

Based in Poznań, Poland, Teatr Ósmego Dnia (Theatre of the Eighth Day) is one of the most important companies in the history of the Polish theatre, as well as one of the most prominent avant-garde ensembles in the world. In time, as the artistic and social radicalism of the method of existence taken up by the group in the early 1970s unfolds itself to us, this statement becomes more and more evident. Unique not only in its time, but also today, this combination of radical attitude to life, public service, and theatrical art has produced over a period of more than three decades a number of performances that have made history and indelibly marked the sensitiveness, or even life choices made by two generations of Polish spectators. Another important question was the culture-inspiring power of the example set by this group of people, with whom a particular proportion of young Polish intellectuals – in particular, the “young theatre” circles – identified themselves (even if they did not follow in the company’s footsteps).

For several reasons these statements have not found their confirmation in a distinctly resounding polyphony of theatre critics and historians’ voices. Firstly, until December 1981, i.e. imposition of martial law by the Communist authorities, Teatr Ósmego Dnia operated in the realm of the student theatre (a.k.a. young, open, alternative), which was generally associated by critics with immaturity, half-baked experiment, and even if with rebellion, this would unfailingly be stamped with the adjective “youthful”.

In the present monograph the rapid development of the young Poznań company is shown against the broad background of the intricate process of diffusion of politics and art which took place within theatre companies operating on both sides of the Berlin Wall at the time of historical storms at the turn of the 1960s and 70s. It also shows the process of maturation of the “Generation’68”, a formation very important for the whole of Polish culture, for the spirituality of Poles, as well as the public life of our country in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries.

The history of the first, very fruitful decade of Teatr Ósmego Dnia’s operation closes when its founders – accompanied by a number of somewhat younger actors and actresses, who contributed to the first version of *Jednym tchem* – begin to leave the company. A new ensemble germinates, which – headed by one of the original company founders and its leader since 1968, Lech Raczak – shall continue one of the most fascinating adventures in the history of the Polish theatre, developing and enriching the group’s manner of existence and its creative methods.