

Jadwiga Domanska

(1907-1996)

Artist, theatre director, community activist



Born in Dabrowa Tarnowska, Jadwiga Domanska graduated from the National School of Drama in Warsaw in 1932 and performed in professional theatres in Poland. After the September 1939 campaign, under occupation, she served as an underground courier between Warsaw in the German occupying zone and Grodno and Lwow in the Soviet zone of Poland. Captured, she was sent to a labour camp in Siberia. Released under the Polish-Soviet agreement of 1941, she joined the Polish Army under General Anders, receiving the rank of captain, and left with it for the Middle East, where she became Director of the Drama Theatre of the Polish Second Corps under British Command. In Baghdad, she created, in collaboration with Wacław Radulski, the Polish Drama Theatre in Exile. In England after the war, she organized a theatre for Polish children Syrena. She immigrated to Canada with her husband in 1960.

In Canada, she was active in the Polish community, organizing numerous concerts and events, especially memorable among them a spectacle about the great Polish astronomer Nicholas Copernicus at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. She also organized celebrations commemorating important events of Polish history, such as the 3rd May Constitution of 1791, the Independence Day and the Second World War. She founded the Ottawa Theatre Club where she directed plays, ranging from comedy to drama, as well as poetic competitions and commemorative pageants. For seven years she had a Polish TV programme in Ottawa.

A dedicated member of the Polish Canadian Women's Federation, Branch 8, in Ottawa, she was twice elected its president. She created the Ottawa Fund to assist children from Polish schools in the territories taken over by the USSR after the Second World War. For fifteen years, she organized poetry competitions for Polish youth. She remained in touch with the country of her origin by sending support to the Association of Former Siberian prisoners in Poland.

Domanska was an honorary life member of the Polish Artists' Association Abroad and a member of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences. She was decorated with the Gold Award of the Polish Combatants' Association (1973), Gold Award of the Polish Canadian Congress (1976), and the Knight's and Officer's Cross of Polonia Restituta (1973, 1978). For her war activities, she received *Corona d'Italia* Cross (1945), Monte Cassino Cross (1946) and Silver Cross of Merit with Swords (1946).

• Jadwiga Domanska • In a play directed by J. Domanska, Mira Gawalewicz as Queen Sonka • Celebrating Christmas with friends from Branch 8 of the Federation, 1992 (J. Domanska third from the right)
All photos – Ewa Zadarnowska archives



POLISH SPIRIT