

Maria Nowotarska

(b. 1936)

Actress, director



POLISH SPIRIT



Born in Cracow, Poland, Maria Nowotarska studied in ballet school and in the Cracow College of Theatrical Art, from which she graduated in 1957. Hired by the prestigious Juliusz Slowacki Theatre in her city of birth, she worked under some of the most renowned Polish directors, among them Bronislaw Dabrowski, Erwin Axer, Lidia Zamkow or Krystyna Skuszkanka, cast in important roles in both drama and comedy. She also appeared in a number of films and TV plays, before she immigrated to Canada in 1990.

In Toronto where she settled, Nowotarska soon started an extensive and varied theatrical activity which she has continued for close to thirty years now, working as producer, director and actress, aided by her husband, the recently deceased Jerzy Pilitowski. Initially, joining the Polish Canadian Music Society, she founded a literary scene known as Salon of Poetry and Music, presenting numerous masterpieces of Polish literature from the Renaissance (Jan Kochanowski) through Romanticism (Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Slowacki) to the present (Nobel Prize winners Czeslaw Milosz and Wislawa Szymborska). Gradually, she created a professional theatre, with a regular cast of performers (actors, singers as well as teenage and kid apprentices), and with about a combined hundred premieres to her credit in both enterprises. Among the theatrical highlights were one-woman or two-women plays written for her and her daughter Agata Pilitowska by the renowned Polish author Kazimierz Braun, otherwise professor of theatre studies at New York State University in Buffalo. They are the monodrama *Helena* (about the great nineteenth-century Polish American actress Modjeska) and two-women plays *American Dreams* (about new female immigrants), *Tamara L.* (about the internationally famous Polish art *déco* paintress Lempicka), *Radiation* (about the discoverer of radium Maria Sklodowska-Curie), and *Pola Negri Stories* (about this celebrated silent-movie star). With these plays mother and daughter made tours of more than a dozen cities of North America and Europe.

Maria Nowotarska's outstanding artistic achievements earned her honours both in Poland and in Canada. Among the distinctions from the Polish government are the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit, Medal of the Speaker of the Polish Senate, and the Gloria Artis medal for contribution to Polish art; in Canada, she received among others Canadian Senate's Recognition Diploma and the Honorary Golden Award of the Polish Canadian Congress.



Photos from top left clockwise:
• Maria Nowotarska / Photo – Wojciech Jantos • M. Nowotarska with actress Jasia Jasinska and animator of culture Bogdan Labecki during Summer Serenade fundraising on Imperial Austra-Hungary theme • Initial ensemble of the Salon, M. Nowotarska and J. Pilitowski seated in front • K. I. Galczynski's poetry presentation. On stage M. Nowotarska with A. Pilitowska and Stan Borys. Stage design by Joanna Dabrowski / Photo – Domator archives
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