

IN MEMORIAM  
**Zbigniew Wilski**  
1934-1995

It is our sad duty to announce the untimely death of Zbigniew Wilski who passed away on 29 January 1995. He orphaned his daughter and left his wife desolate. I address my most affectionate thoughts and condolences to both of them. His friends, collaborators, and students are equally grief-stricken. Zbigniew was not only an outstanding historian of the theatre, but also an outstanding and unusual man. I have known him well, for some thirty years, and I have always had the greatest respect for him.

Zbigniew Wilski was born on 20 April 1934 on his family estate of Rogów. His father, Zbigniew, and his mother, Irena Jagmin, were both descendants of old and meritorious gentry families. He grew up in tragic times. He was five at the outbreak of the Second World War, and he lived all his life in Poland, even during the worst Stalinist period. His family was disinherited by the communist state and values to which past generations had been faithful were annihilated. But Zbigniew remained always faithful to his family's principles and values. He was a man of courage who never compromised his integrity. Reasonable, wise and discreet, he was also mysterious and withdrawn, yet tender and delicate. For all of us who knew him, he was a living example of how to act and live decently.

Having attended the famous King Stefan Batory Grammar School in Warsaw, Zbigniew studied Polish Philology at Warsaw University (1951–5). On graduation he taught Polish language and literature in a Grammar School in Biskupice Reszelskie. In 1957 he was appointed as a Research Assistant in theatre history at the Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences and Humanities). He completed his doctorate in 1967,

became a Senior Lecturer in 1977 and a Professor in 1990. He was also teaching in the Faculty of Theatrology at the Warsaw National Academy of Drama and Theatre (PWST) and became Dean of the Faculty.

Zbigniew Wilski took an active part in the Scout movement in 1947–9, and again after the political changes of 1956. The values of the movement were always dear to him. He was President of the local committee of the Polish Teachers' Union at the Institute of Art (1972–6). He joined 'Solidarity' as it emerged and became very active in the movement. He was elected to the position of Vice-President of the Committee of Research Works on Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Zbigniew's noble attitude and his activities won him the affection and respect of colleagues, collaborators and students. In 1976, his sense of responsibility and his organizational skills made him the obvious choice to head the Department of Lexicography in the field of theatre at the Institute of Art. He co-edited and wrote many entries in *Słownik Biograficzny Teatru Polskiego, 1765–1965* (Biographical Dictionary of Polish Theatre) and edited *Słownik Biograficzny Teatru Polskiego, 1900–1980*. He was Deputy Director of the Institute of Art during the difficult years of martial law and oppression (1981–7). When Poland regained her political independence, Zbigniew devoted all his time and energy to fulfilling his important duties at the Academy. In 1990–3 he was Deputy Secretary of the Department of Social Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Zbigniew's scholarly output is impressive. He was interested in acting and directing, artistic theory, pedagogical issues and, more particu-

larly, in the life of one of Poland's greatest actresses: Stanisława Wysocka (1887–1941) and he devoted two books to her: *Stanisława Wysocka* (1965) and *Wielka tragiczka* (Great Tragedienne, 1982). He also published a collection of the actress's essays. He wrote a pioneering book on the history of Polish theatrical training from 1811 to 1944, *Polskie szkolnictwo teatralne, 1811–1944* (1978). His last and most important work was *Aktor w społeczeństwie. Szkice o kondycji aktora w Polsce* (The Actor in Society. Studies on the Status of the Actor in Poland, 1990).

His books, essays, articles were always clear in thought and style and his scholarship impeccable. There is a striking similarity between his writing and his way of living: honesty, responsibility, seriousness were common denominators in both.

Professor Zbigniew Wilski represented Poland in the International Federation for Theatre Research for many years. He was a most valued member of the Editorial Board of *Theatre Research International*, which he joined in 1981.

In 1983–7 he served on the Executive Committee and was due to start a second term at the time of his death. He was a member of the University Commission in 1991–4. He participated in IFTR meetings from 1979 (Toronto) to 1991 (Prague). He also organized a very successful Professors' Conference and meeting of the Executive Committee of IFTR in Poland, at Nieborów and Warsaw, in 1986.

All this, however, does not give us the complete Zbigniew Wilski. Zbigniew was always mysterious. He rarely expressed his feelings, but one knew that he cared deeply. The seriousness of his illness was known only to his closest relatives. His sudden death took us by surprise, as he was only a youthful 60-year old friend.

He leaves us accompanied by our best thoughts, our fond memories of him and our deepest sorrow. He will be long remembered.

Lech Sokół *Polish Ambassador to Norway.*  
*Theatre Historian, Member of IFTR*