

“Oh the Carols, the Carols”

At the entrance Mrs. Ewa Sałapa is giving everybody a sweet surprises.

-Excuse me, are you from some kind of bakery or something or maybe it is some kind of advertisement? – I asked and I providently took my notebook so I could write down the name of the “sponsor”.-No, No – I just wanted to bring a holiday spirit and share something with others. So, I brought some sweets for all... Well, I reflected, isn't that after all obvious?... after all obvious?...

....In those days there were no TVs, DVDs, Walkman, iPods and speakers in people's ears... There were no cars, and to get anywhere, one had to set forth on a daunting, several hour's journey by carriage, or by sleigh. In those days those customs which we now follow out of habit, had a true meaning and were understood by all. In those days, as now the most valuable commodity was time, but not the time paid for with money, but that offered to a human being, time spent in the company of one's Family, with those Closest to Us, with Friends (the caps are on purpose, out of respect). The stories told were those concerning neighbors, true stories taken from life, from around the corner, from the next street, from the next door house. During those holidays whole families would gather to celebrate the birth of the Jesus child and the story of Mary and Joseph evoking never ending emotions.

Nina Polan, herself vigorously striding through the fourth quarter of her first century, has an unusual ability of traveling through different time spheres, not just by herself personally, but also of transporting

with her the accompanying actors and her audience.

There she goes all dressed up, excited, seemingly entertaining the public, with eyes searching, ears strained and her whole actor's sensibility already inhabiting another era, from long ago. And at last..." Here they are, can you hear the sleigh bells ringing?... They are coming... They are coming..." And this was not a magic trick. We were all simply carried off by the Old fashioned Polish Sleighride, a show for ordinary people performed by professional actors of the Polish Theatre Institute: Nina Polan, Malgorzata Fliszkiewicz, Grzegorz Herominski, Piotr Rudzinski to the wonderful accompaniment of the American Pablo Zinger.

Yes, it became clear that the holiday spark can still be directly ignited in people's hearts.

The Polish Theatre Institute, exists in the US for over 20 years, performing for Polish and American audiences in both languages Polish literature, drama and music. But is not just a simple transference of the texts to the stage. Thanks to Nina Polan the boundaries between separate literary texts are being erased. The familiar characters and events belonging to a particular context are excised to clarify new and unusual circumstances.

The whole premise is that literary quotes imprinted on our minds by education, though moved out of the old context and presented in a new era are able to create new, yet fully lucid interpretations. Nina Polan's theatre is capable of freeing on the one hand the viewer's mind and let his visual senses follow

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the linear story of the show. On the other hand, it challenges the more ambitious and sets out on an intellectual pursuit and an attempt to search for, locate from where and why these literary quotes are derived from. A unique reference game based on Polish culture.

Madam Nina, carried us in her magic sleigh directly to the festive table, to the chamber where with a glass of wine, and sharing in the warmth of friendly and familiar company, we heard the strains of well known and beloved carols.

Anita Flajter

