

**N**ina Andrycz, acknowledged by all as the first lady of the Polish stage, is the personification of the history of Polish theatre. She began her career as a beautiful, young, very skilful actress even before the Second World War. And until today she is still on the stage; she still arouses the interest of the public and still impresses everyone with her youth. For the older generation Nina Andrycz is a recollection and a lasting phenomenon and for younger spectators an example of great artistic success and an original personality. Besides all this, Nina Andrycz is also a poet. In her poetry she expresses all that she hasn't found in the texts of the authors of the plays in which she performs on the stage. And she has performed in dozens, if not hundreds of wonderful roles. Her speciality, due to her superb physical appearance, has been the roles of aristocratic women, princesses and queens. Also connected to the name of Nina Andrycz is one more singularity, that is, for her entire acting career she has been linked to the Polski Theatre in Warsaw, the biggest dramatic stage in Poland, one that is of great value to Polish culture. We held our interview with the actress after the premiere of the play "The Visit of an Older Woman" by Frederick Dürrenmatt. It took place on the Small Stage of the Polski Theatre of course.



*- Yet another premiere in your acting career. What role is this for you already?*

- I don't work out such statistics. I am always asked rather about the number of roles of queens I've played. Not only those with crowns on their heads, but also queens of the salon.

*- How has it happened that you've been able*

*to allow yourself the luxury to be an independent star of the Polski Theatre? Not every actress is able to accomplish this.*

- Perhaps. One has to know how to proportion one's work, how to arrange it in such a way that doesn't reflect on its quality.

*- Young actors today live in great race...*

- We all live today on the run and want to earn money. But one works all one's life in order to have the ability to impose conditions. In other cases one has to settle for, excuse the word, artistic prostitution, and that doesn't suit me.

*- You began at once as a beautiful and talented person...*

- Well, there are many who are gifted, talented considerably fewer. As my colleagues said, I knocked down the walls with my own head and entered the very centre. I began in the role of Solange in the play, "Summer in Nohant" by J. Iwaszkiewicz. This opened my way to a career. I remember that I received at that time an honorarium equal to the salary of a colonel in the Polish Army. Almost at once with this money I travelled to Paris

*- You've remained on the stage for years. Where does the secret of this lie when it is so difficult for other actors?*

- Perhaps it's due to the fact that I changed my genre at the right moment. When I unwillingly approached my sixties, I told myself that it was necessary to say farewell to the roles of romantic leads forever. It was necessary simply to have the courage not to return to languishing glances. And then I played Dulaska in "The Morality of Mme. Dulaska" by Gabriela Zapolska. This is the role of a terrible petit bourgeois, a symbol of hypocrisy, who goes around all day in down-at-the-heel slippers with her head in curlers. After that role, I was no longer afraid that I would do something which would have been too late for me. And then there was a wide choice of roles that didn't demand youth of me, but rather artistry. And only thanks to this can one remain on the stage. Whereas actresses who still obstinately run around in ringlets look pitiful.

*- You have become famous for roles of dominant, haughty people, is that what you're like in private?*

- Oh no! I vent my dominance only on the stage, never in real life. I am always pleasant to everyone and especially to servants. On the stage I find an outlet for such a domineering personage. Perhaps because by nature I have a strong, domineering voice. I can't bear sweet idiots.

*- But surely you have played certain roles which were not in accordance with your character, haven't you?*

- Of course. In such situations, reason, technique and experience helped.

*- Are there some roles that you still would like to play?*

- Naturally. For example, the role of Cleopatra in Shakespeare's play.

*- For a certain time now you have allowed us to know you as a poet. How did this come about?*

- My poetry had already started in secondary school. Since, however, the art of acting absorbs a person (it simply devours one, because it is a vampiric occupation), I have never had the time to totally give myself up to writing verse, and what I wrote, I hid in a drawer. Only after years did I have the courage to show my poetry to the most distinguished poets, who praised them, and then I published them.

*- But acting seems to be the sense of your life.*

- That's true. It's my conscious choice. And I've never regretted it.

*- Thus you are a happy person.*

- Yes, without a doubt. After all I myself have known how to strike out happiness for myself and for success one must work because it doesn't fall from heaven by itself.

*- Thank you for the interview.*

# The First Lady on the Stage

Interviewer: Kazimierz Sobolewski