



***The Theatre Organised by the Industrial
and Handicraft Youth Association in Krakow –
Inspired by Father Mieczysław Kuznowicz,
a Graduate of the Jesuit School in Chyrów***

SUMMARY

The theatre established by the Industrial and Handicraft Youth Association is a representative of the amateur theatre movement, typical for Krakow during the inter-war period. However, it has one remarkable feature – it was created by young people from very diverse social backgrounds, far from the gymnasium elite, often illiterate. They were connected by common passion and artistic needs, awakened by the creative educational concept of Father Mieczysław Kuznowicz. The aim of the theatre on Skarbowa Street was to use appropriate dramatic texts to develop religious, national and social feelings among the members of the association, to teach proper communication in the mother tongue and to form the habits of cultural behaviour and solid teamwork.

The form of the youth theatre adopted in the association seems to correspond with the concept known from the theatrical stages of Jesuit schools. The author attempts to answer the following question: “To what extent did the experiences of Kuznowicz, a graduate of the Scientific and Educational Department of the Jesuits in Chyrów, influence the shape of the theatrical stage in Krakow?”

→ **KEYWORDS** – AMATEUR THEATRE, JESUIT EDUCATION, TEAMWORK

STRESZCZENIE

*Teatr Związku Młodzieży Przemysłowej i Rękodzielniczej
w Krakowie – chyrowskie inspiracje księdza Mieczysława
Kuznowicza*

Scena Związku Młodzieży Przemysłowej i Rękodzielniczej z jednej strony wpisuje się w typowy dla Krakowa okresu 20-lecia międzywojennego ruch teatrów amatorskich, z drugiej posiada cechę niezwykłą – tworzyli ją młodzi ludzie pochodzący z bardzo odmiennych środowisk społecznych, dalekich od elit gimnazjalnych, często analfabeci. Jednoczyły ich wspólne pasje i potrzeby artystyczne, rozbudzone twórczą

koncepcją wychowawczą księdza Mieczysława Kuznowicza. Celem działalności teatru przy ulicy Skarbowej stało się rozwijanie wśród członków Związku, za pomocą odpowiedniej literatury dramatycznej, uczuć religijnych, narodowych i społecznych, uczenie poprawnego komunikowania się w języku ojczystym oraz wpajanie nawyków kulturalnego zachowania, a także solidnej, zespołowej pracy. Przyjęta w Związku formuła teatru młodzieżowego zdaje się korespondować z koncepcją znaną z działalności szkolnych scen konwiktów jezuickich. Autorka stara się, w kontekście wychowania przez pracę oraz edukacji przez sztukę, odpowiedzieć na pytanie, w jakiej mierze doświadczenia Kuznowicza, absolwenta Zakładu Naukowo-Wychowawczego w Chyrowie, wpłynęły na kształt tej krakowskiej sceny.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE** – TEATR AMATORSKI, EDUKACJA JEZUICKA, PRACA ZESPOŁOWA

“Amateur theatre” is a term which is as comprehensive as it is ambiguous. Due to negative connotations with the word “amateurish” some people may find the adjective in the term perplexing,¹ despite the praise of creative dilettantes written by Stefan Szuman.² Performances by non-professionals used to be described as “peoples’ theatre”,³ however this term also raised objections of semantic nature. The name was wrongly associated with the peasant stage, though it also referred to middle-class and workers’ theatre.⁴ Presently, in accordance with Emil Orzechowski, the term “non-professional theatre”⁵ is used in reference literature.

¹ This was noticed by Z. Raszewski, *Amatorszczyzna*, „Pamiętnik Teatralny” 6 (1957) 2, p. 195-198. See also E. Orzechowski, *Teatry amatorskie*, in: *Teatr. Widowisko*, ed. M. Fik, Warszawa 2000, p. 256-257.

² Cf. S. Szuman, *Pochwała dyletantów. Rzecz o znaczeniu samorodnej twórczości w wychowaniu estetycznym społeczeństwa*, Warszawa 1947. See chapter *Dyletanci aktorzy*, p. 31-38.

³ A term popularised by Jędrzej Cierniak to distinguish this type of theatre from one that imitates professional city theatres. See J. Cierniak, *Zaborowska nuta*, compiled by J. Zawieyski, 1988.

⁴ Cf. Z. Kwieciński, *Teatr ochotniczy w Polsce: w pięćdziesięciolecie organizacji*, „Pamiętnik Teatralny” 6 (1957) 2, p. 199.

⁵ E. Orzechowski, distinguishing between “non-professional” and “professional” theatre, emphasises the differences in the existence of these theatres. He argues that amateur theatre functions as a reflection of the professional stage.

Amateur theatre refers to the organisation of stage events by representatives of various classes and social groups, not connected with the stage, including events prepared by school theatres. Such theatrical groups were usually formed in response to social, societal, artistic or custom-related expectations, inner needs and desires of local communities. This form of entertainment, initially reserved for the aristocracy, and which lay “beyond the boundaries of reason of practical life, beyond the sphere of necessity and benefit”⁶ eventually also inspired the bourgeoisie, the workers and the peasants. In 1869 it was thus praised by the press:

One of the most beneficial forms of public and social entertainment is undoubtedly the theatre, which combines two elements: enjoyable music and education. It refreshes the powers of the spirit and gives strength to undertake new action.⁷

Theatre historian Karol Estreicher also showed great approval towards the work of theatre enthusiasts. He writes:

Amateur events must not be passed by in silence. They formed, here and elsewhere, the beginnings of real theatre. They are also the yardstick of interest in public events in the country, in comparison to those that of neighbouring nations.⁸

This “yardstick of interest in public events” resulted in the amateur theatre becoming the stereotype of bourgeois culture in the nineteenth century.⁹ Soon professional guidebooks were required to help with the arrangement of performances.¹⁰ The amateur

E. Orzechowski, *Introduction [to] Słownik polskich teatrów niezawodowych*, Issue I, vol. 1: *Galicja do roku 1918*, part I: *Albigowa-Lwów*, Wrocław 1992, p. IX; idem, *Teatry amatorskie*, op. cit., p. 248-267.

⁶ J. Huizinga, *Homo ludens. Zabawa jako źródło kultury*, trans. by M. Kurecka, W. Wirpsza, Warszawa 1985, p. 225-226.

⁷ *Teatr w Gimnazjum*, „Kurier Lubelski” 4 (1869) 23.

⁸ K. Estreicher, *Teatra w Polsce*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1953, p. 33.

⁹ M. Kowalska, *Polski teatr amatorski w Łodzi w latach 1850-1918*, in: *Szkiecy o polskim teatrze amatorskim*, ed. S. Kaszyński, Łódź 1990, p. 95.

¹⁰ Of particular popularity was W. Rapacki, *Poradnik dla teatrów amatorskich. Do użytku osób takowe urządzających i w nich udział biorących*, Warszawa 1890. See also: J. Kochanowicz, *Reżyseria w teatrze ludowym*, Warszawa 1939; Z.N. [Z. Niedźwiecki], *Wskazówki niezbędne dla urządzających teatr*

movement was growing continuously. Between 1933 and 1934 there were about 26 000 theatrical groups in Poland. It is estimated that for every 2 000 citizens there was one group, thus turning the movement into a factor that could influence the mass culture.¹¹

The most intensive development of amateur theatres occurred in Cracow and in the Cracow voivodeship. In the season of 1937/38 there were about 900 groups in this area.¹² The confirmation of stage activity of the Industry and Handicraft Youth Association, found in the compilation conducted by the authors of the *Słownik polskich teatrów niezawodowych* [*Dictionary of Non-professional Theatres in Poland*] up to 1918 is of particular interest to the present study. At the same time it is worth emphasising that the most theatrical of Polish cities¹³ witnessed the parallel activity of theatre enthusiasts from similar professional groups, representing various organisations but manifesting their world-view similarly in their names: Stowarzyszenie Katolickiej Młodzieży Rękodzielniczej Pod Wezwaniem Św. Józefa „Praca” [The Catholic Handicraft Youth Society of St. Joseph “Labour”], Katolickie Stowarzyszenie Rękodzielników „Zgoda” [The Catholic Craftsmen Association “Consensus”], Stowarzyszenie Katolickich Robotników „Przyjaźń” [The Catholic Workers Association “Friendship”], Stowarzyszenie Katolickich Rękodzielników Na Kazimierzu „Jutrzenka” [The Catholic Handicraft Association in Kazimierz “Dawn”], Polski Związek Katolickich Stowarzyszeń Robotników i Rzemieślników [The Polish Union of Catholic Workers and Craftmen’ Associations] or the Polski Związek Katolickich Czeladników [The Polish Union of Catholic Apprentices].¹⁴

amatorski, Kraków 1904; A. Trapszo, *Podręcznik sztuki dramatycznej dla artystów i amatorów*, Kraków 1899.

¹¹ Cf. S. Żółkiewski, *Kultura literacka 1918/1932*, Wrocław 1973, p. 337. See also: H.T. Jakubowski, *Amatorski ruch teatralny. Zarys historii do roku 1939*, Warszawa 1975; *Szkice o polskim teatrze amatorskim*, op. cit.; A. Bielawska, *Amatorski ruch teatralny w Kielcach do 1914 roku*, Kielce 1996; M.B. Styk, *Teatry amatorskie w Lublinie i na Lubelszczyźnie w latach 1866-1918*, Lublin 1997.

¹² Cf. H.T. Jakubowski, *Amatorski ruch teatralny*, op. cit., p. 54 gives the number as 871, however, no sources are given.

¹³ Cf. L. Schiller, *Teatralny Kraków*, „Krakowski Przegląd Teatralny” 2 (1920) 5.

¹⁴ *Słownik polskich teatrów niezawodowych*, Issue 1, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 136-155. The authors assume that the Association Theatre was established

It is particularly interesting that many of the theatres representing these institutions functioned long before the inauguration of the Association theatre.¹⁵

As an effective tool useful in carrying out various objectives, the theatre was eagerly made use of by numerous educational, religious, charity and youth organisations. Józef Ignacy Kraszewski emphasised the fact that amateur theatres are “an excellent means of creating taste, approaching literature, uniting people, reminding of national ideas and providing practical linguistic education.”¹⁶ Regardless of the particular objectives of various groups, or the organisations they represented, the primary sense was always cultural entertainment (the theatre belonged to high culture), sustaining the language and the idea of “being Polish,” social justice and propagating certain ideologies and role models.¹⁷ However, the situation of the Association Theatre was special from the beginning. It was created by young people from various social backgrounds, far from the gymnasium elite and often illiterate. According to Marian Padechowicz, one of its pupils, it was a “bunch of slobs,” “homeless, poor, abandoned and mistreated apprentice youth.”¹⁸ They were taken in by the “St. Stanislaus Kostka Guardianship over Apprentices”, a primarily social-care establishment opened by the Society of Jesus on 2nd September 1897.¹⁹

Apart from songs to a mandolin and declamations of minor works: *Na ulicy* [*In the Street*], *Powrót taty* [*The Father's Return*], *Wicek i Wacek* [*Wicek and Wacek*], the boys' debut took place in 1902, with a performance of the *Christmas Play* by Lucjan

in 1906. Catholic Industry Associations were created as a result of developing industry and emerging working class. At the end of the nineteenth century there were around 100 various Catholic workers' unions in Galicia. R. Bender, *Katolickie stowarzyszenia rzemieślnicze i robotnicze w Polsce w XIX-XX wieku*, „Zeszyty Społeczne KIK” 9 (2001) 9, p. 170-180.

¹⁵ E.g. The theatre of the Catholic Handicraft Youth Society had its debut in 1885, the “Consensus” in 1891, “Friendship” in 1896, and “Dawn” in 1897.

¹⁶ [J.I. Kraszewski], *Rachunki z roku 1867*, Poznań 1868, p. 326.

¹⁷ See E. Orzechowski, *Teatry amatorskie*, op. cit., p. 250.

¹⁸ M. Padechowicz, *Był i taki teatr. W piętnastą rocznicę śmierci Ks. M. Kuznowicza 1874-1945*, „Przewodnik Katolicki” 66 (1960) 37, p. 582.

¹⁹ Cf. Ks. Mieczysław Kuznowicz i jego dzieło, ed. A. Migąła, Kraków 1980, p. 35.

Rydel. The play became a permanent part of their repertoire, however, we now know very little about the inspiration behind the establishment of the Amateur Circle. Did the idea belong to Kasper Bińczycki, then a boy in his teens, and his 12 friends or was it a suggestion by a member of the Society which, from the very beginning of its educational mission, saw theatre as an ally in teaching devotion and godliness in a way that entertains – *qui pietatem facerte doceant*, which would later become the motto of the Jesuit theatre?²⁰ The Jesuit Fathers had to bear in mind the words of their confrere Jean Croiset, rector of the college in Lyon, who stated that a successful performance and the applause of an audience appreciating a young actor can cause an incredible transformation of an ordinary or even obtuse mind into a genius,²¹ while the youths from the “Guardianship” lacked success in every field.

Up to 1906 the theatrical events staged by the apprentices were rather incidental and sporadic, while the audience before which they presented their achievements were undemanding.

The young boys learnt their roles and performed on stage because they enjoyed playing their heroes, impressing their friends with declamations and performances, and most of all ‘having fun’.²²

When the Rev. Mieczysław Kuznowicz took over “Opieka,” its transformation into the Industry and Handicraft Youth Association, with Kuznowicz as its president, gradually resulted in turning these games into intentional and systematic work. According to the statutory text of the new organisation, dedicated to helping young people deprived of “any social and living rights,” “victimised by life,” taking up employment in industry, handicraft

²⁰ Cf. V.R. Yanitelli, *Heir of The Renaissance: The Jesuit Theatre*, “Jesuit Educational Quarterly” 14 (1952) 3, p.133-135; *Sprawozdanie z działalności Związku Młodzieży Przemysłowej i Rękodzielniczej w Krakowie za lata 1906-1908*, Archive of the Provinces of Southern Poland of the Society of Jesus (further referred to as AP), signature no. 2301, p. 110.

²¹ Cf. K. Puchowski, *Jezuickie kolegia szlacheckie Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów. Studium z dziejów edukacji elit*, Gdańsk 2007, p. 129-130; 369.

²² S. Data, *Instytucje wychowawcze w Związku Młodzieży Przemysłowej i Rękodzielniczej*, dissertation written under the direction of the Reverend Professor Ludwik Piechnik, Faculty of Philosophy of the Society of Jesus, Kraków 1973, AP signature no. 2968, p. 43.

and trade, they were able to receive vocational education, with emphasis placed on teaching them in the spirit of Catholicism.²³ This organic work taken up by Kuznowicz, dedicated to the youth of “the lowest classes of society, neglected, abandoned and left in the street” involved providing them with role models, caring for their intellectual development, “moulding their souls with the strong principles of ethics, morality and citizenship, as well as imbuing them with a strong sense of duty.”²⁴ The theatre fitted this purpose most ideally.

It is worth to emphasise that in the concept of Adolph Kolping, “the father of craftsmen and workers” whose great admirer was Mieczysław Kuznowicz (the Polish Kolping), we find postulates to organise theatrical circles, choirs and orchestras.²⁵ It also needs to be stressed that Kuznowicz was himself a theatre enthusiast, who kept a permanent box at the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Cracow.²⁶ Perhaps this was an influence from his years at the Scientific and Educational Department of the Jesuit Fathers in Chyrów, where he studied between 1889 and 1893.²⁷ Let us remember that the school in Chyrów was famous, among others, for its student theatre. Although none of the preserved posters or theatre programmes mentions Kuznowicz as one of the performers, however, the future president of the Association must have witnessed the success of the tragedies, comedies,

²³ Cf. M. Kuznowicz, *Organizacja Młodzieży przemysłowej i rękodzielniczej a Kościół i społeczeństwo*, „Strzecha Rodzinna” 6 (n.d.) 3-4, p. 25-27. See also J. Mółka, *Koncepcja wychowawcza księdza Mieczysława Kuznowicza SJ (1874-1945)*, Kraków 2004, p. 84. Compare *Statut Towarzystwa Młodzieży Rękodzielniczej imienia „Tadeusza Kościuszki” w Przemyślu*, Nakładem Towarzystwa, Przemyśl 1904.

²⁴ M.J. Kuznowicz, *Młodzież rzemieślnicza polska i jej wykształcenie zawodowe*, „Jednodniówka. Katolicki Związek Młodzieży Rękodzielniczej i Przemysłowej w Sanoku”, n.d., p. 6.

²⁵ For inspirations by the work of Adolf Kolping, as well as other thinkers and social activists see J. Mółka, *Koncepcja wychowawcza księdza Mieczysława Kuznowicza SJ (1874-1945)*, op. cit., p. 61-69.

²⁶ Cf. Ks. *Mieczysław Kuznowicz i jego dzieło*, op. cit., p. 87.

²⁷ Cf. T. Dalewski, *Kuznowicz Mieczysław Józef*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. XVII/2, 3, p. 69-70, ed. E. Rostworowski, Wrocław 1971, p. 320; S. Gajewski, *Kuznowicz Mieczysław Józef*, in: *Słownik biograficzny katolicyzmu społecznego w Polsce*, Vol. II [K-P], ed. R. Bender, Lublin 1994, p. 69; S. Pyszka, *Sylwetki jezuickich publicystów i działaczy społecznych 1872-1918*, Kraków 1996, p. 54; *Kuznowicz Mieczysław Józef*, in: *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy 1564-1995*, compiled by L. Grzebień, Kraków 1996, p. 350.

vaudevilles and operettas, such as: *Śmierć Don Garcii Moreno* [The Death of Don Garcia Moreno], *Ostatni dzień Flawiuszy* [The Final Day of The Flavii], *Alfred Wielki* [Alfred the Great], *Krzysztof Kolumb* [Christopher Columbus], *Piotr we fraku* [Peter in a Tailcoat], *Fedko w kłopotcie* [Fedko in Trouble], *Berek zapieczętowany* [Berek Sealed], *Bednarz* [The Cooper], *Dziwacy* [The Eccentrics], *Nudny jegomość* [The Boring Gentleman], *Isak Silberstein*, *Dożywocie* [Life Annuity], *Consilium Facultalit* or *Biedny Jonatan* [Poor Jonathan].²⁸ One should assume that he followed closely the subsequent activities of the Chyrów theatre enthusiasts, by reading the school gazette subscribed by graduates such as himself.²⁹ Kuznowicz's associate, the Rev. Wiktor Macko³⁰ was also a graduate of Chyrów. They must have both understood the idea behind the functioning of the college theatre, written in their programme leaflet: "in order to make the students proficient in public performances and to awaken artistic taste in them."³¹ They probably also shared the belief in the educational force of theatre, expressed by Aleksander Piątkiewicz, long-time manager of the Chyrów theatre:

Other than God's grace, I know of no better or more powerful means of affecting souls, particularly those of the young – one that is not temporary, but leaves a trace for years to come – than the noble, elevated and well played theatrical performance, especially accompanied by music and singing.³²

Despite all the similarities to the model from the Galician School, the Cracow group consequently carried out their own vision

²⁸ See *Kalendarium repertuarowe jezuickiej sceny szkolnej w Chyrowie (1887-1939)*, in: M. Puchowska, *Szkolny teatr jezuicki w Chyrowie (1886-1939)*. Doctoral dissertation written under the direction of Professor Irena Kadulka, at the University of Gdańsk, Gdańsk 2001, p. 337-338.

²⁹ Reference to the periodical „Z Chyrowa”, which later became „Kwartalnik Chyrowski”, and then „Przegląd Chyrowski”.

³⁰ In Chyrów between 1914 and 1916. *Chyrowiacy. Słownik biograficzny wychowanków Zakładu Naukowo-Wychowawczego OO. Jezuitów w Chyrowie, 1886-1939*, compiled by L. Grzebień, J. Kochanowicz, J. Niemiec, Kraków 2000, p. 354.

³¹ *Program Zakładu naukowo-wychowawczego pod wezwaniem św. Józefa w Bąkowicach pod Chyrowem*, [Bąkowice] 1914.

³² A. Piątkiewicz, *Czy teatr potrzebny w naszych stowarzyszeniach?*, „Przewodnik Społeczny” 1 (1919/20) 1.

of amateur theatre, one that resulted from the immeasurably different capabilities and requirements of their pupils.

Kuznowicz was against all forms of “patronage,”³³ which is why the Theatrical Group of the Association quickly became a complex organisation, similar to a professional theatre, and based on the principles of self-governance. It should be emphasised that in Chyrów all decisions were made by the professor or tutor currently in charge of the school theatre. In Cracow it was the opposite – the artistic manager, the technical-administrative director, the literary director, the stage director, the secretary, the musical director, the decorator, the costume manager, the librarian, the stage manager, etc., all those with specifically assigned positions had clearly specified tasks and duties.³⁴ Before the boys understood the meaning of responsibility for the group there were frequent cases of negligence and quarrelling.³⁵ The aims of the Group were also more broadly understood than in the case of the educational offer at elite colleges. These included evoking among the members of the Association (with the aid of suitable literature) religious, national and social feelings, teaching the correct way to speak Polish, familiarizing them with Polish literature and teaching them habits of proper behaviour.³⁶ We should add that Kuznowicz, in an attempt to instil higher cultural needs in his pupils, took them to museums and the theatre. He also prepared a textbook on manners, made especially for his pupils, which included remarks on behaviour at the theatre and on concerts, as well as rules concerning amateur performances.³⁷

The first period of existence of the Association Theatre was marked by lack of premises and financial problems. However, the enthusiasm of the young “actors” was so great that each week they would refurnish their bedroom in the dormitory, sew their

³³ M. Kuznowicz, *Kwestya terminatorów w naszym kraju*, s.n., Kraków 1907, p. 40-41.

³⁴ *Ustawy Koła Teatralnego ZMPiR w Krakowie*, AP signature no. 2143, p.1.

³⁵ See: *Memoires of Mieczysław Jabłoński*, in: *Ks. Mieczysław Kuznowicz i jego dzieło*, op. cit., p. 173-174.

³⁶ Compare *Ustawy Koła Teatralnego ZMPiR w Krakowie*, AP signature no. 2143, p. 1.

³⁷ *Ks. Mieczysław Kuznowicz i jego dzieło*, op. cit., p. 87-88; *Zasady kulturalnych form towarzyskich. Napisał dla polskiej młodzieży Prezes Związków Polskiej Młodzieży*, Kraków 1918, p. 57-58, 97-98.

blankets together to make a curtain and make a stage from the tables, to make it come alive with the characters of their performances. Sometimes they would rent a room at the Franz Joseph school or from the Rifle association, but this was costly.³⁸ The association could only dream about the conditions that were available to theatre enthusiasts in Chyrów,³⁹ however, with time this dream came true. On 3rd May 1931 the first performance at the new theatre hall of the Association,⁴⁰ one of the most beautiful halls in Cracow, took place. It is well known to habitués of the Grotoska Theatre. The auditorium, as in Chyrów, was designed for 700 people, so great was the number of spectators that the growing Association Theatre, already functioning as the Theatre of the Industry and Handicraft Youth Association for the past several years, could expect.⁴¹

The audience of the students in Chyrów was limited to the school community, church and secular notables visiting the institute and specially invited guests. The apprentices began with performing for their colleagues, though Kuznowicz was always in the audience. Relatively soon their work gathered interest from family and friends. Donors and patrons were sent personal invitations but posters also drew in a new audience. At first, similarly to Chyrów, performances were free of charge. Only sometimes were voluntary donations gathered for the common Association fund.⁴² However, the growth of the theatre also meant the rise in upkeep, thus tickets were introduced. Ticket prices can be found

³⁸ Cf. *Memoires of Mieczysław Jabłoński*, op. cit., p. 173-174; M. Padechowicz, *Był i taki teatr*, op. cit., p. 582.

³⁹ The theatre auditorium in Chyrów had room for 700 people. This area was divided into a wardrobe (51,4 m²) and a cloakroom (47,3 m²). The stage had an area of 114,8 m², and the audience seating area had an area of 419,6 m². „Z Chyrowa” 17 (1909) 63; *XLII Sprawozdanie Dyrekcji Zakładu Naukowo-Wychowawczego OO. Jezuitów w Bąkowicach pod Chyrowem za rok szk. 1935/36*, Nakładem Zakładu, Bąkowice pod Chyrowem 1936, p. 54.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Serce matki* by Henryk Zbierzchowski.

⁴¹ Cf. *Ks. Mieczysław Kuznowicz i jego dzieło*, op. cit, p. 90-91. In the brochure *Teatr Związku Młodzieży Przem. i Rękodziel. w Krakowie, sezon 1935-6* we find the information that the auditorium had room for 800 people. See AP signature no. 5041.

⁴² Cf. *Memoires of Mieczysław Jabłoński*, op. cit., p. 173-174.

on posters dated as early as 1912. It should be stressed that association members had free admission.⁴³

Finding new residence for the Association Theatre also seemed a necessity due to the continually growing wardrobe.

The theatre sewing room produced wonderful and artistically made costumes, representing various styles and epochs. The dressing room was becoming filled with Greek and Roman chlamys, tunics and togas. Polish traditional and burgher coats, tchamaras and outer garments of the nobility competed with old-fashioned and colourful French and Spanish garments. The huge shelves were packed with parade uniforms and armour of all armies of the world. Big and small boxes were crammed with laces, ribbons, gloves, feathers, and in a short time the wardrobe of the Theatre Group was better equipped than that of many bigger theatres.⁴⁴

A similar opinion could be held regarding the wardrobe at the Chyrów institute, where the students themselves saw to the preparation of the stage, costumes and other props necessary for the performance.⁴⁵ In Cracow the costumes were made by the apprentices, but with a great amount of help from the many donors of the theatre – Cracow intelligentsia, gentry and aristocracy, whose cooperation the president managed to solicit. It should be highlighted that the numerous manifestations of involvement on the part of Catholic social activists, noted with gratitude and acknowledged in the Association's press, were without doubt greatly influenced by the teaching of pope Leo XIII and the *Rerum Novarum* encyclical.

This support was not only material. Kuznowicz had many friends among artists, who helped him with the work in the Association and the theatre. The apprentices' cause won the support of dramatists, such as Władysław Anczyc, Karol Hubert Rostworowski, Ksawery Milieski and Michalina Janoszanka.⁴⁶

⁴³ Cf. *Sprawozdanie z 10-letniej działalności Koła Teatralnego*, AP signature no. 994-VII, p. 8; *Kronika Związku Młodzieży Rękodzielniczej i Przemysłowej*, AP signature no. 1430.

⁴⁴ Ks. *Mieczysław Kuznowicz i jego dzieło*, op. cit., p. 85.

⁴⁵ Cf. K. Lewicki, *Chyrowskie popioły*, Wrocław 1989, p. 38; *XXXVIII Sprawozdanie Dyrekcji Zakładu Naukowo-Wychowawczego OO. Jezuitów w Bąkowicach pod Chyrówem za rok szkolny 1931/32*, Chyrów 1932, p. 31-32.

⁴⁶ Cf. Ks. *Mieczysław Kuznowicz i jego dzieło*, op. cit., p. 91.

Known contemporary directors Zygmunt Nowakowski and Juliusz Osterwa gave the boys professional and friendly advice. Students from the Jagiellonian University also took an active part in preparations for the performances by giving lectures on the history of dramatic arts, directing and joining the performers. This sort of help was unattainable for the students of the provincial Chyrów, however, it should be highlighted that all administrators of the Institute theatre had great competence and often talent in this area.⁴⁷ One such counsellor, the Rev. Feliks Cozel, prefect of the Chyrów theatre in the school year 1890/1891, at the time when Kuznowicz was a student at the Institute, aided the Association theatre with his experience.⁴⁸

The young apprentices from Cracow began their adventure with the stage with humorous evenings and academia in honour of religious and state celebrations, anniversaries, as well as name day celebrations for patrons, protectors and benefactors of the Association.⁴⁹ In the *Report* for the year 1910 we read that the Amateur Group gave several performances of the *Nativity Play*, staged the *Victory at Grunwald* (a historical portrayal in two acts, probably based on *Krzyżacy* [*The Teutonic Knights*] by Henryk Sienkiewicz), *Pod borem* [*By the Wood*] (probably *By the Żyrzyn Wood*, by Tadeusz Zubrzycki), *The Hidden Pearl* (a play written by Nicolas Wiseman), as well as several comedies and over a dozen monologues.⁵⁰ Worth mentioning is the fact that *Victory at Grunwald* was staged to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the battle⁵¹ while *The Hidden Pearl*, a play on the life of Saint Alexius, was staged on the day of the Association's patron, i.e. 13th November. Both performances formed only a part of a celebration consisting of many elements. These

⁴⁷ Cf. ibidem, p. 87-88; M. Puchowska, *Szkolny teatr jezuicki w Chyrowie (1886-1939)*, op. cit., p. 177-187.

⁴⁸ Cf. ibidem, p. 177; S. Data, *Instytucje wychowawcze w Związku Młodzieży Przemysłowej i Rękodzielniczej*, op. cit., p. 41; L. Grzebień, *Cozel Feliks*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, vol. 3, Lublin 1979, column 615.

⁴⁹ Occasions for performances can be found on preserved posters and programmes. See *Kronika Związku Młodzieży Rękodzielniczej i Przemysłowej*, AP signature no. 1430.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Słownik polskich teatrów niezawodowych*, op. cit., p. 151 under 1910 only gives information about the staging of *Nativity Play Jasełek* on 1st, 2nd, 9th and 30th January.

⁵¹ However, the play was not staged until 14th of August.

were primarily religious, for instance a ceremonial mass including the hymns *Te Deum* and *Boże coś Polskę* [*God Save Poland*], a sermon and a procession, as well as patriotic, including readings, participation in marches and laying of flowers.⁵² We should also take note that this form of celebrating was very close to the tradition of the Society of Jesus, which also meant the theatre in Chyrów, characteristic for the emphasis it placed on particular occasions.⁵³

The biggest similarity to the Chyrów model can be found when analysing the Theatrical Group's repertoire. Initially the group members staged short dialogues, monologues and declamations, later adding short forms, known probably to all enthusiasts, such as *Mosiek spekulant* [*Mo the Profiteer*] by Karol Miarka, *Żyd w beczce* [*A Jew in a Barrel*] by Aleksander Ładnowski, *Pochód z pochodniami* [*March with Torches*] by Aureli Urbański, *Trójka hultajska* [*The Three Rascals*] by Jan Nestroy, *The Miller and his Daughter* by Ernst Raupach czy *Gwiazda Syberii* [*The Star of Siberia*] by Leopold Starzeński.⁵⁴ With time longer forms were introduced. The group staged the favourite comedies of audiences of professional and amateur theatres: *Pan Geldhab* [*Mr. Geldhab*], *Dożywocie* [*Life Imprisonment*], *Zręczność i przekora* [*Grumbling and Spite*], *Nikt mnie nie zna* [*Nobody Knows Me*], *Świeczka zgasła* [*The Candle has Gone Out*], *Przyjaciele* [*Friends*], *Gwałtu, co się dzieje* [*Heavens, What is Happening*], *Ciotunia* [*Auntie*] by Aleksander Fredro, *Dom otwarty* [*Open House*] and *Grube ryby* [*Big Fish*] by Michał Bałucki, as well as plays written especially for the People's Theatre by Władysław Anczyc – *Kościuszko pod Racławicami* [*Kościuszko at the Battle of Racławice*] and *Błązek opętany* [*Mad Błązek*]. They performed the three-act drama *Karpaccy Górale* [*Carpathian Highlanders*] and the comedy *Majster i Czeladnik* [*The Master and the Apprentice*] by Józef Korzeniowski. As in the case of Chyrów, important celebrations were accompanied by great dramas. The group would turn to

⁵² Detailed descriptions of the celebrations can be found in *Sprawozdanie z działalności Polskiego Związku Katol. Uczniów Rękodzielniczych w Krakowie za rok 1910*, Kraków 1911, p. 13-18.

⁵³ A. Kruczyński, *W teatrach jezuickich*, in: J. Lewański, *Dramat i teatr średniowiecza i renesansu w Polsce*, Warszawa 1981, p. 415; H. Dziechcińska, *Oglądanie i słuchanie w kulturze dawnej Polski*, Warszawa 1987, p. 60-61; M. Puchowska, *Szkolny teatr jezuicki w Chyrowie (1886-1939)*, op. cit., p. 227-251.

⁵⁴ Compare H.T. Jakubowski, *Amatorski ruch teatralny*, op. cit., passim.

Dziady [The Forefather's Eve] Part III, *Kordian*, *Książę Niezłomny* [The Unbroken Prince], *Irydion* or solemn religious plays, such as *Venantius* by Maurus Carnot and *Ostatni dzień Flawiuszy* [The Final Day of the Flavii] by Marian Morawski – Jesuit, rector of the Tarnopol college. In spite of the binding *Oath Against Modernism* the Rev. Kuznowicz allowed the introduction of dramas by Stanisław Wyspiański and Lucjan Rydel (*Warszawianka* [Varsovian Anthem], *Królowa Korony Polskiej* [Queen of the Polish Crown] and *Zaczarowane koło* [Magic Circle]).⁵⁵ This way the apprentices learnt and popularised national history, traditions and the most important works of literature within their own community, at the same time entering the sphere of high culture. They did this at a time when the pedagogical environment widely demanded not to include classical works, which can be seen in a professional theatre,⁵⁶ when working with amateur groups. The theatre of the Rev. Kuznowicz chose to follow a patriotic-pedagogical path regarding its repertoire, a choice it would adhere to throughout its entire existence.

It is interesting to observe how close the repertoire of the apprentices' theatre came to the selection of works made by most school theatres. Gymnasiums organised systematic "Evenings with the Three Bards" and tried to popularise the most worthy examples of dramatic literature. Apart from Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński and Fredro, their repertoire included classical works, namely Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, *Antigone* and *Ajax*. In the first years of the twentieth century schools organised previews of recently published plays by Stanisław Wyspiański. *Acropolis*, *Noc Listopadowa* [November Night], *Cyd* [Le Cid], *Powrót Odysa* [The Return of Odysseus] and *Sędziowie* [Judges] were staged by school theatres before the artistic director of the professional theatre in Cracow decided to do so. Bolesław Śmiały [Boleslaus the Bold], *Varsovian Anthem* and *Wesele* [The Wedding] were also staged.⁵⁷ The Imperial and Royal St. Ann's Gymnasium, the oldest such school in Cracow, staged the second act of *Konfederaci Barscy* [Les confédérés de Bar] already in 1867, i.e. just after the announcement of the French original and the

⁵⁵ *Formula Juramenti anti-modernistici* appeared on 1st September, 1910.

⁵⁶ See S. Papée, *Drogi i cele teatru szkolnego*, Poznań 1930.

⁵⁷ H.T. Jakubowski, *Amatorski ruch teatralny*, op. cit., p. 97-101; K. Olszewski, *Lata gimnazjalne Leona Schillera*, „Pamiętnik Teatralny” 4 (1955) 3-4, p. 43-53.

publication of the Polish translation by Tomasz Oliżarowski in the "Polish Review."⁵⁸

However, the Association Theatre had great difficulty selecting stage material. Rev. Kuznowicz wrote: "90% of plays are based on an erotic element, and the remaining 10% that can be shown to young people are of little literary value."⁵⁹ The Association Theatre also had a rule banning women from playing, which was not shifted until 1925, though with great reservations.⁶⁰ This ban caused similar complications to those in Chyrów and resulted not only from the character of the institution, but also from obedience to very strict moral norms. That is why the President urged his pupils to make their own attempts at writing. He even set an example with the three-act religious drama *Bohater Eucharystyczny* [*The Eucharistic Hero*] depicting the martyrdom of the early Christians,⁶¹ and the one-act play *Przy drodze* [*At the Side of the Road*]. The Association members responded, among others, with *Sen Pana Łukasza* [*Mr. Lukas' Dream*] and *Trucizna* [*Poison*], adaptations of novels by Bolesław Prus, written for the stage by Tadeusz Dalewski, apprentice, later to become secretary general and vice-president of the Association, and with *Triumvirate*, *Wszystko przez frak* [*It's All Because of that Tailcoat*], *Dobry Przyjaciel* [*Good Friend*], *Panicz* [*The Young Master*], *Na podbój świata* [*To Conquer the World*], *Kościuszko pod Maciejowicami* [*Kościuszko at the Battle of Maciejowice*], *Zaduszki* [*All Souls' Day*] and the operetta *Hrabiowski spleen* [*The Count's Spleen*], written by Mieczysław Jabłoński, longtime manager of the theatre.⁶² While looking for plays suitable for his theatre Kuznowicz also asked the establishment in Chyrów for help. Soon the Rev. Władysław Chmura, then head of the college theatre, sent six dramas to the library collection of the Association (the catalogue at that time had over 1000 entries and until the outbreak of

⁵⁸ H.T. Jakubowski, *Amatorski ruch teatralny*, op. cit., p. 97-101.

⁵⁹ „Związkowiec” 9 (1935) 10-11, p. 20.

⁶⁰ In Mieczysław Jabłoński's play *Nawrócenie*, staged on 13th November, the role of Saint Teresa, was played by Magda Rostworowska. „Przegląd Miesięczny Działalności Związku Polskiej Młodzieży Rękodzielniczej i Przemysłowej” 1 (1925) 10-11, p. 7.

⁶¹ Published anonymously as part of the *Teatr Ludowy* series in 1913.

⁶² *Sprawozdanie z 10-letniej działalności Koła Teatralnego*, AP signature no. 994-VII, p. 11.

World War Two this number grew to 1600⁶³), and twenty seven for rewriting. As a result Elżbieta Oleska's *Ratuj nas ojczy* [*Father, Save Us*], *Wyzwoliny* [*We Shall Liberate*], *Dawaj wódki* [*Let's Have Some Vodka*], *W sidłach szatana* [*Satan's Snare*] found their way the posters in Cracow. The repertoire was also broadened to include the works of the best stage managers from Chyrów, such as *Jasnogórska Królowa* [*The Queen of The Luminous Mountain*], *Czarowny skrzypek* [*The Enchanting Violinist*] by Aleksander Piątkiewicz, *Złoty kwiat* [*The Golden Flower*] by Piotr Turbak.⁶⁴

The amateur group of the Association Theatre worked very systematically. Rehearsals took place after 7:00 pm, so as not to interfere in their work or other duties, and lasted till late at night. The artists learnt their roles in haste in the street, on their way to the dormitory. The performances were becoming more frequent, from several to over forty per year,⁶⁵ many times more than in Chyrów.⁶⁶ The theatrical troupe consisted of young amateur-artists,⁶⁷ adult members of the Association and theatre enthusiasts, often Gymnasium and University students wishing to test themselves. They often remained for many years, supporting young disciples in arts with their experience. With their help preparation for a performance often took just several days.⁶⁸

⁶³ In 1925 there were around 700 works in the library. „Przegląd Miesięczny Działalności Związku Polskiej Młodzieży Rękodzielniczej i Przemysłowej” 1 (1925) 2, p. 3. It expanded mostly thanks to donors and contained a lot of manuscripts and rare publications. Ks. Mieczysław Kuznowicz i jego dzieło, op. cit, p. 97.

⁶⁴ „Związkowiec” 9 (1935) 10-11, p. 20.

⁶⁵ The work statistics of the Theatre group were published in successive issues of the apprentices' periodical. See „Związkowiec” 8 (1934) 7-8, p. 30; „Związkowiec” 11 (1937) 4-5-6, p. 15.

⁶⁶ The theatre in Chyrów gave around 12 performances a year. W. Chmura, *O chyrowskim teatrze szkolnym i muzyce*, in: *Księga pamiątkowa pięćdziesięciolecia Konwiktu i Gimnazjum OO. Jezuitów w Chyrowie 1886-1939*, Kraków 1936, p. 114.

⁶⁷ Nearly all members participated in this section, at least for a short time.

⁶⁸ Stage preparation for Rostworowski's *Niespodzianka* in 1935 took 6 days. During this time the actors “had to undergo a transformation from the happy lot they were until now into the characters of a real drama. They had to master an unknown language and find the right mood, in which the totally realistic reality would speak to the audience through the magic of poetry”, „Związkowiec” 9 (1935) 3-4, p. 9.

The performances in Cracow took place on Sundays. Mondays were spent on performance overviews, i.e. reading press reviews, discussing mistakes and suggesting new ideas. These meetings were always participated by Kuznowicz, who approached the work of the young theatre with great care. Performance reviews were also written by Association members, who would later publish them in their press („Przegląd” [“The Review”] and later still in „Związkowiec” [„The Unionist”]), which broadened the circle of audience, indicating examples of appropriate entertainment, in agreement with the Catholic outlook and the ideals of the Association.

The greatest success of the Association Theatre was Calderon’s *Secret of the Holy Mass*, staged 25 times between March and May 1937. 20000 viewers were present at the performances, an event broadly commented by the press in Cracow.⁶⁹ The staging of Rostworowski’s *Niespodzianka* [*The Surprise*] in 1935 and his *Antychryst* [*Antichrist*] the following year were also major cultural events but the most important achievement of the theatre can be seen in the change which took place in the artists. Once lost, socially excluded apprentices, they were now widely appreciated people with a sense of fulfilment, crystallized beliefs and an awareness of their capabilities.⁷⁰

The management succeeded in assembling a large, disciplined and valuable team, giving their work a sense of purpose. With its variegated programme it won the young and acquired a vast audience.⁷¹

For many members the theatre became way of life, a distraction from daily sorrows, a means of opening new, cognitively valuable perspectives. Religious dramas, folk plays, comedies, farces, vaudevilles, operettas, magical fables and tragedies staged by the amateur artists shaped their aesthetic and moral sensitivity. Many, following their experiences at the theatre in Skarbowa street, were to embark on artistic careers. Franciszek

⁶⁹ „Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny” Issue 225, 15 IX 1937; AP signature no. 5041.

⁷⁰ The author shares the views expressed by Stanisław Kaczyński and sees no need to look into the matter of the amateurs’ acting abilities. Compare S. Kaszyński, *Uwagi wstępne*, in: *Szkice o polskim teatrze amatorskim*, op. cit., p. 6.

⁷¹ „Związkowiec” 8 (1934) 7-8, p. 30.

Filus, Ignacy Spytkowski, Tadeusz Surowa, Stanisław Drabik, Krzysztof Borzędowski and many others became professional stage actors. Stefan Bartik, a clicker at the printing office of the „Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny” [“Illustrated Daily Courier”] in Cracow, is a typical example of how one can be promoted to the world of art. He began amateur stage work in the 1930s, passed his external acting exam in 1953 and later worked in theatres in Rzeszów, Łódź and Tarnów.

Although the Association Theatre bears many similarities to the theatre in Chyrów, these are merely similarities. Chyrów was not the unattainable model for Cracow but served merely as an example of an efficiently working model, approved with regard to the methods of work and the voiced ideas. The offer of Chyrów was addressed to the social, political and financial elite, whereas Kuznowicz’a pupils represented the lower classes. The common element was the conviction that the theatre was a powerful force and that art can refine a person. Organizing amateur performances in the Association was initially the only important element of educational, cultural, therapeutic and social-rehabilitation work dedicated to the development of the apprentices. The good publicity the theatre in Skarbowa street generated, its choice of repertoire, which spread the Associations ideas, drew in many various communities. The question whether president Kuznowicz suspected that his theatre would play such an important role in the social and cultural life of the city, will most probably remain unanswered.

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