the Free City of Danzig, there were attempts made to establish a permanent and professional Jewish theatre. Such attempts were undertaken by Pola Chwoles (1926) and subsequently by Melech Rubin (1929). In 1934, the Warsaw actor Hirsz Głowiński and Symcha Wajnsztok, formerly an actor with the Vilner Trupe, founded the Jewish Theatre in Gdańsk, a permanent theatre offering a repertoire in Yiddish. In this study, the activities of the Theatre are presented via the work of the various directors of the company: Głowiński and Wajnsztok, Rudolf Zasławski, Głowiński again, and Jonas Turkow. The Theatre performed a classic Jewish repertoire: works by Goldfaden, Sholem Asch, S. An-sky (including the celebrated *Dybbuk*), Jakow Gordin, Sholem Aleichem, and other Jewish playwrights and directors. Under Turkow's direction, the repertoire was broadened to include plays by authors such as Ladislav Fodor, Wilhelm Werner, and Maria Morozowicz-Szczepkowska. In 1938, the Jewish Theatre came under the patronage of the local *Kulturbund*, which made the operations of the Jewish theatre much easier.

This study also discusses in detail the work of the Gdańsk dramaturg Max Baumann, author, *inter alia*, of the play *Glikl Hameln żąda sprawiedliwości* (*Glikl Hameln Demands Justice*), performed in Poland by Ida Kamińska.

In connection with the growth of anti-Semitism in the Free City, Nazi repressive measures against Jews, and the introduction of the "Nuremberg Laws," the Jewish Theatre ceased its activities in March 1938.

After the Second World War, attempts were made in Gdańsk to rebuild Jewish life after the Holocaust. Jewish institutions were established in the city, workers' unions, and even kibbutzim. There were also attempts to develop artistic-cultural activities. In 1947, in the rooms of the Wrzeszcz Jewish Committee, Szmulik Goldsztajn and Jakub Rotbaum gave performances – the last Jewish actors to perform in the banks of the Motława.

In the final chapter, the author of this study also discusses post-war productions Max Baumann's *Glikl Hameln żąda sprawiedliwości* overseen by Ida Kamińska.

The study ends with three annexes: *Repertuar* (Repertoire), which provides a list of all Jewish performances in Gdańsk; *Osoby* (Persons), which is a biographical dictionary of the Jewish theatre in Gdańsk; and *Miejsca* (Places), which gives an account of the rooms and buildings in which Jewish artistes performed in Gdańsk.

Transl. by David Malcolm